

April 1, 2005

Andrea Riner
Parks and Open Space Planning Manager
City of Eugene, Parks & Open Space Division
1820 Roosevelt Blvd.
Eugene, OR 97402

RE: Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Comprehensive Plan

Dear Andrea:

We are writing to comment on the Skate Parks section of the PROS Comprehensive Plan, Draft Parks and Open Space Analysis as well as the recent release of the complete Draft PROS Comprehensive Plan. As you know, skateboarding has seen strong growth over the past several years, with overall participation up by 81% and frequent participation (defined as 52+ days per year) surging by 173% between 1998 and 2002 (SGMA International, 2003). *In 2003, skateboarding participation nationwide was estimated to be over 11 million. This is roughly the same participation level as baseball.* Worldwide, skateboarding also continues to grow and skate parks continue to be built in Europe, South America, and Australia. Skateboarding provides an active, healthy activity for our youth and is particularly appealing to kids not interested in traditional team sports such as basketball and football.

With regards to the "Findings/Trends" section of the report on pages 47-48, we would make the following observations:

- 1) Point 2 states that "according to the Community Survey, skateboarding is the least popular activity in terms of participation." This appears to be a somewhat misleading interpretation of the data that was collected in this Survey. Clearly, skateboarding is more appealing to youth aged 10-17 and more meaningful participation conclusions should be drawn from demographic specific analysis, such as was attempted in Point 1.
- 2) Point 3 makes perhaps the most important point of this section, which is that skateparks are considered by Eugene's youth to be one of the most needed facilities in our community.
- 3) Point 4 is also rather deceptive by citing the NSGA estimates of a 0.5% growth in skateboarding since 2001. As mentioned, national participation in skateboarding has grown 81% between 1998 and 2002 and American Sports Data Group projects that skateboarding may have over 14 million participants in 2005. Casual observations have also noted a far higher growth in skateboarding in the Northwest in the past several years. This conclusion is drawn not only from discussions with skateboard industry representatives, but also from observations of the growth in the number and usage of skateparks in other Oregon towns.
- 4) Point 6 follows on the heels of Point 3 with the logical observation that not only is there consistent demand for more skating facilities, but that the demand is most acute for all-weather facilities. It is difficult if not impossible to skateboard in the rain.

As the report points out, there are only 5 community skateparks in Eugene and all are very modest in size. In light of Eugene's population, the continuing growth of and interest in skateboarding from our local youth, and the community's lack of skating facilities, it is perfectly clear that the city of Eugene needs to build another skatepark as soon as possible. On page 48, the report notes "the City Central sub-area should be a priority." Other parts of the report point out that youth, especially teens, should be the highest priority for increased services. **All of these factors point toward constructing Eugene's first flagship covered skatepark at the underutilized Washington-Jefferson Park.**

The Washington-Jefferson Park area is perfectly situated to support a large covered skatepark by incorporating the bridge overpass into the skatepark siting. Furthermore, due to its urban location, the facility could be lit without disruption to residential uses. In order to gauge interest in a skatepark at this location, Tactics Boardshop skate team members circulated **a supporting petition last year and received over 1,600 signatures from local residents in just a few weeks.** A copy of this petition is attached, along with the explanatory cover sheet that accompanied the signature form.

Andrea, the time has come to make building a large covered, lit skatepark at the Washington-Jefferson skatepark a priority for the Eugene Parks and Recreation Department. This skatepark could even be part of a larger public plaza upgrade to this urban park. We are acutely aware of the financial restraints your department faces in these times. However, we are willing to personally dedicate our efforts and resources to helping your Department acquire the funds necessary to build this skatepark. Although we have not received any formal bids, our preliminary research indicates that we will need to secure between \$350-400,000 to build a large and diverse, covered, lit skatepark at the Washington-Jefferson Park. If the city commits to siting a skatepark at this location and cannot secure complete funding to build the skatepark, we are willing to spearhead efforts to attempt to raise up to half the total funds from private donors. Our hope is that we can work together to obtain any remaining funding from other government sources and matching grants.

The time is now to get this project off the ground. The PROS Comprehensive Plan has been a valuable tool for charting the future of Parks & Recreation in Eugene and we are very pleased to see the most recent Draft plan list providing a covered centrally located skatepark as a Priority 1 initiative (p. 60). We hope your Department will formally articulate a commitment to building a skatepark at the Washington-Jefferson Park in the final PROS Plan. We look forward to hearing from you in the near future so that we can talk about making this vision a reality. Thank you for your time.

Best regards,

Robert Chandler & Matthew Patton

cc: Eugene Mayor, Kitty Piercy
Eugene City Council Members
Lane County Commissioners
4J Board of Directors
4J High School Principals
4J Middle School Principals
Eugene Chief of Police, Robert Lehner
Kidsports Executive Director, Jim Torrey