

Voice News

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Impromptu BMX park bulldozed by city

by **Daniel DeBolt**
Mountain View Voice Staff

In the name of safety and to protect itself from lawsuits, the city took a bulldozer last week to the result of years of work by local youths: The informal BMX park known as "Creek Trails," located in plain sight of the Stevens Creek Trail at Central Avenue.

The dirt bicycle track had been there for at least 20 years, its large jumps and berms built and rebuilt by daring bicyclists, usually teens, with the intention of getting airborne on their bikes.

It may not have been the first time the area faced a bulldozer, but it was no doubt a bummer for many.

"Friday was a sad day for me," wrote [Jeral Poskey](#) in a post on the Voice's Town Square forum. "As I rode my bike to work along the Stevens Creek Trail, I witnessed bulldozers flattening the dirt bike recreation area. This area was always inspiring to me. I don't know the full history, but it appeared to be homemade by determined kids."

Poskey said it seemed like an unfortunate thing to happen as the city tries to figure out how to build a teen center. In response, others commented about how American society has become overly litigious; that there was nothing for kids to do anymore; and some wondered if it meant the city would finally build an official BMX park -- an idea that has been on hold for years.

City attorney Michael Martello owned up to having "Creek Trails" removed. Although he said it was an easy decision to make intellectually, his sentiments were also with the BMX riders.

"This comes under the heading of one of the times where you hate to be an adult," Martello said.

Martello said his decision came out of discussions about liability and safety. Unless such jumps are city approved and maintained to city certified design, the city is highly exposed to a lawsuit if someone gets hurt.

Martello pointed to an \$8 million claim filed with the city of San Jose by the father of a 16-year-old who paralyzed himself at Calabazas BMX park in San Jose. The action prompted San Jose to bulldoze the informal park and put in a certified set of jumps at a cost of \$800,000.

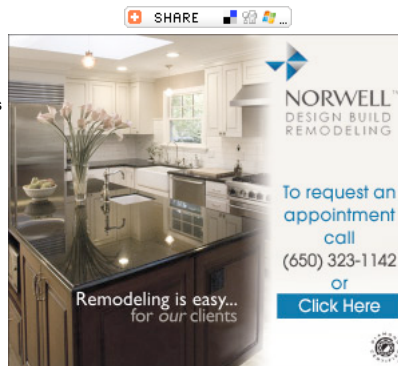
The increasing prevalence of "certified" BMX parks has reportedly made it easier to sue cities if someone is injured at an informal park, especially if it can be proved that the city was aware of the existence of uncertified jumps. In San Jose, the most damning evidence was a shed the city had built at Calabazas for riders to store shovels and other track-building tools.

"When you ask the city attorney about it, there is really only one answer the city attorney can give," Martello said.

There is hope for the city's dirt bicyclists, however. The city has already budgeted \$60,000 for an official BMX park that would likely have broader appeal to both novice and highly skilled BMX and mountain bike riders. The city has even selected a site for the park: a long slice of land which sits between a levy at Shoreline Park and Google's Crittenden Lane Campus under a set of PG&E power poles.

The City Council, however, has not moved the project forward for several years. Martello said the project, which was originally envisioned to cost only \$60,000 -- to simply dump dirt and have volunteers build a track -- is likely to be significantly more expensive if the jumps have to be designed and certified for safety.

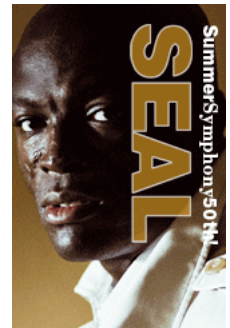
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Comments

Posted by Shannon, a resident of the Martens-Carmelita neighborhood, 7 hours ago

Too bad about this BMX park. The problem isn't the park, it's our "litigious society." It's too bad we can't do something about the litigious society and leave the bike paths alone!

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Posted by Paul, a resident of the Shoreline West neighborhood, 6 hours ago

The reasons to bulldoze the BMX park were no less valid years ago. I don't see what has really changed. I'd rather let kids be kids than lawyers be lawyers.

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Posted by Dade, a resident of the Shoreline West neighborhood, 5 hours ago

The BMX track was not only a threat to the city for law suits, but it was a real danger to the many users of the Stevens Creek Trail and the people who used the BMX track. I have seen many close calls there.

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Posted by FormerBMXer, a resident of the Waverly Park neighborhood, 4 hours ago

So, we took away another group of kids relatively benign form of entertainment. Looks like we'll have a few dozen new kids ready to be lured into the local gangs so that they'll have something to do.

We can't keep taking away without giving something back! The new BMX park sounds great, except it is out where nobody by seniors live. Who is going to use up all their energy riding out to that and then being too tired to do the jumps and then having to ride back home?

How about building it at the Cuesta Park Annex? Yeah, I know, that will go over like a lead balloon.

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Posted by Bmxr, a resident of the Old Mountain View neighborhood, 4 hours ago

A danger to creek riders your kidding right??? That park has been there 20 plus years way before the creek trail. Too many close calls what about all the new idiots on the trail. Talk about real danger, half of them can't ride and have no clue about general rules on a bike trail.

It's a sad day for what used to be a quite little spot for kids to go hang out and be kids on their bikes. Guess there were too many close calls for "some" people.

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Posted by Minda Torres, a resident of another community, 3 hours ago

I don't see the BMX track being anymore of a hazard than people on the trail. All too often I have had close calls with parents and children riding on the trail itself. Often parents don't teach their children the proper etiquette for trail riding, especially when the children are on bicycles-- some take up the trail 2, 3 abreast and refuse to move to the right for passing bicyclists. I see kids on bikes, off the trail as less of a hazard than those on the trail.

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Posted by Bill, a resident of the Jackson Park neighborhood, 2 hours ago

So you take away the park. Then try to build them a new one, so by the time you get it together, they will be adults. Well done! Oh buy the way I saw a pebble on the path, maybe you should tear out the path before someone kills them self.

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Posted by richard cranium, a resident of the Old Mountain View neighborhood, 2 hours ago

better remove the fountain at city hall...a small child might drown

better remove the trees and flowers on Castro street, someone may sneeze from the pollen and get into an accident.

better close all the parks, a rabid squirrel might attack someone.....

better yet...let's just shoot the lawyers...problem solved.....

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Posted by localmom, a resident of the Cuesta Park neighborhood, 1 hour ago

This is pathetic. The city of MV does less than nothing for its youth. It actually runs bulldozers over the one dirt bike park in a town of 70,000 without any public hearing, hoping no one will notice! If you don't have tons of money and a BMW SUV, your kid is stuck at home getting obese watching pizza commercials if they live in MV. They can't even convince the seniors to let them play a little ping pong with them or do some crafts. What a sad state of affairs. MV spends nearly \$90 million per year on it's overpaid fire, police, and city staff, and repaving perfectly good streets without spending a DIME on kids or families, collected from HUGE property taxes from residents AND Google---we have GOOGLE folks! AND MICROSOFT! These are companies any city in America would die for. And yet not one of them even sponsors a softball team. Or donates money to the schools in a meaningful way. Or has named a park after themselves, opened a ball field, or how about a skate park! These companies, and many of the tax payers of MV, can see the problems in front of them and yet no one does anything. The mayor and city council needs to be turned out on its ear and the entire legal department shrunk down to almost nothing. That would save plenty of money, FINALLY allowing the construction of a Youth Center, Skate park, and Bike track.

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