



OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
CITY OF CHICAGO

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 10, 2016

CONTACT:

Mayor's Press Office

312.744.3334

press@cityofchicago.org

**MAYOR EMANUEL INTRODUCES MEASURE TO SUPPORT THE SPACE TO GROW PROGRAM,
EXPANDING THE NUMBER OF GREEN SPACES IN CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

DWM will provide up to \$14 million in funding to convert 28 schoolyards into play spaces over the next five years

Mayor Rahm Emanuel and the Department of Water Management (DWM) today introduced an intergovernmental agreement that would authorize DWM to commit up to \$14 million in funding from the Mayor's Green Stormwater Infrastructure Strategy (GSIS) to build 28 schoolyards over the next five years through the Space to Grow program. This funding complements the \$3 million in funding from DWM that supported six recently completed schoolyard projects.

"We as a city are committed to expanding green stormwater infrastructure that will both absorb rainfall and reduce flooding, while adding value to new and current capital projects that will strengthen our neighborhoods and make us a more sustainable Chicago," said Mayor Emanuel. "I can't think of a better way to incorporate additional green space citywide as we work on much need school modernization projects that will, in turn, add valuable learning opportunities for the children of the City of Chicago."

Space to Grow is an innovative public-private partnership designed to transform Chicago schoolyards into vibrant green spaces for physical activity, outdoor learning, active play and stormwater management. Funding and leadership for Space to Grow are provided by Chicago Public Schools (CPS), DWM, and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago in collaboration with managing partners Openlands and Healthy Schools Campaign.

"In addition to improving the management of rainfall and runoff, green stormwater infrastructure has significant environmental benefits, enhancing air quality and improving biodiversity," said DWM Commissioner Thomas H. Powers, P.E. "With the support of Mayor Emanuel, the Department of Water Management continues its work with City agencies and departments to identify additional opportunities to incorporate green infrastructure technologies and improve services for our residents."

Each Space to Grow project will include special green infrastructure to absorb rainfall and reduce neighborhood flooding risks, and is customized with input by school staff, students and community members to create plans that will best serve their individual school community. These projects will contain several green infrastructure components, including rain gardens, bioswales, plants and

permeable pavement to help absorb rainfall.

Once schoolyard construction is complete, Space to Grow partners continue to support schools to help them maintain, enhance, and maximize the educational benefits of their schoolyards.

In addition to the educational and physical opportunities that green space provides to schools, Space to Grow sites provide the added benefit of reconnecting communities with their local public schools. While the transformed schoolyards contribute to a reduction in stormwater runoff, these sites also bring public art and communal spaces into urbanized neighborhoods. Gardening offers students and the community at large and opportunity to participate in nutritional education, and to harvest fresh produce.

Since the program's launch, six CPS schools have completed construction on Space to Grow schoolyards, with work pending at Wadsworth Elementary this year. The following schools have completed sites:

- Willa Cather Elementary, 2908 W. Washington Blvd.
- Orozco Fine Arts & Sciences Academy, 1940 W. 18th St.
- Virgil Grissom Elementary School, 12810 S. Escanaba Ave.
- Theophilus Schmid Elementary School, 9755 S. Greenwood Ave.
- Donald Morrill Math & Science Elementary School, 6011 S. Rockwell St.
- George Leland Elementary School, 512 S. Lavergne Ave.

As part of the Mayor's GSIS, which is one of the largest voluntary investments in this type of infrastructure by an American City—DWM has worked with City agencies to identify opportunities to incorporate green stormwater infrastructure into existing and ongoing capital projects. Under the Mayor's leadership, these partnerships result in creative stormwater management solutions while expanding green space citywide.

For more information on the GSIS, visit

<http://www.cityofchicago.org/content/dam/city/progs/env/ChicagoGreenStormwaterInfrastructureStrategy.pdf>.

###