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New York City and the Trust for Public Land Create “Green” Playground at P.S. 261 in Brooklyn That Will Manage Stormwater and Improve the Health of the Gowanus Canal

Program will create up to 40 Green Playgrounds throughout the City over the Next Four Years to Improve the Health of Local Waterways including the Gowanus Canal, Newtown Creek, Westchester Creek, the Bronx River, Flushing Bay, and Jamaica Bay

NEW YORK, NY- New York City and The Trust for Public Land today announced a unique partnership to build up to 40 new school playgrounds that will include green infrastructure to capture stormwater when it rains, thereby easing pressure on the city’s sewer system and improving the health of local waterways. The announcement was made during a ribbon-cutting celebration held at Brooklyn’s P.S. 261, where the new playground will manage nearly half a million gallons of stormwater annually.

Participants included The Trust for Public Land’s Adrian Benepe, Senior Vice President, and Marc Matsil, New York State director, Environmental Protection Commissioner Carter Strickland, Chancellor Dennis M. Walcott, City Council Member Stephen Levin, and Hideki Shirato of The Mizuho USA Foundation.

The first three playgrounds to be completed this fall are all located in Brooklyn, at P.S. 261, which drains into the Gowanus Canal, and at J.H.S. 218 and P.S. 65, which drain into Jamaica Bay. Over the next year, the partnership will build up to ten additional playgrounds that will improve the health and cleanliness of the Gowanus Canal, Newtown Creek, Westchester Creek, the Bronx River, Flushing Bay, and Jamaica Bay. This new program grew out of a long-standing partnership between The Trust for Public Land and the City of New York. Under Mayor Bloomberg's PlaNYC 2030 initiative, older asphalt schoolyards are being transformed into vibrant playgrounds and community parks, helping ensure that every child in the city has a safe outdoor play space within a ten-minute walk.

"The Trust for Public Land has been steadily decreasing the amount of asphalt in city schoolyards and replacing it with trees, gardens, permeable surfaces, and turf fields," said Mary Alice Lee, director of The Trust for Public Land's New York City Playgrounds Program.

"We are pleased to partner with The Trust for Public Land and contribute up to \$5 million a year towards green playground projects that will manage millions of gallons of stormwater, reduce local street flooding, and improve the health of our local waterways," said DEP Commissioner Carter Strickland. "These projects will also help raise awareness in the next generation of New Yorkers about the connection between planted beds and fields that absorb stormwater and a cleaner harbor."

"I am delighted to join The Trust for Public Land and our City agencies in creating 40 new environmentally friendly playgrounds," said Chancellor Dennis M. Walcott. "Under the Mayor's PlaNYC, we have worked hard to preserve our natural resources. We have opened 221 schoolyards to the community during after school hours and on weekends, and we have 345 school gardens. Just last year, we opened the High School for Energy and Technology, which offers students a curriculum that incorporates conservation and preservation."

"We are committed to conserving our natural resources for future generations and this agreement goes a long way to cementing this commitment," Deputy Chancellor of Operations Kathleen Grimm said. "The Department of Education has included projects in our Capital Plan to promote a 'greener' City and the new agreement with The Trust for Public Land is a continuation of our commitment. I want to thank The Trust for Public Land for its support."

Depending on the size and layout of the space, and the needs of the particular school, the green infrastructure components could include small green roofs on storage sheds, rain gardens, rain barrels to capture stormwater that falls on roofs, tree swales with pervious pavers, and artificial turf fields with a gravel base that allow stormwater to pass through and be absorbed into the ground. The green infrastructure components will capture at least the first inch of stormwater that falls on the playgrounds each time it rains. Each site will be open to the public after school and on weekends until dusk, seven days a week, as part of the Schoolyards to Playgrounds program.

Public funding for the playgrounds' construction was provided by the NYC Department of Education, the Department of Environmental Protection, and New York City Council Members Stephen Levin (P.S. 261), Charles Barron (J.H.S. 218), and Council Speaker Christine Quinn (P.S. 65), who each contributed \$200,000. The charitable foundation of Japan's Mizuho Bank, Ltd., the Mizuho USA Foundation, which is dedicated to supporting community development programs that contribute to the strength and vitality of urban neighborhoods, provided private funding. Significant funding for P.S. 65 was contributed by MetLife Foundation, a longtime supporter of The Trust for Public Land's NYC Program, having supported close to 20 playgrounds and gardens throughout the five boroughs, while The Trust for Public Land's Playgrounds Committee funded the J.H.S. 218 playground.

"We have enough asphalt in New York City," said Council Member Stephen Levin. "That's why I'm proud to support the new playground at P.S. 261 that will provide a healthier, greener place for our children to play. I want to thank The Trust for Public Land, the New York City Department of Environmental Protection, the New York City Department of Education, and the New York School Construction Authority for working together on this initiative."

"In the advent of climate change—and increased storm events, combining inner city recreation and new playgrounds where needed—with the latest green infrastructure technologies that captures rain water, is a win-win for a cleaner harbor and reduced local flooding in our neighborhoods," said Marc Matsil, The Trust for Public Land's New York State director.

Like many older cities in the United States, New York City is largely serviced by a combined sewer system where stormwater, and wastewater from homes and businesses are carried through a single sewer pipe to treatment plants. During heavy rainfall, stormwater that falls on streets, rooftops, sidewalks, and other impervious surfaces can exceed the capacity of the sewer system and a combination of stormwater and wastewater—called a combined sewer overflow (CSO)—can be discharged into local waterways. Since 2002, DEP has invested more than \$10 billion in upgrades to wastewater treatment plants and related efforts to reduce CSOs and today New York Harbor is cleaner and healthier than it has been in more than a century. However, CSOs remain the city's top harbor water quality challenge.

In 2010, the City launched the Green Infrastructure Plan, an alternative approach to reducing CSOs and improving water quality that combines traditional infrastructure upgrades with cost effective green infrastructure installations that capture and retain stormwater runoff before it ever enters the sewer system. Over the next 20 years, DEP is planning for \$2.4 billion in public and private funding for targeted green infrastructure installations, as well as an estimated \$2.9 billion in cost-effective grey infrastructure upgrades, to significantly reduce CSOs.

To date, The Trust for Public Land's New York City program has led participatory design for 178 playgrounds that New York City has built through the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation. Prior

to The Trust for Public Land's commitment to PlaNYC, the organization had created 25 playgrounds at New York City public schools through a pilot program with the NYC Department of Education, which oversees the School Construction Authority. Based on the success of those pilot projects, this new partnership was able to easily integrate green infrastructure into the playground renovations, of which the playground at P.S. 261 in Brooklyn is the first to be completed. New York City's public schools serve 1.1 million students.

About The Trust for Public Land

Founded in 1972, The Trust for Public Land is the leading nonprofit working to conserve land for people. Operating from more than 30 offices nationwide, The Trust for Public Land has protected more than three million acres from the inner city to the wilderness and helped generate more than \$34 billion in public funds for conservation. Nearly ten million people live within a ten-minute walk of a Trust for Public Land park, garden, or natural area, and millions more visit these sites every year. Learn more at tpl.org.

About New York City DEP

DEP manages New York City's water supply, providing more than one billion gallons of water each day to more than nine million residents, including eight million in New York City. The water is delivered from a watershed that extends more than 125 miles from the city, comprising 19 reservoirs and three controlled lakes. Approximately 7,000 miles of water mains, tunnels and aqueducts bring water to homes and businesses throughout the five boroughs, and 7,500 miles of sewer lines and 96 pump stations take wastewater to 14 in-city treatment plants. DEP has nearly 6,000 employees, including almost 1,000 in the upstate watershed. In addition, DEP has a robust capital program, with a planned \$14 billion in investments over the next 10 years that will create up to 3,000 construction-related jobs per year. This capital program is responsible for critical projects like City Water Tunnel No. 3 and the city's Watershed Protection Program, which protects sensitive lands upstate near the city's reservoirs in order to maintain their high water quality. For more information, visit nyc.gov/dep, like us on Facebook at facebook.com/nycwater, or follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/nycwater.

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