

## County drawing up plans for Dan Ryan Woods upgrade

Chicago Sun-Times, June 14, 2006, by Courtney Greve

Planning is getting under way for upgrades in the Cook County Forest Preserve District's Dan Ryan Woods.

The district has allotted \$550,000 for infrastructure improvements at the woods, east of Western between 81st and 90th streets, in preparation for a proposed nature center, district spokesman Steve Mayberry said.

Joe O'Connor and Ben Cox, of the Friends of the Forest Preserves, led a walk through the woods Tuesday to compile a list of ways that the money could be spent.

A warming shelter, a walking path and three ravines built by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s have seen better days, O'Connor said. "It's beautiful limestone construction that's borne the brunt of 70 years of wear and tear."

Money has been earmarked for nine picnic shelters to be replaced or repaired and new water and sewer lines. The district's Calumet Division headquarters, at the Dan Ryan Woods, also will get a new heating system and a new roof at the garage, district spokesman Steve Mayberry said.

Meanwhile, designs for a proposed \$38 million nature center are in the works, Mayberry said.

### \$38 MIL. NATURE CENTER PROPOSED

Ald. Ginger Rugai (19th) said she's seeking funds and may consider selling naming rights for the center. The unique geology of the area -- the forest preserve sits on a glacial ridge and is the highest point in the city -- makes it ideal.

A consultant came up with the \$38 million pricetag as part of a study completed in March 2005. The center would include interactive exhibits and activities, such as a mastodon dig, a prairie maze and a butterfly garden. "It's going to take a lot of time and a lot of input from different groups to make this happen," Rugai said.