



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

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Space to Grow transformation benefits Nash/KIPP schoolyard to mitigate flooding



Space to Grow partners, students, teachers and family members pause before cutting the ribbon on the new playground.



Enthusiastic cheerleaders offer support to complement the day's ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Two Austin neighborhood schools sharing a campus will enjoy a new space to grow and learn from, thanks to a unique partnership with the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) that works to transform schoolyards to enhance play areas, improve educational opportunities and mitigate flooding.

Space to Grow partners celebrated the completion of their 18th schoolyard improvement with a ribbon cutting to benefit Nash Elementary School, 4837 W. Erie St., and KIPP Academy Chicago, 4818 W. Ohio St. The Space to Grow partners, including the MWRD, Chicago Department of Water Management, Chicago Public Schools (CPS), Openlands and Healthy Schools Campaign strive to turn these schoolyards into vibrant, functional spaces for physical activity, outdoor learning, environmental literacy and engagement with art, while addressing flooding issues.

“Thanks to the investment and coordination of our

partners at Space to Grow and buy-in from Nash Elementary School and KIPP Academy Chicago and the greater Austin community, we now have a beautiful place to play that also addresses flooding and improves local water quality,” said MWRD President Kari K. Steele.

The new permeable improvements at the schoolyard can hold as much as 152,841 gallons per rain event. Since completing the first schoolyard in 2014, Space to Grow has apportioned more than 3 million gallons of stormwater storage at 18 schoolyards combined. This year Space to Grow partners will complete five schools to retain more than 881,000 gallons per storm event. Two more schoolyards are expected to be finished by the end of 2019.

“Given our heavy rainfall in 2019, now is the time to begin addressing stormwater management and where better to start than educating our young students about the importance of green infrastructure,” said Vice President Barbara McGowan. *(continued)*

Space to Grow transformation benefits Nash/KIPP schoolyards, *cont.*



MWRD President Kari K. Steele helps students on new playground equipment.



Students complete activities with MWRD Public Affairs Specialist Rebecca Wooley (center).

The schoolyard upgrades at Nash and KIPP will feature new rain gardens, a turf field, basketball court, hopscotch and four-square play area, observation wells for groundwater monitoring and citizen science, raised garden beds, an outdoor classroom area, native landscaping and trees, playgrounds for two separate age ranges, nature play areas with logs, and an underground storage and infiltration chamber that conveys impervious surface runoff into green infrastructure elements.

Each Space to Grow schoolyard uses special surfaces and design elements to capture rainwater and reduce flooding, basement backups and the load on the combined sewer system. Space to Grow schoolyards also help CPS meet daily recess and physical education requirements by providing outdoor spaces to play and stay active. 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.

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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.