



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

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## Projects highlight MWRD's green infrastructure commitment

*MWRD selects 10 projects to mitigate community flooding, improve public spaces*

Following a call for local projects, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) has selected 10 area green infrastructure installations to support, with an additional 13 projects identified for future consideration. The 10 projects represent a commitment of more than \$7.6 million in estimated construction costs to bolster resilient communities throughout Cook County and spread a growing allegiance to green infrastructure initiatives to stem the tide of unpredictable rain patterns.

The annual selection process for the MWRD Green Infrastructure Program this year placed an added emphasis on communities located in disproportionately impacted areas (DIA), which are defined as low-to-moderate income areas that may be more susceptible to flooding. As part of its 2021-2025 Strategic Plan, the MWRD has strived to increase its presence in DIAs, while also identifying and eliminating barriers to MWRD participation.

"We congratulate these 10 partners on being selected and thank them for their partnership, contributions and attention to green infrastructure solutions," said MWRD President Kari K. Steele. "These projects incorporate permeable surfaces, provide multiple benefits to help mitigate flooding, protect area water quality and aesthetically improve public spaces."

The MWRD continues to make investments in green infrastructure across the Chicago area to complement its vast network of gray infrastructure established through the MWRD's traditional collection systems, Tunnel and Reservoir Plan (TARP) and 33 stormwater detention reservoirs throughout Cook County. In 2022, the MWRD completed 22 green infrastructure partnership projects, bringing its total to more than 90 since 2015. These projects will retain more than 14.7 million gallons of stormwater volume per rain event.

The MWRD's green infrastructure projects vary in size and scope and can include roadside bioswales and rain gardens,



*Crews install brick pavers as part of a green infrastructure installation on Berry Lane in Flossmoor, a project partially funded through the MWRD's Green Infrastructure Program. The MWRD has announced a new round of projects to help fund in 2023.*

green roofs, permeable pavement alleys and parking lots, green streetscapes, and eco-orchards. Green infrastructure mimics the natural environment by capturing water and allowing it to infiltrate into the ground before it enters the traditional conveyance system. This helps to reduce the amount of water flowing through the gray infrastructure of pipes that can be overwhelmed by intense rain events.

These projects reduce runoff to combined sewer systems. When overwhelmed, these sewers can overflow and pollute local waterways. Green infrastructure also reduces runoff volumes and improves water quality in areas served by separate sewer service designed to direct stormwater to local waterways. In addition, green infrastructure can make public spaces more attractive and provide social benefits that enhance the livability of communities.

"We thank new and old community partners for submitting applications and playing a part in our mission to address stormwater management and protect our water environment through new and innovative green infrastructure strategies that strengthen our communities," said *(continued)*

## Projects highlight MWRD’s green infrastructure commitment, *cont.*

MWRD Commissioner Yumeka Brown. “It will take a variety of solutions, innovations, green and gray infrastructure, and partnerships like these to address climate change and increased rainfall. We look forward to advancing these projects in 2023.”

Municipalities, townships, and other governmental agencies submitted 34 green infrastructure project proposals during the MWRD’s call for projects over the summer of 2022. Additional outreach was made to DIA communities and municipalities which had not previously partnered with the MWRD.

The MWRD Engineering Department reviewed each application and prioritized the eligible projects based on factors including the total retention capacity, drainage area, project visibility and outreach, flooding prevalence, commitment to maintenance, separate or combined sewer area, and median income of the community.

The MWRD intends to provide partial funding towards the construction of the selected green infrastructure installations on public property. Combined, the 10 selected projects will provide the capacity to retain more than 800,000 gallons of water per rain event. Through the selection process, the MWRD also identified an additional 13 applicant projects as suitable for future green infrastructure program partnerships, depending on budget and schedule considerations. The MWRD will assess the feasibility of providing additional assistance to these 13 potential partners, and report back to them.

The MWRD has received approval from the MWRD Board of Commissioners to negotiate and enter into intergovernmental agreements (IGAs) for each project recommended. Project partners are expected to provide long-term operation and maintenance of the installed green infrastructure practices. Where applicable, the IGAs will also require that the



*A permeable parking lot utilizing brick pavers and bioswale islands at Schuth’s Grove in the Forest Preserves of Cook County was completed in 2022 with funding from the MWRD through its Green Infrastructure Program.*

goals of the MWRD’s Minority-owned Business Enterprises, Women-owned Business Enterprises, Small Business Enterprises and Veteran-owned Business Enterprises be met for the MWRD-funded portion of the project.

Beginning in 2023, the MWRD plans to hold a new pre-application process for green infrastructure projects. The pre-application process will help the applicants and the MWRD determine if a potential project fits within the scope of the MWRD’s partnership program. This pre-application process will involve a short set of questions about a potential project or flooding problem area that does not require highly technical information be submitted. The MWRD’s Engineering Department and the Environmental Justice Section will coordinate outreach with DIA communities and assist them when navigating through the new pre-application process.

For a complete list and description of the MWRD’s selected green infrastructure projects, see below:

Organization	Project/description
City of Blue Island	Green Alley Project
Village of Broadview	Village Hall Parking Lot Green Infrastructure Improvement Project
City of Hickory Hills	Hickory Hills Police Department Parking Lot Permeable Pavement Project
Village of Lincolnwood	Green Alley Project
Morton College	Morton College Exterior Improvements
Village of North Riverside	Village Commons Parking Lots Permeable Paver Project
City of Northlake	Millennium Park Permeable Parking Lot Project
Village of River Forest	Green Alley Improvements
Village of River Grove	Green Alley Program
Village of Summit	Green Infrastructure Alley Program

### *Recovering Resources, Transforming Water*