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**DEVELOPMENT**

## Des Moines plans to demolish Grubb YMCA for new rec center, but needs to raise \$9 million



**Kim Norvell**

Des Moines Register

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See concept images of the Des Moines north side community recreation center

Des Moines plans to spend more than \$12 million to replace the old John R. Grubb Community YMCA on the north side.

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Des Moines plans to demolish the John R. Grubb Community YMCA in favor of a new recreation center on the city's north side.

The new rec center would be situated southeast of the current Y, 1611 11th St., on the corner of Ninth Street and College Avenue. Its new positioning "allows for a continuous open field for program space — active recreation and passive recreation" such as basketball or picnics on site to the west and north, said Katherine Darnstadt, founder of Latent Design and a consultant for the city.

The conceptual plan was unveiled Thursday after six months of meetings with north side residents and community groups to identify priorities, share ideas and help define the project.

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A view of the main entrance, facing 11th Street. MA Architecture/Special To The Register

Many of the rec center's proposed features are a direct result of feedback from the neighbors who will ultimately use and benefit from the space, Darnstadt said.

The approximately 30,000-square-foot recreation center would include a pool, NBA-sized basketball court, elevated track, weight room and fitness class space. The pool's two-story glass walls would face east, "which puts a lot of prominence on 9th and College," while fitting into the appropriate scale of the neighborhood, Darnstadt said.

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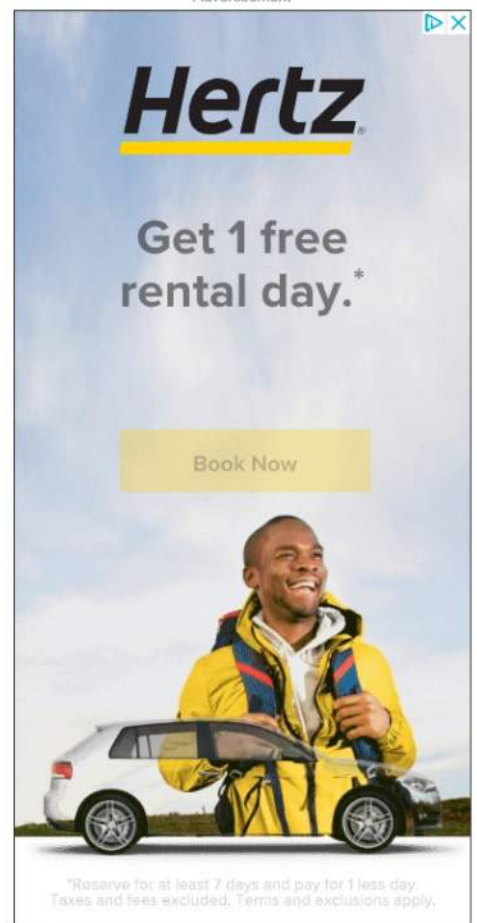
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Other features include space for child care, health and wellness classes, a tech laboratory and a community room, whose glass walls would face an outdoor playground so families attending meetings or events could keep track of their children.

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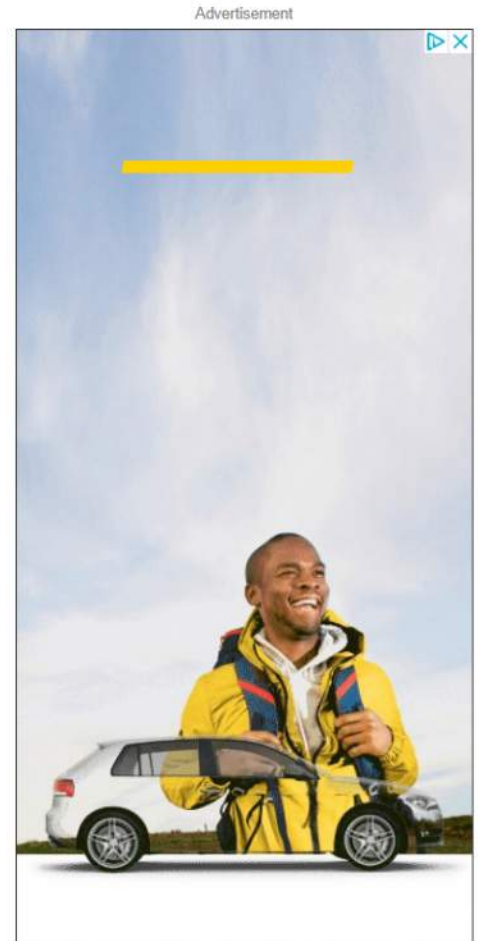


The gym. MA Architecture/Special To The Register

Outside, planners have included basketball and handball courts, a park shelter, a community lawn for special events and trail connections. To the north, Brian Melton Field between Jefferson and Washington avenues would be transformed into a multipurpose field for soccer or baseball.

Margaret Wright, who lives in the King-Irving neighborhood where the Y sits, said she is excited to finally see the concept that she and so many neighbors have pushed for come to life. Wright raised four children in the neighborhood, who regularly hung out at the community center to play basketball and baseball.

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She said this type of investment is needed to improve the neighborhood, considered one of the most diverse in Des Moines, and provide opportunities for its children to thrive.

The current gym facility was built in 1940 as part of Dowling High School, before it moved to West Des Moines three decades later. The YMCA moved there in 1994, but its age has made upkeep expensive and its layout difficult to convert into a modern facility. (Des Moines owns the building and land, and leases it to the Y.)



An aerial view of the new north side recreation center, which would be located on the corner of Ninth Street and College Avenue. *MA Architecture/Special To The Register*

"I want to see that for other families," Wright said. "For my kids, this was a place for them to come and feel safe."

But there's a question of cost. Des Moines has allocated \$12 million toward the project, which is expected to be complete in 2025.



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But what was presented Thursday would cost up to \$18 million for the building,



and an additional \$3 million for the outdoor amenities, said Daniel Calvert, planning and development administrator.

Des Moines Parks and Recreation will now embark on a yearlong fundraising campaign to secure the rest of the funding from donors, grants and other sources. There is no funding secured at this time, but Calvert said there is a lot of excitement around the project.



The park and shelter. MA Architecture/Special To The Register

Beyond donors, the city also has considered using American Rescue Plan Act money or Local Option Sales Tax revenue toward the project, he said. City leaders are expected to unveil proposals for [how to spend its \\$95 million in federal aid next month](#).

The final design — and which features would be included — is dependent on how much is raised.

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Wright said she's hopeful the funding can be secured to do the project as



presented, suggesting it as an opportunity for the city's [multiple fortune 500 companies](#) to invest in a neighborhood that needs attention.

"I want to be aspirational for this community," she said. "If we are going to do something for this community and turn it around, then we need to invest bigger."

*Kim Norvell covers growth and development for the Register. Reach her at [knorvell@dmreg.com](mailto:knorvell@dmreg.com) or 515-284-8259. Follow her on Twitter [@KimNorvellDMR](https://twitter.com/KimNorvellDMR).*

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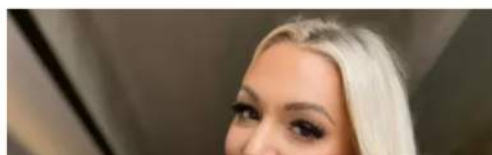
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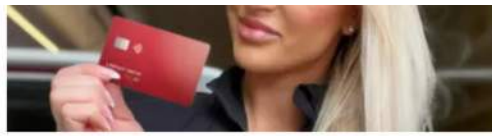


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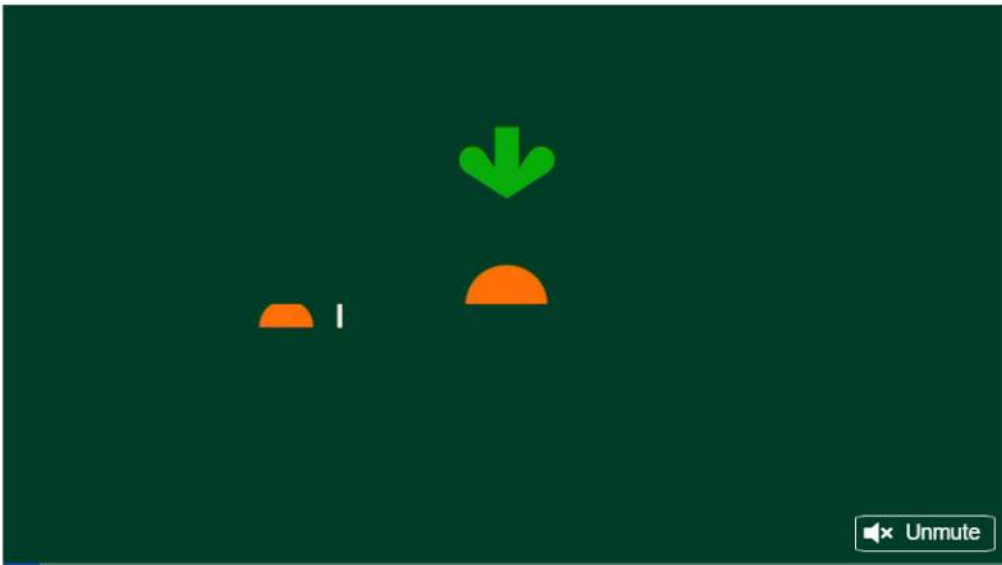


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