

## Partners for Places Project Lessons Report

**Project Name:** *Space to Grow: Greening Chicago Schoolyards*

- **Year Complete:** 2021
- **Local Government:** Chicago, IL
- **Local Foundation:** Hamill Family Foundation

### **Project Purpose**

---

To use green stormwater infrastructure to improve Chicago's climate resilience by transforming Chicago schoolyards into vibrant green spaces for play and learning.

### **Key Lessons Learned**

---

1. Building strong collaborative relationships relies heavily on open communication and is always more successful when partners build a vision together. Starting with a shared vision that can be referenced along the way helps keep the partners engaged in the long term, and especially when inevitable unexpected barriers or challenges arise.
  - a. For the city, this work continues to underscore the importance of developing green infrastructure projects that have significant co-benefits and support under-resourced communities. By partnering with frontline organizations, the city has been able to connect directly with community members, particularly around stewardship and stormwater management.
  - b. For the local matching funder, this partnership created an opportunity to work with new public and non-government organization partners and have a significant impact on improving the environment in an urban setting.
  - c. For the frontline organizations, this partnership presented an opportunity to build the reputation and reach and establish important relationships with civic leaders.
2. Programmatic support is essential to the long-term sustainability and success of the capital improvements that incorporate green stormwater infrastructure. Including educational programming and workforce training programs ensures that neighbors and users of the installations are committed to the project and will help activate and maintain it.
  - a. This program benefits from overwhelming community support, and its inclusive school/community design process deepens that support, ensuring that the schoolyards are actively used and well maintained by the school and broader community. Community members consistently report a genuine feeling of being welcome in the space — a key element in the success of the program.

### **Additional Information and Resources**

---

Take the Boone Elementary Space to Grow Schoolyard Tour [here](#) to see an example of the project work. Learn more about the Space to Grow program in Chicago [here](#).