



City of Palo Alto

COLLEAGUES MEMO

DATE: April 12, 2021

TO: City Council Members

FROM: Council Member Cormack, Council Member Tanaka

SUBJECT: COLLEAGUES' MEMO REGARDING REFERRAL TO THE PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE OF A NEW SKATE PARK (CONTINUED FROM MARCH 15, 2021)

Goal

Having an additional, updated and inclusive skatepark would be valuable to the community of Palo Alto, for both children and adults, by providing a local option for healthy and fun outdoor activities to the large community of action sport participants within Palo Alto.

Background and discussion

The only skatepark in Palo Alto is a historical skate bowl at Greer park. While many years ago it was considered great, layers of graffiti have led to slippery surfaces, and the newly evolved forms of skateboarding, BMX biking, scootering, etc. have surpassed the conditions that the bowl at Greer park can adequately support. Almost 2,000 people have signed a [petition](#) asking for a new skate park with a good mix of street and transition features that would support skaters at all levels. Many other cities on the Peninsula, around the country, and elsewhere in the world, have already created new skateparks to provide safe and supportive environments for their community and we need to catch up.

The lack of proper facilities for these activities leads to many people pursuing their activity in other cities, which requires non-environmentally friendly transportation. Alternatively, many people skate in the streets, sometimes trespassing onto private property, or in an unsafe environment that could harm the participant, property, or bystanders. With skateboarding an official Olympic sport starting this summer, interest and participation is likely to increase.

The community is ready to work with the Parks and Recreation Commission to identify an appropriate location and design that would be substantially paid for with private funds. One estimate of the cost per square foot is \$75, so the total construction expense will likely exceed \$1 million. Specialized skatepark design and construction companies exist and will work with the available land and funding.

Comparison of current situation with proposed

Current Greer Skatepark (5,788 square feet):

- limited to more experienced skaters
- only has bowls; no versatility; no ledges, rails, stair sets, flat bar, etc.
- very slippery and uneven due to many years of graffiti
- small size results in very crowded activity

New proposed skatepark update (15,000 to 20,000 square feet):

- will have sets of stairs in varying heights
- will have a new bowl with a metal lip around the edges to support modern bowl skating and lip tricks
- will have a smaller bowl, quarter pipes, bank ramps, or mini half pipes to support beginners
- will have ledges, metal flat rails, and metal handrails of varying height

Recommendation

Refer this proposal to the Parks and Recreation Commission to evaluate the need for a skatepark, identify a suitable location, and prioritize a skatepark facility within the [Parks, Trails, Natural Open Space and Recreation Master Plan](#).

Resource Impact

Referral of this item to the Parks and Recreation Commission would initiate a several month effort involving the Commission and staff, with particular appreciation to the high level of community engagement that would be required. This includes receiving input from advocates of new facilities and/or replacement of the existing Greer Park facilities, as well as neighborhood and general community input regarding any proposed sites. Areas of Greer Park adjacent to the existing skatepark were previously designed as passive recreation areas by the community, so consultation with the park user community will be important. To the extent that other locations beyond Greer Park are considered, the staff effort required for community outreach could be considerably greater and would need to be prioritized among other parks planning efforts.

As noted, the expectation that such a facility would be largely funded by private donors adds additional considerations that would best be outlined at the outset of a planning effort. Ideally there will be an organization that steps forward as the point of contact for fundraising and outreach to prospective donors. The City has successfully worked with several groups on community-supported facilities, and establishing clear roles and expectations will be very important to such an effort.

A project of this nature would ultimately be incorporated into a future year's Capital Improvement Program (CIP), reflecting a timeframe for implementation that reflects relative priority for funding as well the review and approval steps required. When fundraising is complete, it will take considerable staff time to manage the CIP from planning through construction.