

St. Helens Skatepark Fact Sheet

Frequent Questions/Perceptions

1. Who is building the skatepark?

The St. Helens City Council approved of the idea of building a skatepark in McCormick Park on a site where the topography was well suited for that purpose. The city is leading the project through the help of a planning assistant who is very interested in the project. The city will insure and maintain the facility. The project also is supported by other organizations in the community including St. Frederic Catholic Church, the Greater St. Helens Park and Recreation District, Columbia Foundation, interested students, and a group of young skateboarders.

2. Will the city face increased liability by having the skatepark?

Insuring a skatepark poses no greater liability than insuring baseball fields or other sport facilities. In addition, Oregon law places a ceiling on the city's liability for accidents that take place on public property, limiting the city's exposure. The skatepark will have signage explaining that safety gear is recommended.

3. Is the city using property tax money and general funds on the project?

No. The skatepark is being built with private donations and in-kind contributions. Several grants will be sought to help meet the costs. The city has not pledged financial resources to the project. However, if the city decides to match donations on a limited basis, it could use funds that do not come from property taxes. The city would use "system development charges" that developers pay that are earmarked for park improvements such as a skatepark.

4. Why is the city doing this now, when it has been discussed before?

Providing activities for youth has been a long-standing concern for the City Council. The city recognized that a groundswell of community support was emerging when St. Frederic Church pledged to assist and especially when the skateboarders themselves agreed to actively be involved in the planning, fundraising and construction.

5. Who will pay for maintenance and repairs?

The city, similar to its arrangement for Columbia Center, will maintain the skatepark as it does other park facilities. The city anticipates the community will be involved on an on-going basis. The facility will be designed to need as little maintenance as possible.

6. What about vandalism?

The skatepark will be made of concrete with steel used in several skating obstacles, creating minimal opportunities for vandalism. However, the involvement of the skateboarders themselves in the project will build their sense of ownership in the facility. The skateboarders have said they doubt their peers would be motivated to destroy their own skatepark. Trash cans will be placed at the site.

7. What is the environmental impact of building the skatepark?

Project planners are working to minimize environmental impacts. Prior logging on

the site has exposed the remaining trees to wind impacts that threaten their long-term survival. Approximately 15 trees will be removed, either because they are damaged, block construction, or would stand too close to the concrete for their roots to survive. However, one of the priorities in designing the skatepark has been to incorporate it with the natural setting. The site will be drained into the existing storm water system. Milton Creek will not be impacted. Construction will include a landscaping plan, which will ultimately improve the current appearance.

8. Is the site too secluded?

McCormick Park is used for multiple activities, creating regular traffic ranging from walkers to campers. The city provides a caretaker 24-hours each day that lives directly across from the skatepark. Park hours are dawn to dusk and you can't skate in the dark anyway. Columbia Center, which is visible from the site, is open six days each week until 9 p.m.

9. What about other facilities needed by the skaters?

Restrooms and a drinking fountain are located across the parking lot from the skatepark. A public telephone is located on the south terrace at Columbia Center.

10. Who can use the skatepark?

The skatepark is designed to accommodate in-line skaters and BMX bikers as well as skateboarders. Similar facilities built in other communities have proven to accommodate multiple users.

11. Kids who ride skateboards are bad.

Get real. It is not reasonable to generalize about skateboarders. They are no more troublemakers than any other group of kids. Most of these kids are "mainstream," kids who go to school and often hold down jobs as well. They view skateboarding as an athletic activity that requires a high level of skill. With relatively few activities available to youth, skateboarding is a healthy alternative. Furthermore, an unspoken culture exists among skateboarders about safety, and the protocols of boarding together in parks.

12. A skatepark will cause more skateboard injuries.

Statistics show that skateboarding results in fewer injuries than organized sports including baseball and basketball. Skateboarders currently skate in areas not designed for that purpose. A skatepark designed for this purpose will be safer. Skateboarders currently skate in streets and parking lots where they compete with pedestrian and car traffic, creating hazards. Boarding in public rights-of-way also leaves the government agencies liable for accidents that may take place on their property. The skateboarders are aware that they will be required to wear safety gear in the skatepark, and they know the risks of skateboarding.

13. Will the skatepark become a hang out where kids will congregate and do drugs?

Drug use is not permitted in city parks. Kids will congregate no matter what, but providing an established, centralized location will make it easier for police to patrol. Having the skatepark in McCormick Park will increase the traffic in the skatepark, and

lessen the ease of inappropriate behaviors compared to more isolated locations.

14. Who designed the skatepark?

Guided by a local sculpture studio, a group of skateboarders viewed the site and then used clay to mold skating obstacles and challenges, based on their experience with skateparks elsewhere in Oregon and the United States. The sculpture studio then translated their ideas into a design, which the skateboarders critiqued. After several revisions, the sculpture studio finalized the design and built a model. Local surveyors, excavators, engineers and contractors have offered additional expertise.

