



Roc City Skatepark Update: Where Exactly Has The Money Gone?

Final Draft Written by

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June 19, 2015

The City of Rochester made skateboarding illegal in 1988. This is half of a public policy in a city that prides itself on being a family- and youth-centric community. No action has been taken to address the other half of the policy in 27 years: building a safe skate spot. Rochester remains the only city among the largest 125 in the country that does not have a free, public access skatepark. The penalties for getting caught skateboarding are harsh, and this perpetuates mistrust and marginalization among the most important people in our community: our youth.

At a certain point, the continued decision to take no action to address this problem simply becomes cruel and mean spirited on the part of our elected officials. We are at that point.

Over the past eight years, the Board of the Friends of the Roc City Skatepark has demonstrated significant economic development utility of a destination-level skatepark downtown; we have demonstrated the benefits for youth, including crime prevention and a way to address the obesity epidemic; we have demonstrated that there will be no incremental insurance costs and negligible maintenance costs; and, yet \$211MM tax dollars were spent on a failed attempt to market tourism in upstate New York, and we are unable to secure \$4.5MM to build an actual, bona fide tourism attraction. Significant funding appears to be available to build numerous pickleball courts, while children continue to use the city as their skatepark, putting themselves in significant danger.

This report explains the efforts of the Board of the Friends of the Roc City Skatepark over the past eight years, including stewardship of all donated money; current status of the effort to realize a skatepark; and, immediate action steps.

The mission of the Friends of the Roc City Skatepark is to pursue the creation, maintenance, and growth of a skatepark system in the City of Rochester, New York and to serve as an advocacy group for all progression-oriented sports.



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Overview

On behalf of every member of the Board of the Friends of the Roc City Skatepark, I want to apologize for not keeping our stakeholders as informed as we should be keeping you. We have heard your feedback, and this rather lengthy report should answer all of your questions. If it does not, my cellular phone number and e-mail address are on the cover page and I am happy to answer any questions. We are a very small group of volunteers taking on a project that, by all rights, is the biggest and most aggressive project any of us have ever attempted. But, we have kept moving forward for eight years and we have progress and outcomes to show for our efforts, thanks to your contributions. We keep robust archives of every activity, and anybody can look back on all of our documentation. Eight years is frustrating, but not unusual for a grassroots effort to build a skatepark and our counterparts in other cities can confirm this timeline.



The most significant accomplishment for us is getting the skatepark in the City of Rochester Capital Improvement Plan. This is evidence that the City of Rochester supports the project and the skatepark will get built eventually. We have successfully convinced the City of Rochester and other key stakeholders that a skatepark is a worthwhile investment of capital improvement funds that will have a significant economic development impact; will combat childhood obesity; and is a safe and healthy activity for people of all ages that will not bring the City of Rochester any significant incremental insurance or maintenance costs¹. In fact, among the largest 125 cities in the United States, Rochester, New York is the only one without a public skatepark.

With your funding, we were able to pay for the first conceptual design; we dramatically improved our branding and social networking presence to build a community of support and flow of information; we were able to pay an Executive Director during the very busy and intense design phase to make sure the project remained true and organic to the community; and, by consensus of the board, all of the money raised went to these expenses and keeping awareness alive in the community with tee shirts, events, stickers, tattoos, skateboard decks, coffee, and *etcetera*.

By all accounts, this strategy has worked and we have made progress toward realizing our mission of a skatepark system in the City of Rochester. Progress has slowed since the board made the decision to move the location from under the Frederick Douglass-Susan B. Anthony Memorial Bridge to the Charles Carroll Plaza location, and we are working hard to address this pause and get the project moving forward again. We have big plans, and we will never give up on the task at hand of getting the first skatepark built in the City of Rochester. This accomplishment will be a proof on concept toward achieving our mission of a skatepark system.

¹ Evidence exists that building a skatepark in a neighborhood with a high youth crime rate dramatically reduces youth crime rates in that neighborhood. Skateparks are not nearly as dangerous as people think and are not expensive to insure. Progression sports are far less dangerous than many other sports, like football and hockey. There has never once been a successful lawsuit against a public or private skatepark anywhere in the world.



Backstory

The Friends of the Roc City Skatepark was started by five guys in their mid-30's sitting in a bar over some Guinness. That was eight years ago to this month. Not one of us had (has) any money, power, or networks of people who would know how to facilitate a municipal capital improvement project. We didn't even have access to any to those important prerequisites to taking on the large-scale project that has become a collective community vision. Maybe it was the Guinness talking, but we identified a few action steps and decided to have another meeting ... then another ... then another ... then another ... for the past eight years.



Originally, we were convinced we could raise \$500,000 by selling tee shirts and bumper stickers that say "*I Helped Build the Roc City Skatepark*" and build a really amazing skatepark. That was the task with which we challenged ourselves. It didn't really work out that way².

In the past eight years, we have raised about \$65,000³; just shy of the \$4.5MM cost for the new vision of the skatepark, which will be the largest skatepark in North America; a destination experience that is over 80,000 square feet; and a bona fide tourist attraction and significant retail economic development catalyst for downtown in the City of Rochester (please see Appendix 1). Of the money we have raised, the largest gifts came from a generous \$10,000 grant from the Tony Hawk Foundation and the City of Rochester gave us \$5,000 to help pay for some of our outreach activities. The rest has all come from small individual gifts and special events that we have facilitated, so

thank you for all of the donations.

As the project grew beyond five guys drinking Guinness, we organized a board complete with meetings and a Sergeant-at-Arms with a gavel he made by hand keeping us on task in accordance with Roberts Rules of Order. This is a grassroots volunteer board, and we all agree that we will NEVER give up on this project; it is that important to us. It did not take us long to realize that we are not going to raise \$4.5MM selling tee shirts and bumper stickers that say "*I Helped Build the Roc City Skatepark*."

Over these past eight years we have cultivated a large donor base and group of people interested in and following our progress. Rightly so, we have heard from people who are frustrated with how long this is taking and have questions about where all of the money raised has gone. We will own that we have not done a great job keeping you informed, and the purpose of this document is to remedy this shortcoming on our part and to provide an update on our progress, current status and next action steps.

² We were shocked to learn that the small, modular, 10,000 square foot skatepark in Webster cost \$1MM to build!

³ This does not include the \$50,000 legislated to the project that was awarded to Stantec for the feasibility and design of the location under the Frederick Douglass – Susan B. Anthony Memorial Bridge.



The board recognized that our small group of volunteers is not going to be able to raise \$4.5MM from small gifts and special events. In addition, the project has not been ready to ask any potential leadership level donor for a significant gift. There was and still is a lot of work to be done to get the project to a point where it makes sense to solicit a large donor for a leadership gift, grants, and other donations for the actual build. Your money has paid for the work to get us to this point, and we hope your trust in us continues; and, there is room on the board for anybody interested and willing to work hard.

Where exactly has your money gone?⁴

Design Work

The first major expenditure was paying a design firm to do the initial conceptual design for the location originally chosen under the Frederick Douglass-Susan B. Anthony Memorial Bridge. This design was a large expenditure for us, and we are not getting any help⁵. By having a conceptual design done by experts – New Line Skateparks, Inc. – we were able to show key stakeholders a tangible design and this helped them see our vision and facilitated their support. **We paid for this entire contract for services with your donations.** These conceptual designs were critical to convincing the City of Rochester to legislate \$50,000 in their budget to hire a design firm to take this initial conceptual design to the next level. Most important, these designs helped us get the skatepark into the City of Rochester Capital Improvement Project Plan, where it remains as a planned project that the City of Rochester supports; many, many proposed projects do not make it into this plan. This was a huge victory, and a clear statement that the project will eventually happen and the City of Rochester supports the Roc City Skatepark.

Branding

In the early stages of this project, we did not appreciate or understand the real value of branding, nor did we have the expertise. A small company following the project approached us through mutual friends and really taught us a great deal about the benefits of a strong brand. We entered into a professional services contract to design our brand, and all that goes along with the concept of branding including the design of our two logos, color schemes, web page, social media, and fine tune our message. The brand and consistency of using this brand have improved our credibility as an organization and of the project. The board concurs that this was money well spent. After the contract for services was complete, the people who did this for us were so excited about the project they joined the board, and now we get their services for free!



⁴ In this report, I have been sensitive to names and specific contract amounts. The main reason for this is that there is so much support for this project that all of the contracts have been at dramatically reduced rates and we do not want to share that proprietary information.

⁵ The failed Renaissance Square project cost \$24MM to design, and was never even built. (<http://therochesterian.com/2011/12/15/31/>)



Executive Director



A company called Stantec (the company that owns Action Sports Design) won the \$50,000 contract from the City of Rochester to do a much more sophisticated feasibility study and design at the location under the Frederick Douglass – Susan B. Anthony Memorial Bridge, and this involved facilitating community design meetings, studies of the space available, meetings with key stakeholders, and the design work itself. During this time, the project needed constant attention beyond what a volunteer could give

to make sure the organic, grassroots vision of the Friends of the Roc City Skatepark did not get lost out of fear that the project would become another Fast Ferry or \$24MM design of Renaissance Square (which was never built). To fill this role, the vice president of the board stepped down from the board, lost his voting rights on the board, and became a paid executive director. He had a contract with deliverables and accomplished every single one of them. Again, the money you donated paid for this service, and the board felt that it was a very critical expenditure out of fear that this project would become something else – a bland and boring failed attempt that wasted public funds. We will need this paid service in the near future, and we have to raise this money quickly.

The outcome of the feasibility study and design work was that the skatepark project would be better suited for a different location: Charles Carroll Plaza. The Board of the Friends of the Roc City Skatepark agreed that this move made a lot of sense because: it is still downtown; it is still along the water; there is one less government organization to deal with because there is no bridge (all bridges are (sorta) maintained by the New York State Department of Transportation); and, most important, there is money to leverage because the City of Rochester has budgeted \$5.2MM to repair the parking garage on which Charles Carroll Plaza is built. To fix the garage, the plaza as it is now has to be destroyed and something new has to go on that park space. The experts at Stantec and Action Sports Design strongly encouraged us to move the location, and we trusted their expertise and experience.

Awareness

The Board of the Friends of the Roc City Skatepark has been very deliberate and strategic about the stewardship of your donations to the cause, while understanding that there was no way our volunteer board or the skatepark project itself was in a place to raise \$4.5MM. Until recently, we decided to use the money raised to keep the community’s awareness, understanding, and support of the project at a high level. Virtually all of the merchandise branded with the Roc City Skatepark logo has been given away to keep the project in the public eye; tee





shirts, stickers, skateboard decks, coffee, water bottles, bags, temporary tattoos, advertisements in magazines, a web page, and *etcetera*. As another awareness strategy, we hosted the Rally for the Roc City Skatepark on June 4, 2011. This event was a tremendous success in every way and garnered a great deal of media attention; financially it was a net loss, but it was worth the expense for what was gained.

Other Expenses

With all three of these major expenditures, there are associated minor costs like copying expenses, three of us got business cards to share as we advocate for the project, some office materials and supplies, food for our special events, and *etcetera*. Some board members are in a position to donate these types of expenses and some are not, so we do our best to make sure these types of expenses are compensated.

Wipeouts



Just like riding skateboards, bmx, roller blades, and scooters, there are going to be some wipeouts. We have been good stewards of your donations, but will admit that a few of our awareness and fundraising strategies were total wipeouts. Perhaps you remember “*Throwback Thursday*”? Most likely you do not. Nobody came to the event. We rented Theater 1 at The Little Theater, the rights to two old-school skateboard and BMX movies, and spent a lot of money advertising the event. The number of tickets we had to sell to break even seemed very achievable. Nobody came. We lost money. There were a few other total wipeouts, but we think we have figured out the formula for hosting events that people enjoy.

What exactly has been achieved?

When we started this project, there was virtually no understanding of or acceptance for building a skatepark in Rochester beyond the people who would use it.

The people who would use the skatepark are not and never have been our target audience because this group already supports building a skatepark. As evidence to support the statement that there was virtually no understanding or support beyond the people who would use the skatepark, I offer you my experience with *TEDx Rochester*. On November 7, 2011, I gave a *TEDx Rochester* talk about the skatepark at the Geva Theater. TED talks are reserved for innovative, cutting edge, exciting and new ideas that people are doing to change the world; the TED tagline is “*ideas worth spreading*.” The summer of 2011, right before I gave my *TEDx Rochester* talk, there were three new public skateparks built and opened in New York City. In Rochester, the idea was so innovative, cutting edge, and exciting I found myself on stage at the Geva Theater in front of 450 people talking about how innovative building a skatepark would be for Rochester⁶. This is not a critique of our community in a negative way, but it was the reality. This example supports my claim that there was virtually no understanding of or acceptance for building a skatepark in Rochester when we began this endeavor.

⁶ You can see the entire talk on our web page: www.roccitypark.org



Charles Carroll Plaza

Now, the skatepark is in the City of Rochester Capital Improvement Project Plan; the City of Rochester awarded \$50,000 to Stantec and Action Sports Design to do the feasibility and design of a skatepark at the original location under the Frederick Douglass – Susan B. Anthony Memorial Bridge and this design was completed; and, as a result of this feasibility study, a new location at the Charles Carroll Plaza was proposed and accepted by the board of the Friends of the Roc City Skatepark. The progress at this new location is not going as quickly or as smoothly as any of us want or had hoped, as I will explain.

But, nonetheless, our strategies to spend your donations almost exclusively on (1) initial design work (2) ensuring that this project remains organic to the community by hiring an executive director, and (3) doing everything we can to keep awareness of this project high in the community has produced outcomes and we have made progress. There is a lot of understanding of and acceptance for building a skatepark in Rochester, and this is a critical success factor.

In-Kind Contributions

C-PREP

The Center for Popular Research, Education and Policy (C-PREP) continues to serve as the fiduciary agent for the Friends of the Roc City Skatepark⁷. I co-founded C-PREP about 10 years ago, and continue to engage in some other exciting work through C-PREP. The C-PREP usually charges a 7.5% administrative fee to function as fiduciary (to cover administrative expenses), but this charge is being waived for the Friends of the Roc City Skatepark. The project aligns with the mission of the C-PREP, and is technically considered an initiative of the C-PREP. I am personally not benefitting in any way, shape or form financially or otherwise from the fundraising for the Friends of the Roc City Skatepark; in fact, this whole endeavor has personally cost me thousands of dollars and countless hours of my time.



In-Scale Models, Inc.

Among the best donations received was a scale model of the first concept of the skatepark at the Frederick Douglass-Susan B. Anthony Memorial Bridge. Scott Andrews is the owner of InScale Models, and a

⁷ The board addresses the topic of becoming an incorporated non-profit organization frequently at board meetings, and to date we have always come to the same conclusion that it is not worth the expense or effort at this stage. However, if the organization grows we will likely take this action. One potential leadership donor has said that they would gift a large donation to us, but we would have to become incorporated as our own non-profit; so of course we would become incorporated on those terms.



supporter of the skatepark. He built a model to scale of the park; a project that would have cost us \$8,000 or more, he totally donated. The impact the model had on awareness was immeasurable. People could see what the park would look like, and imagine themselves in the park.

Corporate Communications

A local company called Corporate Communications has generously been hosting our web site for free for the past eight years.

Board Members



Board Meeting

Over the years, our board has changed faces, but the mission and dedication to this mission remains. Every member of the board has contributed countless hours to this project. We have stood at tables at events, written grant applications, had countless meetings with community stakeholders, printed tee-shirts, organized events, worked events: we have dedicated a large portion of our lives to getting this skatepark built and it is hard work.

Many other companies and individuals have donated time, resources, expertise, supplies and money over the course of the past eight years. We have record of these donations, but there are simply too many to mention in this document.

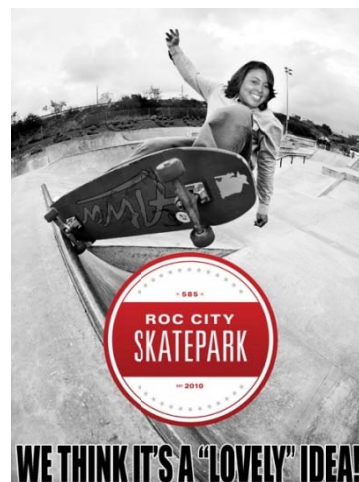
Where exactly is the money going to go now?

New Strategy

The City of Rochester misled us. There is really no other interpretation of the events that unfolded since we agreed to move the location when we were told that Charles Carroll Plaza would be the new location for the skatepark.

We are now being told by the City of Rochester that a skatepark is one of the possible options for Charles Carroll Plaza.

Stantec and Action Sports Design were not the winning company for the \$5.2MM contract to fix the garage and build a skatepark at Charles Carroll Plaza. We are now in the process of building a new working relationship with a company called TY Lin International Group. This summer (2015), two subcontracting companies for TY Lin International Group will be facilitating an assessment and series of community stakeholder meetings to decide what will be built on the location of Charles Carroll Plaza; neither of these





subcontracting companies are skatepark design firms. We are told that TY Lin International Group has “access to” a really great skatepark design company called Grindline. It is our understanding that by August, 2015 we will simply have an answer to the question about the feasibility of a skatepark at the Charles Carroll Plaza (i.e. “yes” a skatepark should go there or “no” a skatepark should not go there).

Nobody is angrier about the way this has developed than the dedicated group of volunteers on the Board of the Friends of the Roc City Skatepark. Your anger – rightly so – is at us, and we understand and accept that this is part of the responsibility of being on a board.



Critical Thrash

Our anger is being directed at the City of Rochester. We continue to be the only city among the largest 125 in the nation with no public skatepark and we have done research that has withstood scrutiny demonstrating that a skatepark will generate significant economic development activity downtown. We read articles about the \$211MM that was spent on a tourism advertising campaign for upstate New York with no tangible outcomes⁸, while we are requesting \$4.5MM to build an actual, bona fide tourism attraction. We see news stories and articles about new pickleball courts being built all over the Monroe County and not a single child has died playing pickleball on busy streets. In the meantime, we have spent eight years on this important cause and our voice is not being heard; in fact, we have been misled in this process.

All of the money raised at this stage will go toward a series of strategic peaceful and passive protests designed to get the City of Rochester to take action on this important cause. In fact, I even addressed City Council and told them our strategy to get their attention is changing so that they will have no choice but to take action. The first was small event called “*Critical Thrash*” at the end of summer, 2014. We took over Park Avenue on skateboards, bikes, roller blades, and scooters and everybody that came received a free red tee shirt for the cause and we were successful at getting some press attention.

I am not going to say what other activities we have planned in this document because – obviously – they would get shut down before they even have a chance to happen. But, pay attention to our cause on social media, stay connected, and hopefully pay attention to the news in the coming months.

Fundraising: Phase II

If the feasibility study this summer (2015) by TY Lin International Group concludes that a skatepark is a feasible option for Charles Carroll Plaza and the City of Rochester agrees, then design work with input from the community will likely occur over the upcoming winter. This design work should give us an

⁸ May 11, 2015, “Audit rips NY’s advertising campaign” Democrat and Chronicle



estimated cost to build the skatepark, inclusive of generating the next step of the design, which is to produce construction documents (essentially the step-by-step instructions for the builders).



Almost all of the money in the \$5.2MM contract to TY Lin International Group will go to remediate the parking garage with a small amount left over to be leveraged as evidence that the City of Rochester supports the project. The margin is money that has to be raised, and hopefully this will be done in partnership with the City of Rochester.

First, our goal will be to secure one, large “leadership” gift for the project; this is the level of gift where the donor will get to name the park (if they choose). The naming right to the largest skatepark in North America has generated some interest, and this interest has been unsolicited from us. We have received phone calls from individuals, companies, and other organizations interested in the opportunity to give a large gift, and in some cases it is companies seeking other rights at the park for special events, competitions, and *etcetera*.



Second, we will pursue grants in partnership with the City of Rochester. Each year, the City of Rochester submits to New York State an application for funding called the Consolidated Application; this application requests funding for capital improvements in the city. Hopefully the City of Rochester will include the skatepark in a Consolidated Application in the near future, and we have been working with them to offer our services on the application. There are some other grant opportunities at the state and federal level. For example, Milwaukee, WI recently received a federal grant to build their skatepark. We will pursue all grants that are available when the time is right.

Third, we will offer smaller gifting opportunities with naming rights to obstacles in the skatepark. There are many, many organizations, companies and individuals interested in naming rights at these smaller levels who are also getting impatient waiting for this skatepark to be built. The leadership gift needs to happen first so that this leadership donor has some say over who else gets to put their name or corporate brand in the park.

In fundraising, the Pareto Principle holds true to an amazing degree of fidelity. Basically, 20% of the money raised will take 80% of our effort; logically, 80% of the money raised will probably take 20% of



our effort. These small, individual donations have consumed a LOT of work and time, but have been absolutely critical to generating the interest and accomplishments to secure large donations.

What exactly are the next action steps?

Keep Fighting

In two words, our plan is to **keep fighting**. The names and faces may change, but the board of the Friends of the Roc City Skatepark will never stop fighting. In fact, the mission is much larger than this one project:

The mission of the Friends of the Roc City Skatepark is to pursue the creation, maintenance, and growth of a skatepark system in the City of Rochester, New York and to serve as an advocacy group for all progression-oriented sports.



The board of the Friends of the Roc City Skatepark is a small volunteer group with limited resources, and we have chosen to focus most of our energy on this one, large destination experience skatepark right now because we believe that it will greatly benefit the city and serve as a catalyst toward pursuing the larger mission of a system of skateparks. We have a grand vision of eventually hosting activities and events of all kinds that go along with being home to the largest skatepark in North America.

Summer 2015

We will be heavily involved and **our voices will be heard** at any public meetings held about the use of the Charles Carroll Plaza. We will seek involvement and attendance at these meetings from people who support the effort so that our voice is heard. We will do everything we can to notify you of these meetings. Hopefully by the end of summer 2015, we will hear good news that the skatepark is feasible at Charles Carroll Plaza and that the City of Rochester wants to move forward in that direction.

Rochester Action Sports Park (RASP)

The board of the Friends of the Roc City Skatepark was approached by the owners of the Rochester Action Sports Park (RASP), and it is their desire to have us take over RASP as a non-profit organization. This is a big undertaking, and we are still working on the details of how we can make this vision a reality. It is a very exciting prospect.

Executive Director

Our time as volunteers is limited. We have a skilled and passionate Executive Director who can facilitate our strategies aggressively, including rebuilding RASP, but we do not have the resources to pay him. This is an absolute critical success factor and fundraising priority. Once the design work begins, we must have somebody in place serving as the steward of our shared community vision, or it will get diluted.



Summary Conclusion

On behalf of every member of the Board of the Friends of the Roc City Skatepark, we apologize for not keeping all of our community stakeholders better informed about where the money has gone, what we have achieved, and our next action steps.

The biggest accomplishment to date is getting the project in the City of Rochester Capital Improvement Project Plan. This is the most significant evidence that the City of Rochester supports the project, and that it will happen ... eventually. This timeline is not unusual, and we have talked with groups like ours in other cities ... we have heard timeframes like 12 years, 14 years, 18 years, and even 21 years. This project is a grassroots effort. The outcome will be amazing, but the process is slow.

The Board of the Friends of the Roc City Skatepark is not going to stop until there is a skatepark in the City of Rochester. This accomplishment will be just one step toward achieving our mission of a skatepark system in Rochester as we continue to advocate for all progression-oriented sports. We have been good stewards of your money over the years, and our accomplishments are evidence of our thoughtful and strategic stewardship. Any board member will answer your questions, and my e-mail and cellular phone number are provided on the cover page of this report. We keep robust archival records of every single document, and the archives are available to anybody who would like to look through them⁹.

Special Project and Dedication

Special Project

From December 15, 2011 – January 31, 2012, the board of the Friends of the Roc City Skatepark voted unanimously in favor of a short-term shift in mission to raise money for Luke. Luke was three years old living with a very rare disease called Megacystis Microcolon Intestinal Hypoperistalsis Syndrome, or MMIHS. Basically, Luke needed an entire intestinal transplant and is currently living without most of his digestive system. At the time of the short-term shift in mission, Luke had been through 19 surgeries. During the six-week period that the board voted to assist Luke’s family with the financial burden of his disease, we were able to raise \$12,700 for his family.



Dedication



In October, 2011, 14-year old Akeer Matthews was killed while skateboarding. Akeer’s spirit is with us and we think of him often as we work toward a safe place for youth to participate in progression-oriented sports. In moments of doubt, frustration and exhaustion from the work of trying to accomplish this task of building the largest skatepark in the North America a reality, Akeer is with us in spirit.



⁹ A SUNY Geneseo student just used this archival record for his final report in an Urban Geography class. He got an A!



Appendix 1: Economic Development Report

**Potential Economic Impact of the Roc City Skatepark:
A Conservative Estimate of Value Added and Jobs Supported**

Draft #1

March 15, 2013

Submitted to Commissioner Luis Burgos, City of Rochester

Dr. James W. Maddison

Abstract

The proposed skatepark in downtown Rochester will be suitable for all progression oriented sports (skateboarding, BMX, roller blading, scooter, and etcetera); will be free and open access to the public; will be owned by the City of Rochester who will be responsible for insurance and basic maintenance (estimated to be \$1,000 per square foot, or approximately \$7,500 per year). The desired location for the skatepark is on the land under and adjacent to the Frederick Douglass – Susan B. Anthony Memorial Bridge on the east side of the Genesee River. According to estimates taken from the City of Rochester’s Maps and Surveys Office, the plots of land available at this location are approximately 75,000 square feet. If this all of this space is utilized, the skatepark in the City of Rochester would be the largest in North America.

For the purposes of this document, value added and jobs are the only two aspects of economic development discussed in detail because tools – such as multipliers – are readily available on the Internet.

Value Added -- Utilizing a formula of conservative, industry standard participation rates in all progression oriented sports; recreation expenditures per person per day (a different rate for local and non-local visitors); very conservative estimates of number of visits per year by participant; only basing this formula on athletes (not family members); and only basing this formula on Buffalo, Syracuse and Rochester, this research suggests the following:

Total conservative, hypothetical five year consumer, recreation-based “value added” from avid progression oriented sports athletes/tourists per year in downtown Rochester based on two closest metropolitan areas and the local Rochester Metropolitan Area = \$7,137,425

Jobs -- The number of direct, indirect and induced jobs created was calculated using a formula of 30.72 jobs per \$1MM spent in recreation/tourism plus an output job multiplier in recreation of 1.54 to conclude (based on the conservative value added estimates) that 66 direct or indirect jobs will be supported per year from the Roc City Skatepark.

A Brief History of the Roc City Skatepark

Since February, 2008 the Friends of the Roc City Skatepark have been working in collaboration with the City of Rochester to build a skatepark in the city. The desired location for the skatepark is on the land under and adjacent to the Frederick Douglass – Susan B. Anthony Memorial Bridge on the east side of the Genesee River. According to estimates taken from the City of Rochester’s Maps and Surveys Office, the plots of land available at this location are approximately 75,000 square feet.

If this all of this space is utilized, the skatepark in the City of Rochester would be the largest in North America.

The proposed skatepark will be suitable for all progression oriented sports (skateboarding, BMX, roller blading, scooter, and etcetera); will be free and open access to the public; will be owned by the City of Rochester who will be responsible for insurance and basic maintenance (estimated to be \$1,000 per square foot, or approximately \$7,500 per year).

The Friends of the Roc City Skatepark will exist as a non-profit group that will continue to advocate for progression oriented sports, raise money for major capital improvements to the skatepark and to construct additional neighborhood-level skateparks, and host events at the skatepark.

The purpose of this document is to attempt to posit the economic development impact of a skatepark in the City of Rochester.

It is important to note the myriad user benefits and social impacts of a skatepark. Progression oriented sports are culturally relevant activities with a low cost of participation; enhance the quality of life for downtown residents (many of whom also work downtown); and, a skatepark of the magnitude envisioned will create a new, significant tourism asset for downtown. It is noteworthy to mention the epidemic of childhood obesity in the City of Rochester – according to the Children’s Agenda, 39% of youth under the age of 18 are overweight or obese. Sixty minutes of skateboarding or bmx riding burn more calories than running at 12-minute pace, playing basketball, lacrosse, tennis, swimming or baseball.

Potential Economic Impact

While conducting research for this document, I was unable to find any studies that quantified empirical data on the economic impact of skateparks. Therefore, the only way to formulate any conclusions about potential economic impacts of a skatepark in Rochester is to triangulate these data using reasonable and valid comparisons.

For the purposes of this document, economic impacts are operationally defined and will be discussed utilizing the following framework.

“Economic impacts are effects on the level of economic activity in a given area. These impacts may be viewed in terms of: (1) business output (or sales volume), (2) value added (or gross regional product), (3) wealth (including property values), (4) personal income (including wages), or (5) jobs.”¹

For the purposes of this document, value added and jobs are the only two aspects of economic development discussed in detail because tools – such as multipliers – are readily available on the Internet.

Business Output

For the purposes of this report, empirical data on business output (or sales volume) from the construction of a new skatepark in downtown Rochester was not able to be found.

However, it is important to note throughout this report that a skatepark will produce a critical success factor for increasing retail sales: foot traffic. The proposed Roc City Skatepark will be a destination experience that is not visited or used in a motor vehicle. People who come to use the skatepark will be pedestrians in downtown Rochester.

Value Added

Public sector parks and recreation facilities are an engine of economic development, and the largest skatepark in North America will lend tourism benefit to the City of Rochester due to the novelty of the park within a culture that is willing to travel to the newest and most novel destination experience.

Estimates by the National Recreation and Park Association² suggest that in one study the average expenditure among “non-local” visitors per person per day at five different types of recreation facilities was \$62.58 per day per person. This study was dated 2010, so if this amount is incremented a conservative five percent the daily expenditure per person per day can be estimated at \$65.71 per person per day at or near the recreation facility (downtown Rochester). There are over 11,000,000 skateboarders in the United States. According to a formula provided by the Tony Hawk Foundation, roughly 4.6 percent of the population is a “frequent” skateboarder (defined as skateboarding 52 days or more per year). Upstate New York likely has a low participation rate compared to other areas of the country. To account for this and use a conservative estimate, I made this skateboard participation rate “participation in all progression oriented sports.”

¹ Economic Development Research Group (1997). Measuring Economic Impacts of Projects and Programs. Northwestern University. <http://edrgroup.com/pdf/econ-impact-primer.pdf>

² Crompton, J. (2010). Measuring the Economic Impact of Park and Recreation Services. http://www.americasbackyard.org/uploadedFiles/Americas_Backyard/_Crompton%20Research%20Paper-Final-150dpi.pdf

Buffalo

By way of just one small example, the Buffalo–Niagara–Cattaraugus Combined Statistical Area is home to 1,215,826 people.

$$1,215,826 \text{ people} \times .046 = 55,928 \text{ avid progression oriented sports athletes}$$

If the Roc City Skatepark is visited by just 10% of these avid athletes:

$$5,593 \text{ (10\% of avid athletes)} \times 1 \text{ visit to Roc City Skatepark} \times \$65.71 = \mathbf{\$373,109}$$

Syracuse

As of the 2010 census, the Syracuse metropolitan statistical area had a population of 662,577.

$$662,577 \text{ people} \times .046 = 30,478 \text{ avid progression oriented sports athletes}$$

If the Roc City Skatepark is visited by just 10% of these avid athletes:

$$3,048 \text{ (10\% of avid athletes)} \times 1 \text{ visit to the Roc City skatepark} \times \$65.71 = \mathbf{\$200,248}$$

Rochester Metropolitan Area

As of July 2011, the Census estimates indicated that the greater Rochester metropolitan area population rose to 1,055,278.

$$1,055,278 \times .046 = 48,543 \text{ avid progression oriented sports athletes}$$

Local visitors spend far less at a recreation facility than non-local visitors, but will visit far more often and a greater percentage of the avid athletes will use the skatepark. Nonetheless, using a conservative estimate of \$4.40 per person per day (Crompton, 2010), and 20 visits per year (“avid” is defined as skating 52 days per year) consider the following potential economic impact examples.

$$9,706 \text{ visitors (just 20\% of local, avid athletes)} \times 20 \text{ visits per year} \times \$4.40 = \mathbf{\$854,128}$$

$$\mathbf{\text{Buffalo, Syracuse, Rochester One-year Total} = \$1,427,485}$$

A five-year trend hypotheses based on these conservative estimates of just two neighboring cities and the Rochester metropolitan area shows a significant impact on downtown Rochester. In order to maintain these conservative estimates, there is no incrementing over the five years.

Buffalo -- 5,593 (10% of avid athletes) X 1 visit to Roc City Skatepark X \$65.71 = **\$373,109 x 5 =**
\$1,865,545

Syracuse -- 3,048 (10% of avid athletes) X 1 visit to the Roc City skatepark X \$65.71 = **\$200,248 x 5 =**
\$1,001,240

Rochester -- 9,706 visitors (just 20% of local, avid athletes) X 20 visits per year X \$4.40 = **\$854,128 x 5 =**
\$4,270,640

Total conservative, hypothetical five year consumer, recreation-based “value added” from avid progression oriented sports athletes/tourists per year in downtown Rochester based on two closest metropolitan areas and the local Rochester Metropolitan Area = \$7,137,425

Jobs

The number of direct, indirect and induced jobs created or saved can vary greatly by the type of project, work type and geographic location. As an average statewide estimate, the New York State Department of Transportation uses 24 jobs per \$1 million dollars (\$1M) of construction value to calculate the estimated number of direct, indirect and induced jobs created or saved.³ So, construction of the park should create 48 direct jobs the year it is built.

The one citation⁴ I was able to find on job creation per \$1MM spent in Amusement/Recreation is:

30.72 jobs per \$1MM spent in recreation/tourism

Using the conservative estimate posited above:

\$1.4MM tourism dollars spent per year = 43 direct jobs created

Output Job Multiplier in recreation = 1.54⁵

43 X 1.54 multiplier = **66 direct or indirect jobs supported per year**

³ <https://www.dot.ny.gov/recovery/jobs>

⁴ http://35.8.125.11/mgm2_new/econ/multipliers.htm

⁵ http://dside.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Using_Multipliers_to_Measure_Economic_Impacts.pdf