



2020 ANNUAL REPORT



A Message from KABOOM! CEO and Board Chair

Since 1996, KABOOM! has worked with thousands of communities across the country to create new places for kids to play. This work has always been important, but in 2020, our mission became more relevant and urgent than ever.

The COVID-19 pandemic upended life for kids all around the country. Virtual learning and loss of access to friends, teachers, and extended family members impacted every child. However, these losses were felt even more acutely in communities of color, which have been denied access to adequate healthcare, educational facilities, and public amenities like playgrounds for decades. In these communities, kids—many of whom relied on a schoolyard or community center for active play—had nowhere to play as schools and other public spaces rapidly closed.

Carrying out community-oriented work amidst a pandemic was a new challenge, but it catalyzed KABOOM! to get creative. Together with our

partners, we dreamed up pandemic-safe ways to install playgrounds and create at-home play opportunities where playspaces were not readily available.

At the same time, the nationwide racial justice movement helped bring our organizational values and priorities into clearer focus. It was an opportunity for us to recognize as an organization that centuries of systemic racism continue to shape the lives of so many Americans, to this day.

This reckoning pushed us to more urgently lay the groundwork for our future. We fostered strategic relationships in regions with deep racial histories and demonstrated inequities, so that we can maximize our impact moving forward. Alongside Independent Sector, we established the Nonprofit Infrastructure Investment Advocacy Group to advocate for essential investments that lift communities of color, especially as they rebuild from the pandemic.

This was a year of unprecedented challenges and significant change. Looking ahead to the future, though, we believe that we have changed for the better. By consciously addressing our country's racist history, and continuing to expand our network of committed partners, we can achieve real change. This path will sometimes be tough, but our flexibility, our focus on the communities we serve, and new intentionality behind our work will fuel our mission to end playspace inequity—for good.



Lysa
LYSA RATLIFF
CEO



Jake Siewert
JAKE SIEWERT
BOARD CHAIR

Our Lifetime Impact

17,000+
playspaces built

1.5 million+
volunteers engaged

11.5 million+
kids reached



KABOOM! Responds to COVID-19

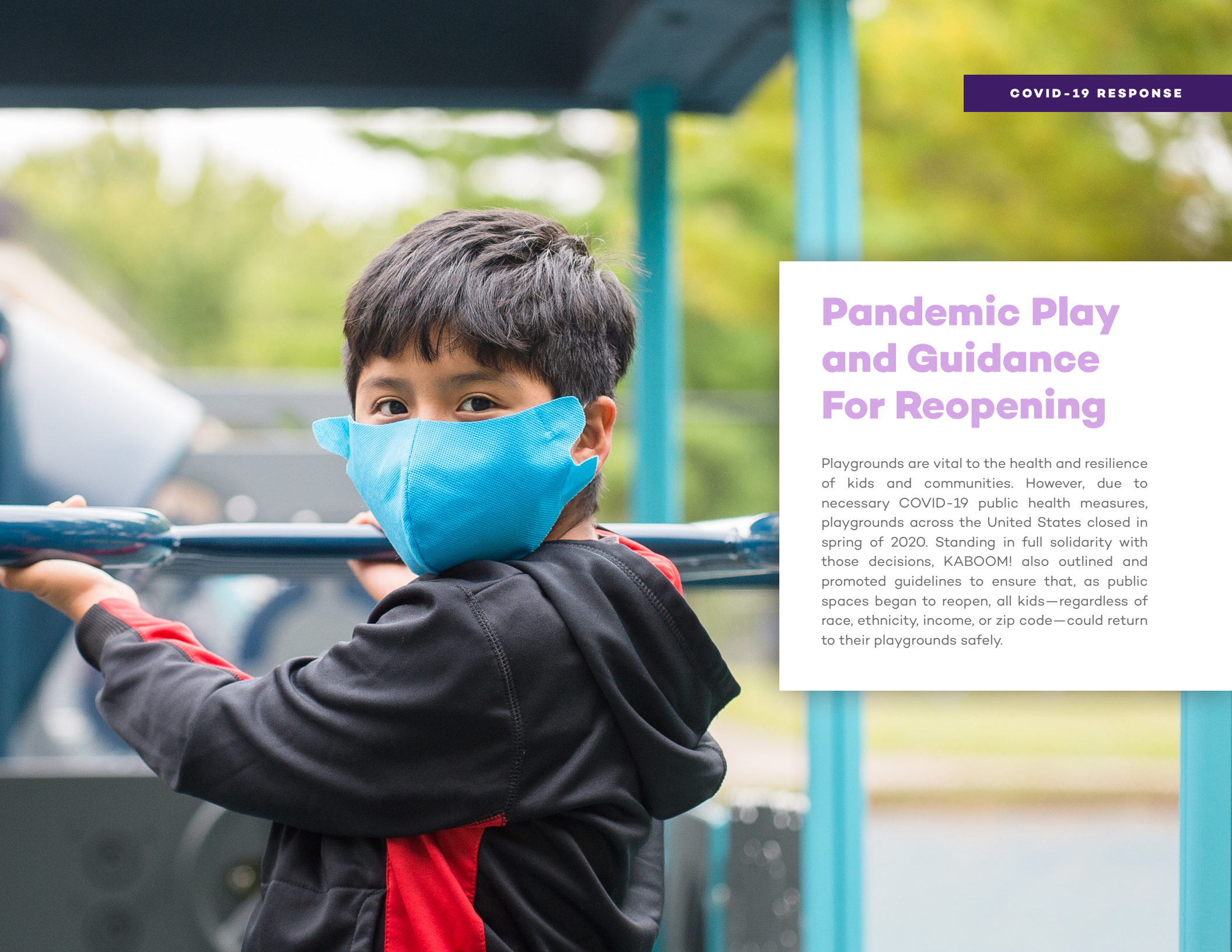
In 2020, we witnessed the COVID-19 pandemic deeply disrupt the lives of kids across America. In order to protect their health from the pandemic, children were removed from their routines, their schools, their friends, and their playgrounds—the building blocks of a healthy and happy childhood.

Now, communities across the country face significant economic and social consequences as they respond to and recover from COVID-19. We know that crisis exacerbates adverse community conditions, and increases the impact of social isolation at the individual and community levels. Communities are going to need safe ways to connect, and playspaces of all kinds—and the process of creating them—can serve as the connection point around a common purpose.

As we work together with communities to help them endure and recover from the pandemic, we must also look toward our further-reaching goal: achieve playspace equity, so that every kid has an incredible place to play close to where they live and learn. We can't let these kids be left behind—again—when the recovery phase begins.

Child with his brand new At-Home Playground Design Kit in Biloxi, MS.



A young boy with dark hair is wearing a bright blue face mask and a black hoodie with red accents. He is holding onto a blue horizontal bar of a playground structure. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with green trees and a blue sky.

Pandemic Play and Guidance For Reopening

Playgrounds are vital to the health and resilience of kids and communities. However, due to necessary COVID-19 public health measures, playgrounds across the United States closed in spring of 2020. Standing in full solidarity with those decisions, KABOOM! also outlined and promoted guidelines to ensure that, as public spaces began to reopen, all kids—regardless of race, ethnicity, income, or zip code—could return to their playgrounds safely.

KABOOM! Playground Reopening Task Force Provides Pandemic Guidance

In May 2020, KABOOM! established its Playground Reopening Taskforce to develop an actionable resource for playground owners and operators as they worked toward reopening. Members of the Taskforce included experts in public health, community development, and parks and recreation.

Complementing and building upon guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

(CDC) and the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA), the Taskforce established recommendations and guidelines to:

- Prioritize equity in reopening playgrounds
- Prepare the playground equipment and space for kids' safe return
- Enable safe playground use and practice safe behavior



Supporting Safe Playspace Reopening

Fourteen Student Learning Centers in Baltimore received support from KABOOM!, The CarMax Foundation, and Baltimore City Public Schools to install hand sanitizer stations and signage with safety guidelines at each playground. These Student Learning Centers offered in-person learning opportunities for approximately 1,000 elementary school students whose parents travelled outside of the home to work or who were experiencing homelessness.

In San Francisco, we partnered with Kaiser Permanente to safely and equitably re-open playgrounds across the city after months of closures. We installed hand-washing stations at the 51 city playgrounds without a public restroom to help ensure that playground users had the opportunity to clean their hands before and after using playground equipment.

Top: Kid playing at a playground opening ceremony in San Gabriel, CA. Bottom: Hand sanitizer station installed at a Student Learning Center in Baltimore, MD.



Pivoting Our Model to Meet the Needs of Kids

Under typical circumstances, KABOOM! teams up with partners, communities, and thousands of volunteers to build community-driven playspaces across the country. In 2020, we faced a new reality, but our commitment to ending playspace inequity remained unwavering. In the midst of crisis, we developed new approaches to achieve our mission.



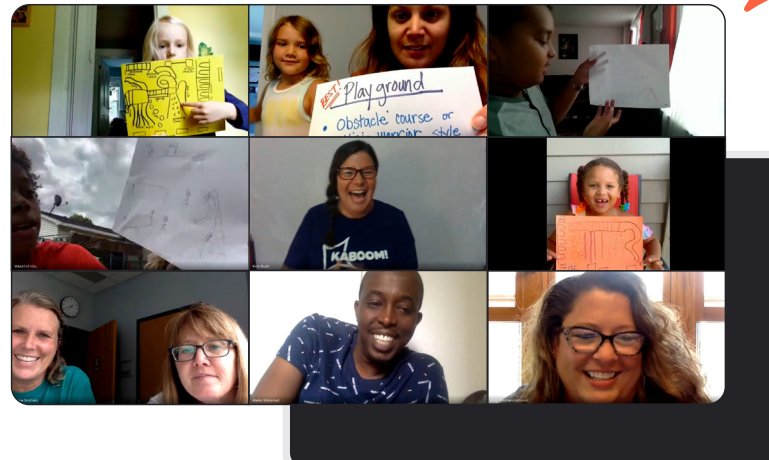
Community Engagement in a Virtual World

The world pivoted to virtual engagements in 2020, and KABOOM! was no different. We reimagined the structure of the community-based events that act as the cornerstone of our work to ensure the safety of kids, volunteers, and staff.

Design Day Goes Virtual

Design Day is a critical part of the KABOOM! community engagement process. Kids sketch out their dream playground, and KABOOM! and our partners incorporate those design ideas to ensure that the new playspace meets the needs and wants of kids who will use it every day.

In March 2020, we held our first virtual Design Day with Travelers Insurance and South Ridge High School in Phoenix, AZ. Students envisioned a multi-sport court with spaces to play basketball, volleyball, and badminton. After months of virtual



Kids, parents, staff, and representatives from Delta Air Lines join together on a zoom call to plan for a future playspace at Anne Sullivan Community School. Kids shared their dream designs live on video and through prerecorded videos.

community planning meetings, the court was completely installed and ready for students to use by September 1.

“Every day, every kid plays on the court. This opportunity for us to grow and have a better court is amazing. I know it is going to benefit our school and the kids.”

Daisy Duran

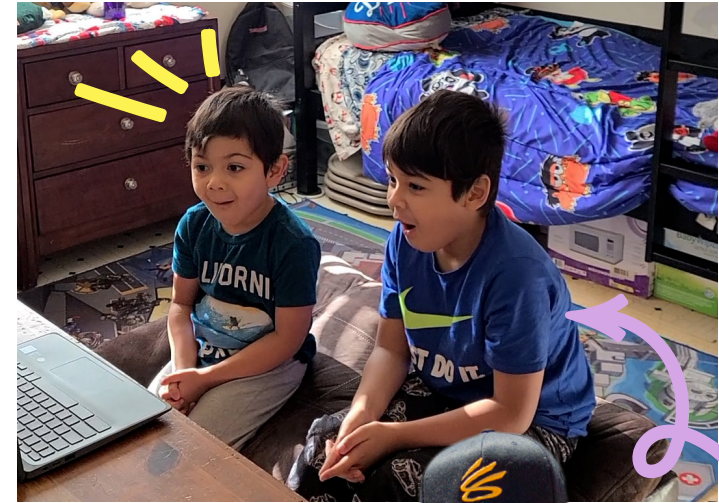
South Ridge High School Senior



Stephen Curry Announces a New Playspace at Franklin Elementary School

In November 2020, KABOOM! announced a partnership with Stephen and Ayesha Curry's Eat. Learn. Play. Foundation, The CarMax Foundation, and Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) to renovate the schoolyard at Franklin Elementary in Oakland, CA. NBA superstar Stephen Curry made the exciting announcement to students

during a school-wide virtual assembly. The partnership is working to build an amazing new place for students to play, including a brand-new playground, multi-sport court, and sensory garden, all centered around the desires of the surrounding community and its kids.



Franklin Elementary students Dustin and Clayton watch a surprise video from Stephen Curry announcing their new playground.



Despite the challenges of the pandemic, installers from Landscape Structures brought new playgrounds to life for kids.

Bringing in the Professionals

Typically, months of planning and dedication culminate in a volunteer-powered Build Day. At the onset of the pandemic, KABOOM! was already working with communities across the country who were ready to build new playspaces in 2020. To ensure that as many of these projects as possible could move forward while also adhering to public health safety guidelines, we brought in professionals to install 38 playgrounds and two multi-sport courts during the year.



At-Home Playground Design

Millions of kids living in under-resourced communities and dense, urban spaces lack access to a safe outdoor space to play. The COVID-19 pandemic compounded this problem, restricting group play and removing kids from their schools and extracurricular activities.

To provide immediate support for kids during the COVID-19 pandemic, KABOOM! deployed more than 4,000 At-Home Playground Design Kits throughout 2020 to kids in communities with

KABOOM! Experts on Playground Access During the Pandemic

Why Playgrounds Are So Important, and Why You Should Avoid Them Now

James Siegal | kaboom.org | March 2020

Three Things Nonprofits Should Prioritize in the Wake of COVID-19

Amy Celep, Megan Coolidge & Lori Bartczak | Stanford Social Innovation Review | April 2020

Every Kid Should Have Access to a Playground

Ronda Jackson | Sesame Workshop: Joan Ganz Cooney Center | May 2020

no available, safe spaces for play. We partnered with schools, after school programs, and Boys & Girls Clubs to distribute the play kits. Partners including Ambetter, Fairytale Brownies, the Powell Foundation, Sierra, and UnitedHealthcare supported the distribution of play kits in 11 cities across the country.

Designed to promote physical activity and stimulate creativity, each kit included items such as sidewalk chalk, pipe cleaners, crayons, coloring pages, origami, and play prompts to spark imaginative and active play. Play prompts included challenges in five categories: Design, Build, Create, STEAM, and Social Emotional Learning (SEL). Available in English and Spanish, the prompts encouraged kids to explore playful possibilities within their own homes.

Top: Happy child picks up their play kit in Phoenix, AZ.
Bottom: KABOOM! staff prepare play kits for distribution.



Expanding Play Everywhere

Play Everywhere innovations spark play in everyday places, from laundromats and grocery stores to sidewalks and bus stops. The creativity and flexibility behind the Play Everywhere model makes play easy and available for kids and families. In 2020, KABOOM! and its partners expanded Play Everywhere opportunities with the goal of creating new, playful spaces in neighborhoods long affected by disinvestment.

2020 Play Everywhere Design Challenge

In partnership with the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation's Built to Play initiative, KABOOM! launched its third Play Everywhere Design Challenge in July 2020. Dozens of community groups and public agencies across Western New York and Southeast Michigan submitted their most unique design concepts for a chance to win.

A total of \$1 million in funding was awarded to 19 winners who will create unique play installations in everyday locations. Teams will partner with design experts and community members to develop and execute their concepts. Installation of the new playspaces will begin in late 2021.



Announcing Play Everywhere Installations Across Philadelphia

In October 2020, KABOOM! announced the 16 winners of the first-ever Play Everywhere Philly grant competition. Funded by the William Penn Foundation, the exciting city-wide competition aims to expand access to high-quality, literacy-rich play environments for kids throughout the

city. Applicants worked with Community Design Collaborative and Playful Learning Landscapes Action Network to refine and design their project ideas. The 16 winning groups will execute community engagement and begin installation in 2021.



Top: *ROCKET to Imagination* will be coming to Rochester in 2021. Bottom: Kids guide the design of the *PlayZa* installation in Philadelphia's Chinatown.

Our 2020 Impact

620,053

Kids impacted

148

Playspaces built or improved

4,000

**At-Home
Playground Design
Kits deployed**

38

**Playgrounds
built**

35

**Build it Yourself
grants awarded**

35

**Play Everywhere
grants awarded**

35

**Rigamajig® and
Imagination
Playgrounds™
granted**

65

**Sites received
reopening
support**

Centering Racial Equity

In 2020, the highly publicized murders of countless Black Americans was an inflection point for many individuals and organizations as we came face-to-face with the effects of deep-seated racism in our country. Recognizing the impact of systemic racism on the kids and communities we work with every day, KABOOM! spoke out in support of the Black Lives Matter movement and the need for inclusion and belonging in public spaces.

Racial exclusion in recreational spaces has denied Black kids the essential benefits and simple joys of play for generations. The history of segregation in playgrounds, parks, and swimming pools has been central to the broader fight for racial justice in America from the early 20th century up to today.

Legal and de facto segregation, along with racialized disinvestment, have long restricted the ability of Black families to freely live and move in neighborhoods and public spaces, including

recreational amenities. Even now, this often remains the case.

Since 2018, KABOOM! has undergone a significant period of self-reflection. As a result, we began explicitly prioritizing and centering racial equity in our work. It was important for us to understand how we may be helping, or perhaps hindering, the progress of the communities we work alongside.

What we learned revealed a need to shift our organizational approach and address racial equity as a cornerstone of our work in order to achieve playspace equity.

There is still much work to be done to ensure Black children have access to and a sense of belonging in places to play. This need is as urgent and important to their well-being as tackling other disparities in

education, health, and housing. Addressing racial equity as a priority in our work makes it possible to solve for other inequities that impact the lives of children.



Playspace Equity Experts

KABOOM! works to amplify the collective power of communities to show kids how much they matter and ensure that they can participate in the activity most natural to them—play. Since our founding in 1996, we have not wavered from our commitment to increasing access to quality playspaces, especially in communities experiencing disinvestment.

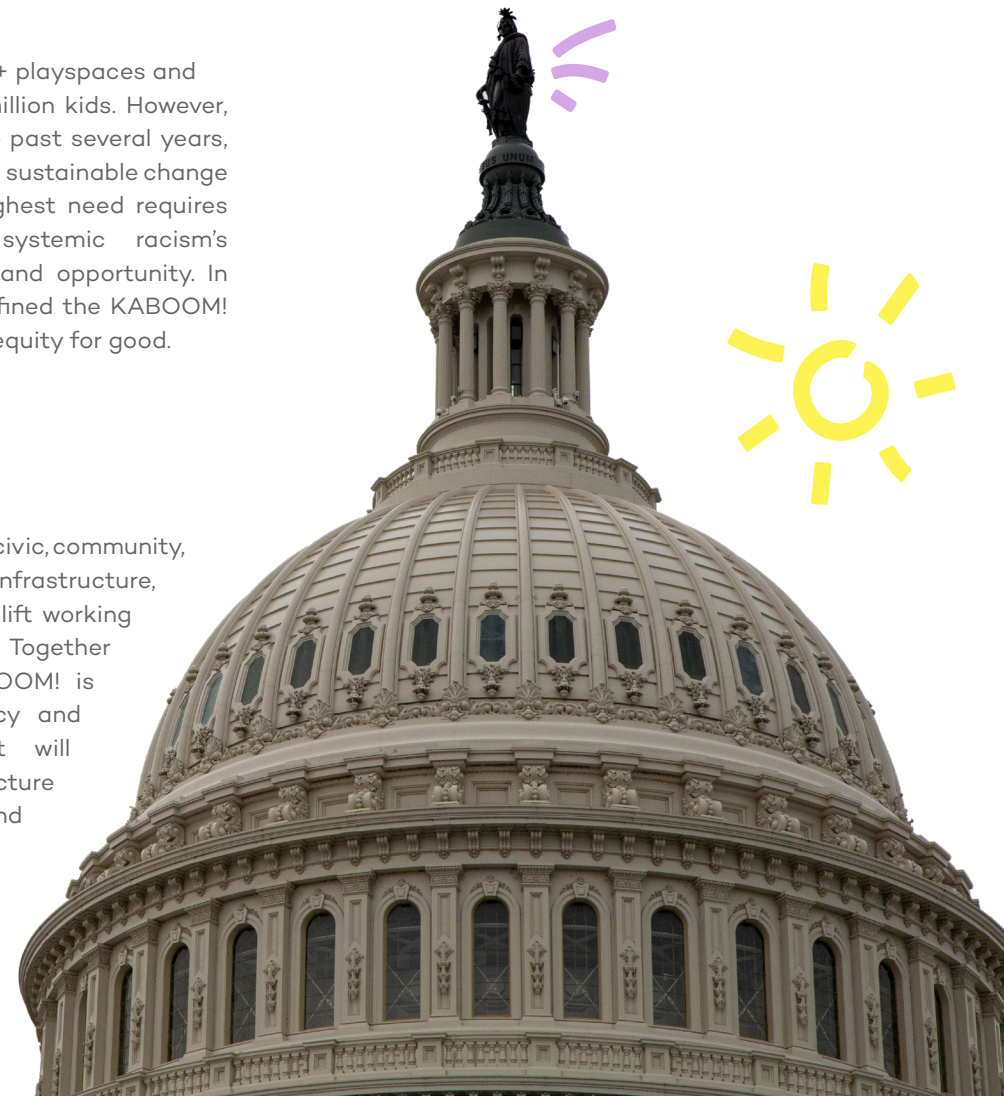
We are proud of the work we've done to-date,

Advocating for Playspace Equity

In late 2020, KABOOM! worked with Independent Sector to form a new coalition known as the Nonprofit Infrastructure Investment Advocacy Group (NIIAG), which now includes fifty national, regional, and local nonprofits and foundations. NIIAG engages a community of diverse leaders from across the nonprofit sector to identify and advocate for the essential federal investments needed to rebuild the nation in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, economic crisis, and racial injustice reckoning of 2020. NIIAG advances

building or improving 17,000+ playspaces and serving an estimated 11.5 million kids. However, with increasing clarity in the past several years, we have realized that building sustainable change in communities with the highest need requires explicitly acknowledging systemic racism's role in determining access and opportunity. In early 2020, we publicly redefined the KABOOM! mission: to end playspace inequity for good.

funding priorities focused on civic, community, and critical national infrastructure, especially investments that lift working class communities of color. Together with NIIAG members, KABOOM! is working to provide a policy and investment roadmap that will help to shape the infrastructure conversation in 2021 and beyond.



Reimagining Our Brand

To effectively raise awareness around inequities faced by children of color in American society, we had to evolve from the excessively optimistic depictions of kids playing on green grass underneath cloudless, blue skies. Our brand couldn't rely on nostalgic memories of childhood playground experiences—especially knowing that too many kids, and their caregivers, don't have those same kind of memories and experiences.

With support from our partners at Purpose, an agency specializing in social impact, we set out to create a new brand with the look, feel, and voice that boldly showcases our commitment to our mission—ending playspace inequity for good.

Our aim was to maintain our unique and vibrant look, while also demonstrating our experience, drive, and know-how. Our old logo's energy came from a burst, an explosion of bright color representing the controlled-chaos that can occur on a KABOOM! Build Day. For the new logo,

we focused on a spark, a representation of all hope that can come from a project that is truly driven by the community.



KABOOM! logo, before and after.



Boldly Highlighting Our Commitment to Racial Equity

[Why KABOOM! Evolved in Order to More Boldly and Clearly Reflect Our Commitment to Playspace Equity](#)

James Siegal | kaboom.org | February 2020

[A Race Equity Journey: The Path to Our Playspace Equity Commitment](#)

KABOOM! | June 2020

[Doing Better On Racial Justice: A Framework for Brands and Nonprofits](#)

David Hessekiel | Forbes | October 2020

Our Partners



Morgan Stanley Foundation



Leadership Partners

Keurig Dr Pepper
 Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation
 The CarMax Foundation
 The Colorado Health Foundation
 William Penn Foundation

Signature Partners

Baltimore Children and Youth Fund
 Delta Air Lines
 Morgan Stanley
 Strive Together with Anonymous Donor
 UnitedHealthcare

Partners In Play

Baltimore Ravens
 Belk, Inc

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina
 Blue Shield of California
 Citizens for Modern Transit
 City of Fresno
 Discover
 Fairytale Brownies
 Feedzai
 Fiesta Bowl Charities
 JD Sports / Finish Line
 Foresters Financial
 General Motors
 Google Ad Grants
 iHeartMedia
 Christine Anderson and Jake Siewert
 Kaiser Permanente
 Kendra Scott

King & Spalding
 Landscape Structures Inc.
 LA Kings
 Mead Family Foundation
 Morgan Stanley
 Rebuild Texas Fund
 The TJX Foundation, Inc.
 St. David's Foundation
 Sullivan & Cromwell
 The Audacious Foundation
 Share Fund
 J. Willard & Alice S. Marriott Foundation
 The Powell Foundation
 Travelers
 Treehouse Eyes
 Wells Fargo Fort Worth

Thank you for your flexibility and support during a challenging year.

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Financials

Revenues

Contracted Program Services	\$5,768,111
Contributions & Grants.....	\$3,799,851
Government Grants.....	\$1,624,600
In-Kind Contributions.....	\$220,485
Total Revenues.....	\$11,413,047

Expenses

Programs.....	\$13,565,360
<i>Direct Impact</i>	\$11,802,595
<i>Thought Leadership</i>	\$1,762,765
Development.....	\$1,398,638
Management and General.....	\$1,209,285
Total Expenses.....	\$16,173,283

Change in Net Assets from Operations.....	(\$4,760,236)
Investment Income/(Loss), net.....	\$1,055,577

Change in Net Assets..... (\$3,704,659)

Net Assets at 2020 Start.....	\$17,509,591
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Net Assets at 2020 End..... \$13,804,932

Click [here](#) to view
our full Consolidated
Financial Statement.



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