WHO’S JOB IS IT?

Every skatepark is the result of a partnership between youth, government, and local civic organizations. In spite of their rough edges, skateboarding youth (and other action sport participants) often prove to be incredible advocates for the things that are important to them, and the long process of skatepark development is transformative not just for the skateboarders, but for the agencies and individuals who work with them. - Peter Whitley

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WORK TOGETHER

CITY GOVERNMENT & PARKS DEPARTMENT ARE COMMONLY RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT EXECUTION
- FUNDING
- SEEKING OUT AND WORKING WITH SKATERS/USER BASE
- TAKING STEPS TO ENSURE QUALITY DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION
- MAINTAINING THE SPACE LIKE OTHER PARKS

SKATERS, PARENTS, LOCALS ARE COMMONLY RESPONSIBLE FOR:

- ADVOCATING FOR NEED OF THE PROJECT
- COMMUNITY SUPPORT & COMMUNICATION
- WORKING WITH THE CITY AND STAKEHOLDERS
- INSISTING ON QUALITY DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION
- STEWARDSHIP OF SPACE & INCLUSIVE TRADITIONS

This relationship results in a better skatepark and greater long-term stewardship of the space. This process of “civic engagement” provides government officials with good information and support from the user base of the skatepark, and it provides local volunteers with a valuable life experience that builds networking, analysis, communication, civic and organizing skills. It also leaves an impressive new item on a resume or college application.
The last piece of the puzzle is hiring an experienced concrete skatepark design and construction firm. They will work with the advocates and city to refine the collective vision and build the skatepark to plan utilizing years of concrete skatepark construction experience.

HOW DO SKATEPARKS GET MADE?
CIVILITY, CIVIC DUTY, KINDNESS & CONCRETE

ORDER OF OPERATIONS:

YOU ARE HERE

LOCAL ENGAGEMENT

CITY INVOLVEMENT

FUNDING

SITE SELECTION

DESIGN

CONSTRUCTION

APPROVAL

PROGRAMMING

GRAND OPENING
Nearly every skatepark is the result of community volunteer activism, or, skatepark advocacy. Skaters must work with the city, and municipalities must work with and support skaters.

SKATEPARK ADVOCACY

“Advocacy” is defined as: “public support for, or recommendation of, a particular cause or policy.”

There are no requirements to “be an advocate.” It’s a self-elected volunteer “position.” Anyone can step up and make change in their community. Most volunteer skatepark advocates start with zero experience. They learn along the way. It helps if you spend some time informing yourself about the civic engagement process and how capital improvement projects work in your town. You can ask city staff to help you learn more about how your local government works. For your skatepark project group - make sure your group members are on the same page to present a “unified front.” Sometimes this means having a short advocate meeting before a city meeting. You’ll want to make sure your group stays organized and communicates well.

For tons of information on how to advocate for a skatepark project, head to skatepark.org/psdg

ADVOCACY PROCESS AND MILESTONES

This is a general order of common skatepark advocacy tasks. While they usually go in this order, some of the tasks may go on at the same time or out of this order.

1. Build your Core Group (your local crew, parents of kids who skate, general supporters)
2. Establish Regular Meetings (weekly or bi weekly, time and location)
3. Make a Plan (name of group, size of park, main points, general guidelines of the project: be positive and prepared)
4. Create a digital presence. This is not where the work is done, it’s where you give the community updates on what work is being done on the project. See page 37 for more on creating an effective digital presence.
5. Connect with the City to create a Steering Committee (Parks and Rec, City Council presentation, site selection, etc.)
6. Find a Place for Donations (most likely a local service organization acting as a fiscal sponsor for your group)
7. Connect with a Skatepark Design/Construction Firm (continue refining your plan, begin design process)
8. Fundraise (ONLY IF NECESSARY - CITY SHOULD BE FUNDING. most of the work, but there are a lot of fun events; you’ll meet the whole town, establishing yourself and team as the group creating the skatepark)
9. Prepare for the Construction Process (work with the city, take steps to ensure quality, qualification process, construction bids, etc.)
10. Let it Happen! Help where you can, be patient and get out of the way where you need to. See Appendix C - Stakeholder Matrix for more info on who does what, when.

 Advocacy is not easy, and it’s not for everyone - but it’s worth it. If you’re looking around your community to find the person who should be doing this, it might be you...

IS SKATEPARK ADVOCACY FOR ME?

All of this effort sounds like a lot - and it is. It’s why the common skatepark project takes a few years (sometimes more). You don’t have to have it all planned out now. But consider this. Start with one meeting. See who shows up to help, and how it feels when you all connect on the subject of a new skatepark. That feeling, and the basic understanding of this process, should be enough to help you figure out if advocating for a skatepark is for you. Worst case - you don’t want to lead a volunteer project for a skatepark, but you introduce a few locals to information on how to get it done. This can be very valuable as someone else may be more willing (and excited) to take on the responsibility. You can still help a project as a member of the core group, if you’re interested.
LEAD ADVOCATES

Best case, you find yourself compelled to help move the project along as a lead advocate. Sometimes there are more than one lead advocate in the core group. These are the folks who spend the most time helping to organize (calls, emails, meetings) and move the project forward according to what your city insiders suggest. Lead advocates put in the most work, but often get the most reward. This can include mentorship from the city insider, new skills, and networking along the way.

A NOTE TO SKATEPARK ADVOCATES

It’s not an easy process, but make it easier on yourself by not taking the bumps in the process personally. You’re there to help shepherd a project, you are not defined by the project. Take care of yourself and be patient. Remember - you are charged with a righteous mission - who wouldn’t agree that a skatepark for the kids is a good idea? But don’t let that feeling of righteousness go to your head. Keep in mind that the people you’re talking to may not have the information you do (or share the same perspective), nor will the city employees and skatepark designers have the same amount of energy or fuel for the project that you do (be mindful of how often and how much you ask of these people). Above all, communicate where you need to, listen to advice, ask for help and do your best to develop a healthy non-attachment from the project so you don’t stress yourself out more than needed during the process. As you develop this skill throughout the process you’ll find a groove that you can ride to the end, picking up some new skills and friends along the way.

RECONCILIATION
CONFLICT - COMMUNICATION - COMMUNITY - CONSTRUCTION

Keep in mind that for a lot of these young skaters their interactions with authority have been negative and intense. If there aren’t enough legal places to do it, it’s likely they’ve been verbally accosted on a regular basis for participating in their passion. It’s also likely that city staff have had to reluctantly shoo skaters away from the spot out front and have had more than a few contentious interactions over the years. When warranted, it’s worth reminding group members, city staff and local skaters that this is a chance for a new type of interaction, and to prepare themselves accordingly. This means not reacting poorly to misconceptions or mischaracterizations of skaters, the value of the activity or the value of the skatepark. Part of your task will be helping those who are still angry about the way they’ve been treated (skater or city staff) that it’s time to let go and put energy toward building a bridge of respectful engagement between the city’s shredding constituents and local government.

SKATEPARK ADVOCACY RIDES ON THE WHEELS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT, PUSHED FORWARD BY LOCALS

CONVICTION

It’s not a matter of “if” it’s a matter of “when.”

Dedicated advocates hold the space and confidence of an outcome already realized - they envision the goal as an inevitability. It’s not a matter of IF the skatepark can be built, it’s a matter of WHEN the skatepark will be built. Having this internal belief in the eventuality of a skatepark can help you frame the project properly both internally and externally in conversation. You have to believe in order to help others believe. It won’t happen overnight, so you’ll have to manage your expectations. But just like in learning to skate, you have to believe in the certainty of the outcome while you work toward your goal.
Organizing and shepherding a public skatepark project is quite the undertaking. There’s a lot to do, but most people learn how to do it along the way. This means at the end of the project you may find that you’ve developed some valuable new skills and have inadvertently developed a larger network. You’ll likely have learned some things about the civic process, organizing, project management, analysis, networking and even public speaking. Nearly all skatepark advocates finish the public skatepark process feeling empowered and are happy with their choice to commit to the project.

IS IT A NEW PROJECT?

If you’re not sure if there’s already an ongoing skatepark project in your town, do a web search for your “town/city name” + “skatepark project” and filter by news articles. You can also check social media. You may learn the progress of an existing project or learn about a defunct project. If there’s an existing project, connect with them and ask if you can be of service. If a group has tried to bring a skatepark project to the town and fallen short of their goals, it may be time for another try. In either case, doing this search may help you learn the names of some locals or city officials who may have been involved and can help provide some insight into old challenges. It’s possible that in the wake of the Olympics there’s a shift in attitude about the subject of a skatepark in town. It’s also possible there’s been a shift in city staffing or elected officials who might be more supportive of the new project.
### BUILDING YOUR GROUP

You may have a crew in mind already, but expanding may help. If you put up signs around town and post online to recruit for a skatepark advocacy group, you’ll find yourself with a crew of individuals who look like they are interested in supporting a new skatepark project in town. It may be worth having them fill out a simple form that captures their contact information, what they are interested in doing for the project, what special skills they might have and how much time they may be willing to volunteer. You can use an online form generator and a QR code that links to your form on any printed materials you put up around town. Regardless of how much the city will outright support (and/or fund) the new skatepark project, it’s helpful to have a small army of supporters. These form responses might help you understand what motivates them, how much you can ask of them, and in what areas they can help.

As you continue with the project, you’ll begin to see a network of helpful people form around the project. Some are in your core group regularly, some you engage with occasionally along the way.

### NAMING YOUR GROUP

One of your first tasks as a skatepark group will be to come up with a name for your organization. Getting the attention of the city gets easier when you sound like what you are - a group of local citizens on a mission. When thinking of names, keep it simple. Be sure to include the name of the area, and what you’re doing. The most common (and often most effective) names are “Friends of (City name) Skatepark” or “(City name) Skatepark Committee” or (County name) Skatepark Coalition.” You can be creative, but don’t lose the opportunity to help folks understand and appreciate what you do the moment they read your name.

### MEMORIAL SKATEPARKS

Memorial skateparks can be a good way to enshrine a loved one’s legacy into the fabric of the community for decades. If you’re planning on naming the skatepark after the person, it’s worth having that discussion early and even considering renaming the skatepark group in some cases.
SKATEPARK ADVOCACY TERMS

CIVIC DUTY - One’s internal nagging sense that they have the responsibility to do something to make their community better.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT - A permanent change or addition to a property that improves the value of the space.

STAKEHOLDER - An individual who has an interest in a project or is impacted by the outcome of the project.

CONSTITUENTS/CONSTITUENCY - The body of people that a governmental figure represents/works for.

PARKS AND REC - A public agency that is responsible for the state of park access locally. (Sometimes this is a commission or committee if there’s no municipality or parks and rec department)

CITY COUNCIL - A group of elected officials who oversee policy and budget.

CITY MANAGER - Appointed official who oversees and coordinates day to day administration city planning, all departments, city budget, research, policy recommendations and staff assistance to council members and committees.

COUNTY SEAT - The governmental center of a county.

SPORTS CLUB/MINISTRY/GOVERNING BODY - An official (or semi-official) collection of sport participants, designated with responsibility for the accessibility, rules, growth and/or performance of a sport.

COMMITTEE - A group of local volunteers OR elected officials (sometimes both) who study, deliberate and decide on policy and other civic matters.

MOU - MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING - A simple agreement between two or more parties, a contract.

CITYWIDE PLAN/CITY PLAN - A dynamic long term plan/document to improve the city (housing, parks, community facilities, economy, transportation).

SCOPE - The size and cost of a project. Can be dynamic.

RFP - Request For Proposal - An externally announced document, aimed at vendors, highlighting an available work contract/project. The RFP outlines the goals, objectives and desired timeline of a project or series of projects.

DESIGN / RENDERING - The conceptual layout and visual representation (Computer Generated 3D) for a project to represent the end goal to the community.

BID - The process some communities use to allow companies to submit a price for a project or piece of work (sometimes design and sometimes construction). Bid Specifications define terms and eligibility requirements. Usually lowest qualified bid wins.

RFQ - Request for Qualifications - A document requiring builders to provide proof of eligibility to bid on a project. Specific language is used to ensure only qualified applicants are allowed to bid on specialty construction projects. Consider “Local Preference/Cultural Value.”

LAYOUT - The general spacing and configuration of skatepark design.

CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS (CD) - Blueprints of a skatepark. Detailed engineering drawings that builders must follow to complete the project according to the designer’s specifications.

TOLERANCES - The degree to which a builder can go outside the specifics of the approved design.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA) OR ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT EIR - Important tests done before and/or after a capital improvement project to assess the (measured or estimated) impact of the addition on the community. Impact can be vehicle or pedestrian traffic, noise, lighting, environmental and more.

SKATEPARK DESIGNER - A skilled designer who understands the nuances of skatepark design and needs of action sports participants.

SKATEPARK BUILDER/SPECIALTY CONTRACTOR - A type of vendor with lots of experience and expertise in a certain specific field.

CHANGE ORDER - Changing a design element after plans have been finalized. Usually costs money.
TIPS FROM THE PUBLIC SKATEPARK DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

THE LANGUAGE OF CITY ADMINISTRATION

Whether they’re in planning, maintenance, or public relations, City and Parks officials face innumerable day-to-day tasks. Like the skatepark advocate, their time is invaluable and should be used efficiently and respectfully. There are many things advocates can do to make these encounters as productive as possible.

LEARN THE LANGUAGE

Ideas and concepts should be phrased in ways that allow the audience, whether it’s one person or 100, to easily grasp the meaning. Resourceful advocates might check out any number of magazines or websites to get a feel for the concepts and language the audience may be receptive to (try your own city’s web site, for example). However, be sincere, and conduct business as plainly as possible. Don’t overdo it or attempt to impress anyone with flowery language. Consider what it would be like to have a bureaucrat trying to speak “skater.” Some good sources of urban planning and park design language are magazines like Dwell, Metropolis, American Society of Landscape Architects, and National Recreation and Park Association.

KNOW YOUR PURPOSE

Throughout the skatepark process an advocate will attend many different meetings, each with its own rhythm and objectives. In most of these meetings it won’t be relevant to talk about skatepark design theory, for example. Advocates will want to deliver the information to the meeting attendees that they will be interested in. Stay on topic.

WALK WITHOUT A PLAN

Before the end of any meeting, quickly outline what will occur before the next meeting and when that next meeting will be. Remember, sitting down with a person or group is the absolute best way to keep them invested in the new skatepark, so plan the next meeting with a group. Tell them when the group will be back and what will have been accomplished by that time. They’ll come to expect success or censurement from the skatepark group and will become increasingly supportive.

LANGUAGE OF SKATEPARK ADVOCATES

As most skatepark advocates are skateboarders, there is usually one thing that they’d rather be doing-skating. Most city officials in contact with the public are accustomed to citizens inexperienced in public policy or the processes for making capital improvements. Here are some ways that city officials can reach skaters.

BE PATIENT

The local skatepark advocacy group may be diven by the enthusiasm of a few young adults with little professional experience. They will make mistakes. Expectations and priorities may need to be adjusted. The local group will need help.

SHARE YOUR CONCERNS

Skateboarding is about “going for it.” It’s filled with risks that scale with difficulty of the trick. Skatepark advocates may not have a clear sense of which challenges to the process are significant and which are trivial or procedural. If the city administrator can illuminate where their group can be most effective, the skatepark group will quickly gain valuable experience, confidence, and indepenence.

BE A BELIEVER

Skateparks have been controversial for as long as they’ve been built on public property. Skaters are usually not surprised when their needs go unheard, and they won’t be surprised when the interests of other influential groups are casually prioritized ahead of the skatepark plans. Skaters, being without clear political leverage, need staunch allies in City Hall.

20 REASONS FOR SKATEPARKS

1. Skateboarders need safe places to recreate.
2. Skateparks, if design and constructed correctly, are fiscally conservative and require very little maintenance.
3. Compared to other sports, skateboarding is underserved in the area.
4. Skateboarding as millions of participants nationally and it’s still growing while more traditional sports are in the decline. There are currently abundant facilities for these other sports.
5. Skateboarding is a multi-million dollar industry.
6. Skateboarders represent a vital part of an urban community.
7. A skatepark can attract skateboarding tourists if designed to do so.
8. With national health issues looming for today’s youth, its time to offer a greater number of healthy, athletic choices.
9. The cost to participate is accessible to every economic class.
10. Thousands of other communities have come to understand the value of skateparks.
11. Skating in a park is much safer than skating in the streets.
12. The community already has hundreds, maybe thousands of skateboarders.
13. In the future there are going to be many legitimate palces to skate in the city. The time to embark on that positive future is now.
14. A skatepark is a place where skateboarders and other people who might not cross paths in the street can come together.
15. Skateparks can displace other less desirable activities in an area.
16. The skatepark can be an attraction for family vacations.
17. Skateboarding is “cool,” and a skatepark will enhance the community’s reputation.
18. Good skateparks often have volunteer teams to help maintain the facility.
19. Skateparks can draw skateboarders away from less appropriate areas.
20. Young and old people use skateparks.
"There was no single project that was undertaken during my years as Mayor that had a bigger and more positive impact on the community. The skatepark is used constantly, it is used by people of all sizes, shapes, colors, genders, ages, you name it, people visit our skatepark, they love our skatepark and perhaps more importantly, they work very hard to protect and maintain our skatepark. It is emblematic of what community is all about and I could not be more proud to have been a part of making it happen."

- Mayor Jennifer Laird White, Nyack NY

"The value in skatepark advocacy has personally given me the opportunity to become a community activist representing local skaters, my community and be a catalyst for social change. Professionally it's given me credibility with those donors, sponsors, industry leaders, and municipalities."

- Kyle Little, Portage Wisconsin

"You don't have to be a great skateboarder to be a great skatepark advocate."

- Stephanie Murdock, Baltimore Maryland

"This skatepark project is a wonderful example of how the community and local government can come together to create a project that will benefit not only the youth of the community, but the greater community as a whole."

- Louis Svehla, Defuniak Springs, Florida

"The skatepark is a snapshot of the diversity within the city that many don’t see: black, hispanic, white... old, young... different socio-economic levels... all come together peaceably to enjoy what they love."

- Whitney Pickering, Laurel MS

"Planning a city-wide skateboard infrastructure has enabled a fuller vision of the inequities of our communities and has sharpened our focus to prioritize youth in need of resources."

- Paul Forsline, Minneapolis MN

"My original intent for becoming a public skatepark advocate was to simply get a great recreational facility developed in my home town. The bigger impact, though, was how working with other community members, organizations, and municipalities resulted in skateparks and skateboarding being not only accepted among the larger community, but skateboarding is now a part of our overall community culture. Kids who helped out early in our skatepark effort have grown up and helped get skateparks developed in their towns. Municipalities in nearby areas have seen our skatepark as a success, and want one for their young people. All it takes is one person’s vision and determination to help create a cascade of opportunities for youth to get active and enjoy being outdoors. If you think you might be that person... you probably are!"

- Trevor Staples, Ann Arbor, MI

"This ambitious project has the potential to not only dramatically transform our current skatepark, but transform our community as a whole. Now more than ever it is important to provide our at-risk youth safe and positive environments in which to grow."

- Ryan Sevenski, Parks & Recreation Coordinator, Quakertown Borough PA

"I learned that pretty much kids anywhere, could do pretty much anything. Because, I was a sixth grader, and look what we’ve done now – we’ve made a skate park."

- Jaylin Law, Chiloquin OR

"In between the infrastructures of a city we try to create active spaces - these spaces are breeding grounds for all kinds of culture and creativity and help keep the city progressive and innovative."

- William J. L. Frederiksen, Department of Culture and Leisure, Council of Copenhagen, Denmark
FOUR SIMPLE ADVOCACY RULES

“You and your core group are representing the project and someone’s opinion will be formed by their impression of you.”
Peter Whitley, Public Skatepark Development Guide

STAY CALM - Skateparks can be a polarizing topic. Don’t let those that are critical of the skatepark vision get under your skin. Acknowledge their input, thank them for sharing and move on.

STAY POSITIVE - The tone of your advocacy should remain positive and focused on creating a successful community space.

STAY AWAKE - Things going on in town (and town meetings) can seem boring or irrelevant to the skatepark project. Try to see the opportunity to talk about skateboarding and the skatepark vision everywhere you look.

STAY ORGANIZED - You will need to maintain a calendar, a list of contacts, a handful of statistics, produce handouts for meetings, and remember peoples’ names. Thankfully, all of this complexity doesn’t come at you at once. Getting organized early and staying organized throughout the process will pay huge dividends in the long run.

For more advocacy advice and real world examples, see Appendix G and the Public Skatepark Guide.

A NOTE ON STAYING ORGANIZED AND CONNECTED:
Some people like using binders, some people keep everything on their phone or computer. If you store things digitally, you may also be able to use extra tags (words) to identify (and later search for) city employees, core group members, general skatepark supporters, potential funding partners and more. Tagging each type of supporter in your contacts (or separating them in a binder) can make short work of sending out group texts or emails to inform your stakeholders. If you meet someone who gives you a business card, store all that information. If you meet someone who’s interested in the project and they give you their information, send a followup “Nice to meet you” email and grow the connection. It will be easier to reach out with an invitation or an ask at a later time.

CITY PLANS & INSERTING A SKATEPARK PROJECT

Every community is different. Some towns may be very supportive of the idea of a skatepark, and some won’t even try to make a skatepark a priority. It’s important to remember that cities often have a long term plan (often called a City Plan or Master Plan) that’s a written document depicting how the city functions currently, and what changes it might be scheduled to make over a period of years, sometimes decades.

When you reach out to the Parks and Recreation Department or someone in the City, you may learn that there’s already a skatepark project in the plan! If that’s the case, you can ask how to support or where to apply pressure to help make that project more of a priority - especially if it’s some years away.

The key thing to remember when working with the city on a skatepark project is that you are essentially inserting a NEW PROJECT into an office that has lots of things going on already. Needless to say, respect and patience are key. It’s very likely that local government employees will be excited that you or your group have taken an interest in working with them to help make the city a better place to live (and skate!). If you work with kindness and persistence, it’s likely that you’ll find a helpful insider or two in the government who will help the project (and your group) along the way. This often comes in the form of a “skatepark steering committee” that includes helpful city employees and local skatepark project group members.

However, sometimes local skatepark groups try hard to get the attention and support of their government but it seems that no one wants to help.
IT TAKES A VILLAGE
BAD REASONS, GOOD RESPONSES
COMMON “REASONS” WHY A CITY WON’T MAKE A SKATEPARK A PRIORITY:

A: an assumption about a lack of need for a skatepark
B: a lack of understanding of the value of these sports and facilities
C: misconceptions and concerns about (1) skatepark liability, (2) safety, (3) noise or (4) crime
D: an inability to put funds or staff time toward the project

All of these concerns can and should be addressed appropriately. The Skatepark Project has resources and staff available to help you and your team navigate these waters.

GOOD RESPONSES TO THESE QUESTIONS:

Learn these short responses below - it’s likely you’ll be asked these questions MANY times during your advocacy journey. Be sure to familiarize yourself with more detailed information in the Appendix.

A: Need: It’s often illegal to skate anywhere in town. Skaters are good at staying hidden (in schoolyards, parking lots, business parks etc.) so it’s likely most people will not see them and then assume there aren’t many skaters in their town. It’s also worth noting that you usually only cultivate a sport when you have a field or court on which to do it... If you build it, they will come.

B: Value: Use what you’ve learned about the physical, emotional, social and societal benefits of skating and skateparks to help them understand. Explain what skating means to YOU, and what it would mean for you and others to have a safe place to do it.

C: Misconceptions and Concerns:
Liability: In most cases, state recreational statutes shield a city from skatepark and other recreational liability and insurance falls under their general city umbrella policy. Talk to your city and other cities (with free, unsupervised public skateparks) in your state to learn more. Research in skatepark-rich states like California also reveals that the fear of liability lawsuits is ungrounded. Skateparks do not invite liability suits any more than existing public ball fields and courts, playgrounds, and swimming pools.

Safety: According to the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission, skateboarding is statistically safer than basketball and football—activities that most cities already provide facilities for. The vast majority of severe skateboarding accidents involve a motor vehicle. It’s important to skate in a safe place. Basketball has 10x more injuries than skateboarding per 1000 participants. One third of skate injuries happen in the first week - safety gear, skate programming, and/or beginner lessons.

Noise: Skatepark noise, according to every study conducted on the subject, consistently falls well below ordinary recreational standards and is completely appropriate for residential areas. Skateparks average 54-71 decibels, between office noise, conversational speech and normal street noise. (Concrete skateparks are quieter than prefabricated ramps)

Crime: The Skatepark Project interviewed 102 Law Enforcement Officers from 37 states across the USA. Here’s what they said about their skateparks.
• Fewer complaints about skating around town (85% reported significant decrease in skate calls)
• The skatepark is NOT a magnet for crime (91% reported no major issues of behavior or crime)
• Visible location is critical. (15% cited location as a major role in whether or not they experience significant delinquency issues)
• Increased tourism in town (15% of officers reported)

For more information on Liability, Safety, Noise and Crime, see Appendix D. To learn more about possible community questions, see the PSDG’s Community FAQ

D: Funding: This is usually the most common issue. “We love the idea, we just don’t have funds for it.” It’s an easy answer for the city to give. But don’t let this stop you. Think about it - if you were to walk into a council meeting and slap a $500,000 check onto the table and say “let’s build a skatepark!” it’s likely things would move much more quickly.

Council’s and Cities are used to saying “no” to random citizens who want to create big new things - usually because there’s no room in the city budget for a new project. However, if there is enough public support or the value of the project is understood, it’s likely they will get behind the project and work with you to find funding. See the next chapter on funding.

Now that you have the basic answers to the most common questions, what happens if your city still doesn’t seem to want to support a skatepark project or make it a priority?
PULL VS PUSH

COMPLAINING ON SOCIAL MEDIA WILL NOT GET A SKATEPARK BUILT.
BEING ANGRY AND AGGRESSIVE WITH THE CITY WILL NOT GET A SKATEPARK BUILT.

THE CITY WORKS FOR THE PEOPLE - NEVER FORGET THAT, BUT DON’T BE A JERK ABOUT IT.

It’s always best to work together, period. That said, remember your rights as citizens to influence public policy and work toward improving your society. Pull people with the vision of this new space. Inspire folks and work together where you can, but push and protest if you have to. “Pulling” usually looks like asking the city what they need to see to make the skatepark a priority, and then working toward that (hopefully reasonable) goal. But sometimes people can be unreasonable, and when that happens, some choose to make noise as citizens. Throughout your project, you have a duty of care to yourself and to people in your group to make sure everyone stays safe while advocating for change.

If you find people are not being supportive of the skatepark project, keep working to run the project yourself and working to find those in government who will support the vision. Most importantly, if you do end up “pushing”, once the project is a priority for the city, resume kindly working together.

Never lose your cool, never throw people under the bus or blame people/politicians. Successful skatepark advocates are soothers, not agitators. Positivity, kindness and a relentless pursuit of the goal are the tools of a successful skatepark advocate.

Advocacy is an act of democracy. In most cases you have the right to make reasonable requests from your local city council to hear and act on the needs of the community.
CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

At some point in your project you’ll likely find yourself standing in front of your local city council explaining the needs of the local action sports community and advocating for a properly built, free, public skatepark. Hopefully your insider tells you when it’s appropriate to make your first council pitch. Don’t worry about being nervous about public speaking, it’s normal. Focus on explaining 1) why you, as a citizen of your great community, find the activity so valuable, and 2) why you think the space will be valuable for the community. Feel free to use data and information from the beginning of this document or verifiable sources.

It’s not necessary for everyone who supports the skatepark to speak at the meeting, but it’s very helpful if lots of people show up for the meeting in support of the skatepark. You can have a small, diverse group of skatepark users and family members speak, and then ask for all those in the audience who are there supporting the skatepark to stand up or raise their hand. This demonstrates the volume of support for the project and is considerate of council members’ time. Keep it short, explain the value, and demonstrate local support. It’s very likely that your council will be stoked that you’re there to improve the community, especially if you have little kids making adorable and truthful speeches. In the end, use the opportunity to ask the council for meaningful movement on the project.

APPROPRIATE REQUESTS FOR COUNCIL

Your group can make appropriate requests for the council to make real moves supporting the skatepark project.

- ACKNOWLEDGE THE “NEED” FOR A SKATEPARK
- ESTABLISH AN OFFICIAL SKATEPARK STEERING COMMITTEE
- SUPPORT AN OFFICIAL RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE SKATEPARK
- COMMIT FUNDS FOR THE SKATEPARK PROJECT (repeat at appropriate intervals)

Ultimately, you’ll try to get the city to make the project a priority, and if they don’t, you’ll start the project yourself while keeping them informed of your progress. Eventually the city will get on board once it has enough momentum. Why? Because you’re doing their job and are creating something valuable.
DEMONSTRATING SUPPORT AND ONGOING SKATEPARK ADVOCACY

In general, cities respond to public support. Whether you’re getting tons of support from the city or not, there’s still a good chance your skatepark group will need to demonstrate lots of public support for the project. Ask your city insider what they think is the best way to accomplish this. It may mean having a large group of skatepark users and families coming together for short presentations to City Council, Parks Board or a Planning Board to help them understand the value of skateparks.

Even though most municipalities are very supportive of skateparks and many are now fully funding skateparks, skatepark advocacy is always a critical element of a successful skatepark project. Whether it is convincing a local government to start a skatepark project, pushing them to make it a priority, or helping them follow best practices to ensure quality - the local user-base should always be involved.

Your advocacy coalition should be a diverse group of local stakeholders, with a few key representatives engaging with the municipality for the duration of the project. Enlisting support from all types of future skatepark users, parents, teachers, law enforcement and supporters of all kinds will more accurately represent the community’s diverse needs and desires. It will also help the city understand the extent of the need for the space and who will support the space once open.

EXAMPLES OF SKATEPARK ADVOCACY:

- Meeting at the skateshop to discuss a new skatepark project
- Putting up “Help us build a skatepark!” signs at the old park, at school, the shop, or around town
- Calling the Parks Department to discuss a skatepark project
- Holding skatepark project group meetings
- Creating a PowerPoint presentation to demonstrate the value of skateparks to Council or others
- Creating a video focused on locals explaining the value of the space and activity
- Attending city council meetings with lots of skatepark stakeholders
- Creating a steering committee for a skatepark project or system
- Establishing a Fundraising Committee with seasoned fundraisers
- Fundraising and awareness events
- Connecting with local service organizations for support & funding
- Engaging local skaters to inform your city-led skatepark project

START A PETITION?

Petitions may seem like an easy way to get the city’s attention, after all, cities respond to public support. However, it’s best to only spend time on a petition if the city specifically asks for one. Your time as a skatepark advocate is better spent having conversations with people inside the city about what the next steps are to get a park built. Focus on those steps and you’ll truly help move the project forward.

To learn more about how to be a successful skatepark advocate, be sure to read the Public Skatepark Development Guide by Peter Whitley, published by The Skatepark Project. Anyone serious about committing to a skatepark project should read this guide. It is the definitive long-form instruction manual for public skatepark advocacy and civic engagement.
WEBSITE AND SOCIAL

This is a place to tell the story of the vision and the project. You’ll likely want to set up an email address, a simple website and a social media account to help people connect and stay connected with the project.

WEBSITE

A clean and simple website is a key asset to a successful skatepark project. People need a place to go to learn more about your project. They also need a place to donate and to sign up to help. See if you can get website design and hosting fees donated. Nearly anyone can design a simple website using today’s website builders.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BASICS TO INCLUDE ON THE WEBSITE</th>
<th>BONUS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What you’re doing</td>
<td>• Where the skatepark will go, if appropriate to reveal at that time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The name of the town you’re doing it in (you’d be surprised how many people forget this…)</td>
<td>• A place to accept donations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Why skateparks are valuable (benefits to individuals and the community, and who will use them)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Who you are - who’s a part of the team</td>
<td>• Quotes from a few locals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What’s the scope of the project? (Timeline, size, cost - conservative estimates are fine, but mark as such)</td>
<td>• Links to statistics (find some at <a href="http://www.skatepark.org">www.skatepark.org</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The skatepark design rendering once you have it, or an example design</td>
<td>• A visual indicator of funds raised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A thermometer for funds raised</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A video describing the project</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Endorsements from city officials</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is not the place where skatepark advocacy happens. It’s the place where you inform project stakeholders and other locals about the work that’s being done to advance the project. You can keep them informed of what important things are happening, fill them in on what’s already happened, and help educate them about how this whole process works. You can also recruit more support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BASICS TO INCLUDE IN SOCIAL MEDIA</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Put your basic project information (name of city, state, project goal, timeline) in the bio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link to your website for donations and more information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posts about recent project movement, fundraisers, supporters, meetings, design concepts, group members, community skaters and more.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TIPS

Keep it positive - don’t tolerate online abuse
Move forward - don’t use the space to blame the city for what they have or haven’t done in the past.
Get your audience involved by asking questions
SUPPORT FROM THE SKATEPARK PROJECT

Founded by Tony Hawk, The Skatepark Project (TSP) is a nonprofit organization working to increase access to outdoor recreation and free play through the creation of safe and inclusive community skateparks. TSP provides the resources, advocacy skills, grants and fellowship programs that guide skaters in creating their own community skateparks, from conception through construction. This is a collaborative process between skaters and city authorities to invest in capital improvements that will enrich a community for decades. The Skatepark Project’s grant programs have awarded over $10 million to help fund nearly 700 public skateparks in all 50 states, enjoyed by an estimated six million people annually. The organization’s International Program has provided technical and financial support to assist youth through the Skateistan educational programs in Afghanistan, Cambodia, and South Africa. To get involved, visit www.skatepark.org
# Table of Contents

## Introduction
- Dedication ............................................ 4
- Intention of Document ................................. 5
- Commitment to Anti-Racism ......................... 6

## General
- What are Skateparks .................................. 8
- Benefits of Skateparks ................................ 9
- Types of Skateparks ................................... 13

## Prioritizing Efforts .......................... 16

## Public Skatepark Planning
- Need and Cost ....................................... 17
- Responsibility for Support ......................... 22
- Advocacy ............................................... 24
- Building Your Group ................................ 27
- Skatepark Advocacy Terms ......................... 28
- Inserting a Skatepark Project ..................... 31

## Community Relations
- Bad Reasons, Good Responses .................... 33
- Pull vs. Push ........................................... 34
- City Council Meetings ............................... 35
- Demonstrating Support and Ongoing Skatepark Advocacy 36

## Your Digital Presence
- Website and Social ................................ 37

## Funding
- Tasked with Funding ................................ 38
- Community Group Support ....................... 39

## Site Selection ................................ 40

## Skateparks
- The Old Way & Your Old Park .................... 42

## Pre-Fabricated Skateparks .................. 43

## Skatepark Design
- Considerations & Constraints, Sustainable Design & Construction Accessibility, Capacity & Flow Skatepark Obstacles Design for Inclement Weather 44 48 49 51 54

## Skatepark Construction
- Ensuring Quality .................................... 55
- Quality - Specific Language Process & Who Can Help 56 57

## Final Steps & Opening
- Skatepark Operation ................................ 58
- Maintenance & Signage ............................. 60
- How to Use, Events & Dealing with Issues ...... 62

## Accelerated Projects
- Interim/Simple Skateparks ....................... 65
- Legalized Skate Spot ................................ 67
- DIY Skateparks ....................................... 69

## Support From
- The Skatepark Project ................................ 71

## Appendices
- Appendix A - Construction - Material Specifics and Tolerances 72
- Appendix B - Learning Concrete .................. 74
- Appendix C - Stakeholder Involvement Matrix ............ 77
- Appendix D - Common Questions & Misconceptions
  - Safety ................................................. 78
  - Liability & Noise ................................... 79
  - Police Study ........................................ 80
- Appendix E - Measuring Transition ............... 82
- Appendix F - Retail and “Competition Certified” Skateparks 83
- Appendix G - Four Simple Advocacy Rules .......... 84
- Appendix H - How to Start a Social Skate Organization 85
- Appendix I - Bid Specification Suggestions ......... 87
- Acknowledgements .................................. 89
- Photo Credits ......................................... 90