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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**GRAND PARK BREAKS NEW GROUND WITH INNOVATIVE CHILDREN’S PLAY AREA  
– Spearheaded by LA County Supervisor Gloria Molina, Inventive, Kid-Friendly Park Addition  
Meets the Needs of Families with Support from First 5 LA –**

LOS ANGELES (July 30, 2014) – Los Angeles County Supervisor Gloria Molina today led a groundbreaking for a new children’s play area at Grand Park, unveiling the details of the park’s first major addition since opening in October 2012. The project is spearheaded by the Supervisor, who is credited with leading the transformation of the original Civic Center site to Grand Park. The play area features a highly innovative, one-of-a-kind design created expressly for use by young children ages 0-12 years-old and their families. It responds to the interests of the community to have additional space in the park for young children to gather, interact, exercise and enjoy the outdoors.

A counterpart to the park’s highly popular and child-friendly interactive water feature, known as the “splash pad,” which is part of the park’s Arthur J. Will Memorial Fountain, the play area will help meet the needs of the 1,000-2,000 families who visit the park each weekend.

“Grand Park is a ‘Great Places in America’ designation, and our very own urban oasis in the heart of Downtown Los Angeles – a vibrant and welcoming gathering place for everyone, including our children,” said Supervisor Molina. “Some of my favorite childhood memories are outdoor activities with my siblings and friends, and I wanted to create a special space with an adventurous environment for all children who visit Grand Park – to bring children directly in touch with nature in their own corner of the world. We have served the children of Los Angeles at Grand Park’s Block 1 with the fountain that is affectionately called ‘Toddlers Beach,’ and soon they will have a separate play area where they can climb, explore, exercise and create many happy memories,” she added.

Leveraging public and private resources, the play area is funded jointly by a \$500,000 grant from First 5 LA, which Supervisor Molina worked to secure, and \$500,000 from the Supervisor through funds from Proposition A/Los Angeles County Regional Park and Open Space District. Construction begins in July 2014 and is anticipated to be completed in November 2014.

First 5 LA, whose mission is to increase the number of young children who are physically and emotionally healthy, safe, and ready to learn, is supporting the project in its effort to help families with young children become more active. “First 5 LA is proud to participate in a partnership with L.A. County, The Music Center and Grand Park to provide a children’s play area where families with young children can gather, socialize and play together,” said First 5 LA Executive Director Kim Belshé. “At First 5 LA, we are committed to partnering with others to support safe places like Grand Park that promote good physical health, allow families to enjoy outdoor space and serve as a central gathering place for all Los Angeles families to come together as one community.”

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## **Grand Park Breaks New Ground/Play Area**

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Grand Park Director Lucas Rivera explained the value of a children's play area to the park, which has become a very popular central gathering space not only for downtown residents and employees, but for all who live and work in Los Angeles County. "Each and every day, Grand Park strives to live up to its mission, to be the 'park for everyone,' in ways that engage, surprise and delight," Rivera explained. "Now, with a children's play area, we hope to exceed the expectations of even our smallest guests."

Children who visit the new play area will experience play in a fanciful forest setting, which was designed by Rios Clementi Hale Studios, the original architect for Grand Park. The space will feature a custom 20-foot-high treehouse with a four-foot-tall roller slide and a 12-foot-tall tube slide, along with three tiers of platforms inside the climber. Made of durable Brazilian Ipe hardwood with bright lime-green accents, the tower embraces the treetop canopy idea. The Ipe and green combination is also used for a series of curved benches situated so parents and caregivers can observe their kids in comfort. The "forest floor" is a large play surface featuring seven berms ranging in size from one to four feet tall. Some have added features, such as rock-climbing handles, a rope climber, and a tunnel to crawl through.

The area will also feature mature sycamore trees, which will grow together to create a continuous shade canopy. The soft play surface resembles a forest floor with larger-than-life leaf shapes in a variety of nature-inspired colors. "It's designed to seem like you're playing in a mound of fallen leaves," says lead landscape designer Tony Paradowski, a senior associate at Rios Clementi Hale Studios. The area is surrounded by a 3.5-foot-tall fence with a custom gate enclosure that features "leaves" from the play surface. Signage along the fence includes the words "Let's Play" translated into the 25 official languages of Los Angeles County that are also represented on the totems that greet visitors to Grand Park.

Community workshops conducted as Grand Park was being conceptualized identified a strong interest in having a play area in the park. Since its opening, Grand Park has hosted more than 350,000 visitors and presented more than 200 cultural events and activities. In addition to free play in the fountain, children who visit the park enjoy concerts, drawing events, craft-making, dance events, festivals, gardening classes and more.

Joining Supervisor Molina at the groundbreaking were Los Angeles County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, Santos Kreimann, deputy, chief executive officer, County of Los Angeles; Jennifer Pippard, interim director, Community Investments Department, First 5 LA; Jonathan Weedman, president, Los Angeles County Grand Park Foundation; and Rivera.

**About Grand Park**

One of Los Angeles County’s recreational assets, Grand Park is a beautiful public park and a vibrant outdoor gathering place for the entire community in Los Angeles County. With expansive green space for gatherings large and small, Grand Park celebrates the region’s cultural vitality and is host to community events, cultural experiences, holiday celebrations, and many other activities that engage and attract visitors from all communities. The 12-acre Grand Park stretches from The Music Center on the west to City Hall on the east, and is easily accessible by Metro via the Red/Purple line to the Civic Center/Grand Park station. The park was named one of American Planning Association’s 10 “Great Public Spaces” in the U.S. for 2013.

Grand Park’s transformation is a credit to the leadership of Los Angeles County Supervisor Gloria Molina and the Grand Avenue Committee, established to create and implement the vision for Grand Park and commercial developments on Grand Avenue. The \$56 million for the construction of Grand Park was comprised of \$50 million in pre-paid rent for ground leases from Related Companies—a key condition Supervisor Molina was instrumental in securing—plus other city funds and interest. Under the direction of the County, Grand Park was developed by Related Companies with an award-winning creative team, including landscape architect, Rios Clementi Hale Studios; general contractor, Charles Pankow Builders; environmental graphic design firm, Sussman/Prejza; and fountain design consultants, Fluidity. Working closely with the County, The Music Center is responsible for the programming and operations of the park. For more information, visit <http://grandparkla.org/>

**About First 5 LA**

First 5 LA oversees the L.A. County allocation of funds from Proposition 10, which added a 50-cent tax on tobacco products sold in California. Funds raised help pay for health care, education and child development programs for children from the prenatal stage to age five and their families. First 5 LA’s mission is to increase the number of young children who are physically and emotionally healthy, safe, and ready to learn. For more information, please visit <http://www.first5la.org/>

**About The Music Center**

Now celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, The Music Center is LA’s home to the world’s greatest artistic programs and events. With four iconic theaters and four renowned resident companies – Center Theatre Group, the LA Master Chorale, the LA Opera and the LA Philharmonic, and recognized for its illustrious dance programming, Gloriosa Kaufman Presents Dance at The Music Center – The Music Center is a destination where audiences find inspiration in the very best of live performance, as well as nationally recognized arts education and participatory arts experiences. For more information, visit <http://www.musiccenter.org/>