

# RECPLEX TAKES NATIONAL VIEW



The Abel Ice Arena is part of West Des Moines' MidAmerican Energy Company RecPlex on the city's southern edge. The complex's two ice arenas will play host for many events, including hockey tournaments and learn to skate programs.

## West Des Moines site can welcome any sport

**Sarah Kay LeBlanc**  
Des Moines Register  
USA TODAY NETWORK

The only limit to West Des Moines' massive new MidAmerican Energy Company RecPlex is the imagination.

Inside the \$45 million, 300,000-square-foot building at 6500 Grand Ave. are four basketball courts, three pickleball courts, one full-size indoor soccer field, an esports center and two ice rinks. But the facility isn't limited to just those sports — nearly every surface can be repurposed for a different activity.

The indoor turf field can become a 90-yard football field, three smaller-sized soccer fields, two softball fields or a space for families to set up chairs and have a movie night. Next door, three basketball courts can be converted into six volleyball courts.

At the other end of the building, a small grass area has space for four batting cages — that descend from the ceiling when in use. It can be used as a small baseball or softball practice area, or as room



The RecPlex is expected to draw visitors and events from beyond West Des Moines and Dallas County, general manager Shayne Ratcliff said.

PHOTOS BY KELSEY KREMER/THE REGISTER

to play kickball or do taekwondo.

Even the main ice rink can be converted from its smooth, icy surface into a 20,000-square-foot event space that can accommodate up to 2,500 people.

From August to April, though, both ice rinks will be reserved for hockey and skating, one of the main reasons West Des Moines decided to open the massive facility.

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## RecPlex

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"A driving force for this facility was the need for ice," said RecPlex general manager Shayne Ratcliff, who took the Des Moines Register on a tour of the new facility as it prepares to open in October.

Already, 10 hockey tournaments are booked at the RecPlex this season.

Most hockey games will be hosted in the main ice arena, which seats 1,500. A second rink will also have ice year-round, but in addition to hockey will be used for ice skating classes and public skating programs. Both rinks are the same size, though the secondary rink has seating for about 300 people.

The building is part of West Des Moines' expansion to the west. Located near Des Moines Area Community College's west campus, the facility is about three miles from Jordan Creek Town Center. DMACC will use 5,000 square feet in the RecPlex for a physical therapy clinic.

The RecPlex is about 40% completed, Ratcliff said. It will host a grand opening Oct. 3, when a majority of the facility should be finished and ready for booking.

But Ratcliff has already been busy yielding calls for the space. Companies have inquired about renting the building's 3,500 square feet of meeting space, which can be divided into three smaller spaces. Open areas on the second floor have been booked for indoor bags leagues, while some have inquired about using it for fencing matches.

Ratcliff said he expects the esports room to be popular for rentals as well. The 3,500-square-foot space has two virtual reality stations, two PlayStations, two Xboxes and 33 PC gaming stations. It can be used for birthday parties, corporate events or esports tournaments.

Outside, there are three additional turf soccer fields that have been used by teams since March. The facility still has room on its 66 acres to build two additional turf fields, an outdoor restroom and a concession pavilion.

The entire building and outdoor fields are equipped with free Wi-Fi that can host thousands of users simultaneously.

With all of these amenities, Ratcliff said West Des Moines' facility is unique.

"When we look across the United States, we can't see anything that checks all these boxes with the esports, with the outdoor, with the indoor and the year-round flexibility," he said.

The project was funded as a private-public partnership. About \$14 million was raised in naming rights, sponsorships and donations, primarily by MidAmerican, whom the facility is named for, and Hy-Vee, which sponsored the indoor field-house. Hotel/motel tax revenue paid for the remainder of the project.

West Des Moines owns and operates the facility, using an enterprise fund in the Parks and Recreation Department.

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visitors and events from beyond West Des Moines and Dallas County, Ratcliff said.

A few games in next year's State Games of America, a biennial Olympic-style event, will be held at the RecPlex. The event is being sponsored by Iowa State University on July 27-31 and is expected to attract 14,000 athletes to Ames and the Des Moines metro, according to its website.

The National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics' Men's Volleyball National Championship will be held at the RecPlex in April.

"I think what people forget is the regional draw, the national draw this is going to bring," Ratcliff said. "It's so much more than just youth sports."

City Manager Tom Hadden said the facility fills a need in the city for additional programming, drop-in sports and team practices. Between tournaments, he said visitors will bring revenue to the city when they stay in hotels, eat at restaurants and visit local businesses. "You're taking care of a local need and a national need for teams to practice and things," he said. "... We can have these kind of regional meets that bring in a lot of people to stay in our hotels and eat at restaurants."

Visitors can go to the RecPlex website to see availability for rentals and to set a schedule for drop-in play.

Sarah LeBlanc covers the western suburbs for the Register. Reach her at 315-284-8161 or sleblanc@registermedia.com. Follow her on Twitter at @sarahkyleblanc.

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