



Clyde Carmant

## OUR PURPOSE & THE PARK

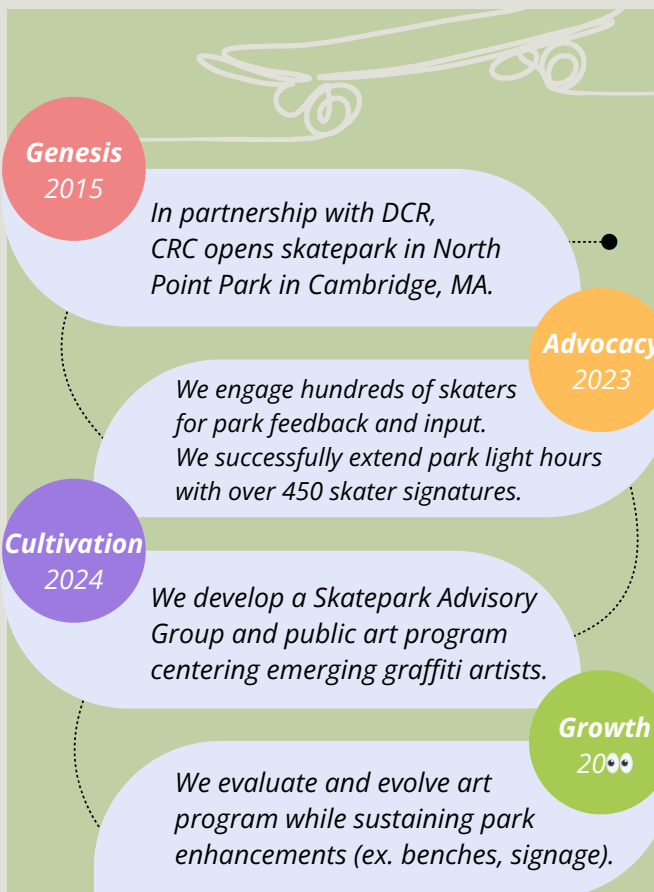
The Charles River Conservancy (CRC) has a longstanding commitment to improving parks that serve all members of our community. By investing in public spaces like the Lynch Family Skatepark (LFS)—the largest skatepark on the East Coast—we fight for **spatial justice** by advocating for inclusive park experiences and providing a safe and engaging space for skaters of all ages and abilities. Designed as a “wheel-friendly” park, LFS is a dedicated public setting built for skateboarders, roller skaters, inline skaters, BMX riders, and more, of all levels.

## WHY IS CRC INVOLVED?

While “park” often conjures images of trees and grass, a park can also be shaped by concrete, ramps, and the ever-changing landscape of graffiti art. As advocates for Charles River-adjacent parks like LFS, we believe in the power of parks to be a **place for all** to gather. Historically, skaters have not always felt welcome or allowed in typical park areas. Our response is to meet the physical and emotional needs of this underserved and diverse community.

**We aim to co-create an Artist-in-Residence Program to support the engaged community and reinforce the park’s value as a desirable, safe, and inclusive place for skaters, artists, and creatives alike.**

## OUR JOURNEY



# THE VISION

## A Community Co-Design Process

The CRC is launching a public art project designed to strengthen the physical and social infrastructure of the Lynch Family Skatepark. Spatial justice means centering the needs of users by creating inclusive environments where skaters of all backgrounds feel welcome and safe. We also seek to be grounded in the experience of skaters who are deeply committed to the practice and the park.

The CRC commits to a co-design process with the skatepark community when addressing transformation of treasured **third spaces** through the lens of public art.

## We can harness the power of expression through public art and graffiti to support and articulate spatial justice efforts to shape park care and inclusion.

### Skatepark Advisory Group

Enabled by the CRC, a skatepark advisory group **designed and led by skaters, artists, and art administrators** puts form to the investment that skaters are already making in the park. We seek a balance of community voices, lived experiences, and professional arts knowledge to ensure the group feels the most representative of the skate community and tuned into local public arts processes. We value representation from folks who identify as BIPOC, queer, women, transgender, non-binary and/or disabled.

a diverse  
composition



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### Artist-in-Residence Program

We aim to launch an Artist-in-Residence program at the skatepark. By issuing an open call, we can reach a broader audience of **emerging graffiti artists**, ensuring wider access. Having an open process offers intuitive ways to bring members of the skate community into the work. The outreach serves as a public way to engage folks about what's to come.

The Skatepark Advisory Group will consult closely with CRC for the selection of the Artist-in-Residence. We anticipate working with one artist every 6-8 months on site-specific work that develops community relationships and serves as an extension of the CRC's advocacy and support, as the artist becomes a liaison for ongoing skatepark community feedback to the CRC.

The Skatepark Advisory Group will be deeply embedded in the CRC's evaluation process to identify early insights, apply learnings, and iterate on improvements to enrich the Artist-in-Residence program.



*"When it's us here you know, this is our good little area. Yeah. Good vibes, good vibes supporting each other." —LFS skater*

# REALITY CHECK: STUDIES & DATA

## CRC Leads Skate Community Engagement



### Public Art Forum Series 2022-2023

- 3 community forums hosted by CRC
- 75 skatepark users engaged
- 95 participant responses

Forums created space for users to voice preferences for change, discuss place-based inequities, and develop a selection strategy for impactful artwork that represents the community which designed it.



### Social Justice Skate Jam 2022

- 132 participant responses

This community engagement kick-off centered skatepark users and their feedback. The CRC partnered with the Cambridge Hip-Hop Collective, Community Art Center, LonelyBones Skate Co., and the Chill Foundation to join a dialogue on park advocacy and cultivate ideas about how public art can be used as a conduit for social and spatial resilience.

### CRC in partnership with public art consultancy Agency:

Together we spoke with a mixed-skillset group of skaters in 2023 with intention to learn about their park experience and how might we meet their needs.

## Agency Leads Listening Sessions

In a commitment to community listening, we employed public art consultants to visit the park on multiple occasions to gather input and derive top community priorities.

### 28 conversations with park users:

- 4 first-timers
- 8 women, trans, non-binary users
- 124 wheels: bikers, skateboarders, roller/inline skaters, scooter riders

### 11 interviews with artists & art admins:

- 3 graffiti artists
- 10 BIPOC artists
- 2 artists who skate



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*“Open the space and tell people, like you are welcome here, you can be here, this is your space, come and use it.” —LFS skater*

# ARTIST CRITERIA

Skaters desire artists that represent them

Connection to LFS

An artist with a relationship to the space can connect to the unique, local value of this park.

Connection to skating

An artist with skate experience can forge authentic connections to the skating community.

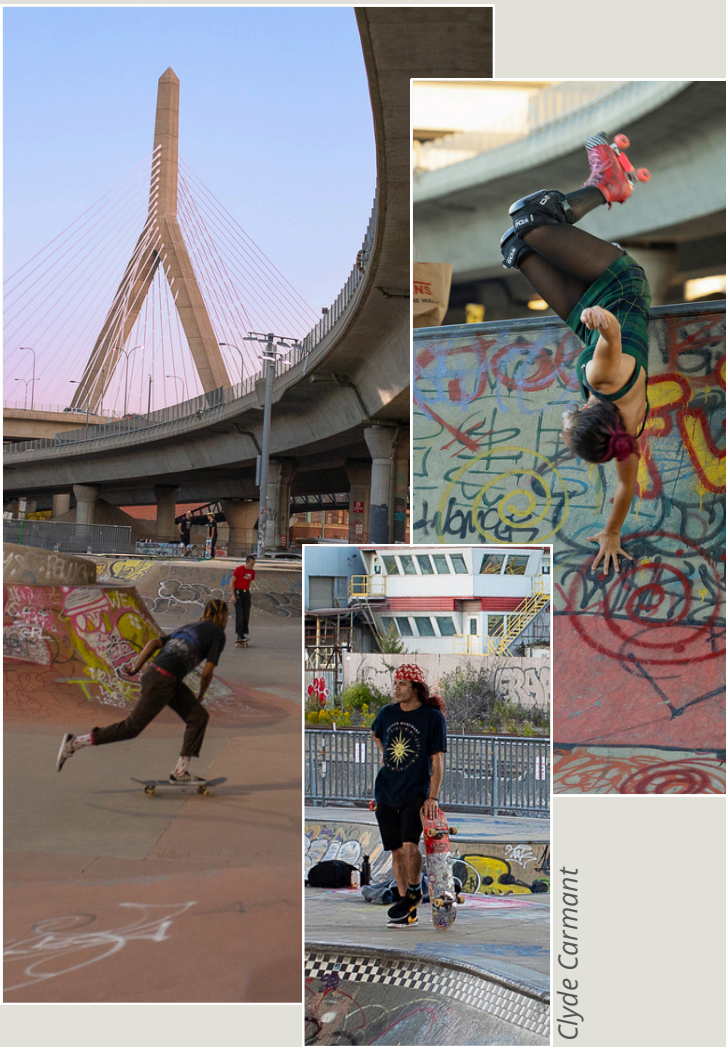
Intentional practice

Art made with intention and a growing practice mirrors skaters' appreciation for self-improvement.

Folx with marginalized identities

Non cis-het male identifying skaters face challenges feeling welcome. Skaters want to uplift diverse identities and experiences.

Emerging graffiti artist



With regards to the goals of **spatial justice, social resilience, and equity**, we see a need for intentional support and representation of **women, queer, BIPOC, non-binary, transgender and adaptive skaters** at the park. While some needs are in direct response to the dominant culture of skateboarding and how it manifests in the skatepark, we also see a need for the folks to feel celebrated and encouraged to stay.



We are guided by the experiences of skatepark users shaped by their:



## IDENTITY

Skaters whose sense of belonging at the park is challenged by the dominant identities and culture around skateboarding



## SKILL

Skaters who are beginners navigating how to access to the space safely and confidently



## COMMITMENT

Skaters who are committed to skating and value the skatepark offerings for their growth and practice

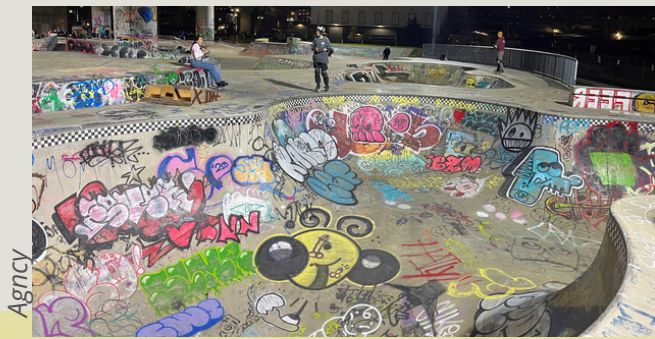


## INVESTMENT

Skaters who routinely skate at the skatepark and are actively invested in its future



“...it’s a little bit **intimidating** to, like, interrupt [the space], but especially I was like a relatively new person and also like a woman and also a skater, a roller skater, not like a skateboarder.” —LFS skater



Agency

The intentionality of the work is key. Visual artwork created with purpose and creativity that honors the people at the park and the existing work is paramount.

## ENVISIONED ART TYPES

### Graffiti

Graffiti and skating feel connected because of the emphasis on **individuality** and **personal style, self-expression** and **creativity**, and **energy** and **street culture**.

- makes the park feel lived in
- amplifies a sense of ownership
- functionally advantageous by helping with depth perception and visual spotting

### Case Study: Graffiti Alley, Cambridge, MA



@graffitalleycambridge

As one of just two legal spray painting walls in Massachusetts, Graffiti Alley is a prominent, active graffiti free wall that invites artists (and spectators) to participate. No registration is necessary, and the alley is accessible everyday at (practically) all hours.

### Free Walls

A free wall is an opportunity for artists to **practice, grow, and learn** from more experienced artists. A **mix of skill levels** enriches these spaces. CRC commits to:

- promote sanctioned free walls and spaces, ensuring that users won't be punished
- support artists and upkeep of the spaces
- communicate norms and expectations

### Case Study: Dumpster, Lynch Family Skatepark



Landmarks like this painted dumpster are prime exhibits of art longevity within a free space. The mutual respect between artists and skaters allows the graffiti piece to "breathe" for well over a year, establishing this work as a semi-permanent, iconic fixture in the park.

## CRITERIA: OPTIMAL ART LOCATIONS

### SKATER WISHLIST

- ✓ Visibility while skating
- ✓ Functional for skating
- ✓ Meaningful skater space

### ARTIST WISHLIST

- ✓ Safe to install
- ✓ Accessible to all skill levels
- ✓ High viewer visibility



# SKATEPARK ART TIMELINE

**Spring-Summer 2024**

**Establish Skatepark Advisory Group** to actively inform decision-making in future programming and public graffiti art.

**Fall 2024**

**Host a kickoff event** at the skatepark to announce the Artist-in-Residence Program, focusing on graffiti artistry and gathering community feedback.

**Early 2025**

**Onboard the artist**, refine artmaking and other expectations, ensure artwork will meet standards of the community, meet insurance and permitting standards, and align with community programming.

**Summer 2025**

**Celebrate and commemorate** the public graffiti artwork with an event at the skatepark to recognize the project's spectrum of community partners and financial supporters.

**Summer 2024 - Early 2025**

**Secure permits with DCR and define policies for Free Walls** to support emerging artists and self-expression under shared community norms and expectations without fear of law enforcement.

**Winter 2024**

**Develop and release call for Artist-in-Residence Program** in close collaboration with the advisory group, prioritizing emerging and non-cis/het artists with a connection to the skatepark community.

**Spring-Fall 2025**

**Support the artist** with resources and creative autonomy to create multiple new artworks, build on existing artworks, and serve as a liaison for ongoing skatepark community feedback to the CRC.

**2025-2030**

**Evaluate and evolve program** by applying continuous feedback to understand the best path for ongoing and sustained impact, and to inform future needs in maintenance and programming.



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