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Skatepark funding keeps rolling in

By **Donna Goodison**

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Supporters of the \$2.3 million Charles River Skatepark have raised more than half of the cost of the project, which tourism officials say could be a regional magnet and attract marquee sporting events such as the X Games.

"There are areas that are for less experienced skateboarders, but this is a skate park where even the most experienced skateboarder or BMXer will find a challenge," said Renata von Tscharner, president of the Charles River Conservancy. "There's nothing else that size or nothing else of that quality in New England."

The Cambridge nonprofit is spearheading the drive to fund the 40,000-square-foot park on vacant land beneath the Zakim Bridge. Construction hinges on [Big Dig](#) work, said von Tscharner, who says a 2008 opening is "optimistic."

The Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau believes the park could draw enthusiasts from around New England and perhaps New York, in addition to serving as one of multiple venues needed to host extreme sports events.

"It gives us opportunities to create events around this which would drive people into the city for new tourism dollars," bureau CEO Pat Moscaritolo said.

Last year's X Games in Los Angeles, aired on ESPN and ABC, attracted 138,672 spectators. Von Tscharner said it's likely the park will start with regional events before vying for the larger ones.

About half of the park will be dedicated to transition-style terrain, with bowls, pipes and smooth surfaces for the skateboarding style that grew out of California in the 1970s, when skateboarders took to empty swimming pools. The other half will be devoted to streetscapes with stairs, ledges, railings and ramps attacked by skateboarders in urban areas. Elements of places frequented by Boston skateboarders, including Copley Square, the Harvard Square pit and Boston Medical Center, were incorporated into the design.

Santa Cruz, Calif., skate park architect Zach Wormhoudt designed the Boston park over a two-year period with input from some 400 skateboarders during four sessions in 2004, von Tscharner said.

More than \$1.2 million has been raised toward the project, including \$100,000 from the Lynch Foundation that was announced yesterday.

"If you're a serious skater in Boston, you can go to Rye, N.H., and get something OK, or you can go to the Midwest and get something really good," said Carolyn Lynch, chief executive of the Lynch Foundation and wife of former Fidelity Magellan Fund manager Peter Lynch.

"We need more places for children to play, where they can get self-confidence," Peter Lynch said, while standing by a "shred ahead" sign yesterday at the park's future site. "It beats waiting around for your parents to get home."

Greg Gatlin contributed to this report.

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