



RALPH C. WILSON, JR.
FOUNDATION

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation Establishes \$10 Million Endowment at Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo for Trails Maintenance Fund in WNY

Funds are part of Foundation's \$100 million Parks & Trails initiative launched in 2018

BUFFALO, N.Y. (March 8, 2022) – The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation announced today it has provided a \$10 million grant to the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo to establish an endowment to support the new Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Trails Maintenance Fund for Western New York.

On Oct. 17, 2018, the 100th anniversary of Ralph Wilson's birth, the Wilson Foundation made a \$100 million commitment to launch its Parks & Trails Initiative. From this, \$50 million was specified to advance the vision of a completed regional trail system, with 20 percent (*or \$10 million*) of those funds set aside for sustainability purposes.

"We are excited to fulfill this commitment that will ensure the sustainability of trails across the region. Trails connect our communities, parks and waterfront, all while providing critical transportation options," said JJ Tighe, director of Parks & Trails Initiative for the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation. "Often, funds for maintenance are delayed or don't exist at all. Setting aside 20 percent of our commitment for upkeep to ensure what is built today is also maintained for future generations is the highest priority."

Over the next several months, the Community Foundation will work in partnership with the Wilson Foundation and other key stakeholders to develop the grantmaking guidelines that will lead to the launch of an annual competitive grant program in 2023 for the estimated \$450,000 - \$500,000 annual funding made available through the endowment.

"We know that parks and trails create an important connection between our community and nature, improve health and wellness, and enhance quality of life. Recognizing these important benefits, we are grateful for the forward-thinking generosity of the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation in establishing this endowment at the Community Foundation to support the maintenance and sustainability of our trails and greenways in Western New York forever," said Clotilde Perez-Bode Dedecker, President and CEO of the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo. "We know Mr. Wilson was active and enjoyed the outdoors, and this gift will ensure that generations to come will be able to enjoy a passion he valued greatly."

While the specific guidelines are still being developed, the maintenance fund's goal is to provide preservation support to already developed trails and greenways that connect people and communities throughout Western New York. This includes, but will not be limited to, three major regional trails: Empire State Trails, Genesee Valley Greenway, and the Shoreline Trail (or Niagara River Greenway).

Rather than focus on day-to-day trail maintenance needs, these grants are intended to support more expensive capital maintenance, like trail resurfacing, a bridge needing repair, or washed out or damaged sections of trails that need to be restored. The goal is to ensure the trails function effectively, providing users with the recreation experience and community connectivity that was envisioned when the trail was developed.



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Those interested in staying up-to-date on the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Trails Maintenance Fund can sign up to receive periodic communications on the grant process from our team at:

<https://www.cfgb.org/nonprofits/grants/ralph-c-wilson-jr-trails-maintenance-fund-for-western-new-york/>.

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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 the devotion of Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. to his hometown of Detroit and greater Buffalo, home of his beloved Buffalo Bills NFL team. Prior to his passing in 2014, Mr. Wilson provided 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. Based in Detroit, the Foundation began with 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.