

# Development Funds for New Skatepark in Old Town

## Project Expected to Strengthen Local Economy

Portland Vibrant Communities Commissioner Dan Ryan, who oversees Portland Parks & Recreation (PP&R), has designated \$15 million in System Development Charges (SDCs) to fully fund a new skatepark in the Old Town neighborhood. The park will be located near the Steel Bridge on the west side of the Willamette River.

“When we have more places to play, there is a better quality of life for our city,” says Commissioner Ryan. “Transforming part of Old Town into a citywide recreation destination will be a tremendous asset for our businesses, neighbors, and visitors from all over.”

Since the early 2000s, Portland’s skating community has envisioned a premier skatepark downtown. After extensive community input, the concept was advanced in PP&R’s 2008 Skatepark System Plan.

“The skatepark near the Steel Bridge will be a world class attraction,” says Ryan Hashagen, director of the Steel Bridge Skatepark



Photos and the preliminary concept renderings are courtesy of DAO Architecture and Portland Parks & Recreation. Importantly, all current project renderings are for illustrative purposes only. The skatepark design will be informed in part by community engagement and will inevitably change.

Coalition. “It will breathe life and energy into Old Town Portland. This new public park will activate the area by providing a recreational space for people, inclusive of all backgrounds and abilities. The Steel Bridge Skatepark Coalition of businesses, neighbors, and skate advocates is overjoyed to see Commissioner Ryan make this investment in revitalizing Downtown Portland.”

“In the past few years, this proposed skatepark project has gained more and more traction as an appealing way to enliven and improve this area of downtown,” says PP&R Director Adena Long. “I am impressed by the enthusiastic community support and look forward to realizing another important recreational opportunity for Portlanders.”

Park SDCs are one-time fees assessed on new development, not General Fund tax dollars. SDCs help ensure that, as the city’s population grows, its quality of life keeps pace with its infrastructure needs. Current state law requires that SDC resources can only be used for improvements that will expand the capacity of the parks and recreation system. In other words,

SDC money cannot be used to fix or maintain current assets.

The project has received support from various partners. Prosper Portland is providing \$250,000 to advance the development process. The Steel Bridge Skate Coalition has been a major advocate, and the Old Town Community Association (OTCA) has shown support for the initial concept. The concept was a collaborative effort by DAO Architecture, Lango Hansen Landscape Architects, and Grindline Skateparks, Inc. The innovative vision received several landscape design awards, playing a significant role in inspiring the skatepark’s future. The City of Portland commissioned the preliminary design, ensuring it included input from both stakeholder and skateboard-focused advisory committees.

Both the Portland Bureau of Transportation and Oregon Department of Transportation currently manage the right-of-way where the park will be located. TriMet and Union Pacific Railroad are involved in discussions and land use matters as well.

In spring 2024, PP&R will begin to work with project partners on property acquisition and feasibility, followed by community engagement and design.



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