



## Officials cut ribbon at Saginaw's Andersen Celebration Park; skateboard, bike enthusiasts give thumbs-up to new ramp

Published: Thursday, August 26, 2010, 3:59 PM Updated: Thursday, August 26, 2010, 4:09 PM



**Justin L. Engel | The Saginaw News**

SAGINAW — The city's new skateboard park received some rave reviews from grinders and bicyclers alike at today's grand opening celebration of the Andersen Celebration Park.

"I've never been to a park this well-designed," said 19-year-old Jerry J. Wilson, a Saginaw Township resident and eight-year skateboarder. "Not in Midland or Bay City."

And Saginaw's skate course isn't finished yet.

Wilson was among about 40 people — teenagers and twentysomethings — who were the first to lay their wheels upon the 1,500-square-foot, 9-foot deep "bowl" similar to one at Trilogy Skate Park in Midland. Meanwhile, city leaders celebrated at the Andersen Celebration Park's entrance with a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Officials opened the skateboard feature for the event but plan to close it again Friday as construction crews spend the next two weeks finishing the 200-foot-long, 10-foot-wide skateboarding "entrance."

Andersen Celebration Park's other attractions — including a splash park, European-style playscape and Bocce ball court — will remain open in the meantime, officials say.

Ian Losee, an 18-year-old Saginaw resident, said he expects both skating fanatics and bicycle enthusiasts will flock to the skateboard park to ride its course, full of deep dips, steep slopes and curving concrete.

"They'll love it because there's a nice flow to it all," the biking buff said. "(Bicyclers and skateboarders) can roll on the same course because it's set up for everybody. I'll probably be here just about every day."

Herb Vasquez, a 22-year-old Saginaw Township resident, said he's not concerned that the park's location will deter its target demographic.

If anything, the ramp's placement beside Ezra Rust will attract the skating- or bike-trick aficionados.

"I like that they don't hide it away," said Vasquez, who traveled to the site with his skateboarding friends. "It's something we haven't seen before in Saginaw."

About 200 people showed up for the 3 p.m. ribbon-cutting ceremony including city officials, Saginaw police and firefighters, business leaders and representatives from organizations that helped fund the \$1.58 million park.

"This is a wonderful, wonderful example of how the community can come together," said Renee Johnston, president and chief executive officer of the Saginaw Community Foundation, which contributed \$20,000 to the park. "It brings tears to my eyes to see what this has become."

The new park was three years in the making.

The former park at that location, with water slides and a wave pool, closed in 2002 because of Saginaw budget shortfalls.

The grant that funded the previous water park stipulated the city must continue operations at the site, prompting City Hall officials to reimagine the park.

Organizers publicly unveiled the idea for the multi-purpose park in August 2007, and using donations and U.S. Department of Natural Resources funds — the sort generated by revenue sources, not taxpayer dollars — crews began tearing down the old 360-foot twin water slides and wave pool.

Officials in July opened a portion of the park but delayed the grand opening celebration while crews continued building the skateboard park at the south end of the 4-acre site.

© 2010 MLive.com. All rights reserved.