



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Rachel Maher

Tel: 941-350-4655

Email: rachel@parkpride.org

Atlanta-based public-private partnership receives support to bring greenspaces to school grounds

The partnership joins national program to improve children's health through green schoolyard plan

May 27, 2021, Atlanta - [Cities Connecting Children to Nature](#) (CCCN) has selected a public-private partnership from Atlanta, including Atlanta Public Schools, Atlanta Department of Parks & Recreation, The Trust for Public Land, and Park Pride, to receive training and technical assistance to add nature and outdoor learning spaces to schoolyards. CCCN, a joint initiative of the [National League of Cities](#) and the [Children & Nature Network](#), supports municipal leaders and their community partners in shifting planning, policies, and programs to connect children to the benefits of nature. Only 10 recipients were chosen to be part of this national program in 2021.

Research shows that green schoolyards can enhance children's physical and mental health and academic performance, as well as community health and well-being. CCCN's assistance will increase the capacity of Park Pride, an Atlanta-based nonprofit, to provide community engagement and landscape architecture services to schools participating in the [Atlanta Community Schoolyards](#) initiative. Atlanta Community Schoolyards is a local project led by The Trust for Public Land, with additional partners including Atlanta Public Schools and the Urban Land Institute, whose goal is to increase access to public land for kids, families, and communities by opening schoolyards in "park deserts" during non-school hours.

During the past year, the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of access to safe, outdoor greenspaces within walking distance of people's homes. Green schoolyards can fill a critical gap in neighborhoods that lack access to parks and natural areas due to inequities in how parks and greenspaces have been designed and distributed. The pandemic also inspired many schools to incorporate outdoor learning into their curriculum. Cities Connecting Children to Nature and the Atlanta Community Schoolyards initiative present opportunities for greener schoolyards and a more resilient and equitable city after COVID-19.

"We often say that parks are the heart of their communities," said Park Pride's Executive Director, Michael Halicki, "but schools are similarly positioned to play a foundational role in strengthening community ties, especially in neighborhoods that lack access to greenspace. These partnerships through CCCN and Atlanta Community Schoolyards demonstrate how we're able to accomplish more together than on our own, and we look forward to continuing to green Atlanta's schoolyards."

As part of the application process, Atlanta Mayor Keisha Lance Bottoms and Atlanta Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Lisa Herring signed a green schoolyard pledge stating their shared vision to advance equitable access to nature's benefits through the creation of green schoolyards, which are proven to bring a wide range of health, academic and environmental benefits to children and the local community. This joint green schoolyard strategy supports related goals for bringing every Atlanta resident within a 10-minute walk of a public park or greenspace.

"The Trust for Public Land has partnered with cities across the country, including Atlanta, to create more than 200 green schoolyards for students and communities to use," stated George Dusenbury, Georgia

State Director with The Trust for Public Land. “This grant will help Park Pride expand the health and educational benefits that our Community Schoolyard Program is providing to students and residents.”

###

About Cities Connecting Children to Nature (CCCN). Longstanding systems of inequity have influenced the design and distribution of green spaces. [Cities Connecting Children to Nature](#), a joint initiative of the [National League of Cities](#) and the [Children & Nature Network](#), with funding from The JPB Foundation, supports municipal leaders and their community partners in shifting planning, policies and programs to connect children to the benefits of nature more often and more equitably.

About the National League of Cities Institute for Youth, Education & Families (YEF Institute). The YEF Institute at the National League of Cities is the go-to place for city leaders seeking to improve outcomes for children and families. With expertise in early childhood success, education & expanded learning, promoting a culture of health, youth and young adult connections, and economic opportunity and financial empowerment, the YEF Institute reaches cities of all sizes and brings together local leaders to develop strategies via technical assistance projects, peer learning networks, leadership academies, and Mayors’ Institutes programs. Learn more at nlc.org/iyef.

About the Children & Nature Network (C&NN) The Children & Nature Network (C&NN) believes that nature makes children healthier, happier and smarter. C&NN is a US-based non-profit organization leading a global movement to increase equitable access to nature so that children—and natural places—can thrive. C&NN achieves its mission by investing in leaders and communities through sharing evidence-based resources, scaling innovative solutions, and driving policy change. Learn more at childrenandnature.org.

About Park Pride

A trusted Atlanta-based nonprofit for over 30 years, Park Pride engages communities to activate the power of parks! Working with over 160 local Friends of the Park groups, Park Pride provides leadership, services, and funding to help communities realize their dreams for neighborhood parks that support healthy people, strong neighborhoods, vibrant business districts, a robust economy and a healthy environment. Park Pride is active in greenspace advocacy and educating both civic leaders and the public about the benefits of parks, and annually hosts the Parks and Greenspace Conference. Learn more about Park Pride at parkpride.org.

###

Additional Press Contacts:

National League of Cities (NLC)

Kat Maramba, Communications
maramba@nlc.org,
202-740-3069

Children & Nature Network (C&NN)

[Jaime Zaplatosch](#), Director of Green Schoolyards for Healthy Communities
jaime@childrenandnature.org
585-632-4852 #24425

