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**MAYOR EMANUEL, CHICAGO PARK DISTRICT ANNOUNCE COMPLETION OF *CHICAGO PLAYS!* PROGRAM, WHICH BUILT OR RESTORED 327 PLAYGROUNDS ACROSS THE CITY**

*Country's most comprehensive playground initiative is completed one year ahead of schedule*

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and Chicago Park District General Superintendent Michael Kelly today announced the completion of Mayor Emanuel's *Chicago Plays!* playground initiative, which built or renovated 327 playgrounds across the City so that every child in every neighborhood is within a 10-minute walk of a world-class park or playground.

"We have strengthened the fabric of communities through one of the most aggressive playground rehabilitation programs in the country, bringing more recreational opportunities and play areas to children in every neighborhood," said Mayor Emanuel. "In Chicago, our investments in parks and playgrounds are ensuring that first-rate opportunities for exercise and play are the expectation for every family - not the exception."

Mayor Emanuel launched the program in March of 2013, announcing that more than 300 playgrounds in communities across Chicago would be built, repaired or refurbished in communities across the City over five years. Just four years later, all 327 playgrounds are now complete - one full year ahead of schedule.

"Completing the *Chicago Plays!* program a year ahead of schedule is a great accomplishment," said Superintendent Kelly. "I would like to thank everyone who helped make this project possible, especially the park advisory councils and community leaders who worked with us."

The program invested an average of \$135,000 in the construction of new playgrounds at each park location for a total cost of approximately \$44 million, allowing for a broad investment in capital projects throughout the city.

Playgrounds vary and were customized based on community input. In addition to the traditional slides and swings, new playgrounds feature unique play elements including zip lines, an omni spinner, challenging climbers and more.

Mayor Emanuel's *Chicago Plays!* program underscores major announcements the Mayor has previously made regarding parks, including his Building on Burnham plan to invest in Chicago's waterfronts, parks and neighborhoods. This plan follows the Mayor's successful expansion of Chicago's park system, which has already added 750 acres of new parkland, 256 new playgrounds and more than \$800 million in capital investment from neighborhoods and private sources.

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