



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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CPS schools selected for schoolyard transformations in 2019



Students and teachers at Webster Elementary School in the Lawndale neighborhood review plans for a new schoolyard made possible through the Space to Grow partnership.

Five Chicago elementary schoolyards will receive presents in the form of major campus upgrades to improve outdoor learning amenities and play areas while addressing stormwater management through the Space to Grow partnership.

Partners Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD), Chicago Public Schools (CPS), the Chicago Department of Water Management (CDWM), Openlands and the Healthy Schools Campaign have selected a diverse set of schools to be transformed in 2019, including:

- Ashe Elementary School, 8505 S. Ingleside Ave.
- Nash Elementary School, 4837 W. Erie St. and KIPP Academy Chicago, 4818 W. Ohio St. (two schools, one campus)
- Ninos Heroes Elementary School, 8344 S. Commercial Ave.
- Webster Elementary School, 4055 W. Arthington St.
- Westcott Elementary School, 409 W. 80th St.

“We are excited to welcome these schools to this engaging program that offers students with a wonderful place to play and an important education into green infrastructure and stormwater management,” said MWRD President Mari-



(L-R): Danielle Russell, Community Conservation Associate, Openlands; Meg Kelly, Senior Manager, Healthy Schools; Comm. Kari K. Steele; Dr. Guillory; Briana Villarrubia, Green Schoolyard Coordinator, Openlands; and Kenneth Varner, Engagement Coordinator, Healthy Schools Campaign at Nash Elementary School.

yana Spyropoulos. “We look forward to partnering with the school communities to incorporate design elements that meet their priorities and address stormwater.”

Space to Grow partners held a series of open house meetings to provide parents and community members an opportunity to view the first draft of conceptual plans, provide input and ask questions of the design team at the selected schools.

“This partnership has already completed 15 schoolyards and not only have students benefited by having an attractive place to play and learn, but the neighboring community has stormwater benefits that are already helping to reduce flooding,” said MWRD Commissioner Kari K. Steele. “I was so honored to sit in on planning sessions for the new schoolyards that will be transformed next year. We appreciate being able to provide this gift to the students, faculty, and community.”

“Five new Space to Grow schoolyards across Chicago means new access to community green space, new school gardens and outdoor classrooms, and new (continued)

CPS schools selected for schoolyard transformations in 2019 *(cont.)*



Project Manager Justin Rossman of Site Design Group explains the highlights of Ashe Elementary School's planned garden to Dean Alonistiotis, MWRD Aide to Commissioner Kimberly Du Buclet.

tools to address urban flooding, which is only becoming more common with climate change,” said Daniella Pereira, Vice President of Community Conservation at Openlands. “We are excited for the new schoolyards to be designed with the families, school communities, and aldermen that make this possible, and we want to thank the capital partners at CPS, Chicago Department of Water Management, and MWRD for their continued support.”

Space to Grow transforms Chicago schoolyards into beautiful, vibrant and functional community spaces for physical activity, outdoor learning, environmental literacy and engagement with art, while addressing neighborhood flooding issues and engaging the community. In addition to providing community members in low-income neighborhoods with safe outdoor spaces to play and stay active, Space to Grow schoolyards help CPS schools meet daily recess and physical education requirements for elementary schools. These green schoolyards also provide a daily connection to nature, which research has shown helps reduce stress and improve academic performance.

“We are excited to be starting on the design process of five new schoolyards,” said Claire Marcy, Senior Vice President at Healthy Schools Campaign. “We look forward to working closely with staff and parents at these schools to ensure the new schoolyard is incorporated into physical education and recess plans, to support the formation of garden teams to take ownership of the gardens, and to support the development of parent leadership.”



Commissioner Kari K. Steele discusses the new schoolyard that will be designed and constructed in 2019 at Nash Elementary School with Dr. Sidney Guillory, Assistant Principal.

The multi-faceted projects also work to reduce flooding, reduce basement backups, reduce the load on the combined sewer system, and educate students and neighbors about green infrastructure techniques and purpose. The green schoolyards incorporate landscape features that capture a significant amount of rainfall, helping keep the city's water resources clean and resulting in less neighborhood flooding. Each Space to Grow schoolyard uses special surfaces and design elements to capture rainwater. The partners completed six schools in 2018, bringing the total to 15 schoolyards that combined have the ability to capture 2,767,389 gallons of storage, equivalent to 4.2 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

Qualified schools are located in a part of the city that the CDWM has determined to be at high risk for flooding. The schools are also in need of a playground; have at least 30,000 square feet of outdoor space to build a green schoolyard; and have no major construction projects planned.

“It may be cold outside, but now is the time for Space to Grow schools to consider all options for improving schoolyards and addressing stormwater management,” said MWRD Commissioner Kimberly Du Buclet. “We welcome the participation of parents, community members and other stakeholders as we rely on input for a vibrant school and resilient neighborhood. These are long-term investments we are making in communities across the city of Chicago.”

For more information on the program, visit www.spaceto-growchicago.org.

Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

Established in 1889, the MWRD (www.mwrld.org) is an award winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois.