

# Group lands \$122,000 grant for effort to build new Dubuque skate park

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Austin Hansen, of De Witt, Iowa, skates at the skate park at McAleece Park and Recreation Complex last year. Local skateboarding enthusiasts hope to raise money to build a new skate park in the city.

Supporters of a new skate park in Dubuque recently received a large grant that puts them more than three-quarters of the way toward their fundraising goal.

However, the \$122,400 grant is contingent on the group meeting a May 1 deadline to raise the remaining money in order for construction to begin this summer.

The money comes from the Parks to People initiative, a state-funded effort to enhance recreational offerings. The Grant Wood Loop, which includes Dubuque, Jackson and Jones counties, is a pilot region for the effort.

The loop's board of directors signed off on the grant, which will be applied to a \$200,000 fundraising goal set by Kids in Dubuque Skate. If the citizen group hits that mark, the City of Dubuque will chip in \$600,000 for the project.

The grant bumps the group's fundraising total to \$151,800. But in order to utilize the Parks to People money, supporters still need to raise about \$50,000.

"We really need the community to step up and help us to finish this community project ... and see something built this summer," said Laura Bies, co-founder of Kids in Dubuque Skate. "It's time to go. We've been talking about this for a long time."

Once the money is in place, city officials can finalize construction plans for the all-concrete skate facility, which would be built in Flora Park. Per terms of the grant, construction must wrap within the calendar year.

The new park — about the size of three high school basketball courts — would provide a centralized, easy-to-find location that's along a city bus line and within walking distance of several schools. It will provide both beginners and experienced skaters a safe, secure place to learn, make new friends and stay healthy, according to supporters and city officials.

The city has skate parks at McAleece Park and at Comiskey Park. But those are too cramped and lack modern features that cater to today's skaters, according to parents and skate park users.

Through the Parks to People initiative, local stakeholders can grab a portion of \$1.9 million in state funding, as long as they can provide a 5-to-1 local match.

"And we think a lot of these (recreational) amenities that have a regional draw will help our communities attract and retain the workforce our businesses and small communities need," said Nicolas Hockenberry, assistant director of the Jackson County Economic Alliance, which is part of the Grant Wood Loop.