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Charlotte skate park opens

By Sally Trout
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CHARLOTTE - The city's \$500,000 skate park got a heavy workout following official dedication ceremonies Saturday.

About 200 youngsters showed up with skateboards, in-line skates and bikes, ready to test their skills.

Planning for the park started in 1998 and got under way with \$200,000 in seed money from the city. A \$166,000 grant from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources helped out; the rest was raised by the community.

"This is a great day in Charlotte," said Floyd Burley, affectionately known as the father of the skate park.

"I have lived most of my life here, and Charlotte has never done a project like this for its youth."

The 13,000-square-foot concrete skating surface was designed by award-winning skate park designer Zach Wormhoudt of Santa Cruz, Calif. He worked with local kids to come up with a unique facility.

It's located on a 19-acre industrial site on Charlotte's southwest side. The park is the first major project completed on the land; a separate BMX bike area and ball fields are planned as well.

"Charlotte isn't one of the official 'Cool Cities,' but this project is typical of that effort," said Bryan Myrkle, Charlotte's Economic Development director.

"This park will be good for the city, bringing



(ROBERT KILLIPS/Lansing State Journal)
Ready for a takeoff: Skateboarders wait for bike traffic to clear at Saturday's grand opening of the new skate park in Charlotte. The facility, located in Lincoln Park, allows in-line skaters, skateboarders and bicyclists to use the facility at the same time.

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About the park

After several years of planning and work, the Charlotte Skate Park is now open. Here are some things you need to know:

- **Free:** There is no charge to use the public park.
- **Hours:** The park will close at 10 p.m., like all city parks.
- **Location:** It is at the intersection of Shepherd and Lincoln streets on Charlotte's southwest side.

visitors from all over."

Burley's grandsons from Olivet got him involved in the project.

"My grandsons wanted to go skateboarding and there wasn't a park here," said Burley, who is 69 and retired. "I told them it would take someone on City Council to get one built and before long I was running for office." Burley, who won his council seat, and former Mayor William White started the work on the park. Now, six years later, the park is done.

"There's nothing the city could give me that would equal the good feelings I get from the kids saying thank you," Burley said.

A number of kids lined up with the officials to take bows Saturday. They had helped from day one, with planning and fund raising. They helped raise \$4,000 for the park by collecting returnable cans.

Once the construction fences came down, Burley said there was no keeping the kids away.

Brian Miars, 18, of Charlotte, was one of the park's first casualties. He took a spill and broke his foot nine days ago.

"As soon as I get rid of the crutches, I'll be back," Miars said. "This park flows well and is the only decent one for bikes within 60 miles."

As kids on bikes and boards dipped, jumped and skidded, the expressions on parents and grandparents faces alternated from grins to wincing. Judy Zakora of Charlotte thinks the park is just great.

"My grandson, Seth, just loves it," she said. "We live four blocks away and he's on his bike or board all the time."

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