

# COLUMBIA SKATE PARK





Columbia Cosmopolitan Recreation Area  
1615 Business Loop 70 West  
Columbia, MO 65205

[www.GoColumbiaMo.com](http://www.GoColumbiaMo.com) (GoWord: GoSkatePark)

**Contact:**

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Columbia Parks and Recreation Department  
P.O. Box 6015  
Columbia, MO 65205-6015

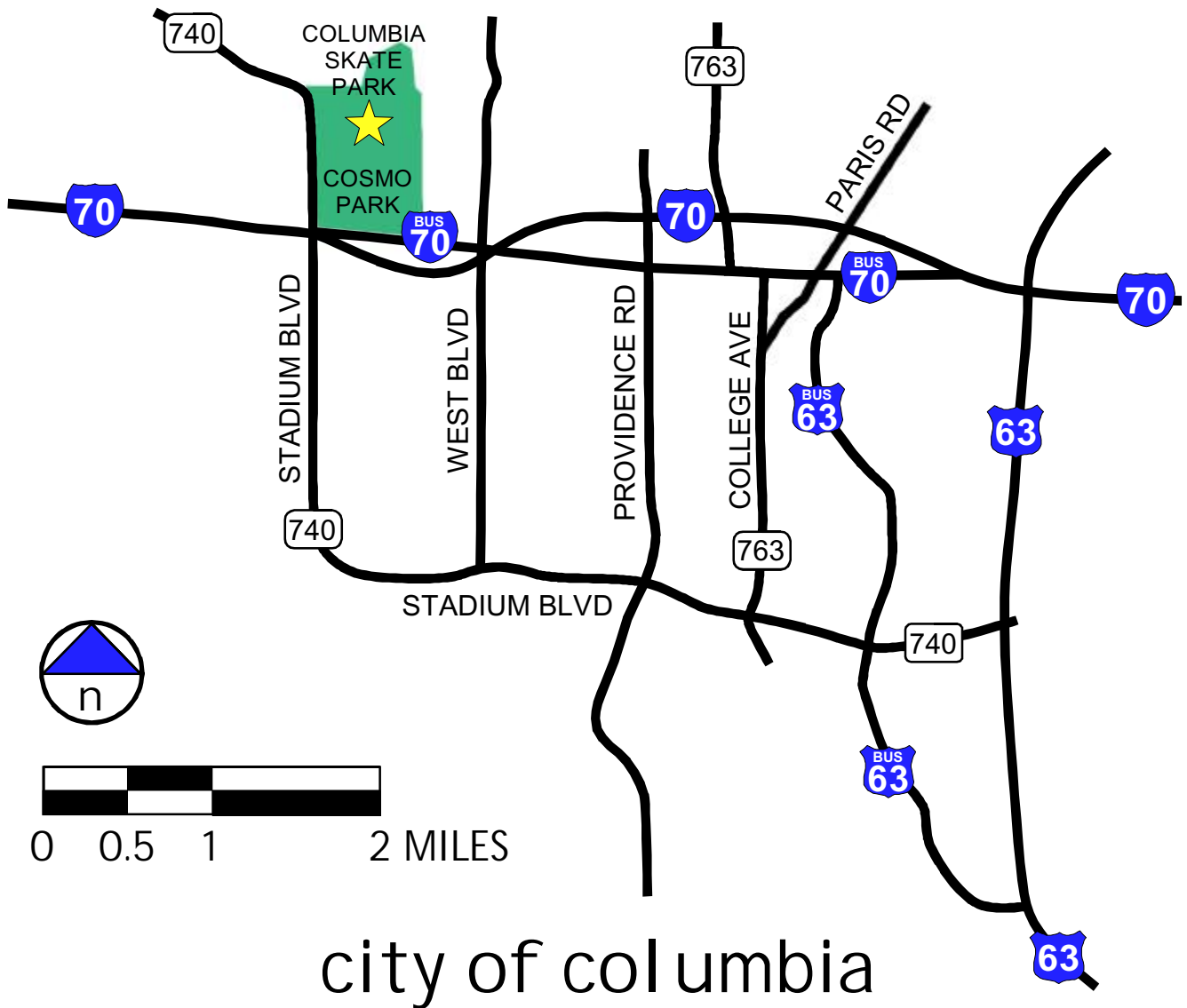
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# LOCATION MAP



## **PROJECT HISTORY**

Columbia, Missouri, like so many cities around the country was faced with the problem of what to do with skateboarders and in-line skaters in its downtown. The initial approach was to pass an ordinance restricting this activity and then work with the business community and the police department to effectively enforce the ordinance. While this seems like a straightforward and sensible approach which would remedy the problem for the concerned business community, it turned out to be the action that inspired the skaters to seek a permanent place they could call their own.

As you might expect, the police had a problem with this approach. They were required to enforce the ordinance, but had no good answer when they were asked, "If we can't skate in the downtown, then where can we skate?" The eventual answer to this question came from an effort by the skating community to organize and lobby for a place they could use to practice and participate in their sport. Columbia's City Council was reluctant at first to give the issue serious attention, but as the skaters and their supporters became more organized the support for a facility increased. The group found that not only those who felt the skaters were not being treated fairly came to their aid, but also many business owners in the downtown realized that the problem would only get better if the City took a pro-active role in providing a place for the skaters to go. The City Council responded by authorizing the Parks and Recreation Department to work with a committee consisting of skaters and business owners to decide on a site and to develop a budget.

This effort proved to be quite interesting as the group considered various options for development. The site that initially drew the most attention was located in one of the City's larger park areas. The facility being considered was a five-court tennis complex that was scheduled for renovation in the upcoming fiscal year. The proposal being entertained would have structured the renovation in such a way as to allow for two of the five courts to be dedicated to the skaters. The plan was to leave the fencing in place and add skating components within this space. The concept sounded reasonable and the majority of the skaters who were active in the effort believed the plan would be better than nothing and felt they would be happy with the facility.

Up to that point, the Parks Planning and Development Division had little involvement in the process of site selection and had minimal participation in the discussions regarding planning for the project. As the skate park development became more public it began to generate concerns by those who lived in and around the park. The threat of a counter lobby against the skate park by the neighborhood association prompted the City Council to request the staff evaluation and consideration of alternative areas for the project. This was the point at which the skate park project became a serious issue for the Parks Department, and we began to give the proposed project the attention it deserved. The project had the potential to provide a facility that was unique in our park system and could benefit a user group that we had ignored until then.

The project design could now receive the serious planning considerations given to any long term recreational facility, and it would be evaluated based on many design factors. The process of site selection would closely examine a site's ability to serve the users as well as the overall benefits it could provide for the park system. Some of the concerns we had with the tennis court conversion proposal were: size limitations, safety issues related to skating so closely to a chain-link fence, adapting skate components to an asphalt surface, what type of material would be used to construct the components, the design limitation that a rectangular space created, and the restricted potential to expand the facility.

The planning effort to determine the best site for the skate park resulted in the consideration of a combined facility that would also provide the location for roller hockey, which was another sports facility we lacked in our park system. This was exciting to think that we were now looking at creating a package that would meet the needs of two related user groups. As the two sports became blended together in the master planning effort we began to realize the benefits of this approach should help enable the complex to promote itself and grow as the demand for the facility increased.

The final site was chosen and is located in the Columbia Cosmopolitan Recreation Area. This park is the city's largest at 530 acres and is home for the majority of our organized team sports, an 18-hole golf course, tennis courts, hiking/biking trails, park shelters and many other recreational facilities. It also serves as one of the main sites for the Missouri Show-Me State Games and offers tremendous exposure for the facilities located in the park.

The next step in the process was the actual planning of the facility. The roller hockey research and design was relatively straightforward, since the sport has rules and requirements for facility design. The skate boarding design process was entirely different, and we quickly realized there were very few guidelines and no formal standards pertaining to the design and detailing of a skate boarding park. As a sport, skateboarding seems to be in a constant state of evolution, and established rules and regulations seem to be much too restrictive for most users. We quickly determined the design process would benefit by the participation of local skaters, and a design committee was formed. This group was comprised of individuals who volunteered to get involved and ranged in age from 12 - 24 years old. Its size varied, but on average the number of members attending the planning meetings averaged about six to eight. They met with the department's planner during a three month period and culminated their efforts in a clay model of the park that was then converted to a computer drawing by the planner.

The skaters who participated in the project's design phase, contributed greatly to the ultimate success of the skate park, by providing the design expertise needed to assure the park would offer the critical elements necessary to achieve a safe, yet challenging environment. They also assured that both novice and expert skaters could enjoy the park by providing areas for all ages and skill levels. Finally, by their participation in the

process, they helped insure the skaters would develop a strong sense of ownership in the park and would give it the care and respect needed to sustain the facility's success for years to come.

The research portion of the project was eye-opening and very interesting. Much of the information about the sport was available on the internet, and the design committee used this source along with the experience of the members to formulate the final design. Our planner's role on the committee was that of a facilitator and a professional designer who could help the group with the questions of how we engineer the construction and implementation of the project. The committee gathered several times over a three month period to discuss the park and determine such things as: the type of skate park they wanted, the materials to be used, the level of challenge, the size, and the spacial relationship of all the skating components. The final two meetings were used to build a clay model which incorporated all the thoughts regarding design and placement of the various elements. This enabled the committee members to see the park take shape and to change its design until a final layout was agreed upon by all members. The final step required the conversion of the model information into a full set of computer-drawn plans and specifications.

During this phase, our planner was able to proceed with certain design criteria established. The committee process had determined such things as: the material to be used (concrete), the transition radius information, the height and degree of slope, the type of grindrail and coping to be used, and the spacial relationships of the various elements to one another. This information helped assure that the end product would function safely and provide the necessary space for novice skaters along with plenty of features that would challenge the most experienced skaters for years to come.

The funding of the facility was provided by local money made available thru the City's general fund (\$39,000) and a donation from the local Columbia International Cosmopolitan Club (\$41,200). The construction of the project began in June of 1998 and took approximately 12 months to complete. All work was completed by Columbia's Parks Planning and Development staff. A new 100-car parking lot was also constructed adjacent to the park to meet the additional parking requirements. The funds for the parking lot were made available thru separate funding sources used to construct and maintain roads, parking, and trails within the Columbia Cosmopolitan Recreation Area.

The completed project was dedicated June 19, 1999, and represents a gratifying success story for those individuals who supported building a skate park in Columbia. It also represents the success that can be achieved when users of a facility are directly involved in the planning process and develop a sense of ownership and pride in the facility. We are very pleased with the response we have received from not only the local skaters, but also the many skaters who travel here from other towns in Missouri and the surrounding states. The many hours of hard work by countless individuals have helped Columbia create one of our city's finest recreation facilities and have silenced the critics of this effort by demonstrating the benefits of the project thru its

continuing growth in popularity. The facility has provided a challenging, yet safe environment for skaters and has helped eliminate the negative stereotype that many people have unfairly developed about young people who enjoy this sport. The skaters have been a wonderful group to work with and show their appreciation and gratitude by the level of respect and care they give the skate park.

## **THE DESIGN PROCESS**

Just over two years ago the Columbia City Council was asked to consider the development of a skate park for the community. They gave the request their attention and after weighing the benefits of the proposal, decided to support the project. The Parks and Recreation Department was given the task of working with supporters to locate a possible site and begin development planning. This design challenge became one of the more unique, exciting and rewarding experiences the Parks Planning and Development Division has undertaken.

It all began as an outcry from the downtown business community for the City to deal with the skateboarding problem in Columbia's downtown, and it lead to a vocal appeal to the City to provide a place for this group of young people to practice their sport. There were many people who expressed support for this effort, and like other communities that have experienced this same scenario, supporters represented both sides of the issue. Many wanted the downtown to become a place free of skateboarders and considered the sport to be more a nuisance activity, rather than a true sport. Others wanted this unrepresented group of young people to be treated like a legitimate recreational user group, and not just a bunch of kids who had nothing better to do than hang out in the downtown and create havoc.

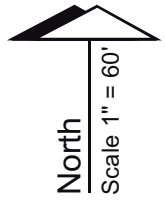
The one thing people on both sides of the issue had in common was the desire to provide a site for the skateboarders to gather and practice their sport away from the downtown. To be successful we had two difficult challenges to address. The first was the selection of a site that could offer all the characteristics needed to satisfy the skaters and at the same time reduce the potential for criticism and conflict from those who may not want a facility in a particular park. The second challenge was the design process itself. If we failed to provide a facility that maintained interest and challenge for the skaters, the end result could be a sense of failure in the eyes of the community, due to lack of use.

The selection of a good site was critical, and as various areas around the City were discussed, evaluated and eliminated, it came down to one location which appeared to offer all the ingredients for success. The chosen site is located in the Columbia Cosmopolitan Recreation Area, which is Columbia's largest park area and home to many local youth and adult sports activities. It also serves as one of the principle locations for the state "Show-Me Games", which occur on four weekends during the summer months.

The actual design of the park was achieved by combining the talents of our park planner with the expertise of a design committee made up of skateboarders and in-line skaters. This process proved to be very effective in allowing the future user group to express their desires and to educate the planner about their sport. The types of materials, maintenance and safety concerns, and operational issues were among the many issues discussed and the information gathered contributed to the ultimate



success of the facility. The actual construction plans and specifications were completed by the planner, and the park planning and development division personnel began work on the project in June of 1998. The completed skate park was dedicated on June 19, 1999 and has proven to be successful well beyond all expectations.

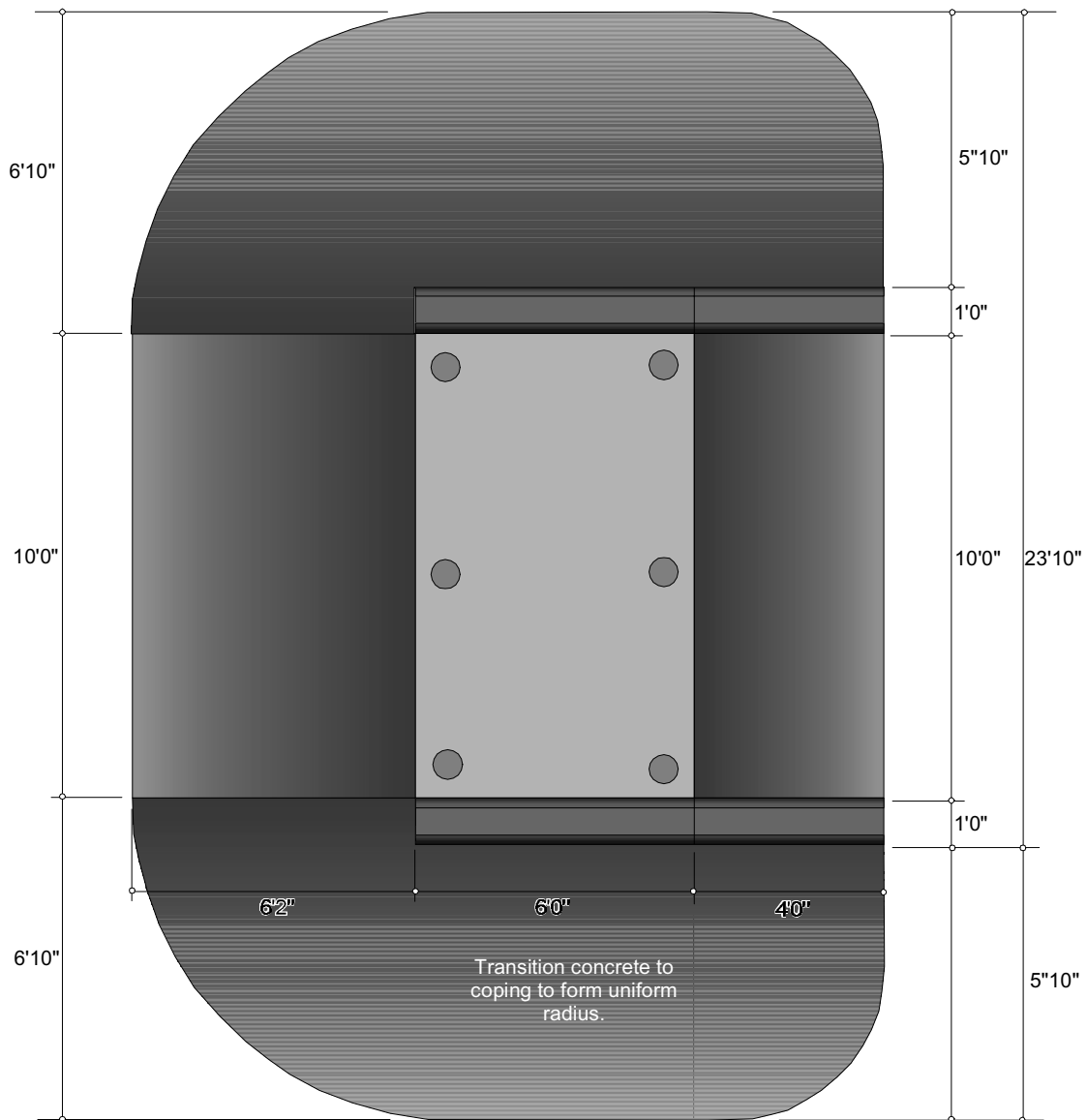


# Development Master Plan

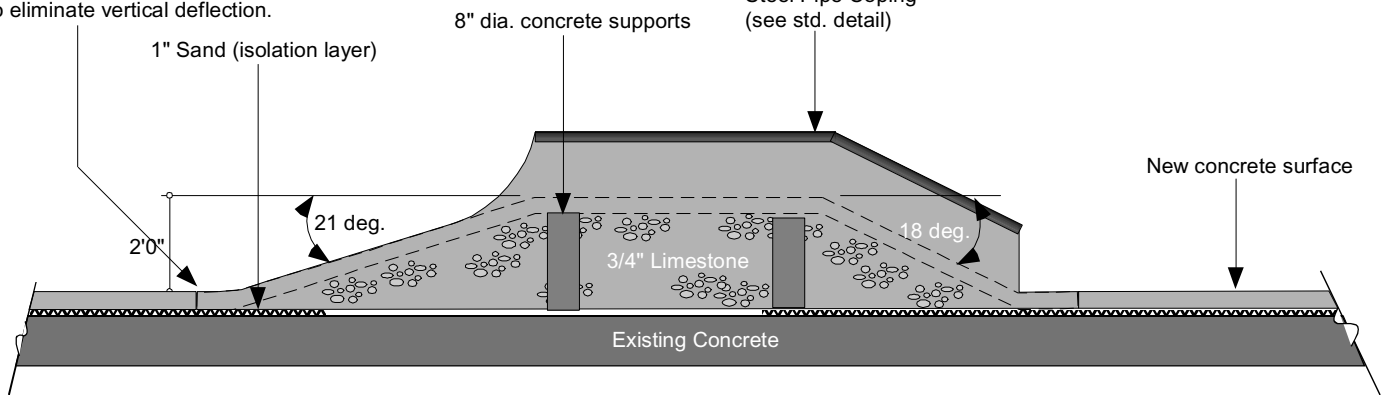
## Columbia Skate Park

# Columbia Cosmopolitan Recreation Area North End

## Columbia Parks & Recreation

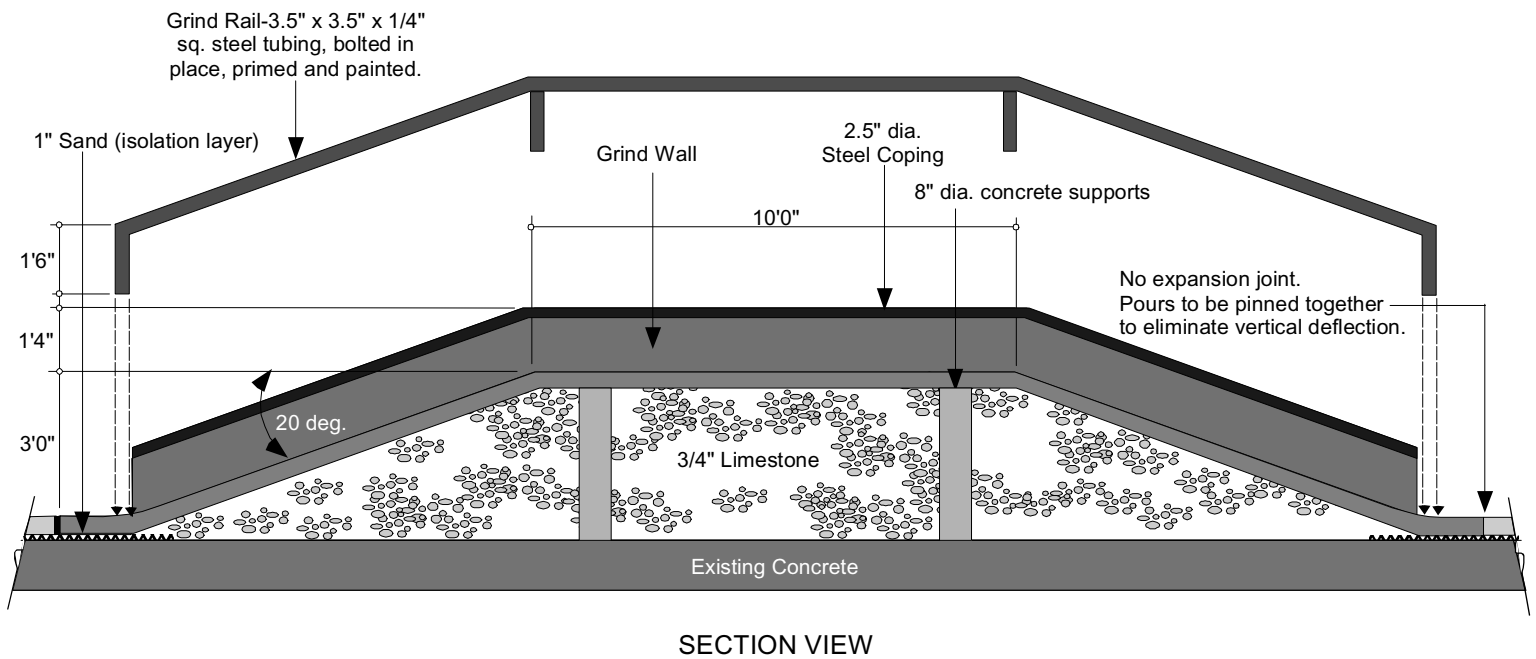
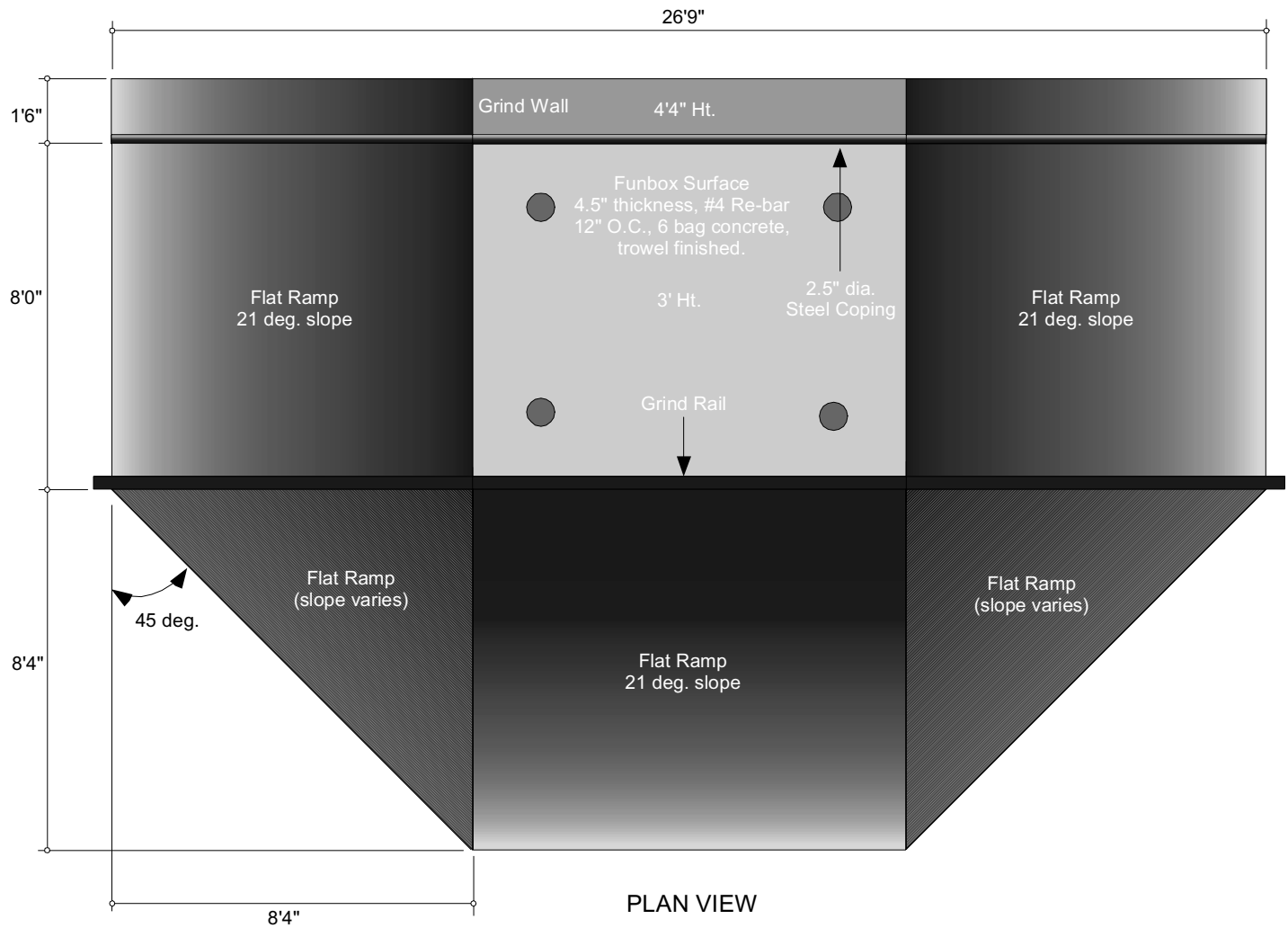


No expansion joint.  
Pours to be pinned together  
to eliminate vertical deflection.



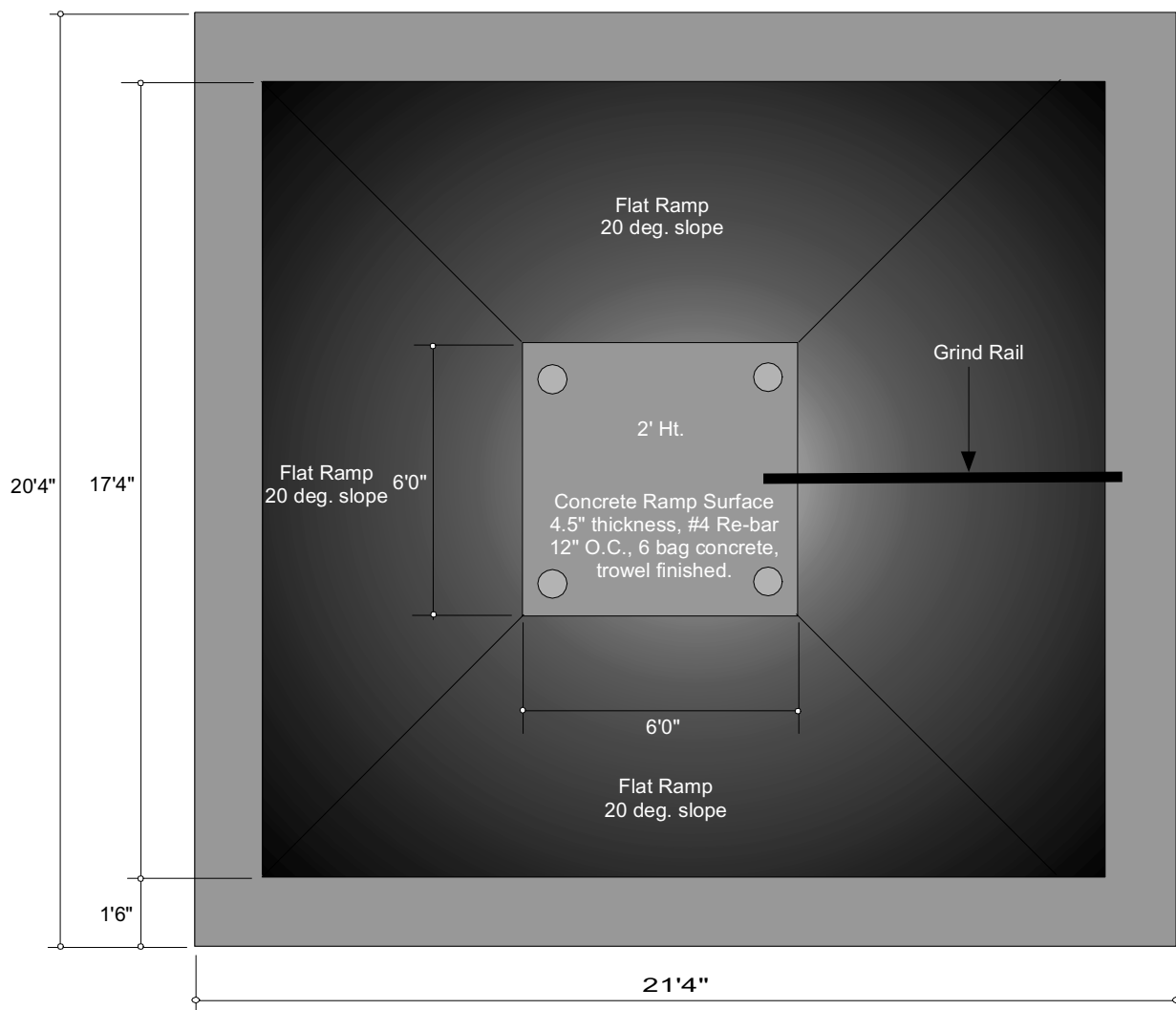
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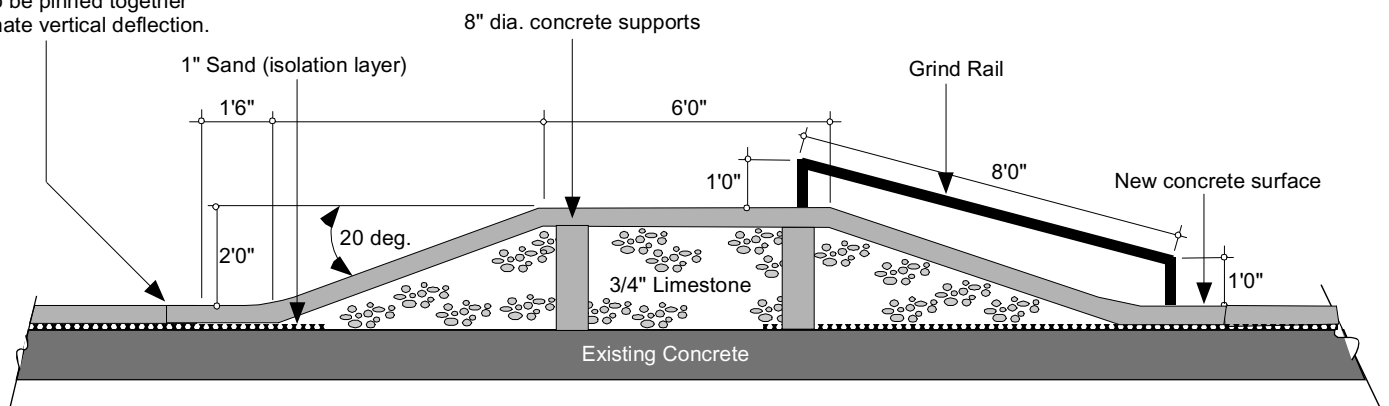
# FUNBOX - NO. 1

scale 1"=4'0"



PLAN VIEW

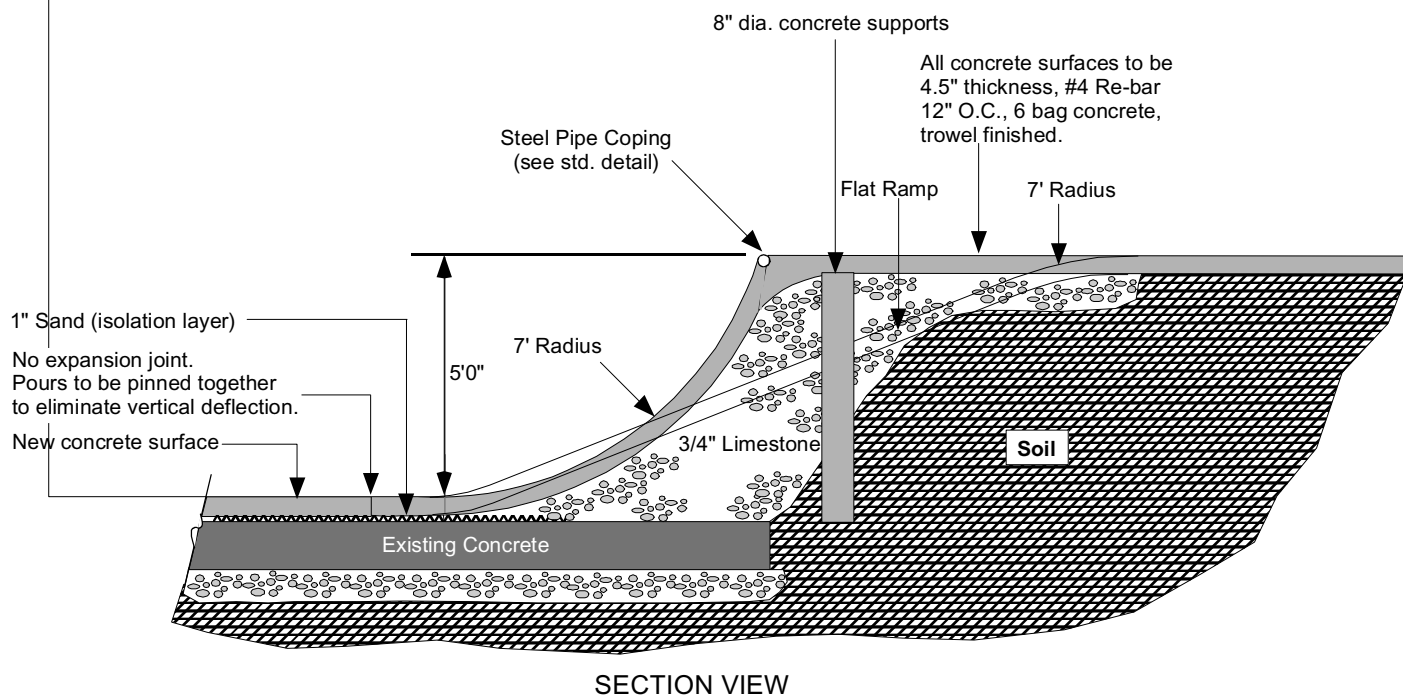
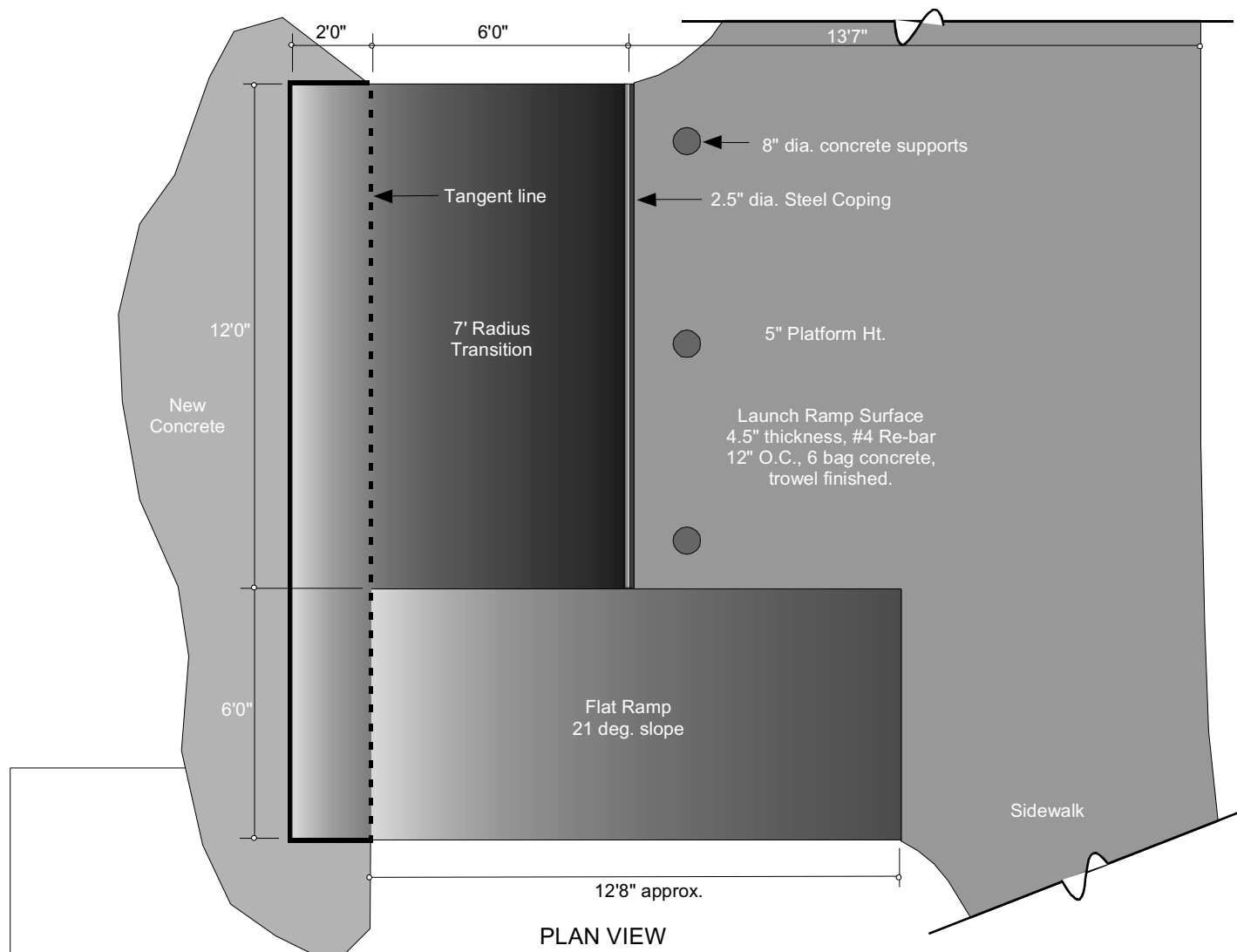
No expansion joint.  
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SECTION VIEW

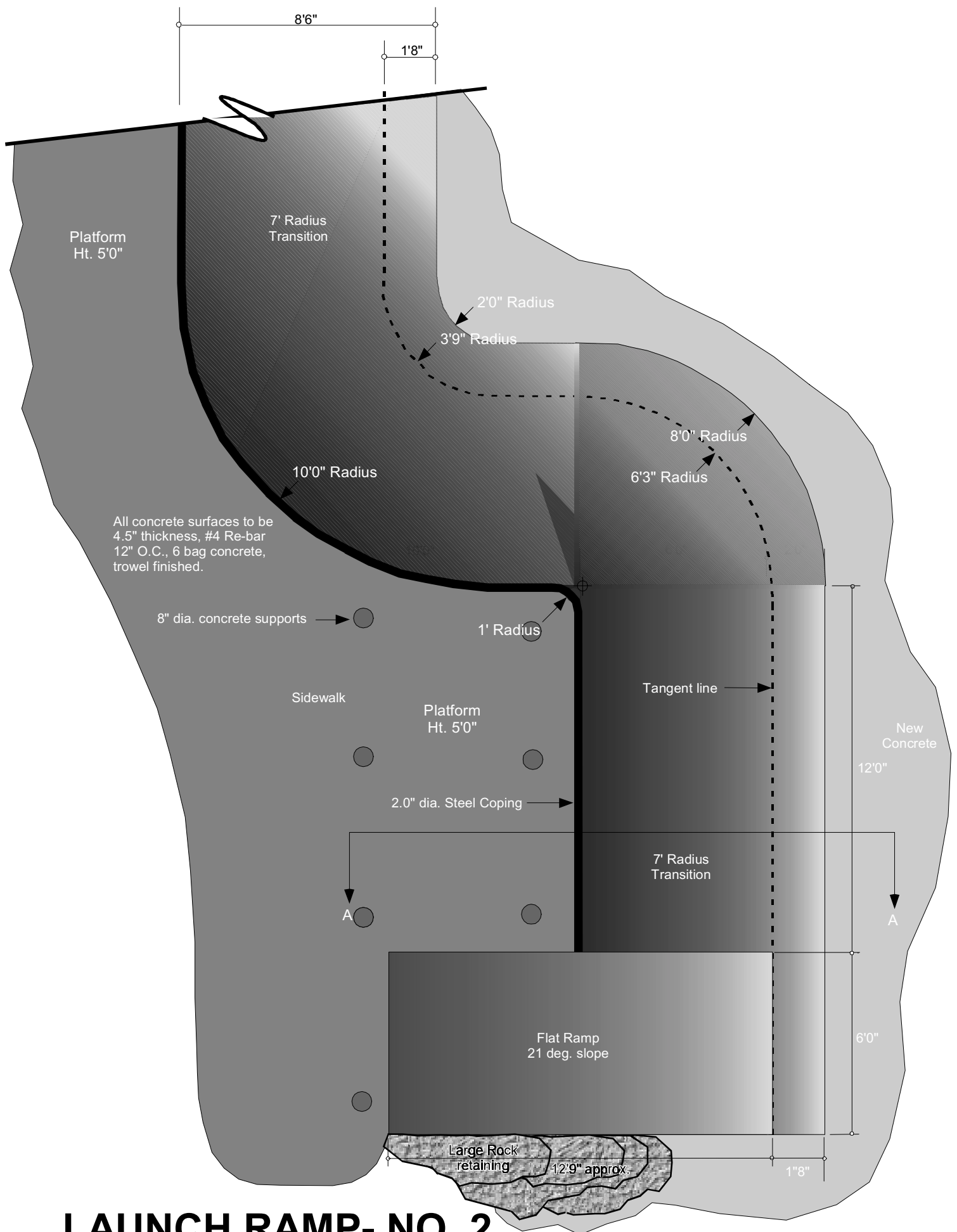
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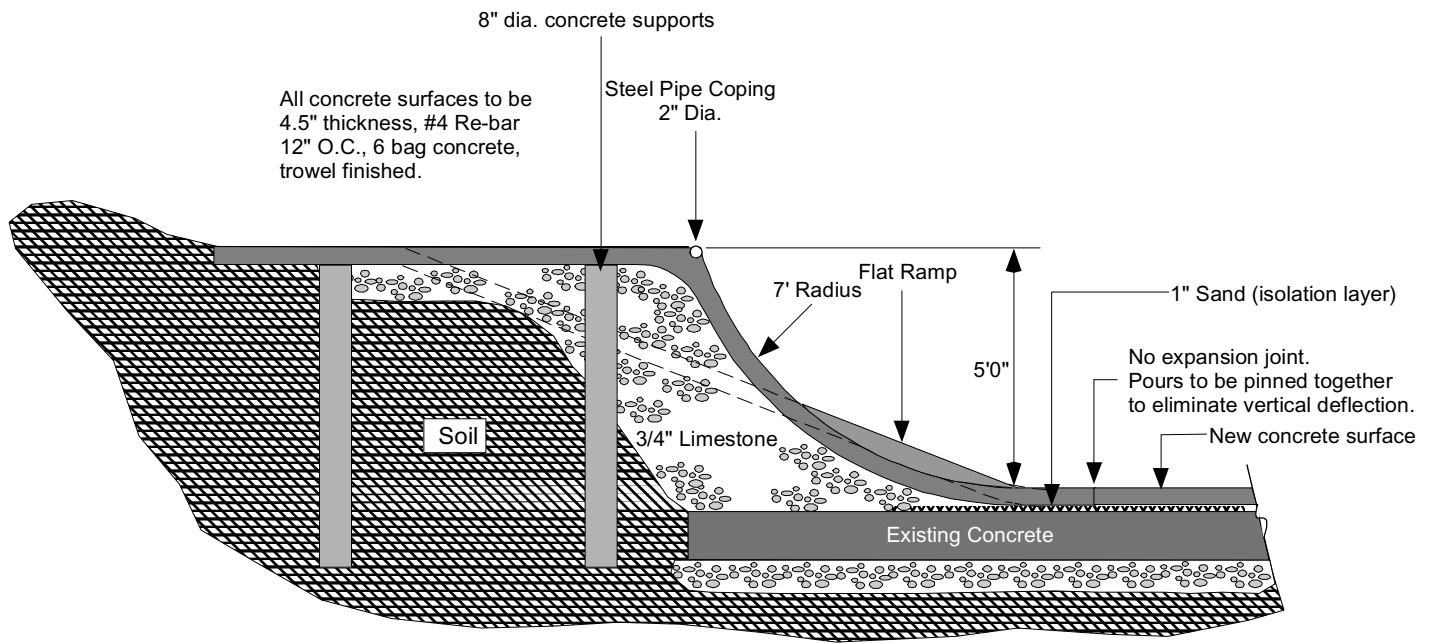
# LAUNCH RAMP- NO. 1

scale 1"=4'0"



# LAUNCH RAMP- NO. 2

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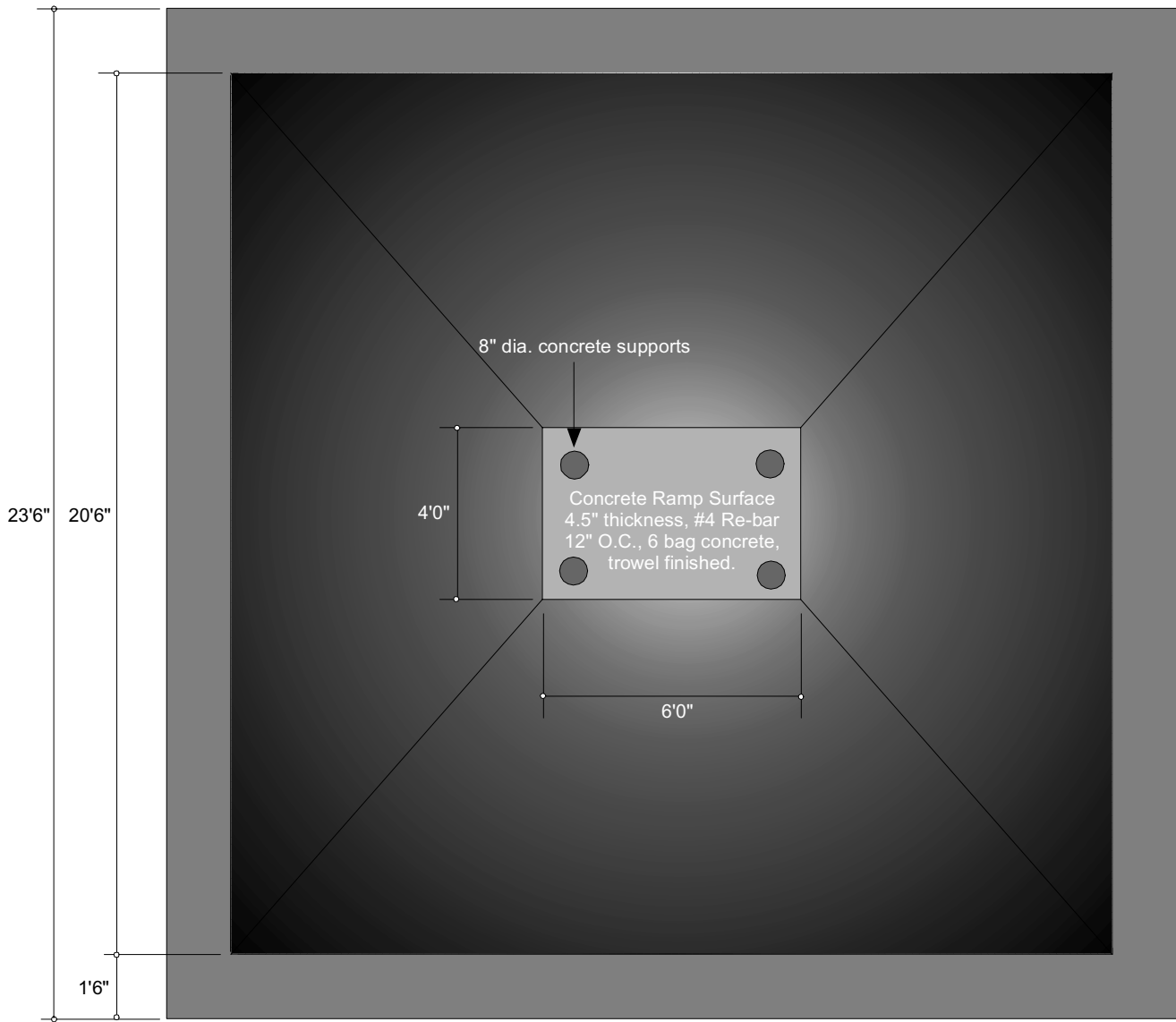


SECTION A-A VIEW

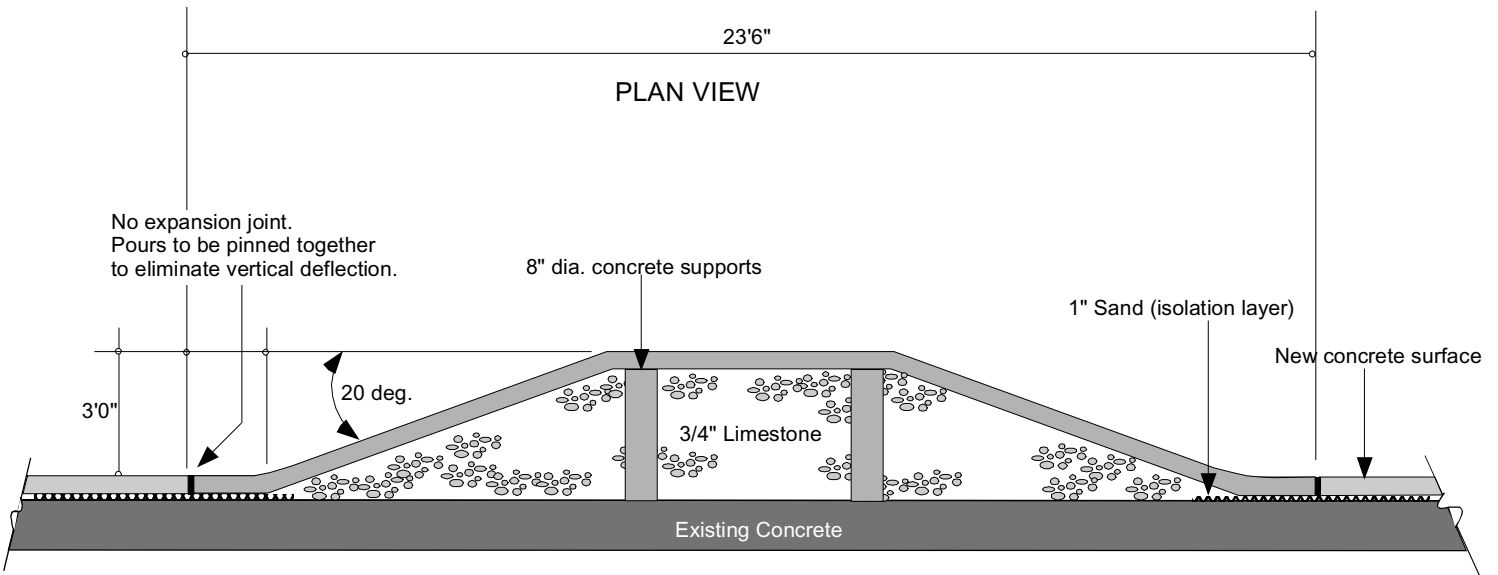
## LAUNCH RAMP- NO. 2

scale 1"=4'0"





PLAN VIEW



SECTION VIEW

# PYRAMID

scale 1"=4'0"

# **CONSTRUCTION DETAILS**

## **REINFORCEMENT**

Reinforcing was used throughout the facility, both in the flatwork and in the skating elements. The pattern was generally 12"-14" o.c. and each pour was pinned to the adjacent pour.

## **CONCRETE FINISH**

The concrete finish is a slick-troweled surface. The elements were hand-troweled, while the floor was power-troweled. The floor surface was treated with a sealer to reduce potential damage from water.

## **DRAINAGE**

The entire park has positive drainage to drop inlets that are inconspicuously built into steps on the west side of the facility. The east half drains off-site without the need for inlet structures.

## **CONCRETE MIX**

All concrete was 6 bag mix and free of calcium chloride unless temperatures required the admix for setup time and finishing.

## **BASE**

The skate park lies at the north end of the north-south runway of what was for many years Columbia's municipal airport. The entire skate park was constructed on top of the former runway's existing aircraft turn-around concrete slab (5.5" thick) that was poured almost 50 years ago. A gravel isolation layer (1" thick) was added to separate the new concrete from the existing slab. This was done to help reduce the potential reflective cracking that might occur over time.

## **EXPANSION JOINTS**

The decision was also made to construct the entire area without the use of expansion joints. The reasoning was based on the need to maintain a smooth surface and the belief that the over-expansion capabilities of the surface was such that the expansion joint method was not going to greatly enhance the structural integrity of the project. The skate park has now survived over 2 ½ years without any structural problems, suggesting that the decision to not include expansion joints was correct.

## **JOINT PATTERNS**

The joint patterns were determined by evaluating each pour relative to the individual components, which were constructed in advance of any floor work. The grind rails and steel coping designs were determined by the skate board design committee. This committee was comprised of local skaters. Parks and Recreation worked together with the committee early in the design phase to outline the basic park layout and feature designs. The critical detail specifications for the coping, grind rails, radius size for all transitions, degree of slope for the numerous flat ramp areas, height of the various

elements, spacial relationships within the layout, and any other details were all established early in the design phase.

### **COST INFORMATION**

Since many projects, including the skate park, are constructed in-house, Columbia Parks and Recreation generally does not calculate per-yard costs. Also, labor costs are not charged against a development project when in-house labor is used, so the following figures were applied to materials only.

Project Budget = \$64,000

- \$39,000 from City General Fund
- \$25,000 donation from the local Columbia Cosmopolitan Club

*Note: Another source of funding was used to build the 101-car parking area for the Skate Park.*

### **DIMENSIONS**

#### **Elements:**

25' x 25' pyramid  
16' lowbox  
9' high bank  
150' of quarter pipe  
30' of half pipe  
15' wide taco  
3 sets of stairs  
30' wide funbox

#### **Totals:**

175 ft x 160 ft = 28,000 ft<sup>2</sup>  
525 ft of coping  
75 ft of grindrail  
540 yd<sup>3</sup> concrete

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**Q:** Are there any costs involved in the use of the facility?

**A:** No. The park is free to locals and visitors.

**Q:** Where is the park located?

**A:** Columbia, Missouri is located approximately half-way between St. Louis and Kansas City on Interstate 70. Columbia has 5 exits off I-70. Coming from the east on I-70, take the West Boulevard exit and turn west onto Business Loop 70. Pass the cemetery and Parks Management Center on the right and turn in at the Cosmo Park entrance. Coming from the west on I-70, take the Stadium Boulevard exit and turn north on Stadium. Then head east on Business Loop 70 West and turn at the Cosmo Park entrance. Go north all the way to the back of the park until reaching Antimi Baseball Fields, Antimi Picnic Shelter, and finally the skate park.

**Q:** What are the park's hours of operation?

**A:** Columbia Skate Park opens at 7:00 am and closes at dusk because there are no lights over the skate park at this time. Since the skate park is located within Cosmo Park, visitors must observe Cosmo's hours of 7:00 am to 12:00 midnight.

**Q:** Does the skate park have rest rooms, a shelter, water, or electricity available?

**A:** The skate park does not have rest rooms, but the Antimi Baseball Complex does. It is within walking distance. Antimi Shelter lies adjacent to the skate park's entrance. The shelter has electricity, water, and light available, as well as 10 picnic tables, one double barbecue grill, and a pay phone. Antimi Shelter is a reservable shelter and at times, may be reserved and not available to skaters.

For information on reserving the Antimi Shelter and other shelters, contact the Parks and Recreation Office at 573-874-7460, Mon-Fri, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm.

**Q:** Is alcohol permissible at the skate park?

**A:** No. Skaters using the skate park are prohibited from consuming alcohol or using the facility under the influence of alcohol or any illegal substances.

**Q:** Is any safety equipment required?

**A:** Safety equipment is not required but is highly recommended.

**Q:** Are bicycles allowed at the skate park?

**A:** No. Because the skate park has so many skateboarders and in-line skaters using it, bicycles would be dangerous for all visitors.

**Q:** Is camping allowed at the skate park or Cosmo Park?

**A:** Absolutely no overnight camping is allowed in city parks. The skate park closes at dusk, and Cosmo park closes at 12:00 midnight. Check the local phone book for available campgrounds.

**Q:** Who should I contact for further information?

**A:** For information on the planning, design, construction and operation of the skate park, please contact:

Parks Management Center  
Columbia Parks and Recreation Department  
P.O. Box 6015  
Columbia, MO 65205-6015  
Phone: 573-874-7201  
Fax: 573-875-3159  
Email: [sms@ci.columbia.mo.us](mailto:sms@ci.columbia.mo.us)

**Q:** What should be done in case of an emergency?

**A:** An emergency phone has been provided nearby at Antimi Shelter. 9-1-1 calls are free and do not require coins.

# **SKATE PARK RULES & REGULATIONS**

## **WARNING!**

- This facility is unsupervised and uninsured. Any use is at your own risk. Use may result in serious injury.

## **SAFETY EQUIPMENT**

- It is strongly recommended that the following safety equipment be worn at all times to help provide suitable protection in the event of falls or collisions:
  - ◆ Helmet
  - ◆ Knee pads
  - ◆ Elbow pads

## **PLEASE REMEMBER**

- No glass containers, food, or beverage allowed on the skating surface. Spills jeopardize the skaters.
- No other items such as benches, tables, wood materials, or other objects used as ramps or jumps are allowed in the skate park facility.
- No pets are allowed in skate park area.
- No skating against traffic on ramps or pipes.
- Do not proceed down a ramp until clear of other skaters.
- Hours of permitted use are from 7:00 am to sundown. It shall be unlawful for any person to enter or remain on the premises outside the hours as posted. (Section 17-131)
- Alcohol, tobacco, and/or drugs are prohibited.
- No bikes allowed to use the skate park area.

## **COLUMBIA'S PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO:**

- Close the facility for any circumstances deemed necessary. (Section 17-132)
- Restrict entry to the facility and to ask persons to leave the facility if any of the rules are not followed, or if unsafe behavior is observed. (Section 17-42)

## **PLEASE REMEMBER!**

- Skate with safety in mind and remember weather conditions may create unsafe surfaces for skating.

## **MAINTAINING THE FACILITY**

- Please report maintenance concerns to the Parks Services Division: (573) 874-7201. Messages may be left 24 hours per day.

## **SERIOUS INJURIES**

- In case of serious injury or other emergency, call 911, no coins required. The facility is located in Columbia Cosmopolitan Recreation Area, 1615 Business Loop 70 West. The phone is located at the adjacent park shelter.

**THIS IS YOUR SKATE PARK!**  
**PLEASE USE COMMON COURTESY AND SKATE FRIENDLY!**

## Columbia Skate Park

This facility is presented to the Columbia City Council and the Citizens of Columbia from the City of Columbia and the Columbia Parks and Recreation Staff and Commission in appreciation for making this possible.

### REMARKS FROM A SKATER'S PARENT

Pat Smith, a parent of a teen who likes to skate, recalls "Two years ago (March '97) I sat in a Columbia City Council meeting with my son as the city's Parks and Recreation director presented several options for developing a skate park. At that same meeting, the council invited interested citizens to serve on a committee to develop input regarding the park. Both my son and I accepted the invitation: he, because he genuinely wanted a place to skate; me because I wanted to help him realize that individual citizens can make a difference in their community. We both achieved our goals. Now, when people ask me how and why it happened so quickly, I always reply, "I knew that once the idea was embraced by the powers that be, it would be done right." It definitely was.

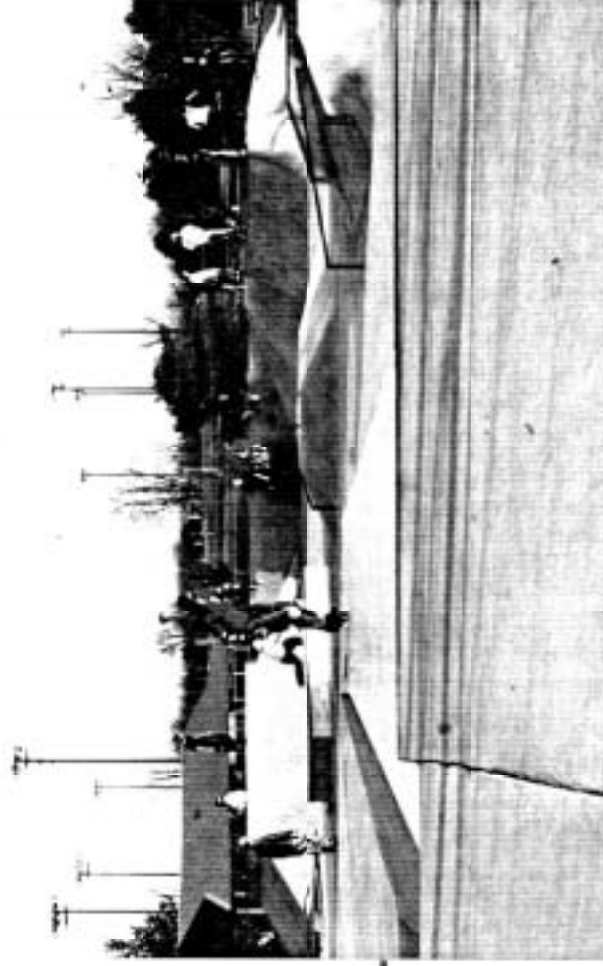
Columbia's new skate park is first-rate because of the manner in which Columbia Parks and Recreation approached it. From the beginning, Parks and Recreation staff welcomed input from the young skaters who served on the committee. Both Mike Hood, Columbia Parks and Recreation Director and Steve Salitta, Park Planner spent many evenings meeting with them, sorting through their jargon and developing compromises between what is ideal and what would be possible, in light of space and budget demands. The skaters themselves designed the park, and never were they meant to feel insignificant or ancillary to the process. When changes had to be made, Parks and Recreation staff consulted them. Even as concrete was starting to be poured, Salitta invited them out to review the final plan on-site. The ownership these young citizens feel regarding their park is because they feel they figuratively built it, a credit to a department that recognized how valuable user input is.

That the park is a success is obvious by the hoards of skaters that can be found enjoying it daily - even before it is officially open. What isn't so obvious is the successful process by which it came to be."

## Columbia Skate Park

### Dedication

June 19, 1999



Columbia Parks  
& Recreation Department  
Columbia, Missouri



## Columbia Skate Park

In 1997 the downtown business community asked the City to deal with the skateboarding problem in Columbia's downtown and it lead to a vocal appeal to the City to provide a place for this group of young people to practice their sport. In September of 1997 the City Council approved the development of a skate park.

The actual design of the park was achieved by combining the talents of the park planner with the expertise of a design committee made up of skateboarders and inline skaters. This process proved to be very effective in that it allowed the future user group to express their desires and to educate the planner. The types of materials, maintenance concerns, safety concerns, and operational issues were among the most important matters considered. The actual construction plans and specifications were completed by the planner. The skaters have a very strong sense of ownership in the park and this may be the most important benefit of the joint planning effort.

The Skateboard Park is approximately 120 feet wide, 140 feet long and is constructed of concrete. The design is described as an elaborate street course that incorporates many popular features including: transitions, flat ramps, spine ramps, pyramids, curbs, coping and grind rails.

The Roller Hockey Rink is adjacent to the Skateboard facility and will offer participants a chance to skate on a full size rink that is specifically designed for the sport of Roller Hockey. Its surface is constructed of a material which is designed for roller blade use and the rink will be bordered with hockey dasher boards. This facility will be open for pickup skating and is expected to become a programmed facility as leagues develop. The Skate Park will be open from 7:00 am until sundown.

The Columbia Parks and Recreation Department designed, constructed and landscaped the Skate Park. Construction cost is \$64,000 including \$39,000 from the Public Improvement Fund and \$25,000 from the Cosmopolitan Luncheon Club.

## Schedule of Events

12:00	Skate Team Demonstrations
12:30	Pro Skate Team Demonstrations
1:30	Dedication
2:30	Open Skate

## Dedication Program

- I. Welcome and Introductions - Mike Hood
- II. Remarks - City Manager, Ray Beck
- III. Remarks - Mayor Darwin Hindman
- IV. Remarks - Columbia Cosmopolitan Club
- V. Remarks - Columbia Skate Park Association
- VI. Ribbon Cutting - Chamber of Commerce Ambassadors

### City Council

Darwin Hindman, Mayor	
Rex Campbell	Donna Crockett
John Coffman	Christopher Janku
Almeta Crayton	John John

Raymond Beck, City Manager  
Michael Hood, Parks and Recreation Director

*A very special thank you to the Columbia Cosmopolitan Luncheon Club for its generous donation.*





**Grand Opening**  
June 19, 1999



**Grand Opening**  
June 19, 1999





**Grand Opening**  
**June 19, 1999**

# **MEDIA COVERAGE OF COLUMBIA SKATE PARK**

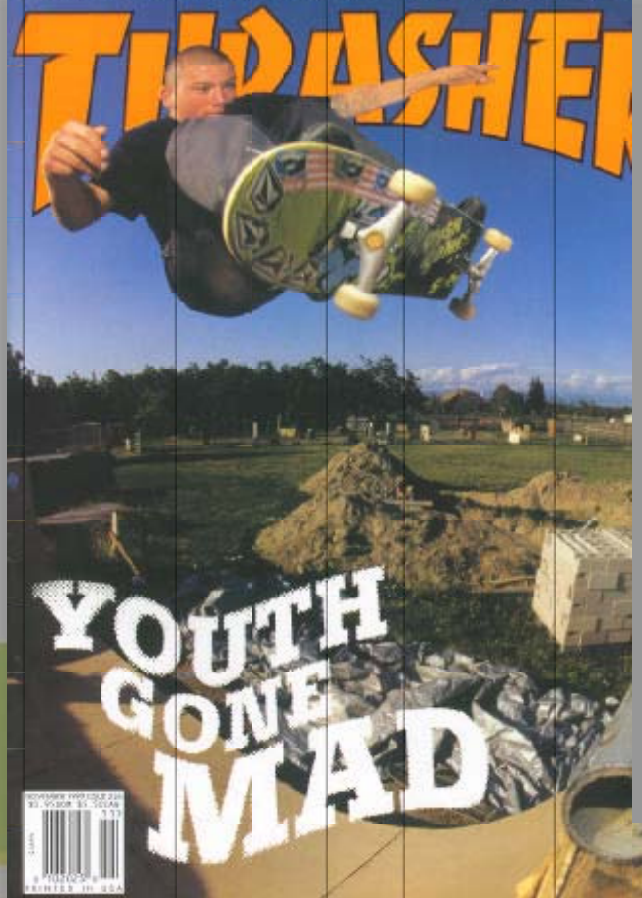


Over 300 people gathered Saturday, June 19, 1999, to celebrate the grand opening of the Columbia Skate Park. Skaters, parents, city officials, and spectators were joined by a local radio station broadcasting live until noon, at which time another D.J. provided accompaniment to the local and professional skate team demonstrations.

The following articles have been published about the Columbia Skate Park. This collection of articles focuses on the park's history of development and its impact on the Columbia area. However, other newspapers and publications have referenced Columbia's skating facility as the standard others are striving toward.



YOUNG GUNS: RYAN JOHNSON AND KRISTIAN SV



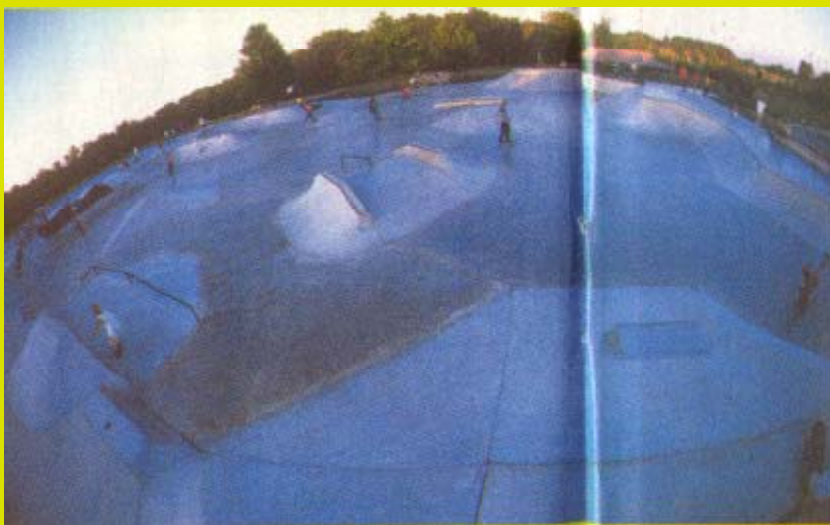
*Thrasher* magazine  
November 1999 issue

## Columbia, MO

Words and photos by Nik Freitas

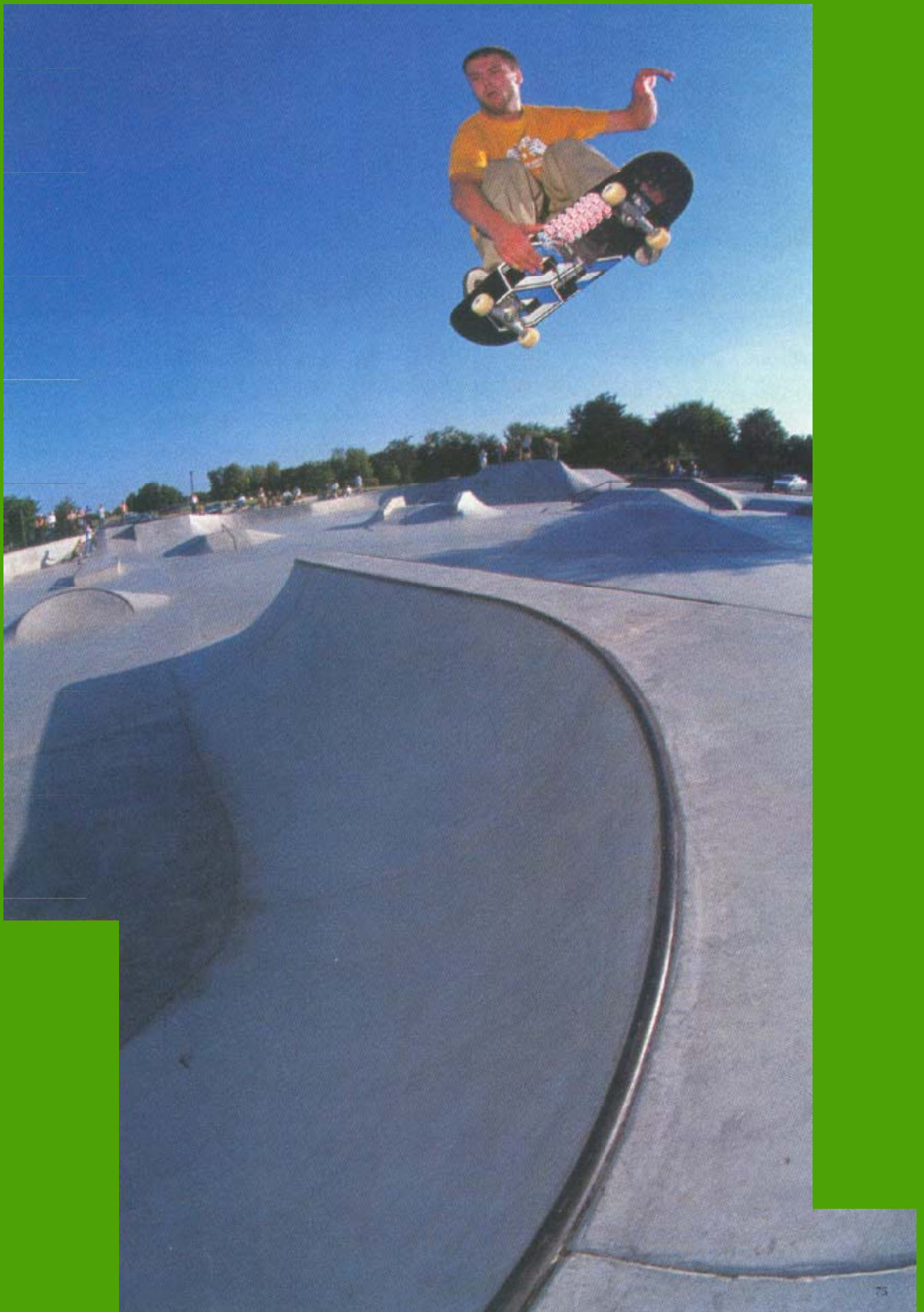
If you are ever traveling through the state of Missouri, there is a sick park that would be well worth your time to check out. Located two hours southwest of St. Louis, the skatepark of Columbia is a brand-new addition to the abundance of concrete wonderlands across the nation. Banks, pyramids, rails, quarterpipes, a spine, and even those humpty-hump things to get speed on top. Yeah, I know, sounds like every other skatepark in the world, but the flow is good because they set everything up nicely, and that's what matters. A 5 out of 10 in the middle of nowhere.

24 THRASHER



### PHOTOS

(Right) There's less misery in Missouri since this park opened and provided a place for skaters like Casey Lindstrom to float slob transfers. (Left) Columbia overview.





## *Skateboarding set to roll into Columbia*

*The skatepark to be built in Cosmopolitan Park is expected to draw more attention to the oft-neglected sport of skateboarding.*



By Chern Yeh Kwok  
*April 27th, 1998*

*Jackson Wallace, left, and Nathaniel Howland have to walk instead of ride on their skateboards at the corner of Ninth Street and Broadway. Skateboarding was banned from the downtown area in 1988.*

Eric McKenzie has been arrested, had his equipment confiscated, been ticketed by the police, been to traffic court, and taken to jail, all for enjoying the sport he loves. McKenzie is a skateboarder.



"I was once yanked off (my) skateboard by a cop on a bike, and I had to go to traffic court (after that)," he said. "When the judge asked me if I had anything to say, I probably talked about 5 minutes. But I still had to pay a \$50 fine."

"Before 18, they didn't give a ticket (for skateboarding)... They'd take you to a holding cell... I didn't know who was the last drunk who was sitting or lying on that same bench I was sitting on. And I was probably arrested 5 or six times before I was eighteen," McKenzie said. He had to wait for his mother to "come pick me up" every time.

Skateboarding was banned from the areas between 5th and Short Streets in 1988. McKenzie was then one of several local skateboarders who went the Parks and Recreation Department to propose a skatepark in Columbia. They were turned away. The skateboarders then saw the ban being expanded to the area between Elm and Ash streets in 1994.

"I've (had to live) like a criminal for the past 11 years," McKenzie said. "I don't want to be thrown in the back of a cop car for having fun."

But all that seems to be coming to an end now.

Today, McKenzie is part of the Skatepark Design Committee that is working with the Parks and Recreation Department for the skatepark to be built in Cosmopolitan Park. He volunteered to be part of the committee for the project that was approved in January this year. He is involved in deciding what to put in the skatepark and how it should be built.

"I didn't think it was going to happen," McKenzie said. "Until they gave us the money, I was apprehensive (about the project)."

"It just seems like when (the skatepark was approved), everything just fell together," he added.

The Parks and Recreation Department decided to look into building a skatepark in Feb 1996. It was a regular topic in the City Council's meeting throughout the whole of last year, and a six-member Skatepark Ad Hoc Committee was formed last June to help in the choosing of its location.

The City Council's meeting on Jan 20 this year saw a unanimous vote for the project. The meeting also saw the initial allocation of \$25,000 being increased to \$39,000. Once the plans are drawn, a construction company will be selected from bids to build the skatepark.



The project has sent some good vibes into the community. Eddie Boster is a former skateboarder and the owner of Salt of the Earth, a shop located in the downtown area that has been selling skateboarding equipment for 11 years. Boster has been a supporter of skateboarding for as long as McKenzie has. His shop is a regular hangout for skateboarders, and he set up petition forms on his counter when the ban was put into effect in 1988.

"(The skatepark) is completely positive. It'll give the skateboarders a place to go...(and) give the police less trouble," Boster said.

Mike and Sherry Sutton agree. They were in Salt of the Earth buying their son Michael his sixth skateboard.

"I see it (as) benefiting the kids," said Mike. "There'll be more things to keep the kids occupied and out of trouble."

William Wood, whose son is on the Skatepark Design Committee, is grateful that the skatepark is being built.

"Skateboarding is much different (than before). It's a sport now, and the kids need an area to develop this sport," Wood said.

"It's nice to see (the city) expanding into sports which don't have as large a following," he added.

The skatepark will be built on a site that was used for overflow parking in the summer baseball season. It measures 100 by 120 feet, and will incorporate the basic features of a street course, which include obstacles such as handrails, used for skateboarders to slide on or to "grind," and ramps, which allow a skateboarder to pick up speed and to jump over obstacles. The skatepark will be made out of concrete.

At its recent meeting, the members of the Skatepark Design Committee were building a clay model of what they deem the perfect skatepark. The model was being built according to the dimensions in which the actual skatepark would be. Steve Saitta, park planner at the Parks and Recreation Department, explained the process.

"We're just getting the master plan. Once they get the model done, with the spatial relationships (between the obstacles), we'll draw it up on a computer," he said.

It will then be turned into a construction document, Saitta added. He said they would worry about the cost later, and that if the skatepark proves to be popular after a few years, the Parks and Recreation Department will improve on its design.

Competitions for skateboarders are planned for the skatepark upon

its completion. There are also plans for a professional team to do a demonstration in the first month of the opening of the skatepark.

With all the activity going on in the skateboarding community, interest in the sport is expected to increase. A report by the International Association of Skateboard Companies states that American Sports Data estimates there are already 9.3 million skateboarders nationwide taking to the streets and skate ramps at least twice a week, while more than 2 million skateboarders say they skateboard everyday.

Recent surveys also show that although more girls are being attracted to the sport, 91 percent of the participants are boys 10 to 16 years of age. Age-range for skateboarders is increasing as well, with more skateboarders keeping their boards past the age of 16.

So how does one start skateboarding?

The first thing for someone starting out in skateboarding is to buy a good skateboard, Boster said.

"Parents often go out and buy their kids a skateboard that has some parts made out of plastic, has no spring to it, don't turn right, and break easily," Boster explained. "A good analogy would be buying a guitar that won't stay in tune for someone who wants to learn the guitar."

- A well-equipped skateboarder requires the following equipment:
- Wheels \$18-26 a set
- Bearings \$8-30 a set - Bearings are what are inside the wheels, and rotate wheels. Better bearings allow a skateboard to move faster and smoother.
- Trucks \$14-18 each - Metal pieces that connect the wheels to the deck. Weight of trucks and material used, usually aluminum-alloy, determine price.
- Deck \$30-58 - Board part of the skateboard, usually made out of maple.
- Mounting hardware \$2-3 - Nuts and bolts used to attach the truck onto the deck.
- Grip tape: \$6 - Sandpaper-type tape stuck on the top of the deck to prevent the skateboarder from slipping off the skateboard.
- Helmet: \$35 (Optional)
- Elbow pads: \$25-30 (Optional)
- Knee pads: \$30 (Optional)
- Skateboarding shoes: \$75 (Optional)

Total cost: \$78- 311

In addition to selling the parts of a skateboard, Salt of the Earth and Dream Catcher Studio, another shop located in the downtown area that specializes in skateboarding equipment, sells skateboards that are assembled. These can cost from \$95 to \$140, though Salt of the Earth sells used skateboards that range in price from \$45 to \$60. Only Dream Catcher offers the safety equipment and shoes. Both shops offer to assemble new skateboards for free.

Boster, and Jason Cook, who works at Dream Catcher Studio, both recommend "blank" decks and wheels for beginners. Decks and wheels usually have graphics on them, usually , and those without these graphics, termed as "blank," costs less.

Boster said that the "blank" decks and wheels "skate just as well, they just don't have the pictures at the bottom."

But there are still some concerns. Sherry Sutton hopes the skatepark would be friendly for different levels of skateboarders.

"There has to be a place for kids to learn," she said.

She shouldn't have to worry. Rafael Stoutz, also a member of the Skatepark Design Committee, said the skatepark will accommodate all levels of skateboarders.

"There's going to be something for everyone, from basic, to intricate and complex," Stoutz said.

Another worry Sherry has is the skatepark attracting "undesirables."

"I want to be sure its safe," she said.

There is also the problem of skateboarders not having good relations with in-line skaters. Wood, whose son is an in-line skater, questions whether in-line skaters would be outcast by the skateboarders at the skatepark.

"There are some skateboarders who are stand-offish about in-line skaters," he said.

McKenzie explained that skateboarders have waited a long time to get the skatepark, and may not welcome in-line skaters. In-line skaters and skateboarders do different tricks and require different obstacles as well, he said.

McKenzie believes that all these problems can be solved one way or another, and foresees a bright future for the skatepark and the skateboarders of Columbia. He appreciates the effort put in by the people involved in the project, especially the funding from the city.

"I'm proud of the city for helping us out," he said.

McKenzie does have one gripe though. He hopes to have a skateboarder at the construction site to help with the supervision of the project's construction.

"I think there should a skateboarder's perspective involved in the construction," he said.

McKenzie is even willing to volunteer his time.

"Why can't they let me go there everyday?" he asked.

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# Columbia Park and Recreation's State-of-the-Art Skateboard and Roller Hockey Rink

The Columbia Parks and Recreation Department will open a state-of-the-art skateboard and roller hockey rink in June of 1999. The facility is located near the north end of the Columbia Cosmopolitan Recreational Area and will be open for use from 7 a.m. until sundown.

The Skateboard Park is approximately 120 feet wide, 140 feet long and is constructed of concrete. The design is described as an elaborate street course that incorporates many popular features including: transitions, flat ramps, spine ramps, pyramids, curbs, coping and grind rails. The park design was developed by the parks and recreation staff working with the Skate Park Design Committee comprising area skateboarders.

The Roller Hockey Rink is being constructed adjacent to the skateboard



facility and will offer participants a chance to skate on a full-size rink that is specifically designed for the sport of roller hockey. Its surface will be

constructed of a material which is designed for the roller blade use and the rink will be bordered with hockey dasher boards. This facility will be open for pickup skating and is expected to become a programmed facility as leagues develop.

Steve Saitta, park planner, has spent the last two years working on this project. Steve recalls, "Just over two years ago the city council was asked to consider the development of a skate park in our community. They gave the request their attention and after weighing the benefits of the proposal, decided to support the project. The parks and recreation department was given the task of working with the supporters to locate a possible site and begin development planning. This design challenge became one of the most unique, exciting and rewarding experiences the Parks Planning and Development Division has undertaken."

It all began as an outcry from the



*Continued on page 11*

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downtown business community for the city to deal with the skateboarding problem in Columbia's downtown and it lead to a vocal appeal to the city to provide a place for this group of young people to practice their sport.

To be successful in the development of this project we had to address two difficult challenges. The first was the selection of a site that could offer all the features needed to satisfy the skaters and the many others who had strong feelings about where a facility like this should or should not be located. The second challenge was the design process itself. If we failed to provide a facility that maintained interest and challenge for the skaters, the result would be a failure in the eyes of the community and everyone involved would suffer.

This selection of a site was relatively painless and as various areas

around the city were discussed, evaluated and eliminated, it came down to one location that seemed to make sense to almost everyone. The chosen site is located in our largest and most heavily used park, the Columbia Cosmopolitan Recreation Area. The park is home to many local youth and adult sports activities and is one of the principal locations for the annual "Show-Me Games" events.

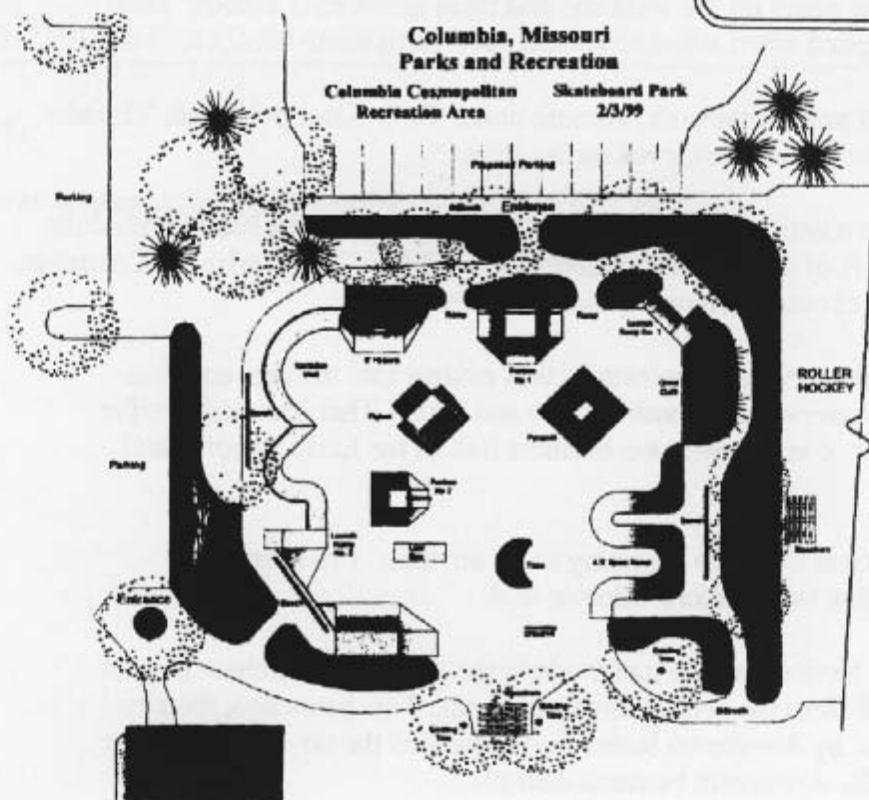


### Welcome New MPRA Members

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Stephanie Cain  
Douglas Cardwright  
Rochelle DePriest  
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Jeff Glenn  
Virginia Hayes  
Michael Henning  
Kevin Kearney  
Robert Knappe  
Wesley McLaughlin  
Jena Mielke  
John Mosby  
Justin Perry  
Stephanie Riggs  
John Shelton  
Ronnie Schweizer  
Carrie Taintor  
Teresa Vaughn  
Arthur "Sonny" Williams  
Bekki Youngblood

Public Agency  
Clinton Parks and Recreation



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*Story ran on March 29, 1996*

When the Parks and Recreation Commission opened last night's public hearing on a city skateboard park, there was an uncomfortable quiet. The 50 or so youths there, mostly boys, shifted in their seats, ball caps pulled low, waiting for someone to gather the courage to approach the dais and testify.

Rafael Stutz, a lanky 18-year-old with short black hair highlighted with blue dye, broke the ice.

“It's an excellent opportunity for young individuals to exercise and experience individuality,” Stutz testified.

One by one, skateboarders from 12 to 25 years old gave enthusiastic testimony about their love of the sport and what they would like in a skateboard park.

“I'd spend eight hours on the weekend and three hours after school,” Mills Menser, 12, replied when asked how much he'd use a park.

But what about your homework, commissioner Terry Kloeppel asked. “I make straight A's,” the boy replied, evoking laughter.

By the time the meeting was over, more than 70 skaters and a handful of adults spoke in support of the idea. Proponents included Rep. Tim Harlan, D-Columbia, whose son skateboards. No one spoke in opposition.

By the end of the meeting, however, it was evident that teenage emotion couldn't offset reservations about liability and injury. That sounded familiar to Eddie Boster, owns downtown business Salt of the Earth Records and Skateboards.

“I'm real skeptical that they are going to do anything. I've been politicianed a few times before,” Boster said.

Skateboarders have seen their turf erode in the city since skateboards were banned in 1988 from the central downtown area. Two years ago, the city council, backed by downtown businesses, expanded the no-skating area to include all of the downtown business district.

The city considered building a park when skateboards were first banned eight years ago. Fear of high insurance costs scared city officials away from the idea.

This summer the idea was rekindled by Fifth Ward councilman Karl Kruse, who was impressed with skateboarders at a professional demonstration on Ninth Street.

Kruse asked the city recreation department to revisit the idea of a park. In December, parks director Dick Green reported that a park would cost \$42,000 and suggested that the city charge users \$2.50 a day.

The commission agreed to gather more information from other publicly owned parks and plans to send a report to the council in 60 days.

“In general, yes, I think I'm in support of most recreational activities, especially when they involve the youth,” said commissioner Hardeep Buhlar. “I'm proceeding with caution.”

By LESLIE WRIGHT

#### CUTLINE

Rafael Stutz, 18, makes a pitch for a skateboard park last night at a hearing held by the city Parks and Recreation Commission at the Daniel Boone County Building. He was one of about 50 youths on hand to support the idea. (Michael Vosburg photo)

PHOTO FILED UNDER COLUMBIA PEOPLE

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*Story ran on November 27, 1998*

## Hot Wheels

**Skaters ride out a 10-year struggle to find a place of their own**



Today's skateboards come in a variety of styles and designs, but they're all built for speed and durability.

R.C. Adams photos



Jeff Pulliam, 9, takes flight from a railing at Columbia's skate park on a recent afternoon. He says he likes everything about skateboarding, from speeding down a ramp to learning tricks from other skaters.

**ASHLEY FANTZ**  
of the Tribune's staff

Forget the boys in baggy pants wearing black sneakers and bothering pedestrians with their rebellious attitudes and agile catch-me-if-you-can moves.

This is skateboarding.

Girls, boys, men and women wear whatever will allow them to catch a 50-50 and turn a 360. They have nothing against nonskaters or pedestrians who have dubbed them irresponsible punks.

Drugs for this so-called counter-culture? Try being hopped up on drugs and attempt their athletic moves.

Skateboarding is a bona fide sport that might be the newest summer Olympics sport.

It's individual. Not just a California thing.

And it's finally here. Set in stone.

Steve Saitta, park developing superintendent for the Columbia Parks and Recreation Department, and a committee of local skateboarders have designed what some experts have called "one of the best skateboard parks in the nation." Skaters started using the new park last week at the northern edge of Cosmo Park, but the facility doesn't officially open until spring.

It's certainly a "big thing," Saitta said last week during a visit to the crowded concrete park, which looks like an empty swimming pool with ledges, rails and square-top pyramids.

Saitta watched as skaters from 9 to 29 maneuvered through the park, which has been the answer to a 10-year ban on skating downtown. Most impressive about the new park is that it was the people penalized by the ban — mostly teenagers — who worked within the system to find a better solution.

"That's what's so incredible about this," said Charles Oberbeck, father of 15-year-old skater Doug Oberbeck and president of Columbia Skateboard Association. "This really is the creation of the kids. It came out of their determination to attend the city council meetings and educate people like mayor Hindman, who really, before this, didn't know anything about skating, but had the wisdom to trust these kids," he said. "When it was announced that" the park, "was going to be built at Cosmo, we couldn't believe it."

In March of 1997, Pat Smith, an adjunct instructor at MU, took her then-14-year-old son, Aaron, and other skaters to a Columbia City Council meeting when a city recreation official was expected to deliver a report on where a skate park could be built. First Ward councilwoman Colleen Coble suggested that a committee should continue to examine possible building sites and monetary resources.

"In the beginning, I felt that if the council was going to vote to prohibit it," Coble said, "there had to be some type of alternate setting."

Aaron and other skaters attended committee meetings despite feeling that their chances for a park were slim, Smith said. In September 1997, the council recommended that a skate park be built in Albert Oakland Park. That idea was opposed by nearby residents.

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*Story ran on March 15, 1999*

## Off ramp



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The council decided shortly after the Oakland plan was shot down to "do it the right way; to do it right," said 21-year-old Rafael Iglesias, who, along with friends Nate Dilorenzo, Aaron Smith and Eric McKenzie, worked with Saitta to conceptualize the park. The facility was later paid for by \$39,000 in city funds and \$25,000 from the Columbia Cosmopolitan Luncheon Club.

"The nice thing about it was that the" city recreation "people handed it over to us," Iglesias said. "They said, 'This is for you, you come up with it, and we'll build it.'"

"But it also says that the city council is always trying to compete to make Columbia America's nicest town," he added. "They didn't do it out of the goodness of their heart. They wanted to get rid of us, but they couldn't just say get rid of us, they had to give us another option."

Today, the negative image of skaters that helped prompt the ban is fading in Columbia.

"We have people from 7 years old to 28 years old. Some kids wearing baggy pants; some kids wear tight pants, fancy running shoes, black shoes. We have kids that wear all black, that listen to hip hop and heavy metal," Iglesias said. "We had a Goth kid the other day. It just encompasses all different kinds of people. That's the thing about the park — it's such a nice place to skate that people who don't really skate are coming out there."

No such place exists in Farmington, where roller blading, roller skating and skateboarding have been outlawed "in or around public or private places" within "the business district." Anyone violating the ordinance can be fined up to \$500, and parents of skating minors are held legally responsible. City clerk Phyllis Hartrup said there is no designated place for skaters to use.

On any given day, the skate park at Cosmo Park is a busy place. Roller bladers and BMX bikers from St. Louis, Hallsville and Quincy, Ill., compete for space while politely steering clear of skaters already in flight.

Theaus Cooper, a 15 year-old Rock Bridge High student, sat down for a break. Despite the 40-degree chill, his temples were glazed with sweat. "You know, yeah, I could be doing what some of my friends are doing: getting into trouble," he said. "But I'd rather be here."

Nine-year old Jeffery Pulliam said he's never felt bullied by the older skaters. As he drops in from an 8-foot-tall half-pipe, an older skater exclaimed, "That little kid is it, man!"

However, this crowd of skaters is missing one thing. Girls.

Jung Kwak of Rookies, NYC, a deck-design and skater clothing company, said, "There are a lot more female skaters now, especially since women in sports are more visible." But still, he said, "girls should be encouraged to participate more."

A supporter of skateboarding since the mid-'80s, Eddie Boster, owner of Salt of the Earth Records & Skateboards on Ninth Street, attended many council meetings over the years to support decriminalizing the sport. However, he's concerned about businesses that have recently begun selling skateboards only to cash in on the new skater market.

"That's the danger of anything that becomes popular — people with money are standing on the sidelines waiting," Boster said. "Skateboarding never would have survived here had it not been that we carried boards for so long, and I feel better knowing that skater culture doesn't mix with malls."

The Columbia Skateboard Association is planning a January organizational meeting to establish safety regulations. "Instead of the parents setting up the limits and rules," Oberbeck said, "we're leaving it up to the skaters to decide what measures will protect themselves and the park."



Rafael Iglesias demonstrates a kick-flip off a steep ramp at the skate park he helped bring to fruition along with the staff of Columbia's Parks and Recreation Department.

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*Story ran on June 19, 1999*

## Pros showcase skills at city skate park

Skaters will again be the center of attention today two years after they began what became a successful effort to persuade city leaders to give them a place of their own.

The Columbia Skate Park will be dedicated at 1:30 p.m. tomorrow during a ceremony at Cosmo Park. The action begins at noon when professional skaters demonstrate their skills. An open skate will follow.

In 1997, the downtown business community asked the city to deal with what they believed was a skateboarding problem, leading to an appeal by young skaters for a place to practice their sport. The council approved the development of the skate park later that year.

The actual design of the park was achieved by combining the talents of park planners with the expertise of a design committee made up of skateboarders and inline skaters.

The concrete park is about 120 feet wide and 140 feet long. The design is described in a city release as an "elaborate street course that incorporates many popular features" including ramps, curbs, rails and other obstacles. The park is open from 7 a.m to sundown.

Construction cost \$64,000, including \$39,000 from the city and a \$25,000 donation from the Cosmopolitan Luncheon Club.

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*Story ran on June 20, 1999*

### Showcase for skaters



Spectators gather yesterday for demonstrations and a dedication ceremony for the new city skate park nestled in the north end of Cosmo Park. The \$64,000 concrete facility features various ramps and obstacles for skateboarders and in-line skaters.

Mike Stewart  
photo

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*Story ran on June 25, 1999*

### Thrills on wheels



Less than a week after its official opening, the Columbia Skate Park has attracted visitors from out of town and out of state as well as local skateboard and rollerblade enthusiasts. Some skaters like 16-year-old Kyle Keller of Topeka, Kan., at right, are happy to perform stunts and tricks, while some less daring groups of young people sit on the sidelines watching the action and waiting to challenge the ramps at the facility in Cosmo Park.

Mike Stewart photo



Don Shrubshell photo

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## Tribune Online Sports Story

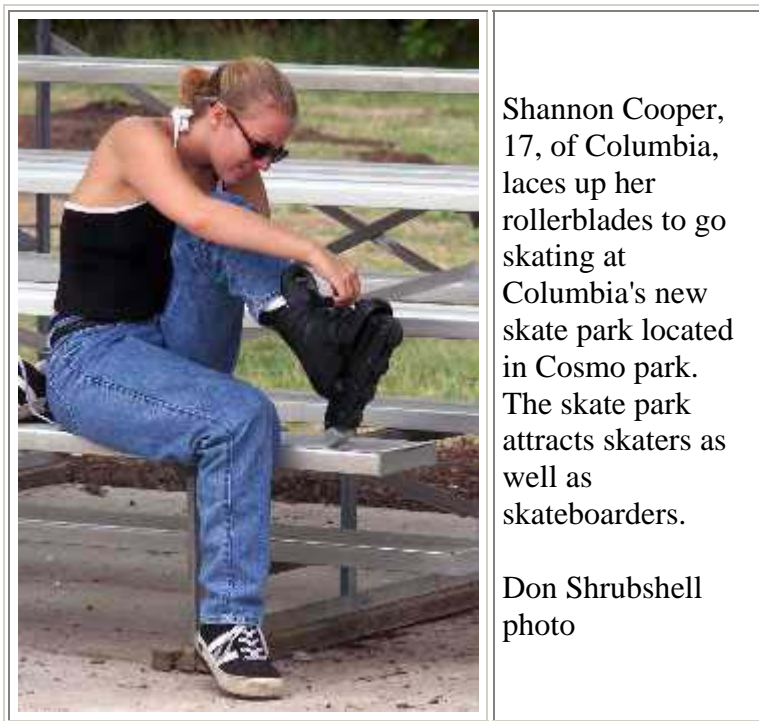
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*Story ran on June 25, 1999*

### It's just a day at the (skate) park for some locals

*With Columbia's \$64,000 skate park having been completed and officially opened, the Tribune thought it would be interesting to spend a couple hours at the park and see just who is utilizing the new facility.*



**By LUKE VILELLE**  
**of the Tribune's staff**

It's 12:10 p.m. on a Wednesday afternoon at Columbia's skate park in Cosmopolitan Park, and the clatter of skateboards is evident.

A curious mix of people, and one restless black dog, surround the new park. Two mothers sit close on one of the three stands of bleachers. They watch their children and the other kids zip up and down the concrete ramps on their choice of transportation — roller blades or skateboards.

At this time, four people are on skateboards and one is on roller blades. In a different set of bleachers, there is a group of four teenage boys with skateboards smoking, talking and observing the skaters.

Although there are exceptions, the uniform of choice appears to be cargo shorts or pants and t-shirts. A few kids have caps turned backwards.

Justin Solum, 17, shows off his tattered Cardinals cap that features the signatures of Donny Barley and Chad Bartie, the two pro skateboarders who made an appearance at the grand opening of the park on June 20.

## **The Teenagers**

Solum, from Jefferson City, is one of the five guys relaxing and enjoying the cool weather. They arrived as a group about 30 minutes earlier and did a little skating before retiring to the sidelines.

Now they are discussing topics from Playstation games to snake sightings to skating injuries. The current malaise among the group is John Bennett's right hand, which he bruised badly in a skating accident.

"I can't even make a first," says Bennett, a Linn resident. "How am I going to play my Playstation when I can't even touch one of the buttons?"

"You're in trouble, man," replies Bennett's brother, Steve Reimund, 23. "We're playing Gran Turismo tonight, and I'm going to whip your butt."

With dark clouds appearing on the horizon, Jason LeMaster, another in the group, begins to employ his skateboard. LeMaster, 16, shows a novice observer the most basic of skateboard maneuvers — the ollie, a jump performed by tapping the tail of the board on the ground. With the back foot, LeMaster pushes down while lifting up his front foot in order to get the skateboard in the air.

"You have to know how to do an ollie before you can start flipping or doing anything else," Solum says.

It's not much longer before LeMaster and Bennett begin using the entire park, including the rails, the quarter pipes and the pyramids, for their tricks. Solum, whose board is locked in the bed of a friend's pickup truck, is relegated to watching.

There is the boardslide, also known as a railslide, where the skater slides the underside of his board along an object such as a curb or rail. The difficult part is coming off the rail because the skater has to spin the board 90 degrees in the air in order to land cleanly on the ground.

LeMaster, who Solum describes as "an old-school skater" because of his proficiency at tricks that existed 20 years ago when skateboards were wider and heavier, displays different "boneless" moves. In these tricks, LeMaster grabs the board with his hand and spins it in one quick motion.

Today's boards are much lighter, stronger and narrower than those of 20 years ago.

"They're easier to pop up in the air and, with their nose, they're easier to flip with your foot," Solum says.

A basic skateboard costs \$30 for the board, \$14 each for a pair of trucks and \$4 for each of the wheels. However, a pro model with top-line equipment can cost \$150.

It's 12:30 p.m., the dog is running around the rink with a glove in its mouth – LeMaster yells, "It's O.J." – and the skating population has increased to 10, including a friend of LeMaster's from Moberly.

"Hey, there's my brother," LeMaster says as Ryan Benn, 17, arrives. "Well, not really my brother, but he's a cool guy I met skating."

Unfortunately, Benn can't do much skating today because he hurt his ankle on the skateboard a few days ago. He and Solum watch their friends and provide a running commentary on kick flips, heel flips, 50-50 grinds, 5-0 grinds, crooked grinds and so forth. Bennett even has a trick he invented, called Dr. Hook.

Another popular topic of discussion are the merits of skating at different sites. Uptown Jefferson City has some good spots, but the teenagers say the police are quick to chase off skaters. Solum likes Lowry Mall on the MU campus. Benn says that Moberly is barren for skaters.

But these guys can get creative when it comes to turning ordinary property into a skating venue. Bike racks, curbs, ledges, stairs, and benches are just a few of the potential sites for skateboarders.

## **The Travelers**

The new Columbia park goes a long way toward erasing illegal skating, and it attracts visitors from miles around. A few skaters have come to the park from Topeka, Kan.

Kyle Keller, 16, and three friends, Brad Nolde, Rod Harper and Brian McKenzie, traveled from Kansas to Columbia in the morning for no purpose other than two days of skating.

"We'd seen pictures of it," Keller says. "I like it a lot better than the Lawrence skate park. You can cruise around a lot more here."

Brad's mother, Sharon Nolde, drove the group, which was spending the night at the Drury Inn.

Sharon Nolde dropped the group off at the park, then went shopping.

However, the fortunes of the visitors were about to take a bad turn. At 1:15, a brief shower falls, sending a number of skaters, including Solum and his friends, to their cars. The Topeka group and a few other skaters race under a city shelter.

These masters of improvisation don't let the rain end their skating, though. With a photographer present, the skaters are not about to pass up the opportunity to have their pictures taken.

They begin skateboarding on the picnic tables, flying off the edges and trying to land on their boards. Meanwhile, Brad Nolde discusses how four Topeka youngsters ended up skating in Columbia.

"We've been to Joplin, Wichita and Liberal, Kan.," he says. "And we're going to a skate camp in Elmwood, Kan., in August.

"We looked on the Internet and it said there was a new skate park in Columbia. So when my parents drove to St. Louis, they stopped here and took pictures of the park. We liked how it looked, so we planned a trip here."

## **The Girl Among Boys**

It's around 1:45 when the skaters decide that the concrete is dry enough to return to the rink. They join 7-year-old Brittany McCormack, who is roller blading.

A few others have come to the park in the past 30 minutes, including Rachel Walters and her daughter, Brittany. With Walters and her daughter are 17-year-old Shannon Cooper and her brother, Mark Milton, 14.

Brittany employs roller blades to move around the park. Her favorite trick, which she does repeatedly, is to straddle one of the rails as she skates over it.

"Last time we were out here, there were some guys doing tricks on skates, and when she'd straddle the rail, they would go by and clap and make her think she was doing something great," Walters says.

Walters has her own pair of roller blades, which she just recently bought. Cooper is the first to use Walters' skates on this day, though Walters does skate 15 minutes later.

For Milton, a San Diego resident, it is his first visit to the skate park. Mark pays a \$35 annual fee to skate at a private park in San Diego, which he says is similar to Columbia's park.

## **The Family**

Nearby, on the bleachers, Bob Robinson has a video camera, taping his two sons, Demetris and Corey Kelly, as they show off their skills.

"We can laugh about it later," says Yvonne Kelly, the boys' mother.

It's an especially trying day for Demetris, 13, who is trying to make the transition from roller blades to skateboard.

At 2:15, a frustrated Demetris asks for the keys so he can get his roller blades out of the car.

Meanwhile, 10-year-old Corey has been demonstrating a 180-degree spin on his roller blades. Taking off from one end of the park, he skates down a ramp to build speed, across the flat area and up the ramp on the opposite end. There, he goes airborne and spins in the air so he lands facing the opposite direction.

Corey experiences success on his first try, but nearly falls the second time, prompting him to explain, "I'm too tired today."

The dog is still going strong, though, at 2:20. The dog has grabbed a stray shoe and is being chased by a young girl.

There is more to this park than just skating.

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## Skating away

Columbia's new Skate Park is located at the north end of Cosmo Park, which is located at 1615 Business Loop 70 West. Westbound travelers should exit 1-70 at West Boulevard, while eastbound visitors should exit at the Stadium exit. Proceed to Business Loop 70 West (north of I-70) and follow signs to Cosmo Park. Enter park and drive north until road runs into the Skate Park lot.

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