



For Immediate Release

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Kentwood City Commission Accepts Donation of 109-Acre Parcel on 36th Street

Property to be Used for Public Park and Recreational Purposes

Kentwood, Michigan, May 8, 2020 – The Kentwood City Commission has accepted a donation of nearly 109 acres of the property known as the Christian Athletic Complex for public park and recreational purposes.

An anonymous donor gave a substantial gift to the Kentwood Community Foundation for the purchase of a parcel, located at 3402 36th St. SE, with the conditions it will be used by the City of Kentwood for park and recreational purposes, be named Covenant Park and feature a dedication plaque from the donor's family.

Previously owned by the Christian Reformed Recreation Center, the property contains a golf course, softball fields, soccer fields and a clubhouse, as well as many picnic pavilions and other outbuildings.

Plans for development of the property and how it will be incorporated within the current park system will begin soon. The City will include the property and its development in the master planning process. The City has updated its Parks and Recreation Business Plan and completed master planning all of its existing community parks in 2018.

“In our ongoing planning for the next 50 years, we are always exploring ways we can improve the quality of life and expand both recreational and economic opportunities for our residents, visitors and our region,” Mayor Stephen Kepley said. “The strategic location and size of this property lend itself to our goals of continuously meeting the needs of our community and West Michigan. We are humbled by the opportunity this donation presents for us, underscoring that even in these trying times, good things are still happening.

“Our park and trail system is one of the true gems of our community. We are very grateful to the donor, the donor's family and the Kentwood Community Foundation for this generous donation of the Christian Athletic Complex, which will allow the City to preserve the property as a valued recreational destination in Kentwood for generations to come.”

As part of the agreement, the CAC property, which was originally one parcel of nearly 120 acres, was split into two. While the City will receive the 109-acre parcel, the remaining approximately 11-acre parcel will be donated to and owned by nonprofit soccer organization Midwest United Football Club for its continued operations for the next 30 years.

Midwest United FC's mission is to provide a quality soccer program that promotes the growth of, and the appreciation for, the game of soccer to kids in West Michigan. The organization strives to promote the highest levels of sportsmanship, develop soccer skills and increase the understanding of the sport of soccer for their pleasure, with the possibility to play the game at the college level or beyond.

Having been in business for more than 25 years, Midwest United FC touts expansive year-round soccer programming and educational opportunities, highly licensed coaching staff and ever-improving facilities.

“Two years ago, the Christian Athletic Complex and West Michigan Community Bank embraced our vision of building two state-of-the-art turf fields on the CAC property. Today, we are thankful for the generosity and faith a donor had in our organization and mission,” said Midwest United FC General Manager Kristie Hollingsworth. “This faith and generosity provided an opportunity for Midwest United FC to call the property our true home and will allow new partnerships to form.

“These new and continued partnerships, along with the support of our Midwest families and dedicated staff, will carry and enhance the vision of growing top-notch soccer at all levels, in West Michigan, regionally and nationally.”

With its variety of amenities, the Christian Athletic Complex has served a wide area of community needs over the years, including recreational activities for people of all ages and venue space for corporate events, meetings and open houses. The organization was founded as the Christian Reformed Recreation Center shortly after World War II to provide an opportunity for Christian Reformed youth to participate in sports camps and summer sports leagues. Over time, it grew and developed into a larger Christ-centered organization providing outdoor space for youth and family recreation with more than 240 softball teams at its height and an 18-hole golf course.

“The CAC Board could not be happier placing this beautiful piece of land into the care of the City Kentwood and Midwest United FC,” CAC Board President James Oppenhuizen said. “As it became clear we were unable financially to continue to further our mission, we searched for someone who would continue using the land for outdoor youth and family recreation.

“Through the diligent efforts of an enormously generous donor, the City of Kentwood will be able to perpetually use the land for exactly that reason. Midwest United FC will also be able to continue and expand its top-notch youth soccer program.”

The property has frontage and access points both off Shaffer Avenue SE and 36th Street SE. It is bordered by industrially zoned property to the east and a mix of residentially zoned properties to the north, west and south.

“This new jewel for Kentwood’s parks will be an asset for all who call Kentwood home, which for us is very special because the world has made Kentwood home!” Kepley said.

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