

My name is Tony Altar, I've been skateboarding since 1961, have competed nationally in tournaments, am a charter member of the DC Wheels Skateboard Team & Charity organization, and a member of the Skatepark Design Workgroup for Montgomery County.

I am here to advocate for you to find a place in our budget for one project, the Wheaton Action Sports Park. It brings at least two sets of values to our county.

The first benefits are for the County itself. Once completed, the Action Park will be a jewel in the Wheaton area. It will be a relatively low-cost facility to build *and* to maintain. It will increase the value of homes within a large radius around the park and eventually, revenues from property taxes. It will attract families, business owners, and home builders to the area, because recreation and the community that it creates are valued by all of them. It will be a go-to location for all kinds of community events. Have you, the Council, calculated the expected additional revenue and cost savings to the county over coming decades from building this park?

The second benefits are for individuals and families. The Action Park will be more than just a recreational space — it will be a creative hub, a community center for jogging, exercising, biking, roller-blading, and other sports including skateboarding. It will be a safe haven that promotes self-expression and connections between diverse ethnic and economic populations.

[It is far safer than basketball, evidenced by my own comparisons, and those of Tony Hawk's organization, [The Skatepark Project](#).]

Skateboarding at a well-designed park creates a sense of purpose and belonging. A place to call home for abandoned kids and adults from our area. It creates a community that is passionate about health.

Kids including those in Wheaton are increasingly grappling with anxiety and depression, fueled by social media excess, socioeconomic barriers and few places to go when the sun shines. As a result, they spend less time outdoors and in physical activities. This contributes to childhood obesity and mental health concerns. My wife, Kristin Altar, the first Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner hired in our County, sees young patients from this area. She knows that skateboarding and sports in general improve mental health and social interactions between kids who might otherwise be marginalized.

Have you, the Council, calculated in dollars the long-term cost versus income benefit of the Action Park? Can you propose suitable alternatives for kids and families in the Wheaton area? If not, I believe the council should re-address the Wheaton Action park. Appropriate the budget that will pay far greater financial and personal gains for many years to come.

