



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District *of* Greater Chicago

# Media Advisory

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## MWRD, city leaders, community to unveil new Morrill Elementary schoolyard

**Who:** Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) Commissioners  
Jerry Adelman, President and CEO, Openlands  
Michael Beyer, Principal, Morrill Elementary School  
Rochelle Davis, President and CEO, Healthy Schools Campaign  
Morrill Elementary School students and members of the community

**Where:** Morrill Elementary School, 6011 S. Rockwell St., Chicago, IL

**When:** Saturday, October 11: Community Planting from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Ribbon Cutting at 1 p.m.

**What:** Morrill Elementary School will unveil its brand new schoolyard after more than a year of community planning and several months of construction. The new grounds are part of a pilot initiative, Space to Grow: Greening Chicago Schoolyards, co-managed by Chicago-based nonprofits Healthy Schools Campaign and Openlands and funded by the MWRD, Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and the Chicago Dept. of Water Management.

The Space to Grow program seeks to transform Chicago's schoolyards into vibrant outdoor spaces. The renovation included tearing up large sections of crumbling asphalt and neglected playground equipment in a flood prone neighborhood, and installing a multifaceted "green" schoolyard. The new schoolyard includes a turf field, jogging track and basketball court, and age-appropriate play equipment. The grounds also feature areas for outdoor learning and exploration, including an outdoor classroom, vegetable gardens and rain gardens. The schoolyard was designed to include ground surfaces and landscape features that absorb large amounts of water, which will result in less neighborhood flooding.

Prior to the ribbon cutting ceremony, community members and volunteers will spend the day at Morrill planting bulbs and flowers and spreading mulch in the gardens.

"As the MWRD works to reduce flooding throughout the county, the Space to Grow campaign will help students, teachers and area residents understand the value of stormwater management," said MWRD Board of Commissioners President Kathleen Therese Meany. "Green infrastructure is important to everyone and is a valuable educational tool."

"Space to Grow is a diverse partnership to improve student health by creating exciting outdoor spaces for recess and PE, and to bring communities together in healthy and active ways," said Healthy Schools Campaign President and CEO Rochelle Davis. "We know that healthy students are better learners, and it's imperative that we incorporate student health into all aspects of the school experience, and that literally starts with the school grounds."

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“Space to Grow is an example of the power of what can be accomplished for our communities when multiple partners work together in concert,” said Openlands President and CEO Jerry Adelman. “Instead of looking at the problem of stormwater flooding in Chicago neighborhoods as a single issue to be addressed by one organization or agency, the program seizes the opportunity with dynamic solutions that not only address flooding, but create multiple benefits for students, neighborhoods, and natural systems in our city.”

In addition to Morrill, Space to Grow pilot schools include: Grissom Elementary School in Chicago’s Hegewisch neighborhood, Leland Elementary School in Austin, and Schmid Elementary School in Pullman. Each school was engaged in a months-long planning process during which school staff, students and community members provided a vision for their schoolyard. The schoolyards were then designed and constructed to meet the unique needs and visions of each community. Construction crews broke ground in July at each of the four schools.

“When I first came to Morrill three years ago, I noticed the giant asphalt lot. Soccer, flag football, cross country -- those are all difficult activities when all you have is an asphalt field,” said Morrill Elementary School Principal Michael Beyer. “Having a common space like this brings us back to the day when there was a community center where everyone interacted. Our Space to Grow schoolyard will be a focal point for the community to meet, play, stay active, learn, and engage kids in healthy and productive activities. A green space like this will have an immeasurable impact on our community.”

Other scheduled community planting days and ribbon-cutting ceremonies include:

Saturday, October 18

**Grissom Elementary School Community Planting Day and Ribbon Cutting Ceremony**

12810 S. Escanaba Ave., Chicago, IL

9 a.m. - 3 p.m., Community Planting; 3 p.m. - 3:30 p.m., Ribbon Cutting

Wednesday, October 22

**Schmid Elementary School Ribbon Cutting Ceremony**

9755 S. Greenwood Ave., Chicago, IL 4 - 4:30 p.m.

Saturday, October 25

**Leland Elementary School Community Planting Day and Ribbon Cutting Ceremony**

512 S. Laverne Ave., Chicago, IL

9 a.m. - 1 p.m., community planting; 1 p.m. - 1:30 p.m., Ribbon Cutting

To learn more about Space to Grow, please visit [www.spacetogrowchicago.org](http://www.spacetogrowchicago.org), contact Jeremy Borling at (312) 419-1810 ([Jeremy@healthyschoolscampaign.org](mailto:Jeremy@healthyschoolscampaign.org)) or Brandon Hayes at (312) 863-6260 ([bhayes@openlands.org](mailto:bhayes@openlands.org)).

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