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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**GRAND PARK’S PLAYGROUND OPENS TO THE DELIGHT OF KIDS OF ALL AGES  
 -- Supervisor Gloria Molina Dedicates Much-Anticipated, Innovative Play Area as Special Gift  
 to All Children in Los Angeles County –**

LOS ANGELES (November 22, 2014) – Los Angeles County Supervisor Gloria Molina today led a celebration for the official opening of the new children’s playground at Grand Park, dedicating the one-of-a-kind play area as a special gift to all of the children in Los Angeles County. The ceremonial ribbon-cutting was part of a “Day of Play at Grand Park,” which included games and sports for children and their parents. The playground, which was developed at the behest of the Supervisor and supported by First 5 LA, is the first major addition to the popular Grand Park since the park opened in October 2012. The playground’s highly inventive design, developed expressly for use by young children 0-12 year-old and their families, creates the feel of a fanciful forest with a large play surface and a number of interactive, kid-friendly features. It was completed in just four months, from July-November of this year.

Grand Park’s playground expands the aspects of the park that appeal to children, which include a highly popular interactive water feature – the “splash pad” – in the park’s iconic Arthur J. Will Memorial Fountain. Both the playground and the fountain help meet the needs of the more than 1,500 families with young children who visit the park each weekend.

“Much as we worked hard to ensure Grand Park would be the ‘park for everyone,’ so too did we want it to be the park where young children would love to play,” said Supervisor Molina. “They waded eagerly into the fountain’s splash pad, and now they can climb, explore, exercise and use their imaginations to create adventures in a place they can call their own,” she explained.

Leveraging public and private resources, the million dollar play area was funded 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.

First 5 LA’s mission is to ensure that every child in L.A. County enters kindergarten ready to succeed in school and life by strengthening families, the communities they live in, and the systems that support them. “First 5 LA is proud to partner 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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“Even though Grand Park is only slightly more than two years old, we are so pleased to be able to answer the needs of families in the surrounding neighborhoods and the thousands who bring their children to visit the park who asked us to add a playground,” said Grand Park Director Lucas Rivera. “We’re excited to introduce Grand Park’s new playground and to give kids of all ages a whole new way to experience the park.”

Cleverly planned to fit naturally into the look and feel of the park, the playground is designed by Rios Clementi Hale Studios, the original architect of Grand Park, and located in the park between Broadway and Spring Street. It features 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. The tower, which is made of durable Brazilian Ipe hardwood with bright lime-green accents, provides children with a sense of what it is like to climb a tree. With many ways to see out, the treehouse offers them a ‘kids-eye-view’ of the park and the surrounding cityscape. The floor of the playground is a soft play surface that resembles a forest floor with larger-than-life leaf shapes in a variety of nature-inspired colors. It includes seven berms that range from one to four-feet-tall with some having added features, such as rock-climbing handles, a rope climber, and a tunnel that visitors can crawl through. Outdoor musical instruments will eventually be added to the area so children can make a bit of music as they play.

“It’s truly amazing how many skilled and intelligent individuals worked on making this playground a really enjoyable, adventurous and safe environment,” said lead landscape designer Tony Paradowski, a senior associate at Rios Clementi Hale Studios. “Our collaborative design and building process is hopefully an indicator of how much fun the playground will be for the kids,” he added. The playground also includes a number of curved benches situated so parents and caregivers can observe their children in comfort. Mature sycamore trees, placed in the playground, will grow together to create a continuous shade canopy. Signage along the 3.5-foot-tall fence that surrounds the playground features “leaves” from the play surface with the words “Let’s Play” translated into the 24 languages of Los Angeles County plus English that are also represented on the totems greeting visitors to Grand Park. The playground, like the entire Grand Park, is ADA accessible.

Children and families who attended the park’s “Day of Play” not only enjoyed playing in the playground but also engaged in a number of informal games with hula hoops and Frisbees as well as more organized play including parachute games, Sharks and Minnows, and soccer on the park’s large Event Lawn. Supervisor Molina was joined for the opening celebration by Jennifer Cowan, First 5 LA program officer and Rivera. Guests were entertained by the Walnut Park Elementary School Children’s Choir.

Since its opening in October 2012, Grand Park has hosted more than 375,000 visitors and presented more than 240 cultural events and activities. In addition to free play in the fountain’s “splash pad” and the new playground, children who visit the park enjoy concerts, drawing events, craft-making, dance events, festivals, workshops and more.

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### **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 is a leading early childhood advocate organization created by California voters to invest Proposition 10 tobacco tax revenues in Los Angeles County. In partnership with others, First 5 LA strengthens families, communities and systems of services and supports so that all children in L.A. County enter kindergarten ready to succeed in school and life. For more information, please visit [www.first5la.org](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 Los Angeles Master Chorale, the LA Opera and the LA Phil, and recognized for its illustrious dance programming, Glorya 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/>

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