



A Brief History of the Des Moines Regional Skatepark (Lauridsen Skatepark)

In the summer of 2004, Mid-Iowa Organizing Strategy (AMOS) organizers met with the Grace United Methodist Church Youth Group members. As the young people discussed their ideas and concerns for their city, a theme emerged: Kids who weren't involved in organized sports needed more recreational opportunities. A skatepark was at the top of their list.

An AMOS team conducted research and reported that although there were a few skateboarding structures sprinkled outside of Des Moines, the capital city didn't have a dedicated skatepark. After visiting skateparks around the country, the youth asked, "Why couldn't Des Moines build a centrally located, top-notch skatepark?" They brought this question to a meeting with Mayor Frank Cownie and Don Tripp, Des Moines Parks and Recreation director. Mayor Cownie supported the idea but suggested the youth and AMOS would have to work to make it happen. Soon, Grace Methodist hosted a meeting for skateboarders and parents to talk about the idea for a skatepark and to gather support.

At an AMOS rally at Plymouth Congregational Church in October 2004, the skateboarders and their supporters told the crowd of over 200 about their plan for a skatepark and asked AMOS and City Councilpersons Christine Hensley and Chris Coleman if they would support it. They all answered, "Yes!"

Then the real work began, which included monthly meetings with a group of skateboarders and supportive adults, and regular meetings with Parks and Rec staff. The original plan included the small "skate zones or plazas" in neighborhood parks, plus a large regional park to be centrally located. The Four-Mile Skatepark in northeast Des Moines was the first one built by the city.

After the floods of 2008, the city had no funds available to build more skateparks, but city land along the west bank of the Des Moines River (north end of the Principal Riverwalk) was offered as a possible site for a regional skatepark. The skatepark committee, with the city's support, decided to raise the money from private sources to build a world-class, top-quality skatepark for all ages and skill levels, a skatepark that would be one of the largest in the U.S.

In 2010, the Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines awarded a \$50,000 grant to underwrite the design for a 65,000-square-foot regional skatepark. California Skateparks created the design in 2012 to much fanfare. The estimated cost of building the skatepark was \$3.5 million. Additionally, the grant provided for a geotechnical survey and soil sampling of the site by Snyder Engineering, and a feasibility study to determine the level of community support by Isaacson Consulting.

In 2015, The Leadership Circle of the Community Foundation awarded a challenge grant of \$500,000, hoping this would spark other contributions. Fundraising and construction preparation appeared to stall until September 2017 when a group of supporters mobilized and formed a skatepark campaign cabinet with the goal of raising the \$3.5 million needed to construct the skatepark. City Councilwoman Christine Hensley, Polk County Supervisor Angela Connelly, nonprofit leader Brad Anderson, and fundraising consultant Connie Isaacson brought together an amazing and respected group of leaders including original committee members, former and current skateboarders, community leaders, and AMOS members.

In early 2018, Nix and Virginia Lauridsen provided a \$1 million leadership gift, allowing the skatepark to be named the Lauridsen Skatepark. The Community Foundation Leadership Circle increased its support to \$600,000, and Prairie Meadows awarded a Legacy Grant of \$400,000. These leadership gifts in combination with donations from more than 250 individuals, corporations and foundations, including 160 online contributions, has allowed the fundraising goal to be met.

More than 4,700 signatures in support of the skatepark have been received online, from members of AMOS congregations and at community events such as the Des Moines Arts Festival, Downtown Des Moines Farmers' Market and Des Moines Social Club.

In September 2018 revised plans for the Lauridsen Skatepark were received from California Skateparks, and the new plans include additions to meet Olympic-level qualifying competitions. Groundbreaking will occur on October 15, with Josh Friedberg, CEO of USA Skateboarding, and Zach Wormhoudt, principal designer of the Lauridsen Skatepark in attendance.

Completion of the Lauridsen Skatepark is expected in 2019. Though most of the original skateboarders—with only a board and a dream 14 years ago - are now well into adulthood, their vision is becoming a reality for many current and future generations to enjoy!

Submitted by Jan Hill, AMOS representative/skateboarder parent, original committee member, and Lauridsen Skatepark Campaign Cabinet member

Original Skatepark Committee, formed in 2004:

Jann Freed, AMOS member
Jan Hill, AMOS member
Kevin Jones, Subsect Skateshop
Paul Turner, AMOS staff
Carl Voss, AMOS member

Skatepark Campaign Cabinet, formed in 2017:

Dr. Richard Deming, Honorary Chair
Jill & Mark Oman, Honorary Chairs
Brad Anderson, Campaign Co-chair, AARP State Director
Angela Connolly, Campaign Co-chair, Polk County Supervisor
Christine Hensley, Campaign Co-chair, Former Des Moines City Council
Jay Byers, Greater Des Moines Partnership
Greg Edwards, Des Moines Convention & Visitors Bureau
Paula Feltner, Attorney
Jann Freed, Consultant and original committee member
Liz Hall, AMOS Staff
Jan Hill, Counselor and original committee member
Kevin Jones, Subsect Skateshop owner, original committee member
Matt Lundberg, NAI Optimum and former skateboarder
Dr. Earl Martin, Drake University
Tom Miller, ReMax and former skateboarder
Johnny Moller, Wilbert Vaults and former skateboarder
Sgt. Lori Neely, Des Moines Police Department
Gerry Neugent, Knapp Properties
Rob Sand, Assistant Iowa Attorney General and former skateboarder
Norm Sterzenbach, GPS Impact and former skateboarder
Tiffany Tauscheck, Greater Des Moines Partnership and former skateboarder
Paul Turner, AMOS staff
Carl Voss, Community activist and original committee member
Chris Whalen, Heart of America Group
Connie Isaacson, Isaacson Consulting, skatepark campaign consultant