



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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South Side schoolyard transformation mitigates flooding, improves water quality, learning environment and play areas

Space to Grow benefits Mann Elementary in the South Chicago neighborhood



MWRD President Kari K. Steele, Commissioners Debra Shore and Kimberly Du Buclet, Chicago Public Schools CEO Pedro Martinez, Healthy Schools Campaign Senior Vice President Claire Marcy, Openlands Vice President for Community Conservation Daniella Pereira and Chicago Department of Water Management Deputy Commissioner William Cheeks joined 8th Ward Ald. Michelle Harris, state Rep. Marcus Evans Jr., interim Principal Karon Purkett and students at Mann Elementary School cut the ribbon on a new Space to Grow schoolyard.

Space to Grow partners officially unveiled a new schoolyard transformation, taking an old barren playground area and converting it into a vibrant place to play, learn and benefit from the power of green infrastructure by soaking up more water.

Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) President Kari K. Steele and MWRD Commissioners Debra Shore and Kimberly Du Buclet joined Chicago Public Schools (CPS) CEO Pedro Martinez and Space to Grow partners from the Chicago Department of Water Management, CPS, Openlands and Healthy Schools Campaign to celebrate the completion of a new schoolyard at Horace Mann Elementary School, at 8050 S. Chappel Ave. Space to



MWRD President Kari K. Steele addresses the crowd alongside Commissioners Kimberly Du Buclet (L) and Debra Shore (R).

Grow transforms Chicago schoolyards into beautiful and functional community spaces for physical activity, outdoor learning, environmental literacy and engagement with art. The spaces also address neighborhood flooding issues by using special surfaces and design elements to capture more rainwater.

“We are thrilled that in addition to all of what is below the ground that these talented students now have a beautiful space to play above ground,” said MWRD President Kari K. Steele. “Thank you to all of the partners and the entire school community that helped build and will maintain this beautiful space.”

Mann’s schoolyard can hold 271,203 gallons of stormwater per rain event and includes: an artificial turf field, porous playground surfacing, two large rain gardens, a nature-play area, and an outdoor classroom with permeable pavers. The campus renovation (*continued*)

South Side schoolyard transformation at Mann Elementary, *cont.*



reduces basement backups, reduces the load on the combined sewer system and educates students and neighbors about green infrastructure techniques and purpose.

“As a former CPS student who attended neighborhood schools, I truly understand what this beautiful new outdoor space at Horace Mann will mean for student learning and the entire community,” said CPS CEO Pedro Martinez.

“The green schoolyard at Horace Mann will incorporate landscape features that capture a significant amount of rainfall, helping keep our water resources clean and resulting in less neighborhood flooding,” said MWRD Commissioner Du Buclet. “We thank our Space to Grow partners for their commitment to educating our

students and protecting our water environment.”

Space to Grow has now completed 27 schoolyards, with three more set to be completed in the fall. These 30 schoolyards bring the grand total of storage volume to 5.6 million gallons per rain event, equal to 8.4 Olympic-size pools or 111,108 bathtubs per rain event.

“Like the students at Horace Mann Elementary School, we have been anxiously awaiting the completion of this state-of-the-art schoolyard – a beautiful place for children to play, which will also capture stormwater, reduce flooding, and improve water quality in our streams and waterways,” said MWRD Commissioner Debra Shore. “We hope students and their teachers and families enjoy this wonderful space to grow.”

Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

Established in 1889, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) is an award-winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois. Learn more at mwrld.org.