

Meeting Date: November 25th, 2020  
Delegation: Guelph Skatepark Community

## Introduction

The Guelph skatepark is an amazing place for people of all ages, genders and backgrounds to enjoy. Although it is called a skatepark, people use this to participate in their choice of action sports, whether that be skateboarding, biking, scootering, or rollerblading. It provides participants with a sense of belonging where everyone shares the same love of action sports. Our skatepark has grown into its own community within Guelph.

Action sports give people an outlet to reduce stress, improve their physical skills and most importantly, to have fun. They provide a meaningful outlet for youth where the only competition is against yourself. The mental strength required to keep pushing your own personal limits is what makes action sports so amazing. This builds confidence and resilience; aptitudes that can all be applied to everyday life.

## Findings

In the past 1-2 years we have seen a crazy spike in usage. This is especially true since the onset of the COVID pandemic. The skatepark is overcrowded, and as a result the safety of the park is compromised with increased chance of a collision. I have personally been involved in multiple collisions and have witnessed many. Generally we see a more experienced rider collide with a less experienced rider (not to say it can't happen to anyone). There are three main reasons for these collisions:

1. Awareness of surroundings and abilities to anticipate
2. Understanding of park rules/etiquette
3. Overcrowding and the absence of lighting

Learning the rules and etiquette of the skatepark can be very difficult. Aside from specific rules most of it is being extremely aware of your surroundings and having enough knowledge to anticipate where someone else is going. Riders should look before dropping into the body of the park as your path of travel might interfere with someone else's path. This lack of awareness is a main factor that contributes to collisions.

Within a skatepark there are safe zones to stand/idle. The rule is that you should only idle in these zones. These zones are at the edges of the skatepark, and although unmarked, are recognized by experienced riders. Beginners often overlook this rule. Beginners standing in non-idle zones affect the flow of traffic, further contributing to unsafe conditions.

Another main factor contributing to collisions is that the skatepark is overcrowded with too many participants at any given time. This is especially true after school and work hours. In the fall and spring, it is especially busy as daylight hours are limited. An overcrowded skatepark and less

experienced riders do not mix well. There are many skateparks around the Guelph area that have lights for evening use. This includes Norton skatepark in Burlington, Iceland skatepark in Mississauga, Gellert skatepark in Georgetown and Fischer Hallman skatepark in Kitchener. If you live in Guelph and want to ride at night, this involves driving outside of our community to participate. Not all riders have access to a vehicle, making it more difficult to participate. Additionally, other recreational facilities in Guelph have lights. For example, adjacent to the Guelph Skatepark is a new dog park which has lights. Most tennis courts and basketball courts in Guelph also have lights. I believe it is unfair to privilege certain recreational users over others, as recreation sports of all types should be celebrated and promoted our community.

Luke Jefferson, the city's manager of open space planning and parks, said in a statement to the Guelph Mercury that,  
"Lighting is not planned for the skate park because of the impacts that would have on neighbours, capital and operating budgets (because it extends the service beyond permitted hours) and impacts to the surrounding environment, which is located, like many of our parks, within a natural area,"

Upon visiting other parks in Guelph which have lights, these parks are also directly adjacent to residential developments. For example, Exhibition Park tennis courts and baseball diamonds, St. Georges park tennis courts, Margaret Green Park tennis courts and Zaduk Park tennis courts. The photos provided show the proximity of the lights to the neighbours.

Margaret Green Park





St George's Park



Zaduk Place Park

In addition, the skatepark is directly adjacent to highway 24, which is supplied with street lights. These lights are closer to the neighbours on Bristol Street than any lights that would be installed in the future at our skatepark. This shows once again how the skate community and its athletes are discriminated against. Not only is our park not illuminated, but is placed far away from any residential development or other recreational facility making it difficult to access and unsafe.

### Recommendations

As a representative of our skatepark community, I present our action plan for the Guelph Skatepark to improve the safety of our community.

1. Post rules & park etiquette

- Post a sign outlining rules and etiquette at the park entrance.
- Post rules and etiquette on a park website or the Guelph Skatepark community instagram.
- 2. Designate idle zones
  - Post a map of the skatepark with directional flow and idle zones at the park entrance.
  - Paint idle zones on the surface of the skatepark.
- 3. Install lights
  - Install lights around the perimeter of the park and parking areas. Lighting will create a safer environment with less congestion and lower risk of mixing experienced and less experienced riders.
- 4. Build more skateparks in Guelph
  - Additional skateparks in Guelph will disburse the amount of people at the skatepark to ensure the safety of participants. For action sport users, it is clear that there is a demand for more skateparks, including BMX jump/pump tracks. Guelph needs to seriously consider adding more of these facilities to our Parks and Rec areas to accommodate all athletes from all backgrounds.

### Summary

In summary, we hope to improve the safety of our community with the recommendations proposed above.

To date we have 775 community members who have signed a petition to support the installation of lights and an additional skatepark in Guelph. The petition is bringing our community together to advocate for change. With the support of Mayor Cam Guthrie I hope to see these changes implemented soon. [LINK TO PETITION AND COMMENTS](#) This is an opportunity for the City of Guelph to support all athletes of diverse backgrounds. If we can implement structural changes such as lights, safety zones & signage, this public space will be a safe and welcoming environment both physically and socially.

Sincerely,

Luke Pruski