



**Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Department
Office of Governor Deval L. Patrick
Press Release**

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GOVERNOR PATRICK ANNOUNCES \$10.3 MILLION INVESTMENT TO BUILD PLAYGROUNDS IN URBAN PARKS

TAUNTON – Tuesday, May 20, 2014 – Governor Deval Patrick today announced a \$10.3 million investment to build or renovate playgrounds and spray parks in all 54 cities in Massachusetts. Governor Patrick celebrated the launch of this new initiative at Taunton’s Hopewell Park, where the city will use its \$200,000 grant to install a new spray park.

“Growth requires investment, and creating and upgrading recreational parks in urban neighborhoods will help create growth and opportunity across the Commonwealth,” said Governor Patrick. “This investment will improve the lives of Massachusetts children and families now and for generations to come.”

Through the Our Common Backyards program, EEA will commit up to \$200,000 to fund projects in each city. Most projects will go into construction over the spring and summer, with the goal of completing all 54 projects by the end of 2014. EEA worked with each city to agree on projects that advanced the goals of the program and the communities. In most cases, cities are contributing additional funding towards the construction of playgrounds and spray parks. In total, cities are expected to spend nearly \$4.5 million this year to improve parks in connection with the Our Common Backyards program.

“The Our Common Backyard Program builds on the Patrick Administration’s historic investments in open space,” said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Rick Sullivan. “As a former mayor, I’ve seen how important parks and playgrounds are to local communities. This project will provide cities with the resources to improve access to outdoor recreation in urban neighborhoods, where open space can be hard to find.”

The Patrick Administration has made a historic investment of more than \$300 million in land conservation focused on three goals: investing in urban parks, preserving working farms and forests and protecting large natural landscapes for habitat. This investment has resulted in the protection of more than 110,000 acres of land and the renovation or creation of over 170 parks since 2007, including projects in 310 of 351 communities and 50 of 54 cities. The land conserved and parks created are within a 10 minute walk of 1.5 million residents – about 25 percent of the state’s residents. For the 26 Gateway Cities,

the new conservation land and parks are within a 10 minute walk of over 500,000 residents – about 33 percent of all residents.

According to a report by The Trust for Public Land, outdoor recreation generates \$10 billion in consumer spending, \$739 million in state and local tax revenue and \$3.5 billion in wages and salaries each year in Massachusetts. This report also found that the state's Gateway City Parks investments will create nearly 500 jobs and \$26.5 million in local wages and salaries.

"I'm very excited about the Patrick Administration's announcement committing over \$10 million to ensure playgrounds and parks are available to families in every city in Massachusetts," said Senator Jamie Eldridge. "A key part of Governor Patrick's legacy is his landmark investments in open space and recreational land across the state, and today's announcement is yet another example of his commitment to enhance the environment."

"I'm glad to know that all of the cities in my district were awarded \$200,000 Common Backyards grants which can be applied to upgrade and renovate playgrounds and to create spray parks; enhancing recreation opportunities and quality of life for residents," said State Senator Kathleen O'Connor Ives. "I appreciate Governor Patrick and Secretary Sullivan investing in and recognizing the value of our urban parks."

"Being outdoors and being active make everyone healthier and happier," said Senator Patricia Jehlen. "Kids and grownups all need these oases."

"The creation of green recreational space in urban environments not only improves the quality of life of residents but serves as another ingredient of smart economic development planning," said Senator Mark Montigny. "Cities with parks and playgrounds ensures that they are attractive to businesses seeking to locate facilities and employees in new or existing locations. These grants will help our Gateway cities remain economically vibrant and competitive."

"Newburyport is so pleased to be a recipient Our Common Backyard grant to upgrade one of our parks to add a spray park," said Newburyport Mayor Donna D. Holaday. "Governor Patrick's administration has championed another important initiative for municipalities to upgrade important spaces for families and children. Neighborhood parks contribute to our economic development, safety, open space goals and promote the health of children and adults – this is a great addition for our city."

"I would like to thank Governor Patrick for his leadership in making this program available," said Salem Mayor Kim Driscoll. "We will be using this grant to create a splash pad and water activity area at Mary Jane Lee Park in the Point neighborhood of Salem, our densest and highest poverty neighborhood. Many of the residents who live in the Point do not have easy access to public or private recreational resources such as pools, so this grant is especially valuable to help us extend these kinds of opportunities to some of our neediest residents. My thanks go out to the Patrick Administration for

making it possible and for recognizing that all of our residents deserve access to recreational services that encourage physical activity, foster greater civic and community engagement, and build neighborhood pride.”

“The Our Common Backyards program has fit an important niche in our community,” said Westfield Mayor Daniel M. Knapik. “Our Spray Park project at Sadie Knox Playground has allowed us to introduce new programming to a neighborhood park on the north side of Westfield, and we have been pleased to engage the assistance of our local Youth Commission as we design this renovation. The Patrick Administration has hit a home-run with this initiative – one nimble enough to be pulled off in a short period but large enough to make a real impact in our community.”

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