

# Newark park gets a makeover

STAR-LEDGER STAFF

Richard Partyka fondly recalls childhood summers swimming at Hayes Park East in the Ironbound section of Newark, buying a hot dog for lunch, and getting home in time for dinner.

Years later, as executive director of the Ironbound Boys & Girls Club, Partyka would regularly take 65 summer campers at a time to Hayes Park East, the only outdoor swimming pool in the area.

Over time, however, the pool fell into such disrepair it was deemed unsafe, and Newark officials closed it two years ago. The concrete walls heaved and the buildings on site became worn out. The 4.3-acre property between Raymond Boulevard and Ferry Street at Waydell Street was an eyesore.

"Oh, it was bad," Partyka said. "They didn't have a filtering system that worked effectively. At one point, we said we weren't going to take them anymore. The water looked too nasty."

All that will change after a \$5.2 million renovation project that will result in a new pool, soccer and volleyball courts and a playground at Hayes Park. Bulldozers have begun to demolish the site for the project, slated to be completed by May 2009, said city architect Bob Dooley. Bidding is expected to begin next month.

Funds for the project come from a capital budget allocated for special projects, Dooley said. In all, 23 parks are slated to be renovated with capital money.

The pool, at 150 by 100 feet, will be restructured into a "zero-entry pool," a swimming pool with the child-friendly feature of having a shallow sloping en-

trance, rather than steps or a ladder, Dooley said.

Swimmers or waders enter into a half-inch of water, which gradually deepens as one progresses farther into the pool. The pool will also feature a peninsula with a water slide, he said.

Two of the buildings on-site will be gut-renovated, Dooley said, and new locker rooms, rest-

rooms and offices will be installed. The facilities will also be handicap accessible.

New landscaping and pavers are planned, as well as a soccer field with artificial turf and a volleyball court. The complex will be surrounded by a 10-foot fence.

"The goal is to make the park look brand-new," Dooley said. "Today it looks pretty dreary."