



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

# Press Release

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For immediate release

November 14, 2019

## Space to Grow partners transform Webster Elementary schoolyard

*MWRD and partners celebrate 17th Space to Grow school to mitigate flooding*



*Webster Elementary students and staff joined Space to Grow partners to cut the ribbon on the new schoolyard that includes a new playground, turf field, garden area, track and basketball court.*

A West Side elementary schoolyard has been transformed by Space to Grow partners and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) to provide several new places to play, learn, cultivate gardens and mitigate flooding.

The Space to Grow partners, including the MWRD, Chicago Department of Water Management, Chicago Public Schools (CPS), Openlands and Healthy Schools Campaign, rebuilt the schoolyard at Daniel Webster Elementary School, 4055 W. Arthington St. in the Lawndale neighborhood, to retain more than 151,000 gallons of water per rain event.

Webster becomes the 17th school that Space to Grow partners have upgraded into vibrant and functional community spaces for physical activity, outdoor learning, environmental literacy and engagement with art, while also addressing neighborhood flooding issues and engaging the community. Space to Grow is now halfway to a goal of transforming 34 schoolyards through 2022. The program aspires to change the way

schoolyards are built to provide multiple community benefits, including stormwater and basement back-up mitigation.

“It might be unseasonably cold out, but it’s still a beautiful day to play at Webster Elementary School and a chance to learn year round about the sustainable impacts of green infrastructure,” said MWRD President Kari K. Steele. “We thank Space to Grow and our partners who strive to improve educational experiences at Chicago Public Schools and empower our communities to better manage stormwater and improve local water quality.”

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 Space to Grow transformation at Webster *(continued)*

## Space to Grow partners transform Webster Elementary schoolyard, *cont.*



is replete with new rain gardens, a turf field, basketball court, observation wells for groundwater monitoring, revitalized raised garden beds, an outdoor classroom space, native landscaping and trees, two playgrounds for two different age ranges and an underground storage and infiltration chamber that conveys impervious surface runoff into green infrastructure elements.

Since completing the first schoolyard in 2014, the Space to Grow has apportioned more than 3 million gallons of stormwater storage at 17 schoolyards combined. Three more schoolyards are expected to be finished by the end of 2019.

“These green schoolyard projects make a major difference in the lives of the students, and the fact that the green space is open to the community while providing a stormwater management benefit is a win-win for everyone,” said Vice President Barbara McGowan.

In addition to providing community members with outdoor spaces to play and stay active, Space to Grow schoolyards help CPS meet daily recess and physical education requirements for elementary schools. These green schoolyards also provide a daily connection to nature, which can help reduce stress and improve academic performance. For more information, visit [www.spacetogrowchicago.org](http://www.spacetogrowchicago.org).

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### ***Recovering Resources, Transforming Water***

*Established in 1889, the MWRD ([www.mwrdd.org](http://www.mwrdd.org)) is an award winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois.*