

Youth take second crack at new skate park design



By Jeff Doner

Some very enthusiastic young members of the community turned up to voice their opinions, views and ideas for Aurora's new proposed skateboard park at an open forum last Thursday.

Representatives from the Canadian Ramp Company, which is designing and building the park, showed those in attendance an artist's conception of the proposed park thus far.

After getting a good look, the youngsters sounded off on what they wanted to see.

Brandon Robinson, a skate park specialist from the Canadian Ramp Company, said he was happy with the turnout and that the forums have been helpful in finding out what skaters, BMX bikers and scooters in Aurora are looking for.

"It's actually really good that we had this second meeting because we were kind of going in one direction and now we know we have to go to the other side a bit," he said.

"We always try to incorporate as much of all worlds as possible, but when you hear one thing so much at one meeting, we decided this is going to be a plaza style park, but now we're hearing a completely different thing, so it's really good we have this. I like the interaction."

During the presentation, Robinson said the current template was driven from feedback from many skateboarders. That inspired two shallow bowls and a more "plaza" theme, which mimics a street-like experience.

The park is also expected to be diverse for all needs and skill levels and this includes features for skaters, bikers and scooters.

"It's going to be a balance," Robinson explained. "Right now we're very heavy plaza, because that's what we heard first, but it's one of those things that it's going to have to be where we step back a bit and push a little more on the transition."

Despite the fact that a first draft is complete, Robinson said there was still a lot of work to be done and everyone's suggestions will be taken into serious consideration.

"This is a conceptual design and we came in with the pure intention of creating a skate park that was meant for Aurora," he said.

"We do every build method and the reason we do that is every community has different needs and desires. Some have more skaters, other BMX bikers."

Jordan Connell, 12, is thrilled about the new park and suggested features that make the park more suitable for scooters. He also voiced concerns about keeping it well lit and deterring graffiti and vandalism.

"I feel like the park is going to be more molded to creation of flow and I like that," he said, citing other parks around the country in reference.

Noah Cowan, also 12, chimed in numerous times with ideas for features that would be appealing to BMX bikers and received a couple "good idea" comments from the presenters.

"I just go to skate parks all around and I think, "oh, that looks like a pretty popular set up, why don't we have that in Aurora, that would be so cool," he said.

Coming out and having his voice heard was important to him.

"You've got to come and tell these guys and help them understand that a lot of people would like different things and tell them your ideas."

Justin Foster, 12, was also enthusiastic about the project and hopes the new park will be properly designed.

"It's good, because that way it hopefully won't turn out like the other Aurora one that was not much of what we wanted, but now we can help make it so that it's better."

Foster also pointed out that a quality facility will keep bikers, skaters and scooters off the roads.

Robinson said he wasn't surprised about how involved today's youth has become in advocating for skate parks.

"I'm not surprised at all because skateboarding is one of those sports that has really been overlooked," he said. "Skaters, they're not heard most of the time in the community and so Aurora is doing something great by listening to their skaters and bikers and creating something that they want."

He also said the public at large is starting to take skateboarding seriously.

"We're really transitioning to a growing, accepted sport and it might even make the Olympics in eight years, that's really being pushed. It's becoming a mainstream sport and it needs to be treated like a mainstream sport.

"Aurora is going to have great skaters, bikers and scooters in 15 years time," he continued. "They're passionate about it and it's great. Skating is more than just a sport and a physical activity; it's a livelihood for some people. This is what they do and it gets their name out there."

In a few weeks a new draft will be completed, followed by some more public and town input. The Town is eyeing a tender for the park this October with construction beginning sometime in November.