

D. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT + INPUT INTO ROCHESTER 2034

INTRODUCTION

Community engagement is vital to crafting an effective and responsive long-range plan. Involving a community in planning for its future creates a sense of excitement, hopefulness, and ownership. This engagement is a valuable outcome of a successful planning project. The following is a brief description of the varied means by which the community in Rochester was brought into the planning process for *Rochester 2034*.

COMMUNITY MEETINGS

MAYOR'S ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Mayor's Advisory Council, consisting of elected officials, municipal staff, and other key stakeholders, met on April 27, 2016 to assist with providing input into the planning process. The Mayor of Rochester, Lovely Warren, chaired the Council to introduce the planning process to this group of stakeholders. The group served as a sounding board to establish a consensus on major themes, issues, recommendations and priorities for the Plan moving forward. Following the presentation the group participated in an interactive exercise that had the members identify Rochester's greatest assets and challenges.

PLANNING AREA COMMITTEES

Between June 2016 and April 2017, five Planning Area Committees were assembled within the four quadrants of the city and downtown. Each of the five planning areas had their own committee consisting of eight to 16 members. Committee meetings gathered local perspectives on opportunities, needs, and issues at a quadrant level. Each committee met between three and four times.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Valuable input was received from over 50 neighborhood groups and over 100 topic-based stakeholder groups.
- Two surveys gathered input from over 4,000 respondents.
- “Pop-up” community outreach events at the public market, Celebrate City Living, and local colleges brought additional input and awareness.
- Supplemental plans and studies provided valuable technical guidance and further input to inform *Rochester 2034*.





D. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT + INPUT INTO ROCHESTER 2034

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COMMUNITY MEETINGS CONTINUED

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS

Using the information gathered through the quadrant meetings, City staff from the Office of Planning decided that a more grass roots approach for community input was needed, so they arranged to meet with every neighborhood association in the city which amounted to meeting with over 50

neighborhood groups, involving about 500 people. This process also allowed for City planners to further their relationships with neighborhood associations while gaining input into *Rochester 2034*.

A TYPICAL MEETING AGENDA AT A NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION MEETING:

Presentation. City staff explained the purpose of a comprehensive plan, how to take the survey, and informed residents about ways to continue involvement in the planning process.

Outreach Area. Attendees informed staff about the geographic area their group represented. This helped with understanding for whom the association was speaking, and which parts of the city may not have the benefit of locally-organized representation. This exercise informed [Initiative Area 6-Section B, Building Community Capacity](#).

Commercial Center. Neighbors discussed where they see the commercial center(s) of their neighborhoods. This exercise informed [Initiative Area 5-Section A, Economic Growth](#) and [Initiative Area 2, The Placemaking Plan](#).

Strategic Sites. Neighbors identified underutilized/vacant sites in their neighborhood that could have a transformative impact if they are developed or rehabilitated. The responses helped inform the City's Strategic Sites Inventory, which directs public and private investment to areas where it will benefit the surrounding neighborhoods the most.

Open Spaces and Parks. The project team asked neighbors to identify where their most valuable open spaces and parks were, as well as which parks were underutilized. This helped to inform [Initiative Area 4-Section B, Parks, Recreation, and Open Space](#).

“What do you LOVE about your neighborhood?” Attendants were asked to discuss positive characteristics and assets of their neighborhood that were most important to them. A prioritization exercise identified the top items discussed. This exercise influenced strategies for [Initiative Area 5-Section D, City and Neighborhood Promotion](#).

Open Dialogue. City planners provided neighbors with time to talk about the issues that were most important to them as citizens and as an organization. Common dialogue topics included: neighborhood goals and areas of focus; resources that could assist associations with organizing and sustaining involvement; types of investment that would make the biggest difference in the neighborhood; specific challenges and opportunities.

WHAT WE LOVE ABOUT OUR NEIGHBORHOODS!

These attributes and assets were identified as most important by residents at various neighborhood meetings.



D. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT + INPUT INTO ROCHESTER 2034 (CONTINUED)

COMMUNITY MEETINGS CONTINUED

TOPIC-BASED STAKEHOLDERS

In order to have a deeper understanding of various community dynamics, topic-based stakeholder groups were identified including a wide range of advocates, employers, educators, service providers, developers, etc. Various members of the project team met with them to learn more about issues, needs, and strategies around specific topics. This process not only informed *Rochester 2034*, but helped establish and nurture relationships with people and organizations that will play a key role in plan implementation. Over 30 meetings were conducted involving over 100 different stakeholder groups.



COMMUNITY MEETINGS CONTINUED

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Mayor's Youth Advisory Council. In May 2018, City planners met with the Mayor's Youth Advisory Council and presented the comprehensive planning process. Input was gathered by asking questions on the councilmembers' personal experiences living in Rochester and what changes they would like to see in the future.

Rochester City School District (RCSD). High school students from across the district came together for an interactive event in May of 2018. Students learned about *Rochester 2034*, met with specialized staff from City departments, provided input, and learned about city planning as a potential career choice. Additionally, through the Future Cities Program, over the course of 20 weeks RCSD students learned about urban planning and sustainability principles and competed in designing a sustainable future city with other schools. City staff worked with the students throughout the process by capturing their ideas and vision for the future and mentoring them in creating their design.

Genesee Community Charter School. Project team members visited the GCCS 6th grade class to teach and engage students about city planning principles. The class was in the midst of their capstone project, "Whose Renaissance Is It? A Closer Look at Rochester's Renewal." Students were exploring the progress of the City's previous comprehensive plan as well as examining the degree to which all of the city's residents were or were not benefiting from recent positive trends.

Rochester Children's Agenda. City planners met with staff from the Rochester Children Agenda, which advocates for the success and well-being of Rochester's youth.



D. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT + INPUT INTO ROCHESTER 2034 (CONTINUED)

POP-UP EVENTS

PUBLIC MARKET

A *Rochester 2034* station was set up at the Rochester Public Market, a popular gathering place for people from throughout the city as well as from the surrounding suburbs. During the event, citizens were informed about the survey and were asked a series of three questions:

- **What is your dream for Rochester?**
- What is your favorite thing in Rochester?
- What does Rochester need to be an even better city?

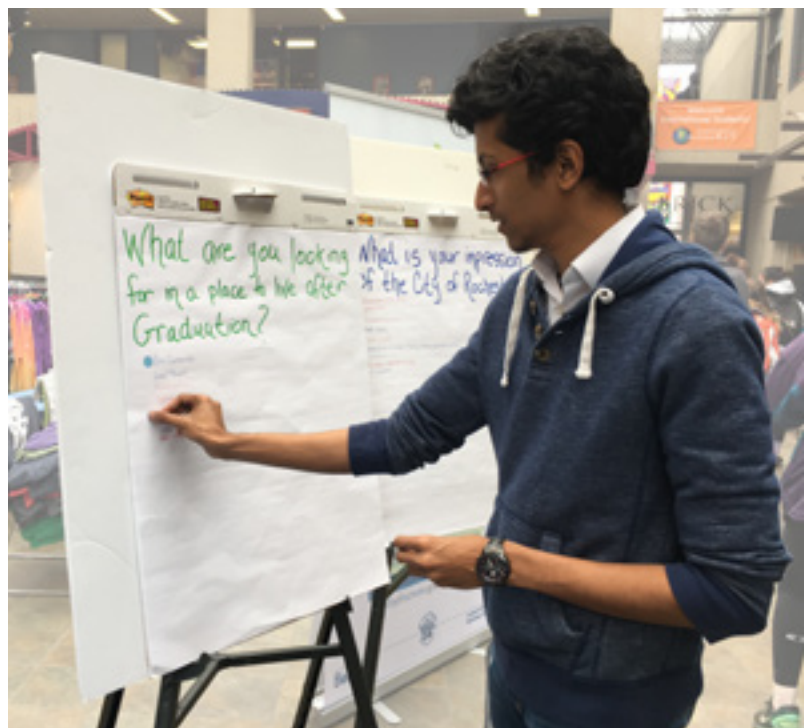
The varied responses helped create a narrative for *Rochester 2034*. A slideshow of the responses can be found on the [project webpage](#).

CELEBRATE CITY LIVING

City staff were present at the annual Celebrate City Living event at Sibley Square. This public expo encourages people to create roots in Rochester by investing in city living. The format of the input process was the same as the format of the Public Market pop-up event. The project team promoted the Plan and heard from attendants about the challenges and benefits of buying or renting a home in the City of Rochester.

UNIVERSITIES

Rochester is a regional center for education, as thousands of students are educated in the region annually. City staff set up tables at the student unions at local colleges and universities to introduce *Rochester 2034* and gather input. Students were asked about their impression of the City of Rochester and what would compel them to stay after graduation. The responses helped inform the Plan on strategies for retaining students after graduation.



WHAT'S YOUR DREAM FOR ROCHESTER?



MAN HOLDS BOARD THAT SAYS "MY DREAM FOR ROCHESTER IS FOR IT TO BE A THRIVING CITY AND BETTER CITY ON IN WHICH FUTURE GENERATIONS CAN LIVE, LEARN, AND LOVE"



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D. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT + INPUT INTO ROCHESTER 2034 (CONTINUED)

SURVEYS

SURVEY #1 (NOVEMBER 2016 – FEBRUARY 2017)

Early in the planning process, a survey was administered to get a broad understanding of the vision and goals Rochesterians have for their community. Over 1,250 residents, employees, and visitors took the survey over a 6-week period. The survey was composed of approximately 20 questions ranging from basic demographic information to questions like, “What is the City of Rochester’s greatest asset?” A summary of this survey and its results is available on the [project webpage](#).



SURVEY #2 (JANUARY – MAY 2018)

A second survey took a more targeted approach to gain an understanding of people’s priorities while also educating the public about what topics and information are addressed in a comprehensive plan. The survey had many opportunities for participants to comment and allowed respondents to link comments to specific locations. In addition to being an online survey, a printed version was developed to reach citizens without computer access. Both versions were available in Spanish.



Survey takers were able to insert pinpoints on any location within the city on an interactive map and define them as a “Favorite Place”, a “Challenge Area”, or a “Wish List” and could add comments to each pin to provide specific feedback on that location. Survey results also ranked 25 different issues of importance to respondents. The full results of this survey can be found [online](#).

SURVEY #2 RESULTED IN 3,022 SUBMISSIONS AND YIELDED OVER 10,000 COMMENTS AND MORE THAN 80,000 TOTAL DATA POINTS.

SURVEYS CONTINUED

ACCESSIBILITY

To maximize access to and participation in Survey #2, the following actions were taken:

COMMUNITY PARTNER SPOTLIGHT:



WORKING WITH RMAPI TO EXPAND OUTREACH

The Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative (RMAPI) was an invaluable partner in our efforts to expand outreach to people who are not traditionally involved in community planning processes and to diversify the range of input we received to inform *Rochester 2034*.

RMAPI staff invited the City's Manager of Planning to present on *Rochester 2034* to several of their working groups, distributed information about the survey to all of their staff and grantees, and conducted nearly 40 survey outreach events on their own time (with tablets and paper copies) at libraries, rec centers, public housing facilities, settlement houses, Foodlink mobile markets, and other community locations.

Neighborhood Associations. City planners reviewed the survey with meeting attendees at all of the 50+ neighborhood association outreach meetings and encouraged neighborhood leaders to distribute the survey through their networks and social media to ensure broad participation.

Monroe County Library System. City library branches promoted the survey at their computer stations and Library staff provided assistance to help community members take the survey, which helped to make the survey more accessible to people without internet access, or who needed assistance in filling out and submitting the survey.

Faith Community. The Mayor and City planners hosted a Faith Leaders' Summit at City Hall to discuss *Rochester 2034*, gather their input, and solicit their assistance in promoting the survey to their respective congregations.

City of Rochester Social Media. The survey was heavily promoted on the City of Rochester's Facebook and Twitter accounts, reaching over 20,000 followers.

Our Voice Magazine. This magazine promoted the survey for two months to help get input from Black and Hispanic communities in Rochester.

CityWise. City planners went on WXXI's talk show to discuss the comprehensive plan, how to take the survey, and how to get more involved.

Rochester Black Young Professionals (ROCBYP). City planners teamed up with the leaders of ROCBYP to sponsor an event during which *Rochester 2034* was promoted and the online survey was made available.

Blue Cross Arena. The marquee in front of the Blue Cross Arena displayed information about *Rochester 2034* and the online survey.

Rochester Housing Authority (RHA) Jurisdiction-Wide Resident Council. City planners met with the RHA's Jurisdiction-Wide Resident Council to introduce them to the survey and to give them printed copies to distribute. They were encouraged to foster participation in the survey from their fellow residents.

D. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT + INPUT INTO ROCHESTER 2034

(CONTINUED)

PUBLIC REVIEW OF DRAFT

Mayor Warren released the draft of *Rochester 2034* for community review on May 16, 2019 at a community celebration that included over 300 people. Over the next three months, the community was invited to view and comment on the Plan online, at libraries, recreation centers, Neighborhood Service Centers, and at five community meetings held throughout Rochester. During the comment period, city planners met with many stakeholder groups (advocacy groups, non-profits, industry experts, etc.), neighborhood groups, and City Hall professionals.

A revised draft was presented to the City Planning Commission (CPC) on September 9, 2019 to kick off the approval process, which included additional opportunities for public review and comment. At their October 7th meeting, the CPC recommended approval of the Plan with conditions that city planners distribute to the community a document entitled, "Common Misconceptions," and that periodic updates on implementation be provided.

After conducting a public hearing on November 7th, *Rochester 2034* was unanimously adopted by City Council at their November 12, 2019 meeting, through the approval of an amendment to Chapter 130 of the City Code, the Comprehensive Plan.

NEIGHBORHOOD, CITY, AND REGIONAL PLAN INVENTORY

One outcome of the *Rochester 2034* planning process is the creation of an inventory of all neighborhood, City, and regional plans that have been developed over the past 10 years. This inventory can be found on the City's Projects and Plans website, under the "Plans and Studies" tab. On this website, copies of any of the inventoried plans can be downloaded. Each of these plans were reviewed and taken into consideration during the development of *Rochester 2034*.

INPUT FROM OTHER PLANS

NEIGHBORHOOD, CITY, AND REGIONAL PLANS

Rochester's history of community planning has given rise to many plans. The city's active resident population drove the creation of those plans. Respecting those past efforts for *Rochester 2034*, the project team looked at all existing neighborhood, City, and regional plans and incorporated key points and relevant information into *Rochester 2034*.



Renaissance 2010 Plan

Adopted in 1999, the [Renaissance Plan](#) served as Rochester's comprehensive plan until the adoption of *Rochester 2034*. City planners reviewed the Renaissance Plan, noting how the Plan was or was not a useful tool for elected officials and City staff after adoption. Staff also incorporated elements of the Plan that are still relevant to the *Rochester 2034* process and document.

INPUT FROM OTHER PLANS CONTINUED

SUPPLEMENTAL PLANS AND STUDIES

The following technical studies and plans were prepared to inform the **Goals and Strategies** of *Rochester 2034*. Each project featured its own community engagement and input process.

- **Citywide Housing Market Study:** The [Citywide Housing Market Study](#) analyzed housing market data and provides recommendations for housing and community development policy and strategy, moving forward. The findings are reflected in the narrative and in [Initiative Area 3-Section A, Housing Action Plan](#).
- **Transit Supportive Corridors Study:** [This study](#) analyzed the relationship between land use, development, and transportation choices in Rochester and developed recommendations on how to target development along key corridors to enhance the viability of transit and multi-modal transportation in Rochester. [Initiative Area 2, The Placemaking Plan](#) and the [Initiative Area 4-Section E, Transportation](#), were heavily influenced by this study.
- **Comprehensive Access and Mobility Plan:** This [plan](#) studied Rochester's multi-modal transportation system, outlining recommendations for future transportation-related decisions. Its findings and recommendations are the foundation for the [Initiative Area 4-Section E, Transportation](#).
- **Commercial Corridor Study:** This [study](#) analyzed the market strength of, and recommendations for, the city's prominent commercial corridors. [Initiative Area 2, The Placemaking Plan](#) and the [Initiative Area 5-Section A, Economic Growth](#), are reflective of this study's conclusions.
- **Rochester Public Library Facilities & Operations Plan:** This [plan](#) was designed to serve as a roadmap to guide RPL capital investments, fundraising and decision-making for both the short and long-term. [Initiative Area 2, The Placemaking Plan](#) and the [Initiative Area 3-Section E, Schools + Community Centers](#) are reflective of this study's conclusions.
- **Rochester Climate Action Plan:** The [Rochester Climate Action Plan](#) set a goal to reduce community-wide greenhouse gas emissions 20% by 2020 and 40% by 2030, from a 2010 baseline. Its recommendations are the foundation of [Initiative Area 3, Climate Change, Mitigation, and Adaptation](#).