



For Immediate Release

Contact:

Lisa Taylor
City of Kentwood, 616.401.5137

City of Kentwood Launches Community Survey to Inform Work of New Covenant Park Advisory Committees

Committees to Prioritize Ideas for Recreation and Regional Competitive Sports

Kentwood, Michigan, May 18, 2021 – The City of Kentwood has created two advisory committees and an online survey for community members to share input on the development of Covenant Park’s 109 acres.

The two advisory committees began meeting earlier this year to gather, review and prioritize improvement ideas, concepts and plans for Covenant Park to make recommendations to the City Commission on future development. One committee is focused on opportunities for passive and active recreation at the park while the other is exploring the potential to incorporate regional competitive sports on the property as well.

The community survey will help inform the committees’ work. To share input on the park’s future, community members are invited to take the [online survey](#) by Friday, June 4. The survey takes 10-15 minutes to complete and includes questions about Kentwood’s other parks, trails, recreational programming and facilities. Individuals who want to take the survey in a different language can call the Parks and Recreation Department at 616.656.5270 for assistance.

Formerly known as the Christian Athletic Complex, Covenant Park is located at 3724 Shaffer Ave. SE. The City accepted a donation of the 109-acre parcel in May through a substantial gift to the Kentwood Community Foundation from an anonymous donor. Covenant Park features open spaces, walking trails, softball fields and a clubhouse.

“With its significant size and strategic location, Covenant Park has great potential to support our growing community and its evolving needs in a number of ways,” Mayor Stephen Kepley said. “These committees ensure broad community engagement and have been tasked with determining the future of Covenant Park and how it will align with ongoing efforts to improve Kentwood’s current parks system with the additional potential of supporting our local economy.

“We are eager to explore how the park could improve the quality of life for our residents, our businesses and our neighbors in the region.”

The committees include broad community representation with more than 20 members on each, including parks and recreation commissioners, city commissioners, planning commissioners, residents and business owners.

The **Covenant Park Advisory Committee for Active and Passive Recreation** is focused on opportunities for both active and passive recreation on the property. Active recreation refers to structured activities – either for individuals or teams – that require the use of special facilities,

courses, fields or equipment. Examples include baseball, basketball, football, golf, soccer, softball, tennis and rugby. Passive recreation refers to activities that do not require prepared facilities such as sports fields or pavilions. Examples include bicycling, cross-country skiing, walking, hiking, picnicking, running and wildlife viewing,

Members on the Covenant Park Advisory Committee for Active and Passive Recreation are:

- **Emily Bridson**, City Commission
- **Robert Coughlin**, City Commission, Parks and Recreation Commission
- **Christopher Furner**, community member
- **Mark Giles**, community member
- **Jill Gorkowski**, Parks and Recreation Commission
- **Maurice Groce**, City Commission
- **James Hayes**, Parks and Recreation Commission
- **Karmen Johnson**, Parks and Recreation Commission
- **Fridah Kanini**, West Michigan Kenyans, A Glimpse of Africa
- **Ed Kape**, Parks and Recreation Commission, Planning Commission
- **Tarwo Konbloa**, West Ottawa High School soccer
- **Mimi Madden**, Parks and Recreation Commission, Kentwood Public Schools Board of Education
- **David Moore**, Parks and Recreation Commission
- **Dustin Mosley**, Parks and Recreation Commission
- **Phillip Nguyen**, Vietnamese Community Association of Grand Rapids
- **Darius Quinn**, Planning Commission
- **Laurie Sheldon**, community member
- **Adam Shilling**, community member
- **Kevin Small**, Parks and Recreation Commission
- **Billy Smith**, community member
- **Travis Tate**, community member

In addition to serving as a public recreational amenity for local residents, the park also has the potential to accommodate a regional competitive sports component. The **Covenant Park Advisory Committee for Regional Competitive Sports** is exploring the feasibility of and community interest in this possibility.

Members on the Covenant Park Advisory Committee for Regional Competitive Sports are:

- **Shea Abbgly**, Great Lakes Disc
- **Betsy Artz**, City Commission
- **Rick Baker**, Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce
- **Ron Draayer**, City Commission
- **Sanel Fazlic**, Bosnian Cultural Center, Advisory Council for Bosnia and Herzegovina. All American Athletic Academics soccer at Aquinas College, Kentwood Community Foundation
- **Mike Guswiler**, West Michigan Sports Commission
- **Adetunji Ifaturoti**, High school soccer for Caledonia and Byron Center, Michigan Fire Juniors
- **Fridah Kanini**, West Michigan Kenyans, A Glimpse of Africa
- **Tom McKelvey**, City Commission
- **Sam Moore**, Kent County Parks Foundation
- **Tim Mroz**, The Right Place

- **Phillip Nguyen**, Vietnamese Community Association of Grand Rapids
- **Sam Nichols**, Michigan Sports Academies
- **Bob O'Callaghan**, Kentwood-Wyoming Chamber of Commerce
- **Ram Ravikumar**, MIGR Cricket Club
- **Paul Richards**, Grand Rapids Pickleball Club
- **Josh Sheldon**, Midwest United FC
- **Doug Small**, Experience Grand Rapids
- **Monica Sparks**, Kent County Commission
- **Brian Dokter**, West Michigan Mountain Bike Alliance
- **Michael Zoerhoff**, Kentwood Public Schools

This community engagement process will ultimately determine how the property will align with existing local parks and recreational needs identified in the Parks and Recreation Business Plan, Parks Master Plan and Non-Motorized Trail Plan. The outcomes of the [Parks, Trails and Recreation Advisory Committee's work](#) in 2019 will also be taken into consideration.

The City has engaged Pros Consulting, LLC to help facilitate the review process, which will include providing the committees with market and financial data, community feedback and best practices.

The committees are expected to make a final recommendation to the City Commission later this year. More information and updates about the committees, including a meeting schedule and the [survey](#) for public input, can be found on the City's website at kentwood.us/CovenantParkPlanning.

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