

# C. OTHER PLACEMAKING ELEMENTS

## MULTI-USE TRAILS + BICYCLE FACILITIES

The Placemaking Plan Map illustrates a network of existing and recommended multi-use trails, and protected lanes. A more in-depth examination of all other bicycle facilities and amenities can be found in the [Comprehensive Access and Mobility Plan \(CAMP\)](#). The major bicycle network corridors are addressed here.

Multi-use trails and other bicycle facilities, while important elements in the transportation system, do not have the critical mass of users to drive land use patterns. However, they play an important role in providing active transportation and recreation opportunities. Therefore, the existing and proposed land use patterns were factors that influenced the location of future trail linkages.

The network of recommended trails represent opportunities to connect origins (mainly residential areas) and destinations (employment/mixed-use centers, parks, etc.). The recommended segments also include opportunities to fill in gaps in the existing multi-use trail and bicycle facility network. Future opportunities are limited by available land in corridor form such as large landowners, current and former railroad rights-of-way (ROWs), utility ROWs, and highways ROWs with ample undeveloped space.

The City of Rochester, as well as its neighboring towns, have collectively developed one of the most extensive regional trail networks in the country and certainly New York State. Most of the easiest trails – the “low hanging fruit” – have been built. What remains in the recommended network are the more challenging corridors in terms of available land and physical constraints. As the City and its partners continue to develop these linkages, they will become part of a robust network of transportation alternatives and recreational opportunities, making a significant contribution to Rochester’s placemaking efforts.



## PARKS + OPEN SPACES

The identity of many streets and neighborhoods is tied, formally or informally, to the city's wonderful collection of parks. Preservation and expansion of these critical community assets is addressed in the Parks and Open Space Character Area as well as in [Initiative Area 4-Section B, Parks, Recreation, and Open Space](#).

In addition, The Placemaking Plan Map contains numerous enhancements to specific parks and playgrounds throughout the city. Continuously tracking and improving the conditions of these amenities should be a high priority. The proliferation of public art, educational programming, and special events contributes to the vitality of parks and other public spaces.



## C. OTHER PLACEMAKING ELEMENTS (CONTINUED)

### COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Rochester boasts an extensive network of community facilities including libraries, recreation/ community centers (rec center), public safety buildings, sports complexes, and other public facilities. Collectively, they contribute to the rich assortment of activities, resources, and programming available to residents and visitors.

The Placemaking Plan Map includes a variety of improvements to these facilities. In addition, the challenges and opportunities related to these facilities are explored in more depth in [Initiative Area 3-Section E, Schools and Community Centers](#). This includes planning for co-locating services and facilities such as community meeting rooms at fire stations and siting rec center on or near school campuses. Of particular importance is the [Rochester Public Library's Branch Library Facilities and Operations Plan \(Appendix H\)](#), which outlines a series of policy, programming, and facility changes to enhance their role in serving the community.



## GENESEE RIVER ACCESS

While the Rochester area boasts an unrivaled abundance and diversity of water-bodies, the Genesee River is the most closely associated with the city's identity. The river features ever changing scenery as it winds 13 miles from Genesee Valley Park north to Lake Ontario. From the meandering flatwaters of the south river corridor to the channelized urban setting of downtown, from the dramatic cliffs and waterfalls of the gorge to the bustling river terminus in Charlotte, the Genesee is an important resource and source of pride for many neighborhoods along its course. However, generations of neglect coupled with formidable topography has limited access to the river.

The Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP) and ROC the Riverway (RTR) initiative have provided a transformative vision for the city's reconnection with the waterway. Each of the capital projects in the LWRP and RTR are integrated into The Placemaking Plan Map, including opportunities for improved access, dynamic parks and public spaces, expanded multi-use trails, and greater boating activity.



## C. OTHER PLACEMAKING ELEMENTS (CONTINUED)

### INFRASTRUCTURE + STREETSCAPES

There are numerous opportunities throughout Rochester to improve the public realm, especially in the form of redesigned streetscapes that emphasize the pedestrian experience. Beyond the general importance of these features as discussed in the Streets Character Area, examples of major capital projects included in The Placemaking Plan Map include safer and more attractive highway bridge crossings, streetscape and intersection improvements, on-street bicycle facilities, restored and new pedestrian bridges, riverfront promenade segments, and the Inner Loop North project. These projects can have a transformational impact on the urban experience, as evidenced by previous successful projects like the Port of Rochester Marina, Maplewood Park Pedestrian Bridge, Midtown Rising, Western Gateway I-490 Project, ARTWalk, and the Inner Loop East Transformation Project.



## NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING

*Rochester 2034* provides a blueprint for growth and development from a city-wide perspective, with some detail provided at the neighborhood scale. Neighborhoods are encouraged to partner with the City to do more in-depth plans and studies that will add more specificity to placemaking strategies. Projects such as brownfield opportunity area (BOA) plans, corridor studies, and neighborhood charrettes are useful tools for digging deeper than a comprehensive plan. The City should continue to implement existing small area plans while supporting additional follow-on studies and plans. Many examples of these projects are included on The Placemaking Plan Map.



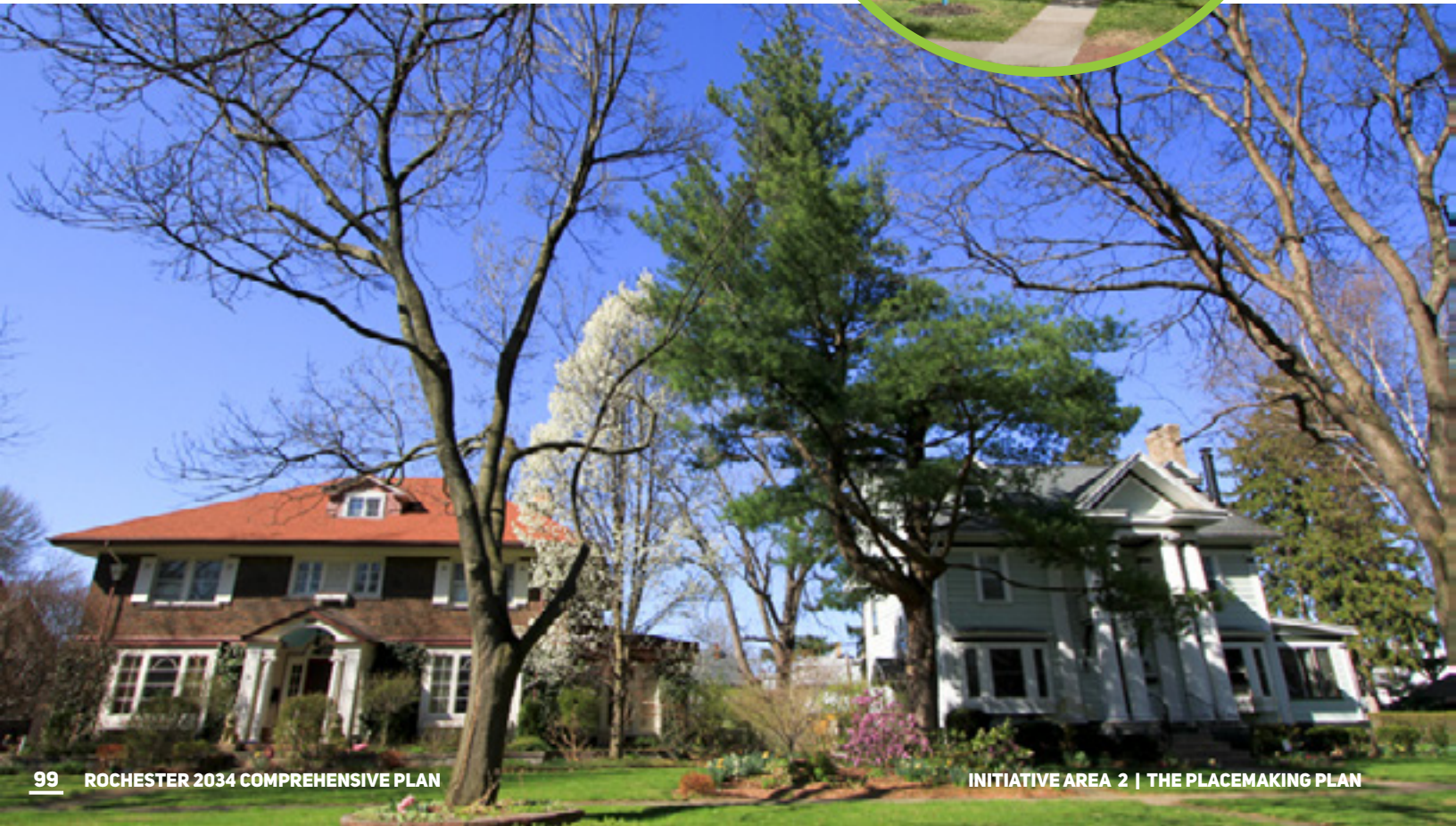
# EAST MAIN ARTS & MARKET INITIATIVE



## C. OTHER PLACEMAKING ELEMENTS (CONTINUED)

### HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Placemaking is enhanced by preserving our traditional built environment. Rochester has an abundance of historic buildings to complement its unique history of innovation, democratic pursuits, and enrichment. Museums, landmarks, heritage trails, and history-oriented programming all help tell the story of the Flour/Flower City's evolution and the great figures from our past. The recommendations found within each of the Character Areas work towards preserving the traditional form of Rochester's neighborhoods, as do the numerous strategies listed under [Goal PMP-4](#).



## STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT SITES

During the community engagement stages of *Rochester 2034*, each neighborhood association was asked to identify buildings or sites that, if redeveloped in a positive way, would have a substantial impact on their entire neighborhood. Their suggestions were combined with numerous other underutilized sites and buildings that City staff have identified as being of neighborhood or city-wide significance. The collection of sites also includes the Landmark Society of Western New York's [Five to Revive](#) sites.

[These sites](#) represent a wide variety of scenarios. There are vacant lots, dilapidated buildings, and structures that are relatively sound but remain vacant. Some are privately owned, some are owned by the City. Some are in various stages of redevelopment; others have no plans as of yet. Many are brownfield sites in different stages of cleanup. For all of these sites, the City should develop a



comprehensive program to advance their reuse through documenting existing conditions, fostering partnerships with landowners of privately-owned sites, pursuing environmental remediation funds, and marketing the sites through multiple platforms and partners.





## C. OTHER PLACEMAKING ELEMENTS (CONTINUED)

### PUBLIC SPACE DESIGN WITHIN PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT

The terms ‘public space’, ‘open space’, and ‘greenspace’ are typically associated with formal publicly-owned parks, both large and small. However, many of the benefits of parks can be incorporated into the site design of private development. Creating an attractive respite in the fully man-made urban environment is not limited to setting aside entire parcels for public space, nor is it limited to the natural landscape or purely green landscaping. Well-designed, dynamic spaces play an integral role in community placemaking.

When space is limited within a development site, the benefits of public parks can still be obtained at a small scale through the creative design of how buildings and the absence of buildings interact with each other. The following annotated images illustrate how the pedestrian-scale intricacies of site and building design can create small gathering places, beautiful landscapes, and whimsical spaces for play within the urban environment. When designed properly, they reinforce a strong sense that people are valued as residents of a place, not merely consumers of products.

Rochester’s relatively weak real estate market has limited how much developers and property owners are willing to incorporate these elements that do not produce direct revenue. However, as our market strengthens, especially with the resurgence of downtown, the City should gradually raise the standards based on the [principles illustrated in the following pages](#). This should include incorporating public space concepts into the updated/new form-based codes for downtown and mixed-use districts.

Public space enhancements should be viewed as a strategic investment for property owners and developers. Combined with a highly attractive, playful public realm, these investments will multiply street level vibrancy, bolster the positive perception of the city, and drive greater levels of economic activity. Given the presence of The Strong National Museum of Play and the City’s newfound commitment to incorporating ‘urban play’ elements into the public realm, Rochester is uniquely positioned to craft a new identity.

#### EXAMPLE: CHANNEL GARDENS AT ROCKEFELLER CENTER, MANHATTAN

One of the world’s most famous public spaces within private development is Channel Gardens at Rockefeller Center. Not only does this tiny four-season ‘outdoor room’ not generate any direct revenue, it is costly to maintain. Yet for nearly a century, it has been the centerpiece of Rockefeller Center, indirectly generating untold millions of dollars in revenue for adjacent uses because of its irresistible lure in the heart of the highly dense Manhattan landscape. While Rochester does not have nearly the critical mass to replicate these levels of investment and activity, the same principles regarding the direct and indirect value of public space can be applied on a smaller scale.



**EXAMPLE:  
LA CIUADAELA, SAN JUAN**



first floor unifying elements like awnings and cornice lines allow for variation and interest in upper floors

whimsical, undulating paths communicate that this is a destination, a place to 'be', not just a connector



changing building orientation counters the monotony of large-scale development

outdoor eating spaces soften the barrier between private and public space

high-density development adjacent to public space, when designed well, creates a sense of place – an 'outdoor room'

**THIS  
OVERALL  
DESIGN  
PROMOTES  
A SENSE  
OF URBAN  
'PLAY!'**

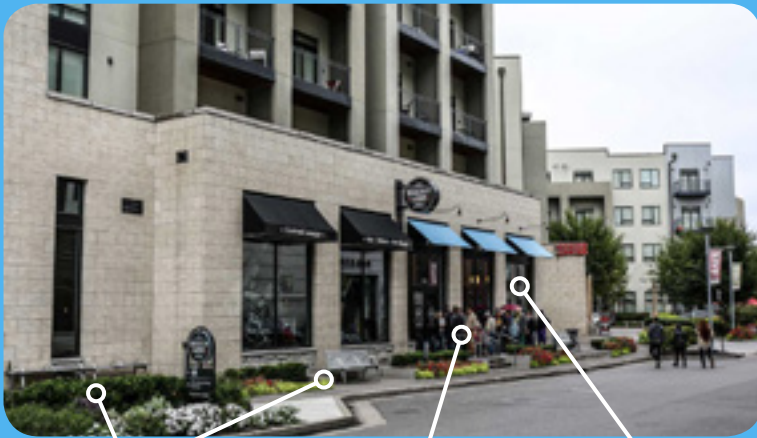


historic and modern building designs complement each other when emphasis is placed on first floor and public space design

creative lighting enhances the 'after 5' experience

## C. OTHER PLACEMAKING ELEMENTS (CONTINUED)

### EXAMPLE: THE GULCH, NASHVILLE



enhancements to even the smallest public spaces contribute to vitality

first floor uses like restaurants and shops contribute to regular pedestrian traffic; offices and certain services do not

first floor transparency highlights pedestrian activity

maintain overall feel of development built to the sidewalk while allowing for small-scale variations in setbacks for visual interest and gathering spaces



gardens, fountains, and outdoor seating

sidewalks with varying widths and nuances

modern features added to historic buildings

## REUSE OF VACANT LANDS

One of Rochester's greatest challenges is the prevalence of vacant lands in its most economically distressed neighborhoods. Their presence can negatively impact a sense of place and pride as they raise safety concerns, portray disinvestment, and are even correlated with low educational outcomes for nearby children. As discussed in [Initiative Area 3-Section B, Vacant Lands](#), the City should pursue a more deliberate set of strategies for repurposing vacant lands. Whether converting them to community gardens, holding them for future development, or installing renewable energy facilities, the City should engage neighborhoods and other stakeholders to customize strategies for different areas across the community.

Not only will the reuse of these lands enhance a sense of place, empowering neighbors to drive these investments will foster hope and commitment. These properties are far too numerous to clearly show on the Placemaking Plan Map. However, the City does maintain an inventory of vacant properties and the most significant ones are shown on the map as Strategic Sites.



## C. OTHER PLACEMAKING ELEMENTS (CONTINUED)

### GRASS ROOTS INITIATIVES

While documented extensively in this Initiative Area, not all placemaking efforts come from municipal investments, policies, and regulations. Of equal importance are the efforts of local residents, businesses, and organizations. Sometimes these initiatives are done in partnership with the City such as the BoulevART program that allows neighbors to promote traffic calming and beautification through street murals. The annual Clean Sweep event and recent pop-up mini-festivals at La Marketa site are additional examples.

In other cases, character and vibrancy are fostered solely through grass roots resources. Block parties, active neighborhood organizations, and community gardens are defining features of many parts of the city. As well, the basic upkeep and beautification of individual homes, businesses, and yards has a significant impact on the daily experience of residents and visitors. Many neighborhoods and business corridors self-organize and promote these values. The Action Plan for this Initiative Area contains several strategies for continuing to build local capacity for placemaking.



## PUBLIC SPACE PROGRAMMING + PUBLIC ART

Another key element in creating places of great character and vibrancy is programming activities and events in those public spaces, districts, and neighborhood centers. The City of Rochester sponsors and promotes festivals and other events that enliven parts of the city. Local groups and organizations also play a role in programming public spaces. Examples of this includes the Puerto Rican Festival, Corn Hill Arts Festival, and Park Avenue Festival. As part of the ROC the Riverway initiative, the City will form a downtown/riverfront management entity that will program, market, and maintain the proposed new public spaces.

Public art is essential to the beauty and vitality of a place and is free and accessible to everyone. Rochester has numerous public art installations, especially in the downtown area and in the Neighborhood of the Arts. Additionally, many neighborhoods and grass roots organizations have proudly advocated for and successfully installed unique public art to create a greater sense of place in their community. Future development projects and public space enhancements should add even more artistic installations to the cityscape. Public art investments include temporary, rotating, and permanent installations. These investments are bolstered by creating public spaces that can accommodate performance art of varying scales and genres.



## C. OTHER PLACEMAKING ELEMENTS (CONTINUED)

### PARKING POLICIES

As Rochester continues to see a renewed interest in city living and urban development, and as mobility options and preferences continue to evolve, the City should reexamine its parking-related policies.

**Prioritizing parking in development decisions works against the principles of placemaking. Ample parking can often stifle the economic success of a street or district, as it discourages pedestrian activity and is an inefficient use of land.**

Conversely, businesses or destinations can often be highly successful despite the lack of parking. For example, two of Rochester's most popular restaurants, Magnolia's Deli & Cafe and The Playhouse / Swillburger, have no dedicated parking. Over time, patrons have organically found nearby parking or alternative transportation solutions to get to these locations. Similarly, it can often be challenging to find a parking space along or nearby the city's most vibrant business corridor, Park Avenue. Few businesses in this area have dedicated parking of their own. Yet these places demonstrate that people will find a way to get to a business or destination if the 'product' is highly desirable.

Ride share and bike share are solidly established in Rochester, reflecting emerging preferences for non-single occupancy vehicle modes of transportation. *Reimagine RTS* is positioning bus service to be even more viable for riders. Also, e-bikes, e-scooters, and autonomous vehicles are showing signs of collectively having a major impact on transportation choices in the next 15 years. Driving will remain the majority mode of choice in future years, but its expected decline should be reflected in land use regulations and the overall urban investment mindset.

**It is recommended that zoning regulations for future commercial, mixed-use, and large-scale housing development in all mixed-use Character Areas transition away from minimum parking requirements to a "transportation access plan", which would be applicable to projects above a scale identified during the zoning code update process.** This approach should also be applied to as-built commercial buildings in residential Character Areas, as well as conversion of single-family homes to 4-family homes in all Character Areas. Proposed parking should be based on a transportation access plan that considers

all relevant modes of transportation and potential impacts of off-site parking usage.

Parking minimums are car-oriented regulations intended for car-oriented places that fail to recognize, let alone encourage, the urban environment, its transportation choices, its historic context, or emerging trends. Parking minimums often pose a barrier for new shops, businesses, and housing to be established, especially in cases of repurposing historic commercial or industrial buildings. In most cases, businesses and residential buildings should be able to supply sufficient parking and accessibility to patrons through:

- nearby parking lots and garages;
- shared parking agreements;
- on-street parking;
- bicycle parking;
- transit access;
- being in a walkable environment;
- ride sharing services; and
- other emerging trends in transportation options and preferences.

Limited amounts of on-site parking spaces, if any, can be combined with each of these options to make the development economically viable. Under current regulations, when the required amount of parking is installed, it often perpetuates an overly car-dependent culture and covers valuable real estate with asphalt.

The recommendation to transition away from conventional parking requirements is consistent with an emerging movement across the country to eliminate parking minimums in favor of promoting alternatives to driving.

Parking maximums should be retained, with a variance needed for proposals exceeding the cap. These regulations ensure that proposed projects do not include an oversupply of spaces. However, the current maximums should be revisited and adjusted, as needed, if there are recurring issues with their levels. In addition, greater emphasis should be placed on the City, developers, and landowners identifying opportunities for community parking lots and shared parking agreements.

As mentioned in the [Design Considerations for the Downtown Mixed-Use Character Area](#), developers and architects should be provided more guidance on the design of first floor covered parking within mixed-use and multi-family residential buildings. The high cost of creating underground parking, coupled with the CCD's limits on surface parking, often results in development proposals containing first floor covered parking. Revised standards should effectively limit, but not prohibit, this design approach as well as mitigate its negative impacts on adjacent street life.

Lastly, the City should revise each of its request for proposals (RFP) processes for development of City-owned land. Developers responding to these RFPs should be required to outline a holistic approach to transportation choices, as opposed to the more conventional request for a parking plan. Several recent development proposals for new construction projects in downtown have contained less than one parking space per residential unit, an encouraging sign. This market shift should be supported by revising related City policies.

**“AS PARKING REGULATIONS WERE PUT INTO ZONING CODES, MOST OF THE DOWNTOWNS IN MANY CITIES WERE JUST COMPLETELY DECIMATED. WHAT THE CITIES GOT, IN EFFECT, WAS GREAT PARKING. BUT NOBODY GOES TO A CITY BECAUSE IT HAS GREAT PARKING.”**

**- MICHAEL KODRANSKY, INSTITUTE OF TRANSPORTATION AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY**

