



# Washington County Health Department

1302 Pennsylvania Avenue, Hagerstown, MD 21742

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November 16, 2020

The grand opening ribbon cutting ceremony of the Bike Safe Play Court was held Thursday, November 5<sup>th</sup> and was live-streamed on the Washington County Health Department's (WCHD) [Facebook page](#). This project is the result of a collaboration between the WCHD, the Hagerstown YMCA, and the City of Hagerstown and was funded by the Maryland Department of Health (MDH). The Bike Safe Play Court is the first public traffic garden in Maryland. Washington County Commissioners President Jeff Cline presented a certificate of recognition for the Bike Safe Play Court during the ceremony. Pictures from the event can be found on the WCHD's Bike Safe Play Court [Facebook photo album](#).

A traffic garden is a painted streetscape that gives children a safe place away from traffic to learn how to safely ride their bikes on the streets. The Bike Safe Play Court is the result of a nearly two year long project. In 2018, MDH held a workshop for local health departments to help each county develop a plan to promoting walking and walkability. As part of that initiative, representatives from each health department participated in the Walking College and attended the 2018 Walk Bike Places Conference. Mary McPherson, a now retired Program Manager at WCHD, attended the conference and saw a presentation by Fionnuala Quinn from [Discover Traffic Gardens](#). As the Washington County Child Fatality Review Coordinator at the time, McPherson knew there had been a couple of children who had been killed while riding bicycles on the road in Washington County in the past several years. She suggested to MDH that it would be beneficial to have a traffic garden that was open to the public in Washington County so that parents and caregivers could have a safe area to teach their children about bicycle safety and how to follow the rules of the road. MDH provided WCHD a grant to fund the project.

After several logistical setbacks in securing a location for the traffic garden, the Hagerstown YMCA offered to provide a location for the traffic garden in a little-used section of the YMCA's parking lot. The City of Hagerstown's Parks and Engineering Department designed the traffic garden to include many traffic features that cyclists may encounter in Washington County, such as bike lanes, bike boxes, crosswalks, a roundabout, and train tracks. The Bike Safe Play Court was implemented in October 2020.

The Bike Safe Play Court is open during daylight hours when the barricades are up. No automobiles are allowed on the court when the barricades are up. If the area is being used for parking for large events at the YMCA, the barricades will be taken down and bicycles should not use the court at these times. Helmets are required for all cyclists on the court and children should be supervised by an adult.

It is important to know how to bike, walk, and drive safely. When bicyclists, pedestrians, and drivers all follow safety rules, everyone can get to their destinations safely! Walking and biking are also excellent opportunities to be physically active. The Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommend that children get one hour of physical activity a day. Parents, guardians, and caregivers are encouraged to bring their children to the Bike Safe Play Court and use it as a resource to teach them bicycle safety skills. Children can also learn the rules of the road for drivers and bicyclists and pedestrian safety skills at the Bike Safe Play Court. Learn more and find bicycle safety resources on the WCHD website at [washcohealth.org/bike-safe-play-court](https://washcohealth.org/bike-safe-play-court).