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Moving *earth wind & fire*

When Kent County wanted to build a new courthouse on the eastern side of the county, they turned to property along the East Beltline.

The property was owned by Grand Rapids Township and a deal was put in place in which the county purchased enough land for the actual facility and parking, but the township retained the surrounding property, which lies immediately adjacent to its town hall and popular family park.

With an eye to the future, the design plan included two landscaped circles - the first earmarked for a sculpture and the second for a fountain. While the fountain has not yet been added, the sculpture is now in place.

earth wind & fire by renowned artist Gary Price was moved late last month from its home at Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park to the Grand Rapids Township property.



earth wind & fire relocated from the Gardens on September 29, 2017

The original purchase agreement between Kent County and Grand Rapids Township also included provisions for upkeep of the courtyard plaza. Each party contributed to a landscape and maintenance fund with actual care of the site remaining under the purview of the township. Since the agreement was put in place in 2009, the township has made landscape improvements and provided maintenance for the site without dipping into that fund pool.

“We are growing that as an endowment fund,” said Township Supervisor Michael DeVries. “We do not want maintenance of the court site to become a burden to future taxpayers.” The only cost to the township under both agreements is a promise to pay for insurance of the sculpture during its stay here. The Gardens also paid moving costs for *earth wind & fire*.

The timing for obtaining a major work of art from Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park was ideal, since it is currently undergoing a multimillion dollar renovation with some of its permanent pieces in the outside sculpture garden, including Price’s *earth wind & fire* scheduled to be moved or stored.

The long-term permanent loan agreement between the parties is similar to the one governing the “American Eagle,” sculpted by Marshall Fredericks, that is located outside of the township hall facility. Many years ago when the sculpture garden was first expanding, Fred Meijer offered the township “one of its eagle sculptures” to display on their property, according to Supervisor DeVries.

earth wind & fire was one of the earliest pieces at the Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park, and in its possession in the early 1990s - even before the sculpture garden was in place. The Price sculpture was first located near the Gerald R. Ford Museum, according to Caleb Brennan, Conservator/Assistant Curator of Sculpture for Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park. “The sculpture had to be moved due to the reconfiguration of the parking and new building,” said Brennan. “We wanted it to remain highly visible for the public, so this arrangement is a good fit.”