

RALPH WILSON PARK FACT SHEET



Ralph Wilson Park Conservancy

General Information

- The 100-acre world-class park located at the confluence of Lake Erie and the Niagara River in Buffalo, N.Y. includes the former LaSalle Park and the addition of the 4th Street park that will be connected by a signature pedestrian bridge.
- The community-driven, transformative, accessible park design was developed through [Imagine LaSalle](#) led by the University of Buffalo Regional Institute. This multi-year community engagement initiative included a collaborative focus group that traveled to world-class parks in Chicago, Cincinnati and New York City to gain inspiration and reaching out to over 1200 local stakeholders through surveys and community meetings.
- This project began in 2018 with a focus developing 30-40 acres of LaSalle Park and expanded because of community input to include two major infrastructure projects: 1) the pedestrian bridge, including the beautification of the 4th Street park, and 2) rebuilding the 100-year-old, 1 mile long, deteriorating sea wall.
- A multi-phased construction effort began in July 2023 with initial focus on the two, additional major infrastructure projects: 1) transforming the vertical cement sea-wall to a natural, armored slope and inlet on the south end to ensure structural resiliency, improve habitat, and reduce flooding; and 2) installing the signature pedestrian bridge over the I-190 to increase safe access to the waterfront from the lower west side through the 4th Street park.
- The first phase of construction is underway and the cost is \$99M. The timeline and cost for Phase 2 has not been finalized, as several major Federal and State grants are pending. Specifically, the City is pursuing \$20M in funds to restore the shoreline next to Col. Ward Pumping Station. These funds were previously committed by New York State and the Army Corps of Engineers and are considered in process. We anticipate Phase 2 of construction will begin while Phase 1 is underway in 2024-2025.
- New sections of Ralph Wilson Park will begin opening in 2026.
- Once the transformation is complete, LaSalle Park will look vastly different in its new iteration as Ralph Wilson Park. Key features of the design include:

- Major topographic alternations, including the addition of a “Great Lawn” that will improve the year-round flexibility of the park, allowing for a broad range of events, gatherings, festivals and performances. At 30 feet in height, the Great Lawn will also serve as a sledding hill in the winter, while affording unparalleled views of the city and water.
 - Transforming the current vertical cement sea-wall to a natural, armored slope and inlet on the south end to ensure structural resiliency, improve habitat, and reduce flooding; including a lagoon complete with native wetland plants that will attract migratory birds and a location to safely launch kayaks and canoes.
 - Repairing athletic fields, quadrupling the number of walking paths and increasing the variety of sports that can be played in the park. There’s also a 5K running loop, more than 3 miles of cycling paths and an enhanced dog park.
 - Planting 2,500 trees of varying species.
 - A redesigned approach to parking that minimizes parking lots. Instead, park visitors arriving by vehicle will be able to park curbside near the athletic field their child is playing on.
- Named in tribute to the legacy of the late entrepreneur, veteran, philanthropist, and Buffalo Bills owner Ralph C. Wilson, Jr.
 - The Ralph Wilson Park Conservancy (RWPC), an independent non-profit, will manage and operate the City of Buffalo owned park once construction is substantially complete. RWPC is committed to engaging the community through frequent communications and programming throughout the construction process.

Key Project Development Partners

- Park visioning through Imagine LaSalle, a community-driven initiative to guide design concepting and development, was led by the University at Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning and University at Buffalo Regional Institute (UBRI), made possible through funding from the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation
- City of Buffalo Division of Parks and Recreation
- City of Buffalo Dept. of Community Services and Recreational Programming
- City of Buffalo Office of Strategic Planning
- Buffalo Urban Development Corporation (BUDC)
- Architecture design by Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates (MVVA)
- Bridge design and engineering services by schlaich bergemann partner (sbp)
- Project management services by BUDC and Gardiner & Theobald
- Construction Management Services led by Gilbane Building Company

Funding Sources and Contributors (listed alphabetically)

- Buffalo and Erie County Greenway Fund Standing Committee
- Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper and Buffalo Blueway Initiative
- Buffalo Urban Development Corporation (BUDC)
- Buffalo Water Authority
- City of Buffalo
- Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo
- Edith Wilson and Linda Bogdan Fund
- Great Lakes Commission
- Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield
- KABOOM
- Major League Baseball & Major League Baseball Players Association Youth Development Foundation
- M&T Charitable Trust
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation – Sustain Our Great Lakes (SOGL)
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, via the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative
- Niagara Greenway Commission
- Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation
- State of New York
- State of New York Environmental Facilities Corporation
- SUNY Buffalo State College
- Trust for Public Land, On Common Ground
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Department of the Interior - Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP)
- Western New York Land Conservancy
- Wegman's Family Foundation

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