



Partnership for Downtown Rochester Community Open House (Public Meeting #2) Summary

**Central Library of Rochester & Monroe County
115 South Avenue, Rochester, NY 14604
December 13, 2023, 5:00-7:00PM**

On December 13, 2023, the Partnership for Downtown Rochester held a second public meeting to solicit input on the Draft District Plan for a potential Business Improvement District for downtown Rochester. The meeting was held in the Kate Gleason Auditorium at the Central Library, and consisted of an open house format where participants could provide their individual feedback at each of nine stations, each staffed by a facilitator. Meeting participants are included in Appendix A.

Meeting Overview

The Partnership for Downtown Rochester (PDR) prepared a Draft District Plan to outline the governance, funding, services, and execution of a Downtown Rochester Business Improvement District (BID) that can be supported by a majority of property owners in the district, for consideration by the Rochester City Council.

Attendees were welcomed by the project team and encouraged to sign in and then interact with each of the nine stations located around the room. A facilitator was present at each station to take notes and attendees could write down their own input at one of the stations. Staff, board members, BID Formation Committee members, and consultants were present to answer questions and record feedback from meeting attendees.

The station boards and a summary of input collected is summarized below.

Station #1: Visioning & Guiding Principles and Summary of Community Outreach

Downtown Rochester BID Community Outreach

- 2020: ROC the Riverway recommendation for an ongoing management entity and formation of a BID
- 2021: Formation of the Partnership for Downtown Rochester
- 2022: BID Formation Committee established
- August 2022: City Council approved initial legislative step to begin development of District Plan
- 2022-23: Community engagement
 - Survey & event engagement with 1,000+ respondents
 - WalkShops
 - Office hours
 - March 2023 Public Meetings
 - Focus Groups
 - Key stakeholder discussions
 - Formation Committee Meetings x 10+

English



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DOWNTOWN ROCHESTER BID Vision & Guiding Principles

A Vision for Downtown Rochester

Downtown Rochester will solidify its position as the region's historic and vibrant center of bustling community activity. Residents, workers, and visitors will enjoy beautiful and energetic public spaces, including a sensational Riverway, with a dynamic collection of arts, music, culture, shopping, living, educational and employment opportunities that are accessible to everyone. Active street life will make all feel welcome and safe.

?

What resonates with you the most?

Guiding Principles

- **Community Centered & Accessible:** Downtown is everybody's neighborhood and a proud home of social innovation and people care. Downtown embraces its role as the center of community life for people of all ages, races, incomes, abilities, and world views.
- **Welcoming & Safe:** Everyone feels welcome and safe in downtown Rochester. Public areas are active throughout the daytime and evening and enlivened with welcoming messages, friendly faces, and things to do.
- **Equitable:** Downtown is the center of a proudly diverse city. Community members come from many different histories and circumstances. Downtown acknowledges past harms and accepts its responsibility to offer positive experiences for everyone.
- **Vibrant:** Downtown is exciting and fun. Streets and public areas are energized, bustling with activity. It is the place to be in Rochester to live, work, shop, dine, learn, and play.
- **Vital:** Downtown is the center of Greater Rochester's economy. Many people work in downtown's offices, stores, hotels, homes, gathering places, warehouses, and industries. Public, private, and community-based leadership work together to realize a shared vision for the future of downtown.

The Partnership for Downtown Rochester vows to support the Guiding Principles by:

- Supporting, promoting, hiring, and advocating for small and local businesses and talent.
- Actively seeking and engaging diverse leaders, board members, event participants, vendors, and talent.
- Hosting events and programs by and for Rochester's diverse communities.
- Building and fostering long-term relationships with local community and direct service organizations.
- Advocating for livability and smart growth (housing affordability mix, active transportation, parks & open space, neighborhood serving retail & amenities).
- Supporting traditionally marginalized populations downtown through programs and services (e.g., programming, workforce development, access to public facilities, and other services).
- Establishing community-based committees to inform and plan for annual priorities and programmatic activities.
- Promoting and supporting growth of local cultural amenities and artists.




General Statements from Attendees:*

- Downtown is not as vital as other neighborhoods, driving vitality is important
- We all want a vibrant downtown but how to achieve that is the real question
- We need to wake up to our greatness
- Will this BID feel comfortable for children, poor people, folks who don't speak English, people of color?
- Do not want to encourage gentrification; inclusivity is paramount

*Comments reflect direct statements made by individual members of the public and have not been edited based on factual accuracy.

Station #2: Draft Services and Budget

Statements from Attendees:*

Services & Budget

- Shrink hospitality to zero
- Retain hospitality line item
- Maintenance and beautification has clear ROI
- Looking at the budget, it looks like the money is for events and hospitality; it seems like you are taxing the downtown people to supplement and plan these events
- Don't add more, fix what's here

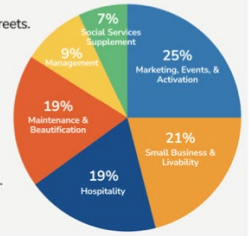
BID Service Area

- Seems like a large area to cover
 - How many properties are in the boundary?
 - How many owners in the boundary?
 - Who are the owners in the boundary?
 - How do we know and is it passed onto tenants?
- Make sure Slaughter train station stays IN
- Extend East Ave. Past Alexander to hotel/GVC and bump Union St. One block east

DOWNTOWN ROCHESTER BID
DRAFT Services and Budget

Services:

- **Marketing, Events & Activation**
Programming and promoting vibrancy in public spaces and streets.
- **Small Business & Livability**
Convening stakeholders to champion downtown.
- **Hospitality**
Friendly and informative street-level presence.
- **Maintenance & Beautification**
On-call cleanliness and beautification in vital public spaces.



Other Activities:

- **Management**
Ensure program efficiencies and organizational sustainability.
- **Social Services Supplement**
Supplemental support for agencies addressing downtown's social needs, (e.g. providers of mental health, housing, and shelter)

? Which services are most important to you?





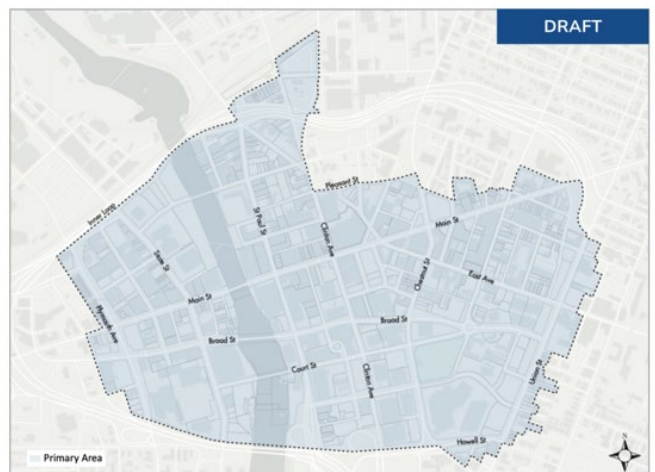
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BDS
PLANNING & URBAN DESIGN

DOWNTOWN ROCHESTER BID
DRAFT BID Service Area



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Station #3: Governance

Statements from Attendees:*

General

- Governance: how to nominate for initial board?
- One vote per parcel?
- Stakeholder participation other than property owners; i.e. students, colleges, guild members, musicians, theater, etc.
- Can one person represent more than the constituency?
- Integration with county offices and other entities

Concerns

- BID governance isn't representative of grassroots organizations that represent the most marginalized Rochesterians
- The fact that the board members are all appointed is concerning and unfair representation from the "community". Why do property owners who don't live here get more of a say than those that do?
- How will non-property owners be represented?

DOWNTOWN ROCHESTER BID Governance

- **Partnership for Downtown Rochester board of directors to appoint an ongoing board to replace them (District Management Association)**
 - Majority property owners, per NYS law, + tenants & residents, artist, nonprofit leader, retailer/small business owner, and hospitality leader
 - About 20 members; staggered 3-year terms; 3-year term limit
 - Direct appointments by government officials: 1 by Mayor; 1 by Council; 1 by City Chief Financial Officer
- **Meet at least 4 times per year to approve & monitor BID budget, work plan, & performance**
- **Annual Meeting of ratepayers & annual review and approval by City Council**
- **Community Committees (chaired by board member; open to community members with community member votes carrying equal weight)**
 - Marketing, Events, & Activation
 - Hospitality & Maintenance
 - Small Business & Livability
 - Finance

?

What do you think? Did we miss anything?

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Station #4: Marketing, Events and Activation

Statements from Attendees:*

General

- Activating indoor spaces too
- Emphasize features (e.g. High Falls & river)
- This is nice to see
- Create more permanent outdoor infrastructure for events and activities (i.e. KC Live)
- Affordable events
- Connectivity of historical locations and activities (for various age groups, various interests and populations)
- More activities and stores keeping tax money in the city
- Large-scale events
- Less gaps, more to see
- Bring families downtown with events; Support for families to access events/equity
- People are eager to come down to do things
- Parcel 5 food trucks weekly

Arts & Culture

- Build on our (celebrate) history (civil war, abolition). Use the cultural community
- We are more than the Jazz and Fringe festival, Build on all parts (especially local artists and intellectual community)
- Pop-ups: music (school of music centrally located); Musicians on our streets
- More activities that have the impact that jazz fest has

Placemaking

- Seats outside at café
- Incentivize restaurants to have seating outside/play music outside whilst dining
- Street activations; Activate Main Street
- The appearance of safety is not the same as safety. Activate our spaces to build a sense of safety/security.

Marketing

- Promote all we have-Planetarium, Strong Museum, RMSC
- More marketing/broader marketing/brand awareness; Marketing and promotion is an important component
- Celebrate accomplishments that are exclusive to Rochester/get the word out
- Day light for guilds and their talents
- Take advantage of historic assets; Promote people who know the history of downtown
- We need to move from a “legacy” mindset to move forward thinking. Define our new “normal”. finally. It needs to be realistic and futuristic at the same time
- Need more information for visitors
- City-wide signage program to improve accessibility
- Need to better celebrate/promote/recognize valuable assets it has. “Puzzle with wrong picture on the box”

Service: Marketing, Events & Activation
Programming and promoting vibrancy in public spaces and streets.

Marketing & Promotions

- Highlight small & local businesses & talent
- Monthly newsletter
- Social media
- Promotional materials
- Earned media

Events & Activations

- Versatile & comprehensive program: 100+ events per year
- Continue Downtown Definitely events (Play Day, Midday Bash, Fall Fest, etc.)
- Sprinkle of smaller activations
- Off-peak and winter events and programming
- Host events by and for Rochester’s diverse communities
- Feature small and local businesses and talent
- Support small and local business activity

Which events and activations would you like to see?

?

- Street performances
- Large-scale events (festivals, markets, concerts)
- Events led by partner organizations
- Off-peak events
- Small-scale events (e.g. pop-up performances, food truck rodeos)
- Winter programming
- Others?





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Station #5: Small Business & Livability

Statements from Attendees:*

General

- BID will help job creation and help grow economy and positively affect those in poverty.
- More interconnectedness with existing assets, tie into larger regional experience (ie. Underground railroad tours)
- Revitalize canal over Broad Street

Art & Culture

- Heritage-based tourism
- Kids art competition at festivals and other events (display kids art downtown)

Small Business

- Daily needs of folks living downtown now (like cat food, litter) grocery store; More retail is needed
- Bowling alley
- Consumer data-credit card points of origin, generation - data share
- Bulk media buy for small business
- Wegmans micro-store - ask them
- Small-scale stores, walkable
- Retail is not coming back
- Recruitment of business for neighborhoods?

Transportation

- Transit [system] to better connect
- Circulator-financially help operate the BID
- Enhance walkability
- Better transit system; there should be a bus that goes around to the “hot spots”
- Free parking
- Circulator or similar would help bring people downtown to major sites
- Need to fix parking perception problems
- We need downtown trolley/transit (especially to connect key attractions)

Service: Small Business & Livability

Convening stakeholders to champion downtown

- **Small Business Support & Retention**
 - Connect small businesses to resources & support
 - Identify needs and share insights to support success of existing small and local businesses
 - Partner with local community to understand and demonstrate needs for neighborhood-serving retail
 - Data, information collection and analysis
- **Policies & Programs that Promote Livability and Smart Growth**
 - Access to quality parks & open spaces
 - Active transportation & transit accessibility, service delivery
 - Mix of affordability in housing options
 - Fostering sense of place
 - Encouraging robust community engagement in downtown projects
 - Recruitment of neighborhood-serving retail

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Regarding small business support and livability, which efforts do you think are most important?

What would most effectively help to achieve the community-informed vision for downtown?



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PLANNING & URBAN DESIGN

Station #6: Hospitality

Statements from Attendees:*

General

- Former city resident - excited about the future. Crime/decay since 1985 has saddened many
- The presence of people greeting is a plus
- Priority: conduit for services for people who need help
- High-quality customer service is important. Have standards. Think of service at multiple levels-visitors AND residents. People who live here have to feel good about living here
- Need a structured, all-encompassing approach; standard and accountability
- How will you address safety issues?
- Downtown ambassadors are a good idea to help improve the perception of safety; More activity = less crime

Evaluation

- Be sure evaluation and benchmarking/accountability is clear, and ROI is reported regularly; Concern about it being another tax without ROI

Services

- Priority: public bathrooms to help keep people from using the streets. (Portland loo models)

Concerns

- Will resources be evenly spread?
- Worry about sanitizing versus being hospitable; everyone has a place here
- Skeptical about whether BID can solve resource issues
- Time and geographic coverage need clarity (for the hospitality staff).
- Ambassadors will sanitize and make residents uncomfortable
- Visit Rochester could play the role of ambassador-this won't solve the issue of crime or housing/retail/homelessness

Service: Hospitality
Friendly and informative street-level presence

Purpose: Enhance the Downtown Rochester experience by promoting amenities and activities, and fostering positive connections among residents, workers, and visitors.

- Six Hospitality Ambassadors on foot and/or bike
- Adherence to a code of conduct, not a security team
- City of Rochester residency requirement
- Union option facilitated

Primary Responsibilities:

- 1. Support Small & Local Businesses and Property Managers:**
 - Regular check-ins, stocking brochure racks, service coordination
- 2. Promoting Downtown Amenities, Activities, and Enhancing Downtown Experience:**
 - Providing wayfinding and information
- 3. Public Space Defect Documentation:**
 - Reporting infrastructure issues like broken streetlights and signs
- 4. Support for Event Activation and Programming:**
 - Event setup, staffing, and breakdown
- 5. Conduit to Resources & Services for People in Need:**
 - Connecting to resources, building rapport, and maintaining relations with local organizations

? In the context of hospitality services, what do you think would be most helpful?



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Station #7: Maintenance and Beautification

Statements from Attendees:*

General

- Ownership/Management and evaluation of Main Street
- Visibility
- More trees and shade
- Banners created by kids
- Photographs in our windows
- Banners designed by children and awnings
- Student community service for cleaning and beautification

Concerns

- Some of the job descriptions of the ambassadors are already done by people employed by the city even though it states they would not take the place of them; I wonder what would happen to them?
- Maintain services that downtown enhancement district currently sets (snow/recycle)

Station #8: Other Activities

General

- Don't duplicate what already exists (events, hospitality, social services)
- Pool resources to maximize effect, i.e. cultural organizations
- Create single or two-person bus shelters like the ones on Main St. That people can sleep in
- Create 5x7 sheds where people could lock to protect homeless from weather and provide safety

Social Service Supplement

- Business owners NEED social service support for others
- Protection for homeless people so they can stay downtown
 - Tiny homes
- Why isn't supplement budget larger? We feel we need it

Agency Partnerships

- Supplement: have agency discussions already begun? Please communicate about that.
- Seems a little unfair that there would be no "open BID" process for agencies that want to contract for the supplement services, but they would be picked

Concerns


- We don't want taxpayer money invested in union formation issues
- Clarity who the code of conduct is for (public or staff?)
- Stocking brochures can be full time by itself. Time distinction/clarity of job duties is important in planning
- We're losing sight of collective impact. Collaborate!

Service: Maintenance & Beautification*
On-call cleanliness and beautification in vital public spaces**

- **Deploy 4 Beautification Ambassadors****
 - Beautification & maintenance teams on foot and/or bike
 - Shifts of 8 hours
 - City of Rochester residency requirement
 - Union option facilitated
- **Litter Pick-up & Cleaning****
 - On-call services: cleaning and litter collection as needed
- **Planting & Décor****
 - Bi-annual clean up & plantings
 - Install street banners
 - Provide on-call landscape services as needed

*Ambassadors will not replace, supplant, or overlap with any existing City staff or positions.
**As supplement to existing Downtown Enhancement District (DED)

? What additional supplemental services do you think are most important in downtown public spaces?



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DOWNTOWN ROCHESTER BID
Other Activities

Social Services Supplement
Supplemental support for agencies addressing downtown's social needs

- 7% of the BID budget is proposed to support supplemental services by social service entities serving the downtown service area
- Local, pre-existing non-profits would provide shelter and expert case work for people in need
- Funding would allow for their trained staff to engage with people experiencing homelessness or mental health crises in the downtown service area and connect them to services and resources.

Management
Ensure program efficiencies and organizational stability

- **Evaluation & Benchmarking**
(listening, reflecting, and revising — sharing data publicly at regular intervals)
- **Program Administration**
(includes working with City Council on annual review)
- **Collaboration**
(forge relationships with broader community, hear all voices, and work towards common goals)
- **Financial Management**
(includes co-governance finance committee open to community members)

? What do you think of the proposed social services supplement?
What should be prioritized?

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Station #9: Next Steps. What Else is Needed? Would you Change Anything?

Statements from Attendees:*

What Else is Needed?

Process

- More engagement of public officials (city council)
- More input from local grassroots community leaders

Services

- Urgent care

Services

- Re-entry of community and development center

Other Comments

General

- Look for low-hanging fruit
- What we are doing now isn't working
- Big supporter
- Join to lift everyone up
- This is needed
- There is a need for urgent care
- Speed up this process
- Get it done

Concerns

- Outside influences who don't have a stake/financial stake driving this
- Developers don't need any further consideration
- A lot of this seems vague; the meat and potatoes are missing
- Businesses don't know about this (BID). Most that do, don't want it. Actual businesses.
- Public referendum as allowed by law
- It's unfair to tax property owners that don't agree to this.
- I don't see the need for a BID; BID's bad, don't create one; No BID because its bad
- We don't need this extra layer
- Cost is a major concern for business owners that rent from property owners
- Concern: rent increases for small businesses and individuals.

DOWNTOWN ROCHESTER BID Next Steps

The process to set up a BID includes several important steps required by New York State law. The remaining steps required for the formation of a Downtown Rochester BID and anticipated timeline are as follows:

- **Winter — Spring 2024**
 - Draft district plan survey open through December 31st, 2023
 - Community input received will inform revisions to the draft district plan by the BID Formation Committee
 - Revised district plan presented to property owners for petition
 - Requires petition support from 51% of property owners and 51% of total assessed value within the proposed service area to move forward
 - If required support is demonstrated, collected petitions are delivered to City of Rochester for review
- **Spring — Fall 2024**
 - City Council Process (including one or more Public Hearings)
 - Final Council Approval & Mayor's Signature
- **Late 2024**
 - If all above steps are completed with support:
 - Downtown Rochester BID Established

Downtown Rochester will solidify its position as the region's historic and innovative center of bustling community activity. Residents, workers, and visitors will enjoy beautiful and energetic public spaces, including a sensational Riverway, with a dynamic collection of arts, music, culture, shopping, living, and educational and employment opportunities that are accessible to everyone. Active street life will make all feel welcome and safe.
 — A Vision for Downtown Rochester







Appendix A: Meeting Participants

Partnership for Downtown Rochester:

Galin Brooks
 John Connors
 Johnna McCooey

Consultant Team:

Brian Scott, BDS Planning + Urban Design
 Stephanie Hyde, Highland Planning
 Tanya Zwahlen, Highland Planning

Station Facilitators:

Joseph Stefko
 Johnna McCooey
 Eugenio Marlin
 Marty Muggleton
 Ebony Miller-Wesley
 Hilary Respass

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Tom Myers	Paul Gangarosa	Miguel Velazquez	Jon Gavy
Gary Fry	Roger Brandt	Kelly Cheatle	Patrick Dutton
James Thompson	Jacob Schermerhorn	Heidi Frederick	Frank Opatt
John DeCarolis	Chip Russell	Deborah Theil	Kayleigh Iene
Carol Carmel	Matthew Denker	Jonathan Hammond	Ken Marvald
Kate Kennedy	Gene DePrez	Susan Mandl	Ronald L. Washington
Kate Washington	Becky Willis	John Lam	Demald Hyatt
Keith Cleary	Daryl Krumsieg	Reaghan McCann	Latrell Liptrot
Ken Hall	Matt Deturah	Richard Oot	Anthony Bizzaro
Randy Gaher	Joel Frater	Kate Kreutter	Nichalos Livadas
Rich Perrin	Kadeijah Reese	Christina Christman	Warren Miller
Roger Brown	Riley Schillaci	Hank Wedow	Miquel Powell
Ryan Madlah	Peggy Newell	Betsy Liano	Dana Miller
Seth Oser	James Senall	Amy Geoll	Adam Lubitow
Steve Webster	Peter Landers	Jonathan Hoor	Bleu Cease
Omen Carmel			