

## NOTES FROM THE APRIL 30, 2015 COLONNADE PUBLIC WORKSHOP ON POTENTIAL SKATE FEATURES

*Drafted by Tobias Coughlin; edited by Chris Leman*

The workshop was held on a Thursday at the Agora Conference Center (1551 Eastlake Avenue), with 24 volunteers in attendance. The Colonnade study area is 20 acres of WSDOT land, of which 7.5 acres is currently under lease to the Seattle Department of Parks and Recreation.

The *Citywide Skatepark Plan* (2007) identified a need in this part of Seattle, but proposed only a skatedot near the corner of Eastlake Avenue and E. Allison Street (two blocks south of the University Bridge). That site faces fervent opposition from some nearby residents, and the Eastlake Community Council urges focus on Colonnade, where there is no known local opposition to skate features.

Attendees widely emphasized the need for covered spaces. Rain is a major negative factor for Seattle skaters. Micah Shapiro, of the Grindline skatepark design firm said, "Anything that's skateable and undercover is always a plus." Nancy Chang from Skate Like a Girl added, "we've always advocated for a covered space."

Lights are also very important, with many saying that opportunities to skate late at night are scarce. It's hard for people who work in restaurant/hospitality industry to skate after work; and for anyone to skate during dark winter months. In Seattle, Jefferson Park has the only skate facility that is lit at night, and that ends at 10 p.m. Otherwise, lighted skateparks are commercial enterprises that charge for their use.

There was general agreement that a lighted skate facility that is covered from rain would be a citywide resource, a draw for skaters from all over. The extensive use could be a selling point for budgeters. It was also felt that active use of a skatepark would decrease crime and drug use in the area, and that users would be good stewards for maintenance and discouragement of vandalism and graffiti.

Graham Turnage from Evergreen Bike Alliance attended to express support from the mountain biking community. He emphasized that some mountain bike features now at Colonnade are underutilized and could be converted to skateable. "Evergreen is supporting this skatepark thing, fully."

Skateboard advocates welcomed the support from bicyclists, while emphasizing that dirt and gravel such as found on typical mountain bike facilities are a problem for skateboards. However, facilities designed for skateboards are popular for use also by BMX bikes and by nonmotorized scooters.

Support for skate features at Colonnade was clear; the question was where. Consensus was that most feasible is the undeveloped space next to the Lakeview Blvd. underpass on the northernmost side. The site could support a small skate park of 3-4,000 square feet, about a

quarter the size of the ones at Woodland Park and Seattle Center. Already drained and wired for lights, it could be dug down or built up. The lower ceiling height would give much better rain coverage than further south where the ground is so much farther below the freeway. The location also would mitigate light and noise pollution. The close proximity (approximately 85 feet on center) of the columns will require close coordination with WSDOT if there is to be digging close to their bases.

Two other sites in the existing I-5 Colonnade Open space might work for a skatepark, but are already committed: (1) The bicycle pump track that is next to Lakeview Blvd. near the I-5 off-ramp is a flat area that could be suitable for a skatepark, but it is already a mountain bike feature and anyway is exposed to rain; and (2) the existing off-leash area would work as a site for a skatepark, but of course is not available unless the dog owners find a better space.

Two sites seem promising in the potential expansion area south of the existing I-5 Colonnade Open Space: (1) the dirt rises between WSDOT's leased parking lot and the graffiti area; and (2) much further south is a large flat covered area next to the graffiti wall—a site that however could be troublesome because it is crossed by a WSDOT access road.

Although hoping for a moderate sized classic skatepark, the workshop attendees urged elsewhere at Colonnade some multipurpose features that skateboarders could enjoy, but these features would look like a normal park, not a "skatepark." Two such features already exist in Colonnade: (1) the granite "gathering area" can accommodate some skateboarding; and (2) the paved switchback pathway that extends downhill from Colonnade's north edge has natural appeal for skateboarders without much change.

Ideas for new multipurpose features that would benefit skateboarders include ramps, bowls, benches, planters, flat rails, steps, and ledges. The Grindline company representatives suggested a series of linked mini-areas or nodes with a diversity of style features. An advantage is adding bits at a time instead of in needing to build in one large push.

These features could be connected by a "skateable path" (pedestrian/mixed used) winding around the columns. The first feature could be at the northernmost space, with additions along a use path going through park. The node model allows for most diverse obstacles, and is beneficial for "transportainment." Cruising from spot to spot adds an element of itinerant fun to skate features.

The "Wall of Death" (a partially dismantled public art installation under the University Bridge near the Burke Gilman Trail) was enjoyed so much by skateboarders that the City installed concrete barriers to prevent such use. As the "Wall of Death" is unsuccessful in its current location, could it be moved to Colonnade?

One skater suggested "sexy materials" such as stamped brick, granite, and natural looking features. The idea was a nice public plaza rather than a typical gray concrete skatepark. He noted the nice aesthetics of stamped brick at Bellevue's skate plaza and Delridge's "china banks" obstacles. Other skaters called for granite/marble ledges as being fun to skate and

also aesthetically pleasing. It was agreed that skaters would rather have one good granite ledge than several angle iron ledges.

The attendees felt that that non-skateboard amenities would be an important draw for skateboarders too. Art and murals were suggested by Nancy Chang, as a way to bring funding and make the space friendlier to public. There was a strong desire for a restroom, although awareness of abuse such as for drugs.

It was also emphasized to provide better bicycle and pedestrian pathways and ADA access, although there was concern that a north-south bike commuter path could create problems requiring careful planning.

Skaters are urged to submit design ideas to the Eastlake Community Council at [info@eastlakeseattle.org](mailto:info@eastlakeseattle.org) AND via Instagram by tagging @eastlakeskate in photos or videos of spots they would like to see emulated.