



For Immediate Release

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City of Kentwood Aug. 2 Ballot to Include Millage Proposal for Parks, Trails and Recreational Improvements

Kentwood, Michigan, Jan. 25, 2022 – The City of Kentwood will ask residents in August to consider a permanent dedicated millage that, if approved, will support the City’s parks, trails and recreational facilities and programming.

The millage would fund improvements to all trails and parks, as well as expand and enhance programming through increased capacity in space and staffing. It also would fund the construction of a new multigenerational community recreation center and park amenities on the City campus, transforming the area around City Hall into a community gathering space.

“Since celebrating Kentwood’s 50th anniversary in 2017, we’ve dedicated significant time and effort planning for the next 50 years of community growth through collaboration with our residents and other partners,” Mayor Stephen Kepley said. “Available parks and recreation funding has not kept pace with increased residential demand, delaying repairs for the community today and significantly limiting future improvements. If approved, this millage would provide a permanent sustainable funding source to improve, operate and maintain parks, trails, and other amenities and services for generations to come.”

The proposed millage of 1 mill was recommended by parks advisory committees that included residents and other stakeholders, as well as extensive community engagement and an in-depth review of the City’s current parks, trails and programming, its projected growth and community needs.

The advisory committees also recommended the City contribute additional funds up to \$22 million from other public and private sources to make the needed improvements. The committees’ comprehensive plan was presented Dec. 7 to the City Commission, which unanimously approved the millage ballot proposal for the Aug. 2 election.

The proposed millage would support Americans with Disabilities Act upgrades and a variety of other improvements and developments, including:

- **Bowen Station Park:** Restroom, playground equipment, signage, landscaping and other amenities.
- **Burgis Park:** Trail and sidewalk improvements and a new drinking fountain.
- **City campus:** Splash pad, playground, plaza, shelters, stage, event lawn, parking, restrooms and other amenities.
- **Community recreation center:** Approximately 50,000 square feet of year-round indoor and multigenerational programming and recreation space on the City campus.
- **Covenant Park Phase 1:** Trails, sports fields, event lawn, lighting and infrastructure to support future phases.
- **East Paris Nature Park:** Trail improvements, signage and other amenities.

- **Home Acres Park:** Skate park improvements, shade shelters, lighting, signage, landscaping and other amenities.
- **Jaycee Park:** New restroom/program building, additional parking, disc golf improvements and other amenities.
- **Kellogg Woods Park:** Restrooms, softball/baseball field improvements, new sports fields, lighting and landscaping.
- **Northeast Park:** Restrooms, playground, splash pad, landscaping and other amenities.
- **Old Farm Park:** Parking improvements, playground, shelter and other amenities.
- **Paris Park:** Trail improvements and signage.
- **Pinewood Park:** Splash pad improvements, pickleball courts, a new restroom, shade shelters, landscaping and other amenities.
- **Rondo Street Station Park:** Playground, bicycle rack and repair center, signage, landscaping and other amenities.
- **Stanaback Park:** Playground, parking improvements, signage, pickleball courts, landscaping and other amenities.
- **Stauffer Station Park:** Kiosk, bicycle rack and repair center, signage, lighting, landscaping and other amenities.
- **Summerwood Park:** Playground and landscaping.
- **Trails:** Repairs, replacement and new connections.
- **Veterans Memorial Park:** Shelter, additional parking and other amenities.

“Our extensive community engagement and planning process has shown our community needs have grown beyond available funding,” said Val Romeo, Kentwood Parks and Recreation director. “This has been reaffirmed by increased use of our parks, trails and recreational offerings throughout the past two years.

“The Parks and Recreation Department has exhausted current general funds, including a parks millage that expired in 2013. We have been able to make improvements only through grant opportunities, which are becoming more and more difficult to acquire. New funding is critical to support our growing community needs.”

If approved, the millage would be levied starting July 1, 2023, with the following tentative timeline:

- All parks would receive improvements to address the most immediate needs within the first five years, with all remaining improvements completed within 10 years.
- Trail improvements and construction planning would be prioritized in the first year, followed by ongoing trail repairs and expansion to enhance the trails for all users.
- Construction of the City campus park amenities and community recreation center would begin in the second year.

A mill is 1/1000 of a dollar, or .001 cents. If a tax rate or millage rate is 1 mill, a resident is taxed .001 cents for every dollar, or \$1 per \$1,000 of the taxable value of the property. For example, for a residential home with a taxable value of \$100,000, the cost of 1 mill would be \$100 per year.

Kentwood is home to 15 parks that cover more than 400 acres and more than 13 miles of non-motorized trails that are used year-round by residents and visitors. Numerous community events and more than 700 recreational programs are offered annually for people of all ages and abilities through the Parks and Recreation Department in the Kentwood Activities Center, 355 48th St. SE, on City campus and other locations.

More information on the proposed millage is available at kentwood.us/millage.