

Local youth brainstorm during Monday evening's skate park meeting at the rec center. According to recreation director Gary Scott, the design is up to the kids who will utilize the park.

Daily Leader photo/Jessica Crawford

Ten years ago, group of teens got skate park at Mary Frame Park built, they're back to help with new skate center in Light Park

By JESSICA CRAWFORD

- Daily Leader

Without the option of skating in parking lots or down streets and sidewalks, local kids that partake in this particular hobby need a place to go where no one is going to ask them to leave. The intent behind a meeting at the rec center Monday evening was to provide one more place where skateboarding and roller blading is welcomed.

Ten years ago, a group of local teenagers got together with the common goal of building a skate park in Liberal. The boys went door to door in order to get signatures on a petition that was then presented to the city commission. The result? The skate park in Mary Frame Park.

These young men are now adults. They were in attendance at Monday evening's meeting to help a new batch of teenagers build another skate park – in Light Park. However, the most recent park has already been approved by the city commission.

"The hardest thing I remember was getting everybody to get on the same side as we were," said Shane Hodges of the process 10 years ago.



"They thought we were a bunch of bad kids doing bad things. They didn't understand that we had our own hobbies instead of playing football or baseball."

Ike Brown of the former committee explained the challenges of the project the boys had 10 years ago as he addressed the new group of teenagers.

"The first thing we had to do is get all of our plans together and we had to make a petition up to take to the city commission," Brown said. "You don't have to do that now – it's already been approved."

That was going door to door and have everyone sign the petition agreeing with us.

"The next hardest thing was finding a location, doing the renovations on it and getting all the layout and finding out how to build that stuff, that was tough," he continued. "There were a lot of people that showed up there at the end and really showed their support. So it was really just trying to get everybody on the same page."

Tony Abeyta echoed Brown's sentiments of the process. He stated he was proud of the park they built ten years ago.

"We just had to work together – parents, kids and city commissioners," Abeyta said. "And we just did it. Now we have something and that's a start."

Recreation Director Gary Scott explained to the young men at the meeting the process of the planning stage and exactly where they were at in that stage.

“We actually put together it and went to the city commission, and the city commission said, ‘Yes, we are interested in improving the looks of Light Park,’” Scott said. “What we have to do is get everyone in the community interested in it. You have to get your parents involved in it too, they have to be helpful.

“The good thing about this is that the city commission has already met, they have already talked about it and they said to go ahead and do it,” he added. “All we have to do is figure out what we want – that is the fun part.”

According to Scott, \$1.2 million has been set aside for the Light Park improvement project. Approximately \$40,000 of that money will be set aside for the skate park. Scott also explained the responsibility to be shouldered by the kids involved in the planning process.

“If we work on this together, you guys really have to pull together and make sure you take care of the place,” he said. “If we build something new, the first question that some of the commissioners will ask is ‘are they going to take care of it?’ So it’s something to think about.”

Scott then presented the young men with paper and colored pencils. He asked them to sketch out what they would want for their park to look like. The adults involved 10 years ago jumped in and helped.

“This is your park, this park is very important,” mayor Joe Denoyer told the meeting attendees. “We want to put in there something you will use. We don’t want to put in something that is just going to sit idle.

“It is going to be in Light Park and will be very visible,” he concluded. “As people drive by, they will be able to see what you can do.”

## Skate park design phase includes local youth's input

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