



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

Allison Fore

Public and Intergovernmental Affairs Officer

312.751.6626

allison.fore@mwrdd.org

100 East Erie Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611

For immediate release

December 10, 2018

Partnership inspires Space to Grow at Jefferson Park school; Farnsworth Elementary School is sixth CPS schoolyard to be transformed in 2018



MWRD Commissioner Frank Avila gives remarks before joining Space to Grow partners in cutting the ceremonial ribbon on the Farnsworth Elementary School schoolyard on Dec. 7.



Commissioner Avila joins 45th Ward Alderman John Arena and other Space to Grow partners in cutting the ceremonial ribbon on the Farnsworth Elementary School schoolyard on Dec. 7.

Space to Grow partners unveiled the sixth schoolyard transformation in Chicago this year, improving outdoor access for students at a Jefferson Park neighborhood school that can now retain more than 156,077 gallons of stormwater per rain event and help the community address flooding.

The schoolyard at James B. Farnsworth Elementary School, 5414 N. Linder Ave., underwent a dynamic overhaul thanks to the Space to Grow partnership created through the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD), Chicago Public Schools (CPS), the Chicago Department of Water Management, Openlands and the Healthy Schools Campaign. The vibrant upgrades made through Space to Grow enhance the campus with functional community spaces for physical activity, outdoor learning, environmental literacy and art engagement, while addressing neighborhood flooding issues and community participation.

“Thanks to our Space to Grow partners and the students, faculty and families of Farnsworth Elementary for embracing our mission to tackle stormwater management issues and

work together to deliver exceptional learning opportunities,” said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. “We hope Farnsworth students enjoy their new play areas that come with a valuable education into protecting our water environment.”

Farnsworth marks the sixth CPS campus transformation completed across Chicago in 2018 by Space to Grow partners and the 15th total since 2014. The six schools will capture a combined 1.28 million gallons of water per storm event. The 15 schoolyards combined can capture more than 2.7 million gallons, equivalent to 4.2 Olympic-sized swimming pools.

In addition to capturing 156,077 gallons per storm event, the Farnsworth School upgrades include several features:

- Permeable turf playfield with gravel storage underneath and a three-lane track circling it
 - Permeable rubber play surface and new playground equipment with age-appropriate play areas for both children 2-5 years old as well as 5-12 years old; handicap-accessible ramps, platforms and bridges; a swing set and benches
- (continued)*

Partnership inspires Space to Grow at Jefferson Park school, *cont.*



Farnsworth Elementary School students play on new equipment incorporated as part of a new playground.

- Hills and play mounds with both grass and rubber surfacing
- Edible plants garden planters, some of which are specially designed to be handicap accessible
- Outdoor classroom with boulder seating and wheelchair seating areas
- Bioretention areas with bioswales, three rain gardens and native planting areas
- Gravel walking path, interpretive signage, hopscotch and foursquare striped areas
- New handicap-accessible parking spots

Research has shown that connecting students to nature can help reduce stress and improve academic performance. The new schoolyards also educate students and neighbors about

green infrastructure techniques and purpose. 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. As a result of the improvements, Space to Grow reduces flooding, reduces basement backups and reduces the load on the combined sewer system.

Space to Grow organizers are currently reviewing applications for new schoolyard transformations with more schools to be announced soon for future construction. For more information, visit www.spacetogrowchicago.org.

###

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.