



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

# Press Release

Allison Fore

Public and Intergovernmental Affairs Officer

312.751.6626

[allison.fore@mwrdd.org](mailto:allison.fore@mwrdd.org)

100 East Erie Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611

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## Webinar to discuss new suburban schoolyard stormwater protection program set for March 2 at 3:30 p.m.

### *Survey to gauge interest closes on March 19*



*Wadsworth Elementary School before and after. The new schoolyard retains more than 130,000 gallons of water per rain event.*

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) is seeking schools from suburban Cook County to participate in a new stormwater management initiative. A webinar to explain the program will be held at 3:30 p.m. on March 2, 2021. Register at <https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tjwvdeCvrD8rGtdourDPuAz1RdifWNSZZi5U>. A survey to gauge interest is available [HERE](#). The survey closes on March 19.

The MWRD is studying the possibility of partnering with suburban school districts to implement green infrastructure on school campuses. The plan follows a proven and successful formula that the MWRD has established in Chicago with partners at the Chicago Public Schools (CPS), Chicago Department of Water Management, the Healthy Schools Campaign and Openlands, which together formed Space to Grow. The popular program transforms Chicago schoolyards into beautiful, vibrant and functional community spaces for physical activity, outdoor learning, environmental literacy and engagement with art, while addressing neighborhood flooding issues and engaging the community.

“Greening schools helps address flooding for the school and the entire community, and we all know the importance of better stormwater management practices,” said MWRD Commissioner Cam Davis. “This plan will identify potential benefits, partners and locations and work to serve underserved communities impacted by flooding.”

The study identifies and assesses suburban school districts’ interest in partnering with the MWRD on green infrastructure projects that are similar to the Space to Grow program. The MWRD will also identify a mechanism for coordination and funding.

Since 2014, the Space to Grow partnership has converted 25 schoolyards, providing an engaging place to learn and grow but also major stormwater capacity. These schoolyards combine for a total storage volume of 4.5 million gallons. This design retention capacity is equivalent to 6.8 Olympic-size pools or 81,459 bathtubs per rain event.

*(continued)*

## Webinar to discuss new suburban schoolyard stormwater program, *cont.*

In addition to providing school communities with increased protection from stormwater, green schoolyards reduce the load on the combined sewer system, helping to keep the city's water resources clean. Further, Space to Grow schoolyards help CPS meet daily recess and physical education requirements for elementary schools and educate students and neighbors about green infrastructure techniques and purpose. The feasibility study is working to identify optimal suburban school locations for green infrastructure projects to maximize the com-

munity benefit of each project. It will also identify pilot projects based on potential partners that could take place in different areas of Cook County to show geographic diversity. The MWRD will examine potential costs and benefits, including consistent maintenance for the green infrastructure projects, especially with support for disproportionately impacted communities. Finally, the study will recommend steps for the MWRD to overcome barriers to achieving a successful green infrastructure program in suburban school districts.

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### *Recovering Resources, Transforming Water*

*Established in 1889, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) is an award-winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois. Learn more at [mwrld.org](http://mwrld.org).*