



Contact

Jessica Alaimo, City of Rochester
585-428-7135

Mary Holleran, Community Foundation
585-341-4351

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 14, 2020

\$460,000 Grant from Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation Completes Funding for Indoor Sports Training Facility

Rochester, NY — The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation has awarded a grant of \$460,000 to upgrade and repurpose the city-owned stadium at 460 Oak Street for use as a youth sports training facility and sports complex.

The concept for the Rochester Community Sports Complex includes making the former soccer stadium available for various sporting and community events and renovating the adjacent 25,000 square-foot building into an indoor training facility — the first in Rochester. Planners envision it will be used by Rochester City School District athletic teams, community sports teams and clubs, community health and fitness professionals, and city residents.

“This truly is about leveling the playing field,” says Mayor Lovely A. Warren. “With no access to indoor training facilities nearby or athletic trainers who can help with injury prevention, student-athletes in Rochester are at a competitive disadvantage. The Rochester Community Sports Complex will address this inequity.”

Rochester Area Community Foundation applied for the grant on behalf of the project’s partners and supporters — the City of Rochester, Rochester City School District, University of Rochester Sports Medicine Division, Greater Rochester Youth Sports Foundation, and Greater Rochester After-School Alliance.

Plans are to use the stadium from April 1 through December for community and school sporting events, sports camps, and clinics. The indoor facility, currently a warehouse, is being retrofitted with multipurpose courts, a turf training area, a weight room, batting cages, a trainer’s room and locker rooms. With an expected opening in Fall 2020, the facility will be used year-round by Rochester City School District team practices, conditioning, and workouts on weekdays, and available nights and on weekends for public use. UR Sports Medicine will explore opportunities with the City to provide services to athletes using the complex.

“Having an indoor practice facility will create additional opportunities for our youth to participate in sports that require practices, scrimmages, and playing time when outdoor venues are covered in snow and not usable,” says Dr. Carlos Cotto, executive director of health, physical education and athletics for the City School District.

A lack of indoor facilities in the city and rural areas and access to athletic trainers in high schools were key findings in the “State of Play: Greater Rochester & The Finger Lakes” report that the Community Foundation published with the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation and Aspen Institute’s Sports & Society Program in 2017.

This independent assessment of sports and recreation programs and facilities shared ways that communities could eliminate barriers and access to sports and recreational opportunities and help children become more active, which has been found to increase cognitive function and educational outcomes and result in positive mental health and lower health-care costs later in life.

“This complex, in the heart of a city neighborhood, carries out Ralph Wilson’s dream to make a lasting impact on our community’s young people. It also complements the \$653,000 in grants for regional projects we have awarded from the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Legacy Fund for Youth Sports to improve the quality and accessibility of sports and recreation programs,” says Jennifer Leonard, president and CEO of Rochester Area Community Foundation.

“All kids should have the opportunity to play, but access to safe, affordable and year-round recreation spaces is a barrier for far too many children and families,” says James Boyle, vice president of programs and communications at the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation. “We’re inspired by the City of Rochester and the community’s support for the renovation of this indoor complex into a shared resource for both residents and community partners. This grant will give a boost to the city’s significant investment and help get them to the finish line.”

The Sports Complex dovetails with Mayor Warren’s commitment to improving academic achievement and health outcomes of city residents, particularly for youth. Mayor Warren has invested in facilities and programming through the Department of Recreation and Youth Services, which operates 14 community centers, 16 after-school programs, a waterways center, two ice rinks, five pools and 68 parks and playgrounds, sports fields, courts, and spray parks.

During development of the City’s 2019-20 budget, residents were polled regarding plans to transform the soccer stadium into a community sports complex and 71 percent of respondents were in favor of the new use.

In addition to the City and City School District, other partners in the project are:

- Rochester Youth Sports Foundation, which will provide scholarships for youth participation in camps, clinics and training at the complex; and
- Section V Sports Association, which will use the venue for tournaments and games for soccer, lacrosse, football, and cheer.

The estimated cost of the proposed Sports Complex is \$2.1 million, of which the City of Rochester is committing \$1.64 million. Since the stadium opened, the City has maintained the facility in its operating budget and \$919,000 was included in the 2019-20 fiscal year budget. The goal for the Sports Complex is to generate revenue through stadium and indoor facility rentals, permits, sponsorships, and advertising to support expenses.



Staffing for the Sports Complex would include three full-time employees — a director, coordinator, and maintenance technician — and four part-time support staff. Eric Rose, director of community athletics for the City of Rochester, will serve as the facility’s director and will be in charge of hiring the staff.

At its January 21, 2020 meeting, Rochester City Council must vote to accept the grant and receive the funds.

The City of Rochester previously received a \$250,000 matching grant for the Roc City Skatepark from the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation’s *Built to Play* initiative in partnership with the Tony Hawk Foundation.

About the Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation: *The grantmaking foundation that bears the name of the founder of the Buffalo Bills football franchise was established by proceeds of the sale of the team after Wilson passed away in March 2014. Based in Detroit, the foundation is dedicated to sustained investment in the quality of life for the people in Western New York and Southeastern Michigan. Per his directive, the foundation’s \$1.2 billion in assets will be spent over the course of 20 years — through 2035. Grantmaking focuses on four key areas — promoting active lifestyles, preparing for success at all stages of life, supporting the important role of caregivers, and spurring entrepreneurship and economic development.*