



RALPH C. WILSON, JR.
FOUNDATION

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation Receives \$1 Million to support the future Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park in Buffalo

Gift comes from trusts of Wilson's late daughters, Edith Wilson and Linda Bogdan; Additional grants from the trusts will be provided through an endowed donor advised fund to support park maintenance & youth tennis in the region

Buffalo, NY (March 30, 2021) – The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation today announced a gift of \$1 million from the trusts of Mr. Wilson's late daughters, Edith "Dee Dee" Wilson and Linda Bogdan. The trustees of the Foundation have directed this gift to support capital projects within the future Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park in Buffalo in recognition of the two women.

"Ralph's daughters held a very special place in his heart, and each bonded with him over their shared passions – which of course included the Buffalo Bills. Dee Dee and Linda also loved to play tennis, spend time outdoors, and enjoyed gardening. When identifying how to allocate this generous gift from their estate, we knew it would be most appropriate to honor these passions in a way that will live on through the park, along with sustaining these spaces and investing in future programming that community members can enjoy," said Mary Wilson, life trustee and board chair, Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation.

The Foundation has granted the \$1 million gift to the Buffalo Urban Development Corporation (BUDC), which further builds upon the Foundation's support of the community engagement and transformation of LaSalle Park into the future Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park. The grant will support two distinct elements within the planned 90-acre park, specifically the dog park and entry garden:

- **Dog Park:** *The "Barkyard" is the first official off-leash dog park in the city and attracts thousands of visitors each year. Throughout the [Imagine LaSalle Initiative](#), the community and "Barkyard" users have been very engaged in the process and have welcomed the suggested design improvements. The design, created by Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates (MVVA), proposes relocating the "Barkyard" and improving it by adding topography to create interest for dogs and their humans, incorporating a mixture of materials such as gravel and lawn, and adding ADA-accessible paths, benches, drinking fountains with dog bowls, and plantings for shade and comfort. Staff will work with partners for naming/recognition at this new dog park to recognize the generous gift on behalf of Edith and Linda.*
- **Entry Garden:** *When parkgoers walk across the new, iconic pedestrian bridge over the I-190 designed by Schlaich Bergermann Partner, they will be met with an incredible view of Lake Erie and a beautiful garden designed by MVVA where the walking and biking paths come together. This place will provide a special moment in the park where park users can reflect.*

In addition to the capital gift, the Foundation will also recommend annual funds from the daughters' endowed donor-advised fund at the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan to support the sustainability of the park. An estimated \$300,000 a year will be granted to the Ralph Wilson Park Conservancy, once established, to support the maintenance of the garden and seasonal plantings in Ralph Wilson Park in Buffalo.

“As the City of Buffalo and Imagine LaSalle project partners work to fund all of the components and sustainability for the parks' master plan, we're excited that through the Wilson family's continued legacy of giving we can provide this additional support to help move closer towards fully realizing the community's incredible vision for the park,” said David Egner, president & CEO, Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation.

The Foundation will also honor Dee Dee and Linda's shared love for the game of tennis, which was also enjoyed by Mr. Wilson throughout his entire life, by recommending an estimated \$125,000 annually from the donor-advised fund to support youth tennis programming, maintenance and capital repairs of courts throughout the region.

To jump start this effort, the Foundation is working with its Project Play Western New York partners and the Olmsted Parks Conservancy on a coordinated plan to support tennis programming through Algonquin Sports for Kids (ASK Tennis) and Buffalo Pal (Love to Serve) and capital support to resurface courts in both the Olmsted Park system and nearby courts through the first round of grants. More details will be announced in the coming months.

“On behalf of the residents of Buffalo and Western New York, I once again thank the Wilson family for their continued generosity which is driving the creation of Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park. From the original \$50 million the Foundation announced for this transformative project in 2018, to the millions in additional funding for planning, and now this gift from the trust of Dee Dee and Linda, for the park and local tennis programs, Buffalo is a better place because of the Wilson family and we are extremely grateful,” Mayor Byron W. Brown said.

Prior to his death, Mr. Wilson set up trusts for his daughters. Dee Dee Wilson passed away in January 2020 at age 68, and Linda Bogdan passed away in April 2009 at age 61. Bogdan was the first female scout in the National Football League, and vice president and assistant director of college and pro scouting for the Buffalo Bills. She spent 22 years with the team. Dee Dee and Mr. Wilson often traveled together and loved to play tennis. He admired her as a caregiver, as she cared for her mother and was comforting to Mr. Wilson as he aged, too. Mr. Wilson's third daughter, Christy Hofmann, who at one time served as a consultant in the area of merchandising during Mr. Wilson's ownership of the Buffalo Bills, enjoys a private life today on the east coast.

Design plans and other community updates for Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park can be viewed [here](#). For more information, visit RCWJRF.org.

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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.

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