



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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Space to Grow® program celebrates Halloween ribbon cutting at Mays Elementary Academy in Englewood

Stormwater is not so spooky when managed sustainably by MWRD and partners

Space to Grow® partners, including the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD), completed their third of four schoolyard transformations in 2022 and 33rd total, thrilling students and families with a new place to learn and play, while also mitigating stormwater through permeable play areas and rain gardens.

Space to Grow® partners from the Chicago Department of Water Management, Chicago Public Schools (CPS), Healthy Schools Campaign and Openlands joined MWRD President Kari K. Steele and Commissioners Mariyana Spyropoulos and Kimberly Du Buclet to cut the ribbon on the new schoolyard at Benjamin E. Mays Elementary Academy, 6656 S. Normal Blvd. on Halloween. Thanks to the upgrades, Mays's schoolyard can now hold 158,271 gallons of stormwater per rain event.

"Congratulations to Mays Academy, Principal Hannah, students and teachers, and the larger Englewood community who have a new place to play, learn and manage stormwater," said MWRD President Kari K. Steele. "The new features Space to Grow® partners installed will erase the puddles on your playground and offer an education on the strength of partnerships, green infrastructure and resilience."

The new schoolyard includes an artificial turf field, basketball court, porous playground surfacing, a nature play area, several play hills and rain gardens, and an outdoor classroom. Rain gardens line the perimeter of the schoolyard, protecting the school from flooding and improving local water quality by intercepting runoff before it can run down streets and sidewalks and overwhelm combined sewer systems that can overflow into waterways during heavy storms.



MWRD President Kari K. Steele, Commissioner Kimberly Du Buclet and Commissioner Mariyana Spyropoulos joined Space to Grow project partners, 6th Ward Ald. Roderick Sawyer and Principal Tanyelle L. Hannah to cut the ribbon on the new schoolyard at Benjamin E. Mays Elementary Academy.

Because of the new features, the \$1.5-million schoolyard conversion can reduce flooding, reduce basement backups, reduce the load on the sewer system, and educate students and neighbors about green infrastructure techniques and purpose.

"We are grateful for the collaboration of our Space to Grow® partners who see a need for improving every inch of our schoolyards and turning them (*contin-*



Space to Grow® program celebrates ribbon cutting in Englewood, *cont.*



Mays Academy students participated in an assembly and then ran out to enjoy a new schoolyard delivered via partners from Space to Grow.

ued) into vibrant places to play and hold stormwater,” said MWRD Commissioner Mariyana Spyropoulos. “As we battle unprecedented rainfall brought on by climate change, we appreciate this new education in green infrastructure and the Mays Academy community’s willingness to embrace it and learn about it.”

Mays is the third of four Chicago Public Schools benefiting from the Space to Grow® partnership

in 2022. Once all four schools have been unveiled in November, a total of 34 Space to Grow® schools will have been completed since 2014. This brings the grand total of storage volume to 6.5 million gallons per rain event. This design retention capacity is equivalent to 9.9 Olympic-size pools or 130,731 bathtubs per rain event.

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.