



# Rochester Community Food System Plan

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**Virtual Public Meeting**  
**Monday, Oct. 28, 2024, 6pm**

KK&P

JLP+D



HIGHLAND PLANNING

mass economics

# Welcome

## Elizabeth Murphy

Director, Policy and Strategic Initiatives  
City of Rochester, Department of  
Neighborhood and Business Development

# Welcome

## **Nathaniel Mich**

Chair, ROC Food Policy Council  
Executive Director, Taproot Collective

## **Michael Henry**

Administrative Member, ROC Food Policy Council  
Community Relations Specialist, Foodlink

# Welcome

**Ben Kerrick**

Managing Partner  
KK&P

**Clare Bramhall**

Senior Analyst  
KK&P

**Brian De Corte**

Analyst  
KK&P

# An Appetizer



Scan the QR code or visit  
[menti.com](https://www.menti.com)  
Code: 1830 5809

*What is your favorite food to  
eat in Rochester?*

*At your home, at a restaurant, at the  
Public Market – wherever!*

# Agenda

1. Welcome
2. Project Overview
3. Themes from our Research
4. Breakout Discussions
5. Adjourn



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Code: **1830 5809**



Photo credit: Foodlink

## **An Appetizer: Results**



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## **2 Project Overview**



# What is the food system?



Graphic: Vermont Farm to Plate

## ... and what is a food system plan?

A food systems plan is **a set of interconnected, forward-thinking strategies that strengthen a community's food system** through the collaborative creation and implementation of plans and policies.

Through the planning process, local and regional stakeholders develop and implement activities and policies to influence and shape how food is produced, processed, distributed, consumed and disposed.

# ... and what is a food system plan?

The Goals of the Greater Pittsburgh Food Action Plan are:

1

Enhance coordination and communication among existing food systems' resources and agencies



2

Center the roles of equity, sustainable agriculture and environmental stewardship in a healthy food system



3

Support a robust regional food economy that benefits all



4

Improve food security and public health by increasing availability and accessibility of nutritious, high-quality, affordable and locally sourced food



5

Build community power based on the principle of food sovereignty for all residents



**GOAL 2**

**Center the roles of equity, sustainable agriculture and environmental stewardship in a healthy food system**

**RECOMMENDATION 2.1 — Improve access to land and capital for farmers, especially new and beginning farmers and farmers of color.**

**STRATEGY 2.1.1:** Utilize a buy, protect, lease strategy to make farmland available to farmers at affordable rates.

Development pressure has resulted in a reduction in the availability of high quality agricultural land and an increase in the cost of land, making it difficult for farmers to access and afford land. Structural racism has and continues to increase these barriers for farmers of color. For some farmers, long-term lease models provide the best opportunity for accessing desirable land for cultivation.

**STAKEHOLDERS**

Public Sector: Pittsburgh Urban Redevelopment Authority  
Contributors: Allegheny County Conservation District, Allegheny Land Trust, Western PA Conservancy, Three Rivers Agricultural Land Initiative

**CURRENT STATUS**

Currently, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy Farmland Initiative Program, Three Rivers Agricultural Land Initiative, and the PA Farmland Preservation Program programs all work to address land access challenges.

**NEXT STEPS**

- █ Advocate for additional funding and resources for existing programs.
- █ Connect farmers to existing programs and opportunities.
- █ Increase awareness of farm leasing opportunities among new and beginning farmers and connect farmland leasing initiatives with young farmer and farm apprenticeship networks.

**POTENTIAL EVALUATION MEASURES:**

1. Was an advocacy campaign or campaigns executed? [Yes/No]
2. Was an education and awareness campaign among farmers executed? [Yes/No]
3. Number of farmers connected to existing programs annually [Number] (No baseline data currently available; extant programs may be able to provide information that allows a baseline to be created.)

# About the Project

The Rochester Community Food System Plan is a **city-wide assessment and planning initiative** intended to inform City policies, strategies, and activities to improve healthy food access and create a stronger food system in Rochester.

The assessment and plan will be informed by qualitative and quantitative research, mapping and data analysis, robust community and stakeholder engagement, and an inventory of assets, challenges, needs, and opportunities.

# Project Team



*Food Systems Consulting  
Project Lead*



*Program & Policy Analysis;  
Research & Planning Support*



*Community Engagement*



*Data Analysis*

# Anticipated Project Timeline

Food System Research and Analysis

Community Engagement

● Assessment  
Complete

Plan Development

● Plan  
Complete

Oct-Dec 2023

Jan-Mar 2024

Apr-Jun 2024

Jul-Sep 2024

Oct-Dec 2024

Jan-Mar 2025

April 2025

# Our Research To Date

- Community Advisory Committee
- Rochester Food Policy Council
- Kick-off site visit
- Interviews with nearly 40 stakeholders
- Focus groups and group discussions (9)
- Community survey (736 responses)
- Review, analysis, and mapping of data
- Review and summary of key documents
- Inventory of key policies and programs



Photo credit: City of Rochester

# **3 Themes from our Research**



**Rochester is located within an abundant agricultural region with real strength in vegetable and fruit production.**

# Rochester is located within an abundant agricultural region with real strength in vegetable and fruit production.

Monroe  
County

**TOP  
4%**

of U.S.  
counties for  
**vegetable  
sales**

Finger Lakes  
Region

**3x**  
acres fruit &  
vegetable  
production per  
capita  
compared to U.S.

Finger Lakes  
Region

accounts for  
**45%**  
of NY's fruit &  
vegetable sales

County & Region

Other top  
products include  
**Dairy  
Beef  
Poultry/Eggs**



Photo credit: Foodlink

## **Rochester is located within an abundant agricultural region with real strength in vegetable and fruit production.**

### **DIRECT TO CONSUMER SALES**

*When farms sell directly to consumers through farmers' markets, farm stands, and CSAs*

- Monroe County has **3x the % of farms with Direct to Consumer sales** compared to U.S. counties as a whole
- Direct to Consumer sales in the Finger Lakes region **grew at over 2x the pace** of U.S. counties as a whole, 2017-2022

### **WHOLESALE DIRECT SALES**

*When farms sell directly to local retailers, restaurants, and institutions*

- The Finger Lakes Region had **3x the % of farms with Wholesale Direct sales** compared to U.S. counties as a whole
- Even so, stakeholders see potential for growth in institutional purchasing

**Rochester residents want expanded access to community gardening, but perceive barriers to land tenure and resources.**

## Rochester residents want expanded access to community gardening, but perceive barriers to land tenure and resources.



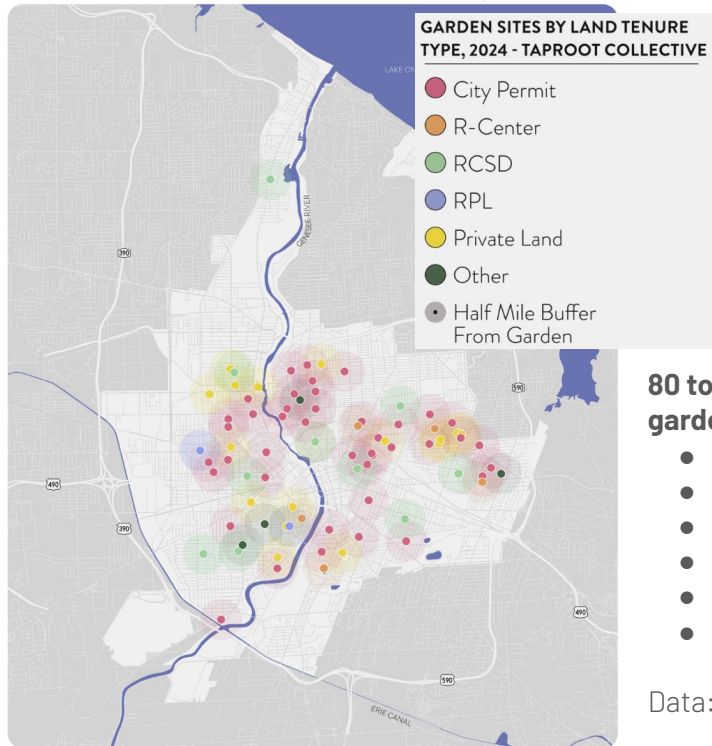
- Many **residents believe the city needs to take a more supportive approach** via improved permitting process should be streamlined, and made more accessible.
- Focus group attendees cited **community as the most common benefit of urban agriculture and gardening.**

*“Historically, the city makes it hard to have community gardens (compared to Buffalo and other cities). Best you can have is to lease it from the city for a year. This is tenuous and prevents folks from investing in abandoned lots.”*

# Rochester residents want expanded access to community gardening, but perceive barriers to land tenure and resources.



COMMUNITY GARDENS GROWING FOOD IN ROCHESTER, 2024



## 80 total food-growing gardens

- City Permit: 42
- R-Center: 6
- RCS D: 10
- RPL: 2
- Private Land: 16
- Other: 4

Data: Taproot Collective

- Rochester had 80 food-growing gardens in 2024
- About half utilized city garden permits and 20% were on private land
- City's permit program has grown, has hovered around 80 since 2019 (includes non-food gardens)

**Food is an important part of Rochester's economy - but entrepreneurs face challenges when attempting to scale their small businesses.**

## Food is an important part of Rochester's economy - but entrepreneurs face challenges when attempting to scale their small businesses.

- Rochester is home to over 12K food-related jobs - about 10% of all jobs
- In manufacturing categories, Rochester overperforms (relative to US) in:
  - Baked Goods
  - Beverages
  - Packaged Fruit & Veg
  - Food Packaging



Photo credit: Kyle Lilly

*“Extra labor is needed. We’ve had people looking to hire part-time and full-time staff. Dozens of interviews, half no shows, half not qualified.”*

*“I researched loans, grants, everything. But we were too small. Didn’t have a 1-year or 5-year revenue sheet to show people.”*

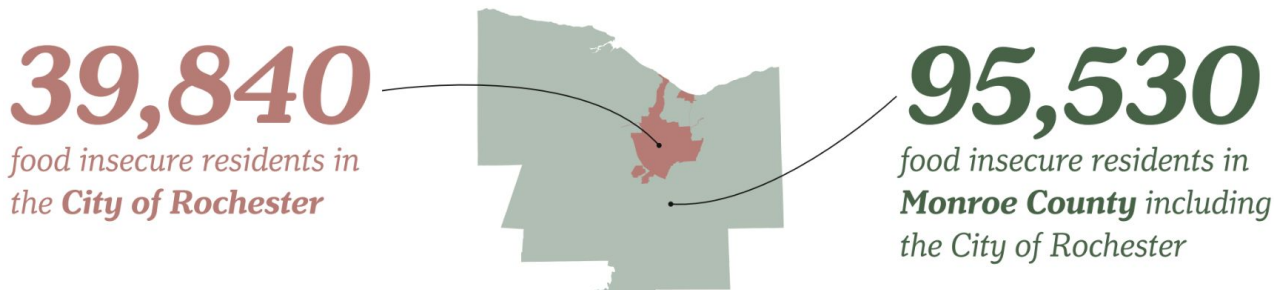


**Rochester residents experience food insecurity at high levels with disproportionate impacts to specific demographic groups and neighborhoods.**

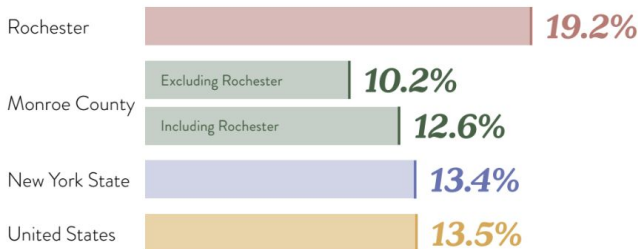
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## FOOD INSECURITY, 2022

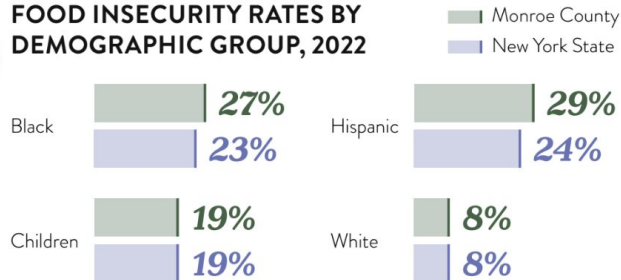
### FOOD INSECURE POPULATION



### FOOD INSECURITY RATES

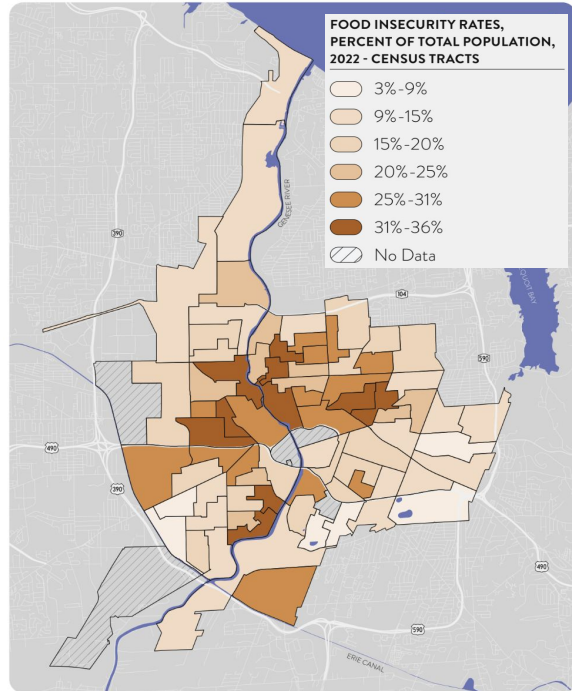


### FOOD INSECURITY RATES BY DEMOGRAPHIC GROUP, 2022

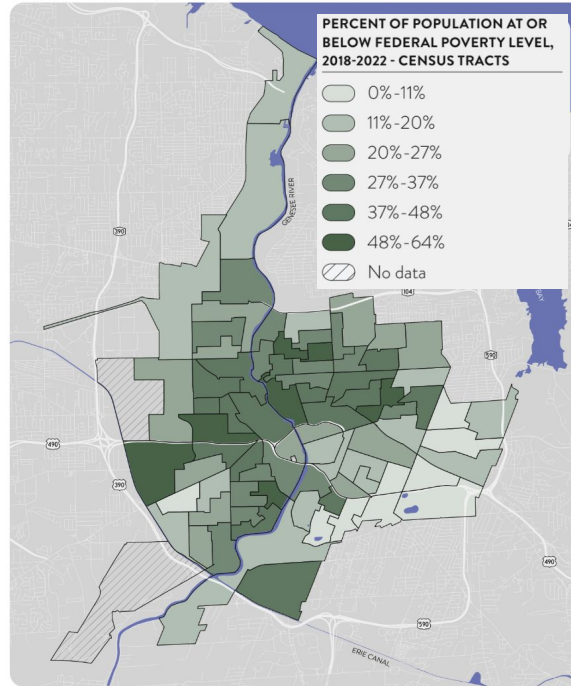


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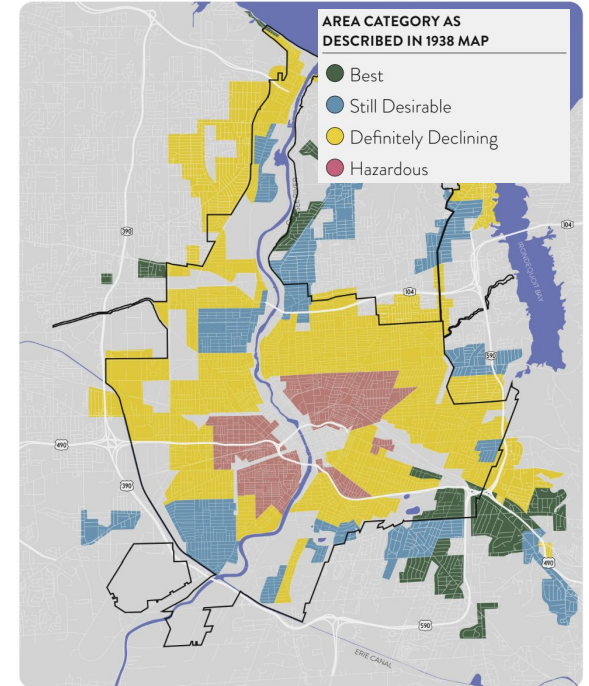
OVERALL FOOD INSECURITY RATES, 2022 - ROCHESTER



POVERTY RATES, 2018-2022 (5-YEAR ESTIMATES) - ROCHESTER

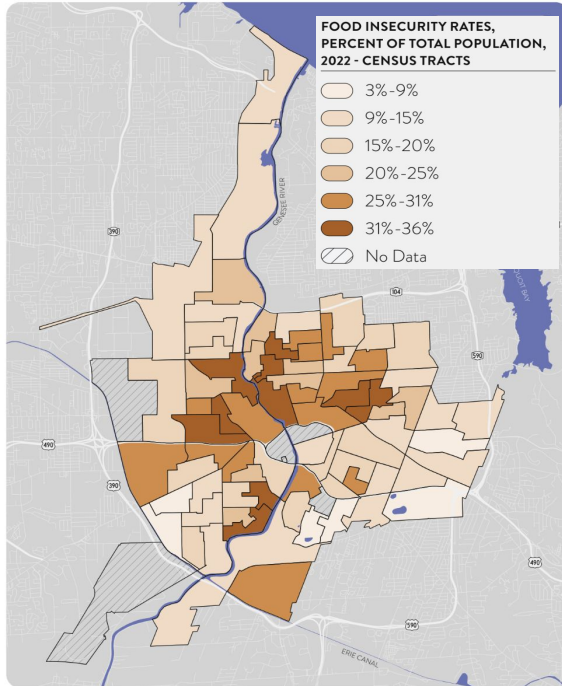


HISTORIC REDLINING MAP, 1938 - ROCHESTER

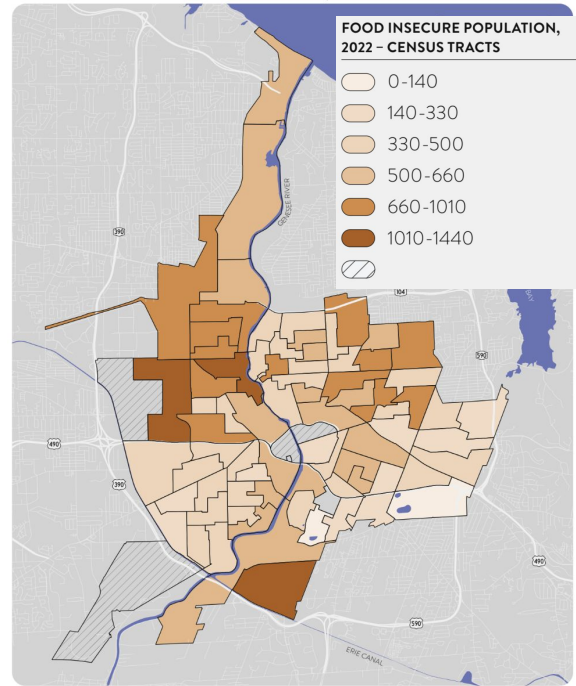


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OVERALL FOOD INSECURITY RATES, 2022 - ROCHESTER



OVERALL FOOD INSECURE POPULATION, 2022 - ROCHESTER

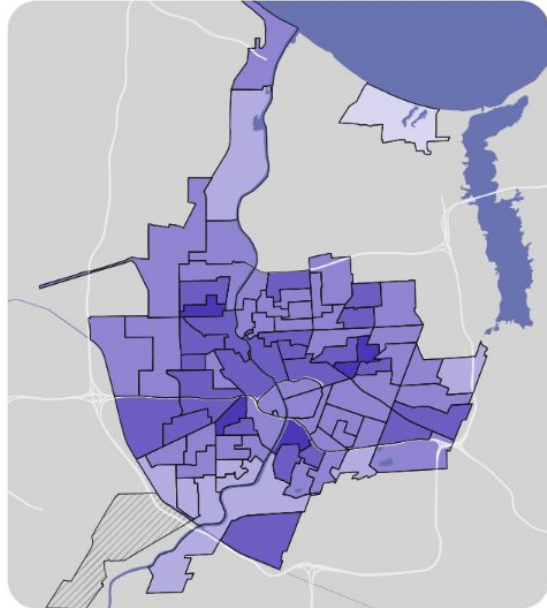


**Access to food retail is highly variable,  
with price and transportation cited as  
top barriers.**

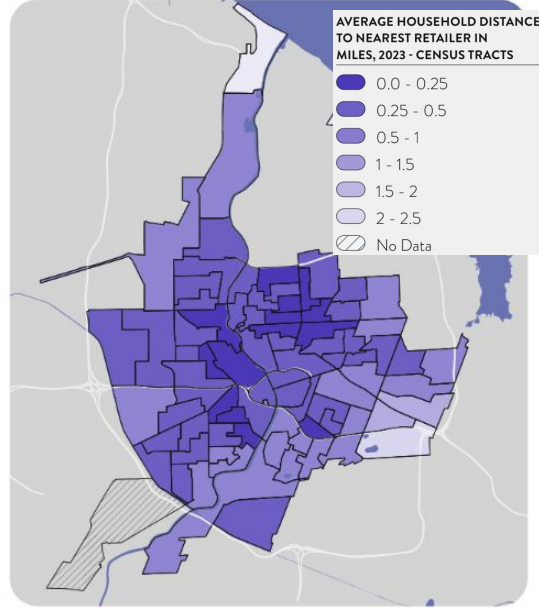
# Access to food retail is highly variable, with price and transportation cited as top barriers.

## FOOD RETAIL ACCESS BY SNAP RETAILER TYPE, 2023 - ROCHESTER

**SUPERMARKET, SUPERCENTER,  
OR LARGE GROCERY STORE**



**MEDIUM OR SMALL GROCERY STORE**



## Retailer Types per 100K Population

SNAP Retailer Types Per 100K Population (count)	Rochester	Monroe County
Superstore, Supermarket, and Large Grocery	8.5	11.4
Medium and Small Grocery	23.7	9.0

- While Rochester has a lower density of supermarkets, it has a robust number of smaller stores.

# Access to food retail is highly variable, with price and transportation cited as top barriers.

## 12. How satisfied are you with the ease with which you can access the food you want to eat in your neighborhood?

The majority of respondents said they were very satisfied (134 respondents; 43.4%) or somewhat satisfied (228 respondents; 38.2%) with food access in their neighborhood.

### Very Satisfied

Genesee Jefferson (64%)

Browncroft (63%)

Park Ave (51%)

### Somewhat Satisfied

South Wedge (52%)

Charlotte (46%)

Beechwood (45%)

### Somewhat Dissatisfied

Mayor's Heights (45%)

19th Ward (28%)

Corn Hill (20%)

### Very Dissatisfied

19th Ward (14%)

Corn Hill (12%)

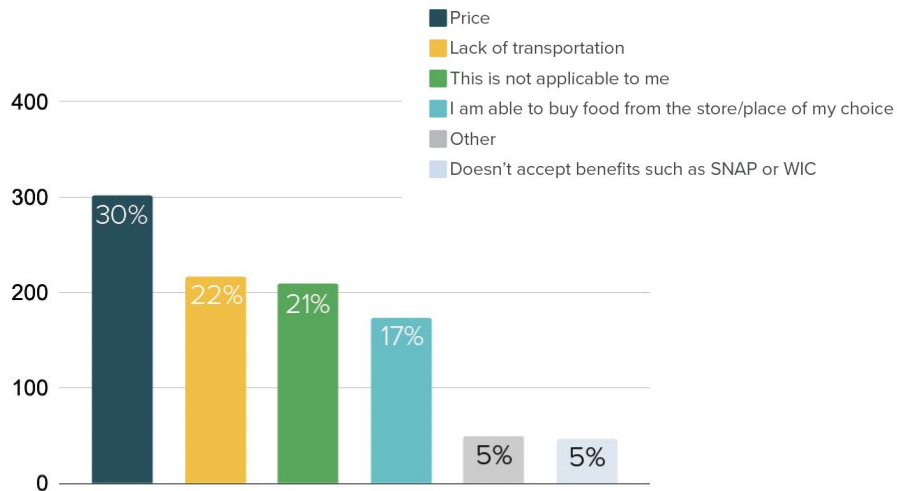
Maplewood (11%)

## Access to food retail is highly variable, with price and transportation cited as top barriers.

- **Price** was the barrier cited most frequently.

### 5. What factors prevent you from buying food at the store or place of your choice? Please select all that apply.

Respondents most frequently cited price and lack of transportation as impediments to shopping at their store of choice.



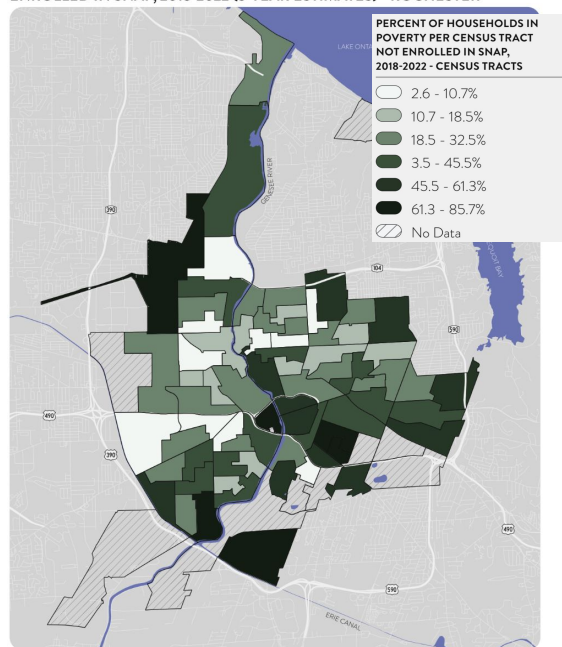
*“Transportation is a challenge. Can't go on a bus with kids and bring a box of food.”*



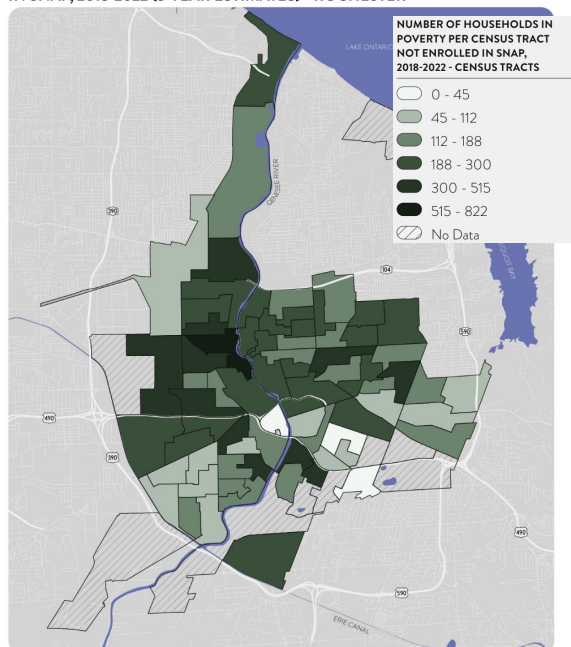
**Benefit and incentive programs are widely utilized at food stores but there is room to increase participation among eligible populations.**

## Benefit and incentive programs are widely utilized at food stores but there is room to increase participation among eligible populations.

PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS IN POVERTY NOT ENROLLED IN SNAP, 2018-2022 (5-YEAR ESTIMATES) - ROCHESTER



HOUSEHOLDS IN POVERTY NOT ENROLLED IN SNAP, 2018-2022 (5-YEAR ESTIMATES) - ROCHESTER



- Well utilized programs include **SNAP, WIC and Fresh Connect**
- In 2020, estimated **66% of eligible households were enrolled in WIC** in Monroe County
- Community survey respondents most frequently cited **uncertainty around eligibility** as the primary reason why they don't use benefits.

*“Probably 90% of the women we work with are eligible for WIC. About 51-52% of them are registered.”*

**Rochester is home to uniquely innovative organizations and initiatives which can be further leveraged to strengthen the food system.**

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Photo credit: Foodlink

### **FOODLINK**

Regional food bank with highly diversified and innovative programming



Photo credit: City of Rochester

### **ROCHESTER PUBLIC MARKET**

Unique partnership with Friends of the RPM; hugely successful SNAP redemption program (\$1.1M in 2023)



Photo credit: KK&P

### **HEADWATER FOOD HUB**

Regional food hub building regional supply chains; innovative product lines

## Rochester is home to uniquely innovative organizations and initiatives which can be further leveraged to strengthen the food system.



- Additional key organizations include: **The Commissary, Taproot Collective, Common Ground Health, Rochester Food Policy Council, network of ~90 food pantries, farmers' markets, etc.**
- Recent initiatives include: **\$3M in Innovative Food Model grants, Healthy ROC Grocer Program, SNAP Restaurant Meals Program (RMP).**
- The city, anchor, and smaller organizations can **convene and coordinate to increase impact.**

**Information and data about Rochester's food system are fragmented, difficult to navigate, and incomplete.**

## **Information and data about Rochester's food system are fragmented, difficult to navigate, and incomplete.**

- Stakeholders said a lack of shared understanding and data about the food system hindered more strategic and collaborative approaches.
- Some individual organizations/initiatives maintain their own public-facing data platforms.
- **But there is no central hub for information** about food access points (retailers, pantries, farmers' markets, etc.), food security information, gardening opportunities, entrepreneurship supports, food production, etc.

**Recent investments set the stage for the City of Rochester to take a stronger role in addressing food system issues.**



## Recent investments set the stage for the City of Rochester to take a stronger role in addressing food system issues.

- Recent investments include: Healthy ROC Grocer, Innovative Food Model grants, and this planning process.



### City to put \$3 million in COVID relief into food pantries, kitchens, and gardens

WXXI News 1 | By Gino Fanelli  
Published February 15, 2024 at 2:39 PM EST



# Now: we want to hear from you!

## Breakout Discussion 1

*What resonated with you?*

*What didn't?*

*What's missing?*

# Now: we want to hear from you!

## Breakout Discussion 2: Topic Areas and the Plan

Regional  
Agriculture

Urban  
Agriculture  
and  
Community  
Gardening

Food  
Security  
and Food  
Assistance

Food  
Business  
and  
Entrepre-  
neurship

Food  
Access and  
Food Retail

*What should be addressed in the plan related to this topic?*

**Now: we want to hear from you!**

**Finish this sentence:**

*I want a Rochester food system that is ...*



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[menti.com](https://menti.com)  
Code: **1830 5809**

# Thank you!

**Stay up to date at: [tiny.cc/RochesterFoodSystemPlan](https://tiny.cc/RochesterFoodSystemPlan)**

Any questions? Reach out to:

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