

THE **AUSTIN** VOICE

Volume 29, No. 44

Chicago's Largest West Side Newspapers

Week of July 9, 2014

AGENCIES TEAM WITH LELAND SCHOOL TO LAUNCH **SPACE TO GROW & RECREATE** CAMPUS

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District, Chicago Department of Water Management, and Openlands are teaming up with George Leland School, 512 South Lavergne Avenue, and the Healthy Schools Campaign in creating new recreational and physical education facilities, with gardens and educational outdoor green classrooms.

Leland is one of four *Space to Grow* pilot schools in Chicago having environmental campuses built this summer. The project at Leland has a total price tag of almost \$1.5 million. This marks the first time the City Department of Water Management and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District have ever teamed on a project.

The Leland *Space to Grow* project will transform the schoolyard into a center for outdoor learning, play, and engagement with nature and art. It is also designed to reduce stormwater runoff. The gardens and athletic fields will be constructed with infrastructure that collects rainwater to help stop basement flooding in surrounding residences, reduces stress on the city sewer system, and prevents pollution of Lake Michigan and the Chicago River.

The *Space to Grow* schoolyard will help meet the Chicago Public Schools' commitment to improving student health and addressing childhood obesity by creating new and updating current facilities for recess and physical education. *Space to Grow* is an innovative partnership led by Healthy Schools Campaign and Openlands to transform Chicago schoolyards into centers for outdoor learning, play, and engagement with nature and art, while promoting conservation, community improvement and beautification.

The *Space to Grow* and Openlands project at Leland School includes building athletic playing fields and a running track in unused parking lots between the main building and the annex to the west. A playground for young children will be constructed to replace the dilapidated



*A landscape architect's drawing of the new campus for George Leland Elementary School, 512 S. Lavergne Ave., containing playgrounds, sports fields, physical education space, educational gardens, and infrastructure engineered to prevent residential basement flooding. Construction begins this month. The *Space to Grow* project is a partnership between CPS, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District, Chicago Dept. of Water Management, and Openlands.*

facilities next to the main building at Lavergne & Harrison. Gardens with natural prairie foliage will be planted along the borders of Leland's campus. Construction begins this month and is slated to be completed in the fall.

George Leland Elementary School is a science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) school serving 680 students in Chicago's Austin neighborhood. In 2012, Leland was designated a CPS *Welcoming*

School, absorbing students from the closed Louis Armstrong and Horatio May Schools. Leland was then relocated into May's building.

The Leland School community participated in an inclusive master planning process engaging teachers, students, parents, area residents, and community partners. The west side of Leland's redesigned schoolyard will include playgrounds, a half-court basketball area, a jogging track, new and

relocated playground equipment, a rain garden, new access gates to the campus and a designated drop-off area, learning garden beds for growing vegetables, a paver patio, and a butterfly garden with native plants. The garden will have designated areas for each grade level, with each grade given responsibility for planning and maintaining their section of the garden.

Dr. Loretta Brown-Lawrence is Principal of George Leland Elementary School.



Old & dilapidated playground equipment is being replaced in a state-of-the-art exercise & recreation area at Leland School as part of an innovative campus redevelopment. (Photo by Brad)



The asphalt running track in disrepair is being replaced by playing fields and outdoor physical education facilities, bordered by attractive and educational gardens for Leland students. (Photo by Brad)



Rep. Camille Lilly, Ald. Deborah Graham, Metro. Water Reclam. District V.P. Barbara McGowan, Rep. La Shawn K. Ford, Leland Principal Dr. Loretta Brown-Lawrence, and representatives of Openlands & the Chicago Dept. of Water Mgt. unveil the campus redevelopment plan. (Photo by Brad)