

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE — SEPTEMBER 3, 2021

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**ISLAND OASIS NATURE PLAY GARDEN GRAND OPENING
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, NOON-4PM
RIBBON CUTTING AT 2PM**

Chicago – The 1100 S Mason Block Club, [NeighborSpace](#), and [Human Scale](#) unveil The Island Oasis Nature Play Garden, a community garden development project that has completed the transformation of a formerly vacant lot into a public space for community members to gather and children to play, located at 1114 S Mason Ave, Chicago, IL.

In the spring of 2018, residents of the 1100 S Mason block started this community garden following an initial Earth Day cleanup in partnership with staff and students from nearby G.R. Clark Elementary School. Neighbors mobilized activation of the unused space together by hosting block club meetings, movie nights, CAPS meetings, and holiday celebrations. The garden has now become a thriving intergenerational community space and play area for young children in the area.

“This garden—from its small beginnings to its current transformation—shows the power of neighbors working together for the good of the community, and the possibilities that can only happen through collaboration.” – Nate Tubbs, 1100 S Mason Block Club

The block club mobilized their vision by first working to secure the transfer of this city lot to the urban land trust NeighborSpace. NeighborSpace protects community-managed open space projects; by holding the title, providing insurance, and offering multiple resources, community groups efforts are protected and advanced. Through connecting with NeighborSpace, the Island Oasis Nature Play Garden became part of the [West Side Nature Play Network](#) initiative, a five year project funded by the Christopher Family Foundation.

“Now, more than ever, we need outdoor spaces to gather—so that we can both plan for the future, and participate in the moment. Using community gardens as natural spaces for intergenerational activity, not just for planting, but for playing, for being together, for noticing nature, for being part of a community—The Island Oasis garden is just that, an oasis for this very moment.” – Robin Cline, NeighborSpace

In late 2020 and early 2021, the 1100 S Mason Block Club, Neighbor Space, Human Scale, Common Worlds Playscapes, and residents of the wider Island neighborhood underwent a community design process, led by Human Scale. This process included neighbor survey input, three community forums, and many block-level and design meetings. Construction began in the

spring of 2021 and continued throughout the summer, including many volunteer hours from community members.

“Architecture is a powerful tool for social impact. When the community is given the opportunity to make decisions and be involved throughout the entire development, it produces long lasting and meaningful spaces. Together, we transformed an empty lot into a garden, play space and a source of civic pride.” – Aylene Pacheco, Human Scale

We are now ready to welcome you to the Island Oasis at our grand opening on Sunday, September 19, from Noon-4pm. A short program and ribbon-cutting will take place at 2pm.

Project supported by [Christopher Family Foundation](#), [SG Trading](#), [Christy Webber Landscaping](#)

Program featured in the [2021 Chicago Architecture Biennial](#)

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About NeighborSpace: NeighborSpace is the only nonprofit urban land trust in Chicago that preserves and sustains gardens on behalf of dedicated community groups. We support community gardens – through property ownership, insurance, water, stewardship, education, tool lending, project planning, fundraising support, troubleshooting, and more — so that community groups can focus on gardening and on their community-building vision, generating food, beauty, play, health, and safety for their neighborhoods. neighbor-space.org

About the West Side Nature Play Network: The West Side Nature Play Network presents an innovative and urgent intervention on the West Side. This model addresses both the need for accessible nature play sites for children and the need for additional community stewardship of existing gardens, often maintained by dedicated older adults and long-time resident leaders. Nature play gardens offer promising, accessible, safe opportunities to create intimate green spaces in urban communities where children can be free to do the important everyday work of playing out their ideas and imagination. They provide the additional advantage of being neighborhood spaces that children and caregivers can easily access every day. And finally, these gardens offer a unique model for intergenerational community cohesion and care in a public square. westsidenatureplay.org

About Human Scale: Human Scale is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization founded in 2018 by a group of architecture students with the goal of using their skills to make a realistic impact in their communities. Our mission is to design and build functional, beautiful, and meaningful public spaces in historically disinvested neighborhoods across Chicago. As a result, our work seeks to improve mental and physical wellness, promote civic responsibility, highlight heritage and culture, and foster strong inter generational relationships within the communities we work in. humanscale.org

Learn More: See photos of the Island Oasis Nature Play Garden transformation at islandchicago.org/oasis