

A place to skate

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When the Foster City Skate Park opened last fall, children and adults alike from around the Bay Area flocked to the new skating venue since it offers a legal place to ride and try out new tricks.

Many business owners breathed a sigh of relief, as well. Now, when they tell local kids to stop skating on their property or loitering outside their store entrances, they have the ability to point to the park as an alternative.

The skate park was built as part of Foster City's teen center, "The Vibe," at 670 Shell Blvd., after heavy traffic at a mobile skate park indicated that a more permanent venue would draw users. Plans took a little over a year to work their way through the Planning Department and City Council, from approval to completion. Situated next to the Vibe, the park overlooks the water and acres of manicured grass, providing plenty of space for skaters and spectators to relax. It offers an area for beginners to learn the basics, along with plenty of room for more advanced skaters to perfect their tricks. There is currently no charge to skate for Foster City residents or for visitors, and there are no plans to implement fees in the future.



Michael Costa/Daily Journal
Connor Fench, 15, practices a jump at the skate park at the Vibe Teen Center in Foster City.

"Generally, everyone is happy. I think people are supportive of a legal hangout and skating area for kids," Recreation Coordinator Tiffany Hall said.

Before the park opened, the relationship between the city and skaters was fractious. Kids like Eric Ramirez and Chang Liu, both 14 and residents of Foster City, were constantly reprimanded for skating on public and private property.

"We were always getting yelled at by cops, business people, everybody," said Ramirez.

Has that stopped?

"Yeah," said Liu. "We just come [to the skate park] now."

Theresa J. Dopp, assistant manager of the Sand Cove apartment complex next door to the skate park, agrees that things have improved, but says loitering by skaters in the complex is still a problem.

"It's gotten better. In the beginning, it was more frequent, especially by the shuffleboard area and in walkways. I'm not trying to have it shut down or anything. I just wish they wouldn't loiter," Dopp said.

Director of Parks and Recreation Kevin Miller says he has heard no complaints about loitering.

"You have to engage kids, and at least when they're on our property, we have a Vibe staff whose responsibility it is to engage youth," he said. "We think we've provided a good environment to skate in, and kids need to follow the rules, but we need to engage them. The center is the perfect environment to talk to young people."

Overall, Miller says the center has been well received.

"It provides an opportunity for kids to skate without causing damage to public or private property," Miller said. "It's allowed people to say, 'Hey, not only shouldn't you be skating here, but you have a place to go. It's been very beneficial.'"

Local Foster City kids aren't the only people using the park. Skating blogs and websites provide reviews and information about Bay Area skate parks, and have drawn skaters of all ages and backgrounds.

"There are a lot of people from outside the area," said Hall. "They check skating blogs and then do a sort of tour of different parks in the area. We get a lot of people from San Francisco." Particularly in the mornings, college-aged and adult skaters fill the park, often coming from outside Foster City. Afternoons find the park inhabited more by young locals. A few girls dot the perimeter of the skating area, but currently, adolescent boys reign supreme.

"We've been pleasantly surprised," said Hall. "There hasn't been graffiti or vandalism. People have stopped skating on and damaging private property. The kids enjoy it, and they're really using it."