

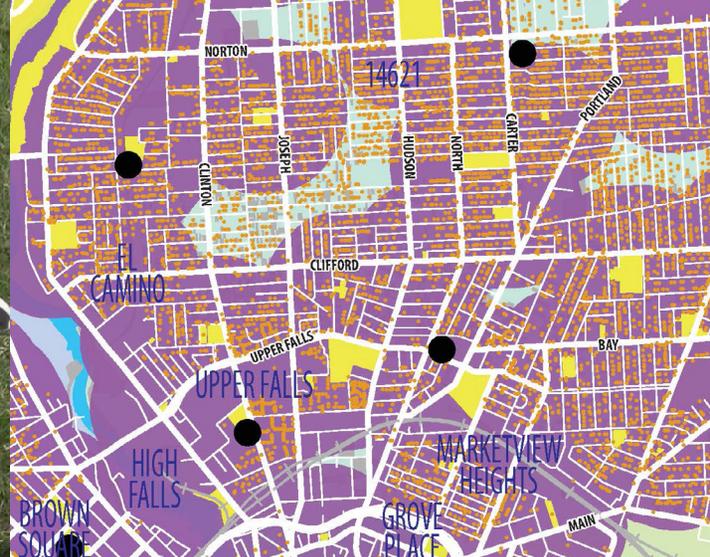
Creating equitable playspaces with youth and families despite the pandemic



In addition to the health and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, many kids have been cut off from recreation, socializing and play. StriveTogether partnered with KABOOM! and Cradle to Career Network members in a multi-city effort to advance playspace equity in Minnesota, Texas and New York.

At the core of this effort was a shared commitment to engaging authentically with youth, families and community members most impacted by racial and ethnic inequities. These playspace projects demonstrate how powerful that co-development can be in creating equitable, sustainable outcomes for kids.





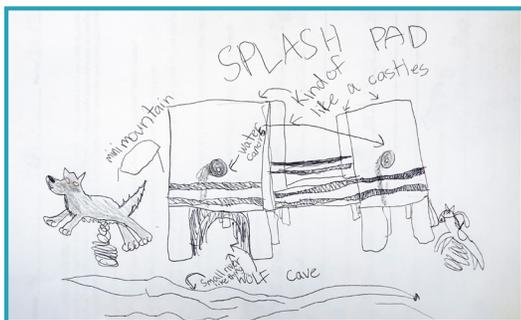
[Click here to watch video](#)

DESIGNED BY KIDS

Northfield, Minnesota

In Minnesota, Northfield Promise is leading a playspace project in partnership with Northfield Public Schools at a new early learning center located near the community's highest density low-income housing areas.

Because of health guidelines, the team used creative methods to gather design ideas from kids and families. In addition to reaching out via online messaging, the team handed out design workbooks with instructions in both English and Spanish at school food distribution sites. Kids drew their dream playgrounds and shared ideas for how they like to play, and parents brought back completed designs the next time they picked up food.



BUILDING EARLY LANGUAGE SKILLS

Brownsville, Texas

In Texas, RGV FOCUS is working with the United Way of Cameron County and the City of Brownsville to design a playspace to support early grade literacy.

Local health concerns slowed the project down, but this challenge has expanded opportunities for community and kid input into the playspace design and allowed the team to seek more equitable input. They've used email, social media, a mass texting system and even a billboard to let residents know how they can contribute.

MAPPING PLAY DESERTS

Rochester, New York

In New York, ROC the Future is leading the creation of a playspace targeted to teens and older youth. Project partners are recruiting teens to work alongside adult volunteers to design, plan and install an adventure course-style playspace including cargo nets, spiderwalk walls and other elements.

Partners are focused on gathering input and participation from teens in the community and will be mobilizing existing networks to jump-start the conversation in the fall. The groups come from various sources — the City Youth Advisory Council, schools and nonprofits with a teen leadership focus.

Image captions

Page one: A child plays at the new kid-designed playspace in Northfield, Minnesota.

Above left: The kid-designed playground at the Northfield Community Education Center opened in September 2020.

Bottom left: Kids from nearby neighborhoods participated in a virtual design day, where they generated ideas for creating their dream playground. The new playground, which was designed with inspiration from the kids' drawings, will provide hundreds of kids and their families in Northfield with an amazing playspace that can give hope and enable kids to reach their full potential.

Top right: Long before the KABOOM! and StriveTogether opportunity, community partners mapped play deserts to highlight concentrations of kids growing up without access to a playground, park or recreation center. The orange dots represent students, black dots indicate recreation centers and yellow blocks highlight playspaces.