

Officials break ground for skate park in Benicia

After six years of struggle, organizers hope to have locals on the ramps and rails by July

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BENICIA - It won't be long now before they'll be doing fakies, heelflips, railstands, Ollies and Nollies at Community Park.

That's because ground finally was broken Thursday for X-Park, and organizers hope to have skaters on the ramps and rails by July.

For the last six years, community volunteers, parents, kids and local businesses have helped raise more than \$300,000 through benefit concerts, car washes, pizza nights and other fundraising events for the park; with the city kicking in the rest. The new \$850,000 skate park has been designed for BMX riders and in-line skaters, as well as skateboarders.

"Raising the funds has been the biggest challenge so far. We wanted to minimize the burden on public funds," said Bob Mutch, president of the X-Park committee.

The X-Park, to be located in Benicia Community Park, has been designed by local skaters and Zack Wormhoudt, renowned Santa Cruz skater and professional surfer. He's designed many skate and bike parks in California and around the world.

Many local skaters have outgrown the old skate park behind the 7th Street Taco Bell, and have nowhere else to skate without testing the law.

"It is illegal to skate anywhere in Benicia except the park; we get hassled when just skating down the street" said Shane Stifle, 19.

Originally the X-Park committee was going to renovate the old skate park, but decided to leave it since its design is suitable for novice skateboarders, said Rob Mullaney, X-Park committee member.

"This new park looks like it is going to be pretty cool," said 19-year-old Matthew Cordonero.

In addition to fundraising by community members, local trade unions have also helped make the new skate park a reality, Mutch said.

Ben Espinoza, a member of the Cement Masons Local 400, said that in addition to his union, ironworkers, electricians, plumbers, bricklayers and building traders all have donated material or labor for the project.

"This really has been a community effort; these things just don't happen on their own." Espinoza said.