

THE  
**SARIS**  
FOUNDATION

A Guide to  
Creating  
Community Bike  
Parks



# Introduction

**Community bike parks** are gaining in popularity, and for good reason. In stark contrast to previous generations, today's kids and young adults spend dramatically less time outdoors, and hours each day on screens and devices. In fact, adolescents' screen time doubled during the corona virus pandemic – but there is a shortage of safe, fun, and accessible places for kids, especially those who are middle-school aged, to enjoy spending time outdoors.

Children's physical health indicators and involvement in sports have declined at staggering rates. The prevalence of childhood obesity has increased to 15.4% of all kids. Only 12% of kids get enough recommended daily physical activity. Over half of children aged 13 to 18 spend more than 7 hours per day on screens. **Bike parks solve these problems** by providing safe, self-contained spaces for exciting and engaging cycling experiences for all kids.



Chris and Sara Fortune, CEO and VP of Saris  
Founders, Saris Bike Parks for Kids Foundation

## WHO WE ARE

We envision a world where every kid has a safe and energizing place to ride a bike. We are the Saris Bike Parks for Kids Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to investing in bike parks.

Our founders, Chris and Sara Fortune, are foster parents, humanitarian volunteers and business leaders. We are inspired by their commitment to transforming the lives of children and giving in ways that impact their future in meaningful ways.

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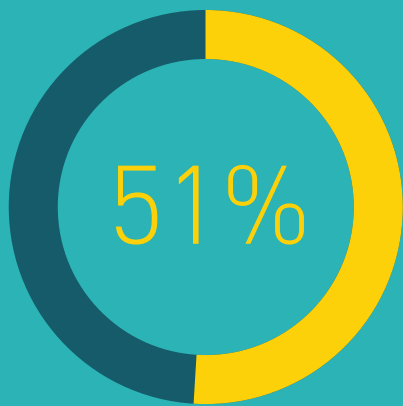
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# Are the Kids OK?

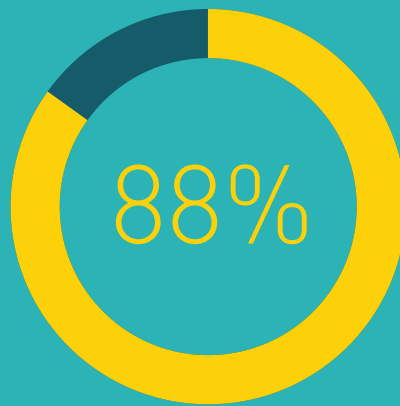
INCREASED SCREEN TIME AND DEPRESSION



LACK OF SAFE AND ENGAGING OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES



OF CHILDREN AGED 15+  
SPEND MORE THAN  
7 HOURS A DAY ON  
SCREENS



OF KIDS AGE 13-15 DO NOT  
REACH RECOMMENDED DAILY  
LEVELS OF PHYSICAL  
ACTIVITY



OF ELEMENTARY AGED  
CHILDREN DO NOT  
KNOW HOW TO RIDE A  
BIKE

## The Power of Bicycles

Biking gets children off the couch and moving. It instills confidence, helps moderate emotion, improves focus and concentration, and combats obesity, depression, and mental disorders. Riding bikes at a bike park can help children work through these issues and improve quality of life.

# RIDING BIKE PARKS

**+** **BUILD**  
resiliency and  
self-confidence

**+** **ENGAGEMENT**  
for kids of all ages

**+** **FUN**  
and safe places  
to ride

**+** **BRAIN**  
and motor skill  
development

## Types of Bike Parks

Like playgrounds and skateparks, bike parks are compact, purpose-built spaces that are welcoming and provide a fun, adrenaline-inducing outdoor activity. They have rideable features like rollers, berms, ramps, obstacles and trails, that offer a challenge for riders of many skill levels. Bike parks can incorporate perfectly into public parks, playgrounds, lots and community centers.



Photographed by Mike Repyak, IMBA Trail Solutions

**+** **ADRENALINE-FUELED**  
alternatives to screens

**+** **COMMUNITY**  
building connections

**+** **EXCITING**  
outlets for older youth

**+** **MENTAL**  
and physical health  
and wellbeing



**LINEAR** – a naturally surfaced trail with skills development features, co-located alongside a paved path, that ranges from approximately 100 - 1,500 feet in length.



**POCKET** – a small standalone park, or one that's near a linear facility or within an existing park that caters to multiple ability levels, with a paved, natural, or gravel surface. Its size can be anywhere from 0.25 to one acre.



**PUMP TRACK** – a pump track is a small standalone park with definitive rolling slopes on an oval or circular paved track. Its size can be anywhere from 0.25 to one acre.



**NEIGHBORHOOD** – a facility with a series of rideable features that is contained within a larger community park area and focused on riding experiences for many ability levels. Its size can be anywhere from one to 15 acres.

## LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION:

✓ Neighborhood centered

✓ Safe and energizing

✓ Free and public

✓ Shovel-ready

✓ Small and compact

✓ Accessible by foot or transit



# The Path to a Bike Park

There isn't "one way" to build a bike park, and each project has its own process.

## HERE ARE THE STEPS ALL PROJECTS SHARE:



### VISIONING:

Dream big and think in phases. Imagine all the features and amenities that your project should include, including maintenance and operations. Do your research to see what types of bike parks there are and seek input from all stakeholders to create a vision that fits your community.



### ASSEMBLING THE TEAM:

Committed supporters from private and public groups must come together. Invite parents, businesspeople, park and recreation leaders, engineers, government leaders, city planners, community members, youth organization representatives, and bike park design experts to be on your bike park team.



## SELECTING THE SITE:

Be intentional and collaborative with the site selection process. Think outside the box as you identify priority locations and research them with the help of city or county representatives. Considerations for sites include: access and connectivity, the amount of space needed, costs, location, and suitability.



## BIDDING AND DESIGNING:

Select a qualified bike park builder through a bidding process. They will help your team put pen to paper to flesh out exactly how your bike park will look and ensure your design fits your vision, budget, and site.



## BUILDING:

This is when the vision of your team comes to life! Invite community members to participate as appropriate, so the creation of the park belongs to everyone it will benefit.



## ACTIVATING:

Programming makes a bike park a hub of activity that brings a community together. Create programs and activities that appeal to all ages to ensure long term engagement. Have plans in place for operations, maintenance, and emergency response.



## MEASURING:

Evaluate the success of your bike park through surveys, input, and attendance data. The greatest measure of success for your bike park is the number of kids it impacts positively.



## MAKE THIS AN ONGOING ACTIVITY:

Fundraising, public support and advocate: Most bike parks are funded by a mix of sources including businesses, individuals, governments, grant-making organizations, private donations, and associations. Compile a list of potential partners and make the ask.



*“Bike parks are a micro ecosystem when done right. They cultivate and grow the riding community in many ways and all skill levels. They can even sprout new interest in on-lookers, growing them into riders. It’s more than just jumps and turns. It can be a life changing place for all ages!”*

*–Jeremy Witek, Global Action Sports Solutions, Trail Builder*

# Groundbreaking Bike Parks

One size does not need to fit all. A bike park project can be designed to fit into any space with any budget. They can be uniquely challenging to create but the effort pays off in huge dividends for kids, families and communities.



## BIG MARSH BIKE PARK Chicago, IL

Nature and bikes come together in this 13-acre space that's collaboratively managed by the Friends of Big Marsh, the Chicago Park District, and volunteers. The bike park, formerly an industrial site, opened in 2016, with a one-mile single track loop, 3 BMX jump lines, and a pump track.

[www.bigmarsh.org](http://www.bigmarsh.org)

[www.chicagoparksdistrict.com](http://www.chicagoparksdistrict.com)





Photo courtesy IMBA



## GRAND RAPIDS BIKE PARK Grand Rapids, MI

The community of Grand Rapids spoke up and asked for a bike facility on land that was formerly used for baseball and softball fields. This park features a singletrack mountain bike trail, intermediate and advanced pump tracks, a tot track for 2-5-year-olds, a bike playground, and a skills loop near downtown.  
[www.friendsofgrparks.org](http://www.friendsofgrparks.org)  
[www.wmmba.org](http://www.wmmba.org)



## PHILLY PUMPTRACK Philadelphia, PA

The Philly Pumptrack is a thriving urban family bike park that opened in 2014 after four years of behind-the-scenes surveys, design, consensus building, and fundraising. It's volunteer-run and supported primarily through donations, with seasonal part-time staff provided by the Philadelphia Parks and Recreation Department.  
[www.phillypumptrack.org](http://www.phillypumptrack.org)

# Care & Feeding

## AFTER YOUR BIKE PARK IS BUILT

The Saris Foundation encourages all grant applicants to look beyond the day their bike park is open for freestyling and plan for its long-term success and growth. Programming is what brings bike parks to life and ensures their long-term success.

Next steps in the evolution of a bike park includes partnering with local schools, businesses, and youth programs to establish free learn-to-ride programming and earn-a-bike activities; to host bike rodeos and safety clinics; to coordinate fundraising events to cover ongoing maintenance; to add amenities like lighting, restrooms, and storage; and to mobilize volunteer groups to provide clinics and host events.



Photographed by Mike Repyak, IMBA Trail Solutions

# The Saris Foundation

We envision a world where every kid has a safe and energizing place to ride a bike. The Foundation gives grants, provides resources and planning assistance, and helps YOU champion a bike park in your community.

Our grant program will amplify your bike park project. We consider requests from individuals, nonprofit organizations, and municipal agencies. Your project must be:

- A private/public partnership with matching funds and support by its host community
- Built on public land (For example, an existing park land that has fee-free access.)
- In a neighborhood-centric location providing easy access for kids, families and schools wherever possible
- Designed for multiple skill levels and must include moderately challenging features
- Named in recognition of the grant: "The Saris Bike Park at (location name)"

## GRANTS

## RESOURCES

We have curated a useful resource database to help you with the following:

- Sample bike park types, plans, costs, and descriptions
- Proven great partners
- Trail builders' contact information
- Programming experts' contact information
- Other potential funding sources
- Tips for creating public awareness

If we don't have the information you need, we will get you in touch with a source that does.

This is a no-drop ride. You can count on us every step of the way to help get your project up and running. We help with:

- Project planning guides and assistance
- Fundraising event assistance
- Public awareness campaigns
- Scripts for speaking to city officials and donors
- Templates for letters of support and thank you's
- Meaningful programming plans

## ENGAGEMENT

## ABOUT SARIS

Saris, founded in 1989, is a Wisconsin-based company that makes products to help people live and move through the world by bike, believing that bikes connect us to our world.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Saris Foundation extends its appreciation to the many individuals who contributed to this how-to guide. We thank them for their time and insight.

We thank them.



**SARIS**  
FOUNDATION

BIKE PARKS FOR KIDS

We are a 501 (c) 3 nonprofit organization dedicated to investing in bike parks and envision a world where every child has a safe and energizing place to ride a bike. We make grants to individuals and publicly supported organizations so they can bring a bike park to their community.

Special thanks to all those who contributed to this project:

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