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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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GARY JOINS CITIES CONNECTING CHILDREN TO NATURE RECEIVES \$75,000 GRANT AND EXPERT ASSISTANCE

Gary, Indiana-The City of Gary and the Youth Services Bureau is one of six cities recently awarded a planning and implementation grant from the National League of Cities (NLC). The city receives this support from the Cities Connecting Children to Nature (CCCN) Initiative designed to move forward city-level efforts nationwide and to connect children with nature more equitably. Following a competitive selection process, Gary will receive \$75,000 and nearly three years of intensive technical assistance.

Systematic efforts to increase children's access to nature, aim to bring a number of benefits to Gary and its residents. Among those are improved mental and physical fitness and increased opportunities for the social and emotional learning essential to a well-balanced childhood.

Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson said, "Last year we celebrated improvements at Reed Park; one of our city's mid-town parks. Reed Park is now a nature park. Improvements at the park include a nature play area that allows children to explore nature indigenous to the region. The play area also encompasses natural features that stimulate the human senses. There is also an outdoor classroom where children can enjoy nature while learning. We look forward to this grant assisting us to further our efforts to experience the wonders of nature in our city. We thank the NLC and CCCN for their support."

The city's Green Urbanism and Environmental Affairs Department consistently offers nature and environmental programs to educate Gary citizens regarding environmental concerns and the importance of a healthy environment. In addition, Green Urbanism partners with Youth Services to involve Gary's young people in the Green Gary program. Youth Services has incorporated nature and environmental summits as a component of youth summer programs.

Cities in the 2018-2020 Cities Connecting Children to Nature cohort will build upon strategies such as green schoolyards, early childhood nature play spaces, green career pathways, and NatureSmart Libraries that gained momentum among a pilot cohort of cities in 2016-17, and explore new areas of potential as well. The new cohort will also engage with and benefit from tools from a partner initiative, the [10-Minute Walk to a Park Campaign](#).

In addition to Gary, Indiana, cities in the current technical assistance cohort include, Atlanta; Baltimore; Houston; San Antonio; and St. Louis. Five additional cities – Albuquerque, New Mexico; Cincinnati; Minneapolis; Rochester, New York; and Seattle – will join the technical assistance cohort for a multitude of peer learning opportunities. Cities in the original cohort included Austin, Texas; Grand Rapids, Michigan; Louisville, Kentucky; Madison, Wisconsin; Providence, Rhode Island; St. Paul, Minnesota; and San Francisco.

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The National League of Cities (NLC) dedicates every day to helping city leaders build better communities. Working in partnership with the 49 state municipal leagues, NLC serves as a resource to and an advocate for the more than 19,000 cities, villages and towns it represents. The Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF Institute) is a special entity within NLC that helps municipal leaders take action on behalf of the children, youth and families in their communities. Visit www.nlc.org/iyef.

The Children & Nature Network (C&NN) believes that nature makes children healthier, happier and smarter. C&NN is a US-based 501c3 nonprofit organization working to increase equitable access to nature for children, families and communities so that children—and natural places—can thrive. It does this by investing in leadership and communities through sharing evidence-based resources, scaling innovative solutions, and driving policy change. Learn more at childrenandnature.org.

The Cities Connecting Children to Nature (CCCN) initiative, a partnership between the National League of Cities and Children & Nature Network generously supported by The JPB Foundation, began in 2014 and provides technical assistance, training, extensive resources and documentation, and peer learning opportunities to increase equitable access to nature's many benefits for all residents. More information and resources available at <https://www.childrenandnature.org/initiatives/cities/>.