Rochester 2034 Pandemic Resiliency Strategies

Introduction

Rochester 2034, adopted in November 2019, presents the Rochester community with a collective action agenda for the next 15 years. While the Plan did not anticipate a global pandemic, its vision for a healthy, resilient community guides the goals and strategies that seek to build readiness for future pandemics and other health crises. This report outlines the strategies from *Rochester 2034* that are specifically relevant to guiding the current recovery process and strengthening Rochester's resiliency against future health crises.

1. **Improve and strengthen the accessibility to health services**

The impact of the pandemic on our healthcare system has drawn attention to the gaps in healthcare coverage in our community. Vulnerable populations, including those in high-poverty areas, had a more difficult time meeting their healthcare needs during this crisis for a number of reasons, including a lack of nearby health facilities, transportation, affordable healthcare, and a higher likeliness to be working with the public.[1]

Relevant Rochester 2034 Strategies:
PHS-5a. Work with health care and health planning partners to inventory health facilities in the city, and document major health conditions, trends, utilization, needs, gaps, and opportunities to better inform City efforts to integrate health into its policies, programs, and neighborhood development efforts.

PHS-5b. Work with ongoing health care and health planning efforts to share City data and knowledge that could benefit those processes, identify new opportunities for joint work, and collaboratively fundraise to implement ideas.

PHS-5c. Work with partners to identify available sites for development of health and human service facilities that will benefit neighborhoods, particularly in underserved areas. Ensure that facilities are easily accessible, make the best use of existing facilities, and are compatible with adjoining uses.

SCC-3b. Examine additional opportunities for co-locating community facilities and programs. Between the rec centers, libraries, neighborhood service centers, colleges/universities, fire stations, and even police stations, there is the potential to site future facilities on or nearby existing facilities. Various public services could be co-located at these facilities such as health clinics, senior centers, senior housing, childhood development centers, day care, after-school programs, and employment services. Other types of services may be explored, such as not-for-profits, satellite college campuses, fitness centers, or medical offices. Co-location can offer cost savings, community integration, and intergenerational support.

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[1] https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7221360/
https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7183932/

SCC-3f. Promote schools as platforms to provide multiple support services, such as extended learning programs, nutrition counseling, free or subsidized breakfasts and lunches, and health services to low-income families in the community.

2. **Expand and improve access to healthcare data**

Rochester is home to a number of healthcare and community service agencies, all who have their own methods of data collection and analysis. Data is important to assessing and tracking heath conditions and threats in the community for program design and deployment. An efficient system of health services requires that data be accessible for sharing among all partners, while protecting people's right to privacy. Including the community in accessible health data also allows residents to make healthy choices and decisions for themselves and their families.

Relevant Rochester 2034 Strategies:
PHS-3i. Perform a Community Risk Assessment to evaluate the hazards faced by residents, and create a Community Risk Reduction program designed around the information gathered.

PHS-5a. Work with health care and health planning partners to inventory health facilities in the city, and document major health conditions, trends, utilization, needs, gaps, and opportunities to better inform City efforts to integrate health into its policies, programs, and neighborhood development efforts.

PHS-5b. Work with ongoing health care and health planning efforts to share City data and knowledge that could benefit those processes, identify new opportunities for joint work, and collaboratively fundraise to implement ideas.

SC-4a. Continue to deploy and promote online tools and open data to the maximum extent possible and become a recognized leader in sharing data in informative, easy to use, and compelling ways with the public.

3. **Build Economic Resiliency**

Economic instability has been a devastating side effect of the COVID-19 pandemic. Unemployment has risen to record breaking levels[2] and businesses struggle to remain viable. Rochester was built on innovation and entrepreneurship and those characteristics continue to be the backbone of Rochester's economy. Its innovation and entrepreneurship that will contribute to the City's recovery from the impacts of the pandemic as well as long-term economic resiliency from future challenges.

Relevant Rochester 2034 Strategies:
ECN-2b. Guided by the 2019 City of Rochester Commercial Corridor Study, create a new financing vehicle housed within the Rochester Economic Development Corporation (REDCO) aimed at providing predevelopment funds for small businesses. This investment should focus on high-impact neighborhood projects that will serve as anchors for further development in neighborhood districts

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[2] https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/empsit.pdf

ECN-2e. Assess and reduce administrative and regulatory barriers for small business development and support.

ECN-2f. Continue to explore creative and innovative ways to finance businesses, focusing on providing grants, below-market interest rates on loans, and large-scale economic development incentives through programs like the SBA 504 lending program.

ECN-2g. Continue to support and expand programs such as Kiva Rochester and other innovative community-based methods for increasing capital access such as micro-lending, shared assets, and resource pools.

ECN-2h. Collaborate with traditional financial institutions to make lending practices more accessible and culturally inclusive.

ECN-2i. Raise awareness of new and existing financial products and strategies available to residents and small businesses.

ECN-2l. Offer businesses a stronger and more coordinated network of service providers focused on technical assistance, training, and mentorship opportunities. Focus on connecting service providers through systems integration, shared performance management, navigating multiple levels of bureaucracy for development projects, the creation of a central hub of information and referrals, and increased funding to support "Navigators/Advocates" to assist in accessing services.

ECN-3a. Support and grow startup businesses in the community through incubator and small business programs and initiatives, such as NextCorps, Luminate, RIT Center for Urban Entrepreneurship, and the Commissary.

ECN-4d. Increase outreach efforts to the industrial/manufacturing sector to maintain and enhance strong business relationships. Rochester's manufacturing base provides well-paying entry-level and mid-skill level jobs to neighborhood residents.

ECN-4f. In accordance with the Finger Lakes Forward: United for Success Plan, increase program focus on industries such as optics/photonics, food production, advanced manufacturing, and technology. These industries are gaining regional momentum in large part due to the growing prominence of RIT and UR.

ECN-5b. Leverage business accelerator strategies and programs to assist MWBEs' progression from sub-contractors to prime contractors.

ECN-5c. Ensure loan and grant-making processes are equitable and responsive to the needs of all cultures, ethnicities, and abilities.

ECN-6a. Create a formalized anchor collaborative network in the Greater Rochester region. Draft goals and strategies for anchor collaboration including support for OWN Rochester Companies, shifting procurement streams to support local businesses, hiring employees from low-income communities, community-building activities, living wage, supporting local homeownership, and more.

ECN-7b. Adopt evidence-based methods and approaches to analyzing citywide economic/market trends, commercial dynamics, and economic development opportunities on an on-going basis.

WRK-1c. Coordinate and analyze data around the labor market in terms of growing industries. Share this information with workforce partners to help guide their strategies and support skills development in emerging labor sectors.

WRK-1d. Develop new resources to provide crucial services to support workforce programs, such as childcare, transportation, stipends, and benefits navigation to program participants.

WRK-2b. Encourage employers to work with members of training programs, such as Operation Transform Rochester (OTR), to offer financial support to students in the form of scholarships.

WRK-3c. Develop a transitional employment program that features simple, low-skill, short-term job opportunities to assist panhandlers and other residents facing housing or employment crises. Similar programs exist in Syracuse and Albuquerque and are designed to provide people who are not yet employable in the traditional job market with a stepping stone. The transitional employment set-up will give them confidence, work experience and access to services.

WRK-3f. Foster partnerships with disability organizations and local employers to increase employment of Rochesterians with disabilities and understanding of ADA accommodation requests.

   4. **Encourage transportation alternatives**

Transportation accessibility is a significant issue during a pandemic, one that disproportionately affects low-income residents. While expanding ridership access to RTS is important to ensuring a sustainable, accessible community, it is also important that residents have multiple transportation options. This way, when a crisis such as a pandemic occurs and residents do not feel safe using a specific mode of transportation, there are other options. This includes expanding the bicycle grid network, installing more bikeshare stations, maintaining pedestrian paths and sidewalks year-round, employing vehicle traffic-calming efforts, and encouraging the use of the citywide trail system by installing safety measures such as adequate lighting. By creating a safer and more accessible multimodal network, residents will have options when needed.

Relevant Strategies:

PMP-5b. Expand bicycle facilities and the multi-use trail network to better connect origins and destinations and enhance the environment for active transportation choices.

TRN-1b. Implement previously completed plans that improve multi-modal accessibility, including:
    -Rochester Bicycle Boulevards Plan
    -Irondequoit Seneca Trail Feasibility Study
    -Finger Lakes Regional Trail Initiative
    -JOSANA Trail Feasibility Study
    -Eastman Trail
    -East Main Arts and Market District Plan
    -Roc the Riverway Vision Plan
    -Reimagine RTS

TRN-1e. Adopt a City of Rochester Street Design Guide based on street typologies developed in the City's Comprehensive Access and Mobility Plan and the notion of "self-enforcing design." The Guide should provide standards and direction for how to best balance the needs of multiple transportation modes.

TRN-1i. Develop performance measures that recognize the impacts of transportation facility and network design on safety and accessibility, health, economic vitality and opportunity, equity,

sustainability, and quality of life. Apply the measures to infrastructure planning, design, and maintenance.

TRN-1m. Support the use of the trail system as a transportation corridor by installing lighting, wayfinding signage, and providing all-season maintenance and litter services along key segments to start and expanding as resources allow.

TRN-1n. Identify and implement additional strategic winter maintenance and/or snow and ice accumulation prevention activities to better maintain key walking and biking facilities, as well as areas around key transit stops, through the winter months.

TRN-1q. Work toward becoming a member of the World Health Organization's Network of Age-Friendly Communities and an AARP Livable Community by identifying and implementing strategies that respond to the varying mobility needs of residents as they age.

TRN-3a. Strategically fill gaps in the dedicated bicycle network while also expanding to form a safe, interconnected "minimum grid."

TRN-3b. Perform periodic, citywide bicycle demand and Level of Traffic Stress analyses to help further pinpoint priority investments that expand the bike network, as well as its use and safety for cyclists of all ages and abilities.

TRN-3c. Evaluate the potential for an east-west multi-use trail.

TRN-3d. Expand the bikeshare system. Prioritize station expansions around employment, residential, and activity centers, as well as high volume transit stops and transit connection hubs. Expand the fleet to include more bikes, as well as e-bikes, e-scooters and other innovative mobility options as they emerge.

TRN-3e. Work to achieve higher ratings and awards from bicycle advocacy organizations, including the League of American Bicyclists and Places for Bikes.

5. **Expand opportunities to stay connected with physical distancing.**

Physical distancing during the pandemic created a need for rethinking routine activities around being connected to social networks. Remote technologies such as internet and cellular technologies became imperatives as a safe means of working, studying, doing errands, and staying connected to people. During the COVID-19 pandemic, households without access to these technologies faced a more difficult time sheltering in place.

In addition, outdoor public spaces where people can safely gather became a critical community need during the current pandemic. Physical distancing requirements made it essential to have safe accessible public spaces for people to move about and be social without spreading illnesses. Parks, trails, and public spaces provide an environment where people can be social, get exercise, interact with nature, and spend time outside of their homes.

SC-2a. Examine internet needs in the community and determine the most effective ways to improve internet accessibility.

SC-2b. Work with private internet providers to expand fiber-optics throughout the city.

SC-2c. Continuously upgrade internet speeds and capabilities in public facilities such as libraries and rec centers.

SC-4b. Expand existing and develop new municipal online payment, permitting, and licensing systems, as well as subscription-based public notifications.

SC-4c. Advance City permitting, inspection, and enforcement operations through digital transformation.

BCC-3d. Explore options for improving access to 311 for non-English speaking residents.

PR-2e. Develop a small parks/parklets strategy and explore options for public/neighborhood use of City-owned vacant land.

PR-3a. Provide adequate funding, technology, and staffing for high quality maintenance, operations, and safety of parks, including:
    -Sufficient mowing, pruning, watering
    -Safe and accessible playgrounds, athletic facilities
    -Parks free of litter and graffiti
    -Trails and pathways clear and smooth
    -Technological improvements for planning and monitoring
    -Staff training and education in best management and maintenance practices.

PR-4b. Increase visibility and welcomeness near parks and recreation facilities through:
    -Public art, murals, and playful design elements and amenities on or leading to rec centers, trails, park entrances, and other facilities
    -Colorful, beautiful, and informative wayfinding and interpretation signage
    -Traffic calming treatments to slow vehicular speeds and make it safer and easier to walk and bike to parks and recreation facilities

PR-4c. Activate parks with community-oriented programming for diverse audiences, ages, interests, and abilities:
    -Exercise, yoga, dance classes in parks
    -Nature education and adventures, local history walks, garden programs, music
    -Accessible adventures, athletics, and recreation programing

PR-4f. Develop a formal Friends of the Parks organization which actively promotes, advocates for and assists with fundraising for our parks and greenspaces.

PR-5b. Target infrastructure investments within existing parks, trails, and recreation facilities to areas that need improved access for people with disabilities, particularly Washington Grove, Lower Falls Park, and other areas of the Genesee River Gorge.

UAG-1h. Sponsor grants to support community gardening as well as other urban agriculture applications.

VNT-2a. Identify community groups who are willing and have the capacity to help manage and program vacant lots for community gathering and playability. Write grants to offset capital and operational costs.

Additional Information

To learn about Rochester's Jumpstarting ROC plan, visit https://www.jumpstartingroc.com/

To learn more about *Rochester 2034* and how it is being implemented, visit www.Rochester2034.com.