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07 / Ruby Hill, Denver, CO: Free jibs! Get your ice-cold jibs! Photo Ed Herbold.

08 / Pat Milberry, back home with a back five tail grab at the Buff. Raging Buffalo, IL. Photo Ed Herbold.

Olympics or Bust

A real estate developer based out of Kelowna, BC, Mark Consiglio has more than terrain parks on his mind. He is building a self-contained resort community called Kelowna Mountain on the outskirts of the rapidly growing city. But his plans contain a snowboarding component. "That bank should be at least six feet high, and we want a flat spot right over here," he says, directing a contractor as machinery drones through the alpine. Summer grooming is underway for the Kelowna Mountain Terrain Park, an integral part of this new development.

Consiglio hands the phone off to Nagano gold medalist Ross Rebagliati, his director of ski and snowboard operations. While it will still be a year or two before their newly acquired quad chair is hauling riders up the slope, Rebagliati is confident Kelowna Mountain will be an important addition to the Kelowna snowboard community. "Just imagine how much better the local kids could be if they could ride every day," he says. With a focus on training for "Olympic disciplines," Rebagliati's vision for Kelowna Mountain incorporates snowboarding into the mainstream sporting world: families with Olympic hopefuls will have a place to settle down and allow young Johnny Shred to develop his switch 9s. And while it is officially a private development, the hope is that snowboard camps will be offered as public after-school programs. Snowboarding is part of the mainstream at Kelowna Mountain, riding parks alongside a golf course, a private wakeboarding lake and idyllic condo living. It is part of a structured program that encourages parents to incorporate snowboarding into their children's after-school activities—mainstream recreation in the truest sense.

Shredding for the Masses

For five weeks in early 2007, Holme created the first-ever free, publicly funded, community terrain park by importing snowmaking equipment, a few boxes and a Piston Bully to a popular sledding spot known as Ruby Hill in industrial Denver, CO. Far from producing gold medalists, Ruby Hill aims to generate new snowboarders. "At the end of the day, the reason I wanted to do it was because I wanted to get kids involved that didn't have the chance," Holme says. "If there's one kid who says, 'You know what? There's this little place in Denver where I got hooked, and I made it a priority to get out and ride,' I'll be stoked. I see it as a way to grow the sport." And, at its core, that is what community terrain is all about: growing the sport by providing access to snowboarding for a more diverse demographic. By building low-key features, park builders can safely introduce people to the joys of riding and get them stoked before they even set foot in the mountains.

But community parks aren't just about beginner terrain—they're also about access for the more experienced rider. "The [Ruby Hill] setup is pretty solid, yet mellow, Denver's Pat Milberry says. "It caters to a wide range of shreds, both experienced and beginners."

Although Capita rider Dustin Craven travels the world to snowboard, he can still be found at COP on a regular basis. "It's nice to have something so close that you can go for an hour and it's not a big deal," Craven says. "It's kinda like having a skate park." Riders can go for a quick couple laps during their coffee break on any given day without breaking the bank, an opportunity that wouldn't be available if they had to drive to the resort. If they get lucky and it snows in the city, they might even wind up slashing the lip of a powdery quarterpipe after chemistry class.

With a concerted effort to garner municipal funding, the possibilities for parks based on the Ruby Hill model are endless. "This is so easy to do," Holme says. "Why don't a lot of places do it?"

In Fact, Ruby is not the only municipally operated snowboard facility. The Theodore Wirth Snowboard Park in Minneapolis is entering its fourth season of business, offering rope-tow-accessed urban riding for \$10 per day. With a three-part contest series, lessons and an official "development team" sponsored by the USA Snowboard Association, Minneapolis is solidly behind snowboarding. Reporting 800 percent user growth over the past season, and with plans for further expansion, the potential for community parks is firmly on display at Theodore Wirth—affordable riding in the city augmenting the ability to develop competitive snowboarders as notable community athletes, the same as basketball, tennis, hockey or any other sport performed on civic property.

Much like skateboarding, snowboarding in community settings has, until now, often been an illegal activity opposed by businesses and rent-a-cops. But, if the recent explosion of municipally funded skate parks is any indication, potential exists to get communities involved. Snowboarding already has the upper hand—and a picture of three smiling Americans on the Olympic podium certainly hasn't hurt.

All we need is more people like Bob Holme and the Winter Park crew to get the snowball rolling.

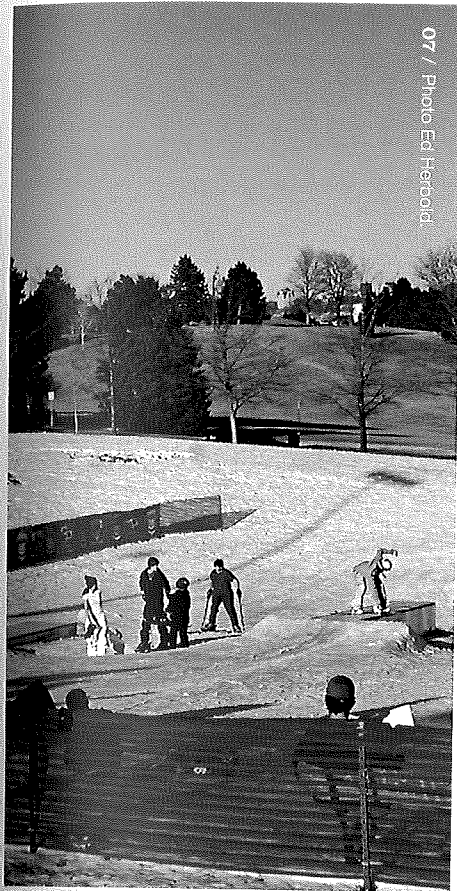
If You Build It, They Will Come

As snowboarding searches for ways to reach new participants, community terrain parks appear to be the future. Smaller, affordable, park-only operations are growing closer to town with developments like Ruby Hill, Theodore Wirth Snowboard Park, and Kelowna Mountain complementing long-established, community-friendly shred zones like COP and Raging Buffalo. If snowboarding is going to continue to grow and attract new participants, accessibility is essential. By incorporating snowboarding terrain into the municipal recreation budget in Denver and Minneapolis, the first steps have been taken to bring riding to the people. Where it goes from here is up to the rest of the snowboarding world. Providing a venue for a new demographic is the future challenge for snowboarding—and building community parks is the answer.

Let's see if snowboarding can surpass scootering in popularity. **▲**

Youth Outreach

Although reduced-fee snowboarding in the city is an important step in getting more people involved with the sport, sometimes folks need a bit of extra support. Thankfully, a number of organizations are taking initiative to help those in need. Perhaps the farthest-reaching of these is Burton's Chill Program, which provides gear, transport and lessons for more than 2,500 inner-city youth each year. Serving another 2,500 kids is SOS Outreach, based in Colorado, which works with youth outreach centers throughout the American West to integrate social skills development with five days of riding and some free gear. On a more grassroots level is Free Ride Inc., a California nonprofit that accepts donated gear and distributes it to kids in need. All of these organizations, and numerous others across the continent, rely on volunteer help. If you have some free time to share your love of snowboarding check out www.chill.org, www.sosoutreach.org, and www.myspace.com/myfreerideus, respectively, or go to the youth outreach center nearest you to find out how you can get involved.



“Imagine how much better the local kids could be if they could ride every day.”

Ross Rebagliati,
Kelowna Mountain

