



## INNOVATIVE SOCCER SPACE TO BE UNVEILED AT DOVE SPRINGS RECREATION CENTER

November 8, 2019

Austin, TX – Led by local nonprofit, *Soccer Assist*, in partnership with the U.S. Soccer Foundation and Austin Parks and Recreation Department, a new soccer/futsal court was recently completed at the Dove Springs Recreation Center in Southeast Austin.

A ribbon cutting ceremony will take place on Saturday November 16<sup>th</sup> 10-11:00 a.m. at the recreation center, 5801 Ainez Drive, Austin, TX. Brief comments will be made by Andy Loughnane – 4ATX Foundation Board Member and Austin FC President, Mayor Pro-Tem Delia Garza, Aaron Rochlen - Soccer Assist Co-Founder, and a representative from the U.S. Soccer Foundation

To support the project, contributions were provided from 4ATX Foundation, the philanthropic extension of Austin FC, Soccer Shots, and Fayruz Benyousef Consulting. Community support was coordinated by the Dove Springs Recreation Center in consultation with the Dove Springs Advisory Board.

The origin and execution of the Dove Springs soccer/futsal court has been over a year in the making. Austin residents Aaron Rochlen and Eddie Russ, both active in soccer through their families, business, and community interests, were determined to build a court in an under-served, soccer passionate part of the city. Familiar with the U.S. Soccer Foundation programs, the mini-pitch project proved to be the optimal goal to pursue. The emergence of the new Major League Soccer (MLS) Club Austin FC, coupled with their commitment to community-based projects, provided the last key collaborator to finalize the development plans for the site.

Sixteen months later, Dove Springs youth have a new safe place to play.

Aaron Rochlen, Co-Founder of Soccer Assist commented on the significance of this opening by saying, *“Since the inception of our organization in 2014, we dreamed of building a special soccer space where soccer enthusiasts at all levels can play the beautiful game in a safe, creative, and accessible environment. Eventually, we found the perfect project partners and location in Dove Springs. With our new MLS team Austin FC, the timing (and court colors) could not be better. We expect it to be one of the coolest places to play in town.”*

Eddie Russ, Soccer Shots owner added, *“Soccer Shots has a long running relationship with the US Soccer Foundation, and we are thrilled to be a part of bringing a safe place to play to the Dove Springs*

*community. We look forward to partnering with the rec center to provide free sessions for community children ages 2-8 on this awesome new field for many years to come.”*

Notably, this will be the first U.S. Soccer Foundation mini-pitch collaboration in central Austin and part of 1,000 safe places to play mini-pitches that the Foundation is installing with partners across the country by 2026. These soccer spaces support the Foundation’s *It’s Everyone’s Game* campaign to ensure children in underserved communities can benefit from all that the game of soccer has to offer.

*“Austin FC and the 4ATX Foundation are honored to work alongside community and youth soccer leaders to provide increased access to the sport of soccer in Austin,”* commented Andy Loughnane, President of Austin FC and 4ATX Foundation board member. *“The Dove Springs mini-pitch is entirely representative of the goodwill and positive community impact that our sport generates, and the creation of another safe playing environment in Austin is a great testament to the vision of Soccer Assist, U.S. Soccer Foundation, and each of the community partners who provided resources to make this Southeast Austin dream a reality.*

Fayruz Benyousef, Founder and Principal of Fayruz Benyousef Consulting (FBC) added, *“FBC is thrilled to be a part of this amazing futsal court at Dove Springs. We believe strongly in increasing access to soccer for all, and providing spaces and places where kids can be creative and have unfiltered freedom and fun while playing this amazing game.”*

*“We’re excited to be a part of bringing this new soccer mini-pitch to the Austin community,”* said Ed Foster-Simeon, President & CEO of the U.S. Soccer Foundation. *“This mini-pitch will not only provide a new safe place to play our game but will also enable more Austin kids to participate in soccer programming where they can develop critical life skills that will help them on and off the pitch.”*