

# PORTSMOUTH

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Photography:  
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# HIGH ON LIFE



*John Flynn: Frontside  
Ollie Over the Hip*

**Dropping In On Portsmouth's New  
Skatepark That Delivers Outdoor Fun  
For All Ages**

**ARTICLE BY ANN KATHRYN KELLY |  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY IAN DAVIS**

There's something about skateparks that broadcasts a young-at-heart vibe. Skateparks tick off the boxes for skills, thrills, and the ultimate chill—bringing together all ages for outdoor fun that's good for the body and the mind.



Cody Sullivan: Monty Grind

“We’re standing on the shoulders of those before us who fought for this. From day one, this has been a wellness project.”

Portsmouth’s new, state-of-the-art skatepark opened in December 2023 after more than two years of planning, fundraising, and construction. Local skateboarders looking to drop in and carve their next bowl or kick-flip a six-set will find a variety of challenging elements, complete with stadium lighting that extends enjoyment into the evening hours. While designed specifically for skateboarding, the Portsmouth Skatepark—located at 305 Greenland Road—also welcomes scooters, inline and roller skating fans, BMX bikers, and, of course, spectators.

“It’s packed whenever I drive by,” Dave Cosgrove, Co-chair of the Skatepark Blue Ribbon Committee, says. “There’s always activity, including diehard skateboarders I saw shoveling snow in the winter.” He chuckles, adding: “Not a surprise. We’re hardy New England riders.”

Steady traffic speaks volumes to why this park is essential for the community. “It’s about much

more than skateboarding,” Cosgrove continues. “People realized, especially during the pandemic, how important outdoor recreation spaces are for everyone’s health. From day one, this has been a wellness project.”

Blue Ribbon Committee member Chris Rice agrees. “There’s nothing better for mental health than physical activity.” Rice and Cosgrove both grew up skateboarding and share a love for the sport. “There’s a strong sense of mentorship,” Rice explains. “We all want to see each other improve and, most importantly, have fun. It’s common to find experienced skaters offering pointers to new riders or celebrating when someone lands a trick. The energy is inclusive.”

The Portsmouth Skatepark was decades in the making, though earlier locations—sanctioned and unsanctioned—were available through the years. Greenleaf Rec Center, built in the 1990s, was an option for a time but was outdated and with limited access. Rye Airfield

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Top: Cody Vaillant: Frontside Nose Grind  
Bottom: Jesse Court: Melon Grab



was another option until it closed. And then there was everyone's favorite underground "Sh!t Park" behind the Button Factory, nicknamed that because it was a last resort: just a patch of broken concrete, some homemade ramps, and an illegal gathering place from the start. Portsmouth police tolerated it because it kept skateboarders away from the pedestrian-heavy downtown, but when redevelopment began for what is now West End Yards, skateboarders found themselves once again without a home.

Amy-Mae Court's son Jesse was among the crew of local skateboarders being shuffled around. "Jesse has been skateboarding since age five," Court points out. "When Rye Airfield closed, that was a big loss for the community. Our kids want—and deserve—a dedicated place to practice their sport. The time had come to stop pushing them to the outskirts."

That's why, three years ago, Portsmouth High School students Oliver Sieve and Seamus Durkin approached Portsmouth City Councilor Esther Kennedy with a request to fund improvements for Greenleaf Rec Center. Kennedy brought it to the Mayor, who suggested a committee. Enter Cosgrove and Court as co-chairs, along with Rice, Todd Henley from Portsmouth Recreation Department, Peter Rice from Portsmouth Department of Public Works, and additional committee members, each bringing their experience and connections to the table. The group determined a better and longer-term solution would be to build a modern skatepark versus putting a band-aid on Greenleaf.

"Oliver and Seamus kicked it off," says Cosgrove, "but all of us stand on the shoulders of those before us who fought for this skatepark for many years. It's a testament to what is possible when we come together as a city."



“Skateboarding teaches those who take it up how to be resilient, empathetic, and helpful. Etched somewhere within all those falls is the blueprint to their success.”



*Dave Cosgrove, Amy-Mae Court, and Chris Rice*

The committee worked with local schools and students, businesses, and through community meetings to educate people on the upsides of having a skatepark free and accessible to all ages. Awareness and fundraising campaigns were vital in securing enthusiastic community buy-in. A Battle of the Bands fundraiser at the Community Campus brought in performers from across New Hampshire. Another time, Portsmouth High School students designed skateboards sold at a fundraising event. Middle school students drew and colored a banner of paper skateboards for a 3S Artspace fundraiser. It served double duty as the ribbon cut at the Grand Opening.

Cosgrove, Rice, and Court agree that skateboarding teaches those who take it up how to be resilient, empathetic, and helpful. “Skateboarders,” Court explains, “know that it

will take days, weeks, sometimes months of falling before landing a trick. Yet, they keep falling and keep trying because they know that etched somewhere within all those falls is the blueprint to their success.”

The skatepark is an ideal fresh-air alternative to the couch or screen time and gets a big thumbs up from Court’s son, Jesse. “It’s now the place where we can reunite with old friends and make new ones,” he says. “I think it will spark passion for skateboarding with future generations.”

While a draw for Seacoast residents, visitors also come from Massachusetts, northern New Hampshire—even as far as Quebec, Canada—with the park welcoming everyone, from tots learning to scooter to teen skaters practicing with mentors, adults reliving their glory days on boards, and spectators cheering tricks.

**Portsmouth Skatepark hours:**  
May to October: Dawn - 10:00 pm  
November to April: Dawn - 9:00 pm