

APRIL 2015

# SITELINES

Landscape Architecture in British Columbia



## 2 MANY QUESTIONS — YOUTH IN THE LANDSCAPE

Consultation to Collaboration | Youth Engagement—One Pizza at a Time | Teenagers in the Landscape  
Unintended Results | School of Skateboarding

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The purpose of Sitelines is to provide an open forum for the exchange of ideas and information pertaining to the profession of landscape architecture. Individual opinions expressed are those of the writers and not necessarily of those of the BCSLA.

# 2 MANY Questions

Who are you hanging out with?

When are you going to be home?

Where are you going to University?

What are you going to do with your life?

**TOO MANY QUESTIONS!** Youth, Teens, Kids, whatever you want to call them, they have too many questions in their lives. Yet, as professionals planning and designing for youth, we have so many questions for them. How can we deliver what they are looking for when finding out is so difficult?

I work in Parks Planning, Research and Design at the City of Surrey. Surrey’s population is one of the youngest in the region and with over 95,000 residents between ages 10-24 years (Census Canada, 2011), there are many opportunities to work with youth on projects that we think are meeting their needs. While I work with all ages, the youth demographic is the hardest to understand and most fickle when the project is completed.

That is the inspiration for this issue which is dedicated to planning and designing for youth. I too have many questions so I canvassed those working in the field to share their successes and ideas so we can all work more effectively.

The issue’s contributions are varied. A youth worker in Surrey’s Planning Department poses more questions on how to shift from consultation to collaboration and a consultant urges us to assess all park features for their potential to be used by youth. Specific projects are profiled including the brand new Plateau Park in Vancouver and a skatepark in Red Deer that has brought skateboarding into the high school curriculum. Looking ahead, a UBC Grad student shares research on erasing the boundaries of specific youth elements and instead incorporating youth into all open space planning.

This issue won’t answer all your questions but read it, its good for you! **sl**



Cover Image: Dylan Uhrich avoiding questions  
Photo by Alexa Uhrich

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# Consultation to Collaboration

QUESTIONING YOUTH CONSULTATION IN SPACE DESIGN /  
GETTING FEEDBACK WITHOUT QUESTIONS

**Youth Engagement is a field rich with both theory and practice.** But why is it that, in practice, consulting with youth and turning that feedback into effective space design is really challenging?

**What's the problem with asking questions?**

**Are there ways of getting input on design not based on consultation?**

**How do we move from consultation to collaboration?**

Outlining the key challenges towards effective youth consultation in space design will dictate potential directions moving forward. While presenting a fully articulated solution to all the issues isn't possible, providing new concepts and direction will pave the way for effective solutions.

**What's the problem with asking questions?**

Whenever I think about the challenges of youth engagement in designing spaces, I come back to an experience of gathering ideas at a high school. The consultation process aimed to retrofit a youth space for a recreation centre and conversations typically went like this:

*ME: "What do you think should be in the youth lounge?"*

*STUDENT: "Oh, you know – video games, a pool table, some graffiti art"*

*ME: "Sounds great, so do you think you'd hang out there?"*

*STUDENT: "Oh, not really, I'm not interested in that sort of stuff"*

The youth I spoke with were telling me to implement things that they had no interest in doing themselves. What are the problems here? Depending on how questions are structured, the young person may be speaking on behalf of all youth. Often this leads to answers that youth "think" other youth want — because, as we know, the proverbial youth likes video games, pool tables and graffiti art. In scenarios where consultation is directed to a future space the youth may not know what they really want. This is a great recipe for a "youthy" element to appear in a design that no one actually wants.

The line of questioning assumed that a youth lounge was what youth wanted. If the scope of the consultation only presents a number of options within a predefined range, and the youth are picking the best option, the best option may still not be what the young person really is after.

Youth are not a homogenous population. What works for one may not work for another. One of the biggest mistakes of youth engagement is to ask youth to speak on behalf of others. It would be like asking a reader of this magazine to identify what all landscape architects' favourite food is.

What happens when the consultation produces ideas that we simply aren't going to do? Perhaps graffiti art is what youth actually want, but it is against the policies of the organization asking the question. The answer is then ignored or reinterpreted into something more palatable. Consultation is a process of gathering ideas and the challenge is listening to and implementing the results.

The youth engagement field has developed a variety of great techniques for asking questions. There are many examples of highly engaging and interesting consultation methods that deeply connect with youth and that they really enjoy taking part in. However, no matter how great an approach is, a key disconnect is that we will be interpreting what we hear and then implementing that within our systems. I am certainly not advocating that we shouldn't ask youth what they want — we need to continue to refine our consultation ►



approaches and to find ways to better connect feedback with policy. Perhaps we need to recognize some of the limits of these consultative approaches, and consider if there is a different way of addressing these challenges that go beyond how we ask questions.

### Are there ways of getting input on design not based on consultation?

One of the ways to overcome the challenges of consultation is rethink what our role is. We need to stop consulting, and do more collaborating. A critical practice in youth engagement is not to think of our role as getting feedback from youth then providing a service. Instead, we should be expanding opportunities for youth to create things themselves.

Put simply: Don't ask youth what they want. Give them the opportunity to do something and see what they do. That is what they want.

In Surrey we've redirected resources away from our more prescriptive youth lounges where staff provide programmed recreation opportunities, and put more time and energy into having staff support youth to identify and organize their own events and projects. This is a more collaborative approach where staff are giving up some control, but the benefit is that youth are able to create the opportunities that really speak to them. The opportunities produced as a result of this are better able meet the recreational needs and interests of the youth because they are creating it for themselves and their peers. It is also leading to a richer variety of recreation opportunities than we could ever provide ourselves.

### How do we move from consultation to collaboration?

First, the consultation can become more of a conversation. We need to move away from asking questions and making lists of answers. If more of a dialogue is able to take place, where youth learn about the challenges faced by the designer, and the designer learns more about why youth have the ideas that they do — there is much more potential for good information, better understanding and youth ownership to emerge.

Second, the design process could improve connections to the actual future users of the space. This could look like involving youth who most likely form the main user group meaningfully into the process. This happens often with specific groups of youth such as



skateboarders at skate parks. But we also need to engage youth in the design of all purpose public spaces.

Third, it could involve giving up some power or sharing responsibility. This could mean earmarking a portion of the budget to commit to implementing youth's ideas and making a commitment to working together and sharing some level of informed decision making. Figure out where there is room for youth to have ownership and agency over the process, and hold that for them.

However, it is not always possible to collaborate with the future users of the space, because they don't exist yet. Beyond the engagement process itself, design elements of a space could potentially help with this shift towards collaboration and learning from use. If a good way for youth

to have input on something is to have them actually use it question to consider is how can design permit more emergent feedback to take place? Flexible and durable spaces come to mind. If a space is too prescriptive in how it should be used, or there are strong fears about damaging the space, it is unlikely that youth will be able to use it in creative, unexpected ways.

So in closing, but not conclusion — more creative experimentation needs to happen in how we empower youth to create their own environments, or public environments. At a personal level of practice, I have become less inclined to use approaches that I would consider forms of consultation. While this approach gets results, it doesn't always produce the long term success we are all looking for. [SL](#)

**Top:** Cloverdale Skatepark by VDZ and New Line Skateparks, photo by Jay Meneely **Inset:** Longboarder Josh MacEachern, photo by Matt MacEachern **Below:** Invergarry Bike Ramps by Alpine Bike Parks, photo Surrey Parks



## SPEC SHEET: Empire Fields/ Plateau Park Project

**Project size:** 6.27 ha (15.5 acres)

**Designed:** 2011-12/  
constructed: 2013-15

**Client:** Vancouver Board  
of Parks and Recreation

**Landscape Architect:** PFS Studio

**Cost:** \$10.5M

### Program elements:

- 3.2km of separated use (pedestrian/bike) greenways
- Over 900 large canopy trees and conifers planted

### EMPIRE FIELDS

- 2 full-sized synthetic turf fields with player's shelters and bleachers
- 560m 4-lane rubberized running track with additional elevated radius
- 3.2km of new separated use greenways connecting Hastings Street to New Brighton Park

### PLATEAU PARK

- 2 Hard court sport courts for street soccer, basketball, ball hockey
- 4 sand volleyball courts

### REC ROOM

- Outdoor parkour course (Canada's first)
- Ping pong tables
- Outdoor exercise equipment
- 2 playgrounds with slide hill connecting to field level
- 2 bicycle pump tracks

# YOUTH Engagement

## ...one pizza at a time

**Forget the open house and put away the questionnaire — engaging youth in park planning and design takes time, commitment and a willingness to go to their turf.**

The Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation is about to open one of the largest park projects it has completed in over a decade. The 6.27 ha (15.5 acres) Empire Fields/Plateau Park complex is the most significant outcome to date of the Hastings Park/PNE Master Plan. The 2010 Council-approved Plan is guiding Hastings Park's transformation into a greener, more active, year-round urban park destination. The Master Plan includes significant new park spaces, renewal of the annual Fair and Playland, and improved connections to green spaces, the waterfront, and the surrounding community.

The idea for the 1.35 ha (3.3 acre) sport and activity focused park space — the Plateau Park — emerged in the master planning phase of 2009 – 2010 and was refined and designed through 2011-12 with construction

**Opposite:** Plateau Park Birdseye, image by PFS Studio  
**Below:** Outdoor ping-pong, photo by Dave Hutch



initiated in 2013. The Plateau Park is being constructed along with the renewed Empire Fields and running track and will be complete this year.

During the two-year process to develop the Master Plan, dozens of consultation events were undertaken. City-wide, thousands of people attended events that were primarily an open house format, however, one particular demographic was missing at those events — youth. In order to address this gap in participation, the project team made a concerted effort to find out what young people thought of Hastings Park and how their needs could be addressed there.

So how did the planning team accomplish this? The planning for the project was being run through the City of Vancouver in collaboration with the Vancouver Park Board, so the project team had good access to local community centres and Neighbourhood Houses. The first step was getting together with youth workers at these locations to get the lay of the land. The planning team shared the project and what we were looking for. The youth worker was able to point the team several directions and shared ideas on format and timing that would be best to get the information we were looking for.

The youth worker suggested piggy-backing on the regular Friday evening teen drop-in activity night would be a good start. The evening was very informal with a portion of the community centre allocated for the teens to hang out, play pool or ping pong, have pizza and other snacks. The planning





team set up a bit of a display and had a few curious onlookers at first wondering who had infiltrated their space. We had no structured activity or workshop and had just planned to talk to youth who dropped by. Once we had engaged an initial few, a small curious group also gathered. By the end of the evening we had lengthy discussions with many eager to learn more, share their thoughts and ideas on Hastings Park, and explain a bit about living as a teen in East Vancouver.

Next the planning team connected with a social studies teacher at the local high school. The disciplines of planning and landscape architecture fit well with his class curriculum and the teacher was happy to have project staff spend a few sessions with his classes to discuss the project. Several classroom sessions were organized that built on each other and led to more detailed discussions and feedback. To kick off, project staff presented to students an overview of the project and how spaces like this in the city come about — the role of planning and landscape architecture and who does this kind of work.

With the background established, subsequent classroom activities were organized and ►

## YOUTH ENGAGEMENT INSIGHTS

- **Get to know local youth workers** at community centres and neighbourhood houses — they are your gateway to the local youth scene.
- **Piggy-back on existing youth programming** such as drop-in activity nights and leadership groups.
- **Connect with local high school teachers** whose curriculum has a fit with the project you are trying to consult on. Be prepared with a package e.g. run a series of talks and workshops that not only explain your project but elaborate on the discipline of planning, landscape architecture, engineering etc.
- **Craft your engagement plan around several different approaches that suit the context:** more structured activities for classroom sessions seemed to work best and keeping it casual for drop-in nights fit the informal nature of the evening.
- **Reconnect and make repeat appearances** with youth. This familiarity and continuity helps in building relationships with youth and is needed to warm up groups and individuals and allows them to open up and express their thoughts.
- **You're not going to get it perfect** — keep it casual and roll with the vibe of the group. Sometimes just hang-out time is needed to get to know one another, so be patient. This investment let's you move more easily to the next stages where you can start to mine for input and feedback you are looking for.



Hastings Park Entrance Signage  
Photo by Dave Hutch

ranged from groups planning their own program for Hastings Park, to more detailed brainstorming sessions on the Plateau Park — the space that would deliver many of their needs and ideas directly. Discussions allowed for a lot of wide-open thinking, talking about what's lacking in the neighbourhood. Mapping exercises also allowed students to describe how they got around the neighborhood and might access Hastings Park. This input provided the team with insight of what was important to youth and how they might use the spaces. Project staff returned several times to different classes to gather further input.

Similar sessions were held with a local youth leadership program that was run out of the local neighbourhood house.

## Success?

The on-the-ground success of the youth engagement remains to be seen, the Plateau Park and Empire Fields project will open this spring with an official opening in July 2015. Given the site's discreet location and four years of being off-line, it may have been temporarily removed from most local young people's consciousness.

However, the diversity of activities, structured, self-directed and casual, spread across the 12 acres of the site including over 3km of new greenways in an area of the city that does not have access to contiguous greenspace is anticipated to be very popular. How youth will interact and adopt the various spaces of the park — time will tell. **sl**

# Teenagers in the Landscape

**Public spaces that are intended for everyone fail to meet the needs of teenagers** while in the rush to deliver public spaces geared specifically to teenagers, we often forget the basics of successful public spaces: access to nature; prospect/ refuge; and flexible, informal spaces and features.

Neglecting the spatial needs of teenagers in the landscape is problematic: while teenager's activities can be performed in a variety of settings, research indicates that teens often use public spaces in ways different from other age groups and have different values and priorities for landscape than adults. Planning and design that reflects adult priorities and accommodates only their patterns of use and values will ultimately fall short for teens (Gearin and Kahle 2006; Owens 2002).

Failing to provide for teenagers in the landscape is problematic because teens' local environment plays an important role in their development and social identity (Lieberg, 1995). As well, a teenager's social position and lack of social power makes them more dependent on public and open space than adults. Designing public spaces that invite and accommodate teens is particularly important because they have limited opportunities to use landscape outside of public realm (Childress 2004; 2000).

Research indicates that in most instances, we have failed to understand the environmental needs of teens, prioritizing instead the needs of adults thereby limiting teen activities because they interfere with other potential users (Owens 1997). Up to now the unique and holistic landscape needs of teens have not been addressed. Public spaces that are appropriate and inviting to teens as well as the wider adult public is a landscape design challenge that designers haven't yet resolved.

While skateboard parks have risen in popularity and become a dominant landscape typology for teen users they also tend to isolate teens from larger public spaces. While skateboarding is allowed at the skate park it is often banned from other public spaces effectively removing teens from the larger community.

One of the overarching trends in the literature on teenager's relationship to space, landscape, and environment is their desire for a sense of belonging. Studies indicate that in general today's teens lack spaces in which they feel they belong (Owens et al. 2014) and (Driskell et al. 2008). Further studies indicate that teenagers are excluded from, or not welcomed in, much of the public realm and argue that teens are often purposely designed out of public spaces. (Bell, Thompson, and Travlou 2003; Kato 2009; Németh 2006; Owens 1997, 2002; Woolley et al. 1999).

Public space is particularly important for teens for building community and social identity. Designing public spaces where various age groups can interact are needed. Rather than separating teens from other users by developing areas specifically for teens, integrating teens by accommodating for their needs and welcoming them into public areas should be attempted. Recreation and commercial areas, public green spaces and plazas where teens and adults can participate together and observe one another is an ideal setting for teens to become a part of the greater community (Owens 1997).

One of the major themes to come out of researchers observations of teens' behaviours is how strongly teens desire social contact, and need spaces that allow them to come together and gather. This research indicates that social environments have to bring teens together in a way that is seemingly beyond their control.

Navigating social spaces is complex for teens. While they require and welcome it they also feel that it is “terrifyingly uncool to admit it” (Childress 2000).

While adolescents need to be accommodated for in the landscape design and planning, researchers have suggested that areas that are specifically designed for young people are typically under-used by them. The majority of the social behaviors engaged in by teens can be performed in any number of settings. Rather than designing specific environments for particular activities researchers advocate for “adolescent-friendly designs rather than adolescent-specific places” (Owens 2002). The objective is to accommodate teens in design rather than design specific places exclusively for them.

Accepting and embracing “hanging out” as one of the primary ways that teens use landscape and public realm is a means to accept and accommodate teen users. Strategies for teen design have been successfully implemented at the Oakland Public Library which makes a conscious effort to maximize social experience and seating options for teenagers. The space invites them to hang out and relax, “inverting the conventional construction of teens as objects of surveillance and pedagogy” (Bernier 2011).

One of their strategies is to provide a variety of movable seating options from stools, chairs, and benches with a spatial arrangement that is flexible and allows teens to arrange the space as they wish. With its seating options, the space offers maximum seating flexibility, postural height, task variety, socialization, and fun (Bernier 2011).

Flexibility in orientation and posture is key for teens. Seating arrangement should allow for informal social interaction while also providing a view to neighboring activities (Childress 2000).

Just like seating, public spaces need to be flexible and accommodating to a variety of users. They must serve several functions. This is particularly important for children and teens who have trouble accepting a singular definition for things particularly when the object or environment affords a multiplicity of uses. “A slab of asphalt with yellow stripes may be a parking lot between 8 am and 6 pm, but outside that window of time it is a bicycle race track, a meeting hall, a skate park, and more”(Childress 2000).

While it isn't the first thing that comes to mind when thinking about teenagers' activity preferences in the landscape, the desire to enjoy a view comes up frequently in the literature on teenager's landscape

preference. Some researchers connect this to the introspective nature of adolescents. (Childress 2000).

The security that comes with knowing they are alone often leads to introspection that allows creative forms such as writing poetry, painting and ceramics. Providing viewing areas furnished with tables and seating could help support these activities.

Findings on teenager's landscape preferences revealed that 66% of the teens surveyed valued nature for the opportunity to be alone and while enjoying the view 64% of teens interviewed said that they prefer to remain unseen (Owens 1988). This safe vantage point also allows them the opportunity for people watching. Situating prospect-refuge experiences strategically to reveal a view and the activities of others while recreating in the park is ideal for teens.

Teenagers have always been known to challenge the conventional. Designing conventional, “safe” public spaces won't meet the needs of teenagers and yet there is a commonality in the desired elements of all ages. Delivering public spaces that meet the needs of all ages requires a new tolerance of risk and unconventional approach to the classic elements of all public spaces. **SL**

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# EXPANDING

## Uses *and* Embracing the Unintended

### Multi-use Design for Innovative and Inclusive Community Parks

**A lot has been written about why we need youth friendly public spaces and how best to design them.** There are many success stories describing places which are magnetic to young people. Unfortunately, many of the design principles employed in these successful places are overlooked or difficult to deliver at one of our most common public spaces — community parks. Typically, these parks include some play fields and perhaps a playground but little more to engage youth if they're not involved in a game or practice. Park users, particularly the youth, who are not involved

in programmed or intended activities inevitably find creative ways to utilize the park despite their narrow design intention.

Given that space is only becoming scarcer, community parks must offer a wider range of opportunities to a broader group of people. Every element of a park, no matter how basic, must be examined for all its hidden potential and reimagined to accommodate multiple uses. Park designers must match the creativity of young park users by making spaces, and park elements which perform their primary purpose as well as accommodate more imaginative uses.

Unwanted outcomes are often termed “unintended”. In a community park context, if we design a court surface next to an elegant new field house which unexpectedly becomes a \$200,000 kickwall, the outcome, although rewarding to the kids kicking the ball, is “unintended”. As park designers we must try to consider all the ways a space might get used so that the term “unintended” is seldom used to describe the activities taking place in our parks. Many designers have been surprised to observe their creations being engaged with in “unintended” ways and wished they could



**Opposite:** Swale opportunities **Above:** Kickwall opportunities **Below:** Pond opportunities  
All photos by R.F. Binnie

have better accommodated the “creative” use. Here are some of our experiences designing some common community park components.

### Bioswales and rain gardens

What child can resist playing in water? Cities and towns spend large sums of money installing water parks, spray parks and splash pads in their community parks. Although many park budgets do not allow for these features, it does not necessarily mean water play opportunities aren’t possible. We’ve been involved with spray parks where one of the more popular play opportunities was the discharge channel conveying runoff from the pad. The fact that kids like to play in creeks and puddles is no epiphany,

entire playgrounds are designed around this type of water play. Despite this recognition we overlook potential play opportunities inherent in storm water facilities such as bioswales, drainage channels and rain gardens. We get caught up with the technical or aesthetic aspects of the facility and miss the potential for multiple uses, or worse still we design them to prevent unintended use. The challenge in designing these storm water facilities is not in making them attractive but in making them safe, accessible, experiential opportunities. Failure to do so could result in a wonderfully designed and picturesque water feature which can only be observed from behind a fence.

### Storm water storage ponds

Managing storm water at community parks can often be problematic. As park designers we know the potential for using water to create interest and amenities but we’re faced with limited space and vast program requirements so we’re forced to marginalize the storm water infrastructure. Storm water basins, when required, can be big space wasters so we focus our design attention on less vexing problems and leave the basin in a utilitarian state. The problem is that water, if it can be seen, will attract attention. If the basin was designed for a singular, utilitarian purpose it will certainly see undesirable and unintended use. We’ve observed single purpose, utilitarian storm basins take on all manner of uses from makeshift bike skills parks when dry, wetland adventure sites when saturated and a place to float a homemade raft when flooded. Even impromptu skating rinks have appeared on our flooded basins when the weather turned cold. These examples of unintended uses, and the many more you’ve likely encountered, should act as a source of inspiration when you’re at a loss for how to accommodate storm water storage — the problem may become the solution to an otherwise mundane space. ▶



## Kick/rebound walls

For various reasons such as concerns over CPTED guidelines or aesthetics, kick walls have faded in and out of favour with park operators over the years but they have always been appreciated by park users. For soccer players working on precision shooting and receiving rebounds, or tennis players training solo, rebound walls are invaluable. Despite their value to athletes the majority of a kick wall's life is a solitary one which begs us to ask how else they can be used. The potential for a large blank wall is greater than one might expect. For example we have discovered that a large, slatted, kick wall designed to achieve some transparency, makes for a fantastic climbing wall with great views over the park below. While this outcome wasn't entirely unexpected, it could have been more purposefully designed for climbing with some minor modifications. Kick walls are

just one example of a category of community park elements which, although important, see limited use. Imagining how these park elements can be used in alternative ways is fun and a great way to inspire creativity in overall park design.

## Picnic tables

Park furniture doesn't come much more vanilla than a picnic table. Almost all parks have them — some are stylish, painstakingly selected by discerning landscape architects and some are not. And yet it doesn't change the fact that a cluster of picnic tables make for a terribly awkward hang-out space. Despite our intention to create a lovely space for families to eat lunch together these clusters invariably offer the only group seating opportunity for young people looking for a spot to socialize. So they sit backwards on the benches or on table tops, attempting to lounge where lounging was

surely unintended. It's not hard to come across these impromptu gatherings in our community parks, which might make it seem that these picnicking areas are a success despite themselves. However, just imagine if more parks comfortably accommodated hanging out through innovative designs that went beyond the family picnic. Perhaps it's time to re-imagine the picnic table!

As these examples show, if we as park designers don't consider all the possibilities for park components, the user's, particularly the youth and children, will undoubtedly identify them for us. We must strive to avoid unintended outcomes not by designing away opportunities but by supporting creative use. The benefit is two-fold, we create more engaging and inclusive parks while at the same time achieving the space efficiency required to support ever growing programming needs. **SL**



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Article by Trevor Morgan, BComm, Vice President,  
New Line Skateparks and  
Bill Gurney, CSLA, ASLA / Senior Designer,  
New Line Skateparks



Above: Bill Gurney.  
Right: Trevor Morgan.

# School of Skateboarding

## In Red Deer, Alberta, PE is no longer just for jocks

**Over the past 10-15 years, many parks and recreation professionals will attest to the increasing popularity of skateboarding and BMX riding for today's youth.** While traditional team sports continue to be popular, the individualistic pursuits of skateboarding and BMX riding offer fewer barriers to entry, and provide opportunities for recreational athletics in a self-directed environment that is appealing to many youth. The increasing popularity of skateboarding and BMX riding have led to the development of the modern youth park (aka skatepark, all-wheel park, etc).

New Line Skateparks, and project partners van der Zalm + associates are leaders in the field creating landmark projects such as the Plaza at the Forks, Chuck Bailey Youth Park and Cloverdale Youth Park and earning recognition in the form of design awards from the CSLA and SPS (skaters for public skateparks) for their contributions. They are pushing boundaries of youth park design by not only delivering bowls and rails, but a public space that works for all youth.

Glendale Skatepark in Red Deer, AB is an example of a purpose built youth park that has been thoroughly embraced by the community. Located in the City's north end, within immediate proximity to Glendale Middle School, the skate park has approximately 18,000 sq. ft. of hard surface



Top: Opening Day Above: Birdseye view  
Images by New Line Skateparks

terrain including a variety of obstacles inspired by an urban plaza theme and two competition level concrete pool/bowl structures. However, the success of the project is largely due to the additional amenities that engage all youth. The additional amenities for the park include integrated green spaces, an expansive 'amphitheatre-style' viewing area for hanging out, a washroom building, site furnishings, as well as pathway connections to other park areas and the public transit system.

The success of Glendale Skatepark is largely attributed to the collaborative approach employed by the design team and the community support provided throughout the consultation, planning and design phases. In a first of its kind, City Staff, local youth and community leaders have brought skateboarding into the physical education curriculum offered by the school system. Red Deer high school students can now go to school for skateboarding!

With the park located in immediate proximity to Glendale Middle School, the design team was extremely fortunate to have strong support from the school's administration, staff and students who embraced the skatepark as an opportunity to enrich the learning experience. This ultimately led to Glendale Middle School teacher, Everett Tetz, introducing western Canada's first official skateboarding based, full year class curriculum — now approved for implementation throughout the Red Deer School District. The success of this curriculum has drawn nation-wide media attention and has sparked a new conversation about the potential synergies between municipal youth parks and nearby public schools.

2013 marked Red Deer's centennial anniversary, and Glendale Skatepark was one of a handful of special capital projects selected by City Council for funding that year. There was a great deal of interest from





City Staff and local youth to recognize this significant milestone for Red Deer. With coordination and promotional assistance from City Staff, the design team was able to host and facilitate two well attended public outreach sessions. These workshop sessions provided opportunity to engage directly with local youth and help brainstorm the design vision. Not surprisingly, the input from local youth proved quite sophisticated — not only in terms specific skatepark terrain elements, but also in terms of overall park aesthetic and integration with the existing landscape.

Local youth were also instrumental in conception of the park's signature elements — creative and functional public art — or 'skateable sculptures', that not only integrate with the functional (i.e. rideable) terrain of the park design, but also make meaningful references to specific aspects of community identity, cultural themes and the City's heritage. The results of this creative collaboration include a curvilinear 'flat gap' and suspended 'bridge ledge' that make reference to the community's origins as a

point of crossing for the iconic Red Deer River. Elsewhere, a cantilevered, triangular shaped quarter-pipe transition feature serves as a metaphoric compass arrow pointing north. Additionally, the use of the red coloured concrete mix for selected features makes an obvious reference to the City's name, Red Deer. Lastly, the recreation of the City's official Centennial logo as a custom sand-blasted installation references 100 years of the City's past and looking 100 years forward.

While an inclusive approach, site specific design, and the exploration of culturally significant themes are all hallmarks of successful modern youth parks — it is the support of local youth and the entire community that makes the Glendale Skatepark truly unique. Glendale Skatepark is now among Alberta's largest and most progressive modern youth park facilities — attracting visitors from across western Canada and serving as a catalyst for an exciting new realm of opportunities for park programming and physical education curriculums. **SL**

Glendale Skate Park  
Photo by Newline Skateparks

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