

Des Moines regional skate park is becoming 'a reality'

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The long-awaited Des Moines regional skate park is becoming "a reality" following a \$1 million contribution by Nix and Virginia Lauridsen of Des Moines.

The park will be named "Lauridsen Skatepark" in honor of Nix, a local businessman, and Virginia, a professor at Simpson College.

"This is a great project that's going to bring great things to Des Moines," Nix Lauridsen said Wednesday during the naming ceremony at Wells Fargo Arena. "I'm happy to be able to help with this."



(Photo: Special to the Register)

For more than a decade, skaters, musicians and creative types have pushed an idea they believe will pump new, young energy into Des Moines' Principal Riverwalk — a 65,000-square-foot, world-class, one-of-a-kind skate park.

The idea was originally proposed to the city nearly 14 years ago by AMOS, a Mid-Iowa Organizing Strategy, after the group met with families across the area and asked them what was needed for local young people. Since then, members of the group have worked to keep the project alive.

However, fundraising has been a struggle, particularly with overcoming stereotypes and educating people on skate parks, according to local skaters.

But with the \$1 million donation, the project now has the \$3.5 million needed for construction. Work is expected to begin within a year.

During the ceremony on Wednesday, Mayor Frank Cownie emphasized the economic development opportunities the skate park will bring, particularly with the increase in visitors and tourism it's expected to generate.

Organizers estimate 40,000 visits from skaters each year.

"It will be a place to have competition and bring people from all over the county for this specific purpose," Cownie said. "It's going to become a reality."

The fundraising group for the park plans to raise an additional \$225,000 for ongoing maintenance costs.

Polk County will assume liability for any injury incurred on the property within the first five years. The city will assume liability after that.

[The Polk County Board of Supervisors voted to manage construction](#) of the skate park, which will be located adjacent to the Rotary Riverwalk Park between 2nd Avenue and the Des Moines River. Two acres of land have been donated by the city of Des Moines for the project. The skate park would be one of the largest in the country.