

Arlington Skate Park Strategy

OUR VISION: A SKATE OPPORTUNITY WITHIN REACH

Following the vision outlined in the 2004 Park, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan, the Arlington Parks and Recreation Department strives to provide a high quality of life through **great parks and exceptional recreational opportunities**. Our mission is to provide quality facilities and services that are responsive to a diverse community and sustained with a focus on partnerships, innovation, and environmental leadership. Arlington's reputation for innovation means identifying park design and recreation trends, then determining if such trends satisfy unmet needs in the community.

The City of Arlington has a significant number of skateboarders and no formal skateboard park facilities. The lack of facilities results in increased pressure on public and private spaces by skateboarders who utilize these places for recreation. The safety of both skateboarders and other pedestrians is compromised by skating in unsanctioned spaces.

The Skate Park Strategy (SPS) will guide the delivery of skate facilities to a broad spectrum of participants. A significant number of residents enthusiastically and regularly participate in skateboarding across the City. Often times, participants build their own ramps. These facilities, when constructed on public lands, may be unsafe and create a liability to local governments.

The strategy carefully considers site selection criteria that will help identify a logical array of potential sites and facility types. Potential sites were presented to the public to gauge overall support and solicit feedback. Through stakeholder feedback, public input, staff review, and professional consulting, a network of skateboarding opportunities has been suggested. Through examination of the trends and needs, the first initiative is to develop a single, centrally located skate park facility that will accommodate participants throughout the community.

The long-term vision of this strategy is to identify a combination of skate spots, neighborhood skate facilities, community skate facilities, and a single city-wide skate facility that will offer skateboarders a place to practice and participate in close proximity to their homes. Due to safety concerns for pedestrians and park users, this strategy attempts to integrate the skate facilities with the trail system. This strategy will help to ensure that the City of Arlington accommodates skateboarders and other action sports within parks planning and development efforts over the next 20 years.



Goals of the Skate Park System

1. The primary goal of the strategy is to guide the planning and development of a network of skate facilities that encompasses and connects the entire city.
2. Provide skating opportunities within 15 minutes of all residents through the trail network.
3. Establish site criteria for the selection of appropriate skate park locations (visibility, parking, neighborhood impacts, noise, crime, trash, graffiti, etc.).
4. Establish design guidelines for each facility in order to provide appropriate differentiation of the facilities on a city-wide scale.
5. Identify a location for the city-wide skate park.
6. Facilitate public/private partnership opportunities.
7. Add skateboarding vibrancy to the City of Arlington while helping to build strong and healthy neighborhoods.
8. Build a sense of community through walkability and skateability by linking with the Hike and Bike System Master Plan.

Site Selection Criteria

A criteria matrix was developed to help determine the most suitable locations for skate facilities throughout the park system. A public participation process will be included as part of future planning and design efforts, and each potential site will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

Location

- Are there a sufficient number of users in the service area to warrant skate facility development?
- Is the site an adequate distance from residential dwellings?
- Is there sufficient support within the serviced community and stakeholder groups?
- Could the site be integrated with the existing surroundings?
- Is there potential for viewing areas and informal seating?
- Is it compatible with other park uses and amenities?
- Does the site allow for passive supervision?
- Does the site allow for ease of routine maintenance?

Access and Security

- Does the site allow for the creation of a safe and secure environment?
- Is the site visible to the street?
- Is the site within walking distance of the target user?
- Are there pedestrian connections?
- Is there adequate parking?
- Does the site allow for area/security lighting?
- Does the site have easy access for police and emergency response vehicles?
- Does the site provide for separation from vehicular traffic?

Physical Site Conditions

- Does the site provide adequate size?
- Does the site have expansion potential?
- Is the site easily developable and have minimal construction impediments?
- Are there minimal drainage requirements for the site?
- Can the site facilitate no net loss of mature or significant trees?
- Is there vegetation to provide comfort, wind protection and shade?
- Does the site have good, stable soil conditions?

Supporting Infrastructure

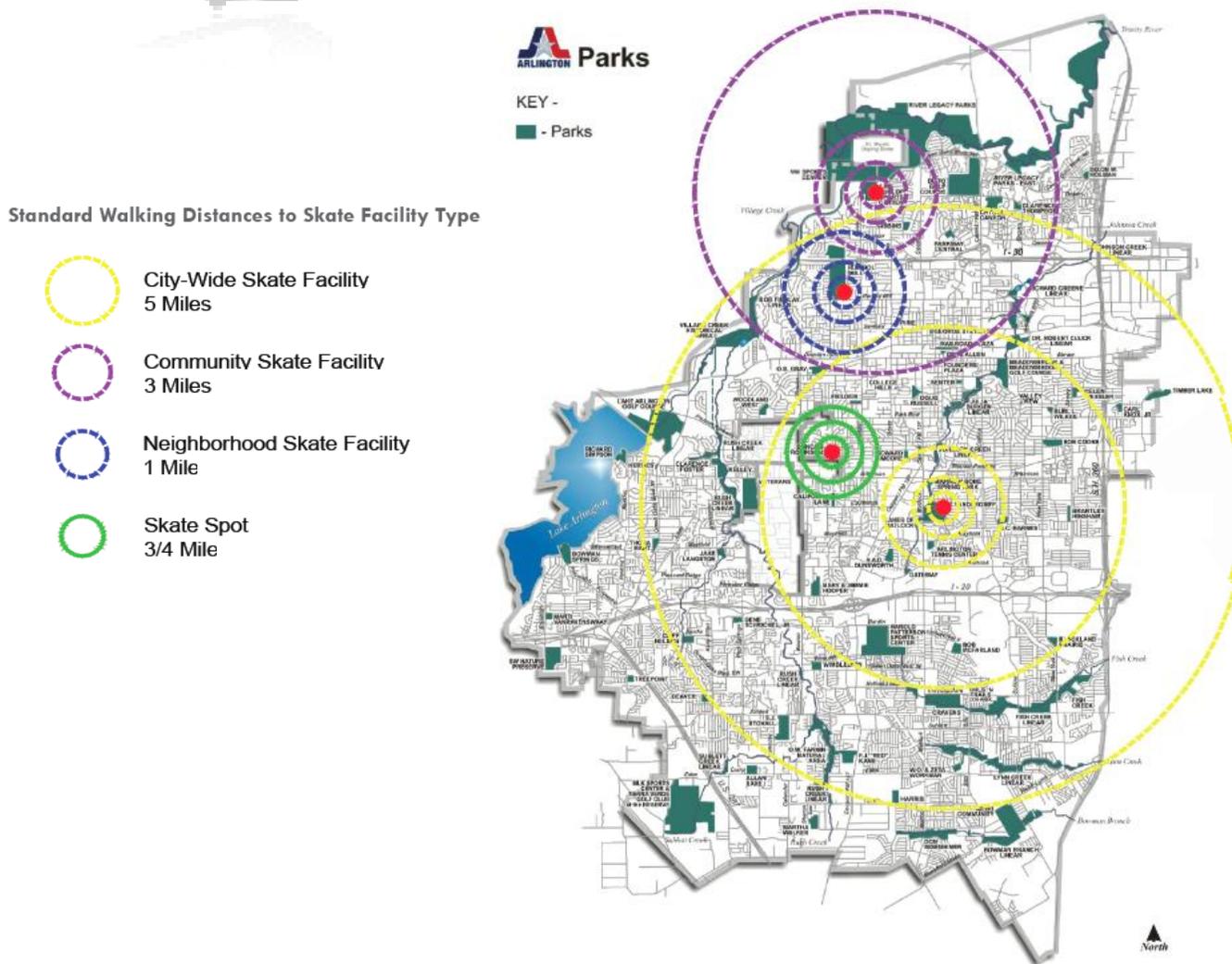
- Does the site have public amenities close by to support skate users (i.e. trash cans, drinking fountains, restrooms, concessions, pay phone/call box)?

Skate Park Typologies

A comprehensive strategy for skate facilities will contribute to greater activity and provide alternatives for participants in closer proximity to their homes. The recommended approach is to review the physical landscape of the City, understand existing barriers and constraints to participation and then create a hierarchy of facilities to encourage participation and eliminate barriers.

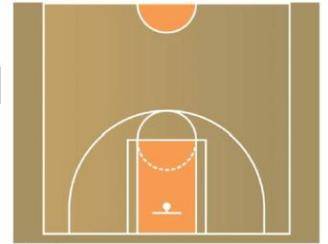
In many communities without a skate park, youth can be found skating on a single park bench, a simple handrail, a curb, or any flat smooth area. Variety is always good, but the strength of a 'Tiered Network Strategy' is to offer variety 'community wide'. The SPS attempts to provide opportunities for skateboarding at a number of scales, geographically dispersed, thereby accommodating the most participants in close proximity to their homes.

The skate park opportunities presented in this strategy are useful as a standard approach for any community. However, the sizes suggested in this report are to be used as a guide. When planning a city-wide network, it is important to consider a variety of context specific factors including: physical size of the community, youth population, catchment areas, extent of organized user group, etc.



Skate Spot

A "spot" is a small opportunity that is created as a dedicated zone within a neighborhood park or along an established trail. It may consist of one or more features and encompasses an area no larger than 1,500 square feet. A spot may support users of all skill levels; however, it typically consists of street or transition style features that target less experienced and intermediate skill levels.



Skate Spot
1/2 Basketball Court Size or 1,500 sq. ft.

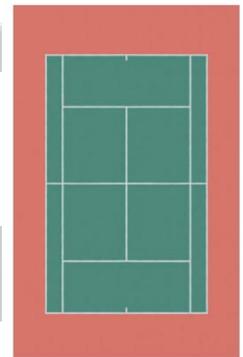
Spots are often located in residential settings or in urban spaces where such facilities are needed to off-set conflicts on private or semi-private land. The provision of spots may offer small opportunities in legitimate and safe locations. Spots are also a useful and effective means for 'linking' larger skate opportunities around a larger geographic area. Spots can help establish a safe route of travel between skate destinations.



Neighborhood Skate Facility

A neighborhood skate facility encompasses an area of approximately 1,500–10,000 square feet, and typically serves the needs of one or two neighborhoods. It offers users a single dominant type of terrain accommodating a particular riding style.

A neighborhood skate facility may support users of all skill levels but is primarily intended to target less experienced and intermediate skill levels. This type of opportunity is commonly located within existing neighborhood parks or on highly visible land in close proximity to residential development or small commercial zones.

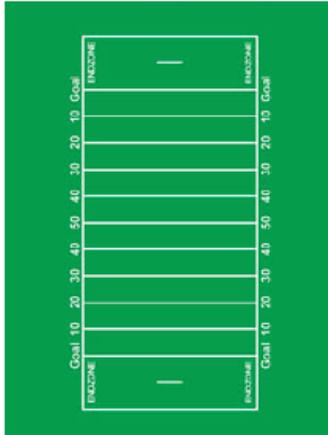


Neighborhood Skate Facility
Tennis Court or 7,000 sq. ft.



City-Wide Skate Facility

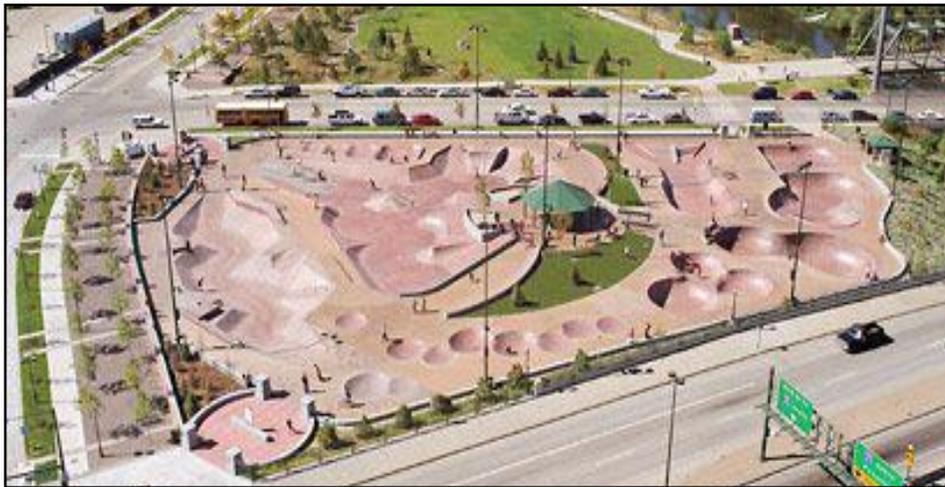
A City-wide facility is similar to a community scale facility in that: the park may accommodate more than one riding style; it is best located in a geographically central location to the entire city; it often has formal infrastructure; and it is best suited in a mixed zone of residential, commercial and institutional land uses. During the peak months, events and competitions can be held at these facilities to promote both skateboarding and tourism. This scale of facility may accommodate a wider range of riding styles, and ranges between approximately 30,000–50,000 square feet.



City-Wide Skate Facility
Football Field 50,000 sq. ft.



City Wide Park
Sunland Park - Sunland, NM



Public Meeting Process

Once funding has been identified for a proposed skate facility, a public meeting should be scheduled prior to beginning the design process. Information regarding the meeting purpose, date/time and place should be clearly conveyed to the intended participants at least two weeks prior to the planned meeting. With the audience in mind, the City will utilize a variety of methods to notify area residents of the upcoming meeting. Some of these methods include direct mailers to the surrounding neighborhood, email communication blasts, press releases, website and social media postings, newsletters, flyers and posting signage in the proposed park.

Following the initial public meeting, a summary email with meeting notes should be delivered to all citizens that attended and provided contact information. If applicable, a project website can be developed that will allow citizens to track the progress from design to construction completion. The website can be used to post conceptual plans, project updates, future meeting dates and staff contact information.

Utilizing the feedback from the first public meeting, the design process will begin. Depending on the size and scope of the project, additional meetings may be scheduled throughout the design process. Prior to finalization of the design, at least one additional public meeting will be scheduled to solicit public input before proceeding with the bidding and construction phases.

Conclusion

The Skate Park Strategy provides a framework for building-out a network of skateboarding facilities over a 20 year period. When implemented, this strategy will ultimately provide an equitable distribution of facilities for all residents. By taking advantage of existing and future pedestrian routes throughout the City, the user group, parents, and spectators are encouraged to be active, to interact socially with others, and to help support the notion of more compact, walkable neighborhoods.

During the first five years of implementation, the City will work to create a general framework for the skateboarding community. The initial sites will focus on bringing a variety of skate park types to the park system. These facilities will work to encourage skateboarders to become active in their local park. Although day trips may be slightly longer than the ideal (15 minutes for a pedestrian), these facilities will be built along existing and future trails to allow for easy connections. These initial facilities should provide diverse skating styles including a higher diversity of transition, bowl, and street style skating.

In the first five years, the objective is to develop enough square footage to meet the immediate skateboarding needs in Arlington. Future skate facilities will include smaller footprints to allow for creativity in the design and construction processes. More integrated art and custom features will be developed in each new facility. Upon completion of the final facility, the City of Arlington will have one of the nation's first skate park networks and be on the cutting edge of action sports facilities for its residents.

While the SPS is set within the current park system of the City of Arlington, future opportunities may arise for skate facility locations that will need to be considered. These opportunities include the Entertainment District, the Viridian, and the University of Texas at Arlington.