

Teens excited that bmx/skate park is coming to Aurora

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By Marie Wilson

When Carlos Olivares and his friends go bmx biking, they make a day out of it, driving from Aurora to St. Charles to shred Olivares' favorite bmx park.

"We'd stay for six hours off a Snickers and a Monster," Olivares, a 16-year-old junior at East Aurora High School, said.

But come mid-November, he and other Aurora bmx bikers and skateboarders can tear up a new place in town while staying off the streets. That's because after six and a half years of discussion and planning, the City of Aurora broke ground Wednesday on bmx biking and skateboarding areas at Phillips Park.

"Man, I'm going to be carving this up every day as much as I can," said Kris Torres, a 17-year-old skateboarder and East Aurora High School junior. "We really need somewhere where we can do our own thing. A little sanctuary."

A youth task force generated the skate and bmx park idea in 2004. A grant of \$400,000 from the Illinois Open Space Land Acquisition Development program and third ward funds are paying for the two separate areas designed to allow skateboarders and bikers the freedom to freestyle, Alderman Stephanie Kifowit said.

The courses will be constructed between the sledding hill and the softball fields north of the family aquatic center parking lot off Howell Avenue.

Skateboarders will have 4,000 square feet of concrete ramps, vertical ledges and grinding areas to skate on, while bmx bikers can shred 3,000 square feet with a wide variety of terrain, said Tod Stanton, president of Design Perspectives, a Naperville-based parks and recreation design firm that laid out the skate and bmx parks.

"This really allows them to have a lot of independence of skating and having fun with their peers," Stanton said.

The skate and bmx park is the latest in a string of improvements to Phillips Park, Dan Anderson, the city's superintendent of parks and recreation, said.

Softball fields already have been improved, and the city added a splash pad water area. A dog park, resurfacing of a walking trail and addition of a volleyball court are also planned, Anderson said.

"I think it's going to be great with the skate park and the bmx park and other improvements to the park, it's going to be quite a transformation of the park in general," Mayor Tom Weisner said.

Local skateboarders and bmx bikers say they are counting down the days until the new areas open.

"It's pretty sweet to know that they're finally going to do it," Olivares said.