



Skate Park Advisory Committee

City of Seattle

Duty now for the future!

To: The Honorable David Della, Jan Drago and Richard Conlin
Seattle City Council
Parks, Education, Libraries and Labor Committee Members

Cc: John Merner, Seattle Center

From: Skatepark Advisory Committee (SPAC)

RE: Evaluation of Additional Proposed SeaSk8 Replacement Site – Dupen Site

Date: July 11, 2007

The purpose of this letter is to provide the Seattle Parks and Recreation Skate Park Advisory Committee's (SPAC) evaluation on the additional identified potential SeaSk8 replacement site ("Dupen site"). The SPAC was notified of this site on July 9, 2007 by the Seattle Center staff and asked to provide feedback on it. We hope that this feedback is helpful in determining whether this site is a viable replacement alternative relative to the other potential identified replacement sites.

Square Footage

Prior to analyzing the Dupen site, the SPAC requested that the Seattle Center provide a diagram showing the layout of the proposed skateable area with the necessary egress and ingress areas defined. The diagram provided by Seattle Center on July 9, 2007 showed a skateable footprint of 6,660 square feet.

Based on the Seattle Center's website...

http://www.seattlecenter.com/events/location/detail.asp?VE_VenueNum=107

...the former SeaSk8 facility was 8,910 square feet. Therefore, prima facie, the Dupen site reduces the size of the skatepark by 25 percent. The SPAC considers this decrease significant given that there is currently no other legal, safe, and accessible skateable terrain within the downtown core and only a single advanced skate spot within the broader Seattle area at the Ballard Commons Park.

Advantages and Disadvantages

In addition to the comparison of the square footage provided by the Dupen site relative to the former SeaSk8 facility, the SPAC evaluated this site using the siting criteria previously applied to each of the four sites (1st Avenue North, Mercer Street, Broad Street Green and Pavilion sites) identified to facilitate a direct comparison among them. The

Dupen site shares many of the same characteristics of the Pavilion site, and also carries the following advantages:

- Fast track to skatepark design and construction. By far, the most important advantage of the Dupen site is that it will allow expedited design and construction of the replacement skatepark in an area of the Seattle Center campus that is currently supported by all major stakeholders, in an area of the Seattle Center campus that is currently supported by the PELL committee with the concurrence of the Seattle Center and the primary adjacent resident tenant, The VERA Project.
- Proximity to the perimeter of the Seattle Center campus. This will help attract skateboarders away from the center of campus while using the skate facility.
- Proximity to the VERA Project. As a key player in youth programs at Seattle Center, the VERA Project will attract young people to this part of the campus. This will encourage “eyes on the park” and self-policing and help serve the needs of skateboarding’s primary demographic group. Additionally, the potential partnership between VERA and the Skate Like a Girl organization would further promote positive active youth programming in this space.
- Proximity to pedestrian traffic. Based on discussions with the Seattle Center, the SPAC understands that moderate foot traffic exists in this general area of the campus. If an appropriate buffer between the skatepark and surrounding walkways can be designed (no fence!) this will further promote self-policing, and will provide a free public spectator activity for pedestrians.
- Requires a cutting edge design/build. The exceptionally tight integration between a skatepark at the Dupen site and its adjacent structures and amenities will require a world-class skatepark designer and builder, with considerations for aesthetics and skateable art features. This will be a significant driver toward fulfillment of the City Council’s requirement “that the replacement skateboard park be upgraded and technically enhanced to reflect current design standards for new skateboard parks to the extent possible.” As a preliminary short list of qualified designers and builders, the SPAC recommends the following: Grindline, Dreamland, Airspeed, Team Pain, Spectrum and New Line.
- Proximity to restrooms, water, and garbage cans.
- Potential for lighting.

Disadvantages of this site include the following:

- Limited line of sight depending on time of day. The skatepark footprint is surrounded on three sides by buildings. Although this serves to reduce noise migration during use, it also significantly reduces site lines through the space and decreases “eyes on the park” when they are not in use.

- Limited adjacent space. The existing buildings and their egress requirements reduce options for integrating green, passive and open space for families and spectators to view the skatepark and create a family-friendly environment.
- Located away from major bus lines. Although the Dupen site's proximity to the campus perimeter is an advantage, the location of major bus lines on the East side of the campus would likely encourage skaters to traverse campus in order to reach the skatepark.
- The square-shaped footprint of the site, coupled with the limited available square feet of skateable terrain, limits the potential skatepark design alternatives.

Toward Consensus

Although the Dupen site clearly offers several advantages over the Mercer Street and 1st Avenue North sites, evaluation of the Dupen site and Broad Street Green sites using objective, pre-defined siting criteria clearly shows that the Broad Street Green site is the superior replacement alternative for a host of reasons, including: more equitable replacement of skateable square footage, increased site lines and “eyes on the park” during use and non-use periods, surrounding green space and passive viewing areas for spectators and families, closer proximity to bus lines, and increased opportunity to integrate art and green space into the skatepark (due to less constraints surrounding the skatepark footprint).

However, amidst these advantages the SPAC understands, through numerous outreach meetings and discussions with all major stakeholders, including the Seattle Center, Experience Music Project, Space Needle, Pacific Science Center, Vulcan, and the PEL&L Committee, that several stakeholders have significant concerns about locating the replacement facility at the Broad Street Green site. Further, it is our understanding that continued attempts to locate the skatepark at the Broad Street Green site will result in indefinite project delays and a continued lack of skateable terrain for the displaced downtown skateboarding community and that it is also a near certainty that no further potential sites will be identified on the Seattle Center campus. Therefore, in order to reach consensus among the aforementioned stakeholders and start building the replacement skatepark on an expedited schedule, the SPAC is willing to endorse the Dupen site with the understanding that this endorsement comes with the potential consequences and disadvantages listed above.

It is important to note that the limited available space at this site will provide significant design challenges to construct an upgraded, quality skatepark and therefore will require a world-class skatepark designer and builder, with considerations for aesthetics and skateable art features. The SPAC has considerable knowledge of local and regional skatepark designers with the capabilities to make this compressed site the best possible asset to the largest possible skateboarding demographic and we therefore offer our support during selection of the design and build team(s).

The SPAC also feels that the Lot 2 conditions of sale allotted budget to build approximately 9,000 square feet of skateboarding facilities. Therefore, we request that any budgeted funds remaining following design and construction of the reduced size facility be allocated to a general fund for use in construction of skate elements as part of the Citywide Skatepark Plan process recently passed by the City Council.

Final Note

The SPAC regards the skatepark replacement project as an important policy undertaking in the broad public interest, and understands that the project has demanded considerable time and effort from all of its stakeholders. Just like all of the other stakeholders on this project, the SPAC sincerely hopes that everyone will reach consensus on a site that provides both a successful skatepark replacement and a win-win compromise for all stakeholders. Please let us know how we can further expedite and assist in this process.