

SELECTED FAQs from www.tonyhawkfoundation.org

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Why are skateparks beneficial to communities?

The easy answer is that they provide a place for kids who aren't attracted to traditional team sports a place to go and express themselves in an individual and athletic manner. Getting kids, particularly at-risk kids, involved in a personal and esteem-building activity like skateboarding helps them build the confidence to do well in other aspects of their lives. Tony knows this because that's what skateboarding did for him. That's why he started the Tony Hawk Foundation--to help today's kids by helping their communities build quality public skateparks.

The 13-million skateboarders in America only have about 2,000 skateparks nationwide. That means the vast majority of them are skating in the streets. Skateparks, even the more challenging ones, are far safer than kids rolling through busy streets. And when parks are built right--with local skater input and involvement throughout the process--those youngsters develop a sense of ownership and pride. The very existence of the park is the result of their hard work. They worked with civic and local business leaders, with each other on design elements, and with the community to find a suitable location. These previously disenfranchised skaters, who once ran from the police, find themselves working with the police and city and community as a whole. It's a transformational process for these young people.

Do you have any information on the economic impact of skateparks in communities?

We do not have any specific studies on the economic impact of skateparks on communities. But from the feedback we receive from municipal skatepark managers, skateparks do seem to have a positive effect on businesses in the surrounding area. When a skatepark opens, it tends to draw folks from the outlying communities to come bring their kids to the skatepark, do some shopping, maybe have lunch, buy some gas, etc. The further away the nearest skatepark is, the further people travel to visit the new park. Skateparks attract patrons to local businesses that might not otherwise be in the area.

Do you have information on the physical and psychological benefits that skateparks provide children, or other ways communities benefit from having a skatepark?

Skateparks offer families in the immediate area a local recreational opportunity for their children. Offering recreational activities to young children helps them develop healthy, active lifestyles, and the growing popularity of skateboarding is encouraging more and more people to go outside and roll (currently over 12-million people enjoy skateboarding in the

U.S.). Providing a skatepark for youth also helps them feel that the community is addressing their needs. It helps them to feel more connected and encourages good citizenship.

Our own observations and the information we receive from municipal skatepark managers suggest that the physical and psychological benefits of a skatepark are many. Being a physically active sport, skateboarding encourages children to spend time outdoors and to engage in an activity that tests their endurance, sharpens their senses, and develops their creativity. Skateboarding requires no coaches and suggests no standardized approach to riding a skatepark. Skaters are free to ride in their own way, to their own abilities, and encouraged to pursue their own style of skating.

In the communities with no skatepark, where skateboarding is banned on city streets, skaters are frustrated from being targeted by police. They are discouraged rather than encouraged to pursue their otherwise healthy pastime. Many skaters aren't interested in more traditional team sports. So when they are discouraged from skateboarding, they're unlikely to take up an "approved" sport, and are more at risk to exposure to drugs, idle hobbies that promote obesity, and other unhealthy lifestyles.

Building a public skatepark and including the skaters in all aspects of the process (organization, fundraising, and design) draws them into the civic process, and cements their personal ties to the community.

Because of their choice of fashion and the prevailing stereotypes, skaters are often pegged as outcasts and delinquents, even though their choice of activities and style of dress really have nothing to do with their personalities, GPA, or habits. Bringing these individuals into the process of planning and building a public skatepark also exposes adults and civic leaders to the people behind the T-shirts and torn jeans. As much as the skaters learn about their local government, local leaders are typically the ones who learn the most.

Skateparks provide a place for skaters to go and practice the sport they love with friends. It gives them the opportunity to improve, to achieve small victories on a daily basis, to grow more confident in themselves and their own abilities, and allows them to dream of possibly becoming a "Tony Hawk" someday. Including skaters in the process of planning and building a public skatepark also teaches them that some things take time, and that patience and persistence often pays off.