



Project Summary: Saratoga Springs Bike Park

A bike park in the City of Saratoga Springs would improve the quality of life of the community as an activity that promotes health and wellness to all ages, contributing to economic development, ensuring social equity and protecting parks and open space.

A bike park is an outdoor recreation facility with terrain sculpted for having fun on bikes while developing skills. This one will include a paved pump track with berms and rollers, uniquely designed that will help beginners build skills and confidence, while allowing experts to challenge themselves. The bike park will also include a skills training area with prefabricated features, a Flow Zone to practice jumping skills, and a Dual Slalom Course for more advanced riding. An urban bike park becomes a hub for neighborhood youth and bike enthusiasts. Similar to a skate park, a bike park does not require much space, which makes for an ideal recreation activity within city limits.

There are many benefits of a mountain bike park, including but not limited to:

- An inclusive opportunity to participate in a fast-growing sport
- Additional safe space for the community
- Contributions to the physical and mental wellness of our community

The sport of mountain biking is growing

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, families have sought out recreational activities that are safe and healthy for their children. Cycling is one of the sports that has thrived during the pandemic. Mountain biking's growth in 2020 was extraordinary. According to the market research company NPD Group, sales of front-suspension mountain bikes [were up 150 percent last spring](#); and they predict that the mountain biking market [will grow by 10 percent worldwide](#) in the next 5 years.

In the space of 2 months alone, Saratoga Shredders (Saratoga mountain biking program for girls, ages 5-12) enrollment grew from 20 to over 200 girls, and from 5 to more than 60 volunteer female mentors!

Our goal is for mountain biking to be accessible and inclusive.

Many families do not have the means to bring their child to a practice or to a trailhead. Saratoga Bike Park would provide an area within the city limits, close to a school, where kids can gather and enjoy another free recreation opportunity in the downtown Saratoga area. Bike parks can help reach a demographic that isn't as easily reached on the mountain bike trails. You can have a really inexpensive bike and still be a superstar at the bike park. There are also more families and younger kids who would use the space.



Kids need more opportunities for outside play

Bike parks can help get kids active and are alternative ways for play. 1 in 3 children are obese in the US and the American Pediatric Association recommends 60 minutes of exercise daily per child. Bicycle play spaces are magnets for youth and provide exercise opportunities.

In addition to the physical benefits that come from cycling, there are proven mental health benefits to outdoor exercise and the mental health of young adults has never been as dangerous as it is currently. In December 2021, the [United States surgeon general warned](#) that young people are facing devastating mental health effects as a result of the challenges experienced by their generation, including the pandemic. Emergency room visits for suicide attempts rose 51% for adolescent girls in early 2021 compared to 2019, and 4% for boys. These girls and boys need outdoor activities that will keep them off of social media and into activities that promote their social, emotional and physical well-being. The Saratoga Bike Park will be that space for at-risk teenagers.

The Saratoga Springs Recreation Department's mission is **to create fun, safe, affordable activities**, and to enrich the community's quality of life through outstanding recreation programs, resources, and facilities for all individuals. One of the key findings from the city's 2019 recreation assessment was to "continue to develop and connect trails and infrastructure for walking and biking throughout the city." This newly created bike park would be fun, safe, affordable and would develop bike trails--all part of the key findings.

Economic Incentive

Biking is a fast growing outdoor industry. The creation of more mountain biking and biking opportunities will lead to more people playing here, working here, living here. Most mountain bikers travel to bike and spend money in those communities. (Survey by singletracks.com of 1,400 bikers).

Mountain biking is being used all across the US in towns to diversify and improve their economies, but also attract and retain young, skilled workers by improving quality of life. Communities are recognizing the value in trails. Trails are now seen as the 21st century version of ball fields. Saratoga has several different bike trail systems and can become a hub for locals and tourists alike.



The Bike Park will need about 2-2.5 acres of space (including ~0.5 acres for the pump track) on public land near the city center and close to schools and the downtown area.

The Park ultimately would become the property of the town and be operated and maintained by the Parks and Recreation Department.

Total budget for Bike Park, including design and build: ~\$400k, including paved pump track (~\$250k)

Timeline: Approved, designed and funded January - August 2022; construction started by October 2022

Conclusion:

A bike park would improve the quality of life of the community as an activity that promotes health and wellness to all ages, contributing to economic development, ensuring social equity and protecting parks and open space. Let's raise the money to make the Saratoga Bike Park a reality not just for the 5 year old girls who shred but for our whole community.

Photo of similar pump track to proposed Saratoga Pump Track project, with permission from Berkshire Bike Park initiative:





Links to Saratoga Shredders in the News:

[Saratoga Today](#) - August 2020

[Adirondack Sports & Fitness](#) - November 2020

[CBS6 Albany TV](#) - May 2021

[Schenectady Daily Gazette](#) - June 2021