



# U.S. SAYS IT CAPTURED VENEZUELA’S MADURO

STORY • PAGE 3A

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# Ames Tribune

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# DEVELOPING SITUATION



A rendering of the planned CyTown district in Ames. PROVIDED BY IOWA BOARD OF REGENTS

## Which projects should residents be watching in 2026?

Celia Bocker and Ronna Faaborg Ames Tribune | USA TODAY NETWORK

Several major developments and projects in Ames should see progress in 2026. • From the Fitch Family Indoor Aquatic Center to the highly-anticipated Olive Garden opening, the Ames Tribune has compiled a list of projects to watch in the next year.

### Daisy plant in Boone

Daisy Brand is building a \$1.2 billion dairy processing facility in Boone and broke ground on the project in May. Although this project is not technically in Ames, the Ames Regional Economic Alliance – in collaboration with the City of Boone, Boone County Economic Growth Corporation and Iowa Economic Development Authority – was instrumental in bringing Daisy to central Iowa.

The plant will be a positive impact for Boone and Story counties as Daisy expects to offer 255 jobs with an average hourly wage of \$34.75. Daisy Brand, which produces sour cream and cottage cheese as well as several other dairy-based products, expects to open its 1-million-square-foot facility in 2028, and local residents will see progress throughout 2026.

See **PROJECTS**, Page 2A



Daisy Brand president Ben Sokolsky is greeted by Boone Mayor Elijah Stines, Gov. Kim Reynolds, Iowa Secretary of Agriculture Mike Naig, and CEO of the Ames Regional Economic Alliance Dan Culhane during a groundbreaking ceremony on May 20, 2025, in Boone.

NIRMALLENDU MAJUMDAR/AMES TRIBUNE

## Hardman wins in District 16

### Thwarts Republican supermajority in Senate

Marissa Payne

Des Moines Register  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Democrat Renee Hardman made history after winning the Iowa Senate District 16 seat to become Iowa’s first Black female senator, defeating Republican Lucas Loftin in a Dec. 30 special election to hold off a GOP supermajority.

Hardman earned 71.4% of the vote, according to unofficial results from the Iowa Secretary of State, to represent the district that includes parts of West Des Moines, Clive and Windsor Heights — continuing a string of special election wins that have buoyed Iowa Democrats heading into the 2026 midterm elections.



Hardman

The seat has been vacant since the death of Sen. Claire Celsi, D-West Des Moines, in October.

Hardman is the president and CEO of Lutheran Services of Iowa. She also made history as West Des Moines’ first Black City Council woman when she was elected in 2017.

At an election night party Tuesday in Valley Junction, Hardman, 64, said she felt a responsibility to live out the words on her campaign yard signs to be “a voice for all people” and give all Iowans equal opportunity to thrive, adequately fund public schools, make health care affordable and support small businesses.

“We ran to make life better for real people,” Hardman said. “I ran to fight for people like you.”

Hardman becomes the 17th Democrat in the Iowa Senate, holding Republicans at 33 members — one short of the 34 the GOP caucus would need to claw back their supermajority in the 50-member chamber.

It means Republicans would need at least one Democratic vote to confirm Gov. Kim Reynolds’ nominees to state agencies, boards and commissions. Iowa Senate Minority Leader Janice Weiner, D-Iowa City, told reporters her caucus will give all nominees the chance to explain themselves and make their decisions as a collective.

Hardman gathered with supporters to celebrate her win at The Tavern, a West Des Moines staple that was purchased in 1988 by Chuck Celsi, the late senator’s uncle.

See **HARDMAN**, Page 2A

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