

April 12, 2006

Letter to the Editor
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RE: Support our youth, let's build a downtown skatepark

Skateboarding provides an active, healthy, independent activity for our youth. In 2003, skateboarding participation nationwide was over 11 million - roughly the same as **baseball**. American Sports Data group estimated that skateboarding had over 14 million participants in 2005. Skateboarding participation grew over 80% between 1998-2002. Eugene has followed this nationwide trend.

Over the past 3 years, the Eugene Parks & Recreation staff worked with the community to develop a guiding plan for the future of our parks and open spaces. Certain projects consistently bubbled to the top, reflecting the greatest needs. Providing a **covered centrally located skatepark** was one of these projects and was given a Priority 1a status – the highest priority level in the plan.

Where should we build a large flagship skatepark? Washington-Jefferson Park - one of Eugene's most under-utilized open space assets – is the answer. This area is perfectly situated to support a lit, covered skatepark by incorporating the bridge overpass into the skatepark siting.

The City Council is considering referring to voters a \$25 million Parks bond measure, primarily for land acquisition. This bond makes great sense – now is the time to acquire some key lands before they are gone. However, we also need to fund a few highly needed projects immediately. A downtown skatepark would be the right project to include in this bond measure. The \$500,000 estimated cost is modest, but the reservoir of citizen support is huge. This project will support our youth – something I heard many Councilors at Monday's meeting echo as their highest parks related priority.

-Bob Chandler