

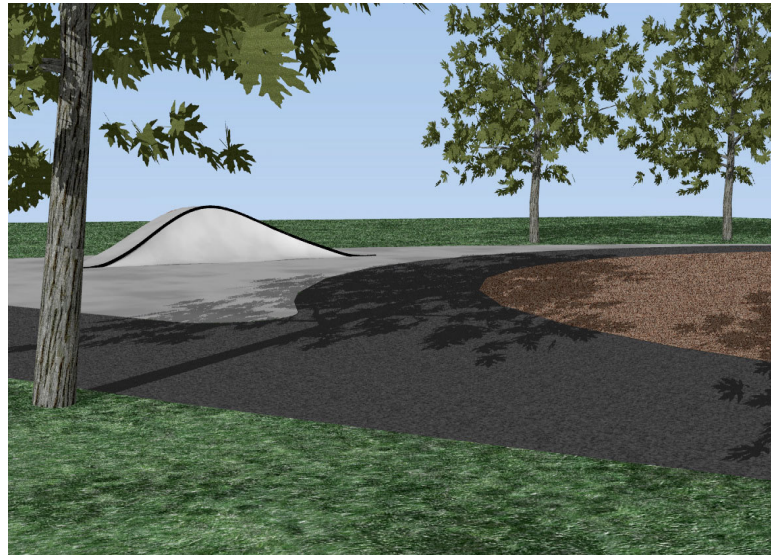
Integrated Skateable Terrain in Seattle

The Vision



As much-needed major skatepark construction continues in our large regional parks, this initiative seeks to seamlessly integrate more skateable terrain into smaller neighborhood parks, creating a complimentary network of “skatespots” and “skatedots” for the public to enjoy. The design shown in these pictures is a simple cement pad with a raised embankment upon which skateboarders, roller skaters, rollerbladers and razor scooter enthusiasts could practice their craft and improve their skills next to other types of playground equipment, creating a supportive, low-maintenance public space for skating.

Considering skating in existing and new parks and proposed park upgrades will add appropriate, site-specific, skateable terrain to our city. Skate advocates could help design the layout of walkways, assist with bench placement, identify prime locations for skating, and suggest ways to avoid conflicts between skaters and other park users.



The Rationale

Supports the transient nature of the skating activity. Imagine kids stopping at 5 different spots along a “circuit” or “skate trail” of spots, visiting with friends, grabbing some food, picking up people along the way, and getting out into the world, which is more true to the nature of skating than all climbing into a designated hole in the ground for a few hours, launching off grocery store loading docks next to smelly dumpsters, or driving to a distant roller rink. Expanding the “park” into the city-at-large is an overdue idea and more conducive to growth and sustainability. Features can be upgraded and added with comparably low amounts of effort and expense.

Acknowledges that skating is everywhere. Skateboarding is not a crime and should be encouraged in appropriate public spaces through landscaping features that can be used by skaters. In contrast, the landscape of areas where skating is inappropriate should be designed to deter it. Because the law has not required park planners to consider the impacts of their landscaping or development practices on skating, or of future skaters on proposed parks or buildings, the sport of skateboarding itself grew and flourished in a concrete environment where stairs, banks, ledges, loading docks, etc. on both public and private property were the de facto skatedots of choice. This initiative gives park designers an opportunity to direct the skating activity that's already happening into loosely defined areas that are clearly superior for skating. 78% of skateboarders consider themselves "street skaters" and yet there are very few places for them to legally skate.

Integrates skating with other disciplines. If neighborhood-level skate advocates are able to work with other community leaders who advise the Parks Department about new park features, they have an opportunity to educate all parties on the positive aspects of incorporating and integrating skating into the urban landscape. This would help the public understand skating, might actually help get more skateparks built, and would help the skate community connect with the people responsible for sculpting our cityscape. The skating community would have an opportunity to learn from these other disciplines as well, opening up new avenues and ideas.

Focuses effort. Including skating features with general construction guidelines gets more skateable terrain in less time, with less effort. We're finding that the process is grueling and seems to be equal whether or not you're trying to lobby for a 20K sq. ft. park or a single banked ledge with a granite cap in the corner of an existing park. Skateboard supporters should not have to canvas the community with petitions in order to have a place to enjoy their sport. Integrated skate features would look just like other park features, and in some cases would be even more aesthetically pleasing. Park users and citizens would not perceive the skate features as "issue worthy" as they would be unassuming and well integrated into the surrounding environment.

Broadens the skatepark design/build industry. This initiative would encourage commercial development of skate-friendly structures like benches, parking blocks, barriers, bus stops, mailboxes, etc. Skate representatives would be needed for sitting on design committees, in meetings, and on site, which would bring more diversity to the process. Again, this is all tied into the idea of removing some of the insulation around skatepark design and construction. Integrating skateable terrain into existing and new parks could be a great "ramp up" for a Parks Dept. staff who is tasked with understanding and creating facilities for skaters. It could also be a great way to integrate skating as an acceptable park activity, making it as commonplace as kids playing on a swing set or two people playing chess.

Some Next Steps

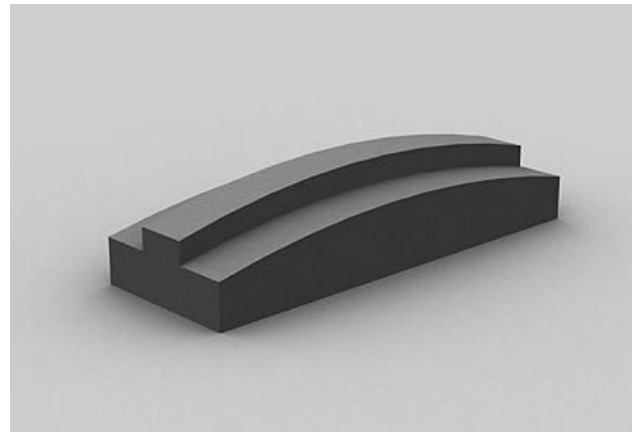
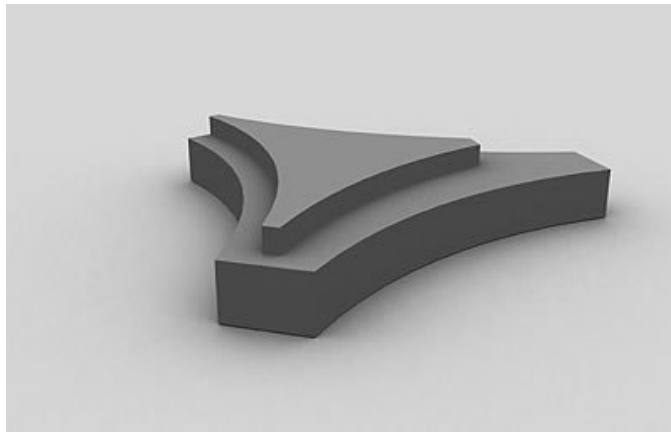
Identify some sites. Verify initial administrative details with Parks management, then add descriptions and support for proposed sites

Study the sites, design them.

- Look at unofficial spots that already attract skaters and the possibility of "legitimizing" them with sanctioned upgrades
- Investigate public art programs that could help provide inspiration for funding and placement
- Explore the Parks Dept's ability to work with DPD and other city agencies responsible for core infrastructure and general construction projects
- Determine what type of spots are needed and how multiple spots can be complimentary, ie: the "skate trail"
- UW may teach a skatespot design class during Spring or Summer quarter 2005, wherein students will design skatespots on the sites identified by Parks.
- Prior to this, members of the SPAC might also seek design help for specific sites from professional resources in the community at-large. The goal is to have a clear initial picture of the proposed skatespot that can be used as a focal point for public outreach, detailed design, and fundraising.

Examples

Below and on the following pages are some additional examples of real and imagined skatespots, skatedots, skateplazas and skateable art features.



For more information about how you can bring skating to your neighborhood, please contact:

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