



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 3, 2019

## Space to Grow partnership brightens schoolyard at Niños Heroes



*MWRD President Kari K. Steele and Commissioner Debra Shore joined 7th Ward Ald. Greg Mitchell and Space to Grow partners from the Chicago Public Schools, Openlands, Healthy Schools Campaign, and Chicago Department of Water Management to celebrate the completion of a new green schoolyard at Niños Heroes Elementary School.*

A South Chicago neighborhood school has reason to be thankful this year, as Space to Grow partners and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) delivered a new state-of-the-art schoolyard and playground designed to retain water and mitigate flooding.

Niños Heroes Elementary School, 8344 S. Commercial Ave., received a dramatic schoolyard upgrade that incorporates new permeable features that will allow the campus to retain more than 179,000 gallons of water

each time it rains. The Space to Grow partners, including the MWRD, Chicago Department of Water Management, Chicago Public Schools (CPS), Openlands and Healthy Schools Campaign convert CPS schoolyards into vibrant, functional spaces for physical activity, outdoor learning, environmental literacy and engagement with art, while addressing flooding issues.

“The campus at Niños Heroes Elementary School is brighter and resilient today and the students are a little more active and educated on the powers of *(continued)*”

## Space to Grow partnership brightens schoolyard at Niños Heroes, *cont.*



green infrastructure, thanks to the investment and coordination of our partners at Space to Grow and support from the school community,” said MWRD President Kari K. Steele.

The new schoolyard features a turf field, playground, basketball court, a grass play mound, an outdoor classroom, native landscaping and trees, observation wells for groundwater monitoring and citizen science, and underground storage and infiltration chamber and additional green infrastructure to collect water from the existing impervious pavement.

This is the 19th schoolyard completed through the partnership since 2014, including the fourth Space to Grow schoolyard unveiled in 2019. With one more school to complete in 2019, the partnership will be able to capture more than 3.6 million gallons of stormwater per rain event.

“Space to Grow is a partnership with multiple benefits,” said MWRD Commissioner Debra Shore. “The students now have a beautiful place to learn, play, and grow, while the Water Reclamation District provides additional stormwater storage through this project, im-



proving the quality of life for the whole neighborhood, reducing flooding and eliminating frequent puddles.”

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](http://www.spacetogrowchicago.org).

###

### *Recovering Resources, Transforming Water*

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