

Building Burton Park

By [Julia Phillips](#)

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A mob gathered in Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky on April 27. Its participants were young, wearing bright colors, refreshing the Internet connection on their cell phones constantly — it was nearly 1:13 p.m. Moscow time, and 13 days of online voting were about to end in one flashing announcement. Petropavlovsk's snowboarders and skiers were about to find out if they would get their park.

Yuma LLC, snowboard manufacturer Burton's official distributor in Russia, had announced a countrywide contest that would reward 13 cities with new snow parks. Seven cities, including St. Petersburg, Novosibirsk, and Krasnoyarsk, had been the sites of Burton snow park construction last year and were already holding competitions for their local winter sports fans. Now, 26 other spots in Russia were in the running for the next season's build. Petropavlovsk was up against cities like Vladivostok, Ufa, and Kazan, which contain populations many times the size of the entire Kamchatka region.

Petropavlovsk's youth set to work. The phrase "Burton Park" was on the tip of everyone's tongue. Social networking sites lit up with links and images dedicated to drumming up more

votes. Petropavlovsk had to be in the top 13 spots to win a park; for days, it slid up and down the rankings, hitting second place, then falling out of prize consideration. The crowd on that April evening was dreading a last-minute upset.

The polls closed and everyone began to scream. Their city finished in sixth place — only a few thousand votes behind Kazan, which has 1,100,000 residents to Petropavlovsk's 200,000. After two weeks of online activism, the crowd of athletes was ready to rejoice. Kamchatka will be getting its snow park.

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