

# New Plaza puts street skating in the park

Today, Kettering, Ohio, breaks ground on a unique skate plaza giving street skating a legal foothold

By April Umminger  
USA TODAY

Rob Dyrdek knows what it's like to suffer for your sport. Dyrdek, a professional street skateboarder, has been cuffed and ticketed, arrested more times than he can remember, stripped down and put in jail.

I make six figures a year and I have to run from the cops when I'm trying to do my job, he says.

We're talking about skateboarding, right? But now, animosity toward skaters could be on the way out, when Dyrdek, his hometown of Kettering, Ohio, and D.C. Shoe open Kettering Skate Plaza, a first-of-its-kind street-skating park.

Someone had to step up for everyone and do something, says Dyrdek of his \$600,000 plaza of dreams, which recreates the best street-skating spots from around the world. Destinations duplicated in the 40,000 square-foot plaza range from a stair scheme at Philadelphia's Love Park to elements of San Francisco's Embarcadero.

To add to the envisioned skaters' paradise: the park is free, open to the public and follows skate-at-your-own-risk rules, which recommends pads and helmets, but doesn't require them.

I don't think they (city officials) get that this will put Kettering on the map, Dyrdek says. You can build this anywhere and people will come from all over the world.

Some obstacles recreated in the Kettering plaza, like handrails modeled after those at the Arco building in Los Angeles, are now inaccessible to skateboarders. Authorities skateproof areas that become overrun. They weld metal knobs to ledges and put concrete planters or poles at the bottom of handrails.

Measures taken to curb skateboarding are not implemented to foil the alternative sport, but rather because skating in prohibited areas can cause so many problems.

There is a whole bunch of consequences to allowing skateboarding where it

doesn't belong," says Philip Goldsmith, managing director for the city of Philadelphia.

"The issue with Love Park is skateboarding does damage to public property and it makes it far more difficult for pedestrians to walk through safely," Goldsmith also says that damage to handrails is a potential hazard to those with disabilities. He estimates that skateboarding in Love Park cost the city tens of thousands of dollars.

To the untrained eye and many police officers street skating looks like kids running amok on private, state and civic property.

But Dyrdek champions the anti-organized sport as one that is mentally more creative and freeing than ones where you start and score, then win or lose.

More than 70% of skateboarders consider themselves street skaters, a style defined by sliding or grinding down handrails, flipping the board onto ledges or jumping down a flight of stairs.

This style is different from transition skating; tricks done in a half-pipe, made mainstream by Tony Hawk.

To date, street skaters have had to improvise their own parks. They skate in the streets, at apartment complexes and shopping centers, not down ramps found in more than 2,000 public parks across the nation.

It's a vicious cycle, says Dyrdek, "because the bigger the sport gets, you end up building transition skate parks that are badly constructed, and the authorities get frustrated because nobody's using them."

But come summer, street skaters will have a plaza to call their own and, potentially, new status in the community.

City officials hope that Kettering Skate Plaza not only will be an athletic outlet for skateboarders, but also could serve as a community facility for concerts, plays and family gatherings.

Skateboarding really does address kids that we don't typically reach with our traditional programs, says Mary Beth Thaman, Kettering's parks, recreation and cultural arts director. It shows that you don't have to play baseball to be an athlete.



**A skater's dream come true:** Rob Dyrdek, above, advocates building plazas to skate in, not transitional skate parks. Kettering Skate Plaza will be open to the public, free and hold 150 to 200 athletes at a time. The park is scheduled to open this summer.

**Flow:** Obstacles and runways stem from the plaza's center. This design minimizes collision risks.

**Beginners:** Easier spots, like this three-step jump, cater to beginning and intermediate skaters.

**Not just for skating:** Multiuse plaza can be a picnic area, festival grounds or concert venue.

## Kettering Skate Plaza

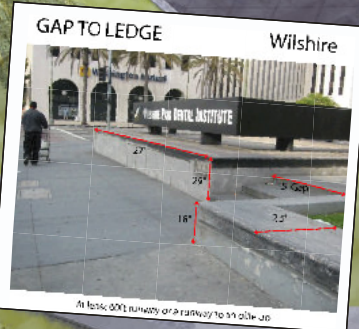
**Do-it-yourself design:** Dyrdek photographed and measured the best skate spots from around the world before he designed Kettering Skate Plaza. Left, A handrail inspired by a popular spot on the University of California Irvine campus (note the yellow pole installed as a skating deterrent); right, a handrail design from the Arco building in Los Angeles. Other spots of inspiration duplicated at Kettering:

**Heart of the plaza:** Just as Robert Indiana's "LOVE" sculpture in Philadelphia became an icon of city skateboarding, sculptures will help create identities for each legal plaza.

**Benches:** Modeled after those at the Department of Water and Power building in Los Angeles.

**Ledge to grassy gap:** Area is duplicated from one in Barcelona, Spain.

**Wide concrete slabs:** Obstacles are inspired by Pier 7 in San Francisco.

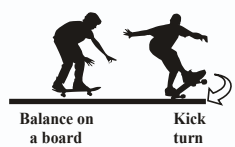


**Dental gap:** This area recreates the space between two concrete ledges at the Wilshire Park Dental Institute.

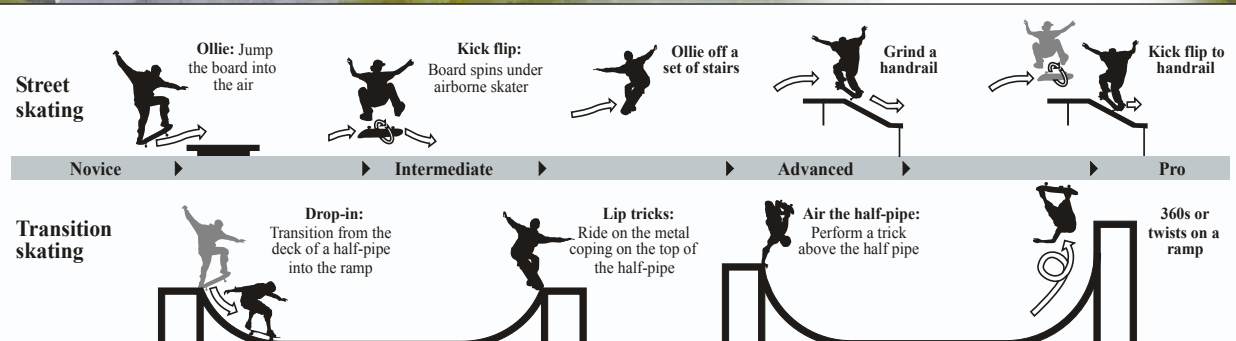
## Styles learn a different set of tricks

Skateboarders learn to balance and turn on flat ground. But once the flat land is mastered, street skaters and transition skaters seek different terrain. A look at the two styles of skating:

### Fundamentals:

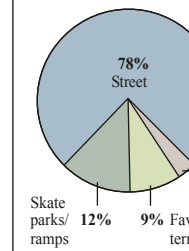


Sources: Kerry Getz, Rob Dyrdek



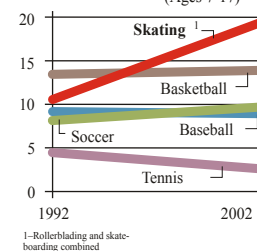
### Most skate in the street

Where youth skateboard: (Ages 7-17)



### A growing demographic

Annual youth participants, in millions: (Ages 7-17)



## Pro street skaters pick

We asked Rob Dyrdek and X-games street skating gold-medalist Kerry Getz to identify today's top skaters, skate spots and videos.

**Their picks:**

### Top skate videos

**Getz:** On video series: DC Shoes  
On video: The DC video: Photosynthesis  
: Alien Workshop  
Sorry: Flip video

**The DC Video**

### Dyrdek:

Yeah right: Girl skateboards  
The DC video: DC Shoes  
Dying to Live: Zero Skateboards  
411 Video series: 411 video magazine

### Skaters

**Getz:** Mark Appleyard  
Stefan Janoski  
Danny Garcia  
Bastien Salabanzi  
P.J. Ladd

### Dyrdek:

Eric Koston  
Guy Mariano  
Paul Rodriguez  
Josh Kalis  
Anthony Van Engelen

**Josh Kalis**

### Skate cities

**Getz:** Barcelona  
Miami  
Philadelphia  
San Francisco  
Atlanta

### Dyrdek:

Los Angeles  
Barcelona  
Philadelphia  
San Francisco

**Philly's contentious Love Park**