

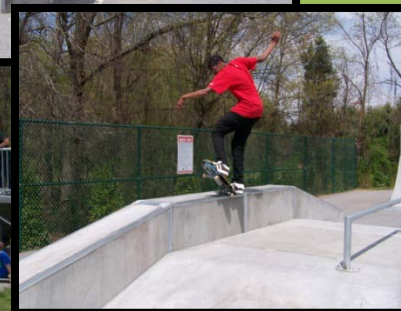
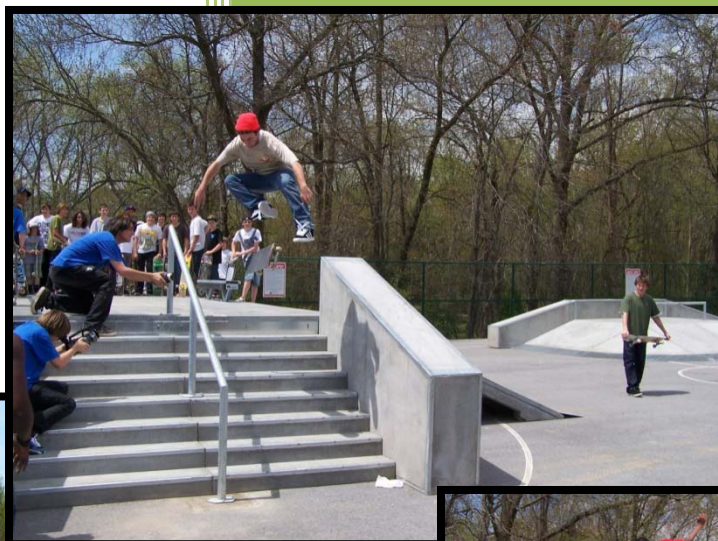


Howard
County

RECREATION & PARKS

2010

Skate Spot Comprehensive Evaluation



Recreation & Parks Skate Spot

Evaluation Committee

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4/27/2010



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OUTLINE: SKATE SPOT COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION

I. INTRODUCTION – PURPOSE OF EVALUATION/HOW WE ARE PROCEEDING

The purpose of this evaluation was to review and research the steps taken to create the Skate Spot at Centennial Park. The comprehensive evaluation was created to provide an overview to those interested in the project. Interest includes, but is not limited to: staff, skate boarders, citizens, legislators and county officials. These documents will enhance the review about this facility and provide an overview of discussions and implementations from the past year regarding the Skate Spot.

The Department of Recreation & Parks created this document from a committee of key players within our work team. This committee, which included staff from the programming, administration and parks bureaus, worked on this project to provide the different sections of the evaluation outline. The committee considered the following to be key components of the comprehensive evaluation: relate why the Skate Spot was built, highlight issues that occurred during the year, address customer and community feedback, review program adaptation and processes, summarize the impact of having or not having the facility, and provide solutions and recommendations for review. This process is part of how the department meets the requirements for an approach to systematic evaluation. For an evaluation to be effective it needs to be cooperative, continuous and constructive, and the committee has addressed those approaches in their task.

The public will have an opportunity to review and comment on this document before the Final Evaluation is complete. It is the intent of the department to share a draft with interested customers and key officials via the department's website in order to obtain feedback and additional information pertinent to the content of the document. Upon sharing the draft online, comments will be taken and shared in an analytical format in the sections where they are appropriate. The final draft will then be shared with all those requesting a copy online. The Recreation and Parks Advisory Board will review the document as well and the outcome of the Draft comments from the community will be shared.

Our focus for this evaluation was to review and share the issues, concerns and processes that arose over the past year. It was an interactive process between trends research, public relations data, security detail, onsite staffing reports, and needs assessments. The field of Recreation and Parks is very diverse, with many levels of functions, goals and services to examine in order to effectively review a topic such as this. Our focus was on the priorities of the organization, including fiscal impact, customer service, and program resources.

In completing these evaluations, we networked with professional Recreation and Parks agencies locally and regionally through the department's contacts with MACO (Maryland Association of Counties), MRPA (Maryland Recreation & Parks Association) and NRPA (National Recreation and Parks Association). There was no prototype to follow for providing a comprehensive evaluation of a skate spot, so the committee developed its own format based on members' professional experience in management of Recreation and Parks facilities.

Due to the size of our current site, we have chosen to refer to it as a *skate spot* in order to distinguish it from larger facilities known as skate parks and skate plazas.

II. WHY IT WAS BUILT/DEMONSTRATION OF NEED

In April, 2007 a number of resident skaters testified at the County Council Meeting for a skate park/spot to be built in Howard County. At that time, there were no publicly-owned skate parks/spots in the County for skaters use. The Department of Recreation and Parks had, however, implemented a mobile skate park called “Skate Park on Wheels” in 1999, which has traveled to different County locations. The site at Centennial Park West was the first location used for the mobile skate park, and served as the site of the department’s in-line and skateboard summer camps.

A user group committee was formed to assess the need and demand for a skate spot in the County. The group met on a number of occasions to discuss the needs and assist with the design of the Skate Spot. Public hearings were held throughout the process and neighborhood input was received. Research was done to evaluate current facilities in order to make recommendations about a location, as well as the size, scope and components of possible skate facilities within County parks.

Skateboarding is the third most participated sport in the United States and is very popular in Howard County. Skateboarding provides healthy social interaction with multi-generational peer groups, promotes physical fitness through exercise, fights childhood obesity, and promotes self-confidence through personal ability and skill level advancement.

Considering the fact that 78% of skaters identify themselves as “street skaters,” it is imperative that they have a legal place to skate close to home and skating elements that attract them to the facility.

The facility was built to offer a safe environment for skaters and as an enhancement to our park facilities. Skate spots should be considered with park amenities such as tennis courts, basketball courts, and playground areas that offer different users the opportunity to participate in their preferred recreational activity. The youth group served by these facilities is usually not involved in team sports and this is their outlet to hone their sporting skills in a safe environment.

There are several negative effects of not having the Skate Spot which would impact the community, the skaters, and the County. Skaters are frequently reprimanded for skating in areas such as grocery store parking lots, abandoned businesses, and other areas where skating causes a public disturbance. Issues can often escalate to the need for getting law enforcement involved for trespassing or loitering issues. A few such locations in Howard County include the shopping center at Dorsey Hall and the abandoned gas station at Route 40 and Saint John’s Lane. Both of these locations also present safety issues for the skaters and the public.

The absence of the Skate Spot would negatively impact skaters because there are very few areas in the County (let alone free skate spots) that are conducive to their needs, allowing them to grow in this world renowned sport. Not having the Skate Spot would create a need for skaters to seek out areas where they are unwanted, and are unsafe for both themselves and the public. Furthermore, it could result in ill-harbored feelings from the skaters who want to be recognized for their skill and feel

like they accepted by the community. This phenomenon has even led to the creation of a bumper sticker that is sold in skate shops that state “Skateboarding is not a Crime.”

When the Department of Recreation and Parks did not have the Skate Spot, graffiti was prevalent at the handball courts located in the north entrance (the same entrance where the Skate Spot is now located). Neighborhood parks such as Cypressmede also suffered because skaters would often bring in their own ramps and set them up on the basketball courts, or use the pre-existing benches for ramps, which caused an influx of complaint calls from the public.

III. KEYS FOR SUCCESS OF SKATE SPOT – RECREATION & MANAGEMENT MAGAZINE, FEBRUARY 2010

1. **Hire an expert:** When designing your park, it’s great to get input from the skaters who will use it; but, don’t let them be your only source. You wouldn’t let your town’s Little League all-stars design the new ballpark would you? Skate park designers know the best materials, latest trends and hippest features. It’s worth extra money to hire them.
2. **Program It:** The old adage says once you build it, they will come. That’ll work for the people who already know how to skate. But what about the others? Hold classes, which will introduce the pastime to the next generation and ensure the park’s usage for years to come.
3. **Make it Comfortable:** Making the facility comfortable and inviting for users sends a message that the skaters are welcome and wanted. A comfortable environment—with benches, shade, water fountains and other amenities—sets an important tone for the facility and will encourage skaters to take care of the park. An uncomfortable environment sets a darker tone, leaving the venue susceptible to graffiti, littering and other degradation.
4. **Make it accessible:** Placing the park in a remote area limits its usage and allows it to fall into disrepair more easily. By locating a park in a more public area, you increase its attractiveness and make it a community activity. The most engaging, socially sustainable skate parks reside where the whole community can enjoy them.
5. **Set the rules:** Like anyplace where teens gather, adults may find fault with the skaters’ behavior or language. In order to address bad behavior, you must have a clear policy that addresses it. One cannot enforce a rule that doesn’t exist. When new rules are set, make sure they’re explained to the skaters or else they will seem to magically appear and breed resentment. All policies should explicitly state what will happen to the offender if a particular number of infractions continue. Signs and posters outlining the rules should be posted around the park. Any changes to the policies should be immediately changed on the signage as well.

IV. WHY THIS SITE WAS CHOSEN

Included below are slides taken from a PowerPoint presentation given to the public which highlights how Centennial Park was chosen as the site of the Skate Spot. These slides highlight the suggested locations and the criteria used for site selection. This criteria included; safety and security, social concerns and potential uses. The committee's recommendation was to proceed with the design of a Skate Spot at Centennial Park North.



Skate Spot Location Criteria

Safety and Security

- Mixed-use facility
- Activity volume

Social Concerns

- Proximity with neighbors
- Proximity with other users
- Citizen request

Potential Use

- Access
- Amenities
- Multi-use location



Mixed Use

Activity Volume

Proximity With Neighbors

Proximity With Other Users

Citizen Request

Rockburn Park	✓		✓		
Centennial Park	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
North Laurel Park	✓	✓	✓		
Western Regional Park		✓	✓	✓	✓
Cedar Lane Park	✓	✓	✓		

Committee Recommendations

➤ Proceed with design of a skate spot at Centennial Park North

Centennial Park North

map is not to scale

V. ISSUES/ACTION TAKEN/OUTCOMES CHART

Although the majority of response for the Skate Spot has been favorable, issues did arise. The following table identifies the issues that have been brought forward, actions taken to address issues, and the resulting outcomes.

Issues	Action Taken on Issues	Outcomes
Noise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planted holly trees. Installed wall panels. Added foam under platform plates. 	Trees are still growing, wall panels were removed, foam has reduced noise impact.
After Hours Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Surveillance camera installed. 	<i>Review surveillance camera photos and data in the Appendix.</i>
Vulgar Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rules & Regulations posted. Monitored by staff early on during evenings. 	Compliance from skaters. (Note: some of the vulgar language comes from the adjacent ball diamonds)

Issues	Action Taken on Issues	Outcomes
Trash	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 recycling can and 1 regular trash can were added to the 1 can that was originally on site. • Trash is picked up on a daily basis, with additional trash runs added as needed. 	The additional trash cans have reduced the amount of ground litter. The camera has also deterred any excessive trash on site. It should be noted that there is more trash on any given evening left at the ball diamonds during season than at the Skate Spot.
Graffiti	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided wall panels to allow skaters a place to conduct their urban art, which was monitored by staff & management for appropriateness in content. • Researched the positive effects of urban art. • Researched graffiti versus urban art. 	Wall panels were well received by skaters, and art was contained to this area with the exception of a one-time instance where graffiti was painted on the Rules and Regulations sign. The staff added plexi-glass over the sign and no further issues occurred. It was determined that the panels should be removed. After the removal, the nearby handball courts were vandalized by graffiti.
Supervision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent with industry standards (highlighted in Section III) • National trend: "Skate at your own risk." 	Although industry standards were adopted, much research occurred in how these standards fit into Howard County's view of the spot and how appropriate they were to Howard County.
Risk Management*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreed to adopting policies that are in line with other local governments which operate skate facilities. 	Industry standards are being followed.
Protective Gear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent with industry standards. Included "strongly recommended, not required" language in the rules and regulations. 	Industry standards are being followed.
Patron Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-route pedestrian pathway. 	Will be completed in Summer 2010
Rules & Regulations*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent with industry standards. • In line with other local governments which operate skate facilities. • County policing enforcement efforts by patrolling through the area. • Park personnel and Park Rangers provide additional patrols, along with the installation of a surveillance camera. 	Industry standards are being followed.

Issues	Action Taken on Issues	Outcomes
Cigarettes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cigarette smoking is a minor issue in the grand scheme of the Skate Spot. While monitoring the Skate Spot in the evenings, staff has reminded patrons that the area is smoke free. • Plans to install “Tobacco Free Sports” signage and a smokers post away from the site are being considered. 	Patrons have complied when asked not to smoke on site.
Freedom*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee recommendation not to fence the area, and to treat it as any other park amenity, i.e., playgrounds & basketball courts. • Everyone feels welcome. 	While it is possible that the Skate Spot could be fenced to address other community concerns, i.e., after-hours access, this would curtail the “freedom” aspect for skaters by potentially having them feel that they are being “fenced out.”
Skaters of All Ages	<p>Skating skills are developed through practice, watching others, and encouragement from skaters of all ages helping each other.</p> <p>Plans are being considered to install a kiosk that would create a positive public relations network for spectators to appreciate the sport.</p>	Industry standards are being followed.
Incident/Accident Reports Log	<p>Staff monitored the Skate Spot in the evenings (5pm to Midnight) from May through July for a total of 207 hours of overtime (May-21 hours, June- 84 hours & July- 102 hours) in order to create a presence, and to keep track of any incidents or accidents that occurred.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No incidents or accidents have been reported at the Skate Spot. • Many positive comments were received from the patrons, though a few parents did express concern over the Department not requiring helmets. • One mother of a 10 year old who skates daily stated: “I love that there is an avenue that supports this growing sport and gives kids and teens a place to socialize as well as practice their sport.”

**The issues of Risk Management, Freedom (no fencing around perimeter), and Rules and Regulations were evaluated when The Committee for Skate Components within Howard County Parks was charged with researching regional and national trends in skate parks, evaluating current facilities, evaluating safety and supervision issues, and making recommendations to the community. The committee made recommendations consistent with industry standards.*

VI. THE BENEFITS OF PROVIDING A SKATE SPOT IN A PARK SETTING

Having the Skate Spot in a park setting is beneficial to persons of all ages and genders, whether or not they are skaters. Park settings promote a variety of activities, so having a child visit the Skate Spot now allows the opportunity for family members and friends to take advantage of other park amenities such as playgrounds, tennis courts, and walking trails. This ultimately makes a trip to the Skate Spot a family outing, in keeping with the Department's objective for the community to Get Up, Get Out & Get Active! The Skate Spot at Centennial Park is a gathering place for skaters of all ages to learn and socialize with each other. It also intrigues many other patrons to stop and watch, and gain an appreciation about something that they are not familiar with.

A skate spot that is not located in a park does not provide an environment for those who are not interested in skateboarding. The lack of other activities does not promote a sense of community for people with different interests. In addition, these facilities often charge an entry fee, which can be a barrier for some families such that their child may be denied the opportunity to participate. Lack of opportunity could lead youth to skate in areas such as the shopping center parking lots, and other unsafe areas.

VII. HIGHLIGHTS/COMMENTS FROM COMMUNITY THROUGH NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

NEIGHBORS

Students help design first skateboard spot in county

Ellicott City

By Lisa Gueli Regnante
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For weeks, brothers Connor (seventh grade), Owen (fourth grade) and Erik (kindergarten) Marcinek watched anxiously as workers finished the construction on the county's first skateboard spot near their home in Centennial Park North on Old Annapolis Road. Since the official opening April 25, it has been a dream come true for many children and their families.

"I'm glad we have a place in our park for kids to practice their skateboarding stunts. Our boys are happy about the new skate place and we're happy to have another great reason for the kids to get outside and exercise," said Chris Marcinek, the boys' mother.

The 60-by-95-foot Skate Spot is situated atop the old underused basketball court and includes ramps, a platform, a 4-foot quarter



PHOTO BY LISA GUELI REGNANTE

The newly restored 59-year-old Enchanted Forest Shopping Center Dragon awaits its

pipe used to gain speed and a set of stairs with hubbas (a down ledge). The ramps are made from dome flex concrete which is ideal for skateboarding because of its smooth surface and ability to stay cooler than metal.

"The skateboarding community is really excited about the Skate Spot because we had a voice in designing it," said Colin Nugent, manager of the Ellicott City Rascals Skate Snow Surf store located on Baltimore National Pike. He is referring to how the county government actively encouraged ideas and suggestions from local skateboarders during the design phase of the Skate Spot.

Dan Lesko, a Dorsey Search resident and Wilde Lake High senior, knows this story well. Two and a half years ago, he started the student movement to build a skateboard plaza in Howard County. He and his skateboarding friends lobbied elected officials and attended local government meetings. They formed a relationship with government officials that eventually lead to an invitation to be part of the planning of the site.

"The coolest part was going to a design meeting at the Parks and Recreation offices with eight of my skateboarder friends. We had a teleconference meeting with the architect using CAD software which allowed us to view the preliminary Skate Spot design on a big screen. We would make suggestions and the architect would make the changes right in front of our eyes," Lesko said.

In the fall, Dan heads to college at University of North Carolina, Asheville. You can bet that he made sure there is a skateboard park nearby.

"Less than five minutes from the campus," he tells me.

Howard County will soon get its first certified green school when Ellicott City's Northfield Elementary School completes construction on a planned addition and complete renovation. The construction project will have five phases starting July 1 with a completion date scheduled for April 2011.

According to NES Principal Steve Meconi the school is slated for Leadership and Energy in Environmental Design silver certification. In order to achieve LEED certification the school construction project must meet strict criteria in six LEED categories: sus-



PHOTO BY CHRIS MARCINEK

Brothers Connor, Owen and Erik Marcinek, from left, are excited about the opening of the county's first skateboard park. The park, located in Centennial Park North on Old Annapolis Road, officially opened April 25.

environment quality and innovation and design process.

If you would like to learn more information about the NES construction project and its impact on the community and students consider attending the following meetings:

On May 6 at 7:30 in the NES media center, the St. John's Community Association's general meeting (www.mysjca.org) will feature Ken Roey, Howard County Public School System Executive Director of Facilities Planning and Management, who will

and answer session.

"I try to do what I can to minimize the impact to the community," Roey said. All Dunloggin residents are invited and encouraged to attend.

On June 1 at 7:30 p.m., the Northfield PTA will host a meeting at the school featuring a presentation by Ken Roey designed for parents. For more information, e-mail Jackie Crispell at jcrispell@verizon.net.

A dragon is coming to Ellicott City. Really! Did you notice that the dragon that nor-

Skateboard plan fought

Facility proposed for Centennial Park has neighbors upset

BY LARRY CARSON
[SUN REPORTER]

A small skateboard facility proposed for the northern portion of Centennial Park is stirring last-minute opposition to the location among neighbors of the site.

Residents of Century Drive and Old Willow Way, whose homes back to the portion of the park off Old Annapolis Road, complain that they did not learn of the county's plans until last month. They fear that the small park, with two baseball fields, tennis and racquetball courts, a small playground and a basketball court will become ground zero for every skateboarder from Laurel to Mount Airy. Current plans would convert the basketball court to a skateboard facility, using the paved surface to save money.

"It's so secluded from the street, kids could do anything there. I paid a \$15,000 premium for my lot," said Jann Keenan, an eight-year resident, whose house, separated by a grove of trees, is about 300 feet from the basketball court.

She and neighbors including Mike Prebish and Chris McCrory said teens walk into the park at night, and they fear noise from skateboarders. They've gathered signatures from 106 people opposed to the location.

"This is acoustically a nightmare," Keenan said, explaining that the park is lower than the surrounding houses, making it easier for sounds to travel.

"People moved into the neighborhood because of the park," Prebish said. He and the others want the skateboard facility placed in the larger, southern section of the park off Route 108, which is not near homes.

Keenan complained that she and her neighbors learned of the project Feb. 1.

"It's just a travesty. We're livid. There's no public signs," announcing the plans, she said, adding that the park should have been treated as a separate capital project, which would have given it more visibility. Her

Chris McCrory, another neighborhood resident, endorsed that view.

"We are going to be overwhelmed with skateboard users," she said.

More than 100 supporters of the park outnumbered the few opponents who showed up at a Department of Recreation and Parks board meeting on the project Feb. 20 despite bad weather, according to Gary J. Arthur, director of Recreation and Parks.

The board plans to hold a work-session discussion on the project March 19 at department headquarters, 7120 Oakland Mills Road in Columbia. If the board approves the location, County Executive Ken Ulman will make the final decision, Arthur said.

"I don't think there have been any complaints about people partying in the park. If there is that activity, which is illegal, the police would take care of it," Arthur said.

Because the skateboard facility would not have lights, skateboarders are not likely to be there at night when the park is closed, he added.

The county expects the average age for users to be in the 12- to 14-year-old range, which means current parking of about 60 spaces should be sufficient, because most users would be dropped off, walk or bicycle to the park, Arthur said.

Everyone who uses the facility will be required to register and have a county identification card with them to use the facility, ac-

ording to the county's plans.

County Council Chairwoman Courtney Watson, who represents the area of Ellicott City where the park is located, said her observations of skateboarders near her home are consistent with Arthur's.

"Generally, we see middle-school-aged children gathering to practice their tricks. We have not seen increased trash, drugs, alcohol, vandalism or foul language — or teens hanging out there at night."

She said that, if built, the facility would be a small portion of the park's other facilities, and she is confident that Arthur's board will "consider carefully the concerns of the neighbors before any decision is made ..." on the location.

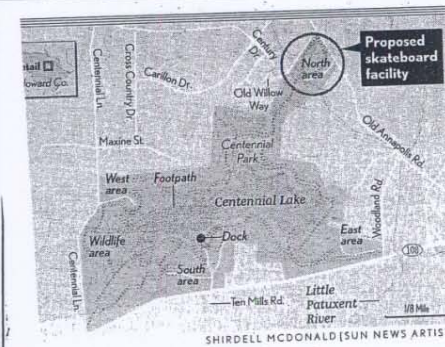
Daniel Lesko, a Wilde Lake High School junior who helped organize support for the facility, said his crowd will not be a nuisance.

"I don't think we'd be too noisy," he said, adding that with concrete obstacles to skate on, there would be less noise than typical skateboard facilities made of wood.

"You can't even drive down into the park at night because they gate it off," he said.

But Michael Rossberg, 19, a Virginia Tech student home on spring break who was shooting hoops at the park Monday, said he wants the basketball court to remain and that removing the baskets would be "a bummer."

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HOWARD



A PARK OF THEIR OWN

Two Wilde Lake High School juniors work to get a skateboard facility at Centennial Park PG 2

INSIDE Hamm to detail development process PG 3

State's attorney race PG 4

DOUG KAPUSTIN (SUN PHOTOGRAPHER)

Wilde Lake High School students press
for park to accommodate their sport

Skateboarding vision

BY ALEX DOBRUSIN
(SUN REPORTER)

Skateboard enthusiasts are pushing Howard County to build a place where they can showcase their skills, and county officials hope to accommodate them.

Two Wilde Lake High School juniors — Evan Sokolosky and Daniel Lesko — are part of the movement to get a skateboard park built at Centennial Park. The pair worked with Gary Arthur, direction of the county Department of Recreation and Parks, on a layout that would appeal to users of the park and to those funding it.

The proposed facility would replace an aging basketball court behind the park's north entrance, off Old Annapolis Road.

Arthur is expected to gauge the community's support for the facility at a Recreation and Parks Advisory Board meeting at 7:30 p.m. today at the department's headquarters, 7120 Oakland Mills Road in Columbia.

"We're hoping for quite a contingent of folks who support skateboarding," Arthur said.

If the majority of those attending favor the project, Arthur will take the proposal to County Executive Ken Ulman.

"I've talked to Ken about it already, and he sounds like he's all for it," Arthur said.

If Ulman approves the project, construction could begin as early as May because funding for the park would fall under the current fiscal budget. Building the park would take less than a month, Arthur said.

Skateboarding has become the third-most-popular sport internationally, Arthur said.

Enthusiasts pressed their case with Ulman at a December budget hearing when a Woodbine woman held up petitions that she said had been signed by 600 people who want the county to build a lighted skateboard park in Western Regional Park in Glenwood. The proposed park in Glenwood could be next in line if the Centennial plan is a success.

"If it is respected by the community, we'll probably look at expanding in other areas," Arthur said.

For Sokolosky and Lesko, the new skate park could mean skating from dawn to dusk because the park would operate under the same schedule as Centennial Park.

"The main reason we need [a skate park] is because kids want to skate street elements, skate for free and skate when they want," Lesko said. "This park will allow them to do that."

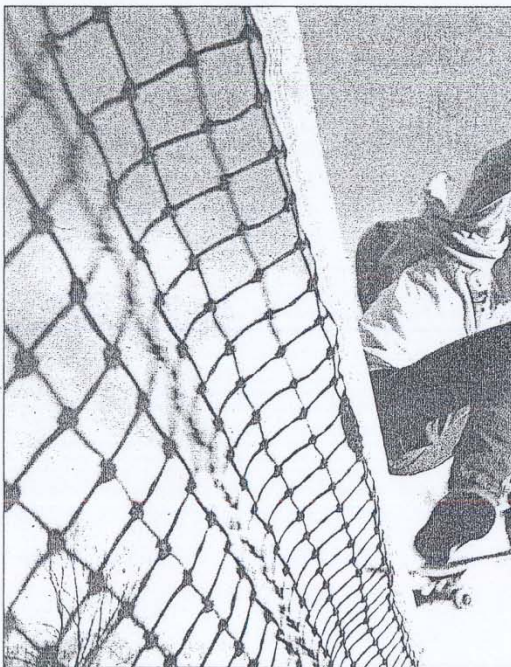
Though unsupervised, skaters would be required to carry identification cards issued by the Department of Recreation and Parks when using the park.

Arthur said the ID card will provide information in case of an injury but that skateboarders are "totally responsible for their injuries."

Arthur has a history of skate park construction dating back 30 years.

"One of my claims to fame is that I worked with skateboarders and surfers in Ocean City and made a skate park in 1976," he said.

The 31 year-old Ocean Bowl skateboard park is the oldest such municipal park in the nation, according to its Web site. Arthur has maintained an interest in skate-



Wilde Lake High School junior Daniel Lesko jumps a tennis net at Cypressmede Park and classmate Evan Sokolosky are pushing for a skateboard park at Centennial Park. DOUG KAPUSTIN (SUN PHOTOGRAPHER)

boarding since the park's construction.

"Skateboarding has evolved from 2 percent participation to become a mainstream type of activity, so agencies have tried to satisfy that," he said.

Despite the growth of the sport, skateboarding still evokes images of the "skateboarding lifestyle," Lesko said. Often portrayed as hooligans in Hollywood films, skateboarders around the area recognize that their sport does not have the credibility of other sports.

"It doesn't get acknowledged because it's not an organized sport with a coach. Skateboarders get stereotyped as bad kids," said Lesko, who added that the lack of coaching in the sport warrants a greater understanding by the individual skateboarder.

"Older kids are generally better at soccer than younger kids, but skateboarding is all about talent," Lesko said. "It's all that you can put into it."

For now, Lesko and Sokolosky are pushing for a skateboard park at Centennial Park. Lesko is an almost daily skateboarder at Cypressmede Park off U.S. 40. The park has ramps or jumps.

"Evan and I bring our own skateboards. I stick it on the basketball court. Cypressmede is all the way off U.S. 40. It's not used by anyone."

ON THE COVER

Daniel Lesko (left) and Evan Sokolosky (right) are pushing for a skateboard park at Centennial Park off U.S. 40. Lesko is an almost daily skateboarder at Cypressmede Park off U.S. 40. The park has ramps or jumps. Lesko is an almost daily skateboarder at Cypressmede Park off U.S. 40. The park has ramps or jumps. Lesko is an almost daily skateboarder at Cypressmede Park off U.S. 40. The park has ramps or jumps.

LETTERS

Don't let vocal minority destroy a valuable community facility

Regarding Jennifer Broadwater's Dec. 24 article, "Resident wants Ulman to relocate skate spot":

I frequently visit the skateboard park in Centennial Park with my fiancée and her young son, and I have never witnessed any of the behavioral issues mentioned in Ms. Broadwater's article. On the contrary, I regularly see a group of young people who demonstrate a strong sense of community, camaraderie and athleticism. This is especially remarkable given that, unlike an organized sports team, there is no adult supervision or structured format to guide these young people.

Given my experiences at the skate spot, the situation described in Ms. Broadwater's article sounds suspiciously like a handful of citizens who have a bad case of NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard). The future of the skate park should not depend on the wishes of a vocal minority. Public policy exists to serve the community as a whole, and we must all make small sacrifices for the well-being of our society.

I am not a skater, but I am a strong proponent of the skate spot. It is a place where I regularly see the young people of Howard County shine. It would be a shame if our leaders kowtow to a vocal minority and destroy something that

epitomizes why Howard County is such a special place to live.

Chuck Amos
Elkridge

NEWS

County opens new skateboard park

By Derek Simmons
dsimmons@patuxent.com

In the past, Daniel Lesko and his friends would travel to Baltimore, Washington and Philadelphia in order to find a place where they could legally skateboard.

Now, Lesko has to go no farther than Centennial Park North, in Ellicott City, where county officials April 25 unveiled the first of several planned "skate spots."

"I'm really happy. It's a dream come true," said Lesko, 18, a high school senior and avid skateboarder who has been lobbying for more facilities in the county.

Recreation and Parks director Gary Arthur said he was first approached about public skateboarding facilities in April 2007 by two county teens. Lesko soon became involved and "got the ball rolling" on adding a skate spot to Centennial Park, Arthur said.

County officials decided to put the 95-by-60-foot skating area on top of an underused basketball court in Centennial because it is located roughly at the center of the county, he said.

Lesko and fellow skateboarders participated in the design, coordinating via video conference with the company that designed the facility, Arthur said.

"We told them what we wanted and saw the skate park come to life on screen," Lesko said. "We got to see exactly where everything would be."

'I'm thrilled that the kids actually got to work with Recreation and Parks to come up with a plan so that it is kid-approved.'

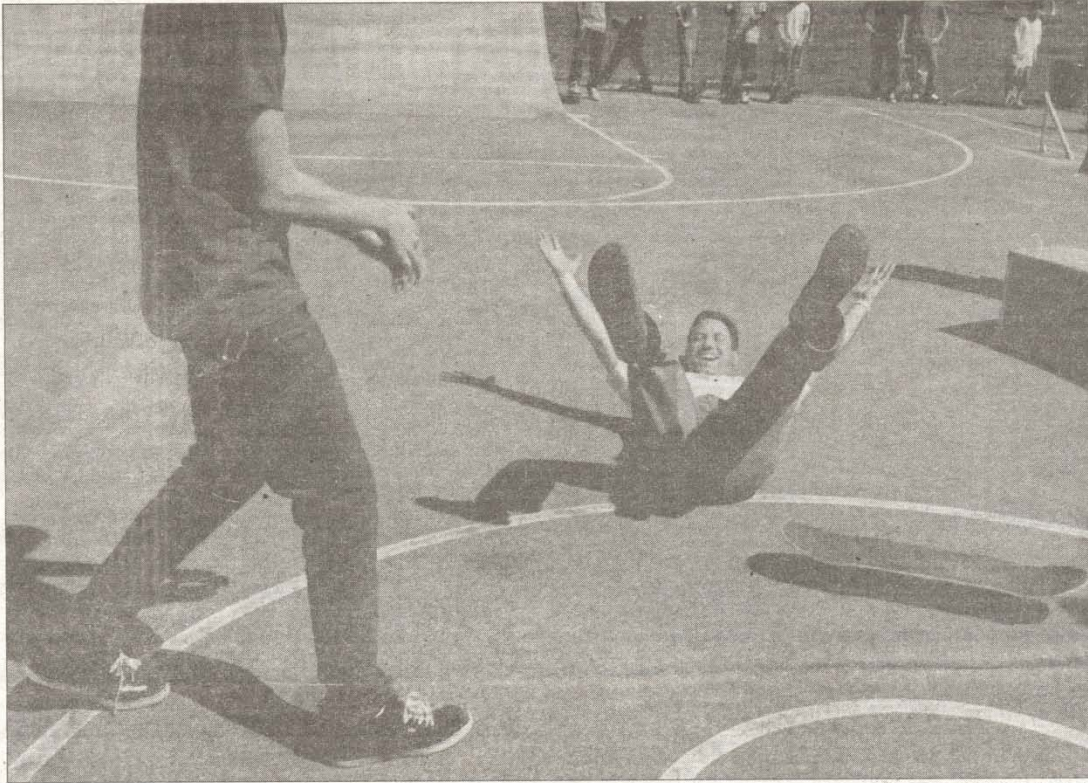
Mary Kay Sigaty,
County Council chairwoman

The facility was set to open in the fall, but construction was delayed after the company building it, Solo Ramps, was bought out by the American Ramp Company last year, Arthur said. In early April, the company sent the completed ramps to the county and parks staff installed them, he said.

Columbia Association board of directors chairman Tom O'Connor said during his final association board meeting last week that he was pleased to see the skate spot come together. The push for the facility was prompted by a complaint against skateboarders riding in the Dorssey's Search Village Center, the village he represents, he said.

Meetings between upset residents and

NEWS



STAFF PHOTO BY GO TAKAYAMA

Howard County Executive Kenneth Ulman enjoys a lighthearted moment with 18-year-old Dan Lesko, left, after Ulman fell off a skateboard during the opening day festivities at the Skate Spot, in Centennial Park North, in Ellicott City, April 25.

skateboarders helped add momentum to the idea for the skate spot, he said.

"This is a very wonderful result of something that could have been very bad," O'Connor said. "They just need places to go, and this is a good deal."

County Council chairwoman Mary Kay Sigaty said she became involved in the matter after she was contacted by residents whose children were banned from skating in Dorsey's Search. She helped local teens meet with Arthur and encouraged them to speak out at public meetings.

"I'm thrilled that the kids actually got to work with Recreation and Parks to come up with a plan so that it is kid-approved," she said.

While the CA operates a skate park facility, it charges fees to use it and its hours are not always convenient for young people, Sigaty said.

Sigaty said more than 100 skateboard-

ers attended the grand opening over the weekend, representing a variety of ages, from young children to high schoolers.

Some neighbors of the facility previously complained about its location and worried about unsupervised youth and noise. Arthur said parks staff were not able to address all concerns but added landscaping to screen the skate spot from nearby neighbors.

He also said the skate spot is open from dawn to dusk and that if neighbors see people there after hours, they should alert police. Park rangers periodically will check on skaters, but a proposal to add video camera monitoring to the skating area was dropped because it was too expensive, Arthur said.

Rules posted at the site ask skateboarders to wear helmets, knee and elbow pads and to be courteous to one another. The site operates on a first-come, first-served

philosophy.

Other skate spots are in the works for North Laurel Community Center and Park, Blandair Regional Park, in Columbia, and Rockburn Branch Park, in Elkrige. There also have been requests to add them at Savage and Western Regional parks, Arthur said.

The skate spots cost about \$130,000 — less than typical playground equipment — making them an attractive way to add new park features for relatively little money, Arthur said.

Having young people advise the county on parks projects is a practice that is likely to continue, Arthur said.

"It's a trend that has come of age," Arthur said. "They keep us up-to-date with ongoing trends. We might be considering things that were popular to us back in the day that may not be so popular anymore."

<http://www.howardcountytimes.com>

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www.baltimoresun.com/entertainment/bal-to.hs.skate28feb28,0,5076376.story

baltimoresun.com

Ramped-up exercise

Hopkins study finds that kids who skateboard or Rollerblade stay fit longer than those who play organized sports

By Meredith Cohn

Sun reporter

February 28, 2008

Fakies, nollies and kickflips. Skateboard tricks and the lifestyles of the kids who practice them could be a key to fitness into adulthood.

A recent study by [Johns Hopkins University](#) researchers said regularly skating, Rollerblading and biking increase children's chances of fighting the flab as they grow. The odds were better than for those who played baseball and other organized, and often seasonal, sports. And better than for those in daily gym class, though those activities also helped kids keep slim.

The study, published in January's Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, was one more among the many seeking solutions to the nation's growing obesity epidemic. But it's one researchers believe will fuel the push for more school and after-school activities. And skaters and their parents say it could help the unindoctrinated appreciate the benefits of some ramps and an outlaw spirit.

Media attention to skating usually only comes from events such as Mountain Dew's extreme sports tour at [Camden Yards](#) and, this month, from a YouTube video of a city police officer berating and manhandling a skateboarder in Baltimore's Inner Harbor; skateboarding is illegal there.

"Skateboarding is not a sport; it's a way of life, a culture," said Jason Chapman, a longtime skater and the 34-year-old owner of Charm City Skatepark in Canton. "You don't go out and play one game and go home. You skate all the time and every day. I still skate every day, and I'd hate to see what I'd look like if I didn't."

His park, inside a warehouse abutting an increasingly gentrified neighborhood, was filled on a recent midafternoon with several skateboarders and a few Rollerbladers and bike riders. Most everyone knew everyone's name.

Jimi Hulson, who turns 12 tomorrow, and 12-year-old Jeff Hatfield come regularly to the park. But they also skate in their eastern Baltimore County neighborhoods and the city. "I'll always skate, even if I



<http://www.baltimoresun.com/entertainment/bal-to.hs.skate28feb28,0,5667540.print.story>

3/5/2008

don't get to go pro," said Jeff.

And they challenged anyone to say skating is not a hard workout. "You've gotta push, use your legs," said Jimi.

Jimi's father, also named Jimi Hulson, said his son picked up a board several years ago and never stopped riding, though he scaled back to play soccer.

The senior Hulson is a lifelong athlete and said he likes skateboarding because he believes it is a good cardiovascular workout, builds muscle strength and confidence, and comes with a community that provides encouragement.

The Hopkins study made no mention of the dangers associated with skating or any other sport, but Hulson said his son has not been hurt skating. Chapman, the skate park owner, said some wrist and ankle injuries do occur. Helmets are recommended but not required.

"If Jimi skates Monday through Sunday, I can tell he feels good," said the senior Hulson. "He also eats really well, including something green every day. I know he'll always be in good shape."

Brenda Welty brings her 13-year-old son, Dakota, from York, Pa., to Canton five days a week and agreed skating is good exercise. Dakota's effort has won him sponsorships to skate, and recently, she said, it's also brought high marks from Dakota's doctor for his muscle tone.

But not all kids are in good shape. About 16 percent of adolescents are overweight or obese, three times the number in 1980, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Studies have shown about 85 percent of overweight kids become overweight adults.

The CDC says more than a third of high-schoolers do not regularly engage in physical activity, and almost two-thirds of 9- to 13-year-olds do not participate in organized activity after school.

All the slacking, along with video-game playing and processed-food eating, among other possible evils, may be to blame for more than a weight problem that researchers say frequently troubles people through their lives. Medical problems surfacing at younger ages are costly in human and health care terms.

Researchers, including those at Hopkins, have endeavored not only to show prevention is easier than treatment, but what methods of prevention work best.

The Hopkins study included 3,345 mostly healthy-weight teens in grades eight through 12 who were surveyed on their participation in physical-education class and after-school activities. The researchers followed up five years after they left school to check their height and weight.

They found that among after-school activities, the likelihood of being an overweight adult was reduced 48 percent for those who skated or biked more than four times a week. For those who played soccer or other organized sports three or four times a week, the odds of being overweight later were reduced 20 percent.

The researchers found that jogging, dancing and gymnastics did not significantly reduce the chances of being overweight as an adult. Perhaps that's because some saw them as social activities or because those children did no other activities like those who may have also run or jumped rope for preparation for other sports.

At school, students reduced their odds of being overweight by 5 percent for each day of the week they took gym class.

The data underscored the role of gym and after-school activities in preventing weight gain into adulthood, said Robert Wm. Blum, the study's lead author and chairman of the Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health's Department of Population, Family and Reproductive Health.

Researchers aren't pushing one sport over another, rather emphasizing that regular activity early on made the difference.

"We are saying that in the name of 'cost-cutting,' the elimination of gym classes might, in the words of Ben Franklin, be 'penny wise and pound foolish,'" Blum said.

Schools, however, face hurdles that include federal rules, competing mandates and limited resources.

The federal No Child Left Behind law, for example, has meant cuts to gym and other subjects in favor of math and reading, according to a report released Feb. 20 by the Center on Education Policy, which examined 349 of the nation's elementary school systems. Since 2002, about 44 percent shifted minutes to accommodate the law, and physical education lost an average of 40 minutes per week, or 35 percent.

But schools that participate in federal lunch programs also have to complete plans that spell out how they will improve nutrition and expand physical education.

Maryland requires students to earn a half-credit of gym class between ninth and 12th grades, which is a half-year of class every day or a year of class a couple times a week. All districts meet the minimum, said Mike Mason, specialist for physical education at the State Department of Education.

School officials and the legislatures are constantly discussing the mix, he said, and bills have been introduced to do everything from funding more recreation centers to collecting more data on student health.

Education and health-related groups have been pushing for a national standard of at least 60 minutes of age-appropriate physical activity most or all days.

One of them is the Skokie, Ill.-based nonprofit group Action for Healthy Kids.

Renate Myler, a spokeswoman, said poor nutrition and inactivity lead not only to health problems but diminished academic performance and raised school and health care costs.

"Schools are the ideal setting for bringing about change because of the unique ability to reach all children and foster positive behaviors that can last a lifetime," she said.

That kind of commitment isn't hard for skaters, said Chapman from the skate park.

"We eat skateboarding, breathe skateboarding and live skateboarding," he said.

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XIII. COMMENTS FROM DRAFT

As of May 18, 2010, Howard County Recreation & Parks has received 10 responses to its Comprehensive Evaluation Study of the Skate Spot at Centennial Park North. This Evaluation was placed on the Recreation & Parks website for the public to view and make comments. Of the 10 responses, all were from residents in the neighborhood(s) near the park. There were 8 against, and 2 in support (one with a few suggestions). Below is a list of the issues that were brought forth in the responses received:

A. Comments Opposed to Skate Spot

- **Graffiti** – Graffiti was referred to as “urban art” in the study; doesn’t paint the true picture of how the graffiti destroyed the property (i.e. racquetball courts had to be closed down, walls were taken away around skate spot. etc. Doesn’t want it to look like the inner city in her back yard. Murals of skaters would be one thing, but not graffiti.
- **Study regarding usage of Basketball Court** – The study was done in November, which he feels is not during a time of year where many play basketball
- **Foul Language** – His young children do not go to that area of the park anymore due to the foul language.
- **Noise** – Every time a skater begins his ride, we are greeted with a loud, angry “clack-clack”. Steps taken towards noise have not worked. The trees are too small, shrubs too sparse, and the bowl-like location sends the sound to ALL surrounding neighbors. No effective response to this noise concern has resulted from my communications to them (HCRP) in the past years and a half, in spite of what was described in this report. No white pines were planted as promised in Mr. Arthur’s letter to the advisory board in 2008. The few hollies that have been planted are entirely too small and spaced too far apart to have any effect on the generated noise. The foam added to the ramps has not reduced any of the noise from the boards going over them. Our young family can no longer sleep with the windows open because of the noise.
- **Foul Language/After Hours Noise** – Loud talking, vulgar expletives, shouts, and MUCH after-hours sounds and activities
- **Trash** – We walk the path into the park and are greeted with all matter of trash. Even the stream is not excluded from waste. On days of much use, the portable toilet area is littered.
- **Location** – Why was the more appropriate location in the East not chosen? It is easily accessible, enjoys a natural noise buffer, has existing permanent restroom and fountain and an existing pathway. The location is only about 300 feet from my neighbor’s house. At this distance, no number of trees, even when they eventually grow to a decent size in 10 years are going to block the sound made when multiple 8+ pound packages of steel and plastic are falling on the pavement from heights of several feet. Why, in a county covering 160,000+ acres, with 7,000+ acres of parkland, the location chosen was 300 feet from a quiet cul-de-sac neighborhood.
- **Noise/Location –Cost of Proposed Relocation** – I would be curious to know how much the cost of the proposed relocation of the existing pathway at centennial North will cost compared to these moving costs.
- **Safety/Supervision** – Of all the sports my sons have enjoyed, skating and skate boarding had the highest incident of injury in our family, all of which involved hospital emergency room visits. Centennial Skate Park provides no such supervision to keep our children safe. Unless a facility can

have full time supervision, I feel it is unsafe. I am proposing that the Centennial Park Skate Park join forces with the already existing Harpers Choice Skate Park, which is well supervised.

- **Illegal Behavior** – I was in favor of the skate spot before it was built but have since changed my mind due to the behavior I have witnessed there. I have on 2 occasions taken my small children on a walk by the skate spot. That requires using a trail that connects the skate spot with our neighborhood. I have witnessed twice a group of teenagers smoking pot near a stream that the path goes over. I will not take my kids to the park any more with this going on. Upon complaining, HCRP told me that they cannot patrol the entire park area so if it cannot be stopped, the skate spot should be removed.
- **Feels Report is Bias & Inaccurate in the following ways:**
 - **Inaccurate Cover Picture on Evaluation** – does not reflect the current graffiti or portable bathroom.
 - **Not enough notice to public** - The public was made aware of only one meeting where they could offer verbal input (mid-February 2008).
 - **Information left out of this report** – At the meeting where the Rec & Parks committee was voting on this site residents were told: skaters would be required to register to use the skate spot (and have the badges on their person); and helmets and padding would be required.
 - **Old photos depicting buffer** – the committee and public were shown old photos of the surrounding CPN area depicting a large birm of trees that would supposedly act as a buffer to surrounding residential houses. The photo was years old and showed over 200 trees had already been cut down. Due to the few remaining trees, one can see the skate spot clearly from homes and you can hear the din from the clashing skateboards up to 2 city blocks away in the Willows 2 neighborhood.
 - **Follow Through on Promises** – Recreation & Park has not followed through on promises. Voting committee members (and the public) were lead to be there would be safety standards for the skaters.
 - **No Mention of Petition in Report** – At no point in this report does it mention that impacted neighbors delivered signatures from over 100 voting adults who live in Willows 1 and 2. Where is there mention that reflected opposing public opinion
 - **Objection to the placement of a skate spot in a secluded spot**
 - **Objection to the overly loud noise, trash, smoking, late after hour use, cursing, smelly port-a-pots, and vandalism**
 - **Skate Spot criteria box is skewed to benefit the desired outcomes.**
 - **Gary Arthur promised white pines –**
 - **Feels that baseball field is too far away to hear obscenities**
 - **Empty trash cans** – trash cans are nearly empty, yet there is trash sitting there. Often it blows into the woods and we clean it up.
 - **Inaccurate information in report regarding graffiti (p. 8).** The rule sign on the chain link fence has been replaced 2 times—not once.
 - **Feels that teens at CA skate spot are happy to wear protective gear and with fences**
 - **Lack of parents present at the skate spot. They drive in their cars – they are not young kids.**
 - **Feels that the Columbia Flyer article on graffiti should be included**

- **Feels that having bleachers to encourage spectators will translate into this area being viewed as a teen hangout.**
- **Feels that \$15,000 isn't an accurate cost for the fencing around the skate spot.**
- **None of the Community Concerns regarding "Skate Spot Goal" have been addressed:**
 - **Provide a safe neighborhood location for kids to skate** – feels its secluded and in the back of a park
 - **Loitering** – The afterhours use survey was taken in the dead of winter.
- **Objects to the Committee recommendations section**
 - Why was Mary Kay Sigaty chosen to be part of the committee
 - Slides of closest houses make it look like only 2 houses are impacted.
 - Food & drink are prohibited rule broken. Skate spot users have used charcoal grills next to the skate spot on weekends.
 - Noise has not been addressed
 - Concerns about budget and how much this entire project is costing – walking path, portable bathroom, new signage, graffiti boards, graffiti caulk, etc.
 - After hours use
- **Specific Concerns with the Report**
 - **Not enough notification given to the public** - Statement "Public hearings were held throughout the process and neighborhood input was received" on p. 4 is not accurate. The surrounding community was not informed of any meetings and did not have any input until the decision had already been made to use Centennial North. The included timeline in the 2/20/08 PowerPoint makes this perfectly clear.
 - **No change in after hour usage after camera installed** - In spite of the instillation of camera, after hours usage continues to be invasive to the quality of life of the surrounding residences.
 - **# of Police Calls to police not included in report** - As recently as last Thursday, we had to call the police department around 9:40 PM and were told that they received "a number of complaints" already that night. Why weren't the number of these types of reports to the police department included in this report? Why wasn't unauthorized usage from higher volume days last summer included in this report?
 - **Additional trash & recycling cans not being used** – or not secured and are often found to be blown or knocked down with debris scattered throughout the area.
 - **Graffiti expansion not confined to the one-time incident on the rules sign as noted on p. 8** – It continued to expand even while the boards were still up as evidence of this still exist on the pathway toward Old Annapolis Road and on the "portable" restroom.
 - **Permanent Use of a "Portable" Restroom wasn't noted as an area of concern in report.**
 - **No specific data to support a \$15,000 price of fencing in the Skate Spot noted on p. 22.**

B. Comments In Support of Skate Sport with Suggestions:

- **Need for more facilities** – Our tax dollars should provide a variety of facilities, so everyone in Howard County has recreational options.
- **Noise comes from many other activities in the park** – We live adjacent to Centennial Park...In our neighborhood, bright lights and loud noise from baseball games disturb us almost every night in summer. Foul language is heard from baseball players at closing time (adult men who looked to be 30 or 40). Music from the PA system rattles our windows at 6 AM when the Columbia Triathlon goes on. Traffic generated from this event, and SAC's facility on Centennial Lane,

especially during big tournaments...illegal parking on our street. Are you going to shut down the soccer fields?

- **Size** – Nicely situated and great place to skate; however, it's very small. It would be better if there were more room to skate in as well as more objects to skate, such as a smaller stair set for the younger kids, or those just too tired to hit an eight-stair.
- **Safety** – we closely look out for our own and while we encourage and while we encourage each other to try something new, or to do something that may seem a bit out of skill range. We are understanding of each other's limits and do our best to keep ourselves and others at the edge of our skills set, but still stay safe.
- **Noise** – When at home our outside in my yard, the sounds of racquetball and baseball are more prevalent, and can be better head than the sound of the board hitting the ramp.
- **More Clearly Marked & Paved Path (A paved path through the yards & woods)** – While there is a public path between houses, on several occasions, I have had a window thrown open and been yelled at by neighbors for "trespassing" on their property. It would be a nice arrangement for everyone if there were clearly marked paved paths. There is a ton of mud which if you don't know much about skating is a great cause of concern—dirty tape, warped boards, easier to slip, lots of problems. As well as a bridge that is on its way to being washed down the creek with one or two more big storms.

C. Comments from the Recreation & Parks Advisory Board Meeting on 5/19/2010:

The following paragraphs is have been extracted from the Minutes of the regular meeting of the Recreation & Parks Advisory Board on 5/19/2010. Board members present at the meeting were Dave Grabowski, Tony Brudis, Dr. Joel Goodman, Tammy Citaramanus, and Lowell Adams.

Ms. Wetherald stated that a Skate Spot Evaluation has been posted on the Department's website for the past two weeks. Public comments on the same were received at the Department through yesterday. The Summary of Responses from the community is attached and was shared with Board members prior to this meeting via e-mail. Ms. Wetherald stated that the Department did look at the location criteria for the skate spot which is based on safety and security, and had a mixed use facility and activity volume already in place. Social concerns such as proximity to the neighbors, proximity with other users, facility requests, and potential use were considered. Potential use includes access, amenities and a multi-use location. We are going to have a full fledged skate park at the North Laurel Community Center. A skate park is also planned at Troy as well. Rockburn has the mixed use in proximity with the neighbors. Centennial Park was the one who had all of those pieces and met all of the criteria. Western Regional Park also has all of the criteria, other than the mixed use.

Question: Dr. Goodman inquired whether any of the other proposed skate spot locations are in proximity to homes.

Response: Mr. Byrd responded that Cedar Lane Park is very close to a neighborhood. Ms. Wetherald stated that Mr. Delorme performed a noise test in the neighborhoods close to the site.

Question: Dr. Goodman inquired as to the amount of money already put into this project.

Response: Mr. Delorme responded that the approximate cost for this project is \$150,000.00 for equipment.

Mr. Delorme stated that if we decided to remove the skate spot from Centennial Park and place it at North Laurel, it would cost about \$20,000.00.

Question: Mr. Adams inquired whether the skate spot was getting a lot of use.

Response: Ms. Wetherald stated that kids that use the spot are coming from the local neighborhood, as well as from Western Regional Park. The perception was that only kids would be using the spot, but young adults are skating too. We can't dictate what age group can use the spot.

Question: Mr. Adams inquired whether the Department is operating this skate spot any differently than other jurisdictions are operating their skate spots.

Response: Ms. Wetherald stated that other jurisdictions are running into these same issues. Most of the other jurisdictions are saying that you have the same sound at any ball park where people are playing sports. It is going to be loud. Mr. Byrd stated that the number one complaint from the neighbors is after hours use. The e-mails are coming in at 11:00 p.m.

Question: Mr. Adams inquired whether the kids are self-policing things.

Response: Mr. Byrd responded that it is a small minority of kids that are causing these problems at night. We are considering hiring a seasonal employee to monitor the spot after hours. If we fence the spot, that should help enforce the security.

Ms. Wetherald stated that when our whole team looked at everything and tried to be objective, it was unanimous to keep the spot at Centennial. The complaints from the residents are constant and strong even though we've responded to everything that we have promised, except fencing it.

Question: Ms. Citaramanis inquired as to the amount of money the Department is willing to spend in order to make the equipment satisfactory to the public. Ms. Citaramanis stated that the skate spot definitely should not be moved.

Response: Mr. Byrd stated that it would cost \$15,000.00 to fence the spot and it would take care of the potential for after hours use.

Dr. Goodman stated that Centennial is a loud and active park. The local people chose to build their homes next to a park. Perhaps it would be reasonable to contact the 8-10 constantly vocal neighbors and tell them that we certainly recognize that after hours use is disturbing their peace. We propose to erect a fence around the spot to enforce security and lessen after hours use. We welcome any comments.

Mr. Adams stated that you have already gone through a process and now are evaluating the situation. Have you thought of including another public hearing in the evaluation process?

Ms. Wetherald stated that we included the information from the public hearing in the report, and we really aren't going to change anything now.

Ms. Citaramanis stated that erecting a fence around the spot shows the public that the Department is doing the very best it can to solve the afterhours problem.

Question: Mr. Brudis inquired as to the role that the contingent workers are taking regarding the skate spot.

Response: Mr. Byrd responded that the contingent workers are a part of the evening staff at Centennial Park that works from 6:00 p.m. until 12:00 p.m.

Mr. Brudis suggested that the contingent staff be present at the skate spot after hours and before the park opens.

Question: Ms. Wetherald inquired of the Board as to whether the skate spot should be removed from Centennial Park.

Response: A discussion ensued among the Board members and it was unanimous that the skate spot remain at Centennial Park.

IX. SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

1. An extensive evaluation draft has been completed and, with input from the community, will be compiled into the final document. Many staff hours have been spent addressing concerns over the past year, as well as making the site a viable location for skaters in the area. The Skate Spot is meeting its intended goal.
2. It is the committee's perception that some of the neighbors bordering the park are not happy with the site being close to their homes. There are few complaints, if any, outside of the immediate radius of the facility, and we have received positive responses from the skaters, skaters' parents, and other community members who attend the site.
3. The Skate Spot meets the immediate needs of skaters in the area and there are several requests for more sites due to its success. There is no other permanent County-run skate park/skate spot. All of the surrounding Recreation and Parks agencies have skate parks/skate spots. The Department does provide a skate park on wheels that is mobile.
4. The Department of Recreation and Parks is meeting all the required criteria to determine an effective Skate Spot according to a national source on the subject.
5. There have been many concerns that were brought forward and addressed over the past year which can be reviewed in the chart (Section VI). The Department of Recreation and Parks has been responsive to issues as they have arisen.
6. Fencing of the Skate Spot area has been discussed as a solution in response to neighborhood concerns regarding after-hours use. We are concerned from our research from other counties that fencing does not provide a 100% commitment to preventing entry to the facility after hours. Cutting the fence or gaining access over the top of the fence is possible and incurs additional costs for repair. Furthermore, fencing eliminates some of the freedom that skaters appreciate about the current Skate Spot, and brings about a welcoming atmosphere.
7. Security has been a concern raised from the surrounding neighbors. Our staff have spent extensive hours reviewing surveillance camera tape and found minimal evidence of evening

activity on this site. *Review after-hours use statistics in the Appendix, along with more info about how the security camera functions.*

8. Better social networking is needed regarding the Skate Spot (such as Facebook and/or Twitter pages). Positive publicity on the Skate Spot will also provide information to address any negative stereotypes of skaters.
9. The Department of Recreation and Parks will consider implementing a program which would allow permits to be given for urban art painting.
10. The Department of Recreation and Parks will consider adding bleachers to encourage spectators including family members and the general public to observe and gain an appreciation for the sport. In lieu of urban art, the Department will consider the installation of an information board (half cork, half chalk) to allow skaters to communicate items such as competitions, and sales at local skate shops. This board would be monitored by staff for appropriateness in content just as the urban art was.

X. RECOMMENDATIONS IN ORDER OF THE COMMITTEE'S SUGGESTIONS

Please note: These recommendations function independently. The first point is the committee's primary recommendation. Subsequent recommendations are proposed in the event that the preceding recommendation is disapproved.

1. Leave the Skate Spot as-is in the current location and continue to address any issues as they arise. This would require no additional cost to provide maintenance as needed, which is the protocol currently in place.
2. Put up a fence around the facility intended to reduce after-hours access and would cost up to \$15,000.
3. Move the Skate Spot to another site in the county and review the evaluation in the process for the greatest need and location selection. Refer to original site selection slide at beginning of evaluation.

XI. Final Recommendation 6/16/2010

The recommendation is to keep the Centennial Skate spot at the original site. It is our intent to continue to address any issues as they arise.

- The Department will be refining the existing toe plates with rubber bushings where the metal joins the concrete ramp and use rubber caulk between the metal and asphalt surface. It is our intent to reduce the noise as the boards hit the ramp.
- As is the case in other park sites to control after hours use, a fence would be installed around the Spot to prevent use after hours. At 8:00 p.m. or sunset (depending on the time of year) curfew will be established and the gates will be closed.

As part of the department's general maintenance schedule the following items will be incorporated:

- The existing pathway through the Skate Spot is being relocated as a part of the drainage project. The foot traffic that currently goes through the skate spot will now be diverted around the skate spot.
- Staff will be installing a spot a pot enclosure as is our practice at some of our other sites.
- Additional trees will be planted at the site for screening purposes. This task will take place during the fall planting season.
- The skate spot will continue to be monitored by park staff for the overall supervision of Centennial park management.
- These park amenities will take place or be installed this summer. (Other than the tree planting.)

XII. APPENDIX (ATTACHMENTS)

- REPORT TO THE RECREATION & PARKS ADVISORY BOARD & THE CENTENNIAL SKATE PARK NEIGHBORHOOD – FEBRUARY 20, 2008 (POWERPOINT)
- PROCESS FOR CONSTRUCTION
- LETTER TO RECREATION & PARKS ADVISORY BOARD (3/5/2008)
- CENTENNIAL PARK SKATE SPOT COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION OF AFTER HOURS USE
- SURVEILLANCE PICTURES
- RELOCATION ESTIMATE FOR THE CENTENNIAL SKATE SPOT TO SAVAGE PARK
- SUMMER 2010 ENROLLMENT (AS OF 4/21/2010)
- SKATE PARK SURVEY

SKATE SPOT CONSTRUCTION PROCESS

Once the project was awarded, park renovations worked with the American Ramp Co.

Supervisor, Johnson, Crane & Blakes repair for one week to install the Skate Spot. The park renovation staff consisted of (5) staff members.

All concrete pieces/units had to have extensive stainless welding and grinding to the seams for safety purposes.

Park renovations staff performed caulk/foam installation to all steel toe plates to reduce the noise one month after the original installation.

LETTER TO RECREATION & PARKS ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS (MARCH 5, 2008)



HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION & PARKS

7120 Oakland Mills Road ■ Columbia, Maryland 21046 ■ 410-313-4640

Gary J. Arthur, Director
garthur@howardcountymd.gov

FAX 410-313-1699
TDD 410-313-2323

March 5, 2008

Dear Recreation and Parks Advisory Board Members:

First, I would like to thank each member for attending the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board meeting on February 20th. We have enclosed the following for your perusal: minutes of February 20th meeting; DVD of proposed skate spot area pointing out issues of landscaping, parking, noise, etc; articles on skating and benefit for children in conquering obesity; Howard Sun article and interview with local skaters. In addition, you should have a copy of the Power Point presentation given at the February 20th meeting.

We have counted the number of testimony in support and opposition of the skate spot from the public hearing and correspondence we received at the office. We have approximately over 550 in support and approximately over 150 opposed to the skate spot. The 550 in support represented their favorable opinion of the skate park and many voiced on the location at Western Regional Park. We have also received several letters/e-mails in support of the skate spot, but not in the proposed location.

History:

The north section of Centennial Park opened in 1984 and the housing development in this area started in 1987. The proposed skate spot is approximately 300' from the closest house.

Areas of concern raised by nearby residents:

Noise

Too close to adjoining neighborhood. Plans are to minimize impact on neighborhood through additional landscaping on two sides of the proposed area. Install security cameras, provide police and park ranger patrols throughout the day, and increase visitation by staff during operating hours. The equipment being installed is designed to be maintenance free and because the actual skating surface will be all concrete, this will reduce the noise level considerably.

Landscaping

The Department of Recreation and Parks will screen the area by planting white pines near the fence and open area along hillside leading to the west area of the park. We will have security cameras installed and we will have periodic staff visitation to the area around the skate spot.

Skate Spot is Secluded:

With security cameras and over 50,000 people using the park, visible from athletic fields, Old Annapolis Road, and pathway, we do not feel that the site is as secluded as mentioned.

Recreation and Parks Advisory Board Members

March 5, 2008

Page 2

Parking:

We have approximately 27 dedicated spots, including handicapped spaces in the area of the proposed skate spot. Also, there is additional parking in the overflow and hard surface entry area with additional spaces that would accommodate approximately 60 vehicles.

Budget:

This facility was not a separate line item in the Capital Budget, but is mentioned in FY 08 and FY 09 systemic projects N3108; therefore, we believe this to be a renovation of a park amenity.

This project is also in FY 09 Capital Budget under the same systemic project. If funding can continue, the Department's goal is to fund additional skate spots at Western Regional Park, Rockburn Park, proposed North Laurel Park and proposed Blandair Park. As these skate spots become available, the pressure on Centennial north area will decrease in the future.

After Hour Use:

The Department of Recreation and Parks will have full time park staff open the park at dawn and close the park at dusk. Staff will clear all participants from the area at closing time. Staff will check the park for vandalism and other issues on a scheduled basis.

If the neighbors encounter patrons in the park at night, they are encouraged to call/notify the authorities.

Thank you for your time in reviewing all the attachments. We will discuss this matter further at our next Board meeting. See you on March 19th.

Sincerely,

Gary J. Arthur
Director

GJA/PB/db

cc: Deanna Peel

E:\gja\skatespotmarch08boardmembers

CENTENNIAL PARK SKATE SPOT COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION OF AFTER HOURS USE

1. **Preface:** *Daily monitoring of footage and record keeping of the Skate Spot camera began the week of January 25, 2010.*

• **January 2010 Statistics**

- 4 out of 7 days showed activity at the Skate Spot after the Park closed at 5:00 p.m.
 - 5:39 p.m. was the latest that skaters were shown on film.
- In each instance, the skaters using the Skate Spot were gone within one hour, if not sooner.
- During the 4 days that after-hours activity was noted, the maximum amount of skaters at any given time was eight (8).

◆ **February 2010 Statistics**

- No after-hour usage at the Skate Spot was recorded during the month of February.

• **March 2010 Statistics**

- 2 out of 31 days showed activity at the Skate Spot after Park Closing.
 - 1 out of those 2 days was before Daylight Savings Time.
 - 1 out of those 2 days was after Daylight Savings Time.
 - Sunset was determined to be at approximately 7:50 p.m. after Daylight Savings Time set in, and at 6:32 p.m. before Daylight Savings Time set in.
 - 7:55 p.m. was the latest that skaters were shown on film.
- In each instance, the skaters using the Skate Spot were gone within 15 minutes, if not sooner.
- During the 2 days that after-hours activity was noted, the maximum amount of skaters at any given time was three (3) persons.
- One occurrence showed 2 people appeared on film with a high powered flashlight and were looking around at the equipment for no longer than 5 minutes. This occurred at 7:31 p.m.
- The second occurrence showed 3 Skaters at 7:44 p.m. and they were gone by 8:00 p.m.

◆ **April 2010 Statistics**

- 2 out of 19 days showed activity at the Skate Spot after Park Closing
 - Saturday, April 10, 2010 at 8:25 p.m. 3 teens were viewed on the Skate Spot with paint cans, painting the concrete and asphalt. Headlights were seen (presumably staff) and the kids dispersed. Upon further inspection, none of the graffiti found was vulgar or offensive, and had mostly washed away within the next week.
 - Saturday, April 17, 2010 at 8:29 p.m. 4 kids were spotted running all around the skate spot, but did not appear to be wearing roller blades or skates. They left after approximately 5 minutes.

◆ **Summary in Percentages**

- The last week of January (only) reflects after hour use 57% of the time.
 - Note: The percentage of afterhours use for the entire month of January is 13%.
- The month of March reflects afterhours use 6% of the time.

- .03% of afterhours use was before Daylight Savings Time.
- .03% of afterhours use was after Daylight Savings Time.
- The month of April reflects afterhours use 11% of the time.
- ◆ Below is the overview of the security view of the camera and location etc onsite.

SURVEILLANCE CAMERA PHOTOS



SURVEILLANCE CAMERA PHOTOS



SURVEILLANCE CAMERA PHOTOS



SURVEILLANCE CAMERA



SURVEILLANCE CAMERA



SURVEILLANCE CAMERA PHOTO



RELOCATION ESTIMATE FOR THE CENTENNIAL SKATE SPOT

Park Renovations was asked for a cost estimate to relocate the skate spot. The cost estimate came in at \$20k. (not including a level pad)

All welds would have to be torched and grinded smooth, then rewelded and grinded at the new site.

The crane company would have to be contracted twice to remove the concrete units and reset simultaneously.

There would also be a large safety concern for staff to remove and reinstall the units weighing thousands of pounds each.

STAFF MUST GRIND OUT THE WELDS ON ALL PIECES OF EQUIPMENT PRIOR TO MOVING	N/C
(5) STAFF LABOR TO CUT WELDS AND REMOVE EQUIPMENT FOR ONE WEEK	N/C
TEMPORARY CHAINLINK SAFETY FENCE RENTAL	\$1,500.00
CRANE RENTAL FOR EQUIPMENT REMOVAL AT CENTENNIAL	\$2,000.00
TRUCK AND TRAILER CONTRACT FOR HAULING EQUIPMENT	\$1,600.00
CRANE RENTAL FOR OFF LOADING EQUIPMENT AT PARK	\$2,000.00
MAY NEED A TEMPORARY ROAD TO GET TO LOWER BASKETBALL COURT	\$1,200.00
BASKETBALL POLES AND GOAL REMOVAL AT PARK BY STAFF	N/C
TEMPORARY CHAINLINK SAFETY FENCE RENTAL	\$1,500.00
CRANE RENTAL FOR ONE WEEK FOR EQUIPMENT ERECTION	\$5,000.00
(5) STAFF LABOR FOR ONE WEEK TO INSTALL EQUIPMENT	N/C
WELDING CONTRACTOR TO REWELD ALL EQUIPMENT	\$2,000.00
MISC. SUPPLIES & MATERIALS	\$500.00
REMOVE TEMPORARY ROAD, TOPSOIL AND SEED	<u>\$2,000.00</u>
TOTAL ESTIMATE	\$19,300.00

SUMMER 2010 SKATEBOARD CAMP ENROLLMENT

Current Enrollment (as of 4/27/10):

June 28 – July 2: 24 enrolled (full), 1 wait list

July 19 – July 23: 24 enrolled (full), 6 wait list

July 26 – July 30: 24 enrolled (full), 1 wait list

All three sections of Skateboard Camp at the Skate Spot are filled, with 24 enrollees per section and additional interested participants on the wait list. Camp is priced at \$189 per participant, for a current earned income of \$13,608.