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**MAYOR EMANUEL VISITS COLUMBUS PARK TO CELEBRATE THE CITY OF CHICAGO'S
CONTINUING INVESTMENT IN THE AUSTIN COMMUNITY**

Park Features Natural and Artificial Lacrosse, Football, Soccer, T-ball, Softball and Baseball Fields

Mayor Rahm Emanuel, Alderman Deborah Graham, Chicago Park District Superintendent Michael Kelly, and members of the Austin community gathered today at the site of a new artificial turf field at Columbus Park to celebrate the ongoing investments being made in the Austin community.

"For years, the fields at Columbus Park have flooded every time it rained. This investment will ensure that children, teens and adults in the Austin neighborhood will have state-of-the-art fields for playing a variety of sports," said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. "Community investments in our parks are essential because they promote active lives for residents. Over the next five years we are totally rebuilding, top-to-bottom, every playground in Chicago. When we are done, every child, regardless of where they live in the city, will be within a ten minute walk of a world-class park or playground."

The Columbus Park Artificial Turf Field is a 7.5 acre area within Columbus Park in the Austin Community located at 500 South Central Avenue. An estimated \$2.5 million has been invested in the park which now features new natural and artificial lacrosse, football, soccer, t-ball, softball and baseball fields.

Site improvements to the park include the combination ball fields, new concrete paving, new sports fencing and backstops, extensive drainage, stormwater detention, new sports lighting, a new electrical transformer, drinking fountains, water lines, trees, a lawn and more. A portion of the funding was secured through a \$1.1 million Open Space Lands Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) program state-financed grant.

"The entire Austin community is extremely excited for these new investments, said Alderman Graham (29th Ward). "Our newly lit soccer, baseball and football fields will give our children a place to enjoy themselves right in their own community. On behalf of the residents of Austin, I want to thank Mayor Emanuel and Park Superintendent Kelly for their help in making today possible.

The Columbus Park Chicago Chargers youth football team is extremely happy, because they will be playing on this field tomorrow and with this celebration, we would also like to wish the Chicago Chargers best of luck in their 2013-2014 season.”

The artificial turf field is part of the building a New Chicago program, a comprehensive \$7.3 billion infrastructure renewal program put forward by Mayor Emanuel. Last year, the Mayor announced a comprehensive plan to build and improve parks throughout the city, so that every Chicagoan is within a ten minute walk of a park.

“The Chicago Park District is responsive to communities’ needs, and this new turf field will provide the Columbus Park area a neighborhood space to enjoy a variety of sports,” said Michael Kelly, Chicago Park District General Superintendent and CEO.

The Columbus Park Artificial turf project is one of more than 800 projects in each of the city’s wards on the Chicago Park District’s current five-year capital improvement plan. More information on the Chicago Park District is available at www.chicagoparkdistrict.com or at 312-742-PLAY.

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Photo Caption - 1: Mayor Emanuel joined Alderman Deborah Graham, Chicago Park District Superintendent Michael Kelly and members of the Austin community today to take part in a ribbon cutting at the site of a new artificial turf field at Columbus Park.

Photo Caption - 2: Mayor Emanuel joined members of the Austin community today to take part in a ribbon cutting of a new artificial turf field at Columbus Park.

Photo Credit: Brooke Collins // City of Chicago