

The Streets of Worcester Challenge

In 2016, former CMS presidents Nick Kanaracus and CMS Bob Dio came up with the idea of running every one of Worcester's streets. Unfortunately, their quest was cut short by Nick's untimely death. In 2019, CMS member Jen Graves took up the challenge. In 2020, when the Covid-19 Pandemic halted races, CMS members Jess Howland, and Andrew MacDonald started running them too. On December 30, 2020, nine months after she started, Jen finished the 2,363 Worcester Streets listed on City Strides. By February 6, 2021, when Jess and Andrew finished, ten more streets had been added. Jen says, "The total is a moving target."

In early December 2020, as they were preparing to leave for a six-mile run, CMS members Karen Pajer, Yael London, Claire and Scott Schaeffer-Duffy bumped into Jen who told them she had completed 90% of Worcester's streets. Karen suggested to Scott that they take up the challenge which the pair, knicknamed Piglet & Pooh, did on December 12, 2020.

Under Nick, Bob, Jess, Andrew, and Jen's inspiration, Karen and Scott included all current Worcester city streets, roads, avenues, lanes, boulevards, paths, ways, trails, gardens, parkways, circuits, heights, hills, forests, circles, squares, triangles, courts, crossings, places, extensions, the named streets in Hope and Rural cemeteries and the College of the Holy Cross, as well as numerous abandoned streets and wooded areas which once tied streets together. Their rule was, if a street is listed on a current or past map, it must be run. As Jen warned them, this required some dicey slogs through snowy, wet, overgrown areas, and dirt roads, as well as bushwhacking through more than a few yards. They learned that Worcester is not a city of seven hills, but more than 700. They also discovered that new streets, often not on any map, appear regularly. Everything had to be run.

On May 19, 2021, Karen and Scott completed 2,483 streets, 531.3 miles. To do so, they had to run 720 miles. It took them five months, six days, and 22 hours.

Like their predecessors, Karen and Scott hope their accomplishment inspires other runners to take up the challenge and set new records for how long it takes to run all the streets of Worcester. Karen and Scott's list is available through his email: theresecw2@gmail.com. They also hope that newcomers will add more streets and, in a very literal sense, reach new heights.