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BLOOMINGDALE PARK AND TRAIL ON TRACK FOR SUMMER GROUNDBREAKING

The long-anticipated Bloomingdale Park and Trail on the Northwest Side is on track for a summer groundbreaking through management and operational agreements approved by the City Council today.

Planned for the top of an abandoned, 2.7-mile railroad viaduct between Ashland and Ridgeway avenues, the \$91 million linear park will be managed by the Chicago Park District through a \$1 lease with the City of Chicago, which recently acquired the viaduct from the Canadian Pacific Railway. The City will maintain the viaduct's walls and bridges and the Park District will maintain the trail and 13 acres of open space planned for the top, according to terms of the 25-year lease approved today.

"The Bloomingdale Park and Trail will be one the most unique and user-friendly open spaces to be developed anywhere in the country," said Mayor Rahm Emanuel. "I am pleased that this project continues to make progress, and I look forward to the start of construction this summer."

The century-old viaduct, which runs adjacent to Bloomingdale Avenue, ceased to be used for regularly scheduled rail operations in 2001. Its redevelopment as a linear park and trail will build on the City's legacy for innovative open spaces by linking four ethnically and economically diverse Chicago neighborhoods (Wicker Park, Bucktown, Humboldt Park and Logan Square) and five neighborhood parks.

Additional agreements approved by Council will secure public access along specific portions of the 16-foot-high structure. One involves the City's \$95,000 purchase of vacant land at 1759 N. Milwaukee Ave., which will be used as one of a half-dozen planned entry points to the trail. The triangular, 2,700-square-foot site's acquisition will be paid for with Open Space Impact Fees.

Another agreement involves easements and City funding for the creation of two new rail spurs on land near the viaduct's western terminus. The spurs, to be paid for with \$2.9 million in Tax Increment Financing, will accommodate rail users who continue to use tracks at the end of the viaduct for car staging and switching operations. The spurs will be

constructed near the Healy and Western passenger stations along Metra's Milwaukee District North Line.

Approximately half of the Bloomingdale's projected development cost is being financed through federal highway and transportation grant funding. The remainder is being raised through a partnership between the City of Chicago, the Chicago Park District, and the Trust for Public Land, the nation's leading organization focused on creating parks and preserving land, which is serving as project manager.

The project could open to visitors by the end of 2014.

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