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CITY OF MUSCATINE PRESS RELEASE

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HOUSER STREET ATHLETIC FIELD EXPANSION READY FOR USE

Ribbon cutting ceremony officially opens expansion to Muscatine Soccer Complex

MUSCATINE, Iowa – Local and state officials gathered with City of Muscatine staff, members of the Greater Muscatine Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and the general public to officially open a long awaited expansion of the South Houser Street athletic facilities.

Joining a growing list of recreational amenities on the South Houser Street corridor is the Houser Street Athletic Field Expansion that includes four multi-use athletic fields and a 200-car parking lot. The site is located just west of the Muscatine Soccer Complex and close to Kent Stein Park, the Muscatine Pollinator Park, and the Muscatine Dog Park. Four recreational trails also merge at this location.

Featured speaker for the event was Gage Kent, chairman of the Board of Directors and Chief Executive Officer of Kent Corporation, who called the Houser Street Athletic Field Expansion the culmination of a 56 year story.

“In 1963 this was just a great big farm,” Kent said. “There were a bunch of city leaders and people within the city that said you know this town needs a ballpark. So, in 1963 the Kent Stein Foundation, now the Kent Corporation Charitable Foundation, contributed 55 acres for the ball parks across the way (Kent Stein Park).”

That began the buildup of the area into a recreational magnet for the citizens of Muscatine and for visitors across the region.

The Muscatine Soccer Complex was added in the 1990s.

“The soccer complex in Muscatine is something,” Kent said. “In my lifetime most everybody knew Muscatine by Muscatine melons. Well I do believe that more people know Muscatine today due to the soccer complex than they do because of Muscatine melons. This is quite a milestone here.”

The last piece of land owned by the Kent Corporation Charitable Foundation was just sitting there when Gregg Mandsager, Muscatine City Administrator, approached Kent with an idea for a project that would bring additional playing fields and much needed additional parking to the recreational complex.

“I was waiting for someone to come into my office and say this land needs to be used,” Kent said, “In order for it to be a good thing, this land needed to be used by a lot of people and supported by lot of people.”

The project presented by Mandsager, Parks and Recreation Director Richard Klimes, and others within City government, fulfilled the needs of the growing recreational area and the requirements of the Kent Corporation Charitable Foundation.

“This is a wonderful accomplishment,” Kent said. “This has really taught us, and I think the entire community, what really effective charitable giving and infrastructure participation and public-private partnerships are all about.”

Mandsager commented on the tremendous growth and efforts over the past several years in Muscatine before introducing Kent.

“This is a wonderful addition to our park complex,” Mandsager said. “We have had economic development growth, infrastructure growth, and we have had a number of our amenities across the city grow thanks to many people and partnerships from across the community.”

Mandsager noted that it takes a lot of time and effort on the part of many people to accomplish projects like the Houser Street Athletic Expansion Project.

“And that is really what Muscatine is all about, the partnerships between public and private entities,” Mandsager said. “That is what helps get everything accomplished here in Muscatine.”

Mayor Diana Broderson opened the ceremonies by welcoming those attending and extending special thanks to Klimes and his team who worked a long time to make this project come to fruition.

“So often it is easy to take for granted all of our wonderful parks and the programs that they (Parks and Recreation) do but that is one thing that makes our city great,” Broderson said. “We want to really thank the Parks staff for the long hours and hard work that it took to make this day happen.”

Mandsager thanked the many individuals from City staff who worked to make this project a reality, and the Mayor and City Council members who took this project on and made it a reality through the budgetary process and with their individual support.

The donation of land from the Kent Corporation Charitable Foundation was the catalyst for the project with support also provided by Musco, who will be installing the latest generation of lights for the new athletic fields and parking area, and Carver Trust with funding for the parking lot and street crossing enhancements.

Muscatine Power & Water (MPW) also contributed by extending electrical and water to the site while also enhancing the street lighting.

Needham Construction was the general contractor and iiv, P.C., was the design firm.

Also contributing in the effort was Leadership Muscatine, GMCCI, and many other groups and individuals from across the community including the Parks & Recreation Advisory Commission and the soccer subcommittee.

While the parking lot will be available for us starting this weekend when the Muscatine hosts a 118 team soccer tournament, the athletic fields are still maturing and will not be available until 2020.

Notes about the South Houser Street Recreational Area:

- Kent Stein Park contains a total of 66 acres and adjoins an 11 acre slough. The park facilities include nine (9) lighted softball diamonds, eight (8) lighted baseball diamonds, and nine (9) lighted horseshoe courts.
- The Muscatine Soccer Complex is a 41-acre facility that features eight (8) full-sized soccer fields with two internationally sized and lighted. The Soccer Complex is fully equipped including concessions, media center, restroom facility, and parking area.
- The inaugural match at the Muscatine Soccer Complex was played August 28, 1993, between the Chicago Power and Kansas City Attack.
- Approximately 250,000 individuals visit the Muscatine Soccer Complex and 400,000 visit Kent Stein Park on an annual basis.
- The two complexes host local, regional, and state soccer, baseball, and softball competitions with camps, leagues, games, scrimmages, and tournaments scheduled nine months of the year.
- The Muscatine Pollinator Park and the Muscatine Dog Park, both located in close proximity to the two complexes, were opened in 2018.
- Four trails (Musser to Kent Stein, Kent Stein to Deep Lakes, Pollinator Park Trail, and the upcoming West Side Trail) merge near the entrance to Kent Stein Park off of South Houser Street.
- Roughly 200 additional parking spaces will service the recreational amenities in the South Houser Street Recreational Area.
- The Houser Street Athletic Field Expansion will have four lighted fields and will be the future site for a trailhead to service the four merging recreational trails.