

Winter wonderland

Park will have new ice arena and sledding hill

Urbandale and the Greater Des Moines Ice Sports Association helped build the winter playground.

By STEPHANIE ARMOUR

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Urbandale, Ia. — A new indoor ice-skating rink has opened in this suburb as part of a planned winter playground.

The rink at 5100 72nd St. is the second indoor skating arena in the Des Moines area. It sits on a 14-acre site that will eventually sport an 800-foot sledding hill and access trail.

The seasonal park is a joint project between the city of Urbandale and the Greater Des Moines Ice Sports Association. The hill and a paved parking area will run the city about \$70,000, and the rink will cost about \$2.5 million.

"It's been phenomenal," said Robin McClelland, who handles scheduling for the new arena. "It's a top facility. People see this warehouse, and they tend to be surprised when they come inside."

Finished by Feb. 24

With locker rooms and a concession area completed, the rink opened in January for private skating. An upper level with a lounge and offices should be finished by Feb. 24, when the arena begins to offer public skating.

But sledding fans will have to wait. The neighboring hill with a 60-foot drop is not expected to open until next winter.

Crews will prepare the ground this spring and build an access path to the hill.

"When it's all done, we want to make our own snow and light it and have a rope lift," said Rick Boals, parks and recreation director. "We

don't have it fully programmed yet, but we may have snow sculpting and other activities."

Once the hill opens, the city may have staff members patrol the park during the weekends.

Rental of inner-tubes and other sledding gear would be handled at the arena, which also boasts a glassed seating area that allows spectators to watch the sledding action.

"It's a beautiful facility," said Tom Muselman, executive director of the sports association. "It's an all-glass front that faces the hill, and the lounge with a see-through fireplace."

Existing Facility Busy

The new, 36,000-square-foot ice arena was built because demand is high at the Metro Ice Sports Arena, located at 72nd Street and Hickman Road in Urbandale. More than 21,000 skaters annually use the 36-year old building.

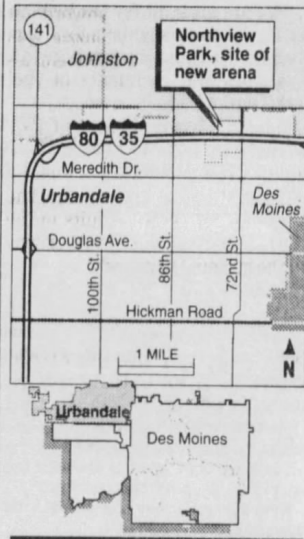
The Greater Des Moines Ice Sports Association will operate both rinks.

The new rink will be available for amateur hockey, figure skating and general public use. The Metro Ice Sports Arena will continue its offerings and remain the site for the Des Moines Buccaneers, an amateur hockey team that competes in the United States Hockey League.

Meetings rooms — along with a skating and hockey store — also will

NEW ARENA OPENS

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be included in the arena near Northview Park.

"I think it's exciting," said Urbandale City Manager Robert Layton. "It's really too bad we were not able to get (the sledding hill) open this winter."