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Venice

July 24, 2008

Work on \$2 million skate park to begin in the fall

BY VINCE ECHAVARIA

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Venice Beach already stakes claim to a famed workout area known as Muscle Beach, art walls for graffiti artists to display their crafty designs and an internationally acclaimed Boardwalk.

A beachfront skate park is now planned to join the group of distinctive attractions that are part of the Venice landscape.

Venice Beach has been a hot spot for skateboarders and skaters to test their tricks since the days of the Venice Pavilion and they have continued to skate along a concrete section of the beach even after the Pavilion was torn down.

But now a new 16,000-square-foot skate park facility is in the works to give the skateboarders and in-line skaters a place to call home on the beach.

The Los Angeles Board of Recreation and Park Commissioners approved the plans for the in-ground skate park at Venice Beach June 18th, sending a project that was initiated by skate enthusiasts nearly a decade ago out to bid.

"It's a state-of-the-art concrete skate park designed by a lot of skaters who came out of Venice," said Geri Lewis, skate park coordinator and executive director of the Venice Surf and Skateboard Association.

Skateboard enthusiasts note that the project is particularly fitting because it will bring a standout skate park to one of the birthplaces of the sport. The Venice and Santa Monica area is widely credited as the place where modern skateboarding originated.

"Skateboarding basically got its start down here," Lewis said.

Project manager Paul Tseng of the Los Angeles Department of Public Works Bureau of Engineering Architectural Division said, "Considering that Venice is the birthplace of the skateboarding sport, this is an iconic project.

"We're excited to bring this project to reality. This is something that local skaters deserve and they will be able to call this home."

Melanie Berry, who has worked with the Skateboard Association on the effort, said that the park will help keep youths away from the streets and involved in a recreational activity.

"This is going to put Venice back on the map as far as the contributions it has made to the skateboarding world," Berry said.

The proposed skate park will be located at the former Damson Oil site, close to the Public Art Walls and existing skate dance area near Windward Avenue and Ocean Front



Walk.

The project includes installation of an entry plaza and surrounding walls, construction of concrete walkways, removal of existing rock revetment at the site, restoration of power to an existing lifeguard tower and landscaping and irrigation.

The \$2 million facility will be funded primarily through "Quimby funds," fees collected from developers that are earmarked for park and recreational improvements in the 11th Council District.

Lewis and others who were active in the effort referred to the extensive planning process, as community workshops were held over the years and the project was subject to California Coastal Commission approval. The commission gave approval to the final design in February.

"It has been a long haul, but we stuck with it and now the fruits are going to be enjoyed by everyone," Lewis said of the effort.

The skate park coordinator pointed out that community members and skating professionals had a hand in the facility's design and the project has been supported by Los Angeles City Councilman Bill Rosendahl's office.

The park design was developed by RRM Design Group and Zack Wormhoudt, a skater and landscape architect, Tseng said. Designers with Santa Cruz-based Wormhoudt Inc. envision the Venice facility as a "premier skate park in the heartland and birthplace of skateboarding."

Tseng said having the design input of skating professionals will help make the skate park one of the most challenging arenas for skaters to ride. Lewis agreed that the new facility will rival other premiere skate parks, including the Cove at Memorial Park in Santa Monica, but will also stand out as the only skate park on the beach in California.

"More kids will use that skate park than any other facility on the beach," Lewis predicted.

City Department of Recreation and Parks officials also expect the facility to be heavily attended, as it can attract not just skate enthusiasts but spectators as well.

"Skate parks are very popular and this one we also expect to be very popular due to the number of amenities it has for the different styles of skating," said Michael Shull, superintendent of the Recreation and Parks Planning and Development Division.

Among the features planned for the park are tiles that can be purchased by the public and placed on the surface, Lewis said. The Surf and Skateboard Association is also working to have the park named after Dennis "Polar Bear" Agnew, an innovative skater who died in 2004, he said.

Construction of the park is expected to begin in either September or October and take approximately ten months to complete, Tseng said.

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Reader's Comments:

Harry wrote on Jul 4, 2008 4:25 AM:

" Good luck with the project. When you get bored of skating there you can come and skate: <http://highvalleyskatepark.blogspot.com/>

Wich is another overdue project that soon will be completed

Skate & Create "

Treffley wrote on Jul 1, 2008 11:23 AM:

" CONGRATULATIONS to The Los Angeles Board of Recreation and Park Commissioners for approving this skatepark!! I can't wait to break some decks there. "