



Chandler Park Skatepark Project

Introduction

Great things are happening at Chandler Park through the Chandler Park Conservancy (CPC). CPC is helping to improve the quality of life for youth, seniors, families and visitors from Detroit's East Side and across the region, by providing memorable experiences focusing on Conservation, Health, Recreation, and Urban Agriculture. CPC works closely with the City of Detroit to install great amenities, provide exceptional programming and create great places for people to gather, learn and play.

According to ConservationTool.org (A Pennsylvania Land Trust Association), *"City parks and open space improve our physical and psychological health, strengthen our communities, and make our cities and neighborhoods more attractive places to live and work. Numerous studies have shown the social, environmental, economic, and health benefits parks bring to a city and its people"*. Statements like these confirm that we are on the right path.

Chandler Park is over 100 years old and has over 75,000 visitors annually. The Chandler Park community is an urban community comprised of over 25,000 residents where over 50 percent of the population is under the age of 18. Over the last four years the investment in capital improvements has been more than \$4.6 million dollars. Projects include: new athletic field, new t-ball field, refurbished comfort station, new tennis courts, a meditation garden, walking path, new soccer fields and a marshland.

Our next project is the design and installation of a 12,000 s/f skatepark. CPC is a recipient of a Tony Hawk Foundation matching challenge grant of \$250,000. CPC is seeking donor(s) to fulfill the match requirement of \$250,000. The project will meet the safety and standards for the latest skatepark design principles for skateboarders, scooters, and BMX riders to develop their skills. The design will be naturally integrated with the surrounding environment and feature a mix of street and transitional-style terrain, with elements designed for all age groups and ability levels. The design of the project should draw and engage local skateboarders to the skatepark and will challenge both beginners and experienced users.

Why a Skatepark?

Our mission suggests that we want to create healthy spaces that will provide benefits to the neighborhood and that visitors will enjoy. Skateparks build and sustain healthy communities. As a gathering place for dedicated, athletic youth, the skatepark provides the forum for visitors young and old, beginning and skilled, to meet and share experiences. For many skateboarding youth, the skatepark becomes a home-away-from-home.

According to the Tony Hawk Foundation: *"Skateparks provide a physical activity for kids not interested in traditional team sports. Community skateparks provide a safe and challenging place for skaters of all levels to develop as athletes. Public skateparks provide healthy activity for kids and help eliminate boredom and drug use"*.

Also, young people need to feel like they are recognized and appreciated by their communities. In too many places skateboarders get the wrong message from local authorities who limit or outlaw skateboarding and ignore its inherent benefits. Skateparks are the solution. Every skatepark supports hundreds of kids that might otherwise have nowhere to go.

The thought process for developing a skatepark included input of the General Service Department of the City of Detroit, along with residents and local stakeholders. An article by the Spohn Ranch Skatepark, out of Los Angeles, CA. sums it up and aligns with our thinking.

1. Skateparks Reduce Illicit Behavior:

The myth surrounding skateparks is that they are a breeding ground for crime and other illicit activities. While there will be an occasional "bad seed," providing designated spaces for positive activities is the best way to curb



Chandler Park Skatepark Project

unlawful behavior among youth. When youth have nothing to do or nowhere to go – that is when they cause trouble.

It's no secret that children who are involved in team sports don't have the time to get into trouble, but it turns out you don't have to just bring them to the soccer field or baseball diamond. Activities you might not expect — like skateboarding — might be just what teens and adolescents need. Research out of the University of North Carolina found that skateboarding is among the activities that might help keep children out of trouble.

2. **Skateparks Provide A Safe Environment For Skateboarding:**

The majority of skateboarding injuries happen outside skateparks. The most common injuries are falls due to surface irregularities and collisions with motor vehicles or pedestrians. Skateboarding is going to happen whether skateparks exist or not, so the best way to keep youth safe is to provide them access to safe, designated spaces to pursue their activity.

3. **Skateparks Reduce Damage to Private Property:**

Without designated skateparks, skateboarders will make use of any and all terrain in their community. This often includes the private property of home owners and local businesses, as well as public spaces such as downtown plazas. Metal skateboard axles and BMX pegs can destroy paint and chip concrete, causing thousands of dollars in damage every year. Public skateparks are a win-win because skateboarders have a safe place to pursue their passion, while law enforcement, business owners and community members no longer have to spend time, money and energy shoos skateboarders away from their property.

4. **Skateboarding Has Significant Physical Health Benefits:**

Arguably the most important reason for participating in action sports is the fact that it keeps you healthy and physically fit. Skaters use their glutes, hamstring and quads muscles while pushing off the ground; abs and back muscles to help with balance; the small muscles in the calves, the stabilizing muscles in the hips and the muscles in the arches of the feet. This is an activity that gets kids off the couch and keeps them in shape is vital for the youth of this nation, especially in this time of a national health crisis.

5. **Skateboarding Has Significant Mental Health Benefits:**

Skateboarding is a unique activity because it combines extreme physical exertion with precise muscle coordination and balance. The complexity of performing tricks on a skateboard improves brain function at a fundamental level and stimulates new cell growth in the brain.

In 2006, an elementary school in Boulder, Colorado began incorporating skateboarding into the physical education curriculum – calling the program “Skate Pass”. The program’s director, Eric Klassen, wanted to “bring in activities that are alternative, non-competitive and individual. Most kids in schools feel intimidated when it comes to competition”.

Klassen says the biggest benefit might be something kids don't realize they're learning. While skateboarding helps with eye-foot coordination and balance, he says it also improves performance in the classroom.

“When they're involved in an activity that involves balance — both hemispheres of the brain are equally stimulated,” Klassen says. He points out that “researchers have shown that the body also produces a hormone that makes students more receptive to learning for the rest of the school day.”

6. **Skateboard Parks Have A Positive Economic Impact:**

From the feedback we receive from other municipal skatepark managers, skateparks do seem to have a positive effect on businesses in the surrounding area. When a skatepark opens, it tends to draw people from the outlying



Chandler Park Skatepark Project

communities to bring their kids to the skatepark, do some shopping, have some lunch, buy some gas, etc. Skateparks attract patrons to local businesses who might not otherwise be in the area.

On another note, skateboarders are tenacious and will go wherever the compelling terrain is. While skateparks with high visibility and ample community interaction are healthier environments, skateparks in challenging locations can often serve to activate an otherwise underutilized space.

There is no doubt that a skatepark would be a great addition to Chandler Park. It will provide a space where people gather and build community, a place where people of any age can get exercise and experience outdoors and a place that will enhance the value of the community.

We need your support helping to match the \$250,000 grant for The Tony Hawk Foundation. To make a contribution go to our website at www.chandlerparkconservancy.org. To receive more information on how to partner with CPC on this project, contact Alex Allen at 313-264-1415 or email at aallen@chandlerparkconservancy.org

Skatepark Concepts

