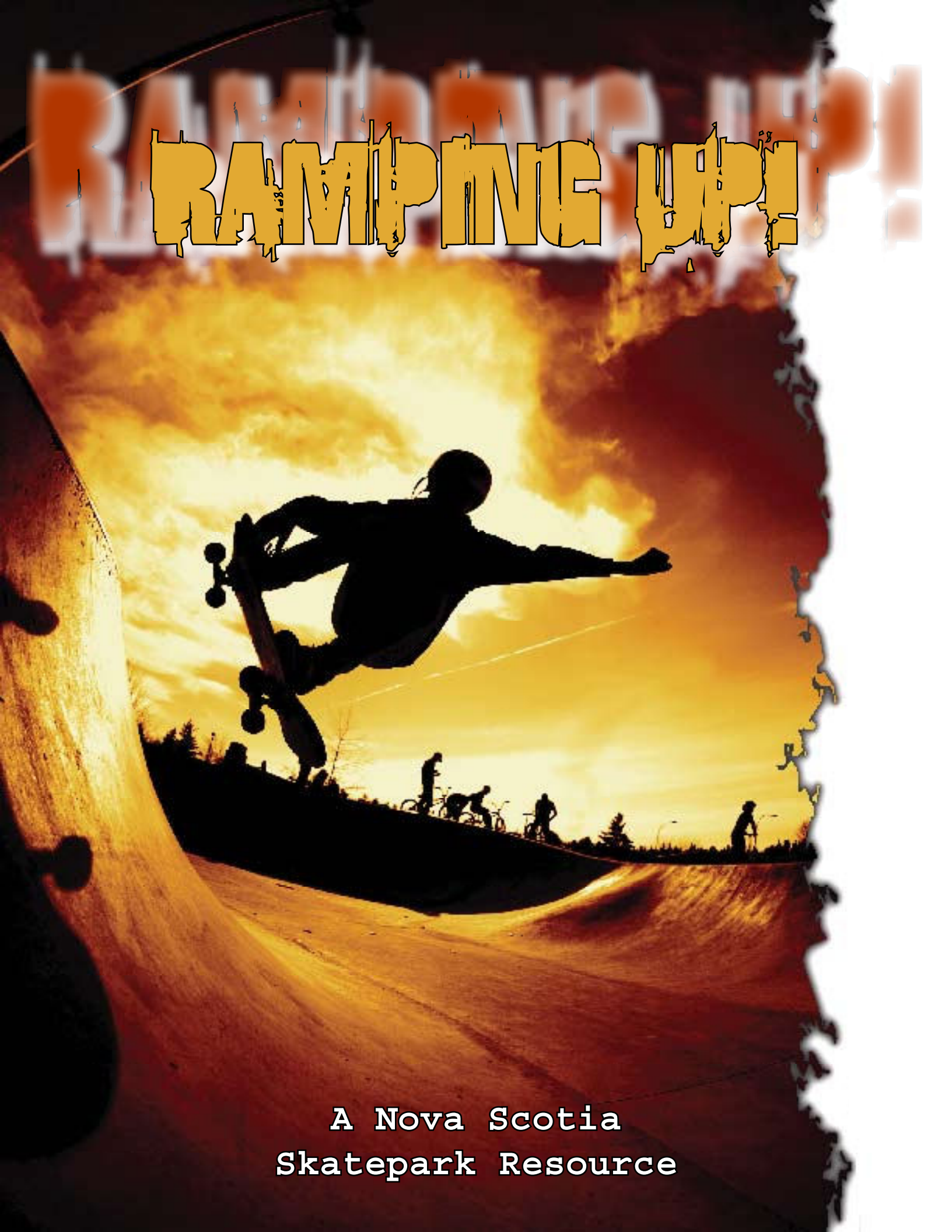# RAMPING UP!

A Nova Scotia
Skatepark Resource

This Handbook is for you if…

… your dream is to build a skatepark in your community,
… you are a skateboarder looking to help educate decision-makers in your community,
… you are a municipal staff member considering action park development,
… you have been approached to help build a park,
… you are interested in the development of skateparks in general!

This manual is a resource to answer frequently asked questions,
and a guide to what lies ahead in skatepark development.

NOVA SCOTIA

Health Promotion and Protection

Table of Contents

Introduction

Welcome to Ramping Up! - a Nova Scotia Skatepark Resource. This handbook is intended to be a guide to help community members in the development of a skatepark facility with a Community Youth Development (CYD) approach. It is intended to be equally useful to adults and municipal staff as it is to skateboarders dreaming of a facility in their community. Though focused on skateboarding, the same information applies to the development of other action sport facilities including BMX bike and in-line skate users. While the information in this guide speaks to all three sports with equal relevance, the largest user group is often skateboarders and therefore 'skateboards' or 'skateboard parks' will be used as generic terms.

The emergence of skateparks in Nova Scotia is part of a growing national trend recognizing the benefit and enjoyment many young people are gaining from the sport. Fred Williams, Recreation Director in Greenwood, Nova Scotia, stated that "…changing with the times, realizing this is what the youth want…" was a key to the successful development of a small skatepark in their community. It is this shift that is allowing young people to become involved in a civic process. It is changing a sport that was once thought to be only for those in a subculture, or counter-culture, to a sport that can benefit communities as much as participants. Through the process of having a park built, young people can gain so-called "soft" skills ranging from teamwork and organization to "hard" skills including fundraising or the carpentry involved in building modular ramps. In turn, the community's capacity to work directly with and integrate young people's voices in decision-making and public space design is strengthened. The development and creation of a skatepark, an inclusive process engaging various community stakeholders, can also act as a model for youth inclusion in a community. Helping to integrate young people into local governance, it results in a more vibrant community that responds to all of its citizens' needs, not simply those of the voting majority.

Skatepark development is an emerging process in many of our small communities. There are many variables that create both unique challenges and positive outcomes with each community's skatepark project. Instead of using the information in this handbook as a rigid guideline for skatepark development, think of it as a collection of accumulated experiences drawn from community members (youth and adults alike), municipal officials, and community organizations from across Nova Scotia's communities. This manual also helps link you to research and results from government and non-governmental agencies working in this field.

It would be a mistake not to include personal experiences, stories and perspective gained from numerous young leaders taking action in their communities. These youth are building skateparks and changing local perceptions of skateboarders from "punks" and "renegades" to active community members. This handbook also draws on a variety of community sources. Though much information is included, there may be some categories or logistics where referencing existing resources would be more useful than attempting to re-create an already valuable resource. In these cases, websites or publications are listed in the resource section.

We anticipate that feedback, personal stories and additional useful resources from users and others with their own experiences will help this document grow and develop further over time, providing an excellent resource based on our collective experience and learnings. With time, this handbook may serve communities outside of the Maritimes.

Finally, it is important to mention that connecting directly with people who have built skateparks in their own communities can provide additional information and insights specific to your concerns that cannot be outlined in a resource handbook. One municipal recreation official said that a road trip to neighbouring communities currently building parks was one of the best things he had done to help him move forward with their goals. So call your neighbouring municipalities and find out who might already have answers to some of the questions you're posing today.

Special thanks to the Nova Scotia Department of Health Promotion and Protection for their continuing work with active transportation and action park development, and promoting healthy lifestyles in our communities, and for the funding to develop such a resource. Thanks also to the skate parks and organizations who have shared great photos for use in this resource. Most importantly, thanks to the youth and supportive adults across Nova Scotia who have shared their ideas, resources and successes, in order that others might also benefit from their learning.

Kirstan Moore
HeartWood Associate

Glossary of Terms

As you read this handbook and work with young skateboarders in your own community, you may begin to hear terms and words that are not familiar to you. Here are some terms often used in the skateboarding world.

Action Sports – including skateboarding, BMX bike riding and in-line skating

Bowl - beginning with drained back yard pools, bowls are a staple of transition skateboarding and are often replicated in concrete skateboard parks

Coping - the piping at the top of a ramp used by skateboarders and BMX riders to grip onto when performing a trick

Deck - the wooden part of the board where riders place their feet. Traditionally made of 7 ply wood veneer laminated together

Full Pipe - often built out of concrete, these full pipes are used for riders to carve high on the walls and practice different manoeuvres

Fun Box - a two way ramp usually with a rail, or hubba down one or both sides

Half Pipe or mini-ramp - traditionally built out of wood and masonite or skatelite, these ramps are half of a full pipe or full circle, allowing a rider to ride back and forth performing tricks on each end

Hubba - a concrete ledge, often found in a skate-park, or in urban architecture built on a slope down a stair set which skateboarders use to ride, slide or grind

Modular - refers to a skateboard park built on asphalt or concrete, consisting of separate individual obstacles such as quarter pipes or fun boxes

Skatelite - a product designed specifically for surfacing skateboard ramps, similar to masonite but longer lasting with a smoother ride

Street Spots – refers to areas outside of skateparks where skateboarders can practice their tricks

Quarter pipe - one half of a half pipe, used on its own for tricks or as a way to maintain, or gain speed for a trick while in skateboard parks

Tranny or Transition - refers to quarter pipes, bowls or any other surface that provides a 'transition' from the ground to more of a vertical surface, or even to perform vertical air manoeuvres

What's Inside?

This handbook is broken into five sections. The first section is Pushing Off, providing you with some background information on the sport and a history of its facilities. Following this is a brief synopsis of the benefits of supporting or leading the development of a skateboard facility in your community. The second section, Good Lines to Follow, will provide you with key principles to keep in mind when supporting or engaging in a Community Youth Development (CYD) project such as this. The third section, Get Rolling, provides a framework for you to build your project on, while understanding that yours will be an emerging process full of planning and re-evaluation. Also included in this section are logistical hints and suggestions on how to continually support the facility and skateboarding in your community.

The final two sections, Resources and Appendices, provide additional information, statistics, websites, and organizations, to help further educate you where this manual leaves off.

Additional information will be found in the sidebars located throughout this handbook. In these sidebars you will find valuable information such as:

- Hints to help in the development of your project.
- Stories from other communities displaying how some of the principles or steps have taken place.
- Statistics and Research relevant to the topic that may help with proposals to cities, towns, funding sources or community partners.

Part 1 . Pushing Off

Why Build Skateparks?

Today, skateboarding has come quite a long way from its beginnings with skateboarders carving streets and pools. It has been increasingly accepted as a legitimate sport and recreational activity, and has worked its way into mainstream culture, media, and even marketing strategies. Research shows that skateboarding has been the fastest-growing "extreme" sport in the U.S. since 1998 (The Sporting Goods Manufacturers' Association, 2003), and skateboarding's consideration as an exhibition sport in the 2008 Summer Olympics is a testament to its development. Benefits of "action sports" (skateboarding, BMX bike riding, and in-line skating) range from improved individual physical and mental health to the potential of increasing the health of the community through youth participation in local governance and decision-making. Young people can also gain teamwork and organizational skills from the process, or carpentry skills involved in building modular ramps. In turn, the community's capacity to engage youth is strengthened through working with and integrating young people's voices in decision-making and public space design.

The Evolution of Skateboarding

Skateboarding began with street skating, hopping off curbs, wall rides, and carving hills. Eventually skateboarders found empty swimming pools, and vert (vertical) skating began. Before the development of professional skateboard facilities, skaters' only option was skating in the streets, resulting in conflict with property owners and police. As boldly stated in the Skaters for Public Skateparks website, "If your city doesn't have a skatepark, your city is a skatepark" (Skaters For Public Skate Parks, No date). It is usually not the preference of a community's non-skateboarding members to have streets filled with skateboarders riding down ledges and performing tricks on the urban landscape. Of course, without the development of a facility, the draw of these public places to young people wishing to skateboard is far too great. They skate not to annoy, nor to aggravate, but simply because it is their form of recreation and play. Without a skatepark, streets became their playground.

The public acceptance of skateboarding began with Canada's first skatepark in 1977 in West Vancouver, BC. Since this date, skateboarding has steadily grown from an outsider sport, to being the focus of advertising campaigns, music videos and Hollywood movies. There is also no doubt that you are picking up this manual resulting from a growing need to serve the local skateboarding community. The sheer number of parks in Canada, now estimated at 450 (Christie, J., 2005), illustrates the sport's growth over the last 30 years.

If a drive through town on a sunny summer day isn't proof enough that skateboarding is one of the most popular sports among youth today, a survey by the Sporting Goods Manufacturing Association found that more Americans rode skateboards last year than played baseball (http://ca-sa.ca/resource.php).

Unfortunately, in communities without skateparks today, young people seeking a place to practice their skateboarding tricks, continue to find themselves stereotyped. Skateboarders are often viewed as loitering or troublesome for the hours they choose to spend at a certain skateboard spot. We try to send the message to our youth that they should be outside and active, but for a teenager, the playground that kept them occupied in younger years is far less than adequate today. If someone were to see a group of kids wandering with a soccer

ball in the streets in the evening, would they be viewed with suspicion? Many communities have soccer fields and opportunities for other forms of recreation. Giving skateboarders the opportunity to use regulated facilities has increased the recognition of skateboarding as a safe sport. Skateboarding has shown that it is more than a fad. It is a growing sport that when supported by the building of a skatepark can become a vital part of your community's local sports scene and provide benefits for all members of your community.

Benefits for Individuals and Communities

As skateboarding becomes increasingly accepted, skateparks are becoming community-driven initiatives with support from parents, teachers, business owners and many other sectors of the community. These community-driven processes achieve numerous benefits, including a sense of pride, accomplishment and ownership over the space created. Municipalities that recognize the need and act with the direct involvement of the community can obtain these same benefits. There are also considerable benefits for youth who participate in these processes.

Shelburne, Nova Scotia

A group of youth aged 14-17 began involvement with a group of friends in an adult-led committee to develop a skatepark in their community. The draw to this group for these youth was the prospect of obtaining an outdoor skateboarding facility. Throughout the process, the group began to identify and change the community's perceptions of skateboarders. They became involved with the municipality and addressed many of the concerns dealt with by other communities. This was a result of direct communication between young citizens and their municipality, fostering an early sense of civic responsibility.

Youth

Research shows that youth who have opportunities for meaningful participation in their communities are less likely to engage in risky behaviour and have a greater chance of continuing community involvement as they grow into adults. They tend to have higher self-esteem, are more physically active, show a greater commitment to friends, families and communities, and are more likely to achieve healthy development (United Nations, 2004; National League of Cities, no date; Public Health Agency of Canada, 2000; International Institute for Child Rights and Development, & Environmental Youth Alliance, 2004; Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement, 2003). Young people, especially those under the voting age of 18, rarely have the opportunity to participate in public space design and local governance. The development of skateparks provides an opportunity for young people to share their views and needs, and participate in the civic process. By taking part in a process like this, young people learn that their community can respond to their needs and cares. As stated in Lessons In Leadership, "Civic activism is a powerful approach for reaching youth who aren't reached by conventional youth development programs" (Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, 2003).

The inclusion of young people, and specifically skateboarders, in civic planning can have a big impact on an individual's future development. One young male's experience in his community in the development of a skateboard park helped him identify that he could create a change in his community. The recognition of this also instilled the understanding and drive to continue his civic engagement through travel and later, university.

Skateboarders

Skateboarding and BMX groups are somewhat of a community in themselves, connecting through good parks or skate spots and local shops, providing a network where beginners can learn from the more experienced how to do new tricks, and improve on the ones they already know. It can also lead to instant comradery amongst peers. "It is really humbling to know that I can go pretty much anywhere in the world and look at a guy's shoes, look at the condition they are in and know that I have a friend right off the bat, from that…" said one 18-year-old male, commenting on the condition of a skateboarder's shoes.

Youth-Adult Partnerships

In addition to the benefits to youth, adults in the community can benefit from the fresh perspective and new energy young people bring to the table. In some cases, the process of including young people to develop a skatepark can open the doors to including youth in decision-making in other aspects of recreation, and perhaps even other municipal departments such as planning and design of our communities. The development of public parks and programs are one way that young people can interface with their community and municipality. Far too often, youth's needs are addressed for them, as opposed to with them. In the creation of a skatepark, an inclusive process of engaging various community stakeholders helps ensure that the needs and concerns of skateboarders, municipality, and community can be addressed in a democratic manner; all contributing to the creation of a skateboard-friendly, and consequently, a youth-friendly community.

Community

Development of these parks has been seen to promote the health of both the individual and the community by bringing diverse groups together to unite for a common cause. With proper planning this process can facilitate greater youth, adult and societal inclusion in our towns, cities and smaller communities.

Additional benefits usually not considered by communities when developing skateboard parks may include tourism and immigration. Communities with skateparks and other facilities are more appealing to families with young children as well as young adults. It is no small surprise that we hear of many of our young accomplished skateboarders moving to the west coast. The lower mainland in BC boasts some 30 concrete skateparks! Equally important to attracting and maintaining a young population in our communities is the relationship formed between community, municipality and youth. In the development of these parks youth are often at the helm, communicating directly with elected officials where they never have before. This can introduce youth inclusion into a municipality, and the recognition that young people can contribute to the decision-making process - not simply on a consultative basis, but by sitting on municipal committees, or even youth councils.

The new Canadian Youth Criminal Justice Act was based on the idea that youth who feel they are important members of their community are less likely to lash out at the community and cause problems. A show of support from the adult population of the town towards a facility directed mainly at youth would help these youth feel like they are a part of their community. Finally, by increasing communication across generations, the anxiety both sides feel towards one another can be overcome. This would not only benefit the current initiative, but also work to foster healthier relationships in the community as a whole.

Supporting Skateboarding as an Alternate Form of Play and Recreation

Skateboarding is an important sport because it continues to engage an ever-expanding audience in regular physical activity. Skateboarding provides a non-traditional method of recreation that appeals to youth who aren't attracted to more structured forms of sport or play. Traditional sports often require regimented practice and inherent competition. Skateboarding is an affordable sport that people can pick up at their own pace. For many, competition isn't even considered, opting instead to skateboard as a casual recreational

endeavour. The rise of an alternative, unstructured sport is a welcome change for those young people not interested in more traditional sports such as baseball, while still helping them maintain regular physical activity.

Over half of Nova Scotians are not active enough to enjoy health benefits. More disturbing is that kids today are less active than ever before, putting them at risk for a host of diseases now and in the future. Unfortunately, inactivity is a way of life. We spend more time at desk jobs and in cars, our activity limited by labour-saving devices like lawnmowers and snow blowers, while our kids play video games and watch TV. People also face barriers to being active – lack of time, poor access to places and facilities to be active, and costs associated with gym memberships or registration for sport or recreational activities. (Nova Scotia Department of Health Promotion and Protection. No date.)

Skateboarding is Physical Activity!

Providing facilities to support new methods of physical activity can contribute to the improvement of one's quality of life. As stated by the Government of Canada's Physical Activity Unit, 'There are 3 types of activities you need to do to keep your body healthy: endurance activities, flexibility activities, and strength activities' (2006). Skateboarding covers all the bases, strengthening legs and core muscles, increasing flexibility and dexterity to perform intricate and precise manoeuvres, and spending long evening sessions at a favourite street spot or park. Along with the physical activity benefits, there are also added mental and social benefits of those seemingly endless sessions skateboarders often indulge in, perhaps alone, but most often with a few friends.

Promoting Active Transportation

The support of skateboarding in our communities shouldn't stop with building skateparks. Many users are too young to drive and the majority of those who do drive don't have their own cars or any transportation other than a bicycle or a skateboard. If we expect these facilities to be well utilized by skateboarders, the skatepark must be accessible without relying on parents driving to the park. The development of safe bicycle corridors and other infrastructure, policies and legislation suitable for skateboards, would support Active Transportation. Before young people are permitted to skateboard to the skatepark (Should we really expect skateboarders to walk the 6 or more blocks with a skateboard in hand?), safe pathways or transportation routes must be created and transportation by-laws revised to integrate skateboarding and accept it as a part of many lives, both young and old. Vancouver city planner Michael Gordon began to skateboard at age 50, and every morning with suitable weather, he opts to skateboard to work, as opposed to driving or the bus, integrating physical activity into his day.

Longer, more stable skateboards with a wider wheel base, known as longboards, are appealing to a new group of users who aren't trick-oriented skateboarders and simply want a new and fun way of getting around. This too is a method of providing new physical activity opportunities to another user group. Through supporting Active Transportation as a daily lifestyle choice, longboarding can provide an individual with a time-saving travel method that allows them to get their recommended daily physical activity.

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Canada's Physical Activity guide recommends that inactive children
 and youth increase the amount of time they currently spend being
physically active by at least 30 minutes more per day and decrease
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the time they spend on TV, playing computer games and surfing the
Internet -- by at least 30 minutes less per day.
The increase in physical activity should include a combination of
moderate activity (such as brisk walking, skating and bike riding)
with vigorous activity (such as running and playing soccer).
(Public Health Agency of Canada)

Supporting Street Skating and Street Spots

Skateboarding was developed in the streets, and where facilities are not present, skateboarders will continue to skate in the streets. It is often the approach that a park is developed to eliminate skateboarders, BMX or in-line skaters from using private property to perform their tricks. Facility development can reduce some amount of street skating, but it cannot be expected to eliminate this completely. Some cities have dealt with this by creating skateboard-friendly places on civic property, providing mixed land use spaces where skateboarders and pedestrians can co-exist. At some of these sites, cities, such as Vancouver, have even installed skateboard-friendly benches, designed to withstand the impact of skateboarding. Including skateboard-friendly places in your group's goals presents a more comprehensive response to the needs of skateboarders.

Sport Development Through Competitions

Development of a facility will most likely increase the skills of your local users, and also result in better athletes, paving the way for professional competitions and demonstrations in your community. Facilities are also known to increase a skateboard population either through attracting a new crowd to the sport, or by getting older skateboarders back on their boards. These additional users can come from within the community, but can also travel from neighbouring towns to skate at a new location. Keeping in mind a unique design when developing your park can help promote such skateboard-tourism, bringing folks from neighbouring communities, families on vacation, or skateboarders simply traveling to visit your community's unique skatepark.

Safe Environment

Skateboarding has often - mistakenly - been perceived as a dangerous sport, and this may inhibit support for the development of a facility, or for skateboarding as a sport.

A U.S. based report from the National Consumer Product Safety Commission stated that skateboarders are less likely to require emergency medical care than participants of more traditional sports like baseball, basketball, football, soccer and volleyball. In 1990, there were 62,428 skateboard related injuries, compared to 432, 799 baseball related injuries indicating that skateboarding is not necessarily riskier then any other traditional sports offered in our schools, or in our local parks. (National Electronic Injury Surveillance System)

Skateboard parks help provide a consistent, and well-maintained skateboarding atmosphere, one that helps in reducing the amount of injuries to skateboarders such as uneven conditions.

"[We have] seen a large number of youth attending and using the park on a daily basis, and the number of youth skateboarding on the downtown sidewalk has dropped to almost nobody".
Craig Burgess,
Recreation
Director,
Berwick, N.S.

Ramping Up! A Nova Scotia Skatepark Resource

Part 2 . Good Lines to Follow

Every community's experience in building a skatepark will be different because the process is affected by so many factors specific to each community. At the same time, there are some key approaches and principles that can and should be applied in all communities. While an adequate skatepark could be built with different priorities, the benefits of adhering to these principles are substantial, for both community and youth. These principles and approaches have been compiled through an examination of Nova Scotia community action projects, including skateboard projects, as well as previous work by HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development.

Youth/Adult Partnerships

The success of youth-based community development initiatives is enhanced when adults and youth are involved in all phases of the project. The presence of adult volunteers sends a message to youth that there are adults in the community who care about the issues that are important to them. Having adults involved in all the steps along the way provides a constant source of guidance and support.

It is vital that youth are able to play a major role in achieving their goal of constructing a skateboard park in the community. This responsibility will create an opportunity to empower them with a sense of achievement. Not only will youth be able to provide valuable input on an issue that is of the utmost importance to them, but also they will develop important organizational skills, learn to set feasible goals, and learn how to work as a team in order to accomplish these goals. Having youth and the community work in conjunction in the planning, funding, construction, and management of a skateboard park will also enable the youth to voice their needs and ideas to the community.
(Dumond, C. & Warner, A., 2003)

Testimonial
"[The] project was youth driven, and youth were involved in construction, fundraising and painting.
They made it their skatepark and I took a lot of direction from the skateboarders.
I listened to what the skateboarders wanted."
Recreation Director, Berwick,N.S.

Action

Action is needed to keep your group's energy soaring. Some groups have lost membership because too much time was spent sitting at tables, talking. Though this can be valuable time, taking action and having results helps maintain and build that energy in your group. Starting with something like a service project helps show your group cares for more than just a skatepark, and also gets your group off and running. (See ideas in Fundraising, Public Awareness and Community Engagement - pages 30-31.)

Fun

Your group may get tied up in logistics, or timelines, but it is always important for the process to be fun! You can integrate fun at every stage and in every aspect of your project by using warm-up activities to increase comfort levels and changing different things about your meetings, from where you meet to how they are run. Hosting public events, such as a concert, or a Skate-A-Thon can be fun for your group and the community. Remember, keeping energy high is key, and what better way than to have fun?

Youth Engagement

In the development of this manual, several communities were consulted and asked, "What were some key lessons you have learned along the way, and what would you like to share with other communities?" Fred Williams, Recreation Director in Greenwood, Nova Scotia, responded that "…changing with the times, realizing this is what the youth want…" was a key to success. Unfortunately there are not many mechanisms in our governance structures that get regular input and involvement from young people. In recent years, many municipalities in Nova Scotia have been re-evaluating their governance structures to better include youth. The Halifax Regional Municipality is currently developing its Youth Engagement Strategy, and will be sharing its approach at www.halifax.ca/recreation/youth. html. Another valuable resource is the Growing Up In Canadian Cities: Creative Tools: Civic Engagement of Young People handbook. This book provides methods of uncovering young peoples' perceptions, needs and ambitions in our communities, and explores methods of engaging young people in the governance of our communities. For more information go to www.growingupincities.ca

Appreciative Approach

An appreciative approach is based on developmental processes that are positive in nature; that is, it focuses your group's attention on the community's strengths, potential and possibilities. It increases capacity in individuals, organizations and communities by identifying and tapping into resources/gifts they already have - including their own knowledge and life experience - and building on that. In a community development context, it means using local skills and existing resources to find/create solutions, rather than relying on outside "expertise" to fix problems. This approach is based on work by John McKnight and John Kretzmann, both of Northwestern University. (see Appreciative Concepts, Principles and Tools by John Ure at www.heartwood.ns.ca/resources.shtml)

Public Awareness and Media Attention

If you want your community to be informed and involved then you have to make sure they know what you are up to! Contact the media as soon as your group is organized and informed, and also share your new knowledge by creating something like a pamphlet to hand out to individuals, or by hosting a public question and answer period. By creating a good relationship with the media early, your group can benefit from the publicity by gaining more public support.

Other common successful ingredients in each community were similar to those found in HeartWood's Community Youth Development Framework. Its basic principles are that engaging youth energy through their passions (in this case skateboarding) and being supported by peers, adults, and community organizations can create a passionate and dynamic community group supporting young people and engaging adults in community building. Additional research on Youth Gathering Places resulted in a report also available on the HeartWood website (www.heartwood.ns.ca). This study shares the key ingredients for creating a successful, sustainable youth gathering place, such as a skatepark, including aspects of creating a healthy and safe space, supporting continued community and youth involvement and a sustainable energy source. For more information on HeartWood and available resources including the CYD Framework, Youth Action Team Tips, Youth Gathering Places Research and more, go to www.heartwood.ns.ca

HeartWood's mission is to work with youth to develop their skills and confidence as community builders. We train and support adults, young adults, and agencies in the skills and tools they require to support meaningful youth participation in building healthy communities.

Ramping Up! A Nova Scotia Skatepark Resource

Part 3 . Get Rolling

Guidelines and Resources to Help You Build and Plan Your Project

There is no one approach to be replicated in each community working to develop a skatepark, though there are common steps that have proven successful in various communities. Included in this section are helpful hints and information you can use for your project. Using this and following the guiding principles in the previous section may help you be better prepared, with a plan in hand, when you are ready to get rolling.

Community Assessment

- Who are the users, and how many are there?
- Who in the community supports the development of a skateboard park?
- What are resources and assets in your community, and in your group?

"We conducted a recreation needs assessment in the fall of 2003 and a need for a skatepark was identified. From the needs assessment the Recreation Committee developed a results-based strategic plan, which was approved and adopted by Council in May 2004. One of the strategies was to partner with someone in the Municipality of Chester to develop a skatepark. In the fall of 2004 I received a phone call from the Chester Area Middle School to talk about the possibility of building a skatepark on school property. We have been working together ever since. The land will be given to the Municipality for the purpose of building a skate park and it will be owned and operated by the Municipality.
- reported by Trudy Payne, Chester Recreation Director

There are different methods to beginning a project such as this, below are two examples of how projects have been started in other communities.

Municipal/Community Assessment

Skatepark projects begin with the identification of a need, often it is the case that a municipality has done a community assessment and a skatepark facility has been identified. If this is the case, revisiting this report and gathering any information specific to skatepark facilities, user groups or location considerations, may eliminate the need to conduct a second assessment.

Community-Led

Community members have raised awareness for a facility when skateboarders, or BMX riders or parents have written letters, or made requests on an individual basis to municipalities asking for a skatepark to be built. Often individual requests do not carry enough weight on their own. Involvement and support from the larger community is needed, and the creation of a citizens' group may help show the numbers in support of the facility.

"Involving youth from the community and experienced designers is the key to a good skatepark. Skateparks are specialized recreation equipment (like a pool, tennis court or playground) and require an experienced designer to build correctly."
Wolfville Recreation Director

Be it municipal or community-initiated, conducting your own research in your community can help identify the number of users, potential community volunteers and potential supporters.

There have been a lot of successful community-led projects that began by conducting their own research.   Often in the form of a survey, this not only shows a desire for a facility, but also identifies community support that could contribute to the development of a skateboard facility through funds or volunteer assistance (**see the Appendix for a sample survey). Another approach would be to have your group identify your community's strengths and resources, taking an appreciative approach to problem solving. Community asset mapping generates interest, involves those who are likely to be impacted by the study and identifies strengths and resources that can be tapped in the process. Most importantly, it doesn't simply focus on the needs of a community, but recognizes the strengths and resources that may be useful in the process.

Asset Mapping does not just refer to a geographical map, like a map of Halifax, or of natural landscapes. Maps can represent processes, concepts, power and decision-making structures, a train of thought, and many other things. In short, it creates a "map" of what items or components are contained in the area of inquiry (community, process, etc.), the relationship(s) that exists between these items, and what's going on as they all interact.

Community Asset Mapping, for example, is a process of identifying existing community assets (people and material resources, networks of relationships) for the purpose of:
- Leveraging existing resources around a common purpose or task.
- Creating connections between different segments of the community so that they may take joint action on a common purpose.
- Mobilizing the community's network(s) of relationships so that they may focus their collective resources and energies on the task.
- Discovering what needs to be – what can be – done to serve the community!

In Canada, the Environmental Youth Alliance in Vancouver, BC, has worked extensively with community asset mapping processes. For more information check out the EYA website at www.eya.ca

Involving the Right Folks
Once it has been identified that there is a need for a skatepark, your group must ensure that you have the support and involvement from stakeholder groups, municipality, youth and supportive adult community members. Now is also a good time to take a moment and brainstorm who isn't at your table, and who might be of assistance.

Who should be included in a Skatepark project? Well... everyone should be extended an invitation! Then those who want to help will, and others are invited to share opinions. Essentially, all members of the community should be involved in this project as a simple invitation given to a friendly and supportive neighbour. You never know who will be a huge supporter!

Lunenburg, N.S.
    When the youth organizers of the summer skateboard competition
     were considering who to invite as judges, someone suggested
   senior citizens. A radical thought, perhaps, given some recent
  public concerns for seniors' safety in the streets. The skaters
    approached the director of the local seniors' home, and three
residents volunteered. They had a tutorial to learn what moves and
   tricks to watch for, and proudly judged the weekend skate comp!

Shelburne, N.S.

A group of youth in Shelburne, N.S. working with HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development and Growing Up In Canadian Cities, decided to invite a few community members to discuss the negative stereotypes put on skateboarders in the community, which they saw as impacting their progress. Several youth hosted this discussion with a facilitator, with four community members to discuss this situation. A neighbour of one of the youth attended, and offered plenty of suggestions and his own time to the project. Over several months the neighbour became more involved with the local Youth Centre who were providing guidance and a meeting location, and when the position of Executive Director of the youth centre came open, neighbour turned volunteer, turned Executive Director of the local Youth Centre! This shows how many people in our community are waiting to help, but simply need an invitation. Involving community from the start can help create a shared communal ownership over the space.

Youth involved are often cited by communities as their biggest key to success! Involving young people at an early age not only includes their energy and enthusiasm, it helps to instill a sense of ownership in those who participate in the park's development. As one parent said, "…youth bring the energy and enthusiasm to the table, which helps keep the group going…" Involving the younger skateboarders will ensure that there is a user group who maintains ownership over the park for years to come.

Older, more experienced skateboarders ranging from mid 20's and on have often visited many different skateparks and can share knowledge in design and flow. One of their most important roles can be in helping to bridge the gap between younger skateboarders and the adult community, and clearly articulating your group's goals and vision.

Parents usually begin as key supports just to assist their kids, but they soon find themselves working directly with the group (in some cases in a leadership capacity), helping with logistics and some of the more technical side of the project.

Neighbours of the future park location are important people to engage early in the process. Members of the Skate Park Action Team (SPAT) in Truro personally conducted a survey of neighbours near a potential skatepark location. This can help introduce the community to the Skate-park team members, and also allow citizens to voice their concerns.

Skatepark Designers

It's important to work with experienced skaters and professional skatepark designers, who can help ensure that your plans serve a diverse group of local needs and abilities.

Law Enforcement

Open lines of communication between the skateboarders and police (Municipal Police, RCMP, etc.), early in the process, will allow them to assist or contribute to the project. Building a positive relationship between youth, community and law enforcement can be a great outcome.

Emergency Services

Staff at emergency and medical services are also great to include. They can play a key role down the road when hosting public events, skateboarding demonstrations or competitions.
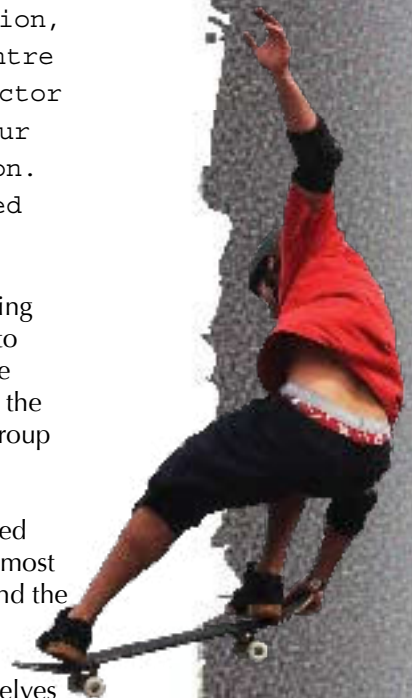
Other Departments

Many successful communities have a member of the Recreation Department, Town Council, and youth advocate sitting on the Skatepark Team. These individuals can help keep the local government updated on progress. In past projects, municipal staff have played big roles in assisting with some of the logistics, such as insurance and park location, which needed to be decided in partnership with the town. Connecting with these individuals can be done through individual phone calls, requests for meetings, or presentations to town council.

Schools can be another valuable community partner. There are many successful examples of skateparks being built on school property. School staff (School Boards, Guidance Counsellors, Phys Ed Coordinators) have played lead roles in these projects in both Shelburne and Chester. Locating a skatepark near a school may encourage schools to integrate skateboarding as a recognized recreational activity, while providing opportunities for physical activity during the breaks throughout the school day.

Community Libraries are often community hubs, and often have a youth representative, or youth coordinator. Libraries can provide neutral community space for meetings, organizational skills and access to resources your group may need such as photocopies or advertisements in bulletins. HeartWood has also been working with Halifax Public Libraries in recent years in supporting more youth inclusion and involvement in library services. For more information on this work, check out the website at www.heartwood.ns.ca/resources. shtml .

Youth centres or youth-serving organizations

These groups can help support youth in developing their project, and maintain support once the park is built.

In Shelburne, the Our House Youth Wellness Centre dedicated youth summer staff interns to the project. They helped develop a well-researched proposal with a lead youth in the project. That youth then became a summer intern with the centre the following year and was tasked to continue the skateboard project and have a park built by the end of that summer.

Youth gathering places can mean more than indoor centres. They can also be public spaces designed with the youth and community working together. Check out What Makes a Successful Youth Centre (http://www.heartwood.ns.ca/resources_publications.shtml) to see how these spaces are sustained.

Not-for-profit agencies

Similar to youth centres, these agencies can provide support for youth, and help train adults in how to best support these young people.

The Antigonish Highland Skateboard Association worked with HeartWood and some municipal staff to help facilitate a shift towards greater youth leadership in the association. The result was a group that was more youth-driven, and most importantly, fun for all participants.

Community developers

Regional Development Agencies can help provide valuable information for proposals and grants, and in the case of Truro, help facilitate the organization of a group until it is self-sustaining. Though youth may not traditionally be viewed as clients of these agencies, RDAs may recognize youth as a vital resource in healthy community building and an invitation to participate may often be enough. This provides new opportunities for RDAs to connect to their community while building their capacity to work with young people in the future.

Service Clubs

These groups are often looking for new projects to take part in, are a great partner for fundraising, and in some cases can provide funding. Take a look in your community and it won't be hard to find a Rotary or Kiwanis-supported public park. Some of these groups have already played key roles in developing skateparks on the West Coast. One example is the Rotary Skatepark at Castlegar, BC. (www.spectrum-sk8.com/parks/bc/interior/castlegar.html) A local example is the New Minas Sunrise Rotary Centennial Skate Park. (www.newminas. com/web/skate_park.htm)

Local businesses

Local businesses are great to include as some may have a youth or community-serving mandate, while others may have an interest in contributing to the development of a park (especially those who have great skate spots on their property!). It's sometimes possible to achieve an agreement for long-term support through a corporate sponsor who will assist with park maintenance costs or annual park events.

Media

Media can help increase public awareness of your project, advertise for meetings, and keep the public up to date on your progress.

Get Organized

Getting organized is a necessary step to completing your project. Action parks are best built with a dedicated team who can delegate and work well together. Registering your organization is a necessary step to receiving future donations. Officially organizing a group can help prove that your group is professional and dedicated to the development of a skateboard park. Your group can form an independent coalition as in the case of the Halifax Skatepark Coalition, or as some communities have done in the past, organize yourself with the municipality and become an official recreation committee. This will assist with ease of communication with the municipality and is often faster then registering your own organization.

Halifax Skatepark Coalition – a case study

In fall of 2003, skater-mom Jacquie Thillaye spoke with local skateboarders regarding the recent closing of Halifax's only indoor skatepark. Out of her own pocket she booked a meeting room at the local library and advertised a forum for the public to meet and voice their ideas about the future direction of skateboarding in Halifax. From these discussions it was determined that the initial goal would be the development of an outdoor concrete park.

The skateboarders set the initial goal of raising $150,000. In conversations with the city and industry professionals in the fall of 2003, the group was advised to increase their goal to $350,000. Once the group met to discuss the design it was decided that they were up to the challenge and the goal was increased again, this time to $500,000. This would develop approximately 14,000 square feet of new, professionally designed, skateable terrain to attach to the existing skatepark – a suitable park area for a city the size of Halifax.

The group then began meeting regularly at a member's house. They decided to name themselves the Halifax Skatepark Coalition (HSC). They nominated a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and directors. They then registered with Nova Scotia's Joint Stocks to obtain non-profit status.

The HSC then began meeting with various municipal departments throughout 2004, including Recreation, Tourism and Culture, who connected them with a Community

Developer to help them learn about board development and affairs. The group also partnered with Real Property and Asset Management, another municipal department, for the development of the skatepark location. President Jacquie Thillaye began to seek as much support from various organizations as possible, including official support from the Tourism Industry Association of N.S., the Downtown Business Commission and several letters from other communities who already had parks, including the Mayor of Victoria, B.C. These all helped to support the HSC's claims of positive outcomes and to lend credence to the project. At this point the president shifted to a Public Relations and publicity focus.

To secure some of the funds necessary to construct the park, members developed a sponsorship proposal package. They submitted a proposal to the province that received the full proposal amount of $164,500. Municipal council was also formally approached at this time. The HSC's president and a local skateboarder presented to council. Council members were impressed by the confidence and determination of the young skateboarders and parents who got up to speak. Members also maintained momentum in the project by hosting community-based fundraisers. These included a Skate-A-Thon and an annual Shin-Dig, an event where skateboarders gathered to shovel snow out of the existing skatepark to gain earlier access to a skateboarding spot. Events like these helped build a community within the coalition, keeping the group active, and giving everyone the energy needed to stay involved in the project.

From this point on, the HSC made some changes to achieve a more community inclusive process. They hosted their meetings in a public recreation centre, as opposed to members' homes, they amended their by-laws to include those under 18 and define voting membership as anyone who had attended or helped at an event.

The rest is history. In three years the group successfully gathered funds totaling $563,049. A knowledgeable park designer consulted with the group members to create a park with mixed-level users and progression in mind. Spectrum SK8Park Creations Ltd, of Vancouver, is a skilled group of skaters and professional designers. They have working with several community groups in Nova Scotia. For lots of inspiration, check out their site at www. spectrum-sk8.com. The skatepark opened on October 28th 2006, and will have its Grand Opening in Spring 2007.

The city is currently in discussion with several other communities to explore the development of additional facilities to serve some of Halifax's more rural communities.

Also, two Halifax skateboarders/BMX riders are currently involved with skatepark design companies, bringing their experience to other Nova Scotian communities to assist them in their projects.

When organizing your group, it might help to delegate roles, based upon the strengths of the individuals in your group. Keep in mind that young people are not always keen about formal roles, and as their skills and knowledge grow, the opportunity exists for them to try on new roles within the group. Possible roles include…
- President and Vice President
- Secretary
- Media and Public Relations
- Fundraising Committee
- Design Committee
- Site Selection Committee

When creating your design or site selection committee, it is especially important that all of the key players are involved, i.e. site selection should involve community members, municipality and skateboarders. Something like a design committee could organize a design workshop where all users collectively contribute to the design of the park.

Some logistical information you might want to address at this point may include
- Registering for Joint Stocks - this will allow you to become a charitable organization and receive donations. See their webpage to get started at http://www.gov.ns.ca/snsmr/rjsc/
- Get a bank account
- If planning to host lotteries for fundraisers, get a provincial lotto license number
- If planning to employ summer students get a payroll number from Revenue Canada

Get Informed

Which type of park is right for you?
Before you make any final decisions about the makeup of your park, your group must ensure that they have enough information to make the right decisions. This section, in addition to the resources in the appendix, provides you with much of this information. Of course, this information should always be used in tandem with advice and consultation from expert designers and experienced skateboarders, who will give you feedback specific to your project. When well planned, a skatepark can remain a staple of recreation and leisure in your community for years to come.

Some things that may help you identify the right park for your community and its user group:

Size of Parks and Estimated Costs
- As recommended by Spectrum Skatepark Creations, a leading Canadian Skatepark Designer specializing in concrete skatepark designs, based on current construction costs in the spring of 2006 (www.spectrum-sk8.com)
- Villages (less than 2500 population) - 930 square metre skatepark minimum.
- Towns (2500 to 5000 population) - 1350 square metre (roughly the size of two tennis courts) skatepark minimum.
- Cities (population 5000+) - 2800 square metre "hub" skatepark minimum, supplementing with smaller satellite 'neighbourhood' (1350-1850 sq.m.) & 'community' (600-930 sq.m.) skateparks.
- Large Cities should have a minimum 5500 sq.m. skateparks, supplementing with smaller satellite 'neighbourhood' (1350-1850 sq.m.) & 'community' (600-930 sq.m.) skateparks.

What is your budget? The cost of skateboard parks depends on your type of park, and the cost of the materials and labour. Concrete parks average $323 per square metre, while modular parks are dependent on the quality of the product and the manufacturer. Contact ramp providers, or skatepark designers in the resources section to get a quote on your project scope.

Who are your primary users? There are two specific types of skateboarding, street and transition skateboarding, which require as different a design as BMX bikers and skateboarders do. Consulting your users and identifying what their needs are will help you identify what aspects your park should include. Many BMX bike riders may prefer something with deep bowls that only a concrete park can provide. Your user group may not only influence the design and type of park, but also potential locations which may have landscape requirements that need to be met such as drainage or elevation. (Personal correspondence, Jim Barnum, president of Spectrum Skatepark Creations.)

Outdoor Modular Park Designs

Modular parks are often chosen as a cheaper alternative to meet the needs of a smaller community, or as a temporary park until a permanent facility can be constructed. They are usually facilities consisting of skatepark elements constructed out of one or a combination of any of the following materials: wood, masonite/skatelite (skate-lite/masonite does not usually last more than two years in our Canadian climate), steel, pre-cast concrete or asphalt. When identifying potential locations for a modular park, often a smooth paved, existing concrete surface can be utilized, decreasing initial costs. Many communities have used places that are already surfaced and fenced in, like basketball or tennis courts. An additional benefit to modular parks is that in certain cases, with solid construction ramps, they can be moved and stored indoors during the winter months, or re-arranged to change up the flow of a park.

Some restriction on hours of use usually occurs with modular parks, perhaps due to the high potential of damage or vandalism by non-park users after hours. Concrete skateparks rarely experience the same problem, as the materials are denser and more durable. Modular skateparks may be noisy as the majority of ramp designs have a hollow underside, producing an echo when a person lands a trick. Therefore, your modular skatepark may have to be located further from residential areas.

If your choice is for a modular skatepark then your design is limited to the apparatus you can purchase or have built for you by a professional. People often assume modular parks are cheaper per square foot, but this is often not the case in the long run. The life-span of a modular park is considerably shorter than that of concrete. Potential benefits include a layout that is often interchangeable, your design won't be as set in stone as concrete and has room to change, expand and develop. It should be noted that a number of communities are having to scrap their modular ramps, purchased from the highest quality US ramp manufacturers as little as three years ago, due to severe damage from regular use. These communities are now installing permanent concrete parks.

Concrete Designed Skateparks

Concrete parks appeal to communities looking to construct a permanent and durable facility. Concrete parks built in Canada nearly 30 years ago are still skated today with minimal surface cracks that can be repaired and rarely expand beyond a surface blemish. As these parks withstand the test of time, they also withstand the abuse from higher impact sports such as

BMX. Proper time and care should be put into the design of these permanent facilities. Caution should be taken to ensure that the park's design meets the needs of all levels of skateboarders, leaving room for skill progression and style preferences. Working with a professional designer can ensure your park design is both unique and challenging for all levels of users.

An advantage is the ability to pour or mould concrete into virtually any obstacle your users desire. These in-ground or above-ground facilities can include any aspect of skateboarding, street, half-pipes, full-pipes, bowls and any combination of the above. New Minas, a community with a population of roughly 4,700, recently built a 'kidney bean' shaped bowl with help from a professional skatepark designer, showing that the size of a community shouldn't limit the creativity of its park design and composition.

As of 2006 in Nova Scotia, there are five concrete parks slated for construction and more communities becoming interested in concrete skateboard parks for their long life span, and low maintenance requirements. Factoring in the 30+ years concrete skateparks have been in the ground in Canada, concrete skateparks are a more cost-effective route in the long run.

Indoor Parks

Indoor parks are seldom viewed as an option for a community or municipally run facility. This is primarily due to the high cost of operation, including insurance, heating, electric, construction and maintenance costs associated with the warehouse-like buildings often used to house skateparks. These are most often private, for-profit ventures. Though there are many examples of successful indoor skateparks, the three indoor skateparks in the last ten years in Nova Scotia lasted a maximum of four years. One of these parks was a youth drop-in centre in Truro. The reasons it succeeded as long as it did included donated ramps (from a former private skatepark which closed its doors after a few years), donated warehouse space, volunteer operation and minimal insurance costs. Though there were four successful years, this model was not sustainable and was forced to close its doors. If you are interested in this kind of venue, try contacting current indoor operations and discussing with them their successes, failures and obstacles, to give you a better idea of the reality.

Insurance

In choosing a location it is important to first identify who will hold the insurance for the facility. This is an ideal opportunity for partnership with the municipality and many communities have worked it this way. It is difficult for a body that is outside of the municipality to insure the park. The costs for a small skateboarding association to get insurance would be prohibitive. Municipal recreation departments hold the insurance on other recreation facilities such as baseball parks in this same manner. Cowan Insurance, a broker for N.S., states that it is no more expensive to insure a skatepark then it is to insure a baseball diamond.

The Frank Cowan Company (www.frankcowan.com), who manages all of Nova Scotia's Municipalities insurance programs, shared the questions that their underwriting staff would normally ask, when determining the premium associated with a skatepark:
- Is it on municipal property?
- Who designed it?
- Who built it?
- Is it fenced?

- Is it lit?
- What are the hours of operation?
- Is there an age requirement?
- Are their safety equipment requirements?
- Is it supervised?
- Any operations surrounding it that could be of concern (i.e. if Skateboarders go outside the boundaries or if small children can wander inside?
- Is it close to a payphone, police station or other means to obtain emergency assistance?
- What signage is posted (what do the signs say)?
- What are the park's rules, how will they be enforced and by whom?
- Who is responsible for inspections?
- How often will inspections be performed?
- Who is responsible for maintenance?
- Any volunteer/parent groups involved? What is their role?

The more tightly controlled the park (supervised, safety equipment required, lighting, etc.), the lower the premium. Conversely, the less tightly controlled, the higher the premium. Annual Liability premiums might be in the range of one thousand to three thousand dollars, depending on the situation, controls and the account. Property insurance coverage for any equipment would be based on the value of the equipment.

Design

If you are designing a concrete skateboard park it is best to consider not only the needs of current skateboarders, but also the future users of the park. What skateboarders want to skate when they are 15 years old, will be vastly different than what they want to skate at 25. If the park is designed to accommodate different styles, users will ride much longer.

There are different styles of parks: street parks with ledges, rails, and stairs that are high level impact, bowls and transition designs that are lower level impact. Accessibility to a professionally designed park provides younger skateboarders an opportunity to become more skilled at safe transitions from a younger age. Proper design can also bring a real diversity of ages to the park, educating younger skateboarders on park etiquette and providing a space for mentoring to naturally occur. Diverse park designs will also draw tourism from skateboard road trips and families on vacation.

Something to consider is fencing. By providing a barrier between spectators and skateboarders, it can help prevent spectators from getting in the way of skateboarders during tricks. Fences can also be beneficial to prevent spectators from tripping over an edge or falling into a bowl. Also by limiting your entrances, posting a sign at each entrance will ensure that all users of the park have read the signage.

Signage

Development of signage is often done in accordance with your local municipal by-law, and with your insurance broker. Communication between the park users and the municipality can often create rules that both partners can be satisfied with. When building the skatepark, getting signage up immediately eliminates someone skating the park before the rules are posted and claiming ignorance. See below for recommendations from Doug Wyseman, a

risk management specialist in Canada (http://ca-sa.ca/resource.php?topic=12).

If you feel that rules detract from the purpose of your facility (or you simply can't enforce them), we would suggest that a short list of recommendations be posted in your park. A sample skateboard sign is as follows:
> RISKY RUN SKATEBOARD PARK
> THIS PARK IS NOT SUPERVISED
> USE OF PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT IS STRONGLY RECOMMENDED
> IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS OR SEE A PROBLEM PLEASE CALL 555-SK8R
> PHONE IS LOCATED NEXT TO THE WASHROOM

Keep your sign short and sweet. You have the attention of skateboarders for a fraction of a second on their way to use your facility. Use the time well. If you feel that your signs are tremendously useful, we suggest you look on the surface below the sign for skid marks…a clear indication of kids slamming on the brakes as soon as they realize you want them to stop and read your sign!

Location Considerations

Location is important to consider early on as it will influence many other aspects of your skatepark. As stated earlier, all interested parties should have input into any discussions around location, looking at what location will most benefit skateboarders and the community. Identifying a location for your park can also help your organizing committee to see that progress has been made early on, and that land is obtained. Putting up a sign at your projected skatepark location as early as possible can also help inform the community of your progress.

If you have identified that modular is your choice, then you may begin to look for existing surfaces like old tennis or basketball courts, ensuring that these existing surfaces are smooth enough to be both safe and functional to skate on.

Accessibility - A large percentage of the users of a skatepark are not old enough to drive, or do not have a vehicle of their own so it is important to ensure that skateparks and recreation facilities are accessible through public transportation or through safe Active Transportation routes. It may also be a good idea to look near your Community and Recreation Centres, these public venues are often located based on community planning and consultation. Rather than conducting more studies, your municipality may have information on existing community planning projects that may allow the site to immediately meet many site selection criteria in this section.

Access to lighting and electricity - Lighting will help provide a safe and visible space to skateboard for those who wish to do so in the later hours, while extending the hours of use. When planning a location for a park it can be a huge cost saver to locate it near an existing municipal electricity source, as opposed to incorporating one after the park is built. Proximity to food, water and washroom facilities - Park users exert themselves, and will eventually need food and hydration. Something as simple as locating a park near adequate facilities will encourage users to spend an afternoon at the park, and stay longer if they have a local place to re-fuel.

Pay phones - It is important to have pay phones available for the security and safety of the park users.

Visible to the public eye - The high visibility of a park can be beneficial for a number of reasons. It can be attractive to the community, encouraging community members to stop by and watch the users perform tricks on their lunch break. It sends a clear message that young people and active healthy living are a community priority. It can also provide an aspect of self policing. Visibility will reduce the vandalism of modular ramps, can prevent unwanted graffiti from appearing in the park, and may help curtail the suspicion that skateboard parks are places for drug and alcohol abuse.

Complementary facilities - Some communities have had success by locating their park near recreation facilities, providing better access to washrooms and potential for programming. Other examples include band shells or performance areas near the park that allow young people to perform their music, promoting more youth ownership over the space.

Environmental concerns - This can include water run off, pollutants from construction, or landscape requirements that may influence the design of your skatepark. For example, in Halifax, the bowl section must be built above ground because it is being built on slate and shale.

Proximity of residences to the park - Some skateboard parks, especially modular ramps of wood or steel, can be noisy and may disturb neighbours. Finding a location at a distance from residences may decrease the disturbances. Also, early communication with neighbours of a potential location can help identify whether that location is suitable or not.

Landscape - As previously mentioned, certain elements are more difficult and costly to work with. Excessive bedrock will limit the range of elevation needed for a good flowing skatepark. Similarly, small inclines can either hinder or assist a park's design process. To see if your prospective site is suitable, contact some of the professionals listed in the resources section of this handbook.

The skatepark in Berwick, Nova Scotia is an excellent example of taking advantage of complementary facilities. It is located right behind town hall, the library and the gym, providing a multi-use downtown area that encourages the integration of skateboarders into the town.

Another example is the Halifax Mainland Common skatepark. Its features include a central location, excellent accessibility (by bus, bike, and even skateboarding across the Common), lighting, washroom facilities, restaurants and convenience stores, hospital (hopefully not needed), a new BMX bike shop and highly visible from the street. The park is also located in an area that is currently used for recreational sports such as baseball, cricket, soccer, and basketball. All of these aspects create a safe and welcoming facility for the whole community to enjoy.

For more examples on site selection and park processes check out http://www.portlandonline.com/parks/index.cfm?a=96344&c=40148

For great testimonials of communities who build parks in Nova Scotia and Canada, go to www.spectrum-sk8.com

Fundraising, Public Awareness and Community Engagement

As your group will likely be soliciting funds from the private sector and the general public, it is important to make your group visible and your goals well known. This can help people

understand who is a part of your group and what your goals really are, not just who and what they might assume them to be.

Each public fundraiser also assists with your visibility in the community as an organized group of citizens. Combining public awareness with fundraising can allow your group to host an event that is also a lot of fun for everybody. The Halifax Skatepark Coalition (HSC) hosted a Skate-A-Thon where 40 skateboarders and bikers were present on a rainy day to parade through the downtown streets with police escorts - a contrast to the norm, and appealing enough for each participant to donate $5 in support of the HSC event. With prize giveaways, a BBQ and a matinee rock concert, it was a day filled with activities, fundraising and public awareness. It was an event enjoyed by organizers and participants alike, providing energy and enthusiasm to the HSC members and participants, who all left feeling eager to attend or help organize the next event. The momentum provided by this kind of enjoyment is important to avoid the 'burn-out' that many organizers feel after an event may not yield the turnout expected. Remember, fun and promotion of your organization's goals are equally as important as obtaining that dollar figure!

Here are some quick ideas of fundraisers or events that other communities have held:

- Bottle drives
- Raffles
- Lotteries
- Concerts/dances
- Car washes
- Chocolate bar sales
- Information and donation kiosks at public events or local shops
- Barbecues

Truro, Nova Scotia

A group of skateboarders in Truro addressed this issue by involving themselves with local organizations and volunteering their time to other local community groups while hosting events, or fundraisers of their own. They also began to recognize that each of them as individuals were representing skateboarders in town, and shared the philosophy with others in the community. Community groups and individuals became more aware of the skateboard group, their public services and media attention, and formed their own opinion of the group based upon their activities as opposed to stereotypes traditionally placed on skateboarders. As a result, the fundraising efforts were improved, showing that a change in the community perspective can assist with the development of the final facility.

Shelburne Sk8 for Food

A group of youth were discussing with community members their current situation in their community - there didn't seem to be support for the group's efforts in getting a skatepark. When the group was asked "Why doesn't Shelburne have a skatepark", the following discussion occurred.

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'No one is going to give us the money!' one young person
      commented, to which the facilitator responded,
                        "Why?"
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"Because they don't want to give it to us [skaters]"
"Why?"

"Because they don't think we deserve it"
"Why?"

"Because they think we are punks and drug users"
"Why?"

"Because that is the image portrayed by the media,
and that is the stereotype they have of us"
"What can we do about that?"

At this point the group began to brainstorm and identify ways in which they could show the community that they were good people, working to create a recreation facility in their town. The group members agreed that they wanted to do a food drive for the local food bank on their skateboards, to do a visible act of service to their community, as skateboarders. The response was very positive in the community and as the fundraising improved, they continued hosting public stunt displays, and participating in public festivals.

Grand Opening

This is a great opportunity to thank the community for their contributions, and launch your park as a location that is welcoming to everyone in the community. It is important that your skatepark feels like a place everyone is welcome. General invitations to the community to attend a grand opening for something new and unique like a skatepark is appealing as something new and exciting to take part in. These grand openings, when advertised and coordinated well, can often gather up to a few hundred people.

Following up in your Community

In many cases skatepark committees are formed to build skateparks. Once the park is built the group's membership shrinks and the members go skating. Your committee can continue to play a role in the community by taking part in fairs, parades or community events. Your group can also continue to maintain a healthy skateboard culture in your town or city by working with the municipality to continue making positive changes like skateboard-friendly street spots, or to work with the Recreation Department to provide skateboard programming and lessons at your new facility. Though skateboarding is seen as an unstructured sport, it doesn't mean that it should remain unsupported. By continually integrating skateboarding into our communities we can obtain the maximum health and social benefits.

Encouraging Healthy Lifestyles: Free, Unstructured, Spontaneous Play

Over half of Nova Scotians are not active enough to enjoy health benefits and at least a small portion of that can be attributed to time constraints or accessibility to recreation opportunities (http://www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/physicalactivity/index.asp). Organizing and

scheduling regular physical activity into our daily routine can be difficult and pose challenges when parents have to drive children to facilities. One of the main benefits of skateboarding can be its accessibility. One doesn't always need an expensive facility to practice tricks; often a flat, smooth piece of pavement will be enough to satisfy one's need to skate. Many young people know of one space where they can skateboard in their community, neighbours or security guards permitting. Some cities have taken a step, and recognized the benefits of these 'spots' in our cities, and even recognized these spaces as 'skateboard-friendly zones'.

Creating Skateboarding-Friendly Spaces in our Cities

The city of Vancouver, with almost 30 years of skateboarding in its history, has recently dedicated certain portions of the city skateboard-friendly. One spot, in specific, under the Cambie Bridge in downtown Vancouver was frequented by skateboarders for years, but then the ledges were capped by the city in attempts to reduce skateboarding in the area. This was an area that was already a public park, with a basketball court and a playground for young children. After much lobbying from the Vancouver Skate Park Coalition to designate this space and other frequent skate spots in the city 'skateboard-friendly', the city's response was to buy several skater-built and designed benches and place them at strategic places in the city. Some are at existing skateparks, and a few at popular skate spots in existing recreation areas to communicate to skaters that this space is now designated skateboard-friendly. This prevents skateboarders from being confined only to skateboard parks, while still getting to experience street skating in spaces where they know they aren't going to get fined or harassed to leave.

Safe and Accessible Active Transportation Routes

Active Transportation has numerous benefits to one's health, and skateboarding is a viable means of transportation, though not legal or recognized in many Canadian cities. Accepting these sports as means of transportation can provide greater opportunities for citizens to obtain daily physical activity. The city of Vancouver is currently examining this topic. See the council report on the web to learn how the council included community and the local skatepark committee to test a new by-law. (http://vancouver.ca/ctyclerk/cclerk/20050315/a8.htm)

To see how your community can become conducive to Active Transportation, check out the on-line resources and examples of what other communities are doing, in the resource section.

Promoting Youth Leadership

The community-driven process of developing skateparks is one short-term example of youth and community members interfacing with municipalities. More permanent structures are needed to meet the ever-changing needs of our citizens. Structures like youth councils, departmental committees, advisory boards, and youth-led youth groups (such as skatepark action teams) are ways municipalities are already keeping young people at decision-making tables.

Resources are available for communities specifically looking at engaging youth in civic

structures, including the Growing Up In Canadian Cities Initiative that has spent the past two and a half years identifying methods of hearing youth voices, to assist with becoming included in governance, policy-making and public space design. As a result, a booklet titled, "Creative Tools: Civic Engagement of Young People" was created to help communities in hearing youth voices and including them in future planning. This and other resources are available online at www.growingupincities.ca. HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development (www.heartwood.ns.ca) also has over 18 years of experience supporting youth leaders in community development.

Coaching and Mentoring

After building a skatepark, many communities have worked with recreation centres to provide programs and camps for young people to learn, or improve in skateboarding. This can also provide a safe introduction to the sport, avoiding potential injuries from beginners attempting tricks beyond their skill levels. A Canadian Google search of "skateboard recreation programs" will yield a plethora of towns and cities with other recreation programs for skateboarding. The Roundhouse Recreation Centre in Vancouver is one example of programs offered for beginner, advanced and mixed gender groups. www.roundhouse.ca/index.php?module=pagemaster&PAGE_user_op=view_page&PAGE_id=88

Part 4 . More Tricks

This handbook should be only one of many resources that your community consults on its way to building a skatepark. Here are some excellent resources:

Skateboarding

- Canadian Amateur Skateboarding Association:
  Includes resources like risk management studies and connection to
  industry specialists.
  www.ca-sa.ca/
- Skaters for Public Skateparks - Also includes tons of studies and papers
  www.skatersforpublicskateparks.org/
- Skate Park Association of the USA
  www.spausa.org
- Board-Trac: syndicated market research studies track the lifestyles and purchasing
  habits of people who participate in or are influenced by board sports.
  http://www.board-trac.com

Local Parks and Groups
- Halifax Skatepark Coalition www.hfxskatepark.org
- Antigonish Highland Skatepark Association www.sk8antigonish.ca/
- Island Skatepark www.islandskatepark.com
- Annapolis Area Bikes Boards and Blades Association
  www.swimmingmouse.ca/aabbba
- New Minas Skate Park: www.newminas.com/web/skate_park.htm
- Nova Scotia Skateparks: www.novascotiaskateparks.ca

Local Skate Shops
- A-One Boardshop: www.users.eastlink.ca/~aerobicsfirst
- Pro Skateboards: www.proskates.com
- West 49: www.west49.com
- East Coast Lips: www.eastcoastlips.com
- Homegrown Skateboards: www.homegrownskateboards.com

Recreation

- Recreation and Parks Month - This page includes a number of links to provincial
  recreation websites, and relevant organizations
  http://www.recandparksmonth.ca/index.cfm?fa=Home.Links

- Youth Participation in Urban Recreation Planning - A great resource for municipalities looking to engage youth in urban recreation planning including youth testimonials, a virtual workshop, and a great base of articles published regarding skateboarding. Also includes an amazing list of websites with information ranging from ramp designers, to the history of skateboarding.
  http://www.sfu.ca/cns/sk8/grant/index.htm
- Lifestyle Information Network - The Recreation Database on the site provides a search option where an entry of skateboard parks will yield several valuable resources relevant to action park development and maintenance.
  www.lin.ca/

Health
- Health benefits of physical activity: the evidence
  www.cmaj.ca/cgi/content/full/174/6/801

Active Transportation
- Pathways for People - A Framework for Action
  This framework, published by the Department of Health Promotion and Protection, provides a definition, scope and a call to action for Active Transportation in our communities. This document will provide much of the needed information to make your community active transportation friendly.
  http://www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/physicalactivity/activeTransportation.asp
- Go for Green - Active Living and Environmental Solutions.
  www.goforgreen.ca
- Blueprint for a Bicycle-Friendly HRM
  www.halifax.ca/cycling/bikeplan.html
- Vancouver-based group promoting Active Transportation
  www.best.bc.ca
- Canada's leading medical journal - information on physical activity and health benefits
  http://www.cmaj.ca/cgi/content/full/174/6/801
- Halifax active transportation plan website:
  http://www.halifax.ca/activetransportation/index.html
- Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre (research on AT and effects on health)
  http://www.ahprc.dal.ca/
- Victoria Transport Policy Institute: innovative and practical solutions to transportation problems: free resources available.
  www.vtpi.org
- Right to Move: Montreal-based group believes transport should be available to all. Has community bike project.
  www.rtm-lvl.org
- An example of how Portland, Oregon has amended its by-laws to include skates, skateboards or scooters in the city, for more information go to
  http://www.portlandonline.com/transportation/?&c=dehia

Other

- American Standards Testing - Although it's outside of Canada, they can provide standards for several aspects of skateboarding.
www.astm.org
- National Electronic Injury Surveillance System - The National Centre For The Prevention Of Injuries http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/default.htm

Funding and Grants

These are sources that can provide information on granting to build skateparks, or to gain funds and resources to develop a community action group.

- Nova Scotia Department of Health Promotion and Protection:
Recreation Facility Development Grants
Planning Assistance Program
Community Recreation Capital Grants
Physical Activity Grants
http://www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/physicalActivity/grantsPA.asp

Local Groups and Organizations

- Your Local Skate Shop or Local Skateboarders - Although this isn't a resource to call on every time you have a question, locals are often a good source of information you can't otherwise track down.
- HeartWood Centre for Community Youth Development - HeartWood can work directly with community groups to build a healthy team with young people and adults. (www.heartwood.ns.ca, 902-444-5885)
- Ecology Action Centre - Stephanie Sodero and Laena Garrison at the TRAX office can provide community contacts, print resources, general info on active transportation in Halifax, and experience with street opening projects. Janet Barlow is the Active and Safe Routes to School contact at the EAC, she sits on the provincial vulnerable road users committee and can provide information from the provincial level on safety issues. They are all happy to answer questions and offer suggestions. (www.ecologyaction.ca, 902-429-2202)
- Regional Development Agencies - Can help connect to the community to make a more successful project

Skatepark Designers and Modular Equipment Providers

- New Line Skatepark Designers www.newlineskateparks.com
- Dreamland Skateparks www.dreamlandskateparks.com
- Spectrum Skateparks www.spectrum-sk8.com
- Brand X Ramps www.brandxramps.com

Ramping Up! A Nova Scotia Skatepark Resource

Appendix

Skatepark Community Survey

Skate-park Initiative Survey

Proposed Mission Statement
insert mission statement and goals here

Contact Information

Name: _____   Phone: _____

Address: _____   Email: _____

_____

_____

_____

1. Describe yourself (check all that apply):

    ☐ Skateboarder
    ☐ BMX Biker
    ☐ In-Line Skater
    ☐ Parent
    ☐ Interested Community Member
    ☐ Other_____

2. Please review this statement and indicate whether or not you agree with it:
    "I believe that a safe, accessible skatepark facility would be of benefit to the community"

    ☐ Agree
    ☐ Disagree

3. The members of the Skate Park Initiative Committee envision a skate park facility
    that includes programs for skills development, youth mentorship, summer programs,
    competitions and show cases. It would also be equipped with a community bulletin
    board to communicate local events and opportunities

    What else do you think should a skate park include?
    _____
    _____
    _____

4. Though some skate parks are more costly, and require more maintenance, we would like to get an idea of what the local users would prefer.

Check the box to indicate your preferences.

| Facility | ☐ Indoor |
| | ☐ Outdoor |

Ramp Construction	☐ Concrete
	☐ Wood
	☐ Metal/Urethane

5. Please suggest an appropriate location within our Town/County

_____
_____
_____

6. What do you currently do for recreation?

_____
_____
_____

7. Would you be willing to volunteer in support of the Skate Park Initiative?

☐ Yes
☐ No

… if you answered yes, please share what skills, abilities or assets you   could bring to this group.

_____
_____
_____

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