

**For Immediate Release**

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**Washtenaw County Health Department begins Transformation of 555 Towner Street**  
*First phase of Play Here: Play Together ready!*

YPSILANTI, Mich., June 6, 2019 – The Washtenaw County Health Department is very happy to announce the completion of the first phase of its Play Here: Play Together project at the Washtenaw County Human Service center at 555 Towner Street, Ypsilanti. Play equipment – including a play farmers market, musical instruments, and an accessible four-person seesaw – is now installed and ready for use. Additional phases will add interactive sidewalk art and wayfinding signage. See [www.washtenaw.org/play](http://www.washtenaw.org/play) for details and opportunities to participate.

The Washtenaw County Health Department is thrilled to create this play space through the KaBOOM! [Play Everywhere Challenge](#), supported by the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation. KaBOOM! is the national non-profit dedicated to ensuring all kids have access to great, safe places to play. The Play Everywhere Challenge is one of their initiatives that transforms public spaces and creates opportunities for active play where kids need it most.

“It’s exciting to see this transformation happening in our public space,” says Susan Ringler Cerniglia, community health promotion administrator at the Washtenaw County Health Department. “We love the play features community members helped us select, and we can’t wait to see people enjoying the space.”

Thousands of local community members visit the Health Department site, just east of downtown Ypsilanti, for health services like WIC, immunizations, help with insurance, or to visit the neighboring state department of health and human services. There are fewer opportunities for play and recreation in Ypsilanti and southeast Washtenaw than in other parts of the county. This project will increase opportunities for all residents to live as healthfully as possible.

The Play Everywhere Challenge is part of the broader *Built to Play* initiative led by the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, which provides more opportunities for free play throughout Western New York and Southeast Michigan. The Challenge awarded 23 grantees a total of \$1 million to create lasting, scalable design installations that will provide more opportunities to play for the kids who need it most.

The Washtenaw County Health Department is partnering with Washtenaw County’s facilities and administration, Parks and Recreation Commission, Office of Community and Economic Development, and Community Mental Health, as well as the City of Ypsilanti.

The play space is expected to be fully complete by August 2019. The next phase is creating interactive sidewalk art. Community members are invited to help paint the sidewalk with local artists John Bucher and Alex Zoltowski on July 13 and 14. Sign up at [www.washtenaw.org/play](http://www.washtenaw.org/play).

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[washtenaw.org/health](http://washtenaw.org/health)



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**About the Washtenaw County Health Department**

The Washtenaw County Health Department promotes health and works to prevent disease and injury in our community. Our mission is to assure, in partnership with the community, the conditions necessary for people to live healthy lives through prevention and protection programs.

The Washtenaw County Health Department has achieved national accreditation through the Public Health Accreditation Board. Visit us at [washtenaw.org/health](http://washtenaw.org/health) or call 734-544-6700.

**About the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation**

The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation is a grantmaking organization dedicated primarily to sustained investment in the quality of life of the people of Southeast Michigan and Western New York. The two areas reflect Ralph C. Wilson, Jr.'s devotion to his hometown of Detroit and greater Buffalo, home of his Buffalo Bills franchise. Prior to his passing in 2014, Mr. Wilson requested that a significant share of his estate be used to continue a life-long generosity of spirit by funding the Foundation that bears his name. The Foundation has a grantmaking capacity of \$1.2 billion over a 20-year period, which expires January 8, 2035. This structure is consistent with Mr. Wilson's desire for the Foundation's impact to be immediate, substantial, measurable and overseen by those who knew him best. For more information visit [www.rcwjrf.org](http://www.rcwjrf.org).

**About KaBOOM!**

KaBOOM! is the national non-profit dedicated to giving all kids –especially those living in poverty – the childhood they deserve through great, safe places to play. KaBOOM! inspires communities to make play the easy choice and works to drive the national discussion about the importance of PLAYces. KaBOOM! has collaborated with partners to build or improve more than 17,000 playspaces, engage over 1.5 million volunteers and serve nearly 10 million kids. To learn why play matters for all kids, visit [kaboom.org](http://kaboom.org) and join the conversation at [twitter.com/kaboom](https://twitter.com/kaboom), [facebook.com/kaboom](https://facebook.com/kaboom) and [instagram.com/kaboom](https://instagram.com/kaboom). #playmatters #PLAYceforKids

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