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FOR INFORMATION CALL

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Ald. Michael Murphy
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MKE Plays awarded prestigious NEA grant

Funding to be used to incorporate art into program's playground reconstruction projects

The **MKE Plays** program has received a prestigious “Our Town” grant from the **National Endowment for the Arts**, said **Alderman Michael J. Murphy**, who helped launch MKE Plays last year.

The \$50,000 NEA grant will be matched by MKE Plays funding for a total project value of \$100,000. Alderman Murphy said community partner Artists Working in Education (A.W.E.) will be facilitating arts programming in conjunction with the MKE Plays design process at selected playgrounds. The MKE Plays program is helping to transform 12 of the city’s most deteriorated playgrounds into models of local collaboration and renovation.

The NEA grant award will be the topic of a **news conference** hosted by Alderman Murphy at **3 p.m. tomorrow (Tuesday, May 10)** at the offices of **A.W.E., 4315 W. Vliet St.** **Mayor Tom Barrett** and **Beth Haskovec** of A.W.E. will join Alderman Murphy for the news conference.

Alderman Murphy said he is humbled and grateful for the highly prestigious “Our Town” grant award from the NEA. “The MKE Plays initiative is based on the premise that equal access to resources leads to healthier communities and improved social outcomes,” Alderman Murphy said. “We envision a city with play areas whose condition is not determined by the ZIP code or district they are in, but rather are equally equipped to inspire a child’s imagination regardless of where they are located in the City of Milwaukee.”

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NEA Grant for MKE Plays/ADD ONE

“Playing outside is a vital part of childhood,” **Mayor Barrett** said. “And involving artists in the design of creative playgrounds is a great way to bring families together and build community.”

Ms. Haskovec said: “A.W.E. is proud to partner with MKE Plays to engage youth in actively shaping public spaces through public art. This initiative brings artists and youth into the planning process, and provides an outlet to express neighborhood identity through the arts.”

With the help of A.W.E., MKE Plays will pair a local artist with neighborhood youth to create public artwork and/or aesthetic enhancement at four playground sites throughout Milwaukee. Each artwork presents an opportunity for service-learning, and youth are actively engaged in the process of creating a public art installation for their neighborhood. The approach will also promote arts engagement in the park space by celebrating the project commencement and culmination.

The MKE Plays program was approved by the Common Council in March 2015 and incorporates both public and private funding sources to accelerate the pace of reconstruction and allow for more innovative designs. The cost for the twelve parks targeted by MKE Plays for reconstruction through 2017 is estimated at \$1,585,408. This number represents a 25% increase over traditional reconstruction estimates to allow for creative, high-quality construction. With commitments from several local philanthropic organizations, MKE Plays has secured \$1,742,500 in funding (private/public) – with another \$125,000 yet to be announced – as well as an additional \$90,000 for program expenses over the next three years, exceeding a minimum funding goal by more than \$155,000.

For MKE Plays updates, please visit <http://www.city.milwaukee.gov/mkeplays>.