

Business Record

Lauridsens' \$1M Donation Lifts Skate Park Campaign

BY PERRY BEEMAN, Managing Editor

Wednesday, April 4, 2018

Greater Des Moines benefactors Nix and Virginia Lauridsen — who a year ago donated \$1 million to help overhaul the headquarters of the Des Moines Metro Opera — have given the same amount toward the planned \$3.5 million riverfront attraction to be named Lauridsen Skate Park.

This has committee co-chairs Brad Anderson, Christine Hensley and Angela Connolly saying they are certain that this quality-of-life project important to attracting and keeping workers — not to mention entertaining us all — is going to happen after more than a decade of talk.

It was Anderson who was talking to Kevin Jones, owner of the East Village's Subsect Skate Shop, and asked him how the drive was going, and who was fundraising. Jones basically said he was running the show, and plugging away. Anderson, who is a veteran political operative and fundraiser, offered to bring in the heavy artillery — Hensley and Connolly and others — and to set up a firm fundraising plan and schedule.

Now the cash is coming in from multiple sources and the \$3.5 million should be in hand by September for the park, which would be north of the Women of Achievement Bridge on the west bank of the Des Moines River. "If we don't have it done by then, it won't happen, but we will," Hensley said. "We have a lot of momentum."

The project is seen as one piece of another wave of development along the Principal Riverwalk, which could include an adventure park and whitewater course south of the skatepark and a private development in the Argonne Armory Building north of City Hall and the Brenton Skating Plaza on the east side of the river.

"It's a quality-of-life issue," Hensley said in an interview before today's news conference. "A city has to have a diverse array of activities."

Added Connolly: "A kid can get a \$100 board and enjoy it all day." Some even use the boards for transportation, she noted.

Connolly said parking will be available at Wells Fargo Arena when there are no events. Others may park on the east side of the river and walk across the pedestrian bridge.



Hensley says the fundraising tally already is around \$2.5 million, and more was coming in as today's announcement on the riverbank approached. The city and Polk County are playing roles, there are plans

for a maintenance fund, and the location — on the west bank of the Des Moines River — is close to both the Rotary Riverwalk Park with its large fishing pole playground structure and the proposed whitewater course at the Center Street dam site. All of that would be visible from the Women of Achievement Bridge over the river.

There is even talk of rock climbing and zip-lining in the area.

“The skatepark is going to give the water trail a real activity,” said Connolly, who had a big hand in the work behind the creation of nearby Wells Fargo Arena. “This is the linchpin. We want it to be an adventure park.”



The Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines' Leadership Circle gave \$500,000, with the caveat that people stop talking about building anything less than the full \$3.5 million, 65,000-square-foot version that has been laid out by California Skateparks. The park would feature a 300-foot downhill snake run, and various bowls and pools designed to please everyone from tournament competitors to novices. Admission would be free.

Des Moines donated the land, and Polk County got involved because it can accept in-kind services and the city can't. The city will maintain the park, which will be built without tax money.

The skatepark was originally proposed after **AMOS, or A Mid-Iowa Organizing Strategy**, found that local families wanted a large, well-developed skatepark. For years, skateboarders had made the multilevel Nollen Plaza, which now is the one-level Cowles Commons, into an ad hoc skatepark. At times, they turned the Crusoe Umbrella sculpture into a skateboard ramp, which was frowned upon by many, including police.

“If you don't have a skatepark, your city becomes a skatepark,” Connolly said, “They want somewhere to go.”

Hensley said the new development would be a center for the sport. There is talk of skateboarding legend Tony Hawk and funmeisters Red Bull being involved in some way. And some are discussing creating art on the surface of the skateboard park.

DONORS

\$1 million

Lauridsen Family Foundation ? Nix and Virginia Lauridsen

\$500,000+

Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines Leadership Circle ? Catalyst Grant

\$100,000+

Bankers Trust and the Ruan Foundation
Gartner Family Fund



McAninch Corp.? Doug McAninch
MidAmerican Energy
Wells Fargo

\$50,000+

Heart of America
\$25,000+
Cultivating Compassion: The Dr. Richard Deming Foundation
EMC Insurance
Dave and Trudy Holman Hurd Fund
William. C. Knapp
Lohse Family Foundation
Shazam
Voss Distributing

\$10,000+

American Enterprise Group
Des Moines Register/Gannett Foundation
Sehgal Foundation
Farmboy
Greater Des Moines Partnership
Hubbell Realty
Iowa State Bank
Susan and Carl Voss

\$5,000+

Susan and Jake Christensen
Dickey and Campbell Law Firm PLC
Jann Freed and John Fisher
Friends of Des Moines Parks
Janice Hill
Robert Sand
Jaey and Brenda Sedlacek Family Charitable Trust in honor of Aidan and Bode Conlan

Norm and Danielle Sterzenbach
Storey-Kenworthy Foundation for Giving
Subsect Skateshop
United Way of Central Iowa

Committee members:

Honorary chairs:

Dr. Richard Deming
Jill and Mark Oman

Co-chairs

Brad Anderson
Angela Connolly
Christine Hensley

Cabinet members:

Jay Byers
Greg Edwards
Paula Feltner
Jann Freed
Liz Hall
Jann Hill
Kevin Jones
Matt Lundberg
Marty Martin
Tom Miller (ReMax)
Johnny Moller

Sgt. Lori Neely
Gerry Neugent
Rob Sand
Norm Sterzenbach
Tiffany Tauscheck
Paul Turner
Carl Voss
Chris Whalen
Consultant: Connie Isaacson