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Play Michigan! All-Inclusive Playground to Open

Community Foundation completes \$3.2 million park unique to the region

LANSING, MICH. — The Community Foundation has announced the grand opening of Play Michigan!, the region's first universally-accessible playground, on September 16, 2023.

Play Michigan! is designed to meet the needs of children with physical, sensory, and developmental disabilities. The playground features wheelchair-accessible play equipment, specialty swings and ramps, sensory play areas, and other inclusive features, ensuring that children of all abilities can play side by side. The 10,000-square-foot playground is part of a 66,000-square-foot park, located at 500 W. Grand Avenue on the downtown Lansing riverfront. The park also includes a picnic deck, pavilion, and dedicated barrier-free parking. In addition, a wide boardwalk and dock allow every child to experience the waterfront. Feedback from the Autism community prompted the Foundation to add safety features to help prevent children from running to the water.

"As parents of children with disabilities, it can be so disheartening and such a struggle to find access to places and events that others attend without issue," said parents Julia and Marlon Olivas. "We are so excited and grateful for such a beautiful, sensory-friendly playground that is so well thought out to consider the needs of *all* community members *and* be accommodating and inclusive to *everyone* regardless of ability, so kids like ours can have fun and enjoy themselves without barriers."

This innovative playground-park, designed to promote inclusivity and the well-being of children of all abilities, has become a reality thanks to generous of sponsors and gifts from community supporters, all matched dollar-for-dollar by the Community Foundation. Major funders include AF Group, CASE Credit Union, University of Michigan Health, Mary Free Bed, Peckham, John and Jewel Bos, Eileen and Jerry Phaner, and Linda and Joel Zylstra. Linda Zylstra initiated the concept as part of the Community Foundation's vision for developing the downtown Lansing riverfront.

"After overcoming pandemic-related delays and permitting challenges, we are delighted to unveil Play Michigan! to the public," said Laurie Strauss Baumer, president & CEO of the Community Foundation. "The original estimate of \$1.6 million doubled over time to \$3.2 million, but the Foundation was wholly committed to this project so that every child, regardless of ability, has the opportunity to play in an inclusive environment. While the Foundation led the project and contributed most of the cost, we couldn't have done it without our sponsors, donors, and partners – the City of Lansing, Wieland, Viridis Architects, Sinclair Recreation, and Disability Network."

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The Community Foundation is passionate about creating vibrant, thriving communities throughout Michigan's capital region. The Foundation serves donors to meet their unique charitable goals, supports area nonprofits with grants and coaching, and leads innovative projects that drive community growth. The Community Foundation (also known as the Capital Region Community Foundation) is a tax-exempt public charity whose mission is to lead philanthropic solutions that build vibrant communities in Ingham, Clinton and Eaton counties.

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