



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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Rotterdam delegation tours Space to Grow schoolyards

Partnership between MWRD, Openlands, Healthy Schools Campaign, CPS and DWM draws international intrigue for recreation and stormwater management



During a visit to Wadsworth STEM Elementary School, (Front, L to R): Dutch Consul General Louis Piët; 8th grade student Satara Hale; Rotterdam Mayor Ahmed Aboutaleb; 7th grade student Aniyah Dyer and 8th grade student Alicia Williams. (Back, L to R): Middle School Science Teacher Pannha Sann; Principal Rashid Shabazz; Rotterdam Director of General Public Works Gerben Wigmans; Openlands Green Schoolyards Manager Kristin Lo Verde; Healthy Schools Campaign Senior Vice President Claire Marcy; Openlands President and CEO Jerry Adelman; MWRD Principal Civil Engineer Jim Yurik; Space to Grow Senior Manager Meg Kelly and Rotterdam Manager of International Relations Martin Dukker tour the new recreational amenities delivered by Space to Grow.

A delegation from Rotterdam, Netherlands recently toured new Space to Grow schoolyards to learn how a unique Chicago area partnership has sought ways to im-

prove urban recreational opportunities on school campuses, while managing stormwater and protecting the environment. *(continued)*

Rotterdam delegation tours Space to Grow schoolyards (cont.)

The delegation, including Rotterdam Mayor Ahmed Aboutaleb and Dutch Consul General Louis Piët, toured Wadsworth STEM Elementary School, 6650 S. Ellis Ave., and Davis Elementary School, 3014 W. 39th Place, with Space to Grow partners and students and faculty.

Space to Grow was created through a partnership between the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD), Healthy Schools Campaign, Openlands, Chicago Department of Water Management (DWM) and Chicago Public Schools (CPS). The program works to transform CPS grounds into beautiful, vibrant and functional community spaces for physical activity, outdoor learning, environmental literacy and engagement with art, while addressing neighborhood flooding issues and community participation.

“We are proud to showcase our work at Space to Grow schools as sustainable alternatives to the former asphalt lots that are now thriving public spaces that promote outdoor recreation and learning, improved stormwater management and fun at recess,” said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. “Thank you to Mayor Aboutaleb and the Rotterdam delegation for visiting these now world famous schoolyards and investing in stormwater management.”

The award winning program has been regaled both locally and nationally for its collaboration, flood mitigation, design, innovation and green infrastructure elements and has drawn interest from similar projects in Rotterdam, Paris and London.

“Space to Grow provides students and their families with safe outdoor spaces to play and stay active, connects them to nature and an education in stormwater management and helps schools meet daily recess and physical education requirements, reducing stress and improving academic performance,” said Healthy Schools Campaign Senior Vice President Claire Marcy. “We are now seeing how these Space to Grow trademarks resonate with cities around the world.”

The partnership is unveiling six new schoolyards in 2018, capturing approximately 1,280,025 gallons per storm event. Once completed, there will be 15 total schoolyards completed that have the ability to capture a combined 2,762,144 million gallons of storage, equivalent to 4.2 Olympic-size swimming pools.

“Integrating safe playgrounds in city planning is a top priority in Rotterdam,” said Mayor Aboutaleb. “We hope



(L to R): At Nathan Davis Elementary School, Martin Dukker, manager of International Relations for the city of Rotterdam; Space to Grow Senior Manager Meg Kelly; Rotterdam Director of General Public Works Gerben Wigmans; Healthy Schools Campaign Senior Vice President Claire Marcy; Nathan Davis Elementary School Principal Rocío Rosales-Gaskin; Rotterdam Mayor Ahmed Aboutaleb; Openlands Green Schoolyards Manager Kristin Lo Verde; Consul General Louis Piët of the Netherlands; and MWRD Principal Civil Engineer Jim Yurik tour the new schoolyard complete with rain gardens, playgrounds and play area.

this exchange of expertise can help us construct dynamic schoolyards inspired by Space to Grow.”

At Wadsworth, designers, landscapers and construction workers took a former 38,000-square-foot play area covered entirely in impervious asphalt and a 2,400-square-foot playground on rubber tiles and transformed them into an attractive athletic field with artificial turf, a running track, a basketball court, a playground with poured in-place rubberized surface and vegetable gardens.

The new features at Davis Elementary include a turf field and track, playground equipment, basketball courts, outdoor classroom area, rain gardens and native gardens.

“Space to Grow demonstrates that smart partnerships lead to strong programs that help to make neighborhoods greener and more livable,” said Openlands President and CEO Jerry Adelman. “Cities can and must lead the way toward combatting the effects of climate change, including flooding. We are thrilled that Space to Grow can help provide an example of such leadership.”

On Sept. 20, Space to Grow partners unveiled their fourth completed school this year with a ribbon cutting ceremony at Field Elementary School, 7019 N. Ashland Blvd. Because of the new upgrades, Field School will now be able to hold 422,169 gallons of water.

Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

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