
Regional Revitalization Partnership

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

December 2024

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Planning and Funding Revitalization Together: A Cohesive Strategy Developed in 2021

Co-Investing in Regional Community Wealth Building

RRP takes a holistic approach to economic development designed to strengthen the region’s ecosystem and build community wealth through multiple paths.

A collaborative, community-driven, targeted economic development investment strategy will build community wealth and leverage public/private co-investments to maximize impact. These investments were announced on April 25, 2022 by Governor Kathy Hochul as part of the 2023 NYS budget. This book provides additional details about RRP investment priorities.


Developed through a collaborative effort in 2021, **RRP is a \$300M private and public co-investment in three interconnected geographic areas.** Investment in these areas catalyzes economic growth for the entire region. Each area is at a different stage in its economic development, so the level of project detail provided in the reporting varies.



A combined \$180 million RRP investment on Buffalo’s **EAST SIDE** will scale up East Side Avenues’s foundational investments that support small business improvements, redevelop key mixed-use properties, promote historic preservation, reinvigorate fundamental east side anchors, and build capacity for nonprofit partners to implement this critical work.



In **NIAGARA FALLS** a combined \$40 million RRP investment builds upon the community-driven planning process of the Niagara Falls Strategic Economic Development Plan and invests in: Niagara Falls’ waterfront and community anchors to tell the story of the City’s unique history and heritage; commercial corridor improvements that revitalize business districts and generate wealth for small business owners; and a cohesive food ecosystem that builds on the region’s food and agriculture strengths.



In **ROCHESTER**, a combined \$80 million RRP investment builds upon a community-driven planning process and invests in placemaking and redeveloping community anchors along the Genesee River to connect people, attract new businesses, and promote long-term economic growth; workforce development that leverages industry partnerships to provide the unemployed and under-skilled with training, employment readiness, and job placement and retention; and small business growth while revitalizing Main Street—an important downtown gateway and commercial corridor.

ABOUT THE REGIONAL REVITALIZATION PARTNERSHIP

RRP is a comprehensive community-driven economic development strategy developed in 2021 by a team at the University at Buffalo Regional Institute (UBRI), a research center of the University at Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning. Today it is led by the Center for Regional Strategies, in partnership with UBRI, OneROC, and other intermediaries. This strategy was made possible by the investment, leadership, and support of New York State Governor Kathy Hochul and Empire State Development (ESD), ESL, Evans Bank, Max and Marian Farash Charitable Foundation, Five Star Bank, John R. Oishei Foundation, KeyBank/First Niagara Foundation, William & Sheila Konar Foundation, M&T Bank, Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, and partners in the cities of Buffalo, Niagara Falls, and Rochester.

COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING ECOSYSTEM

RRP will focus investments on:



WORKFORCE
investments to enhance residents’ skills and increase access to good paying jobs for everyone



PLACEMAKING
to regenerate commercial corridors and waterfronts, rebuild community anchors, and revitalize neighborhoods



SMALL BUSINESS
with a focus on underrepresented communities

Economic Development Strategy built for the Community, by the Community

RRP was designed through interactive and ongoing community and stakeholder input and engagement in the three target communities. Increased capacity and sustainability of community-based organizations ensures that programs directly engage with community members. Strong local intermediaries connect the dots while assessing, problem solving and ensuring resources are getting to the community.

COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING EMERGES THROUGH TARGETED INVESTMENT IN:

NEW PATHS TO BUILD ECONOMIC PROSPERITY:

Invest in building the small business ecosystem to ensure supplier diversity, entrepreneurial growth, and workforce development that connects people to good-paying jobs.



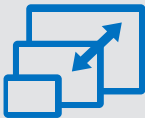
BUILD CAPACITY AND SCALE UP SUCCESS:

Strengthen core existing nonprofits through capacity-building programs, leverage recent investments, and enhance successful programs to build more community wealth.



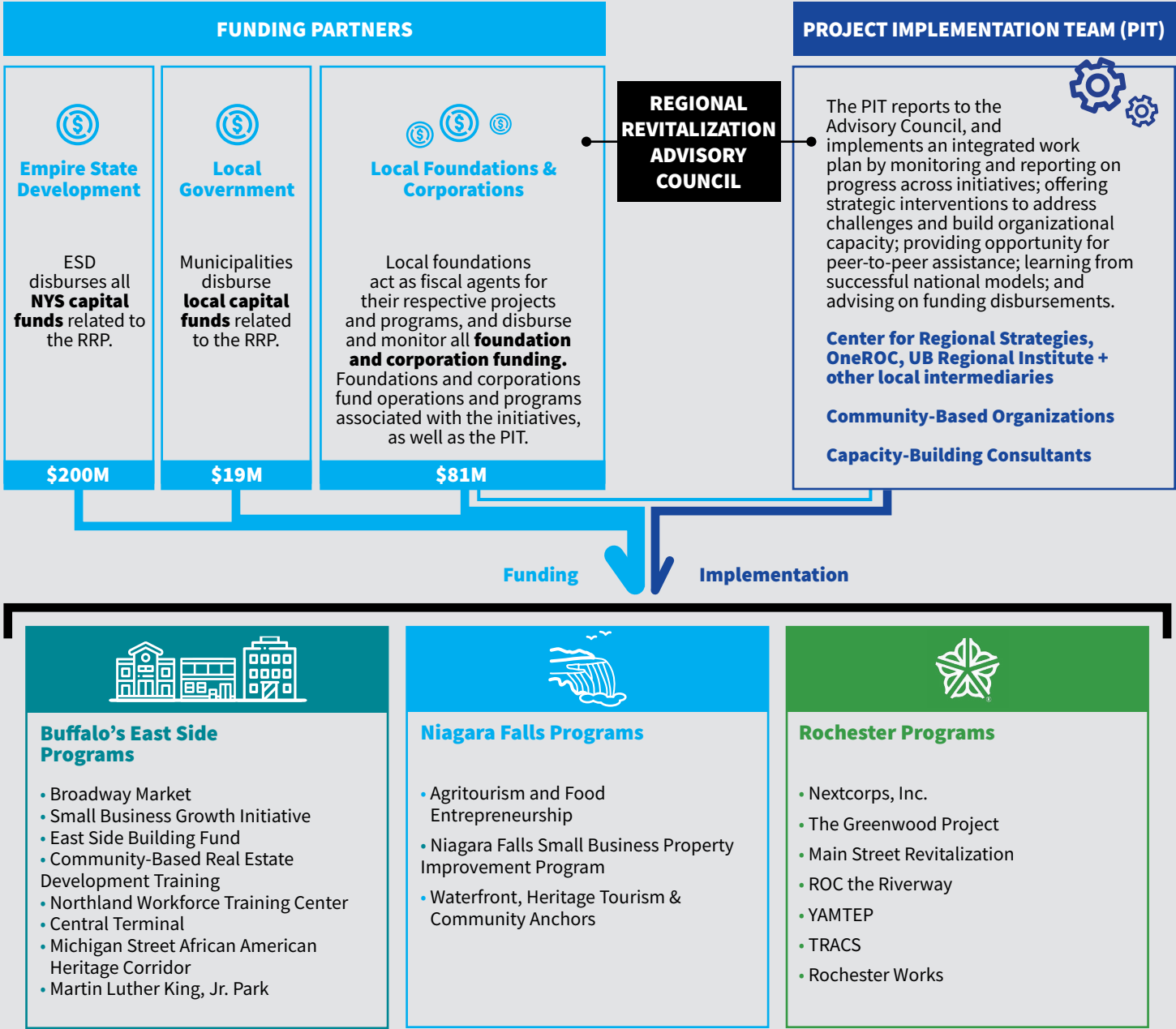
TRANSFORMATIVE COMMUNITY ANCHORS AND HERITAGE AREAS:

Invest in iconic, catalytic large-scale community anchors and unique historic assets/areas.



GOVERNANCE,
PARTNERS & FINANCE

A Project Implementation Team (PIT) provides leadership, implementation support and technical assistance for existing community-based organizations. Pooled funds and operations are overseen by a Regional Revitalization Advisory Council.



BUILDING
PARTNERSHIP TO
MAXIMIZE IMPACT

The RRP is a **unique partnership of private funders, public entities and community-based organizations**.

By **investing in a coordinated, collaborative, strategic way**, RRP's impact will be maximized.

By **co-investing**, federal, state and local dollars will be aggregated and leveraged.

Increased capacity and sustainability of community-based organizations ensures that programs engage with and are led by community members.

This **holistic approach to economic development** is designed to strengthen the ecosystem and build community wealth through multiple paths.

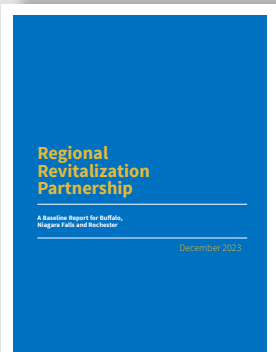
Strong local intermediaries connect the dots and help build and implement programs, while assessing/reporting, problem-solving and ensuring resources are getting to the community.

FOR THE COMMUNITY,
BY THE COMMUNITY



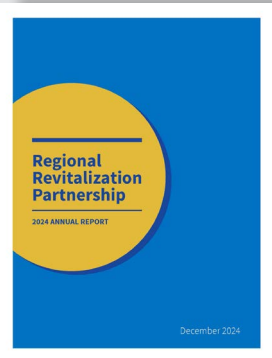
Baseline Report 2023

The **2023 RRP baseline report** introduced the initiative, providing foundational context on the three RRP geographies, RRP investments and program evaluation. The baseline report can be found at www.RRP-NY.org



Annual Report 2024

This **2024 Annual Report** builds off of the baseline report. This document reports progress on RRP projects and programs, monitors trends in neighborhood conditions, and shares lessons learned from program implementation. Going forward, these annual reports will be used to continually evaluate and enhance RRP investment strategies to drive long-term economic growth in RRP investment areas and across Western New York.



To learn more go to www.RRP-NY.org

Tracking Progress Over Time

About the Indicators

This report uses a set of indicators to monitor progress of RRP’s strategies to strengthen Buffalo, Niagara Falls and Rochester as drivers of long-term regional economic development. Indicators are being updated annually to monitor progress in and around the RRP investment corridors, anchors, and assets, and to facilitate continuous progress toward goals.

This report tracks **two types of indicators: project impacts** and **contextual neighborhood indicators**.

- **Key project impacts include** community engagement, visitors, and physical transformation on RRP anchor investments.
- **Eleven neighborhood indicators** provide important context on longer-term trends impacting communities around the investment corridors. The indicators were organized around three pillars: workforce, placemaking, and small business development. While understanding these trends is useful to inform investment strategies, these indicators are influenced by external factors and cannot be attributed to any single strategy.

Indicators were selected considering five principles, as documented by New Localism Associates. The selected indicators:

- 1. Make progress visible:** The indicators are meant to give a simplified but actionable view of RRP’s progress over time.
- 2. Keep it simple:** The list of indicators is short to reduce redundancy and focus on the highest priority indicators that are readily understandable by wide audiences.
- 3. Build from what’s there:** Most indicators are based on data that is already being routinely collected and made available through public sources, reducing the burden of measurement through new survey instruments.
- 4. Focus on the portfolios, not individual investments:** The indicators focus on the overall RRP outcomes and portfolios of investments, rather than progress on individual investments and projects.
- 5. Focus on trends, not strict attribution:** The indicators track trends over time from baseline values rather than trying to attribute the impact of investments to specific outcomes, as outcomes are often affected by myriad factors.

3 PROJECT IMPACTS



Community engagement
Visitors
Physical transformation

11 INDICATORS



WORKFORCE

Educational Attainment
Labor Force Participation
Access to Higher-Paying Jobs
Median Household Income
Economic Security



PLACEMAKING

Population Growth
Business Sales Growth
Vacancy



SMALL BUSINESS

Entrepreneurs
Sole Proprietors
Small Business Growth

Project Implementation Team (PIT)

2024 Big Picture Activities

- For Rochester, advanced the first group of recommended Phase 1 portfolio projects.** This included matching project sponsors with committed funders, initiating and providing support for implementation activities, and evaluating possible Phase 2 projects and potential impact. The team coordinated with ESD on the media announcement of the projects.
- Assisted projects with accessing RRP funds** through grant writing and reporting; and leveraging RRP funding to connect projects to additional resources.
- Assisted partners in executing earned-media engagements** and developed **RRP webpages** for all three communities.
- Led RCWJF Board members on a bus tour of Buffalo's East Side** which included stops at Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor, Broadway Market and Central Terminal. A tour book was developed including updated materials from our 2023 baseline report.
- RRP partners participated in City Exchange in Detroit,** including leading presentations on a panel for WNY.
- On December 4, 2024 at NextCorps in Rochester, stakeholders from the three communities convened at an Annual Summit** to share experiences, foster collaboration and learn about best practices and shared opportunities.
- In addition to quarterly reports, updated an Annual Performance Indicators Report** that includes a mix of both direct project outcome measures and longer-term trends that matter—influenced by many external factors. Sent a survey to RRP recipients to inform the report.

Key Themes Across Investment Communities and Indicators

A few themes emerged from this first annual indicator update and the survey of anchor project leads. These include:

- Momentum is happening across all three communities, and strategies can leverage these emerging trends.** Some of the most promising indicators are those showing notable positive change, and/or where investment areas of Rochester, Niagara Falls, and/or Buffalo are outperforming benchmarks. These key indicators of change include Rochester Corridor's surge in business startups and its large entrepreneurial community. It also includes Niagara Falls Corridor's increase in new businesses and number of higher-paying jobs, and Buffalo East Side's growth in higher-paying jobs and population and decline in commercial vacancies. These indicators underscore how strategic, coordinated investments can lead to positive changes.
- Transformation from RRP investments is a gradual process. Change doesn't happen overnight.** Year-over-year shifts in the data, especially in contextual indicators, are often small, measured in relatively modest year-over-year percentage changes rather than dramatic double-digit leaps (although the data shows some leaps too). Moreover, initiatives on Buffalo's East Side have been underway for some time now, since 2019, and are reflected in the data in this report. Projects in Rochester and Niagara Falls are at earlier stages in their planning and implementation, so the full impact of these revitalization efforts will likely be even more evident in future years.
- Access to higher-paying jobs remains a critical priority in all investment areas,** directly impacting household incomes, economic security and labor force participation and indirectly influencing business formation and growth. Despite significant increases in higher-paying jobs in all three communities, resident employment in these roles remains extremely limited, comprising no more than 12% of the total job number. To bridge this gap, workforce strategies are essential. These strategies should prioritize industry-driven training, employer partnerships, and wraparound services that reduce barriers to training and work. Organizations like Northland Workforce Training Center, YAMTEP and TRACS will play a vital role in implementing these strategies.



Buffalo's East Side

RRP is accelerating community-driven work on Buffalo's East Side through strategies and investments that boost small businesses, restore and revitalize iconic neighborhood assets, and expand training options for un/underemployed residents who need higher-paying jobs.

RRP is an outgrowth of East Side Avenues (ESA)—a \$73+M community-driven public/private partnership providing capital and organizational supports for transformational projects in targeted areas along four East Side commercial corridors since 2019. A combined \$180 million RRP investment on the East Side will scale up ESA's foundational public and philanthropic investments—driven by the community—that support small business improvements, redevelop key mixed-use properties, promote historic preservation, reinvigorate fundamental East Side anchors, and build capacity for nonprofit partners to implement this critical work.

Through East Side Avenues and initial follow-on funding from RRP, 89 East Side buildings were awarded capital improvement funds. Buildings include Neighborhood Anchors like Central Terminal, MLK Park and Broadway Market as well as buildings that were awarded capital improvement grants through three grant programs—East Side Commercial Districts Program, Commercial Building Stabilization Fund, and Community-Based Real Estate Development Training Program Fund.

INVESTMENTS

Buffalo's East Side Investments

RRP investments are revitalizing Buffalo's East Side through projects focused on small businesses, historic preservation, mixed-use properties, community anchors, and workforce development.

Eight construction projects are underway, including four in the Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor.

Additionally, the Community-Based Real Estate Development Training Program (CBREDT) and the Small Business Growth Initiative are actively supporting business and community development with expanded programming. Support for small businesses will accelerate in 2025 with the anticipated launch of the East Side Building Fund.

RRP investments are already having a positive impact, leveraging \$15.2 million in additional funding between September 2023 and August 2024 and attracting more than 164,000 visitors. Over 231,000 individuals and organizations have been engaged in this work.

CONSTRUCTION PROGRESS:

Location	Status			
	Pre-Development	Design	Under Construction	Complete
Martin Luther King, Jr. Park	■	■		
Broadway Market	■	■		
Central Terminal Phase 2	■	■		
MICHIGAN STREET AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE CORRIDOR				
119 Broadway and 129-143 Broadway	■	■		
136 Broadway	■	■	■	
Colored Musicians Club and Museum (CMC)	■	■	■	
Michigan Street Baptist Church	■	■	■	
509 Michigan St	■	■	■	
Nash House	■	■	■	

PROJECT IMPACTS
Sept. 2023 to Aug. 2024

\$15,184,498
additional funding leveraged

164,130 Visitors
at the Broadway Market, Central Terminal, and Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor

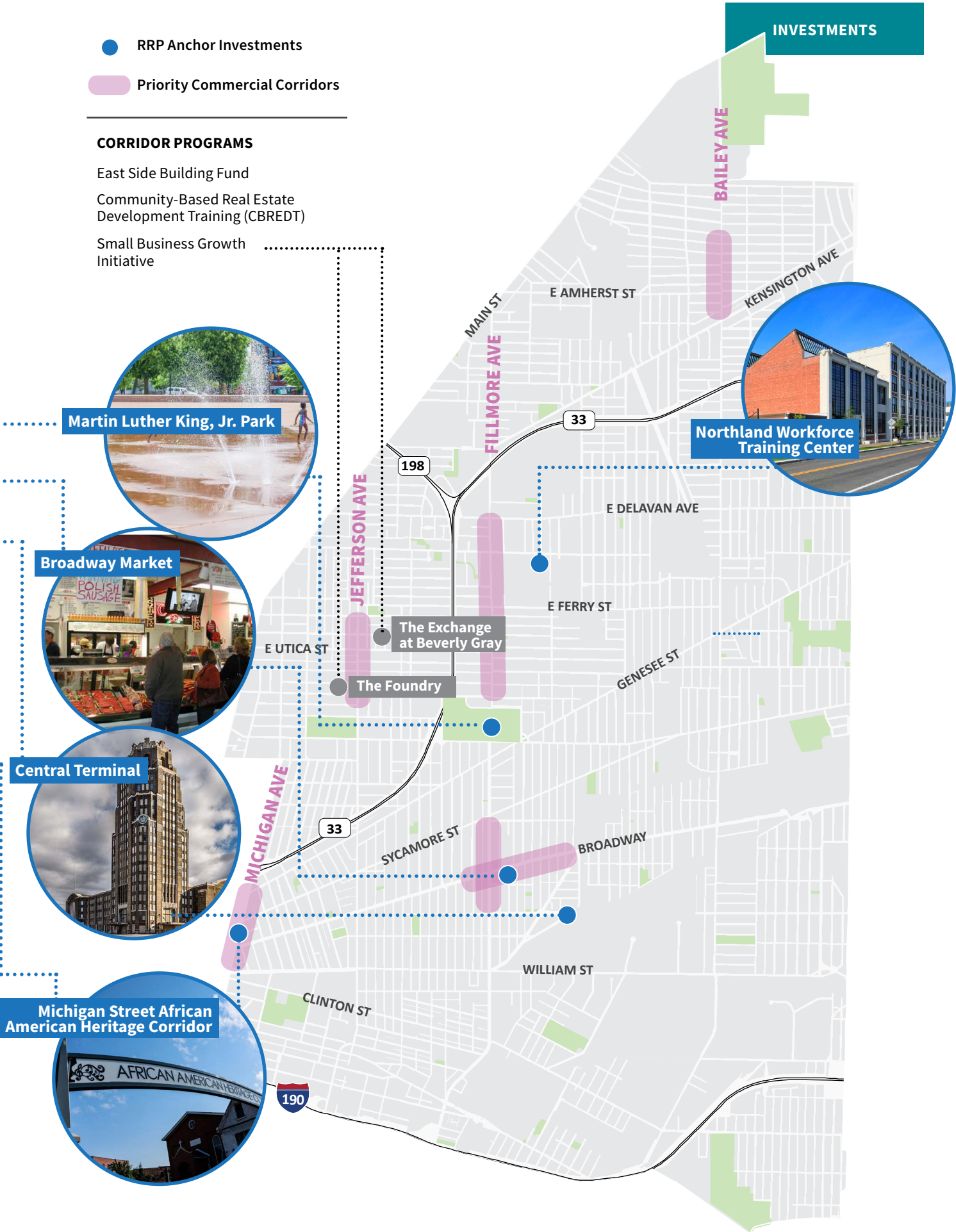
231,110 Organizations/Individuals Engaged

Source: RRP Annual Survey of Local Program Administrators, September 2024.

- RRP Anchor Investments
- Priority Commercial Corridors

CORRIDOR PROGRAMS

- East Side Building Fund
- Community-Based Real Estate Development Training (CBREDT)
- Small Business Growth Initiative



INVESTMENTS

INVESTMENTS

Broadway Market

Re-establish the Broadway Market as a viable and vibrant public food entrepreneur hub and attractive regional destination.

The Market will transition from City of Buffalo management to **Broadway Market Management Inc. (BMMI)** which will become a robust, well-resourced nonprofit operator rebuilding a sense of place and connecting deeply with surrounding and adjacent communities. It will undergo significant transformational capital improvements to address structural and programming needs and elevate the user experience for customers, vendors, and visitors. It will add to the existing vendor community and complement their offerings to make Broadway Market a widely attractive cultural and culinary destination. And, create an innovative series of events and programming to attract and rebuild a local, regional, and international customer base to showcase what is great and what is unique about regional food entrepreneurs, Buffalo, Broadway-Fillmore, and publicly-owned markets.

In 2024, a business support services consultant began operationalizing specific action items from the concepts/programs outlined in the business plan. An A&E consultant began space programming, design development, construction documents and construction oversight for a phased program of capital improvements to transform the Market. Legal counsel is solidifying BMMI’s lease with the City of Buffalo, and will consult on governance and compliance issues. BMMI also retained financial management and bookkeeping services to meet the current needs of the organization. BMMI is preparing to hire and successfully support a full-time staff starting with two key leadership positions.

Small Business Growth Initiative

Develop a dedicated and coordinated suite of services and programs to strengthen the small business ecosystem and ensure small businesses have the tools to prosper and grow.

In February 2024, **The Foundry** and **The Exchange at Beverly Gray** unveiled their partnership and officially announced the Small Business Growth Initiative at an event hosted at The Exchange at Beverly Gray. The initiative is designed to strengthen the small business ecosystem and is centered on aligning critical resources while making them easily accessible/navigable for small businesses. It will serve as a one-stop program customized to fit business owners’ specific needs; will focus on supporting small business growth and developing future entrepreneurs; and will help build generational wealth along with the regional economy. Data-driven and guided by authentic conversations with principals and stakeholders, the partners are planning for and implementing a suite of seven unique programs that streamline services and specifically address the community’s identified needs including capacity building, business and product development, access to financing, access to technical expertise, connections to commercial real estate, and pipeline building to support the next generation of entrepreneurs.

The partners are enhancing operational infrastructure, streamlining processes, and hiring new team members to support small businesses. With consultant assistance, they developed a comprehensive marketing program to amplify outreach, and the first marketing accelerator—REACH EAST. They are finalizing initial technical expertise partners to assist with legal, finance, loans, credit counseling, tax, web design and accounting, and will continue to identify partners for this targeted support. They are establishing a curriculum focused on product development for the new Product Lab and overhauling incubator services to provide more tailored assistance. They are assessing the local youth entrepreneurship landscape, gathering feedback, and enhancing curriculum design for a new Youth Entrepreneurship Program.

East Side Building Fund

Create a building renovation program to generate wealth for small business owners, combat vacancies and revitalize commercial corridors.

Anticipated to launch in Spring 2025, the East Side Building Fund is a joint, consolidated fund that aims to assist in the community-driven revitalization of mixed-use neighborhood commercial districts on Buffalo’s East Side by providing ESD capital grant funds for targeted building and associated site improvements such as stabilization measures, façade renovations and interior building upgrades to commercial and mixed-use buildings.

The East Side Building Fund builds upon the work of three East Side Avenues/ESD programs (**East Side Commercials Districts Program, Commercial Building Stabilization Fund and Community-Based Real Estate Development Training Program Fund**). The East Side Building Fund takes a more streamlined and holistic approach to capital funding. It considers the overall needs of a particular building and funds those needs through one source—cutting down on confusion and eligibility for multiple funding sources so that resources can move into the community more quickly.

To preserve the intent and the goals of the three aforementioned grant programs, under the new consolidated East Side Commercial Building Program, there will be a strong preference for projects located within the four target commercial districts (Jefferson Avenue, Broadway Fillmore, MLK Park, and Kensington Bailey); stabilization projects for at-risk historic buildings to preserve the community’s historic fabric; and for projects on the East Side initiated by graduates of the Community-Based Real Estate Development Training program.

CRS will issue RFPs for a Local Program Administrator and Community Engagement Partners in early 2025.

INVESTMENTS

Community-Based Real Estate Development Training (CBREDT)

Train building owners in commercial real estate development to ensure buildings are redeveloped for and by East Side residents.

Responding to feedback from past participants and key stakeholders, a new expanded and enhanced CBREDT program launched in June 2024. After months of program planning, content and module development, filming, website development, editing and beta testing, the new program features two key components. The first is **CBREDT 101**, a free online course with interactive learning modules along with three optional in-person experiential sessions. The course is available to all who register, but has a continued focus on reaching East Side residents. Since it launched, 100 people enrolled in CBREDT 101. The experiential sessions— Urban Plan, a networking event and a construction tour —will be held in 2025.

The second component of the new program is **Pre-Development Coaching**. Each year, five to ten graduates of the course, who own a commercial or mixed-use East Side property, will be invited to participate in structured, hands-on pre-development coaching with UB School of Architecture and Planning that consists of 15 applied learning workshops on relevant topics. The first cohort of five students began in September 2024. As with past cohorts of the class, a robust marketing communications strategy was developed and executed to reach the intended audience. The project team continues to assess the success of the online program and coaching, and plan for 2025.

While the new CBREDT program was developed, CRS and the University at Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning continued to provide technical assistance to 2020-2023 CBREDT program graduates. To date, thirteen graduates were awarded grants through the CBREDT Program Fund. Looking ahead, funding for projects on the East Side initiated by graduates of the CBREDT program will be given preference for funding through the new East Side Building Fund.

INVESTMENTS

INVESTMENTS

Northland Workforce Training Center (NWTC)

Advance NWTC’s mission to prioritize training and employment for under- and unemployed residents and communities of color to address hiring needs of advanced manufacturing employers and grow WNY’s clean energy resources.

Now in its seventh operational year, Northland Workforce Training Center (NWTC) is a state-of-the-art training center located on Buffalo’s East Side designed to increase the number and quality of candidates prepared for in-demand manufacturing occupations that provide pathways to the middle class.

NWTC’s student-focused culture has allowed them to achieve a graduation rate of 62%, which is double the national average and three times the completion rate of local community colleges. The current employment placement rate is 83% with an average starting salary of \$44,660. The successful placement of these graduates is due in part to the Northland Hiring Fair where in 2024 165 students met with 48 local manufacturers. Placements have a combined economic impact of more than \$21.9 million dollars in wages added back into the local economy.

In 2024, NWTC developed a new five-year strategic plan, held its annual retreat outlining new ambitious performance metrics and hosted over 300 community members and dignitaries to the “State of Northland” event. NWTC continues to engage with the community holding multiple events celebrating Black History Month and its summer tradition of hosting Food Truck Thursdays.

NWTC continues to expand its education programs. Through funding from the Office of Strategic Workforce Development (OSWD), NWTC trained 15 new CNC operators through a new 12-week CNC certificate program developed based on feedback from industry partners in response to the need for machinists in Erie and Niagara Counties. For the second consecutive year, NWTC partnered with Tesla to conduct training for 24 new Tesla hires. NWTC partnered with MOOG and other local machining companies to launch a 10-week deburring and finishing program. The Northland Summer Youth Academy concluded six weeks of paid training for high school students in educational/internship experience focused on increasing prospective students’ awareness of career opportunities within the advanced

manufacturing and energy sectors. NWTC welcomed 160 new students and welcomed back 149 returning students for the Fall 2024 semester.

NWTC spent much of 2024 planning to bring additional new programs to NWTC including Tesla’s Manufacturing Development Program (July 2025), SUNY Erie’s HVAC certificate program (January 2025), Alfred State’s CleanTech Certificate Program (2025) and SUNY Erie’s AutoTech Certificate Program (January 2025).

Central Terminal

Increase community access by transforming the iconic Central Terminal into a year-round, neighborhood, city and regional venue.

In late 2022, ESD moved \$20 million of its \$54 million capital commitment to rehabilitation of the complex under RRP. Central Terminal Restoration Corporation (CTRC) procured a A/E team and has completed a full scope of work for a Phase 2 construction effort focusing on stabilization of the subsurface parking structure and restoring key portions of the concourse level of the complex. In fall of 2024, CTRC selected a construction manager-at-risk that will fully bid/let contracts for this program and intends to initiate the initial contracts in the first quarter of 2025. ESD anticipates approving the \$34 million balance of its RRP commitment, as well as a \$1 million grant from the Downtown Revitalization Initiative in January 2025. Additional RRP funders approved a 3-year \$4 million grant for CTRC in January 2024.

CTRC completed a Historic Structures Report and limited Cultural Landscape Report with a team of historic preservation architects and consultants; and selected an Environmental Consulting Service to assist in the preliminary work to assess and potentially enter the Brownfield Cleanup Program. CTRC boarded 300+ open windows throughout the Main Terminal Building and the Tower.

Following an extensive procurement process, CTRC chose a real estate development team. Leveraging existing public and philanthropic support, the team will bring significant private investment to transform the nearly 30-acre development project, including the rehabilitation of four historic structures. CTRC in partnership with the development team held weekly coordination and community meetings on addressing tenant opportunities, revising Exclusive Negotiation Agreement Milestones and Obligations, filling the financial gap and Phase 2 construction. CTRC conducted a workshop with the development team and A&E consultants to address building and property-wide systems including phasing, space utilization and tenancies, and overall sustainability and energy systems/ electrification goals—a major issue for the site-wide development.

CTRC added four new board directors in 2024. CTRC prepared a Marketing and Communications Plan and hired a marketing and communications coordinator for more robust storytelling and messaging. CTRC is also soliciting and selecting a consultant for the Donor Recognition Program and preparing for a Spring Appeal. CTRC worked with volunteers on grounds maintenance and security; and continued community collaboration with clean ups and tree plantings. A community engagement consultant assists with public events, programming, sponsorship and placemaking including summer concerts, movie nights, back-to-school giveaway, a car show, Shakespeare in the Park, Health is Wealth, EidFest, Fall Fest and Trunk or Treat. In addition to programming, CTRC continues safety repairs of the Lawn, and coordinates with the City Water Dept to complete their repairs on Curtiss and Franczyk Streets and with Buffalo Sewer Authority’s RainCheck stormwater project.

INVESTMENTS

INVESTMENTS

Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor

Build a unified international tourism destination around Michigan Street’s unique assets.

With consultant assistance, the **Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor Commission** (the Commission) completed a comprehensive economic development plan for 136 Broadway (the Commission’s new headquarters and visitor hub), selected an A&E firm as Capital Projects Manager and began design and engineering work. The Commission is working with ESD on Grant Utilization Request Forms for the first phase of remedial work for 136 Broadway, and finalized a Grant Disbursement Agreement (GDA) for the approved \$24 million in Phase II Capital projects.

The **Colored Musicians Club and Museum (CMC)** completed elevator installation and is working on exterior expansion. The Commission successfully closed on 119 Broadway and 129-143 Broadway on behalf of CMC. **Michigan Street Baptist Church** began its second phase of interior capital improvements—installing flooring, wall treatments, and new early-1900 period pews; and completed Phase II of their archaeological dig. **WUFO Radio’s Black Radio History Collective** is working with the City to renovate 509 Michigan St., as well as constructing a sister build-out. The Commission installed and dedicated a place marker to honor Mary B. Talbert.

The Commission hired a Chief Financial Officer and voted in a new Board member. An organizational development consultant is assisting with board development, organizational assessment, and finance policies and procedures for the Commission and anchors. A consultant-led, comprehensive museum interpretive and exhibit plan was adopted by the Commission and steps toward implementation have begun. A grant writing consultant continues to pursue a wide variety of opportunities including assisting with a \$100,000 award from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The Commission issued an RFP to identify an IT consultant and media/communications consultant.

The Executive Director launched a weekly radio show, OUR STORY, on WUFO featuring stories from the historic neighborhoods connected to the Corridor and beyond. The Commission continues to engage the community and attract visitors through programming in partnership with community groups including Black and Women’s History Month programming and a second annual Farmers Market. Street pole banners by a local artist featuring local historic African American figures will be installed in 2025.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Park (MLK Park)

Restore the historic MLK Park greenhouses and ensure educational and workforce development opportunities in horticulture and park management.

Ongoing capital improvements to MLK Park ensure this historically significant community anchor remains an accessible, safe, and relevant asset for the community. **The Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy**, which stewards Buffalo’s Olmsted Park System under a maintenance and management agreement with the City, is leading work on making improvements to MLK Park as identified through community engagement as part of its five-year planning process. Previously, the Conservancy completed an assessment of MLK Park’s historic greenhouses, which produce 10,000 annuals and hundreds of other plants for all of the Buffalo Olmsted parks and circles, and began designing improvements. The design stage is now complete, and cost estimates are in process. The Conservancy is nearing bidding/contracting for the initial phase of construction for structural repairs that will ultimately add new heating and cooling systems and make electrical and plumbing improvements to fully restore the greenhouses. Looking ahead the Conservancy will complete construction to refurbish greenhouses and ensure the space will house educational and workforce development opportunities in horticulture and park management. Support for the Conservancy will train and employ residents to work at MLK Park and throughout the Olmsted Park System.

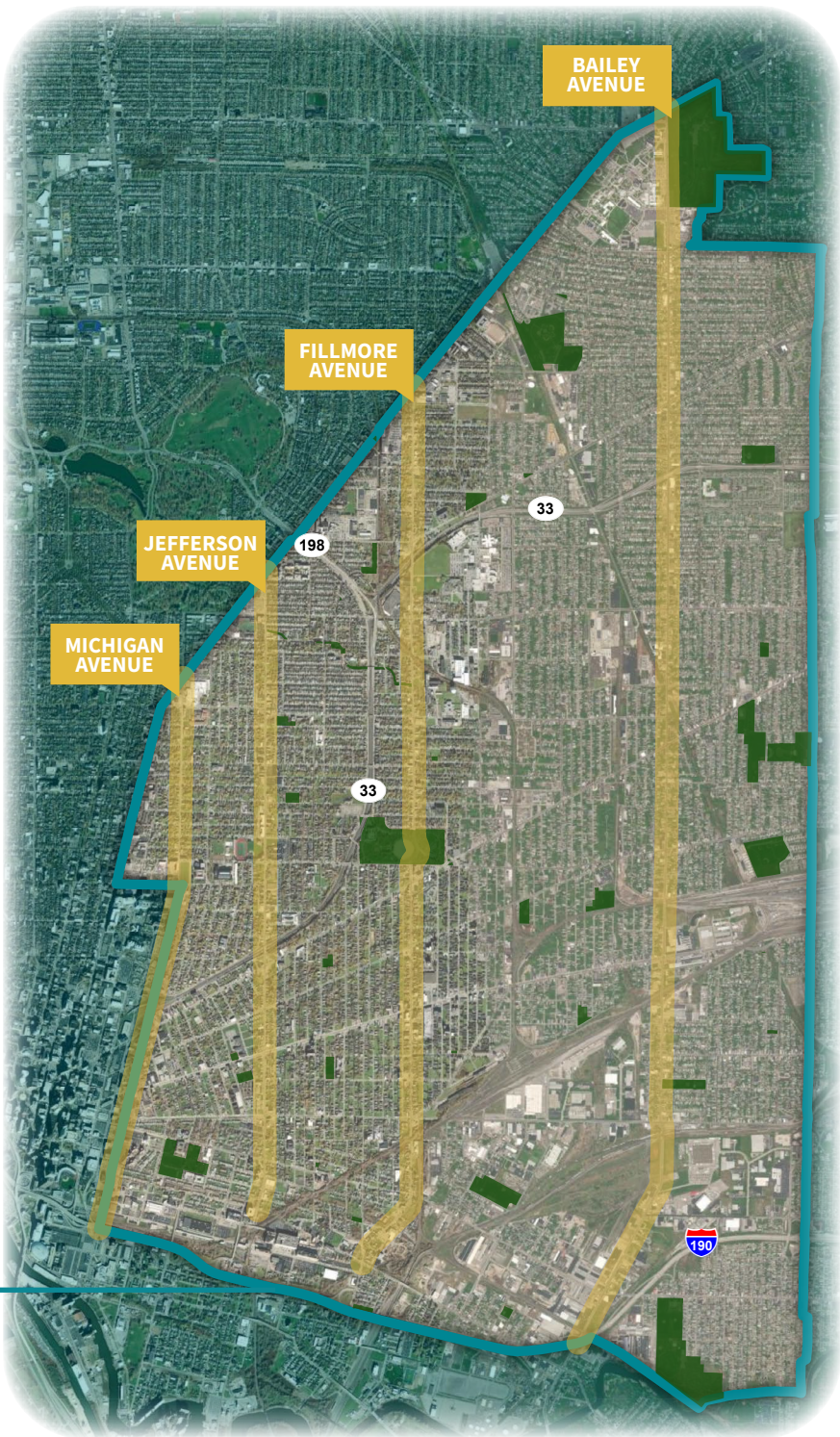
INDICATORS

East Side Corridors

Neighborhood Indicators

The indicators on the following pages offer a snapshot of Buffalo East Side's progress in workforce development, placemaking, and small business growth. Encouragingly, most metrics demonstrate positive trajectories over both the past year and past six years. Buffalo's East Side made strides in the number of higher-paying jobs, median household income, labor force participation, and improved economic security for residents. Placemaking and small business efforts are also showing positive results, evidenced by population growth, business expansion and small business growth.

While there are some indicators requiring attention, such as educational attainment and vacancies, it's important to consider both the potential impact of contributing economic conditions such as the level of construction in the community and/or rising rents, as well as the lag between project implementation and when impacts will be captured in the latest available data. Overall, the positive trends are evidence of strategic investments that are fostering a stronger workforce, growing neighborhoods, and a supportive community for small businesses across the East Side and along four commercial corridors that include Bailey, Fillmore, Jefferson and Michigan.



Buffalo's East Side

East Side Corridors

INDICATORS

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS		MOST RECENT 6-YEAR TREND	MOST RECENT 1-YEAR TREND	MOST RECENT DATA YEAR	
WORKFORCE	Access to Higher-Paying Jobs	Number of higher-paying jobs	↑	2021	
		% of higher-paying jobs held by residents	↑	2021	
	Economic Security	% with incomes above 200% the federal poverty level	↑	↑	2022
		Median Household Income	↑	↑	2022
	Educational Attainment	% of adults ages 25-64 with some education beyond HS	↓	↓	2022
	Labor Force Participation	% of ALL adults ages 16-64 who are in the labor force	↑	↑	2022
% of PEOPLE OF COLOR ages 16-64 who are in the labor force		↑	↑	2022	
PLACEMAKING	Population Growth	Total Population	↑	↑	2022
		Young Adults (25-34)	↑	↓	2022
		People of Color	↑	↑	2022
		Foreign Born	↑	↑	2022
		White	↑	↑	2022
	Business Growth	Employment	↑	↑	2024
		Employers	↑	↑	2024
	Vacancy	Commercial Vacancy Rate	↓	↑	2024
		Residential Vacancy Rate	↓	↑	2024
SMALL BUSINESS	Entrepreneurs	Entrepreneurs per 10,000 people*	n/a	↓	2024
	Sole Proprietors	Sole Proprietors	↓	No Change	2024
		Self Employment as % of Total Employed	↑	↓	2024
	Small Business Growth	Small Businesses	↑	↑	2024
		Employment at Small Businesses	n/a	↑	2024
		Microbusiness	↑	↑	2024
		Employment at Microbusiness	n/a	↑	2024
		New Businesses (Up to 5 years old)	↑	↑	2024
		Employment at New Businesses	n/a	↑	2024

INDICATORS

INDICATORS

WORKFORCE

RRP investments in workforce development strive to keep pace with the growing number of higher paying jobs in the community.



There are 18,900 higher-paying jobs on Buffalo's East Side with annual wages of \$40,000 or more. This number is up nearly 20% since 2015 and represents nearly a quarter of higher-paying jobs across the city of Buffalo. Yet residents on the East Side of Buffalo fill only 6.5% of higher-paying jobs, a percentage that has inched up only a slight 1.1 percentage points since 2015. This underscores the opportunity and pressing need for training that prepares more residents with the skills and credentials that hiring employers in the community seek. Doing this would provide workers with an income that provides economic security.

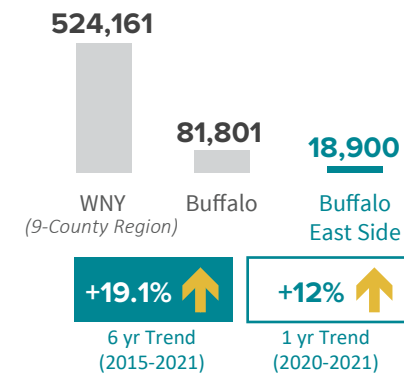
Economic security is essential for individuals to thrive in all aspects of life. Across the region, 70% of households are economically secure, living on incomes above 200% of the federal poverty level. However, on Buffalo's East Side, only 42% of households are economically secure, meaning the majority of individuals and families live in or near poverty and must often rely on social services to meet basic household needs. The median income on Buffalo's East Side is \$35,833—up 11% over the last year but over \$30,000 per year lower than the regional median of \$66,792. Limited educational attainment and access to higher-paying jobs contribute to this disparity and curb the income potential of East Side residents.

For many, having at least some education or training beyond high school is a critical stepping stone into a career. On Buffalo's East Side just over half (51%) of adults have completed training beyond high school, a concerning 2.2 percentage point decrease from 2015 and a 1 percentage point decline over the last year. If Buffalo's East Side looked like the region, at least 67% of adults would have some training beyond high school and expanded opportunities for higher-paying work. The community has many valuable assets to support residents who seek this training, including two colleges and numerous workforce training programs. This includes Northland Workforce Training Center which equips underserved individuals with the skills they need for higher-paying careers in manufacturing and clean technology.

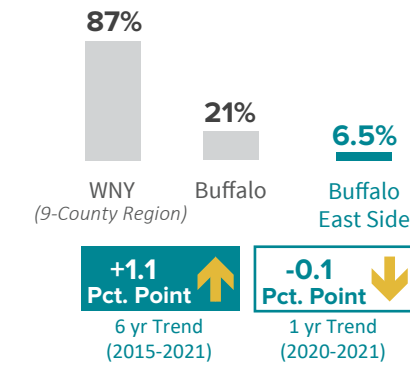
Overall, 64% of all East Side residents are in the labor force—a percentage that is up 0.9 percentage points since 2016 and 0.5 percentage points over the last year. Yet this rate is 11 percentage points lower than the regional average of 75%. The gap is even larger for people of color, underscoring the importance of inclusive workforce development strategies.

Access to Higher-Paying Jobs

Number of higher-paying jobs (\$40,000 per year or more), 2021



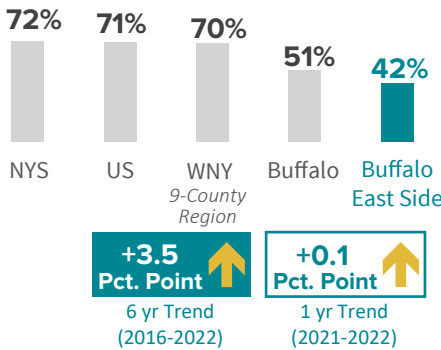
Percentage of higher-paying jobs in the geography held by residents, 2021



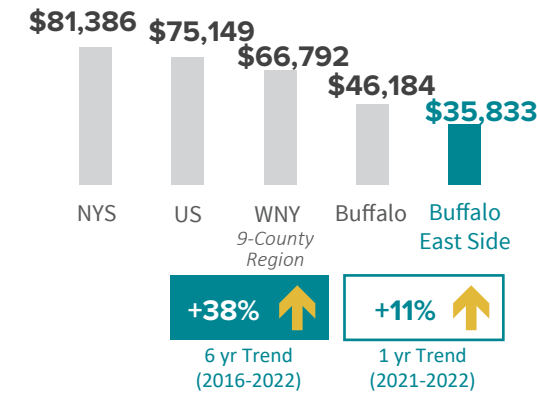
Source: OnTheMap

Economic Security

Percentage of households with incomes above 200% of the federal poverty level, 2022



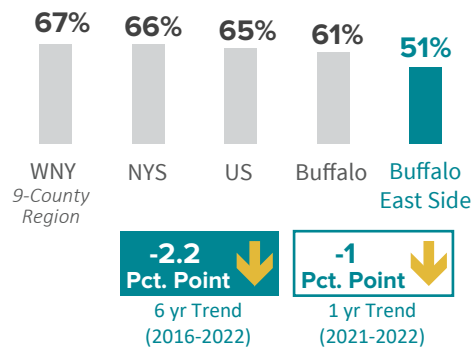
Median Household Income, 2022



Source: American Community Survey

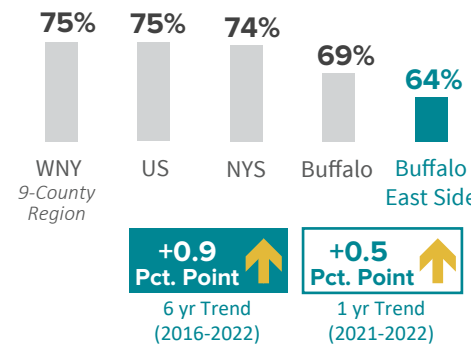
Educational Attainment

Percentage of adults ages 25-64 with some education or training beyond high school, 2022

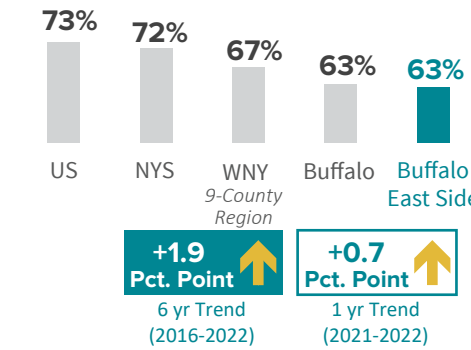


Labor Force Participation

Percentage of ALL adults ages 16-64 who are in the labor force, 2022



Percentage of PEOPLE OF COLOR ages 16-64 who are in the labor force, 2022



INDICATORS

INDICATORS

PLACEMAKING

RRP is building places aimed to attract and retain more residents, visitors and businesses through economic development approaches that rebuild anchors, revitalize neighborhoods and engage the community.



This population of Buffalo's East Side is growing—a sign of increasing community vibrancy that can promote economic growth. Over 116,700 people live on Buffalo's East Side as of 2022, which is up by 2% from the previous year. Population growth on the East Side from 2016 to 2022 (8%) outpaced national, state, and regional trends.

This notable population growth on Buffalo's East Side is more pronounced for key population segments like young adults (ages 25-34). While the young adult population on the East Side is up by 17% from 2016 to 2022, it dipped slightly (-1%) in the most recent year of data (2021-2022). Strategic placemaking, small business development and workforce initiatives can help keep the young adult population growing, which can reinforce revitalization strategies.

Buffalo's East Side is becoming more diverse. About 16% of all people of color in the nine-county WNY region live on the East Side. The number of people of color in the community increased by 9% from 2016 to 2022, with a 2% increase over the most recent year (2021-2022). From 2016 to 2022, the foreign born population on Buffalo's East Side more than doubled (+128%), over four times the rate of the city (+29%).

Businesses on Buffalo's East Side employ more than 42,600 workers. These jobs are concentrated along the four investment corridors—businesses along Bailey, Jefferson, Fillmore and Michigan Avenues make up about 21% of all jobs on the East Side. East Side jobs grew by 6.3% between 2018 and 2024, although job growth slowed in the past year.

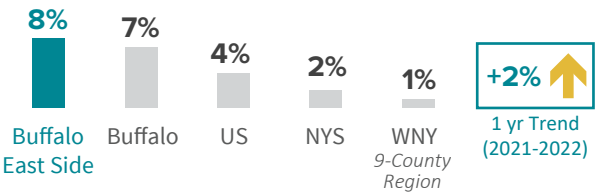
Declining vacancy rates are a sign of increasing commercial activity. From 2018 to 2024, the commercial vacancy rate on the East Side fell 5.4 percentage points, but rose slightly over the past year. Similarly, residential vacancy is down by one percentage point from 2018, but is up slightly compared to 2023. As East Side vacancy rates remain high, opportunities to restore and reactivate vacant spaces are widespread.

The East Side has significant assets that can drive strategic placemaking, keep vacancy on the decline, and promote the East Side as a place to live and work. Key regional assets concentrated along the four corridors include the Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor, Northland Workforce Training Center, Buffalo Museum of Science, the Broadway Market, and MLK Park.

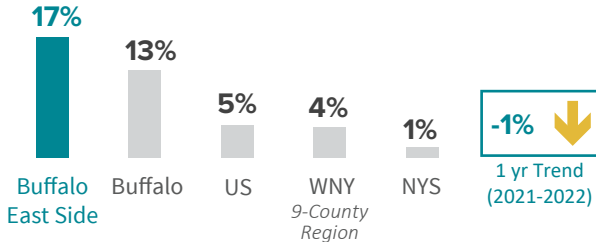
Source: American Community Survey

Population Growth

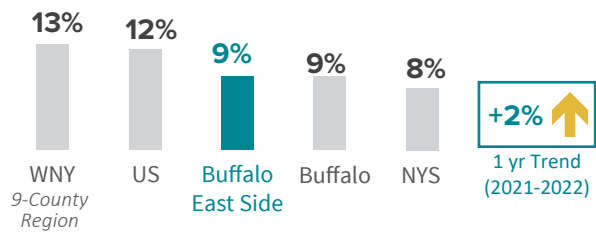
Percentage change in TOTAL population, 2016-2022



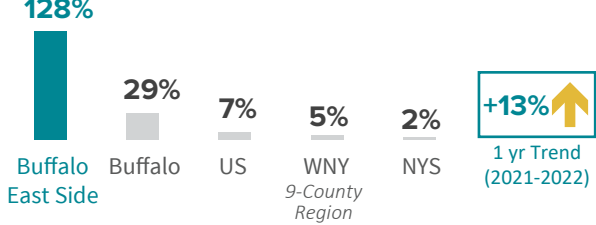
Percentage change in YOUNG ADULTS (25-34), 2016-2022



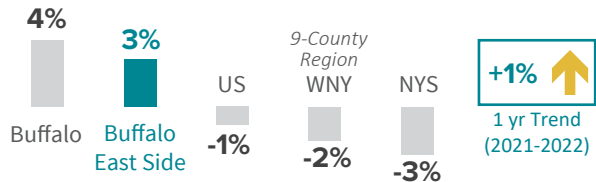
Percentage change in PEOPLE OF COLOR, 2016-2022



Percentage change in FOREIGN BORN, 2016-2022

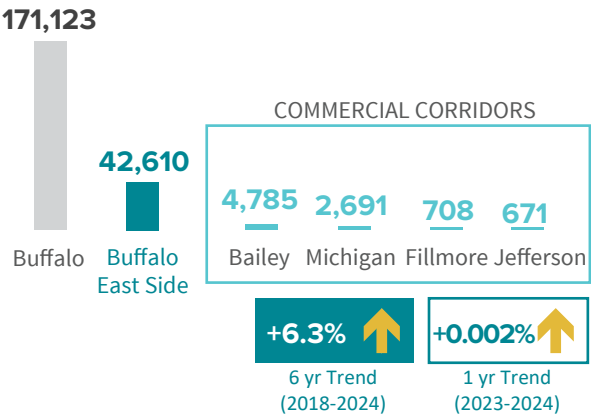


Percentage change in WHITE population, 2016-2022

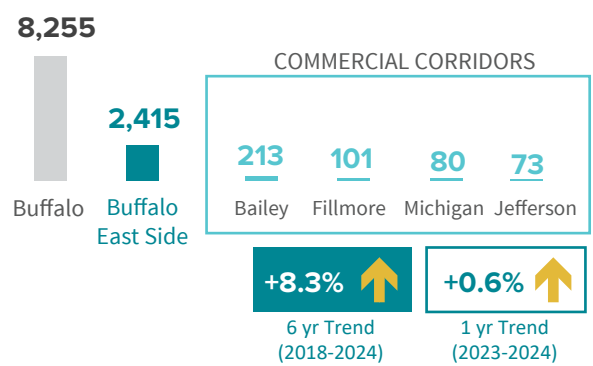


Business Growth

Employment at All Employer Locations, 2024



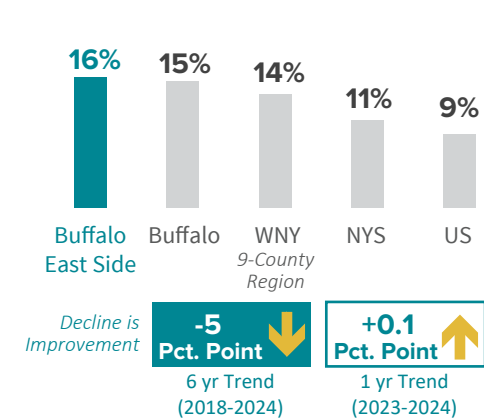
All Employer Locations, 2024



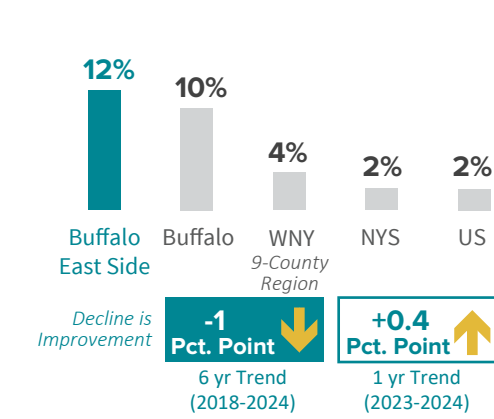
Source: Data Axle

Vacancies

Commercial Vacancy Rate, 2024



Residential Vacancy Rate, 2024



Source: USPS Vacancy Data

INDICATORS

INDICATORS

SMALL BUSINESS

RRP is boosting business, creating new businesses and growing existing ones through capacity-building resources focused on commercial corridors and businesses in underserved communities.



Buffalo's East Side is home to a growing business community, with over 2,400 establishments of all ages and sizes that are driving economic growth. These businesses collectively employ more than 42,600 workers, an average of 18 workers per business. A significant portion of this workforce, nearly 20%, is concentrated along commercial corridors, specifically, Bailey and Michigan Avenues.

Small businesses with under 50 employees are the backbone of the East Side economy, making up about 70% of all businesses in the community. Nearly half of East Side businesses are a microbusiness with no more than five employees. This includes 185 sole proprietors.

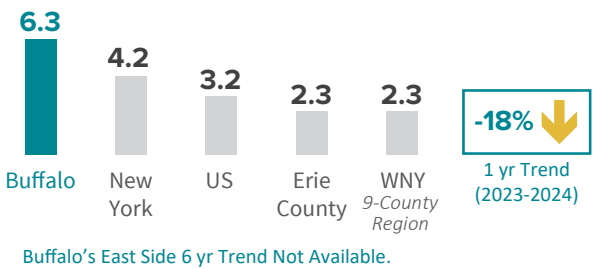
Business activity on the East Side has been steadily growing over the past six years. Key indicators show positive trends. Over the past six years, 100+ new businesses opened, contributing to an overall growth rate of 8% in the total number of businesses. While small businesses and microbusinesses experienced growth as well, it was slower. These smaller businesses faced greater challenges during the pandemic. More recently, the competition for talent in the region's tight labor market could be hindering their growth compared to larger establishments. While the number of sole proprietors on Buffalo's East Side declined 34% since 2018 and remained stagnant over the past year, the number of new businesses in the community surged 315% over the past six years.

The rate of self-employment on Buffalo's East Side is 3%, a rate that lags city, regional, statewide and national trends. It also stands in contrast to the city's position as a hub for entrepreneurship with rates of entrepreneurship that exceed all benchmarks.

Stronger supports for entrepreneurs on the East Side could boost entrepreneurship and self-employment on the East Side, including business planning services, capacity building resources, affordable coworking spaces, transportation services, and more. With initiatives like The Foundry or Exchange at Beverly Gray, the community has a variety of business support organizations that are coordinating support services for new and small businesses to help spur business ownership.

Entrepreneurship

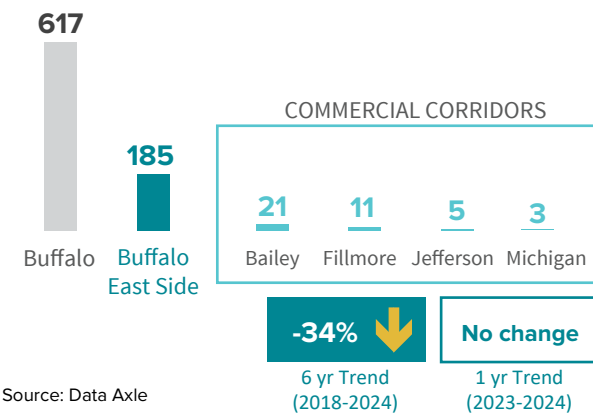
Entrepreneurs per 10,000 people, 2024



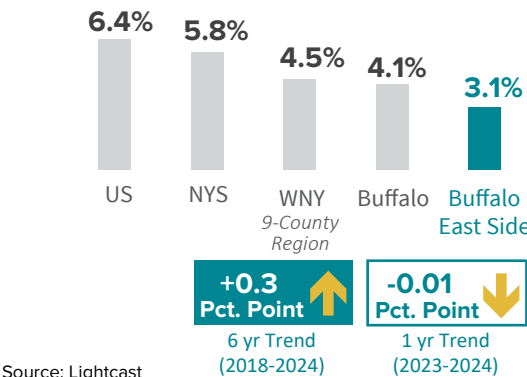
Source: Lightcast

Sole Proprietorship

Sole Proprietors, 2024

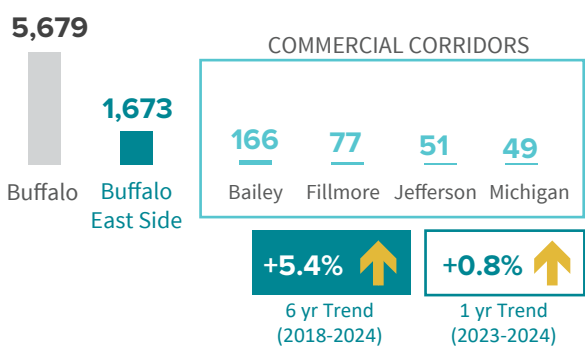


Self Employment as Percentage of Total Employed, 2024

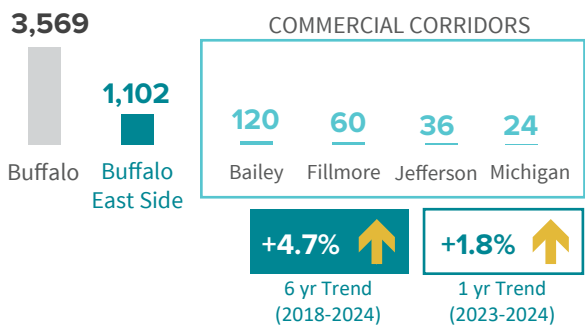


Small Business Growth

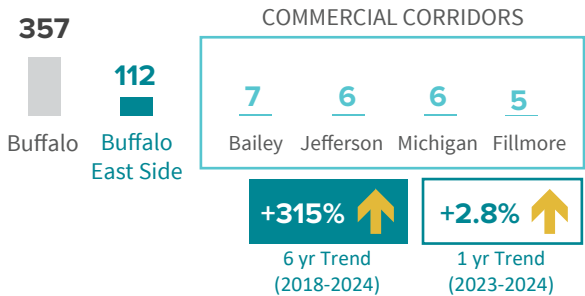
Small Businesses (Under 50 Employees), 2024



Microbusinesses (Under 5 Employees), 2024



New Businesses*, 2024

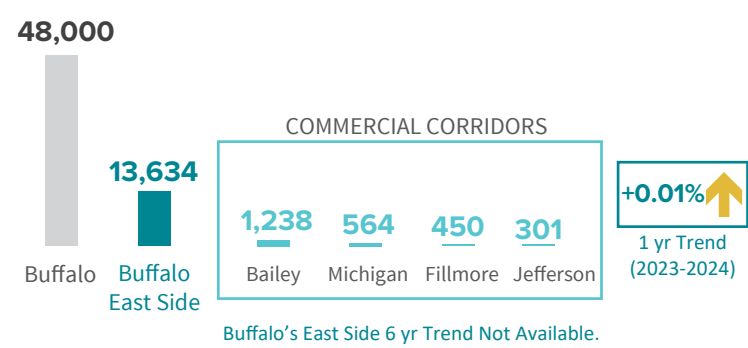


Source: Data Axle

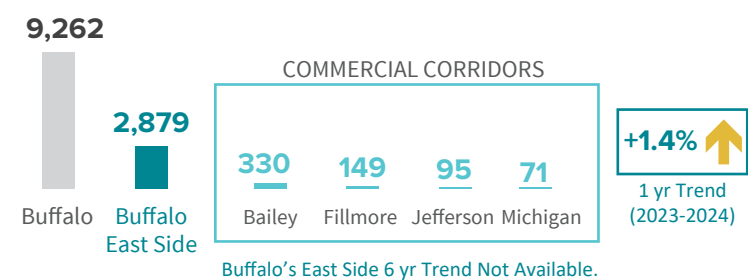
* New businesses are those that opened 2018 or after

**Employment numbers from historical 2018 data are not comparable to current data.

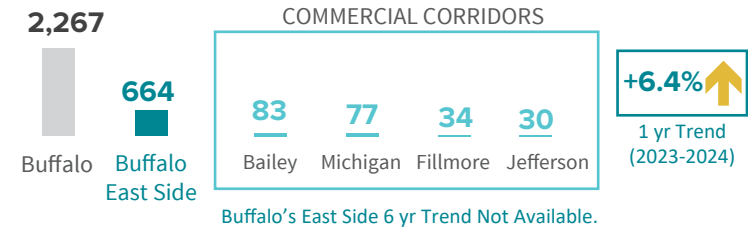
Employment at Small Businesses** (Under 50 Employees), 2024



Employment at Microbusinesses** (Under 5 Employees), 2024



Employment at New Businesses** (Up to 5 years), 2024





Niagara Falls

Niagara Falls is undergoing a significant transformation with an investment aimed at revitalizing the city's economy, enhancing the visitor experience, supporting entrepreneurs and boosting quality of life for residents.

A \$40M investment through RRP is building an ecosystem in Niagara Falls centered on three key projects that promote agritourism and food entrepreneurship, small businesses along revitalized commercial corridors, and enhanced waterfront heritage tourism and community anchors. This strategic approach, which capitalizes on the city's unique strengths, rich history, natural assets and built environment, will transform it into a more vibrant destination for visitors, entrepreneurs, and residents.

INVESTMENTS

INVESTMENTS

Niagara Falls Investments

By focusing on agritourism, food entrepreneurship, waterfront development, and community anchors, RRP investments in Niagara Falls aim to attract visitors, stimulate spending, and strengthen neighborhoods and business corridors within walking distance of Niagara Falls State Park.

Seven construction projects are underway, with six in pre-development or design phase.

RRP investments in Niagara Falls are already making a positive impact, leveraging \$3.2 million in additional funding and attracting more than 60,900 visitors at the NACC and City Market between September 2023 and August 2024. Project work has engaged 80,900 people and organizations.

CONSTRUCTION PROGRESS:

Location	Status			
	Pre-Development	Design	Under Construction	Complete
AGRITOURISM & FOOD ENTREPRENEURSHIP:				
City Market	■	■		
WATERFRONT, HERITAGE TOURISM & COMMUNITY ANCHORS:				
NACC	■	■	■	
Oakwood Cemetery	■	■		
Portage Interpretation	■			
Gorge Gateway Park & Hydraulic Power Plaza	■	■	■	
Cataract House Hotel Historic Site	■	■		
Riverway Tree Walk	■	■		

PROJECT IMPACTS
Sept. 2023 to Aug. 2024

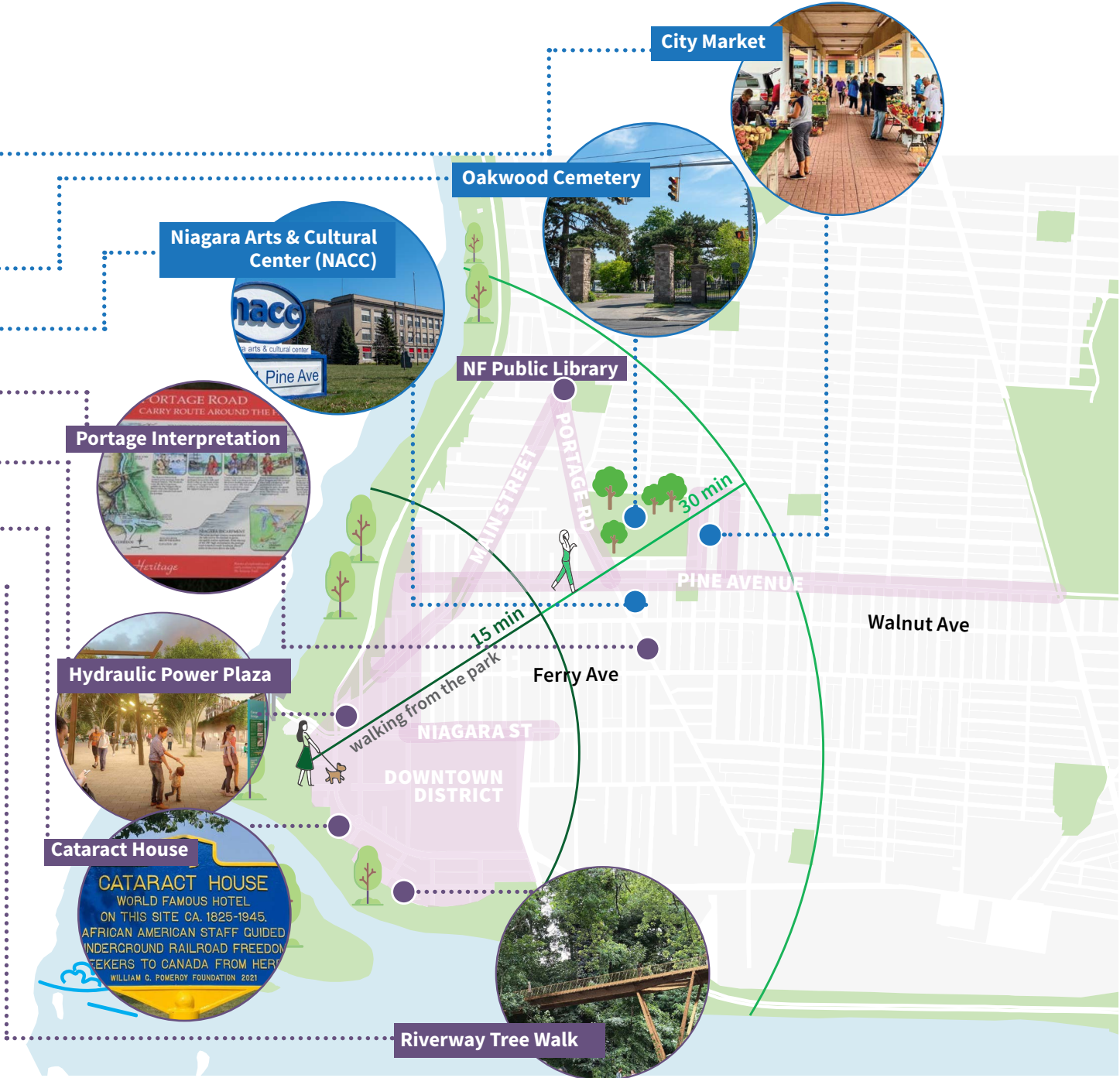
\$3,250,692
additional funding leveraged

60,957 Visitors
at the NACC and City Market

80,900 Organizations/Individuals Engaged

NF Small Business Property Improvement Program

- RRP Anchor Investments
- RRP Asset Investments



Source: RRP Annual Survey of Local Program Administrators, September 2024. NOTE: Visitor numbers for Niagara Falls City Market only includes June to August 2024.

INVESTMENTS

Agritourism & Food Entrepreneurship

Foster a pipeline for food entrepreneurship—with City Market as a key anchor—that capitalizes on the rich food culture of the city, regional agricultural strengths and food-based tourism opportunities.

By creating stronger connections between existing food entrepreneurs and the region’s food producers and processors, and investing in capital improvements and supports for small businesses, Niagara Falls has the opportunity to create an authentic, premier food destination. Following an RFP process in collaboration with the City of Niagara Falls and ESD [led by its subsidiary **USA Niagara Development Corporation (USAN)**], a consultant was selected for business planning and conceptual design services associated with the redevelopment of the **Niagara Falls City Market**. An Advisory Group of 20+ stakeholders (farmers, restaurants, agricultural and food sectors) held meetings to help guide the strategic direction of the City Market redevelopment. Additional stakeholder engagement included an online survey and key informant interviews. The consultant completed a City Market SWOT analysis, initial site analysis and survey, and tours of comparable and competitive food retailing venues and markets. They finalized a recommended concept site plan to serve as the basis for space programming. They developed programmatic requirements and design elements for new structures, including a new market shed, indoor flexible market/ event building, and performance space. They finalized estimated construction costs for full site build-out and prepared a business plan, including income sources, rental rates, staffing model, and expense budget.

Looking ahead, the project partners will hold an initial Agritourism charette in 2025. They will select a consultant team to study and report on the current agricultural landscape in Niagara County, and work with the current ecosystem of government entities, businesses and organizations to facilitate consensus-building among stakeholders that will lead to better connections and coordination between the agriculture and hospitality industries. This is a first step of a longer-term goal to undergo a strategic planning process that purposefully connects the tourism sector with the agriculture sector, and addresses capital, programmatic and organizational needs for the ecosystem. USAN is in extended discussions with **Field & Fork**, a preferred local program administrator (LPA), to become a partner with USAN on this Agritourism scoping process.

Niagara Falls Small Business Property Improvement Program (NFSBPIP)

Fund building renovations to expand neighborhood-serving businesses and increase mixed-use opportunities in commercial districts.

Two organizations were chosen as LPAs for the NFSBPIP, which provides matching capital project grant funds of up to \$100,000 to commercial and mixed-use building owners in four targeted investment corridors with the goal to expand neighborhood-serving businesses including retail, restaurants, and other services, and to increase mixed-use opportunities along the corridors. **NFC Development Corporation (NFC)**—the City of Niagara Falls’ nonprofit development agency—serves as the LPA for three of the four districts (Pine Avenue, Main Street, and Portage Road). **USAN** partners with NFC through a memorandum of understanding and administers the NFSBPIP in their downtown development district. The LPAs developed application guidelines and administrative procedures prior to program launch.

Following an RFP process, NFC selected a Program Administration Consultant for NFSBPIP for three years. The Consultant completed the design guidelines for the grant program which were officially adopted by the City’s NFC Development Corporation in July 2024. The consultant also provides program support for the three NFC districts including grant administration, marketing, evaluating and selecting activities to be supported by the NFSBPIP. The grant program opened on a rolling basis to applications in fall 2023. The program was marketed using the stakeholders list developed through the initial community engagement process. Outreach to promote the program and solicit interest in grant funding from small businesses in all four commercial districts included 300 direct mail pieces, door-to-door canvassing of the business districts, and a new webinar in early September 2024. To date, the program is in discussion with 36 eligible projects. Six projects completed the application process and are under review. With assistance from the consultant, LPAs will work with building owners to develop work scopes, undergo bid solicitations, and begin construction while continuing engagement with business owners.

INVESTMENTS

Waterfront, Heritage Tourism & Community Anchors

Launch a comprehensive heritage placemaking initiative that invests in the waterfront and historic community anchors to tell the unique story of Niagara Falls—to locals and visitors.

Final design drawings are in progress for the upper-river waterfront site (“**Riverway Tree Walk**”) at **305 Buffalo Avenue** to build a scenic overlook of the upper Niagara River. Phase 1 of the **Gorge Gateway Park & Hydraulic Power Plaza** project, being administered by USAN, received bids and the USAN Directors awarded a construction contract at their September 2024 Board meeting. This project will interpret the historic significance of the former canal in downtown Niagara Falls as it relates to the city’s first hydroelectric power generation.

September 2024 began A&E procurements for historic restoration and public access projects at three historic structures at **Oakwood Cemetery** including new roofs, stone repointing, and other structural repairs to stabilize and restore the 1877 chapel, the 1913 Green & Wicks mausoleum, and the 1922 stone office. **Niagara Falls National Heritage Area (NFNHA)** on behalf of and along with Oakwood Cemetery, is working on refreshed branding, marketing and a website for Oakwood Cemetery that was introduced in summer 2024.

RRP funds leveraged an additional \$1,000,000 in funding from NYPA for **The Niagara Arts and Cultural Center (NACC)**. The NACC received official construction bids for Phase I of its \$8.5M, 1000-seat theater restoration project. The \$1.1 M Phase I project will consist of restroom and ancillary space renovations.

Niagara Falls Public Library with History Associates, Inc. (HAI) completed the final phase of a comprehensive inventory, rehousing and digitization project for the Local History Collection which provides important source material for cultural heritage tourism and placemaking work being undertaken in the city.

A community design process to interpret the significant Underground Railroad history of the site of the former **Cataract House Hotel** along the upper rapids of the Niagara River at the entrance to Niagara Falls State Park is underway. Initial planning work began on the Niagara Portage project, which will interpret the pre- American Revolution route used to navigate around Niagara Falls and Niagara River rapids.

NFNHA initiated a search for two full-time equivalent positions for capacity building to help implement RRP and other projects.

INDICATORS

Niagara Falls Corridors
Neighborhood Indicators

The indicators on the following pages offer a snapshot of progress in Niagara Falls in workforce development, placemaking, and small business growth. They reveal a mix of positive and concerning trends. Positive trends include the increase in higher-paying jobs and the rise of median household incomes. Growth in population diversity is evident too, and self-employment and small business growth are on the rise.

Opportunities for improvement include increasing the percentage of higher-paying jobs held by residents, which persistently declined. Overall job growth slowed over the past 12 months and six years. Total population decreased, and vacancies grew. The number of sole proprietors also declined. Overall these trends highlight the importance of strategic investments and coordinated action linked to developing the workforce in Corridor Neighborhoods, fostering, welcoming communities that celebrate diversity, and targeting assistance at small businesses, especially along Niagara Falls Corridors.

Niagara Falls Corridor
Neighborhoods

Niagara Falls Corridors



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

		MOST RECENT 6-YEAR TREND	MOST RECENT 1-YEAR TREND	MOST RECENT DATA YEAR
WORKFORCE	Access to Higher-Paying Jobs	Number of higher-paying jobs	↑	2021
		% of higher-paying jobs held by residents	↓	2021
	Economic Security	% with incomes above 200% the federal poverty level	↑	2022
		Median Household Income	↑	2022
	Educational Attainment	% of adults ages 25-64 with some education beyond HS	↑	2022
		% of ALL adults ages 16-64 who are in the labor force	↑	2022
PLACEMAKING	Population Growth	% of PEOPLE OF COLOR ages 16-64 who are in the labor force	↑	2022
		Total Population	↑	2022
		Young Adults (25-34)	↑	2022
		People of Color	↑	2022
	Business Growth	Foreign Born	↓	2022
		White	↓	2022
		Employment	↓	2024
		Employers	↑	2024
	Vacancy	Commercial Vacancy Rate	↑	2024
		Residential Vacancy Rate	↑	2024
SMALL BUSINESS	Entrepreneurs	Entrepreneurs per 10,000 people*	n/a	2024
	Sole Proprietors	Sole Proprietors	↓	2024
		Self Employment as % of Total Employed	↑	2024
	Small Business Growth	Small Businesses	↑	2024
		Employment at Small Businesses	n/a	2024
		Microbusiness	↑	2024
		Employment at Microbusiness	n/a	2024
		New Businesses (Up to 5 years old)	↑	2024
		Employment at New Businesses	n/a	2024

INDICATORS

WORKFORCE

As strategies strive to grow higher-paying jobs along commercial corridors through investments in entrepreneurs and community anchors, targeted workforce strategies aim to bring more residents back into the labor force and prepare them for higher-paying career pathways.



As workforce initiatives prepare residents in Niagara Falls Corridors for higher-paying jobs, a declining number of good-paying jobs may make it difficult for residents to find work close to home. In Niagara Falls Corridors, there are more than 6,100 higher-paying jobs offering wages of \$40,000 per year or more, a number that increased 14.9% since 2015. These jobs represent 80% of all higher-paying jobs in Niagara Falls. Yet only 12% are held by residents, a percentage that fell slightly since 2015. Most higher-paying jobs in Niagara Falls Corridors and across the city overall are filled by individuals who reside outside the city.

Limited access to higher-paying jobs perpetuates poverty for many residents. Less than half of households in Niagara Falls Corridors live on an income above 200% of the federal poverty level. Although economic security improved since 2016, there is a large 22 percentage point gap between Niagara Falls Corridors and the region where 70% of households are economically secure. This disparity limits opportunities for Niagara Falls residents for homeownership, transportation, and small business development, while increasing reliance on public assistance.

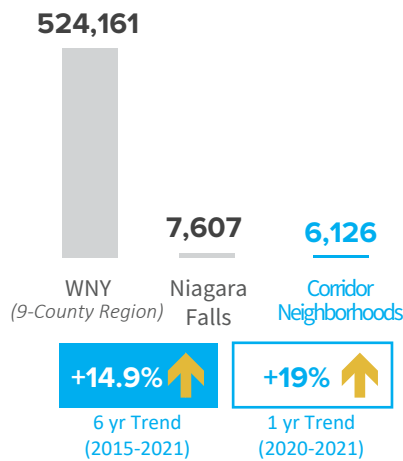
The median annual income for households in Niagara Falls Corridors is \$36,540. While household incomes are up 36% since 2016, they are about \$30,000 less than the regional average. Limited educational attainment and persistent barriers to work such as the need for flexible transportation and childcare, contribute to many adults remaining in lower-paying jobs or being out of the labor force altogether.

Less than half of adults (ages 25-64) in Niagara Falls Corridors have training or education beyond high school, compared to 67% of those across the region, even though the city offers a variety of training opportunities that can help residents gain the skills needed for higher-paying work, including BOCES, colleges and universities, and several workforce trainers such as the Niagara Falls Culinary Institute.

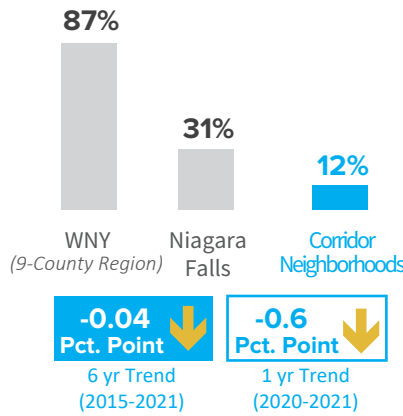
Targeted training programs that align with employer hiring needs could significantly boost workforce participation rates. As of 2022, only 66% of residents living in areas around Pine, Portage, Niagara and Main were working or looking for a job. While racial and ethnicity disparities in labor force participation persist in Niagara Falls, they are less pronounced than across the region overall. By fostering a more skilled workforce for all residents, RRP strategies can drive labor force participation and economic growth, while creating a more prosperous community.

Access to Higher-Paying Jobs

Number of higher-paying jobs (\$40,000 per year or more), 2021



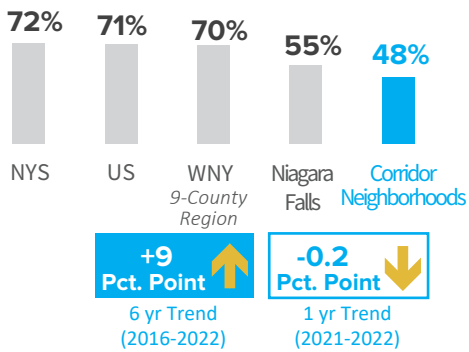
Percentage of higher-paying jobs in the geography held by residents, 2021



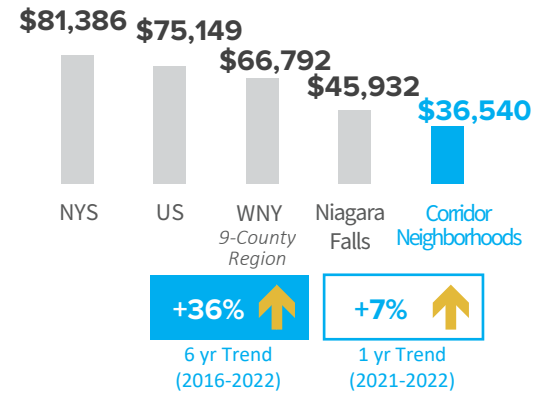
Source: OnTheMap

Economic Security

Percentage of households with income above 200% of the federal poverty level, 2022



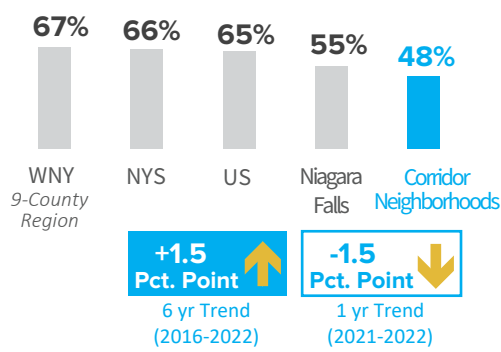
Median Household Income, 2022



Source: American Community Survey

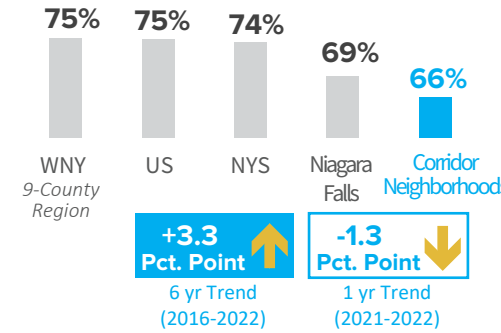
Educational Attainment

Percentage of adults ages 25-64 with some education or training beyond high school, 2022

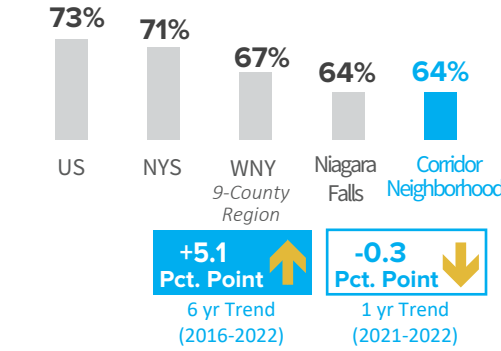


Labor Force Participation

Percentage of ALL adults ages 16-64 who are in the labor force, 2022



Percentage of PEOPLE OF COLOR ages 16-64 who are in the labor force, 2022



INDICATORS

INDICATORS

INDICATORS

PLACEMAKING

Placemaking efforts in Niagara Falls will fund building renovations, expand mixed-use opportunities in commercial corridors, and create stronger connections between tourism anchors and neighborhoods.



Over half (55%) of Niagara Falls’ residents live in neighborhoods within a half-mile of the investment corridors—that’s nearly 26,600 people. From 2016 to 2022, while the City of Niagara Falls experienced population decline (-1.4%), these Corridor Neighborhoods saw slight population growth (+1.1%). However, the population in the Corridor Neighborhoods declined slightly (-0.9%) in the most recent one-year trend (2021-2022). But key population segments are growing in the city and the Corridor Neighborhoods.

More young adults are living in Niagara Falls. The latest estimate of young adults (age 25 to 34) in the Corridor Neighborhoods is up by 6% from the previous year (2021-2022). From 2016 to 2022, young adults grew by 8% in Corridor Neighborhoods, which outpaces the region, state and nation. A growing young adult population can accelerate community revitalization, attract investments and create jobs.

Diversity is a key driver of population trends in Niagara Falls. From 2016 to 2022, people of color grew by 10%, including a 2% increase in the most recent year (2021-2022). There are an estimated 1,130 foreign born residents in Corridor Neighborhoods, which is up by 22% from 2021 to 2022 after declining from 2016 to 2021. Meanwhile, the white population declined 3% in Corridor Neighborhoods from 2016 to 2022.

Despite some positive population trends, jobs declined by 4% since 2018 in the Corridor Neighborhoods, though this pace slowed in the past year (-0.1%). This is a sign that residents may be disconnected from local economic opportunities. Growing higher-paying jobs, promoting workforce development into career pathways, fostering entrepreneurship and small businesses can boost economic development.

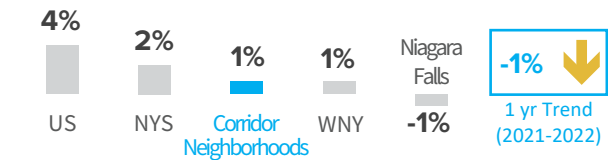
Rising vacancy rates highlight the need for strategic placemaking initiatives. Across the City, 26% of commercial spaces are vacant. In the Corridor Neighborhoods, the commercial vacancy rate rose to 31% in 2024—up by 2.7 percentage points from last year. Residential vacancy in Niagara Falls’ Corridor Neighborhoods also increased, pointing to growing opportunities for mixed-use renovation projects that could be supported by initiatives such as the Niagara Falls Small Business Property Improvement Program.

Niagara Falls is leveraging a number of strategic placemaking assets to combat these trends, create more vibrant urban areas, and attract residents and businesses. This includes the Niagara Falls City Market, the Niagara Arts & Cultural Center (NACC), and Oakwood Cemetery.

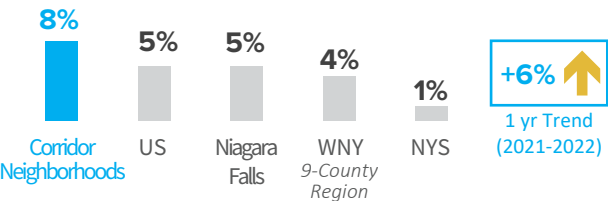
Source: American Community Survey

Population Growth

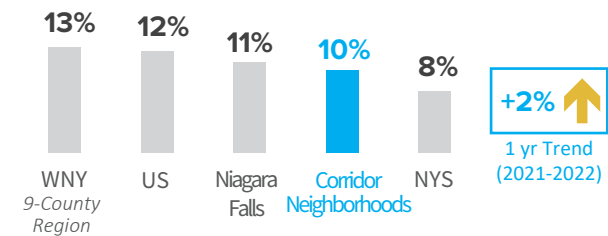
Percentage change in TOTAL population, 2016-2022



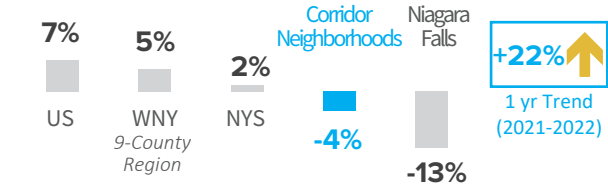
Percentage change in YOUNG ADULTS (25-34), 2016-2022



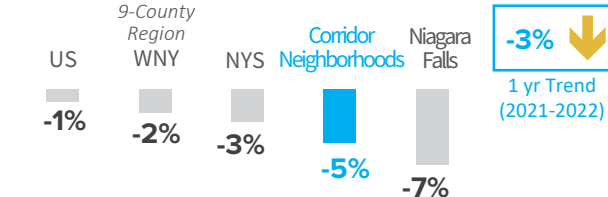
Percentage change in PEOPLE OF COLOR, 2016-2022



Percentage change in FOREIGN BORN, 2022

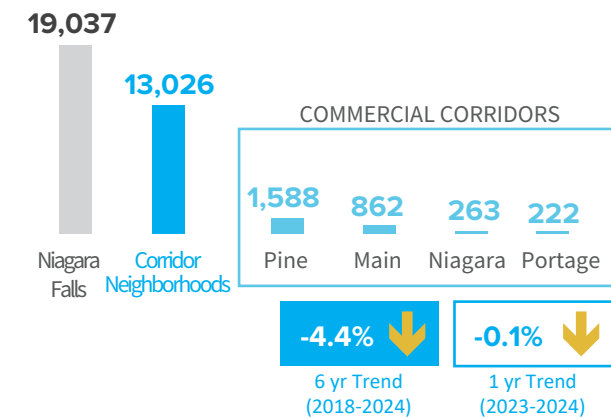


Percentage change in WHITE population, 2016-2022

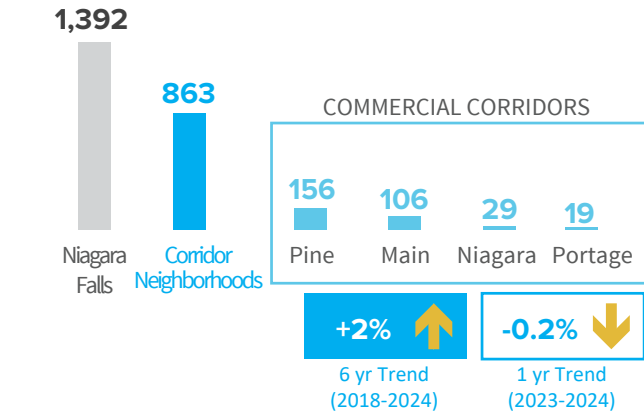


Business Growth

Employment at All Employer Locations, 2024



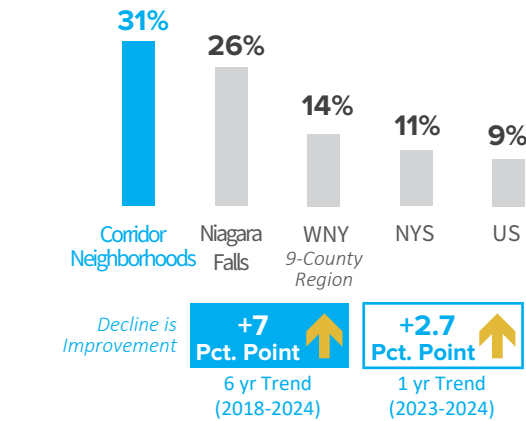
All Employer Locations, 2024



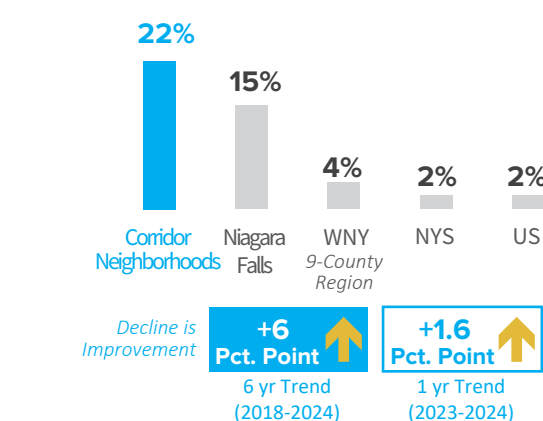
Source: Data Axle

Vacancies

Commercial Vacancy Rate, 2024



Residential Vacancy Rate, 2024



Source: USPS Vacancy Data

INDICATORS

SMALL BUSINESS

RRP is boosting business, creating new businesses and growing existing ones through capacity building resources focused on commercial corridors and small businesses.



Niagara Falls has a robust landscape for businesses with over 1,392 establishments that employ over 19,100 workers across the city. The average business has 14 employees. A very significant concentration of businesses can be found along investment corridors – downtown, and near the neighborhood corridors of Pine, Main, Niagara and Portage. 48 new businesses opened across the city since 2018, creating nearly 300 new jobs; 28 of these businesses are located in Corridor Neighborhoods.

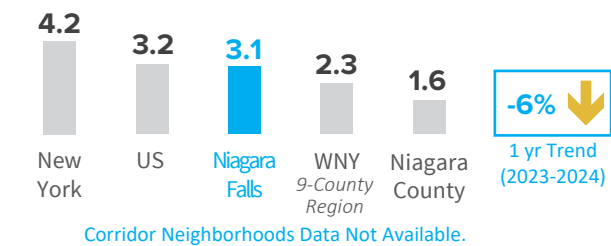
Most businesses in Niagara Falls are small businesses with fewer than 50 employees. Nearly 600 of these small businesses are located in Corridor Neighborhoods, with Pine Avenue and Main Street having the largest number. Microbusinesses employing fewer than five workers are a significant part of Niagara Falls’ economy. There are 669 microbusinesses in Niagara Falls, many situated in Corridor Neighborhoods. This includes 137 sole proprietors.

Although small businesses faced greater challenges during the pandemic and experienced a slower recovery, data indicates that new businesses, small businesses, and microbusinesses in Corridor Neighborhoods have generally outperformed the overall business sector between 2018 and 2024, and especially over the past year. New business activity in Corridor Neighborhoods surged by 180% over the past six years and by 8% in the last year alone. This growth significantly surpasses the overall increase in business establishments, which rose by only 2% over the past six years and declined slightly in the past year in Corridor Neighborhoods.

The growth of new businesses in Corridor Neighborhoods is supported by a higher self-employment rate compared to the city, region, and state. Six out of every 100 workers in Corridor Neighborhoods are self employed. By leveraging the entrepreneurial spirit of Niagara Falls and creating a more robust ecosystem for entrepreneurs and the self-employed, especially those in the food and tourism industries, RRP strategies can foster further business startups, job creation, and economic development.

Entrepreneurship

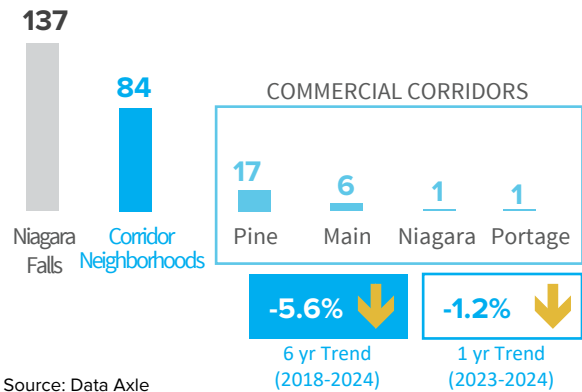
Entrepreneurs per 10,000 people, 2024



Source: Lightcast

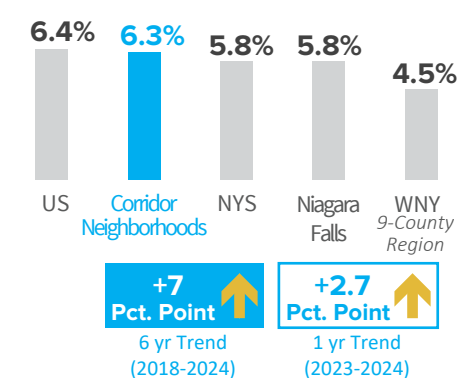
Sole Proprietorship

Sole Proprietors, 2024



Source: Data Axle

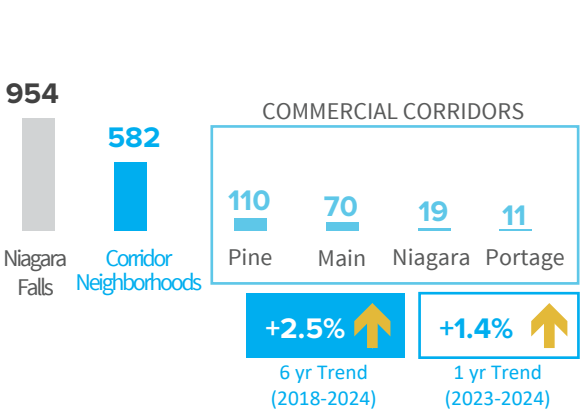
Self Employment as Percentage of Total Employed, 2024



Source: Lightcast

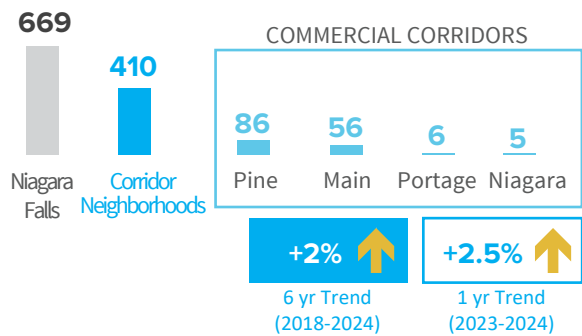
Small Business Growth

Small Businesses (Under 50 Employees), 2024

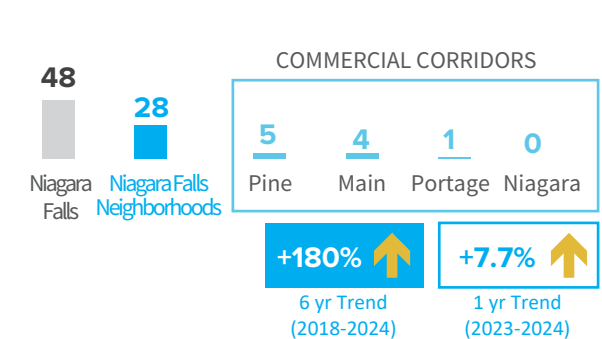


Microbusinesses (Under 5 Employees), 2024

Source: Data Axle



New Businesses*, 2024

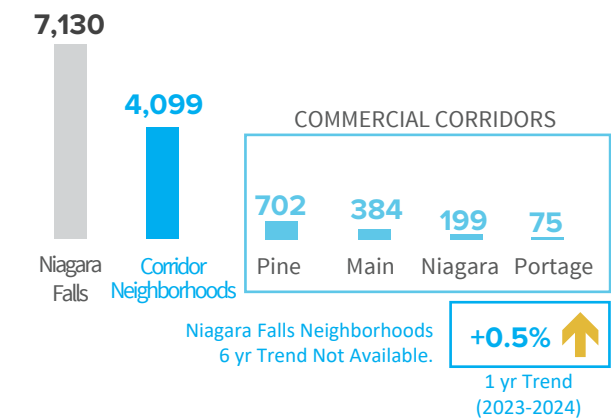


Source: Data Axle

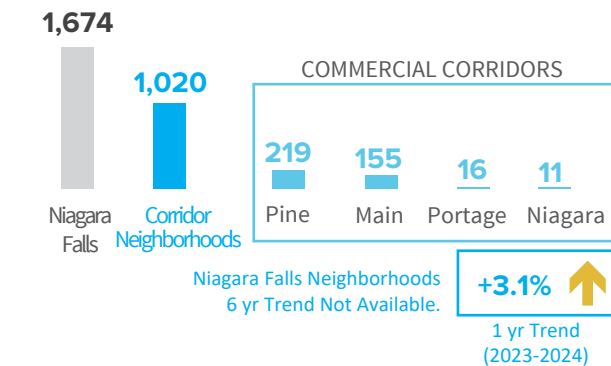
* New businesses are those that opened 2018 or after

**Employment numbers from historical 2018 data are not comparable to current data.

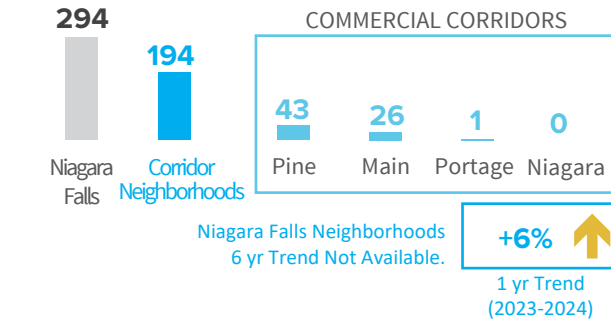
Employment at Small Businesses** (Under 50 Employees), 2024




Employment at Microbusinesses** (Under 5 Employees), 2024



Employment at New Businesses** (Up to 5 years), 2024





Rochester is set for a significant transformation with an \$80 million RRP investment that will boost business and create jobs, attract and retain talent, and enhance community anchors for residents and visitors.

RRP is a multi-year, \$80 million investment strategy aimed at revitalizing some of the most underserved neighborhoods in Rochester. The initiative is funding 14 projects that focus on commercial corridors and small business development, waterfront placemaking, workforce development, and intermediary capacity building.

The projects are strategically designed to address the specific needs of the community, including economic development, job creation, and community revitalization, while at the same time leveraging the city's rich history, strong anchors and entrepreneurial economy. By focusing on capital investments and new and enhanced programming, RRP investments seek to transform Rochester and create a more vibrant and equitable future for residents and businesses.



Rochester

INVESTMENTS

Rochester Investments

RRP investments in Rochester are revitalizing the city through a multi-faceted approach. Fourteen projects are underway, focusing on strengthening downtown commercial corridors, bolstering community anchors and small businesses, and empowering underserved residents for in-demand jobs.

Five construction projects are in progress, including three key components of ROC the Riverway. Collectively, 234,000 square feet of building space are being redeveloped.

While some projects, like those in Harper’s Corner and Greenwood, target specific neighborhoods, the workforce investments will have a citywide impact, benefiting all Rochesterians who need training and/or seek employment. RRP investments in Rochester leveraged \$15.2 million in additional funding between September 2023 and August 2024.

PROJECT IMPACTS
2024

\$15,184,498

additional funding leveraged

234,000

square feet of building space being redeveloped at the Aqueduct Park District, Rochester Downtown Career Center, and NextCorps

Source: RRP Local Program Administrators, 2024. Reflects progress from January through August 2024. See Data Sources and Notes.

- RRP Corridor Investments
- RRP Anchor Investments
- RRP Workforce Investments

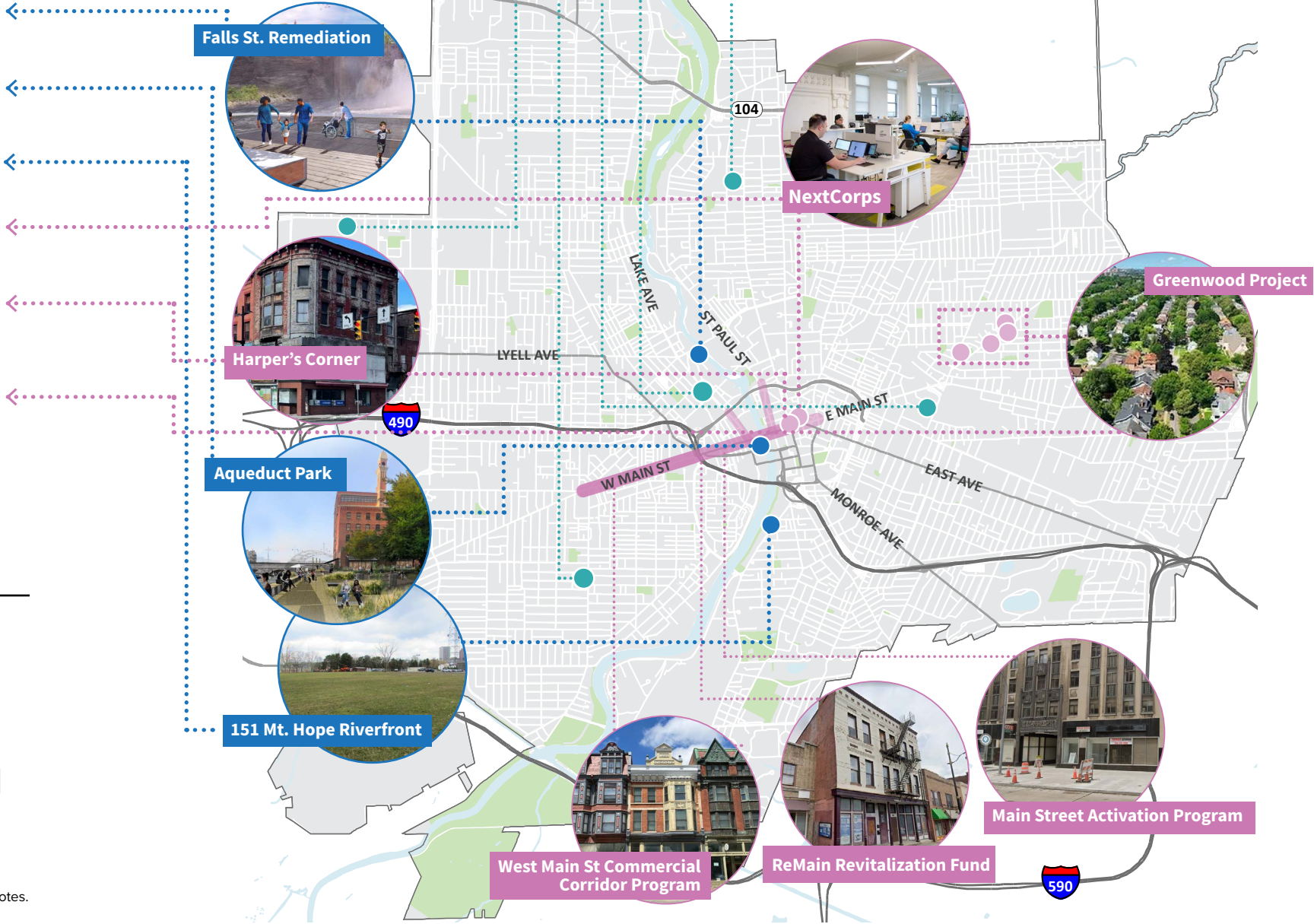
WORKFORCE INVESTMENT PROGRAMS

Training Rochester Adults in Construction Skills (TRACS)

Young Adult Manufacturing Training Employment Program, Inc. (YAMTEP)

Rochester Works: Downtown Career Center

Rochester Works: School-to-Work Navigator



INVESTMENTS

INVESTMENTS

Nextcorps, Inc.

Supporting high-growth, tech-oriented entrepreneurs while reducing long-standing inequities in the tech sector.

NextCorps currently operates out of 40,000 square feet on the 6th floor of the **Sibley building**, which it owns as a commercial condominium. In 2024, NextCorps signed an option to purchase the adjacent 27,000 square feet to expand and add additional startup companies and potential partners. RRP funds will be used for acquisition, full architectural design, and build out of Phase 1 of the expansion (approximately the first 10,000+ square feet of finished space). Architectural and engineering support was secured in 2024. The remainder of the “shelled out” space can then be built out as additional funds are obtained. Interviews are underway for a new Startup Community Manager position and two additional Entrepreneurs-in-Residence will be hired to increase existing programming and services, and build capacity to support the demand from local startup companies.

In addition, NextCorps will expand on an existing pilot program to fill the demand for skilled software developers. The **Embark No-Code Bootcamp and Startup Accelerator Program** will provide hands-on training to Rochester-area residents on popular no-code platforms, allowing them to quickly develop the skills needed to build careers as professional no-code developers and/or launch new software startups in the region. The Embark No-Code Bootcamp will be added to the existing Embark Startup Accelerator program funded through a grant from the Economic Development Administration which resulted in the creation of 10 new software startups. The initial cohort of 20 Embark participants graduated in August 2024.

The Greenwood Project

Creating a neighborhood “hub” that restores and revitalizes two neighborhoods while generating wealth through ownership, equity, and critical business support.

Connected Communities will redevelop five properties in the Beechwood and EMMA neighborhoods (two in the 300-block of Webster Avenue and three in the 200-300 block of North Goodman) into neighborhood hub sites that collectively offer a network of youth and older adult services, workforce and economic development classes, health and wellness services, co-working space for neighborhood nonprofits, and support to residents seeking to start or grow their own businesses in collaboration with economic development partners. Several small businesses will occupy renovated commercial spaces. A community benefits agreement will be established to ensure the long-term use of these spaces solely for the local community and neighborhood. This entrepreneurial hub is more than a standalone entity implementing a program or service—meeting only some needs of a multifaceted issue. Instead, it restores and revitalizes two neighborhoods that have seen decades of disinvestment and layers it with supports for small business growth. Connected Communities identified a general contractor and is working with an A&E firm to create architectural designs and programming for the spaces. Beechwood HUB is undergoing renovations to serve as a multi-generational programming site. Environmental testing and abatement were completed for **The Connect Lab** (360 Webster Avenue).

Main Street Revitalization

Revitalizing an important downtown gateway and commercial corridor to support business growth.

Construction began on **Harper’s Corner** in 2024. Home Leasing LLC will transform four historic commercial buildings into a mixed-use community with ground-floor commercial space and three floors of residential space above. The project will reimagine and revitalize this vital corner of East Main St. and North Clinton Ave., less than two blocks from the Genesee River and one of the highest-profile intersections in Downtown Rochester.

Administered by the City of Rochester, the **ReMain Revitalization Fund** will offer flexible gap financing to property owners and developers seeking to make major investments in mixed-use redevelopment projects along portions of West Main St. and East Main St. By offering gap financing, the ReMain Revitalization Fund will incentivize redevelopment of these challenging historic buildings important to the urban fabric of the community. The City will work with the funding agency to finalize an agreed-upon program structure. Once approved, the City will publish a Notice of Funding Availability on its website and promote the program to property owners and developers along Main Street.

Administered in partnership with the City of Rochester and Rochester Downtown Development Corporation (RDDC), **Main Street Activation Program** will subsidize rents and/or buildout costs for new, startup, and/or pop-up retailers, maker spaces, and food/drink establishments on portions of West Main St., East Main St., State St. and St Paul St. This is designed to generate vitality through occupied storefronts, create opportunities for entrepreneurs to launch new businesses, and increase safety through street-level activity.

The goal of the **West Main Street Commercial Corridor Program** is to strengthen and build capacity for a West Main Street based LPA team, develop a West Main Street district marketing and governance plan and design guidelines and invest in commercial and mixed-use properties in the West Main corridor. The program will provide funds for matching grants to small business and property owners on West Main Street.

Additional infrastructure and streetscape projects will enhance the building investments. Partners convened local stakeholder meetings to further develop the program—ensuring neighborhood-level engagement and ownership. Partners developed draft program policy and guidelines and an RFP to identify an LPA team that will develop design standards, complete a market study, develop a governance structure and local review committee, perform program outreach and marketing, and administer all elements of the program with assistance from A&E and other technical consultants.

INVESTMENTS

INVESTMENTS

ROC The Riverway

Redeveloping anchors along the Genesee River to connect people, attract new businesses, and promote long-term economic growth.

The community-driven ROC the Riverway Vision Plan recommends developing High Falls as a world-class recreation and outdoor destination that celebrates Rochester’s unique blend of dramatic natural features and rich history. The **Falls Street Remediation** project will remediate two contaminated parcels at 52 and 96 Falls Street, which are critical to the development and ultimate success of the planned New York State Park at High Falls in the heart of Rochester. The two parcels cover 3.5 acres and represent a significant portion of the northwestern riverfront within the footprint of the future park. To develop these properties safely, remedial efforts will include asbestos abatement, building demolition, and further investigation of the site. To date Phase I Environmental Site Assessment was completed and the City worked with an A&E consultant to develop cost estimates for remediation.

The **151 Mt. Hope Riverfront** project helps fully remediate a key riverfront site in Rochester’s South Wedge neighborhood for a combination of public access and shovel-ready redevelopment. Referred to as “Link to the River” in the ROC the Riverway Vision Plan, this site is situated between Genesee Gateway Park—undergoing a full renovation into a premier riverfront public space including a canoe and kayak launch, and Charter/Spectrum’s offices. It is also near Roc City Skatepark which opened in 2020 and has quickly become one of downtown’s most vibrant public spaces. Once fully remediated and shovel-ready, 151 Mt. Hope Riverfront will attract infill mixed-use development bringing jobs, services and housing to the Genesee riverfront. Phase 1 and 2 Environmental Site Assessments and Opinion of Probable Cost for site preparation to address environmental needs were completed. A geotechnical report was also prepared.

A redevelopment project of A50EB, LLC, **Aqueduct Park District** is located along a key portion of the Roc the Riverway Promenade, and fronts the Main Street commercial corridor. The overall project already secured \$86M in new investment, including \$41M by property owners and \$45M by incoming tenant Constellation Brands, a Rochester-based Fortune-500 company relocating its global headquarters to the iconic downtown site. The redevelopment of Aqueduct Park and the surrounding streetscape offers

a unique opportunity to create a public space with programming for downtown residents and employees of Constellation Brands. For Aqueduct Park District Phase 1 (for occupancy by Constellation Brands), design and construction is complete. This includes historic restoration of core and shell, and tenant improvements to six buildings totaling approximately 182,000 square feet. The Grand opening was celebrated in June 2024, and occupancy has been accelerating. RRP funding will renovate and reactivate privately-owned (but public use) Aqueduct Park District Phase 2, including landscaping, walkways, restoration and public art to interface with the City’s promenade; updates to Graves Street to match the new district standards; park activation at the Montgomery and Race Buildings; Aqueduct Building River Façade and Historic Sluice Gate Restoration to enhance the narrative of the riverfront promenade; and Aqueduct Building Broad Street Façade Improvements, required as a result of Broad Street’s removal. Park scoping, programming, and conceptual design are underway. A50EB, LLC retained architects and landscape architects for design services.

YAMTEP and TRACS

Leveraging industry partnerships to provide the unemployed and under-skilled with training, employment readiness, and job placement and retention.

Young Adult Manufacturing Training Employment Program, Inc. (YAMTEP) leverages industry partnerships to provide the chronically unemployed and under-skilled with training, employment readiness, and job placement/retention to fill entry-level positions with career pathways in manufacturing. The adult program is a 3-week curriculum specializing in job readiness, essential skills, CNC training, forklift certification and manufacturing fundamentals. The high school program has two sessions annually, which include a 12-week spring curriculum and a 3-week summer curriculum for seniors seeking guidance in post-graduate opportunities such as workforce entry, higher education or military pathways. Transportation, a bottleneck for equal access to opportunities, is provided at a reduced fee or free of cost. To date, the project is fully operational but with limited capacity to increase services. RRP funds will provide critical administrative personnel, instructors, training materials, transportation expenses, training space, marketing/outreach expenses, and high school student stipends to increase capacity and the number of program participants.

Established in partnership with Rochester Careers in Construction Inc., **Training Rochester Adults in Construction Skills (TRACS)** is a new pre-apprenticeship program designed to provide interested individuals the basis for a union construction career. In partnership with the North American Building Trades Union (NABTU) and the Urban League, the 8-week program teaches the Trades Futures Multi-Craft Core Curriculum (MC3) and provides participants with certifications required to be preferred candidates of union contractors.

Rochester Works

Making the workforce system more efficient and manageable for prospective workers and employers, and increasing program participants’ ability to navigate a career pathway.

The capital project to create a **Rochester Downtown Career Center** would rehabilitate 25,000 square feet of legacy Eastman Kodak office space, located in the same building that has been transformed into Monroe Community College’s (MCC) downtown campus. RochesterWorks will partner with MCC and Monroe County (owner of the building) to demolish the existing interior space, provide asbestos abatement, install new utilities and windows, and build out the space into a welcoming career center. To date, RochesterWorks built a relationship with MCC and engaged additional partners for co-location opportunities. They established scope of work for demolition, asbestos remediation, and installation of new utilities.

The **School-to-Work Navigator** program will support a two-year pilot, developed jointly by **Rochester City School District (RCSD)** and partners, to address a gap in career readiness in city high schools. The program will add four school-to-work navigators to serve as access points for students seeking guidance on career pathways; provide career exploration opportunities through employer visits and job shadowing; coordinate part-time work opportunities (including youth apprenticeship programs); coordinate with counselors to identify students at risk of dropping out to provide exposure to career opportunities; and track student success. RochesterWorks and the Rochester Education Foundation recently formed a coalition of stakeholders interested in increasing the overall career readiness among RCSD focused on gaps in the existing system, and in making the workforce system function in a more synchronized and effective manner in service of Rochester youth. The infrastructure for School-to-Work Navigator is largely in place as RochesterWorks envisions utilizing the organizations that have experience in providing career readiness in Rochester schools. This program would be aligned with the Youth Works model developed by RochesterWorks several years ago that effectively mapped out the necessary system inputs to ensure that Rochester youth are career ready.

INVESTMENTS

INDICATORS

Rochester Corridors

Neighborhood Indicators

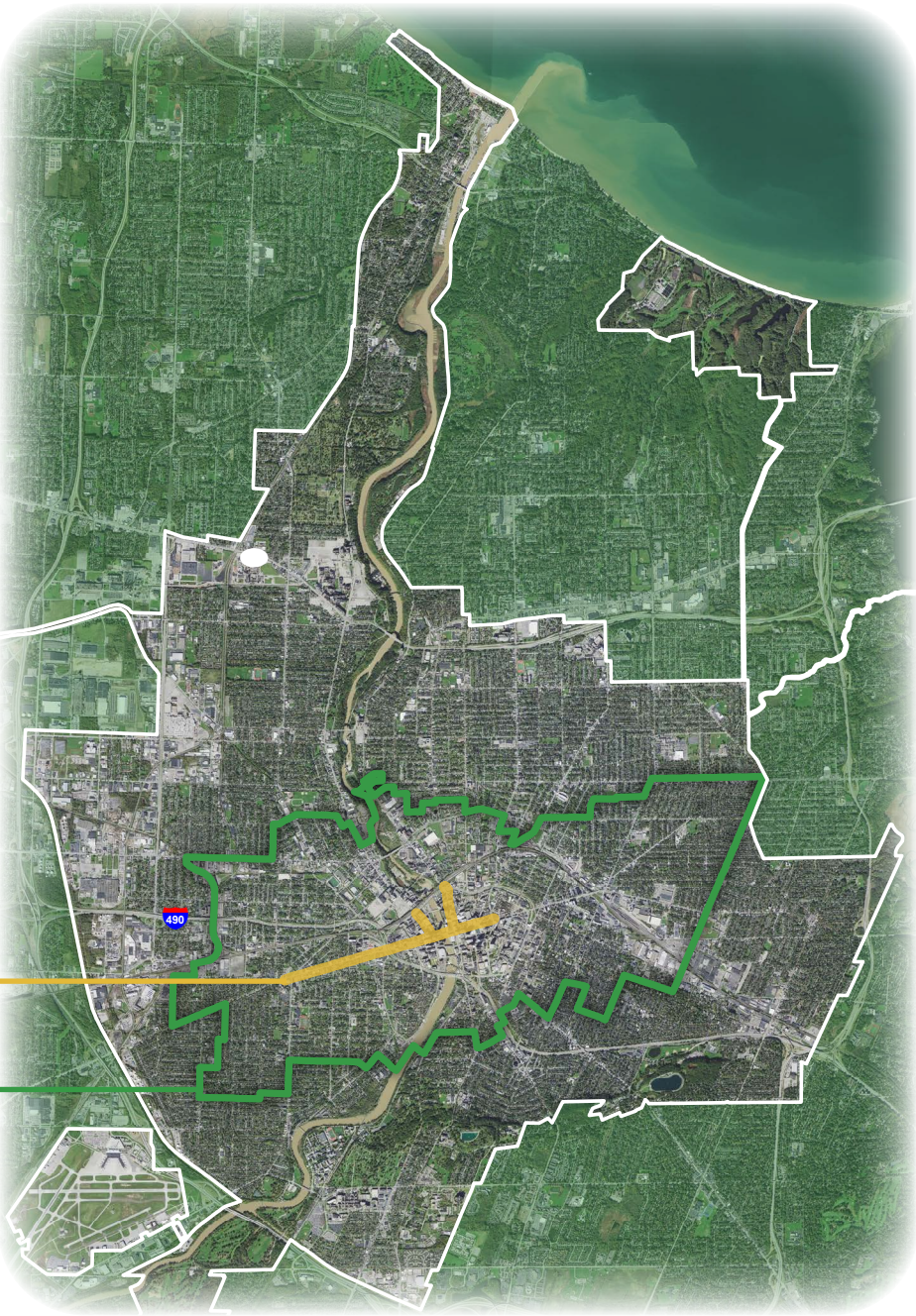
Some indicators for Rochester point to a possible resurgence in the underserved Corridor area, with an increasing number of new businesses and a strengthening workforce. Corridor Neighborhoods experienced an increase in new businesses and job creation over the past 12 months and six years. These changes improved life for residents in Rochester Corridors. The indicators show an increase in the percentage of higher-paying jobs held by residents, rising median incomes, increased labor force participation, and improved economic security. These indicators position Rochester well for additional growth and impact.

At the same time, Rochester Corridor Neighborhoods face challenges that could hinder growth if not addressed. These include a declining population and population diversity. This has likely contributed to rising vacancy rates, both over the past year and last six years. Strategies focused on revitalizing neighborhoods and attracting and retaining diverse talent and leveraging positive indicators of innovation will help address challenges and support sustained economic growth.

Rochester Corridors

Rochester Corridor Neighborhoods

NOTE: Rochester Corridor geographies were updated in 2024. Indicators for Rochester Corridors are not comparable to numbers presented in the baseline report from 2023.



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

		MOST RECENT 6-YEAR TREND	MOST RECENT 1-YEAR TREND	MOST RECENT DATA YEAR
WORKFORCE	Access to Higher-Paying Jobs	Number of higher-paying jobs	↑	2021
		% of higher-paying jobs held by residents	↑	2021
	Economic Security	% with incomes above 200% the federal poverty level	↑	2022
		Median Household Income	↑	2022
	Educational Attainment	% of adults ages 25-64 with some education beyond HS	↑	2022
		% of adults ages 25-64 with some education beyond HS	↓	2022
PLACEMAKING	Labor Force Participation	% of ALL adults ages 16-64 who are in the labor force	↑	2022
		% of PEOPLE OF COLOR ages 16-64 who are in the labor force	↑	2022
	Population Growth	Total Population	↓	2022
		Young Adults (25-34)	↑	2022
		People of Color	↓	2022
		Foreign Born	↑	2022
		White	↑	2022
SMALL BUSINESS	Business Growth	Employment	↑	2024
		Employers	↓	2024
	Vacancy	Commercial Vacancy Rate	↑	2024
		Residential Vacancy Rate	↑	2024
	Entrepreneurs	Entrepreneurs per 10,000 people*	n/a	2024
	Sole Proprietors	Sole Proprietors	↓	2024
		Self Employment as % of Total Employed	↑	2024
	Small Business Growth	Small Businesses	↓	2024
		Employment at Small Businesses	n/a	2024
		Microbusiness	↓	2024
		Employment at Microbusiness	n/a	2024
		New Businesses (Up to 5 years old)	↑	2024
		Employment at New Businesses	n/a	2024

INDICATORS

INDICATORS

WORKFORCE

Rochester’s workforce projects can play a crucial role in expanding the pipeline of skilled workers and addressing the needs of residents for training and higher-paying work.



Rochester has nearly 82,200 well-paying jobs offering annual salaries that exceed \$40,000. Nearly half of these higher-paying positions (35,760 or 44% of the total), are concentrated in Corridor Neighborhoods. Since 2015, the number of good-paying jobs in Corridor neighborhoods grew by 9%. Yet residents in Corridor Neighborhoods fill just 5% of higher paying jobs, a figure that increased by less than 1 percentage point over six years from 2015 to 2021. This gap underscores the pressing need for targeted workforce development programs that prepare residents for the growing number of jobs that exist in their own neighborhood.

Access to higher-paying jobs is a catalyst for economic mobility, enabling home ownership, the purchase of a vehicle for commuting to work and small business development. This in turn reduces reliance on public assistance programs. The majority of residents in Corridor Neighborhoods struggle with economic security, living on an income that is under 200% of the federal poverty level. While recent and longer-term trends since 2015 indicate progress, a substantial 25 percentage point gap exists between Rochester Corridor Neighborhoods and the region where 70% of households are economically secure.

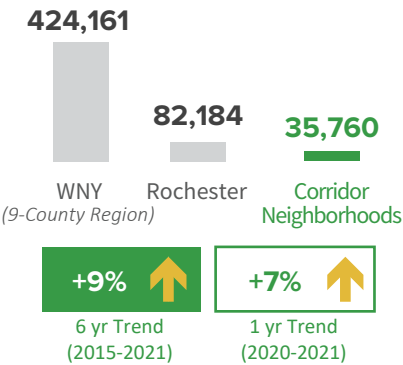
The median income for households in Corridor Neighborhoods is \$39,240, or about 60% of the regional median. Although median incomes in Corridor Neighborhoods increased a notable 53% between 2016 and 2022, limited educational attainment and other challenges keep too many adults in lower-paying jobs, or hinder them from entering the workforce at all.

Postsecondary training and education are often critical pathways into higher-paying careers. In Corridor Neighborhoods, 57% of adults have any training beyond high school, lagging behind the regional average of 67%. While there were improvements since 2016, educational attainment declined slightly in Corridor Neighborhoods between 2021 and 2022. Fortunately, Rochester has several colleges and dozens of workforce trainers who are working to expand employment opportunities for residents and meet the needs of hiring employers. Some are specifically focused on Corridor Neighborhoods like YAMTEP and TRACS.

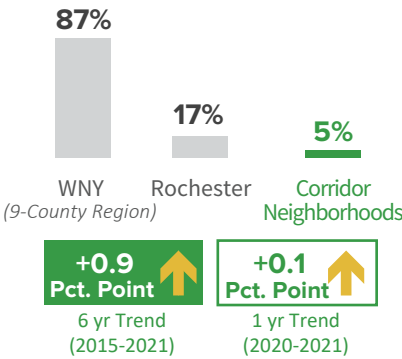
As additional residents are trained, labor force participation rates should continue to increase. Between 2016 and 2022, the percentage of residents in Corridor Neighborhoods who were working or seeking a job increased. While the labor force participation rate in Corridor Neighborhoods is comparable to the city as a whole, it lags behind the region. The disparity is more pronounced for people of color, emphasizing the ongoing importance of workforce development strategies.

Access to Higher-Paying Jobs

Number of higher-paying jobs (\$40,000 per year or more), 2021



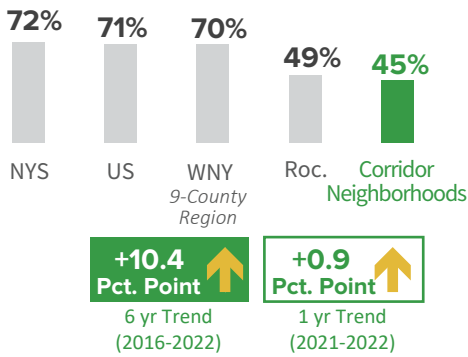
Percentage of higher-paying jobs in the geography held by residents, 2021



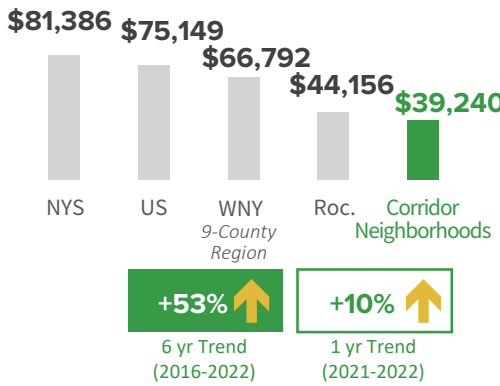
Source: OnTheMap

Economic Security

Percentage of households with income above 200% of the federal poverty level, 2022



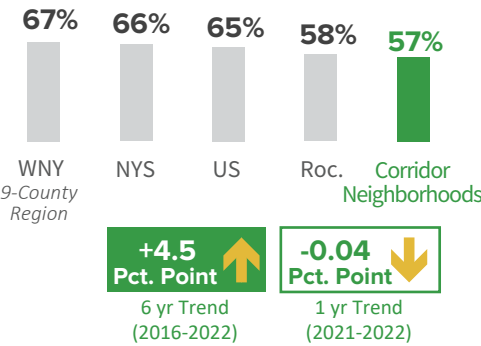
Median Household Income, 2022



Source: American Community Survey

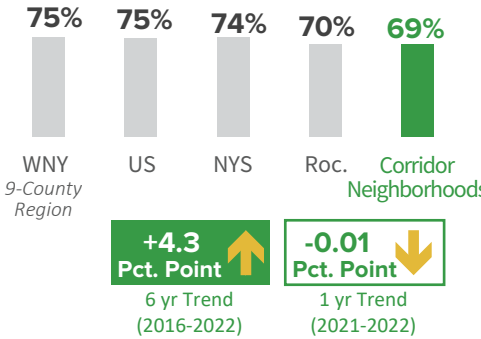
Educational Attainment

Percentage of adults ages 25-64 with some education or training beyond high school, 2022

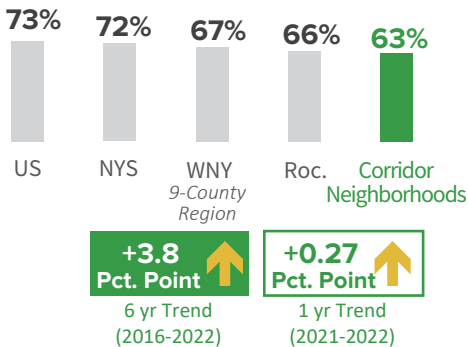


Labor Force Participation

Percentage of ALL adults ages 16-64 who are in the labor force, 2022



Percentage of PEOPLE OF COLOR ages 16-64 who are in the labor force, 2022



INDICATORS

INDICATORS

PLACEMAKING

Rochester’s placemaking projects will revitalize West Main Street and nearby corridors by investing in key anchors and restoring historic neighborhoods in ways that will attract and retain more residents, visitors and businesses.



Significant population growth could take place in Rochester over the next decade with RRP investments that will revitalize Main Street, redevelop anchors along the Genesee River, uplift underserved neighborhoods, fill vacant spaces, and promote long-term economic prosperity for residents and businesses. While some indicators point to this future growth, most highlight the need for these vital investments.

Population growth can invigorate communities, adding to diversity and vibrancy, attracting visitors, businesses, workers, and boosting economic growth. While the region, state and nation experienced small but notable population growth over the past six years, population growth in Rochester was stagnant and it was declining in Corridor Neighborhoods, including a recent 1% drop between 2021 and 2022.

Young adults (ages 25-34), people of color, and foreign-born residents fueled population growth across the region over the past six years. While the City of Rochester and Corridor Neighborhoods saw a 5% increase in the population of young adults over the past 6 years, the one-year trend shows a concerning 2% decline.

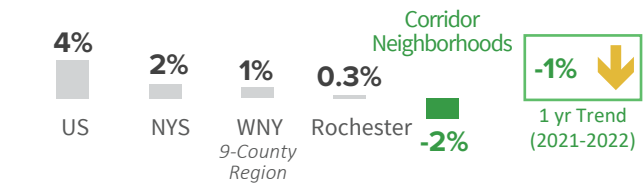
In addition, Corridor Neighborhoods have not attracted and retained foreign-born residents and people of color to the extent this is happening across the region, state, and nation. For instance, while the number of individuals of color grew by double digits across WNY over the past six years, this demographic declined 5% in Corridor Neighborhoods. Strategies that foster a welcoming community for the region’s increasingly diverse population could help boost population and additional economic growth in Rochester.

Corridor Neighborhoods in Rochester are well poised for this future business growth, with employment increasing 5.6% between 2018 and 2024, and reaching a total of 74,615 jobs in 2024. However, high vacancy rates persist. One out of five commercial locations and one out of 10 residential units are vacant in Corridor Neighborhoods. This underscores the ongoing need for placemaking strategies, including renovations, reuse, and infill development, all of which will help to attract new businesses and residents, create jobs, enhance property values, and improve the livability of the community.

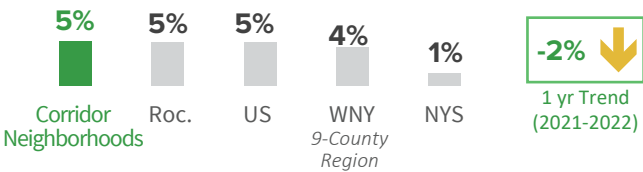
Source: American Community Survey

Population Growth

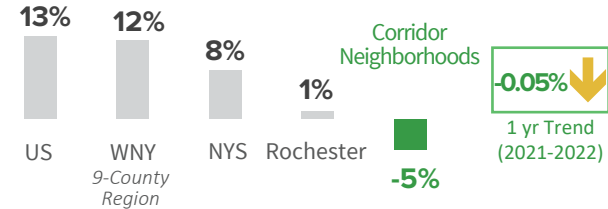
Percentage change in TOTAL population, 2016-2022



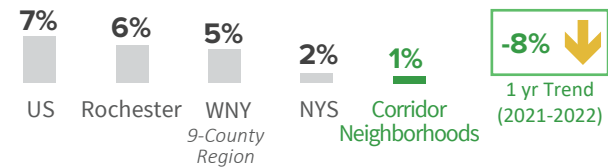
Percentage change in YOUNG ADULTS (25-34), 2016-2022



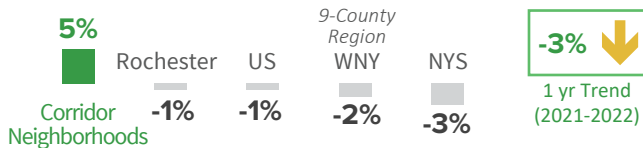
Percentage change in PEOPLE OF COLOR, 2016-2022



Percentage change in FOREIGN BORN, 2016-2022

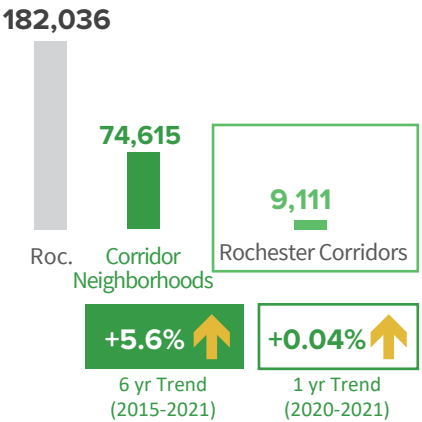


Percentage change in WHITE population, 2016-2022

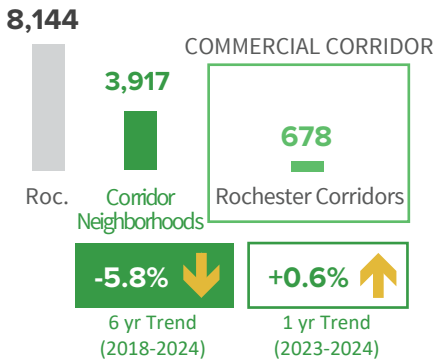


Business Growth

Employment at All Employer Locations, 2024



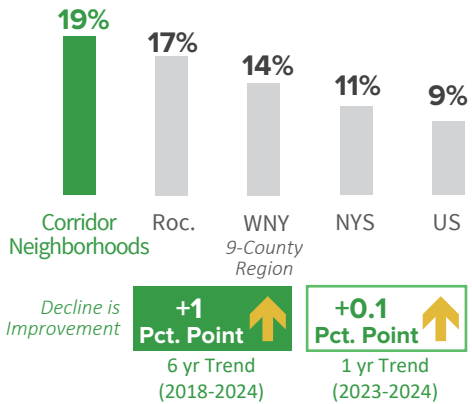
All Employer Locations, 2024



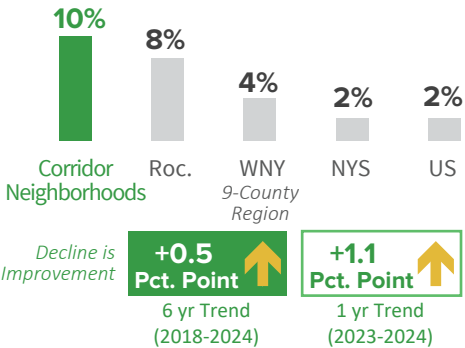
Source: Data Axle

Vacancies

Commercial Vacancy Rate, 2024



Residential Vacancy Rate, 2024



Source: USPS Vacancy Data

INDICATORS

INDICATORS

SMALL BUSINESS

Rochester’s small business projects will attract new businesses and jobs, support entrepreneurs, and equip individuals with the skills they need for work and entrepreneurship.



Rochester has a robust economy for business, with nearly 8,100 establishments that provide employment to more than 182,000 individuals. Over 3,900 businesses are located in Corridor Neighborhoods with a significant concentration of 678 establishments along commercial corridors that include West Main Street.

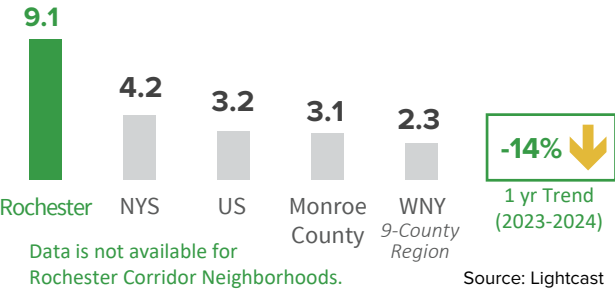
Small businesses are the backbone of Rochester’s economy. They comprise about 70% of all businesses citywide and in Corridor Neighborhoods. The typical small firm has eight workers. Yet despite their significance to Rochester’s economy, small businesses faced challenges over the past year, especially businesses in Corridor Neighborhoods. The number of small businesses, microbusinesses and sole proprietors declined between 2018 and 2024. Many of these businesses were disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic as they struggled to withstand shutdowns, social distancing guidelines and economic hardship. While recent one-year trends show a more positive outlook, with a modest growth rate that exceeds that for all businesses in Corridor Neighborhoods, the lingering effect of the pandemic and other factors creates a pressing need for strategies focused on small business growth.

Despite the challenges faced by small business over the last six years, a surge in new businesses activity is beginning to revitalize Corridor Neighborhoods. The number of new businesses increased a notable 121% over the past six years and 11% over the past year alone. These 135 new businesses in Corridor Neighborhoods created more than 770 new jobs for residents.

Rochester’s strong history of innovation and its currently high rate of entrepreneurship are key strengths that can be leveraged by RRP strategies to expand the pipeline of new businesses and foster their growth. With nine entrepreneurs per 10,000 people, the rate of entrepreneurship in Rochester is almost four times the regional average of 2.3 per 10,000. The city has a strong network of organizations dedicated to supporting entrepreneurship, including three colleges, and a number of business support organizations which are working to coordinate and strengthen services for new and small businesses.

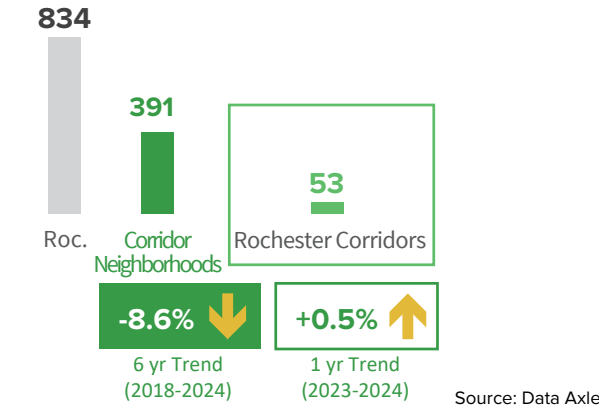
Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurs per 10,000 people, 2024

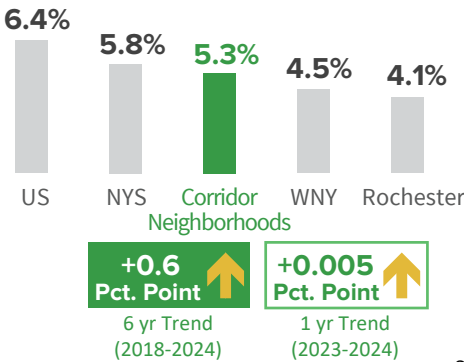


Sole Proprietorship

Sole Proprietors, 2024

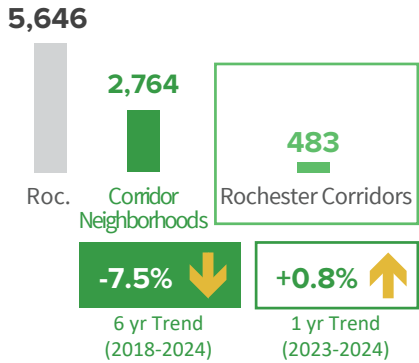


Self Employment as Percentage of Total Employed, 2024

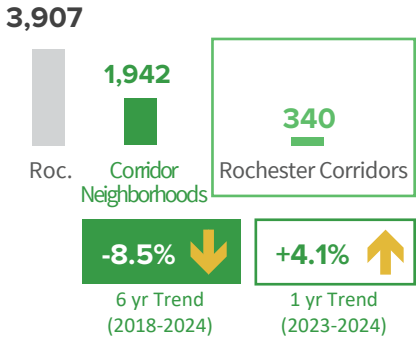


Small Business Growth

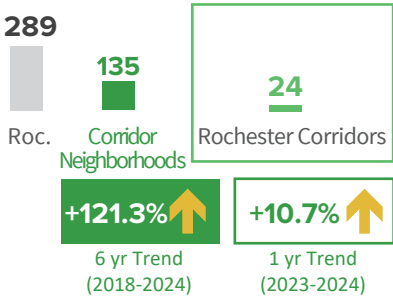
Small Businesses (Under 50 Employees), 2024



Microbusinesses (Under 5 Employees), 2024

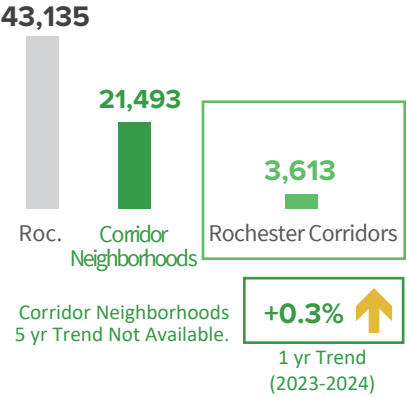


New Businesses*, 2024

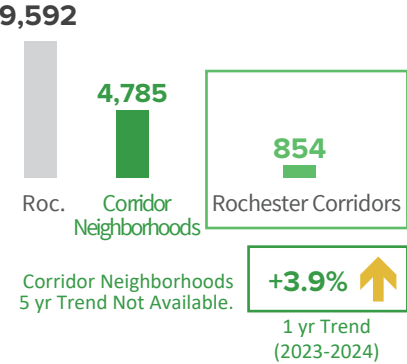


Source: Data Axle
* New businesses are those that opened 2018 or after
**Employment numbers from historical 2018 data are not comparable to current data.

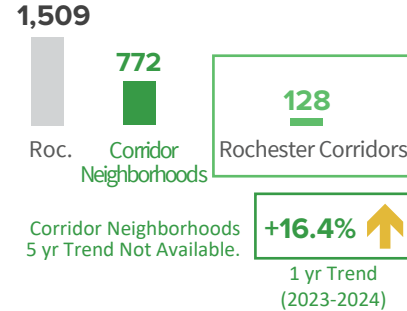
Employment at Small Businesses** (Under 50 Employees), 2024



Employment at Microbusinesses** (Under 5 Employees), 2024



Employment at New Businesses** (Up to 5 years), 2024



Lessons Learned

Trusted partnership is critical for successful implementation.

It takes time to develop relationships where feedback can be reflective and honest. We continue to build trust with our partners so that when we are assessing programs and progress, evaluation can be more productive and changes can be more meaningful.

Capacity building needs to evolve and grow.

The scale of capital projects and the level of program implementation is growing and becoming more complex. This involves an increase in monitoring, managing and resourcing to help partners build the skill sets to bring their projects to the next level of fruition.

Major capital projects on site will impact community engagement and revenue generation.

Construction impacts an organization's programming. During construction, we need to plan for ways to keep the community engaged, find programming that can be done under the constraints of construction, and include design elements that maximize community engagement opportunities in the future. We must also plan for the impact of construction on revenue generation for the organizations located at key sites.

There is a complexity in messaging that can sometimes pose a challenge.

We want to lift up the voices of the individual on-the-ground implementers; but we also want to intentionally communicate the importance and collective impacts of a collaborative, large-scale approach. There is a delicate balance between communicating the accomplishments of the implementers, and preserving the RRP holistic approach to economic development.

Connecting the dots maximizes impact.

Connecting the dots between programs, approaches, and partner organizations increases the impact of the collaborative model. Across nonprofit partners and across the three geographies, we are finding new ways of working together that maximize efficiencies, reduce redundancies, and help us learn and grow together as a region. Looking ahead, we need to continue to connect the dots and build on the momentum we started in years one and two for even greater impact.



Data Sources and Notes

NOTE: Corridor neighborhoods used to measure indicators are defined by census tracts:

East Side of Buffalo: Includes all census tracts in the City that lie east of Main Street and north of the Buffalo River.

Rochester Corridor Neighborhoods: Tracts within half mile of the Rochester Investment Corridors: West Main St., East Main St. from Exchange Blvd to N. Chestnut St., and State St. and St Paul St. from Main St. to the Inner Loop. **NOTE: Rochester Corridor geographies were updated in 2024. Indicators for Rochester Corridors are not comparable to numbers presented in the baseline report from 2023.*

Niagara Falls Corridor Neighborhoods: Tracts within a half mile of the four corridors: Pine Avenue, Portage Road, Main Street, and Niagara Street.

The indicators and the geographic definitions of corridor neighborhoods may change in future RRP reports due to changes in data availability and RRP programs.

Construction Progress (pages 14, 32, 46)

Visitors, funding leveraged, organizations/individuals engaged: Data was self-reported from local program administrators of RRP programs through a survey completed in July-September 2024. The reporting period was September 2023 through August 2024 unless otherwise noted. Rochester project impacts reflect progress from January to August 2024.

Workforce Indicators (pages 24-25, 38-39, 54-55)

Access to higher-paying jobs: US Census, Longitudinal Employment-Household Dynamics (LEHD), Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (LODES), OnTheMap application, 2015, 2020 and 2021.

Economic security, Educational attainment, Labor force participation, and Median household income: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2016, 2021 and 2022.

Placemaking Indicators (pages 26-27, 40-41, 56-57)

Population growth: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2016, 2021 and 2022.

Business growth: DataAxle, ReferenceUSA Business Database, October 2024.

Vacancy Rates: US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Aggregated US Postal Service (USPS) Administrative Data on Address Vacancies, March 2024.

Small Business Indicators (pages 28-29, 42-43, 58-59)

Sole Proprietorship: DataAxle, ReferenceUSA Business Database, October 2024. Sole proprietors are business establishments with one employee, excluding physicians, lawyers, and social workers who are listed individually but are affiliated with larger firms.

Entrepreneurship: Lightcast, Profile Analytics, October 2024. Based on self-identified entrepreneurs in online LinkedIn worker profiles. Includes any individual who identifies their job title as an entrepreneur or innovation professional. This information is not available by census tract; the smallest geography available is a municipality. **NOTE: In 2024, Lightcast updated its methods to estimate self-employment totals. As a result, the percentage self-employed indicator in 2024 is not comparable to numbers presented in the 2023 baseline report.*

Small Business Growth: DataAxle, ReferenceUSA Business Database, October 2024. Small businesses are business locations with under 50 employees. Microbusinesses have under 5 employees. New businesses are locations that were started 2018 or later.

Thanks to our generous funders

The Regional Revitalization Partnership would not be possible without the very generous support of these funders. Their grantmaking enabled us to develop community-driven collaborative strategies and projects that address pressing regional challenges and opportunities in unprecedented ways. We value their time, resources and commitment to this important initiative. Thank you for helping to build a brighter future for our region!

- Empire State Development (ESD)
- ESL
- Evans Bank
- Max and Marian Farash Charitable Foundation
- Five Star Bank
- John R. Oishei Foundation
- KeyBank/First Niagara Foundation
- William & Sheila Konar Foundation
- M&T Bank
- Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation
- City of Buffalo
- City of Niagara Falls
- City of Rochester

