



Plans include a 100-tree gateway for Northerly Island near 12th Street Beach. —BRIAN JACKSON/SUN-TIMES LIBRARY

Big improvements set for parks

They include field houses, dog sites and a water slide

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Staff Reporter

The Chicago Park District is planning to spend about \$160 million over the next five years on capital projects, including building four new field houses, a water slide and two dog parks.

The Park District board Wednesday approved the five-year plan, which also includes a dramatic 100-tree gateway to Northerly Island donated by Rotary International.

For 2005, the district's capital improvement plan calls for \$35 million in spending, about the same as in 2004, said spokeswoman Jessica Maxey Faulkner.

Field houses on the list include structures at Fosco, 1313 S. Throop; Gale, 7631 N. Ashland; Owens, 2032 E. 88th, and Taylor-

Lauridsen, 647 W. Root.

A water slide and other pool development are on tap for Palmer Park at 201 E. 111th. Two new dog parks are planned, for Pulaski at 1419 W. Blackhawk and at the south end of Grant Park near Columbus, where boosters have raised thousands of dollars to equip the "Bark Park" with a specially designed doggie drinking fountain.

The district aims to spend \$3.25 million between 2005 and 2009 to rehab, upgrade or construct about 25 fitness centers that include exercise and weight-lifting equipment.

'Get more with less'

Some projects on the list already are under way, officials said. The list, ranging from garbage cans to gardens to new playground equipment, should be on the Park District's Web site within weeks, officials said.

New projects are not limited to those currently on the list, and the district has included money to address unforeseen needs, said

chief financial officer Jim Chiampas. According to the plan, the district will spend \$35 million in 2006, the second year. In the final three years, the district lists about \$30 million annually.

Chiampas said the plan can be adjusted but that the district is aiming to "get more with less" by using district tradesmen for jobs that previously might have been contracted out to private companies. The district is also looking to boost private donations, he said.

The gateway project for Northerly Island, the former site of Meigs Field, is near 12th Street Beach. Rotary has offered \$275,000 for a "grand entrance" featuring 100 trees and about 500 paving stones.

Erma Tranter, president of the watchdog group Friends of the Parks, criticized the broad plan distributed to the public for lacking per-project financial costs. She added that the list was distributed the same day it was approved by the board with no public hearing on the total five-year plan.