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E8 Sports

KidsSports

For boarders, it's greatest skate

Still waiting for funds and games

By Kevin Paul Dupont

GLOBE STAFF

More like the tortoise than the hare, a skatepark is slowly making its way to the land of Charlie on the MTA.

Boston's \$2 million outdoor skatepark, to be constructed on approximately 1 acre of East Cambridge land near the Museum of Science and the Zakim Bridge, is roughly one-third funded thus far, and organizers remain optimistic that construction will begin next year for a spring 2007 opening.

"Funding is always a challenge," said Noah Stockman, the project's 26-year-old coordinator, noting organizers still must raise some \$1.3 million. "There are causes everywhere, but especially in Boston. We were up for a foundation grant recently, and it came down to us or a group that provides housing for children born with AIDS. Obviously, we didn't get it."

Local sculptor Nancy Schon provided the project's initial boost a couple of years ago after she learned that skateboarders were hopping over and grinding up her work of art, "The Tortoise and the Hare," in Copley Square. Schon, once on site to witness what was happening, engaged the skateboarders in conversation and soon became an advocate for building the skatepark, leading her to partner with Renata von Tscharnner, president of the Charles River Conservancy.

The Schon-von Tscharnner tandem soon led to the hiring of a noted skatepark designer, Zach Wormhoudt, who also designed a highly popular skatepark in Louisville, Ky., that has been up and operating the last five years. Wormhoudt's design for Boston, to be incorporated on the 40 acres known as the New Basin Parklands, can be viewed on the website www.thecharles.org (click on: About the Skatepark).

The park's signature feature: a full pipe with a bend at the finish, resembling a wave crashing on shore.

"Skateboarding promotes individualism, creativity, as well as balance and strength and grace," said Stockman. "There is really a need for a skatepark. Kids are being criminalized for doing something they love — they can be fined for skateboarding in many areas of Boston and Cambridge. They can do damage, but in most cases, it's not out of maliciousness; it's just what happens when you grind against granite or concrete."



GLOBE STAFF PHOTO/DIM DARS

Gavin O'Hara may be just 3½, but this skateboarder is already a regular, along with his father and 2-year-old brother James, at Rye Airfield.

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