

ROCHESTER CITY COUNCIL INITIATIVES

PACT WITH THE PEOPLE
**PRIORITIZING PEOPLE
IN CITY BUDGET AND POLICY**



City of Rochester, NY
Rochester City Council



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Rochester City Council

City Hall Room 301A • 30 Church Street • Rochester, New York 14614-1290

Miguel A. Meléndez, Jr. Council President, Councilmember At-Large

April 25, 2024

Dear Neighbors,

I'm thrilled to share with you our new "Pact with the People," a comprehensive plan developed by the majority of Rochester City Council to restate our collective commitment to working hand in hand with residents like you. Moving forward, this Council will place renewed and focused emphasis on **Safer Neighborhoods, Quality Housing, and Equitable Access to Opportunity**.



In our pursuit of **Safer Neighborhoods**, we stand firm in our resolve to support the underserved. We are investing in mental health services, bolstering emergency response capabilities, and developing innovative strategies to address drug-related issues that disproportionately affect our communities. We understand that safety starts with feeling secure where you live, and we are working tirelessly to ensure that every neighborhood in Rochester has resources to improve quality of life.

Quality Housing is not just a roof over your head; it is the foundation of a stable, fulfilling life. That is why we are committed reducing tax rates and ensuring equitable tax burdens, expanding affordable housing options for renters and owners alike, and holding landlords accountable to maintain safe and dignified living conditions for all residents. Our goal is to ensure every Rochester family has access to quality housing that they can truly call home.

Equitable Access to Opportunity lies at the heart of our mission. We recognize the importance of lifting up those who have been historically marginalized and underserved. By investing in neighborhood-based initiatives, strengthening local employment opportunities, and providing pathways for our youth to succeed, we are working to level the playing field and create a city where everyone has the chance to thrive, regardless of their background or circumstances.

As your City Council President, I am honored to lead this charge alongside my colleagues, **Vice President LaShay Harris and Councilmembers Mike Patterson, Mitch Gruber, and Bridget Monroe**. Together, we are committed to serving you, the residents of Rochester, and building a city where every voice is heard, and every person is valued.

Hand in Hand,

Miguel A. Meléndez Jr.
President, Rochester City Council

LaShay D. Harris
Vice President

Mitch Gruber
At-Large

Michael A. Patterson
Northeast District

Bridget A. Monroe
Northwest District



ROCHESTER CITY COUNCIL PACT WITH THE PEOPLE

Rochester City Councilmembers are making a “Pact with the People” that prioritizes **Safer Neighborhoods, Quality Housing and Equitable Access to Opportunity**. The pact focuses on the upcoming 2024-25 City budget process and developing ongoing strategies to improve quality of life and expand services for our constituents.

SAFER NEIGHBORHOODS

We recognize that we must continue critical investments in the mental health and alternative response models that Rochester has pioneered in recent years. We will expand the mental health supports offered through various City departments, begin to pilot a community response model, and work with the administration to maximize the number of new recruit classes to fill glaring vacancies in the Police Department. City government must provide its residents with the opportunity to make necessary improvements in their neighborhoods. To help improve and create safer neighborhoods in Rochester, City Council will:

- **Invest in the Rochester Fire Department’s Emergency Medical Service capacity** because residents need EMS to respond without significant delay when they call 9-1-1, regardless of which zip code they live in.
- **Invest in Mental Health Services and Pilot a Community Response Model to Offer Alternatives for Low-Priority 9-1-1 Calls** because not all public safety calls are best handled by the police, and our first responders must be readily available when crises arise. Funding for mental health by the county, state and federal government is inadequate to meet the needs of our residents. The new Community Response Model will be an important addition to our continued investment in Crisis Intervention Services such as the Homicide Response and Person in Crisis (PIC) Team will be essential.
- **Invest \$100,000 in Each Quadrant for Neighborhood-Based-Initiatives** to bolster Neighborhood Service Centers and allow neighborhood associations, faith-based communities, local community-based organizations, etc. to fund small scale projects that can improve quality of life for City residents.
- **Promote Community Policing by Bringing More Patrol Officers to Our Neighborhoods** to quickly respond to calls with respect for the lives and humanity of City residents.
- **Use Opioid Settlement Dollars to Invest in Neighborhoods Hit Hardest by Drug Use and Sales**, and partner with community-based organizations to develop more effective intervention and prevention methods on a neighborhood level.
- **Review and Expand Supports for Victims of Domestic Violence** and their families, casting this dark reality into the light.
- **Develop a Comprehensive Vision Zero Plan** in partnership with the Evans Administration to eliminate pedestrian deaths. The plan will include the use of bus arm cameras, improved lighting in line with Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) best practices, raised crosswalks and other traffic calming measures.

QUALITY HOUSING

We want everyone in our community to have safe, quality housing. We will be a partner to increase home ownership rates in Rochester, and will maintain our focus on improving code enforcement to ensure that no one has to live in substandard housing. To improve access to sustainable quality housing, Council will:

- **Cut the Tax Rate** in the upcoming budget and ensure residents are connected to property tax exemptions, with a focus on seniors, veterans and anyone with a disability.
- **Increase Home Ownership Opportunities** and develop innovative methods to bridge the financial gaps between residents and quality housing.
- **Increase Quality Affordable Housing Commitments** by developing new, flexible funding streams to bring critical projects to the finish line and fighting for county, state, federal and other funding to bring more quality affordable housing units online.
- **Increase Investment In Home, Roof and Emergency Repair Programs** while seeking out other programs that help seniors and working families maintain their homes.
- **Demand Continuous Improvement In Code Enforcement** to create a uniform standard of housing, and ensure no one is forced to accept sub-standard conditions.

EQUITABLE ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY

Our community is strongest when everyone has an opportunity to thrive, and we will support and create programming that supports the young people in Rochester and connects individuals to livable wage jobs. We will explore a City-centric hiring policy and provide effective forums to help prepare our residents to enter or reenter the workforce. To foster equitable opportunities, Council will:

- **Strengthen recruitment of City residents for well-paying Jobs** by enhancing efforts like ROC the Block employment fairs and expanding successful job training programs like Re-Job to bridge the skills gap and connect residents with stable and lucrative employment opportunities in the City.
- **Bolster the Career Pathways to Public Safety Program** to connect City youth with rewarding and lucrative careers in firefighting, law enforcement, emergency medical services and emergency communication.
- **Fully Fund the “Raising a Reader” Program and Continue Funding for the Library’s Popular MIFI Program** to ensure youth have access to out-of-school literacy opportunities, and access to reliable broadband access after school hours.
- **Seek Lasting and Impactful Capital Investment at the Public Market** because resources like fresh quality food are necessary prerequisites to safe, equitable communities. Institutions like the Public Market are crucial to the vibrancy and vitality of nearby neighborhoods and the City at large.
- **Support our City’s Youth** by improving and investing in after school programming with measures like a park maintenance program for youth sports organizations, and additional investments in tutoring, arts and other programming at R-Centers and throughout the City.
- **Reimagine Downtown Rochester to Facilitate Growth and Opportunity Throughout the City** by working with residents, small businesses and other stakeholders, equitably building upon on current assets and seeking future opportunities to enhance our urban center as a strong, livable neighborhood and as a premier regional destination.



“I am deeply focused on ensuring the needs of our youth and our seniors are met. Connecting Rochester youth with positive opportunities is important to me, so we need to be sure those opportunities exist, particularly when it comes to careers and jobs. Additionally, it’s crucial our seniors are supported as they continue to maintain their vitality. I continue to work on strengthening public safety services by improving EMS response times and availability, co-launching the “Report It” crime reporting app, and pushing for a more diverse public safety workforce. In everything we do, we must be certain the services the City provides are offered equitably to all citizens in all areas of our community.”

- Vice President **LaShay D. Harris**



“Rochester City government has the tools to address some of the biggest daily challenges that impact our community. I am grateful to work with the majority of the City Council and the Evans Administration on critical issues like increasing the safety of our streets and neighborhoods for bicyclists and pedestrians. When we make our streets safer, it helps us achieve our focus on giving everyone – regardless of neighborhood, race or religion – access to equal opportunities for critical services like after-school programming, broadband and access to healthy food.”

- At-Large Representative **Mitch Gruber**



“I was elected by my neighbors in Northeast Rochester to promote, protect and support the things that matter most to them. Folks up here have faced some of the highest crime rates, which means public safety issues are of primary concern, we also have the greatest need for more quality affordable housing, and these areas are where I intend to continue my focus. Additionally, my district has paid a high price from the so-called ‘War on Drugs’ so in everything we do, whether its reducing violence, investing opioid dollars or improving access to affordable housing, I am committed to ensure we act equitably toward everyone, regardless of their race, their zip code or any other demographic.”

- Northeast Representative **Michael A. Patterson**



“Neighborhood safety and quality of life are of the highest importance to my neighbors and to me. Our kids must be safe walking and playing outside, and every resident needs to be safe in their home. I intend to fight for and support measures that will improve the quality of life for all residents and promote Rochester as a creative, educated, green city that’s open for business and welcomes cutting-edge technology. Working as a cohesive group, and in partnership with the Evans Administration, this Council majority will move Rochester Forward.”

- Northwest Representative **Bridget A. Monroe**



“We are making a deliberate and public commitment to be sure City Council is laser-focused on those things that matter most to our residents, knowing that our resources are not unlimited. Whether it is a single working mother on La Avenida or a senior citizen trying to stay in their home on Genesee Street, each of them wants their City Government working to address crime; making sure they can afford a home for themselves and their family; keeping their neighborhoods vibrant; and creating positive opportunities for our kids. **Today we are making it crystal clear that those things most important to the people of our City are exactly what is most important to City Council.** This Pact is meant to be somewhat comprehensive; however there are clearly many other opportunities for us to meet the needs of Rochester’s

Residents. We look forward to engaging Neighborhood Associations and, most importantly, individual residents to fully explore each of their priorities, to share our collective vision with one another and to find the very best ways we can all work together to improve our City’s outcomes.

Miguel A. Meléndez, Jr.
President, Rochester City Council

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