

# Chandler Park Skatepark

Detroit, MI



## SETTING



Urban

## COST



\$500,000

## SIZE



0.4 acres

## OPEN SINCE

October  
2021

## GRANTEE

Local  
non-profit

# A skatepark designed by and for the neighborhood

## Project Overview

When new soccer fields in Chandler Park were sited elsewhere, a Chandler Park Conservancy board member (and avid skateboarder) saw an opportunity to build a new skatepark on the site.

Early research dispelled doubts as to whether a skatepark would serve the local, predominantly Black community. Today Chandler Park Skatepark serves both neighbors and skaters from the wider region. The beginner-friendly design is welcoming and reflective of the community – an invitation for more local residents to try the sport. The skatepark hosts classes to get young kids – especially girls – skating. What’s more, the life of the space goes beyond skating; young kids interpret the skatepark as a play surface, while others watch as spectators from the perimeter.



PHOTO: CHANDLER PARK CONSERVANCY

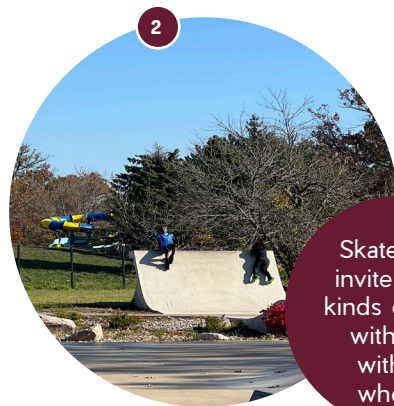


**The skateboard community is really open. Skaters are more than willing to help a younger skater learn a trick or give them some advice. It crosses economic and racial barriers. Everybody is just out there skating.**

ALEX ALLEN  
President and Director of Chandler Park Conservancy & Project Lead



↑ Certain design features make **subtle nods to the character and material palette of the surrounding neighborhood**, like the Chandler sign and the rail equipment, which mimics the roofs of the local neighborhood homes.



Skateparks invite many kinds of play, with and without wheels.

↑ Younger kids interpret the skatepark not only as a skating space, but also as a **playing surface to climb and slide down**.



↑ **Skating classes** introduce local kids, including many girls, to skateboarding and provide them with equipment, ensuring that more kids and families feel welcomed in the skatepark.

PHOTO: CHANDLER PARK CONSERVANCY

# Origin story

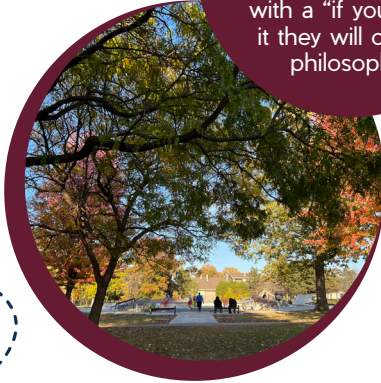
## THE SPARK – GROWING THE DETROIT SKATEPARK NETWORK

At the same time as space opened up in Chandler Park, the City of Detroit was finishing Riverside Skatepark and the city was trying to create more formal spaces for skating. The city encouraged the Chandler Park Conservancy to apply for a Built to Play grant.

Research indicated a presence and popularity of skating within communities of color. The project ran with a “if you build it they will come” philosophy.

## DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION – DESIGNING TO WELCOME ALL SKATERS

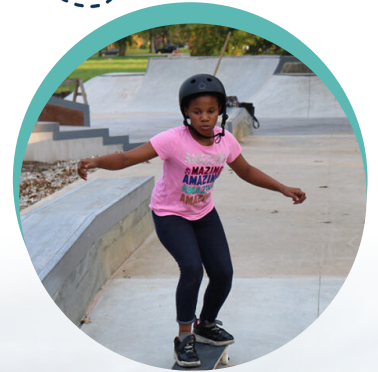
Project stakeholders wanted skatepark design features for beginners or intermediate skaters – they understood that a lot of community members were inexperienced, so they sought to create a space for learning. A location with lots of trees was chosen to soften the space, preventing it from being a fully concrete landscape.



BOTTOM LEFT & BOTTOM RIGHT: CHANDLER PARK CONSERVANCY

## COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION – PUTTING LOCAL NEEDS FIRST

The Conservancy first conducted research to ensure the investment would benefit the local Black community. It tapped into local, Black skateboarding circles and less experienced neighbors’ curiosity about skateboarding. Keviyon Richardson, a local Black skater, became a local advocate for the skatepark and a critical source of input in the design process.



# Lessons learned

1

## OUTCOME

A DIVERSITY OF AGES, BACKGROUNDS, AND SKILL LEVELS HAVE FOUND A PLACE IN CHANDLER PARK SKATEPARK.

→

“You would think the boys pick up on it the quickest. **More girls are dropping in and ollie-ing quicker. We have about a 60:40 boy:girl ratio** in our summer classes run through the Conservancy.”

– Keviyon Richardson

## LESSON

**Do your homework and disprove the skeptics.**

Find the skating community and involve them (and a wider range of community members and park users) in the process. Design spaces for different types of users (skill level but also for spectators and kids to engage in free play.)

2

## OUTCOME

THE NEIGHBORHOOD IS REPRESENTED IN THE DESIGN OF THE SKATEPARK.

→

“**We wanted something that reflected the community.** The colors also mimic the brick we have in the community.... The Chandler sign in the skatepark has become an iconic part of it, skaters like to take photos jumping over it.”

– Alex Allen

## LESSON

**Find subtle and direct ways to reflect the community in the skatepark design.**

Not all skateparks are the same – there is room for functional and aesthetic choices that can make the skatepark feel like part of the neighborhood.

3

## OUTCOME

CHANDLER PARK SKATEPARK HAS NURTURED A SUPPORTIVE SKATING COMMUNITY.

→

“It’s important for kids to see others who look like them. **It would be amazing if I grew up in a space like this.** We try to engage the kids over here, sometimes with people from outside the neighborhood.”

– Keviyon Richardson

## LESSON

**Actively program the space to ensure it is serving the community.**

Sustained funding for equipment rentals and programs like skating lessons is essential to welcoming new skaters into the fold and ensuring local representation. New skateparks should also set an informal tone for learning; many visiting skaters to Chandler Park actively teach local kids and lend extra skateboards, with the leadership of advocates and regular visitors like Richardson.