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City of Perris Seeks Community Input on City Skate Spots



PERRIS, Calif. (July 2, 2019) -- The City of Perris hosted a community event to generate input from the local skateboarding community on July 1, 2019 at Paragon Park.

The Perris Community Services Department offered free pizza, drinks and various swag items for members of the Perris skateboarding community to take a short survey for "skate spot designs" in future city park developments.

The survey was intended to poll the community on how many skateboarders reside in Perris, how often they skate in Perris parks and to see what types of skating combinations the community might like to see.

Ivan Lopez, a regular skater of the Paragon Park skating community, was happy to see it was more than just pizza and some prizes.

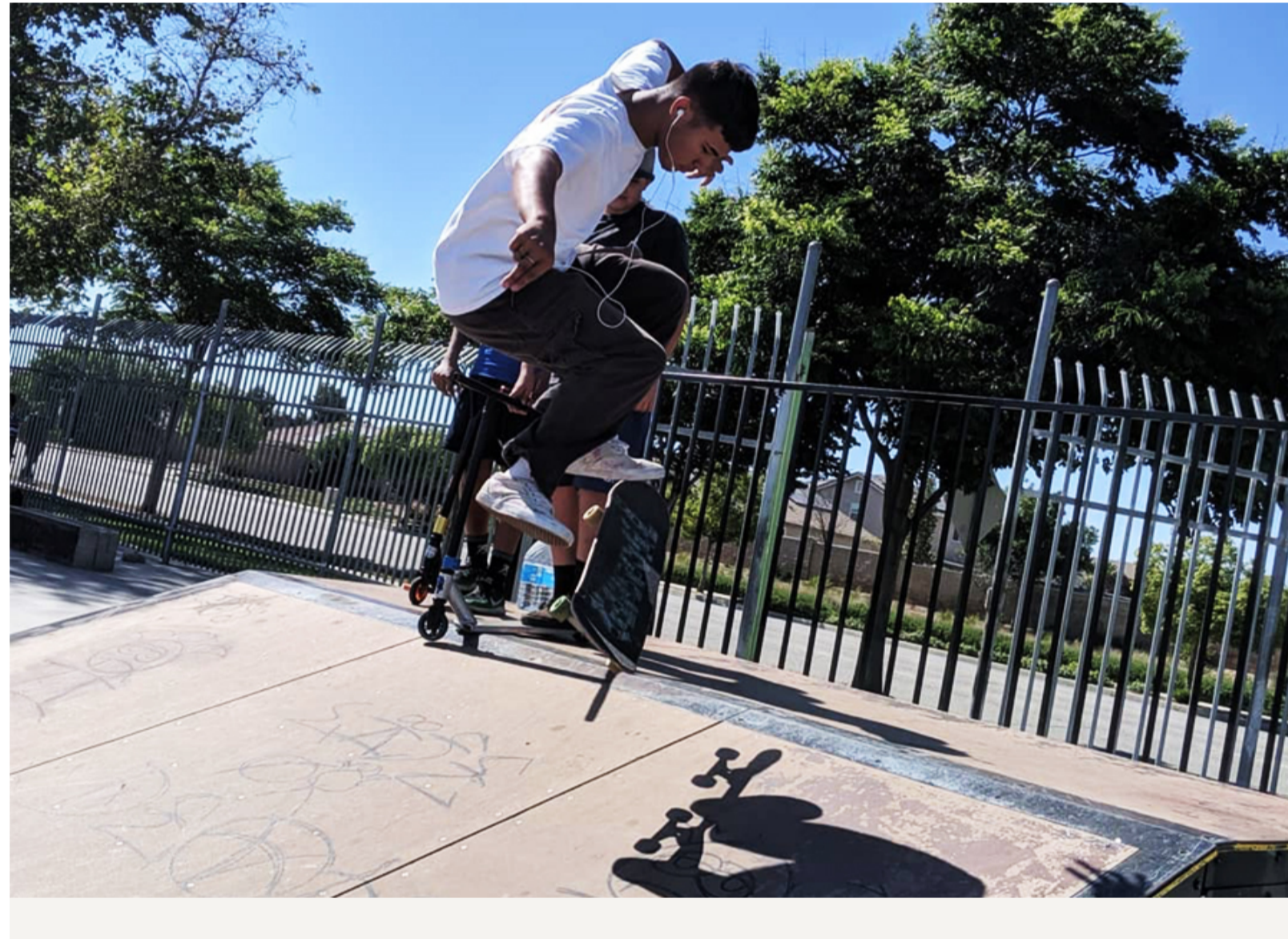


"A lot of us came to just get pizza, but when we saw, 'oh cool, our voice is actually heard here,' then we all started to come together and discuss it and put our input down together as one voice," said Lopez.

This is a strong first step in a process set to serve the skateboarding community, which is often looked at as misfits. While stereotypes exist, Perris Community Services staff and the skateboarding community are working together to change those perceptions.

Perris Community Services Director Sabrina Chavez and her staff believe they can help the skateboarders, but the skateboarders can help the staff as well.

"A lot of these skateboarders are out here every day and some of them may even have a future in skateboarding," said Chavez. "This is a good source of input for our future park development designs, and by providing these types of services, we can give the community a sense of ownership."

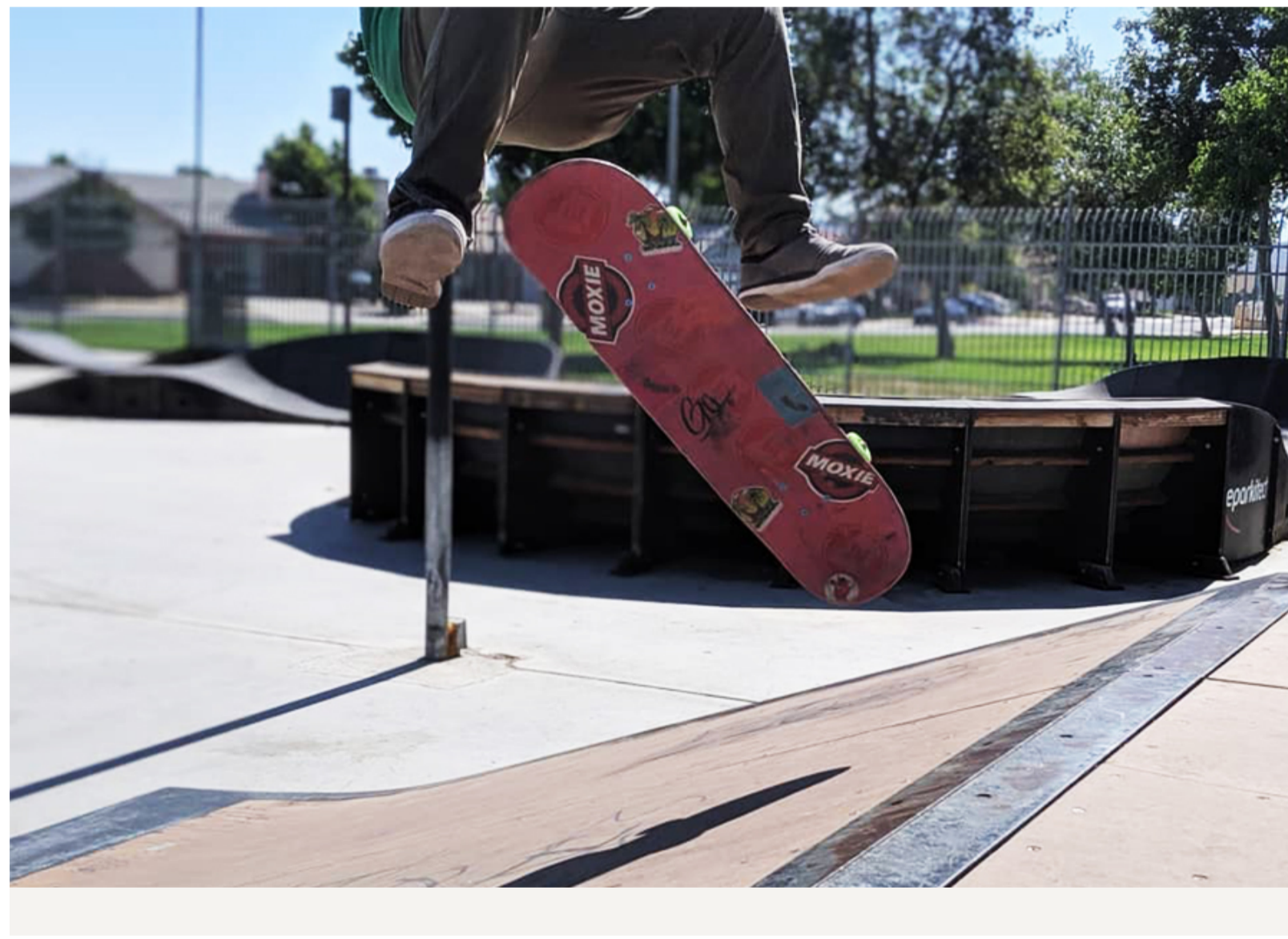


Robert Perkins, who skates daily at Paragon Park, talked about how important the skate park has been to the community.

"Skateboarding here has kept many of us out of gangs and away from violence," said Perkins. "We are all a family here. A lot of us have messed up backgrounds, but when you come out to the skate park, you forget about all that and just skate and have fun."

Perkins and Lopez represent a community that is often frowned upon. However, skateboarding popularity is rapidly increasing and hopefully, those perceptions are changing. In 2020, Skateboarding will make its debut at the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo. According to skaterreview.com, the average age of skateboarders is between 13 and 14 and they participate in the sport on average 50.8 days in the year. 90% of skateboarders are male and 60% are under 15 years of age.

The National Parks and Recreation Association has also declared that skateparks are a win-win: they provide a safe space for skateboarders and help protect property of local government and businesses. The Tony Hawk foundation would agree and has publicly stated, "Nuisance skateboarding is simply a reflection of an unmet recreational need."



Skateboarding also promotes an active lifestyle, no matter the age. As part of the Live Well Perris Campaign, skateboarding goes well with the underlying theme of the program. Having a place for the youth to skate gets them out and about and staying active.

And finally, well-designed skateparks can provide an economic benefit. A good skatepark can bring in skaters from neighboring cities, as the resilient community is always looking for new terrain. This can bring in traffic to local businesses and restaurants from skateboarders and their parents alike, and stimulate the local economy.

Perkins says these are traits the kids learn and take into adulthood.



"There's a lot of bad criticisms about skaters being this or that and that's just not right," said Perkins. "We've got kids out here who didn't give up trying to learn how to do a heel-flip down a six-stair, and that helps them learn not to give up in school."

While the survey was simplistic in practice, in principle it has long-term benefits. It sends a message to the skateboarding community that their voice is important, and it can make a difference. It also tells the community that the City wants to help change some of those negative perceptions. It's because of the community at Paragon Park that now other skate spots may be possible in the City of Perris.

Said Perkins, "This skate park means a lot to us and we want to make the community better. It's nice to see the City recognize that."

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