

8. SKATEBOARDING, IN-LINE SKATING AND FREESTYLE CYCLING STRATEGY

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The purpose of this report is to inform the Board of a project that is being established to formulate a city-wide strategy for the planning and location of skateboarding, in-line skating and freestyle cycling facilities.

Background

Skateboarding, in-line skating and freestyle cycling are legitimate and important recreational activities often chosen by children and youth as an alternative to more conventional sport. The Council has policies that focus on children and young people. The Youth Policy has an objective that seeks

‘where possible to provide facilities and resources to encourage the development positive programmes and activities which meet the current social, cultural and recreational needs of young people’.

Consequently it is important that the Council proactively addresses the current and future provision for these needs in a co-ordinated manner.

Existing Recreational Facilities for Youth

The Council has developed a number of basketball half court and skateboard facilities within the city. Evidence from Christchurch and elsewhere clearly indicates that well designed facilities will attract users, particularly those who are reasonably mobile, and help reduce some of the conflicts on streets and other public places.

The provision of skateboard facilities in particular has been controversial in recent years whilst none the less meeting a genuine recreational need for young people. A number of community boards are considering provision for skateboarding, in-line skating and freestyle cycling facilities in their areas.

With this background it is important for the Council to consider on a city-wide basis the number, type and distribution of youth facilities required rather than just allow them to develop in an ad hoc and uncoordinated manner. To this end the project intends to develop a strategy for skateboarding, in-line skating and freestyle cycling facilities in the city.

Proposed Strategy

The key objective of the proposed strategy is to identify suitable sites and funding for the provision of skateboarding, in-line skating and freestyle cycling facilities in the city.

The strategy will cover the following areas:

- The potential for different groups of participants to share facilities.
- Future trends in the activities.
- The need for facilities in terms of the number, type and broad geographical location.
- The prioritisation of facility needs.
- Develop a process for officers and Community Boards to use in selecting specific sites for facilities.
- The likely issues around the siting of facilities and any mitigation measures or processes that have been successful in handling the issues elsewhere.
- Clarify the health and safety responsibilities of facility providers.
- Identify facility management methods that have proved successful elsewhere.

Process to Develop the Strategy

The activities involved are characterised by a lack of organised groups and consequently considerable informal consultation is required with skaters and freestyle cyclists to ensure that the strategy correctly identifies their needs. A researcher with knowledge of the activities and the ability to communicate well with skaters and freestyle cyclists will be selected to prepare the strategy. Relevant agencies and organisations involved in or affected by skateboarding, in-line skating and freestyle cycling will also be consulted with.

A steering group of suitable officers (the authors and two recreation officers based at service centres) and a member of the Youth Council has been established to oversee the preparation of the strategy.

Skateboarding, in-line skating and freestyle cycling are frequently controversial at a local level and the need for the Council and Community Boards to have an opportunity for input to the strategy before its finalisation is crucial. For this reason it is intended to bring the draft strategy to Community Boards and the Parks and Recreation Committee for input. The final document will then be submitted to the Parks and Recreation Committee for endorsement. It is anticipated that a draft strategy will be completed in August 1999.

Recommendation: That the information be received.