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## Announcement due on 'miracle field' bid

By Dan West  
Staff Writer

City officials will find out next week if Southfield will be the site for Michigan's first baseball field specially designed for physically and mentally challenged youngsters.

The Miracle League of Michigan, chaired by Southfield businessman Steve Peck, is reviewing proposals from Southfield and Troy that offer land for construction of the field. Peck said his organization will announce which city will get the field next Friday, July 25. His goal is to begin construction this year so the field is ready for games next spring.

Southfield offered the use of diamond No. 3 on the Civic Center campus. Bill Waterhouse, the city's parks and recreation director, said Southfield offered a 20-year lease of the field at \$1 per year.

"There's a lot going on around there with the tennis courts, other fields, ice arena, golf course and swimming pool," Waterhouse said. "That's exactly what the Miracle League wants. They don't want an isolated location."

Waterhouse added he feels Southfield's bid is strong because it offers adequate parking and a central location with easy access to many of southeastern Michigan's major highways and freeways.

"Also, we've been involved in adaptive programs before," Waterhouse added. "We've conducted wheelchair basketball programs, wheelchair ice hockey and adaptive golf and tennis programs."

The \$500,000 expense to build the field - which features a rubberized surface to make it easier for youngsters in wheelchairs and walkers to move - will be covered by donors and in-kind donations coordinated by the Miracle League. The field will be built on asphalt and include dugouts, painted field lines and fencing to enclose the entire field. The outfield fences will measure about 150 feet from home plate.

The city that lands this field will have an exclusive facility for at least

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a few years. Families will travel from all over the state so their children can participate in noncompetitive tournaments and games held at this field, Peck said. Michigan has some 200,000 young people between ages 5 and 20 who are mentally or physically impaired.

In the coming years, the Miracle League of Michigan plans to build fields in Bay City and Grand Rapids, but Peck said he wanted to build its first field in southern Oakland County, which is at the center of metro Detroit's population base.

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