Skate parks: a guide for landscape architects

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Much like designing golf courses, designing and building skateboard parks requires very specific knowledge. This knowledge is difficult to obtain without firsthand experience of the sport in question. An understanding of how design details such as alignment, layout, surface, proportion, and radii of the curved surfaces impact the skateboarder's experience is essential and, without it, a poor park will result.

Skateboarding is the fastest growing sport in the US, and new skate parks are being finished at a rate of about three per day. Cities and even small towns all across North America are committing themselves to embracing this sport and giving both younger and older participants a positive environment in which to enjoy it. In the interest of both the skateboarders who use them and the people that pay to have them built, it is imperative that these skate parks are built correctly.

Landscape architects will increasingly be called upon to help build these public parks in conjunction with skate park design/builders. At present, the relationship between landscape architects and skate park design/builders is often strained due to the gaps in knowledge between the two professions. This does not have to be the case.

This thesis synthesizes information about skate parks into design guidelines for landscape architects. This information comes from:

1. A case study of the Kansas City Skate Plaza (a.k.a. Penn Valley Skate Park), involving skating of the park, video/photography, physical measurements, and site analysis.

2. Books, articles, movies, and websites concerning ethnography, landscape architecture, concrete construction methods, skate park and pool construction methods, landscape architecture for public spaces, and skateboarding/skateboarding culture.

3. Interviews with landscape architects, skate park design/builders, and skateboarders.

The intent of this thesis is to help landscape architects familiarize themselves in preparation for working with the skate park design/builders.

Keywords: Skate parks; Skateboarding; Landscape architecture; Skateboards; Design guidelines

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The biggest skatepark in Chile, Skatepark Los Reyes is situated on the banks of the Machopo River. It is one of the most scenic parks in the world. It has enough bits to keep you busy for days, plus lights for night skates in the Chilean summer. 18. 'Livi' Livingston Skatepark, Livingston, Scotland. One for the hardcore old school skaters. No ultimate skateparks list would be complete without Venice Beach. Skating has gone on here for decades, home to giants such as Jay Adams and Tony Alva. It’s in an ideal location – right on the beach. 15. Stoke Plaza, Stoke, UK. The Stoke-on-Trent city council put up half a million pounds to create this 34,000-square-foot park in the north of England in 2005. It does not disappoint. A street-skater’s mecca, it’s one of the largest skate plazas in Europe.