

Salem Geer Park Skate Park Design

Community Survey #1 Results (November 2021)

Overall Summary

- The survey has a **good representation of the Salem and skateboard community**.
 - Over 600 responses from all age ranges, including elementary school to over 55 years old, were recorded.
 - Eighty-four percent of respondents are either skate park users themselves, or the parent/guardian of someone who will use the skate park. The average skill level of skate park users is between intermediate and advanced.
 - Most respondents live in Salem, although not all chose to disclose where they live. Approximately 18% live within walking distance of Geer Park.
- There is general consensus regarding the features people would like to see at Geer Park skate park, with the **focus on a variety of design features to provide people of all ages with opportunities to develop their skills**. Many participants have specific skate elements they would like to see included. There is agreement that WJ Skatepark & Urban Plaza in Eugene is a good example for a skate park, and Marion Square Park is not a good example.
- The separation between uses is also noted by many. This includes **separation between skill levels, equipment use (bikes, skateboards, etc) and type of design features**. The overall size needs to be large enough, and not overcrowded with features, to allow people to ride safely.
- **Additional design features noted: having a covered area as well as lighting**. Both elements seem to be in response to the limited daylight and wet weather in Salem. Providing a cover and lighting would extend the usability of the skate park. Landscaping and integrating the skate park into the overall Geer Park design are not noted as a high priority, even by those living near Geer Park.
- Several **concerns participants mention about the skate park has to do with implementation and maintenance**: safety of the skate park (both for users and visitors to the park) and the need to monitor the park for illegal activity and overnight camping.
- Throughout the entire survey, **responses express the strong desire to have an overall design that is a landmark park for Salem**. There is significant concern that budget limitations and skate park designer experience would limit what can be built (that it would not be what is desired by the skateboard community) and the potential for something great at Geer Park would be lost. Several people recommend the skateboard community be consulted in the design of the park.

What Makes a Great Skate Park?

Participants were asked the open-ended question of “what do you think makes a great skate park?” There were over 250 thoughtful responses to the question. The key themes of the responses are:

- A great skate park is clean and safe, where park users feel welcome and do not have to worry about their safety.
- The overall design matters, with the flow, variety of uses and separation between uses/users being important elements.
- Include a variety of skate park features for all skill levels, ages and wheels is important to creating a supportive and inclusive community and for the longevity of the park as people can grow their skills in place.
- Having the park designed by an experienced firm, who are skateboarders, and involving the public in the design process are important to the skate community. There is a strong sense that the skate park must be designed by actual users of the park.

The individual responses were categorized as summarized below, and included in Appendix A.

- **Clean and safe** (30 responses) – comments relate to the desire to have an environment without illegal or homeless activity and creating a clean environment where everyone feels comfortable and safe to skate.

“Clean safe and user friendly fun. A family friendly environment where folks can come and feel safe and know their kids are safe from crime and drugs.”

“The number one thing this park needs is SAFETY. A fence around it, some sort of police presence, and something that provides safety for kids that want to get into skateboarding or bmx. Nobody wants to go to the skatepark and be harassed by homeless drunks. Salem needs a safe, family friendly place for people of all ages to come and hone their skills...”

“A clean place that's well taken care of, the locals being cool, somewhere you don't have to worry about bums or tweakers bothering you (not like the Marion St Bridge Park in Salem)”

- **Overall Design** (30 responses) – comments relate to the overall feeling of the park, including multiple types of design elements and the ability for park users to continue to use the park as they develop their skills

“A good design that will support the inclusion of all types of skating and riding that continue to challenge park users for a long time, varying heights bowls and transitions as this is something that has almost always been over looked in the skateparks of our area. A good flowing design that allows the park user to be able to use the whole park in a flowing manner. A good mix of transition bowls with hips as well as street type obstacles for different styles of skating and riding”

“Being easy to access and ride at different levels but a good wholistic design”

“Quality design, welcoming space”

“Flow, speed, good layout, a fun mix of large and small features. A quark or 2 but not more. The ability to go from dork to danger.”

- **Flow/separation between features** (35 responses) – several comments relate only to the overall flow for park users to provide for longer runs with multiple features, allowance for more than

one person to ride safely at a time and providing space to reduce conflicts between beginning riders and more advanced riders.

"A skatepark is great when it flows well. When there are too many features too tight that don't make sense it can be frustrating as they won't get much use."

"flow and a park that is multi directional. out and back lines aren't as good as being able to hit different lines in different directions."

"Speed, Continuity and Flow. The ability to maintain a line and incorporate multiple features along the same pathway."

"as long as the features have good flow and don't interfere with each other I think that's what makes a great park."

"Separate areas for one person to skate each area at a time, possibly with challenging connectivity to allow transfers"

- **Specific skate features** (56 responses) – Many responses included personal preferences and visions for specific park features and how the features should be strung together.

"Having at least a mini bowl(beginner) and a bigger bowl. I prefer to skate bowls and ramps."

"I also think having a snake and pump track would be great and helpful for people to learn and get more comfortable on the board."

"A great skatepark would be to have something to work up too you can start by going down a street course work your way up to a drop in witch would be at least 2 ft an make a pocket for that 2ft for trying new grinds and better stalls on the coping. To get bigger bowls but not so steep, an pool coping."

- **Specific amenities** (26 responses) – A covered area and lights are amenities mentioned most frequently by participants. Restrooms, seating, and parking were also called out.

"Good lighting Covered area Good parking and access"

"Garbage cans, access to electric plug-ins, close to bathrooms."

"A well lit up park"

"Rain cover because we get 45' inches of annual Rain."

- **Size** (16 responses) – Building a skate park that is large enough to accommodate multiple users and features is specifically noted by many. Many comments imply larger parks provide for greater separation between features and users, improving the flow and increasing safety.

"Large size to provide space between skatepark users."

"Lots of features all in big area. Compact skateparks are hard and frustrating"

"One that has something for everyone and is big enough so no one gets in the way of others."

- **Variety of features** (57 responses) – In addition to the specific skate park features that are identified, many responses comment on the desire to have a variety of features to keep rides interesting and challenging, allow for skill growth, and be inclusive to attract skaters who like different features.

“A good skate park to me is a park that incorporates all the skateboard styles such as freestyle, street, and vert so everyone of all skill levels and skateboard style can Enjoy.”

“A variety of features for all levels, specifically park/transition, street, and pool/bowl.”

“A versatile set of obstacles that further challenges a skater/biker to progress and strive to be better.”

- **Accommodates multiple user types** (12 responses) – Several comments note that great skate parks are designed to accommodate multiple users at a time and a variety of equipment (bikes, boards, etc)

“Incorporates design for all types of skaters, including skateboarders and roller skaters and includes ADA accessibility.”

“A space for all riders, bikes, skateboards, scooters and glider bikes”

“Being big enough to include all types of wheeled sports. Our parks are too small and not inclusive enough. The features are old and outdated. We need something with lots of features and large enough areas so we do not run into each other.”

- **Accessible areas for all ages and skills** (60 responses) – Comments note how great parks are inclusive and have features and a flow to accommodate all skill levels, from beginning through advanced. Several comments note that having a mix of skill levels and ages creates a better community and makes the park welcoming.

“something for all skaters (beg - advanced)”

“I think what makes a great skatepark is that there is obstacles and to be a place where all people feel safe and is friendly for beginners and experienced skater s”

“Room for all levels, separated to avoid injury.”

“Accessible for all ages, and abilities, clean, partially covered for year-round use, seating for parents, and observers, food trucks, well lit for night skating, area for live music, a safe fun place for people of all ages to gather!!!”

- **Community/ People associated with the Park** (30 responses) – Several comments reference the positive community atmosphere at great skate parks. Creating a community is beneficial in that the park will feel more inclusive and welcoming; there will be more activity and less tolerance for illegal behavior.

“I think what makes a good skatepark are the vibes and the people there”

“It's less about skating than about gathering and interacting. We need to facilitate the social aspect of the skating experience.”

“A good community. Well set up features”

“Cleanliness, openness, and located next to a business or public area that is involved and won't tolerate disrespectful users or vandalism.”

- **Experienced design firm/ Community input in design** (15 responses) – Comments include general statements about the desire to have a firm design the park that specializes in skate park designs as well as calling on the City to hire a specific firm to design the park. Several people also encourage the City to involve the skate community in the process to design the park.

“A great skatepark is always one that is designed by a company that consists of skaters. If the designers aren't skateboarders, they aren't going to understand how skaters actually move around the park or what obstacles they are interested in for example. If it's designed by skateboarders, it will still hold up in popularity years later.”

“Our community deserves for once to be shown we are intelligent enough to spend our money on the best in the world. Guys and girls from right here that put skateboarding and skateparks on the map again. Mark Scott and Dreamland Skateparks....An investment in the best brings a good feeling to the community unlike the 2nd class places that only attract riff raff because dedication is not a part of the formation and the activity.”

“Strong community engagement in the design process, incorporating input into the design (even if it requires going above city's desired budget)”

“Great design build teams like dreamland or Evergreen skateparks. Not landscape architects, they can't build skateparks”

- **Other** (10 responses) – Other comments relate to the location of the park (a desire that it be located elsewhere), quality construction and maintenance of the park, and the possibility of grant funding.

“smooth concrete and correct construction”

“I'm disappointed this is being converted into a skate park”

“A budget for annual maintenance, lighting, landscaping, cleanup etc.”

At the conclusion of the survey, participants were asked if they had other comments or suggestions they wanted to share. Approximately 145 comments were submitted (included in Appendix B), relating to the same themes as identified in the open-ended question of “what makes at great skate park.” Of note are the multiple responses indicating a desire for a covered area (14 responses) and lights (11 responses) to enable riding after hours and in wet weather, and a call for park to be designed by an experienced skate park designer (30 responses).

In addition to the above-mentioned themes, comments focus on the implementation of the park design and relationship of the skate park to the larger Geer Park. Comments relate to implementation were a call to action/encouragement for the City to design and built a quality skate park and budget accordingly. There was a concern that the park design as built will be mediocre and the skate

community believes the time is now to create a marque skate park that will be used for generations. *“Don't mess this up. Salem needs something like this to bring culture, community, and a better pass time activities for the youth and adults alike. There are too many negative influences here, but a complete and updated skatepark could bring so many people from far and wide to enjoy what this city has to offer”*

Comments relate to the integration with Geer Park include: creating a separation between the skate park and the trails in Geer Park to provide enough space for all users of the park; the location of the parking in relation to the skate park; and a desire to locate the skate park somewhere else entirely.

Skate Park Feature Preferences

- Participants were asked to review a list of 16 design features and identify which features they “really want” included in the new Geer Park Skate Park. Participants were asked to categorize each feature into one of three categories: “really want this included,” “nice to have, but could live without;” or “do not really need.” Of the features queried, all are desired – no feature received more than 25% of the participants stating that the feature was “not really needed.” The following is the prioritized list of features. There is a direct correlation between the features participants “really want included” and those that they “do not really need.”

Skate Park Design Features	Number of Responses		
	Really want this included	Nice to have, but could live without	Do not really need
Top Tier Features (69% to 77% really want included)			
1. Street terrain	249	53	20
2. Transitions	245	55	20
3. Street plaza	235	62	24
4. Ledge	229	63	27
5. Flat rail	222	67	30
6. Bowls	221	89	11
7. Manual pad / curb	218	66	33
Second Tier Features (48% to 58% really want included)			
8. Gap	183	94	41
9. Street skate path	167	103	49
10. Snake runs	155	107	53
11. Floating Ledge	152	118	45
12. Roll in	150	112	50
Third Tier Features (30% to 40% really want included)			
13. Clover bowl	123	131	57
14. Pool bowl	120	121	72
15. Wall ride/vertical wall	120	123	70
16. Vert bowl	93	144	78

Participants were given an opportunity to write in other design features they would like to see included. Sixty-three people chose to write in another feature. Features mentioned most frequently were:

- Covered Area - (26 mentions)
 - Lights - (10 mentions)
 - Variety of Rails - (9 mentions)
 - Variety of Stairs - (6 mentions)
 - Flat Roller Skating Area - (6 mentions)
- Participants were also asked to identify their preference for three of seven other park elements/amenities in addition to specific skate features. The top three design amenities were:
 - Separation between beginning and experienced skaters
 - Local art included in the skate park design
 - Universally accessible elements for users of all abilities

Taking a subset of the responses for those who live near Geer Park and those who are not skate park users revealed preferences are similar to the participants as a whole with separation between beginning and experienced skaters as a top preference. Those living within walking distance of Geer Park are interested in accessibility for all users and incorporating greenspace into the skate park design. Features to promote skateboard competitions ranked low across all three groups of respondents.

Design elements/ amenities	All responses (602 total responses)		Those living within walking distance to Geer Park (97 total responses)		Non-skate park users (73 responses)	
	% responses	Ranking	% responses	Ranking	% responses	Ranking
Separation between beginning and experienced skaters	39.5%	1	32%	2	49.3%	1
Local art included in skate park design	32.3%	2	27.8%	4	37%	3
Universally accessible elements for users of all abilities	27.6%	3	33%	1	41.1%	2
Incorporating greenspace into skate park design	26.6%	4	32%	3	27.4%	4
Additional seating/gathering spaces for spectators	25.6%	5	15.5%	7	24.7%	5
Visibility into/around skate park	19.3%	6	25.8%	5	24.7%	5
Features to draw skateboard competitions	18.9%	7	18.6%	6	16.4%	7

Demographic Data

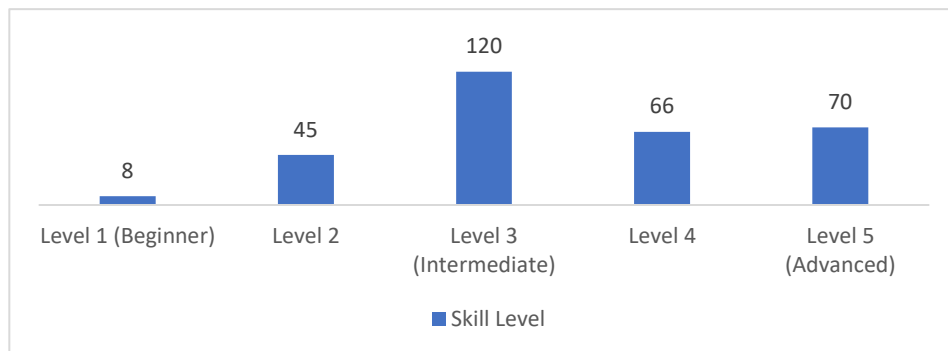
- 612 people participated in the community survey. All responses were considered, regardless of whether all questions were answered. Over 75% of the participants completed the survey.
- 84% of the respondents are either skate park users themselves or the parent/guardian of someone who will use the skate park.
- The age of participants are fairly evenly distributed, ranging from elementary school to over 55 years old:

	Number of participants	Percent of all participants
Elementary – high school-aged	108	18%
18-34 years old	217	36%
over 35 years old	127	21%
Chose not to disclose	158	26%
Total	610	100%

- Of the 406 participants who identified where they live, 67% (or 273 people) live in Salem, and an additional 18% (or 73 people) live within walking distance of Geer Park. The remainder (60 people) live outside of Salem.

Skate Park Experience

- Of the 309 skate park users/represent skate park users who chose to identify their skill level, 84% self-reported their skill level between intermediate and advanced, with an average of 3.5.



- The most popular wheeled equipment used by participants is a skateboard (241) followed by bikes – BMX and other (145), scooters (132) and rollerblades/rollerskates (90).
- Over half the participants visit skate parks either daily (19%), weekly (40%) or monthly (30%). Of the other skate parks in the region, people prefer WJ Skatepark & Urban Plaza in Eugene the most for its variety of features. Marion Square Park is liked the least. Participants were only asked to identify what they liked about the parks – the reasons why Marion Square Park is not liked are not specified. See Appendix C for a more detailed summary of participants’ assessment of the skate parks in the region.