

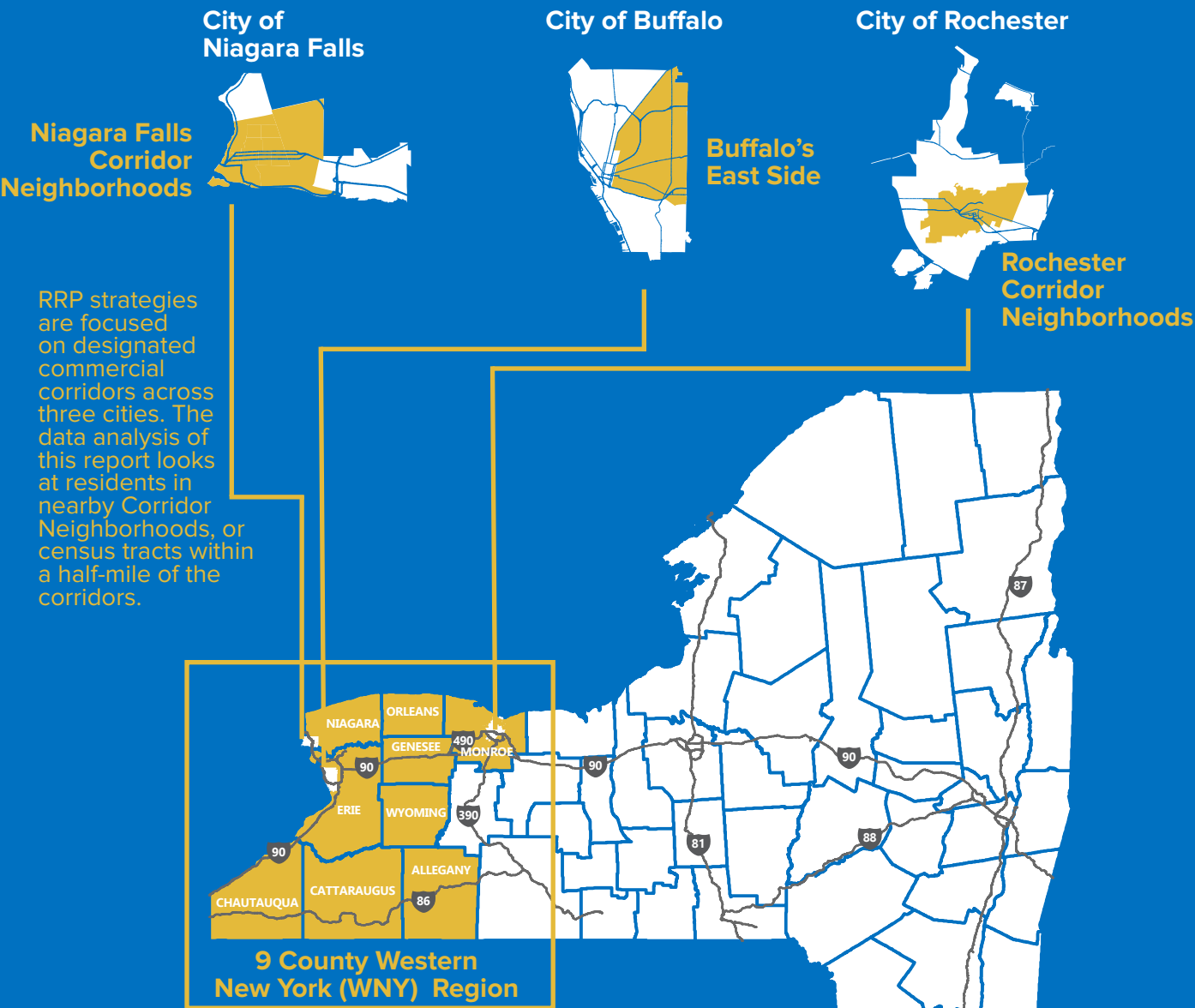
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# Regional Revitalization Partnership

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2025 ANNUAL REPORT

December 2025



# Regional Revitalization Partnership

## 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

OVERVIEW .....	4
Tracking Progress Over Time .....	9
2025 Big Picture Activities .....	10
Key Themes Across Investment Communities and Indicators .....	11
RRP COMMUNITIES .....	
Buffalo's East Side .....	12
2025 Project Milestones .....	14
Indicators .....	22
Niagara Falls .....	30
2025 Project Milestones .....	32
Indicators .....	36
Rochester .....	44
2025 Project Milestones .....	46
Indicators .....	52
LESSONS LEARNED.....	60
DATA SOURCES AND NOTES.....	62
THANKS TO OUR GENEROUS FUNDERS .....	63

**RECOMMENDED CITATION:** University at Buffalo Regional Institute, State University of New York at Buffalo, School of Architecture and Planning and Center for Regional Strategies. 2025. "Regional Revitalization Partnership: 2025 Annual Report."

## MAXIMIZING IMPACT: CO-INVESTING IN COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING

The **Regional Revitalization Partnership (RRP)** takes a public-private approach that will maximize impact and leverage additional investment for Buffalo's East Side and the urban cores of Rochester and Niagara Falls. This holistic economic development strategy can demonstrate how New York State's (NYS) partnership with cities, as well as private/philanthropic sectors, can drive catalytic initiatives that help communities and lay the foundation for economic growth. This strategy has the potential to become an unprecedented and innovative national model for community and economic revitalization.

# Planning and Funding Revitalization Together: A Cohesive Strategy

## Co-Investing in Regional Community Wealth Building

### ABOUT THE REGIONAL REVITALIZATION PARTNERSHIP

The Regional Revitalization Partnership is a \$300 million comprehensive economic development strategy and public-private partnership that maximizes impact and leverages additional investment for Buffalo’s East Side, Niagara Falls and Rochester. This community-driven, collaborative strategy takes a holistic approach to economic development and is designed to build community wealth through multiple paths. The RRP was developed in collaboration with New York State Governor Kathy Hochul and Empire State Development (ESD) and is supported by ESL, Max and Marian Farash Charitable Foundation, Five Star Bank, KeyBank/First Niagara Foundation, William & Sheila Konar Foundation, M&T Bank, NBT Bank, John R. Oishei Foundation, Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation, and partners in the cities of Buffalo, Niagara Falls, and Rochester. RRP program implementation is led by the Center for Regional Strategies.



A combined \$180 million RRP investment on Buffalo’s **EAST SIDE** will scale up East Side Avenues’ 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.

### COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING ECOSYSTEM

RRP focuses 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 growing revenues and jobs

### 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 grow revenues, ensure higher wages and increase household income.

**BUILD CAPACITY AND SCALE UP SUCCESS:**

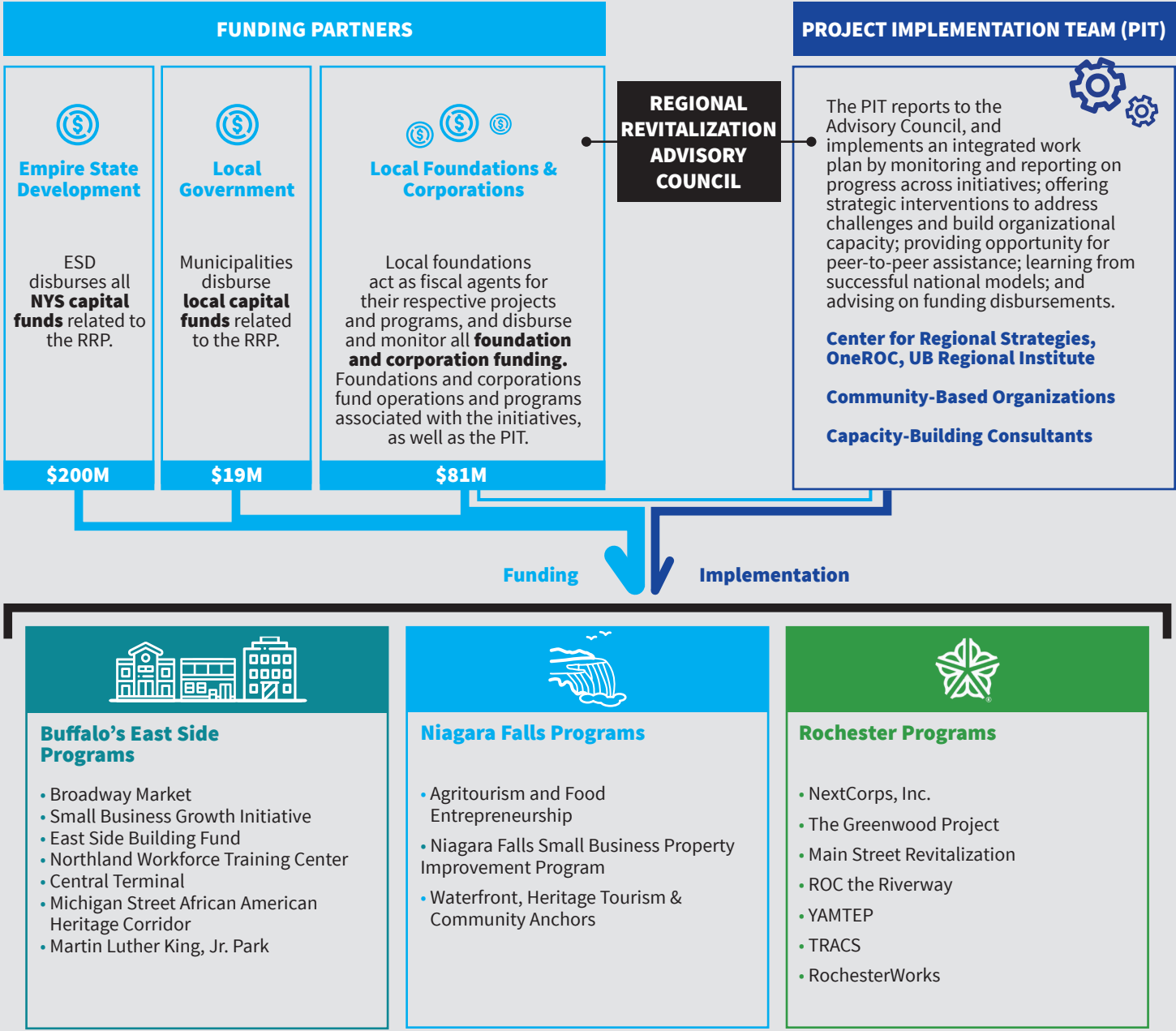
Strengthen core existing nonprofits through capacity-building programs, leverage recent investments and enhance successful programs.

**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



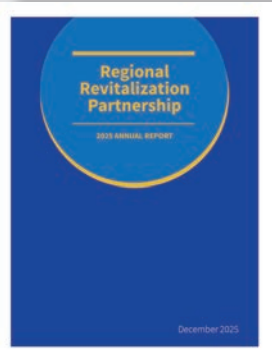
Source: RRP Annual Survey of Local Program Administrators, October 2025. Number engaged includes, but is not limited to, individuals spoken to in phone calls, one-on-one meetings (virtual or in person), along with public meeting attendees, website visits, or email recipients relevant to RRP projects. Also included are earned media (Rochester Business Journal, WHAM radio, Spectrum News, WHEC-TV, Buffalo News, and Niagara Gazette), eNews, print ads (Buffalo Criterion and Challenger) and RRP website traffic.

We continue to engage with the community. In 2025, RRP outreach totaled **480,000+ individuals and organizations**.



# What went into this report

This **2025 Annual Report** continues **tracking progress** on RRP investments and trends in neighborhood conditions surrounding the investment corridors. Going forward, these annual reports will continue to be used to evaluate progress and enhance RRP investment strategies to drive long-term economic growth across RRP investment areas.



## Online Dashboard

The RRP dashboard transforms the Annual Report into an interactive online format. The dashboard visualizes progress made by RRP projects and trends in neighborhood indicators. The dashboard will continue to be updated each year alongside the Annual Report.

Visit the online Dashboard using the QR Code



To view these reports and learn more visit [www.RRP-NY.org](http://www.RRP-NY.org)

# Tracking Progress Over Time

## About the Indicators

This report uses a set of indicators to track progress and provide context on how RRP’s strategies can drive long-term regional economic development in Buffalo, Niagara Falls and Rochester. Indicators are updated annually to monitor trends around the RRP investment corridors, anchors, and assets, and to facilitate consistent progress.

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 are organized around three pillars: workforce, placemaking, and small business. Understanding these trends is useful to inform investment strategies, but 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 indicators:

- 1. Make progress visible:** The indicators are meant to give a simplified, actionable look at RRP’s progress.
- 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 or private 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 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)

## 2025 Big Picture Activities

**Evaluated and addressed capacity building needs** as major capital improvements and programs continued in all three geographies.

**Created an online dashboard to track RRP impacts.** The dashboard tracks key project impacts, as well as neighborhood indicators that provide longer-term trends impacting communities and organized around workforce, placemaking and small business development.

**Assisted projects with accessing RRP funds** through grant writing and reporting; and leveraged RRP funding to connect projects to additional resources.

**For Rochester, evaluated and advanced possible Phase 2 projects** and potential impact.

**Continued implementing extensive marketing communication strategies and tactics for RRP** through community presentations; website updates; facilitation of a Spectrum feature news story and Rochester Business Journal op-ed; support for media outreach promoting projects in motion such as the West Main Gateway Project, NextCorps, High Falls State Park, Harper’s Corner, Niagara Falls Heritage Gateway Project, NACC Phase I ribbon cutting ceremony and announcement, Buffalo Central Terminal, and the East Side Building Fund launch with Governor Hochul. Assisted partners in executing earned-media engagements.

**Held the Annual RRP Summit on December 11, 2025** at Niagara Falls Convention Center. Stakeholders shared experiences, fostered collaboration and learned about best practices and shared opportunities.

**Completed a semi-annual progress report to funders and an Annual 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 Annual Report.

**Developed a series of Economy Builders storytelling videos** that featured voices of RRP partners and participants in advancing their important work. Developed a marketing communications strategy to boost viewership.

**Assisted Empire State Development and the WNY and Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Councils with a bi-regional \$75 million New York State ACHIEVE Initiative proposal** that, if successful, will leverage an additional \$30 million from the RCWJF. This proposal advances and expands RRP initiatives in Placemaking, Workforce and Entrepreneurship/Innovation.

## Key Themes Across Investment Communities and Indicators

A few prominent themes that emerged in the first Annual Report are evolving but still relevant based on the second annual survey of RRP anchor projects and the update of neighborhood indicators. These key themes include:

**Progress is taking shape across all three communities, and RRP strategies can capitalize on unique emerging trends.**

A range of indicators are showing promising signs of change, and the RRP cities and investment areas outperform regional and national benchmarks in some key indicators. These positive trends include high levels of entrepreneurship in Rochester, the growth of small businesses along RRP investment corridors in Niagara Falls, and diverse population growth on the East Side. While all three cities continue to face clear challenges, each community can leverage these unique positive trends to build continual momentum for economic growth and community development.

**Coordinating projects and programs through RRP can extend economic benefits to nearby communities.**

As RRP investments move forward, they seem to be spurring economic development, as shown by the growth of small and new businesses across RRP investment areas. But based on the latest neighborhood indicators, residents in the investment areas continue to face limited access to higher-paying jobs, despite recent job growth. This disconnect limits labor force participation, household incomes and economic security. This trend points to the continued importance of workforce strategies that focus on industry-driven training, partnerships with hiring employers, and wraparound services to reduce work barriers.

**Community-scale changes take time to happen, and even longer to be reflected in the data.**

The indicators, especially contextual neighborhood metrics, fluctuate slightly year to year, rarely showing dramatic annual changes. Also, each RRP investment area has a unique starting point—RRP investments on Buffalo’s East Side began in 2019, but projects in Niagara Falls and Rochester did not start until 2023 or later. Across the three cities, most RRP projects have yet to be completed. Moreover, many data sources used in this report lag real time by two years or more, so the full impact of RRP initiatives on neighborhood conditions will likely become increasingly apparent in future years.





# Buffalo's East Side



Northland Workforce Training Center

The Exchange at Beverly Gray

The Foundry

Nash House

MLK Park

Central Terminal

Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor

Broadway Market

East Side Building Fund

Colored Musicians Club Expansion

**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+ million community-driven public/private partnership providing capital and organizational supports for transformational projects in targeted areas along four East Side commercial corridors. A combined \$180 million RRP investment on the East Side scales 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.



2025 PROJECT MILESTONES

# Buffalo's East Side Investments

RRP projects on Buffalo's East Side are working to strengthen the community's small businesses, historic sites, mixed-use properties, community anchors, and workforce. This includes eleven construction projects that are in progress, including eight in the Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor. Four projects are under construction or complete.

Additionally, the Small Business Growth Initiative and the newly launched East Side Building Fund are actively supporting business development with expanded programming and additional support for small businesses.

RRP investments are already having a positive impact, leveraging over \$15 million in additional funding between September 2024 and August 2025, which is on par with the previous year. Meanwhile, RRP anchors attracted more than 163,400 visitors. There were nearly 1,400 applications to workforce training, small business and capital improvement programs.

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	■	■		
136 Broadway	■	■		
Colored Musicians Club and Museum (CMC)	■	■	■	
129-143 Broadway	■			
Michigan St. Baptist Church (Phase I)	■	■	■	■
Michigan St. Baptist Church (Phase II)	■			
509 Michigan St	■	■	■	
Nash House (Phase II)	■			

PROJECT IMPACTS  
Sept. 2024 to Aug. 2025

\$15,146,714  
additional funding leveraged

163,409 visitors  
at the Broadway Market, Central Terminal and Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor

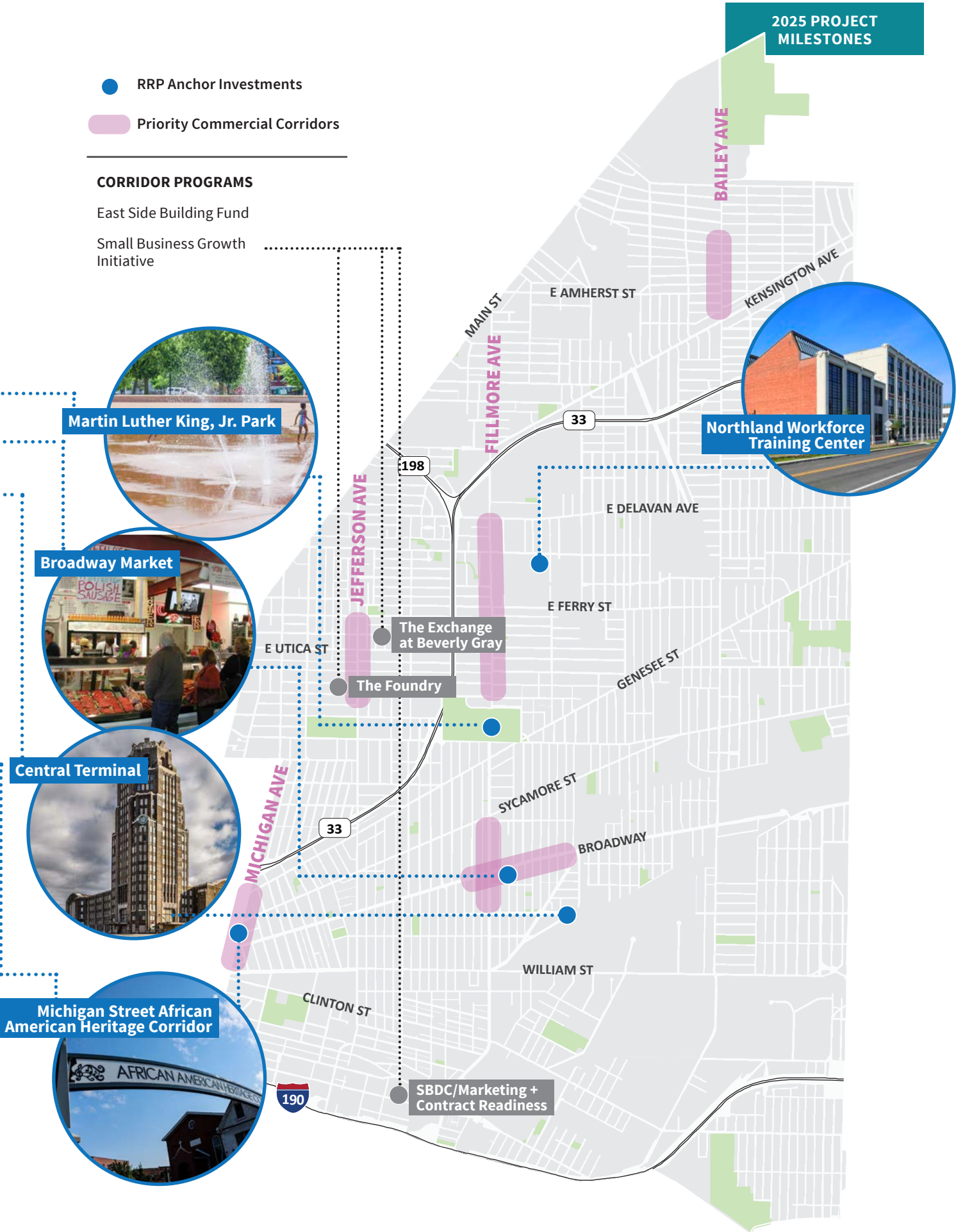
1,382 applications  
to workforce training, small business and capital improvement programs

Source: RRP Annual Survey of Local Program Administrators, October 2025.

- RRP Anchor Investments
- Priority Commercial Corridors

CORRIDOR PROGRAMS

- East Side Building Fund
- Small Business Growth Initiative



2025 PROJECT MILESTONES

2025 PROJECT MILESTONES

2025 PROJECT MILESTONES

Broadway Market

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

- Welcomed new board members**, including the designated representative from Council Member Nowakowski’s office, a market vendor, and Director of Finance at the City of Buffalo.
- Selected a consultant for financial management and bookkeeping services.**
- Conducted due diligence for the pursuit of both Historic and New Markets tax credits** to support the capital stack.
- Updated the public information posters in the Market’s Community Room** and launched a project website to provide the public with updates on the design process.
- Broadway Market Management Inc.’s (BMMI) legal consultant pursued, negotiated, and obtained modified lease requirements for the finalization of the lease between BMMI and the City of Buffalo.** BMMI continues to complete ongoing transition requirements for the full management of the Market.
- The Buffalo Common Council approved the lease and Acting Mayor Scanlon signed it.** The lease will allow for a one-year transition period.
- Architectural and Engineering (A&E) and pre-construction teams are preparing a full set of design documents and updated cost estimates** to be completed this year.
- BMMI, with consultant assistance, revised and reformatted the staffing and consultant support plan** that reflects the changing needs of the organization and the Market.
- BMMI’s Board of Directors, with consultant assistance, updated and submitted its four-year budget** in compliance with the NYS Public Authority Accountability Act.
- Through a competitive RFP process, BMMI solicited consultant firms to provide Human Resources**, including hiring new staff, and organization support.
- Held a day-long convening for design development and strategy** to ensure the project stays on track and on budget.
- Will seek Planning Board and Site Plan Approval** through the City of Buffalo in early 2026 accompanied by a press announcement to document major capital milestones and the announcement of a public engagement process in 2026.
- Conducted key stakeholder engagement** on design and construction plans, and to inform programming at the Market.
- ESD executed a funding Incentive Proposal to BMMI** with plans to take the capital funding for approval by ESD’s Board of Directors in February 2026.

Martin Luther King, Jr. Park

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

- The Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy, which stewards Buffalo’s Olmsted 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.
- The design stage is complete and cost estimates are in process for MLK Park’s historic greenhouses**, which produce 10,000 annuals and hundreds of other plants for all of the Buffalo Olmsted parks and circles.
- Will be bidding and awarding construction contracts to refurbish greenhouses** and ensure the space will house educational and workforce development opportunities in horticulture and park management.
- Will utilize program support for the Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy to train and employ residents** in horticulture.
- Completed restoration of the Buffalo Museum of Science’s historic north facade (a project of East Side Avenues).** The project includes the restoration of the original formal staircase, plazas, sidewalks and curbing of the 100,000-square-foot Esenwein and Johnson-designed building,

East Side Building Fund

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

- Ran an RFP process and selected a Local Program Administrator (LPA) and Community Engagement Partner (CEP).**
- Set up all internal processes and procedures with the LPA.** The LPA ran a procurement process for a Technical Consultant team to assist selected building owners.
- Created all materials to run a successful grant process.**
- Set up an intake process for answering all application questions through the deadline.**
- Built a strong outreach and communications plan with CEP to effectively market the East Side Building Fund.**
- Launched the \$10 million East Side Building Fund in May** at a press event with Governor Kathy Hochul.
- Prepared for and held a Public Information Meeting** regarding the East Side Building Fund with approximately 150 attendees.
- Held a series of four drop-in office hours** to answer questions and assist with applications.
- Utilized a new grants management system** to manage, review, take notes, map and determine finalists for the East Side Building Fund. Performed basic eligible checks on all 328 applications received by the deadline. Performed a full review of all 275 eligible applications.
- Chose a Selection Committee** to participate in application review.
- LPA scheduled and performed 48 walkthroughs** with their Technical Consultant.
- Kept public officials up-to-date on East Side programs and new East Side Building Fund.** Presented at the WNY REDC meeting in June at Michigan Street Baptist Church.
- Planned for, marketed and held a Contractors Event** at Northland Workforce Training Center to inform small, local contractors about opportunities through the East Side Building Fund.
- Continued to provide technical assistance to complete all remaining construction projects** funded through the three former East Side Avenues capital grant programs. Facilitated construction management expertise to help triage the construction pipeline.
- Continued work in partnership with University at Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning to provide technical assistance** to Community-Based Real Estate Development Training program graduates eligible for capital funds.



2025 PROJECT MILESTONES

2025 PROJECT MILESTONES

Northland Workforce Training Center (NWTC)

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

Since opening in 2018, Northland has enrolled 1,607 students. Of the 1,126 students eligible to graduate to date, 729 successfully completed their training, reflecting a 64.7% graduation rate, up from 63.9% in spring 2025.

As of fall 2025, 340 students are enrolled, representing a 6.9% increase from spring 2025 and a 19.3% increase from fall 2024. Among current students, 68.2% identify as minorities, exceeding NWTC’s 2023–2028 Strategic Plan goal of 65%.

Core academic offerings include associate degree programs in CNC Manufacturing and Machining, Electrical Construction and Maintenance, and Welding Technology through Alfred State College, as well as certificate programs in Mechatronics, Automotive Technology, and HVAC through SUNY Erie.

A notable addition in spring 2025 was the launch of SUNY Erie’s Automotive Service Technician Certificate Program at NWTC, in a brand-new, state-of-the-art lab created in partnership with Northtown Automotive Companies and West Herr Automotive Group and supported by a \$1.2 million grant from the New York Power Authority.

In alignment with the goal to expand access, NWTC partnered with the University at Buffalo’s Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) to launch onsite GED and ESOL courses.

Northland’s overall employment placement rate for graduates of both matriculated and short-term programs stands at 89.4%, an increase from 83% in spring 2025. The average starting salary is \$46,440, a 4% increase from earlier in the year.

Students reported high levels of satisfaction with career coaching at 94.3%, the enrollment process at 86.1%, facilities at 85.9%, instruction at 84.8%, and support services at 84.0%.

In addition to long-term academic programs, NWTC delivers the following short-term, industry-driven training programs designed to meet employer needs and respond to labor market demand:

- **12-Week CNC Program** with a 95.5% completion rate.
- **Finishing and Deburring Program** developed in partnership with MOOG and the WNY Manufacturing and Tech Coalition launched its first cohort of 10 students, achieving 100% completion and placement. The second cohort began in September 2025, with 8 students currently enrolled and on track for completion.

- **HVAC Program** offered through SUNY Erie launched its first cohort in fall 2025 following the completion of the new HVAC lab.
- **In partnership with Tesla, two cohorts of 25 students each completed the Manufacturing Development Program (MDP).** Upon completion, 100% of participants transitioned directly into employment at Tesla as Production Associates.

NWTC held the following events and initiatives to engage the community, build the training pipeline and connect students with employers:

- **The April 2025 Hiring Event** featured 44 employers from advanced manufacturing, energy, and automotive sectors, including Tesla, NYPA, and MOOG.
- **Summer Youth Academy 2025** introduced young people to careers in advanced manufacturing and clean energy through hands-on activities and career exploration.
- **Food Truck Thursdays** engaged East Side residents with local food vendors, live entertainment, community resources and family-friendly activities.
- **Northland Principal and Counselors Breakfast** welcomed 50 guidance and career counselors from across WNY.
- **Buffalo Public School Manufacturing Day** hosted 80–100 students who rotate through interactive activities hosted by Tesla, MOOG, National Grid, and Dream It Do It.
- **Northland Student and Graduate Resource Fair** featured community organizations providing resources in childcare, driver licensing, financial services, health and wellness, employment opportunities, and more.
- **Holiday Community Celebration** is hosted in partnership with Dion’s Dreamers and will welcome over 300 neighborhood families and includes community vendors, donated gifts, and family-centered entertainment.

Central Terminal

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

Advanced Phase 2 construction:

- **Completed A&E design** development and construction documents.
- **Salvaged historical materials** to be reinstalled in future phases.
- **Installed domestic and fire protection water services; and temporary access, electrical systems and lighting** required for the safety of construction phases.
- **Installed Buck hoist elevator** along Tower to facilitate abatement and masonry repairs.
- **Removed asbestos and debris** from the Tower, portions of the Main Terminal, and Waiting Room adjacent to the Passenger Concourse.
- **Cleaned collapsed stairwell area** at Curtiss Street in order to rebuild and extend it, making a second egress for the west side of the Passenger Concourse reopening.
- **Pumped all water out of the basement** and installed a sump pump.
- **Strengthened and repaired** the western portion of the plaza balustrade, perimeter masonry, and roofs.

Released final Bid Packages (3 and 5) to address limited structural repairs to the west plaza and Concourse slab, exterior masonry safety, and western portion of the Passenger Concourse safety and functionality.

Held three MWBE solicitation and workforce participation events and additional outreach.

Continued project development:

- **Completed existing conditions review and high-level cost estimates** for Mail and Baggage Building.
- **Collaborated with development team to prepare business terms** for Mail and Baggage Building (CTRC owned) and Post Office Building (City owned) to be redeveloped as housing and mixed use announced in June 2025.
- **Prepared Brownfield Cleanup Program application** and submitted to DEC. Starting remedial investigation plan for Brownfield Tax Credit Program.
- **Completed Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment** for City owned parcel.

- **Coordinated with the City of Buffalo on abutting parcel**, culminating in a Designated Developer Agreement that went to the Common Council June 2025. And, coordinated with Amtrak on abutting parcel to address safety and security.
- **Entered Buffalo Sewer Authority’s RainCheck program**, and designed rain gardens with community input for green infrastructure improvements.
- **Conducted an Energy Study and advanced the next steps with National Grid** to undertake the 2–3 year process to bring electric service to the Terminal beginning with a 23 kV substation.
- **Working on a Landscape Concept Design for the Lawn, Plaza, and surrounding streetscape**, including a living street “woonerf” concept on Curtiss Street pairing with the Lawn to form a central hub for activity.

Community events included two Broadway Fillmore neighborhood get-togethers, working with volunteers on grounds maintenance, safety and security, and continued community collaboration with clean ups and tree planting.

Completed the summer/fall season of programming and events (15)—summer concerts, movie nights, back-to-school giveaway, a car show, Shakespeare in the Park, and fall fest attracting 10,000 attendees.

Developed a new self-guided tour which is nearly complete.

Prepared an events and arts activation white paper to reach a national audience, and began engaging the community to develop the first “proof of concept” art event.

Increased communications via social media and eNews.

In terms of fundraising: conducted and completed a Capital Campaign Feasibility Study; held successful annual appeal and spring appeal; prepared sponsorship program for 2025 Program and Events season; submitted grant applications for National Grid (approved), Erie County Cultural Funding (approved), NYSCA (declined), Save America’s Treasures (approved), CFGB Competitive Grant (TBD) and Levitt Grant (declined).

Finalized naming rights with RCWJF as the Presenting Sponsor of the programming and events on the Lawn.

Completed 2024 Impact Report.

Restarted Nominating Committee for 2025 elections.

2025 PROJECT MILESTONES

2025 PROJECT MILESTONES

Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor

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

**Began engaging the A&E Manager for remedial work on 136 Broadway.** The focus is replacing the roof, followed by masonry, windows and doors. The project is currently out to bid. Construction will begin by 2026.

**Investigating the buildout of an elevator and roof repairs at 119 Broadway** with the assistance of the A&E Manager.

**Michigan Street Baptist Church** celebrated the completion of its first phase of interior renovations with a major press event, began Phase III of their archaeological dig and approved a revised annex design developed by the A&E Manager. Phase II construction will begin by spring 2026.

**The Colored Musicians Club and Jazz Museum’s** construction is anticipated to be completed by December 2025. **The Nash House** will begin A&E for the build-out of an annex and elevator by spring 2026. **WUFO** saw the restart of construction of its new headquarters.

**Installed a place marker to honor Mary B. Talbert** at 116-118 Northland Avenue, the former homes of Talbert. 150 community members attended the marker dedication, which was covered by local media outlets.

**Collections Consultant transported a Nash Family collection** from Buffalo State University to 119 Broadway where close to 1,000 different collectibles were cataloged. The consultant is working with collectibles at the anchors and is developing a collections management plan.

**The City of Buffalo Common Council approved The Commission as designated developers of 13 city-owned lots** which, along with the anchors, will be the Heritage Campus. Next steps will be to appraise the lots, conduct environmental assessments and required title search, and develop the vision, plan and renderings of the Heritage Campus with the A&E Manager, with the goal of acquiring the lots from the City.

**City of Buffalo announced the Michigan Avenue Streetscape Project** bringing the total infrastructure investment to \$16 million.

**Hired a new Project Manager** who is enhancing tourism, building relationships with the community, and developing exhibits, media/marketing, and revenue generating initiatives.

**The Organizational Development Consultant is coordinating a Board of Directors retreat** focusing on strategic planning, economic development, and MOUs.

**Hired a Funds and Grant Development Consultant.** The consultant developed a grant application template,

funding priorities and a new CRM platform. To date, 12 grant applications were submitted.

**Received \$500,000 from Erie County Legislative Chair April Baskin** to support the capital campaign for the Visitor Center and 136-142 Broadway, and a \$10,000 grant to support activities in the Heritage Corridor.

**NYS Assembly Majority Leader Crystal Peoples-Stokes awarded \$200,000 to the Commission** and \$200,000 to the Underground Railroad Heritage Center in Niagara Falls to be used to enhance tourism at both heritage destinations.

**Received a \$100,000 grant award from the Institute of Museum and Library Services.**

**Hosted several larger site visits** including visitors to the planned Harriet Tubman Trail; the African American Travelers Conference; the Smithsonian’s African American Museum and Robert C. Smith Center; Buffalo Bike Tours and Slow Roll; and the Erie Canal Bicentennial which was highly promoted and featured canal programming.

**Secured a vendor’s agreement with the Buffalo Board of Education** that would bring close to 3,000 seventh graders to the Heritage Corridor for field trips.

**Developed a calendar of events** to include tours, a docent training program, and special events.

**Developed relationships and agreements** with Buffalo State University, Canisius University, and the University at Buffalo that will lead to internships, fellowships, and research opportunities for faculty and students.

**Completed the third Mrs. Frances Nash Community Basket Farmers Market at 136 Broadway.** After 20 weeks, 1,684 patrons came to the market. Highmark and National Fuel were main sponsors. The Commission also received a Farmers Market Resiliency grant award from the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets.

**The Smithsonian’s “Voices to Votes” exhibit celebrating Democracy was at 136 and 119 Broadway for one month** with complimentary programming, lectures and concerts. There was media coverage on various news outlets and social platforms. The exhibit received nearly 600 visitors.

**Additional programming included a collaboration with Explore Buffalo on its annual “Open Doors” Saturday event; an Educational Music Series** featuring local musical legends and new talent; a **Heritage Party** on Halloween Day; and the annual **Christmas Tree Lighting, Soulful Christmas** and **Soul Ball**.

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.

**Graduated two businesses from the Foundry incubator,** and several others expanded within the incubator. They anticipate launching 1–2 additional incubator businesses into spaces in the community in the coming year.

**The Legal Clinic consistently serves 5-6 businesses monthly.** Based on need, additional time was added.

**Successfully launched Product Lab with weekly sessions, addressing the full product development cycle from ideation to prototype.** Sessions included financial planning for product development, product ideation, prototyping and production, patents/trademarks/copyright fundamentals, packaging and shipping. The Product Lab workshop calendar is planned through June 2026.

**Through the Product Lab/Business Support Series,** completed Brand Messaging 101, delivered a Digital Readiness Series, and hosted Building Success in Trades program for aspiring and existing construction professionals. Each participant received new tools and referrals to clinics.

**Launched MakeHER series,** a women-only program designed to reduce barriers to access and create a supportive environment for female makers, resulting in 55 first-time female makers applying for access to spaces. Planning for the launch of MakeHER Business Family Dinner Series increasing access for families by reducing barriers such as transportation, childcare and food.

**Continued two tracks of youth entrepreneurship afterschool cohorts** with 10-15 participants per track per semester. Students participate in Creative Leadership Academy social enterprise and Entrepreneurial Foundations Academy--learning both hard and soft entrepreneurship skills and getting real-world marketing experience. They also piloted **Youth Open Maker Hours** where students prototype their own products for sale. Students participated in public markets where they practiced pitches based on audience.

**Launched and completed a new four-month Financial Readiness Program** that matched small groups of entrepreneurs (based on their business stage) with financial experts. This program was developed in response to entrepreneurs being unprepared to receive capital without financial infrastructure.

**The Foundry hired a Finance & Grants Manager** and continued to build intake, follow-up, and market execution to sustain and scale responsibly.

**In terms of marketing,** The Foundry hired two cohorts of marketing interns who support social media, market

research, video production, graphic design and other initiatives. The Foundry also completed a comprehensive rebrand, and launched a new website and CRM system.

**Completed the second and third cohort of Reach East Marketing Accelerator.** Participants receive tailored mentoring, personalized training from local communication professionals, and up to \$5,000 in funding upon completion. Reach East will have awarded \$120,000 to East Side small businesses by the end of the year. A fourth Reach East cohort will begin in spring 2026. A new dedicated Reach East Facilitator led curriculum delivery, selected trainers/mentors, and oversaw reporting for funders.

**Hosted 13 business clinics** supporting entrepreneurs across legal, accounting, tax prep, branding, capital readiness, and more.

**Hosted multiple stand-alone business workshops** (e.g., Business Planning, Branding, Fundraising, Grant Readiness, Storytelling).

**Rolled out a second, all women cohort for the Entrepreneur Enrichment Program.**

**Hosted the 4th Annual Bold Moves Only Conference** bringing together 300+ entrepreneurs, founders, and creatives and delivering expert-led workshops, fireside chats, a powerful keynote experience, a legal clinic and a youth-focused entrepreneurship track.

**Increased visibility and representation** by tabling at multiple Jefferson Avenue community events, with a focus on connecting with walk-ins and underserved founders.

**The Exchange hired and onboarded a new Entrepreneur Success Associate and Program Associate Fellow** to drive stronger intake, follow-up, and milestone tracking.

**The Exchange conducted a 60-day audit of all clinic offerings to assess value, effectiveness, and engagement** providing the foundation for improved 2026 programming. All partners continue monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of all clinic and program offerings and their impact on businesses served.

**SBDC at Buffalo State University led three cohorts of a certificate program** designed for existing entrepreneurs to grow their businesses through marketing and contracts.

**Partners planned to pilot the Small Business Growth Fund for 2026.** Small businesses who complete training will have the opportunity to apply for seed funding to help them significantly step up their business with a goal of growth and revenue generation.



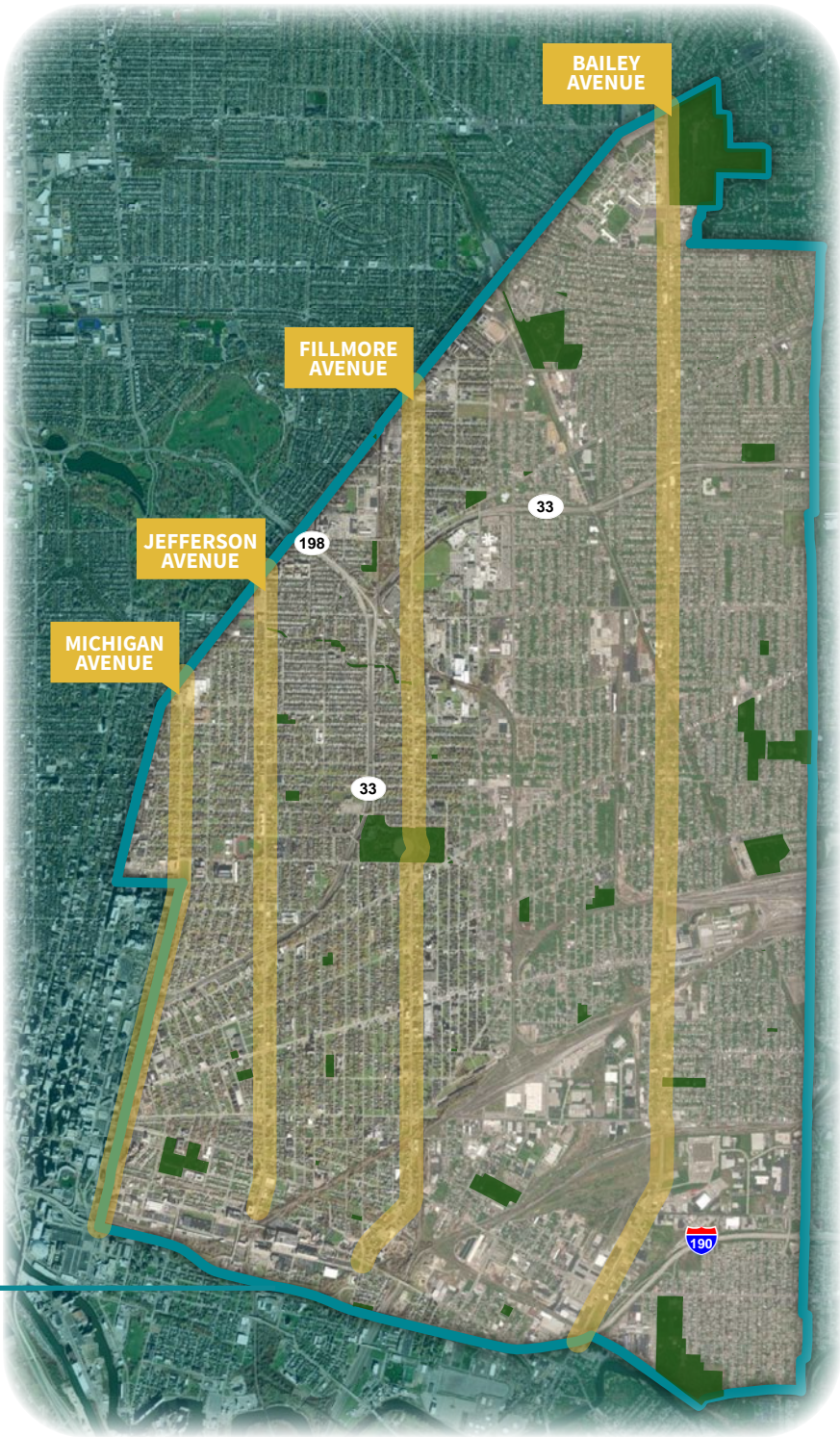
INDICATORS

East Side Corridors

# Neighborhood Indicators

This neighborhood indicator update provides a snapshot of trends impacting workforce development, placemaking, and small business growth on Buffalo's East Side. Most indicators show encouraging trends, both over the past year and longer-term. This can be seen in recent population growth and small business development, which are signs of progress made through placemaking and small business efforts. However, there is still room to accelerate progress, as seen by rising vacancy rates, declining educational attainment and stymied entrepreneurship. While some conditions on Buffalo's East Side continued to improve, including access to higher-paying jobs, median household income and labor force participation, economic security among residents declined in the most recent year of data.

The neighborhood indicator trends highlight the need for continued strategic investments to strengthen the workforce, neighborhoods, and small business environment on the East Side, focusing on four commercial corridors: Bailey, Fillmore, Jefferson and Michigan Avenue. While acknowledging progress, it is important to recognize that reversing decades-long trends and systemic challenges requires sustained action over a long period of time. Also, our ability to measure the impacts of RRP programs and strategies is limited by the lag between project implementation and when impacts will be captured in the latest available data.



Buffalo's East Side

East Side Corridors

INDICATORS

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

		MOST RECENT 7-YEAR TREND	MOST RECENT 1-YEAR TREND	MOST RECENT DATA YEAR
WORKFORCE	Access to Higher-Paying Jobs	Number of higher-paying jobs	↑	2022
		% of higher-paying jobs held by residents	↑	2022
	Economic Security	% with incomes above 200% of the federal poverty level	↑	2023
		Median Household Income	↑	2023
	Educational Attainment	% of adults ages 25-64 with some education beyond HS	↓	2023
			↓	2023
PLACEMAKING	Labor Force Participation	% of ALL adults ages 16-64 who are in the labor force	↑	2023
		% of PEOPLE OF COLOR ages 16-64 who are in the labor force	↑	2023
	Population Growth	Total Population	↑	2023
		Young Adults (25-34)	↑	2023
		People of Color	↑	2023
		Foreign Born	↑	2023
		White	↑	2023
SMALL BUSINESS	Business Growth	Employment	↑	2025
		Employers	↑	2025
	Vacancy	Commercial Vacancy Rate	↓	2025
		Residential Vacancy Rate	↓	2025
	Entrepreneurs	Entrepreneurs per 10,000 people	n/a	2025
	Sole Proprietors	Sole Proprietors	↓	2025
		Self Employment as % of Total Employed	↑	2025
	Small Business Growth	Small Businesses	↑	2025
		Employment at Small Businesses	n/a	2025
		Microbusinesses	↑	2025
		Employment at Microbusinesses	n/a	2025
		New Businesses (Up to 5 years old)	↑	2025
		Employment at New Businesses	n/a	2025

Chart summarizes recent trends for Buffalo's East Side, excluding Entrepreneurs per Capita which represents the city overall. Yellow marks positive trends. For vacancy rates, decline is improvement.

INDICATORS

INDICATORS

WORKFORCE

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



Increasing access to higher-paying jobs is critical to sustain workforce development programs. The number of higher-paying jobs on Buffalo's East Side increased nearly 27% from 2015 to 2022. There are over 20,100 jobs with annual wages of \$40,000 or more on the East Side. The percentage of higher-paying jobs on Buffalo's East Side that are held by East Side residents increased slightly in the most recent year of data (2021 to 2022) to 7.4%.

Industry-driven workforce training programs that are designed for underemployed workers can help individuals overcome employment barriers and access higher-paying job opportunities; but to increase the economic benefits of workforce development in the community, it is critical to grow more higher-paying job opportunities on the East Side. As of 2022, less than a quarter of the higher-paying jobs in the city are on the East Side, and more than nine out of ten of these jobs are held by workers who live outside of the community.

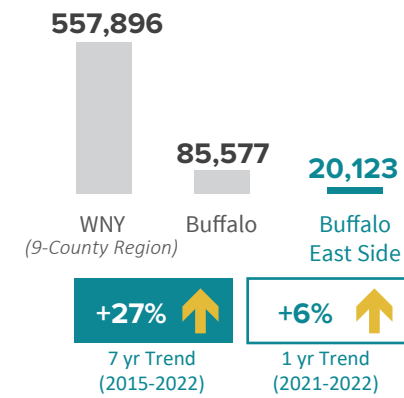
Effective workforce development can provide households with a pathway to economic security. About four out of ten (42%) of households on Buffalo's East Side are economically secure, living on incomes above 200% of the federal poverty level. By comparison, over seven out of ten households are economically secure across the nation, state, and region. The median income on Buffalo's East Side is near \$38,000, which is a 46% increase over the last seven years of data (2016-2023), but remains well below the regional median (\$69,709).

Limited educational attainment can limit opportunities for workforce participation. Half of the adults on the East Side (50%) have some training beyond high school, which declined by 3.6 percentage points from 2016 to 2023. By comparison, 68% of adults age 25 and up across WNY have some education beyond high school.

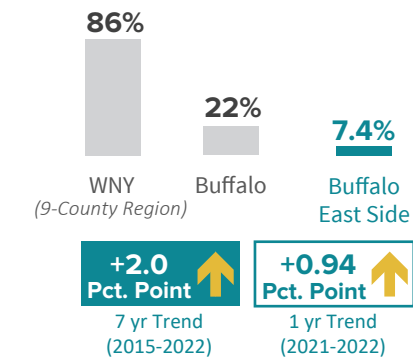
Although labor force participation rates on the East Side are up from previous years, they remain below the region overall. 64% of East Side residents are either employed or actively seeking employment, and within the past year the labor force participation rate for people of color increased by one percentage point to match the overall population (64%). However, this rate is five percentage points lower than the regional average of 68%. Workforce development programs that prepare workers for the needs of hiring employers can bring more residents into the workforce and extend more economic opportunities to communities on the East Side.

Access to Higher-Paying Jobs

Number of higher-paying jobs (\$40,000 per year or more), 2022



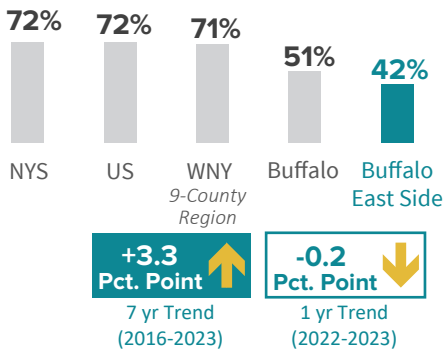
Percentage of higher-paying jobs in the geography held by residents, 2022



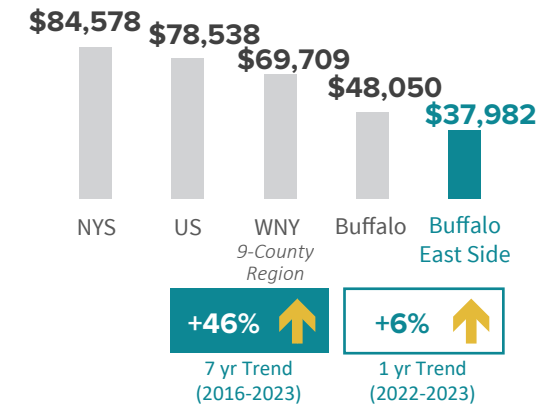
Source: US Census, OnTheMap

Economic Security

Percentage of households with incomes above 200% of the federal poverty level, 2023



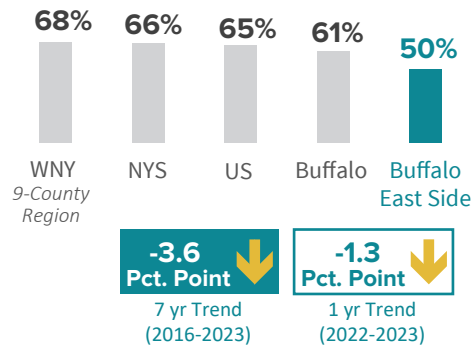
Median Household Income, 2023



Source: American Community Survey

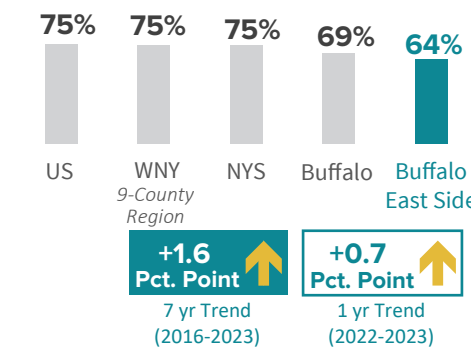
Educational Attainment

Percentage of adults ages 25-64 with some education or training beyond high school, 2023

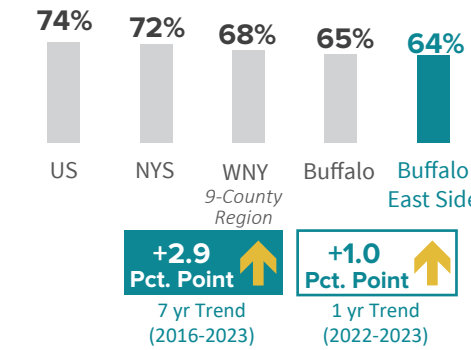


Labor Force Participation

Percentage of ALL adults ages 16-64 who are in the labor force, 2023



Percentage of PEOPLE OF COLOR ages 16-64 who are in the labor force, 2023





INDICATORS

INDICATORS

PLACEMAKING

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



Population growth can promote community vibrancy and spur economic activity, and the population of Buffalo's East Side continues to grow. The East Side's population increased by 2% year-over-year for the second consecutive year, and is now up by 10% from 2016 to 2023. This rate of population growth on the East Side exceeds national, state, and regional trends, and can be a driver of economic opportunity for the community.

The recent population growth on Buffalo's East Side was reflected across diverse population groups. The young adult population (ages 25-34) on the East Side increased by 18% from 2016 to 2023, including a slight increase (+1%) over the most recent year of data (2022 to 2023).

The growing diversity on Buffalo's East Side can help attract new residents and businesses. The foreign born population on Buffalo's East Side more than doubled (+137%) from 2016 to 2023, increasing five times more than the city (+25%). The number of people of color in the community increased by 12% from 2016 to 2023, with a 3% annual increase in the most current year of data (2022 to 2023).

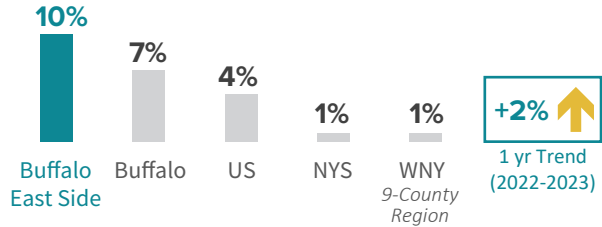
RRP investments in vital East Side assets, like the Broadway Market and Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor, can drive strategic placemaking efforts and help spur the growth of businesses across the East Side. From 2024 to 2025, the number of businesses on the East Side increased by 2% while overall employment grew by 3%. Jobs along the East Side corridors—Bailey, Jefferson, Fillmore and Michigan Avenues—grew by 2% overall from 2024 to 2025, led by Michigan Avenue with 6% job growth over the past year. About one out of every five jobs and businesses on the East Side are located along on the East Side Corridors.

Business growth can spur the reactivation of vacant spaces. While vacancy rates are down overall compared to 2018, the percentage of residential and commercial spaces on Buffalo's East Side that are vacant increased slightly from 2024 to 2025. This marks a continuing trend, as vacancy rates on the East Side also grew the previous year (from 2023 to 2024). Coordinating placemaking strategies with investments in small businesses and workforce development can help promote the restoration of vacant spaces and reactivation of commercial corridors.

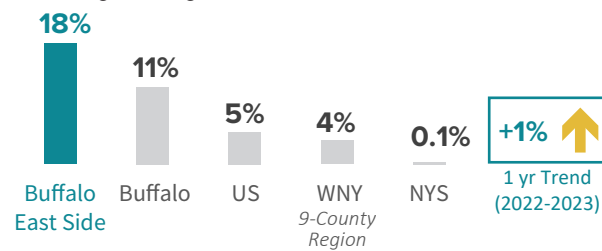
Source: American Community Survey

Population Growth

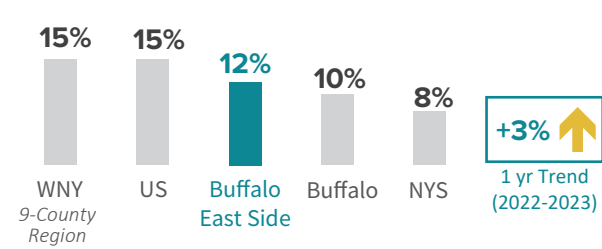
Percentage change in TOTAL population, 2016-2023



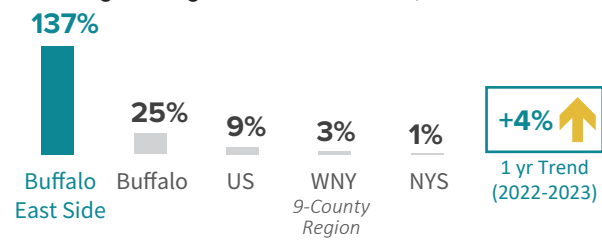
Percentage change in YOUNG ADULTS (25-34), 2016-2023



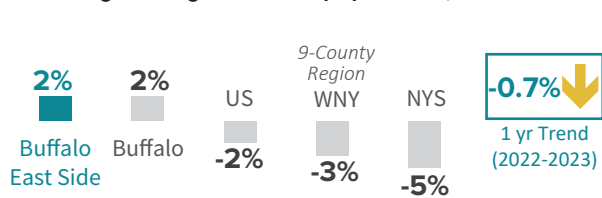
Percentage change in PEOPLE OF COLOR, 2016-2023



Percentage change in FOREIGN BORN, 2016-2023

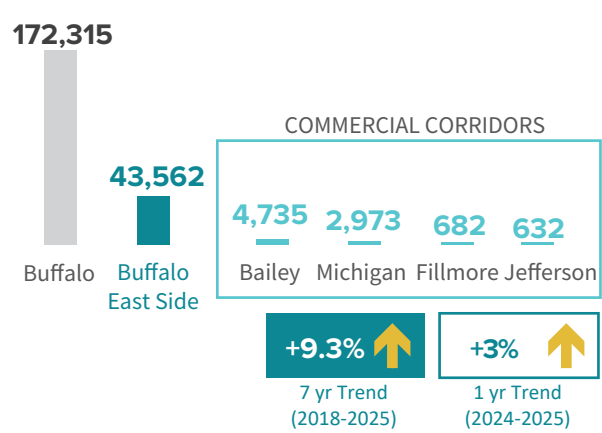


Percentage change in WHITE population, 2016-2023

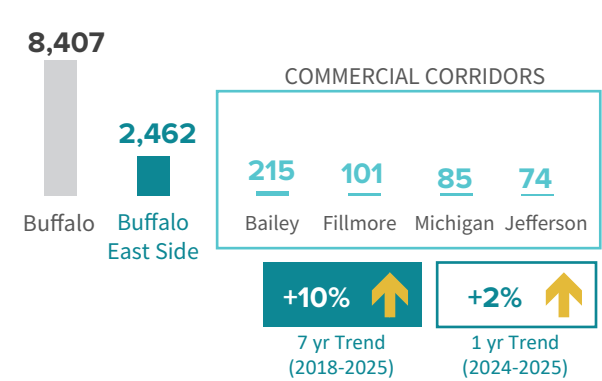


Business Growth

Employment at All Employer Locations, 2025\*



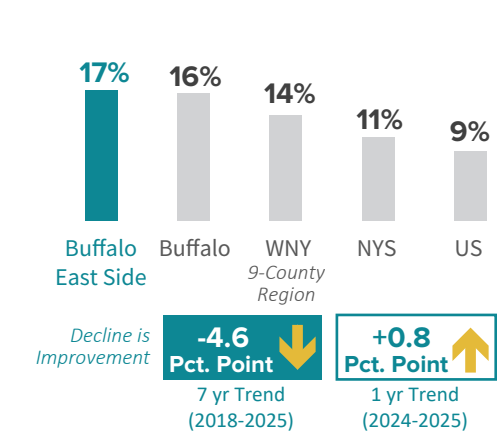
All Employer Locations, 2025



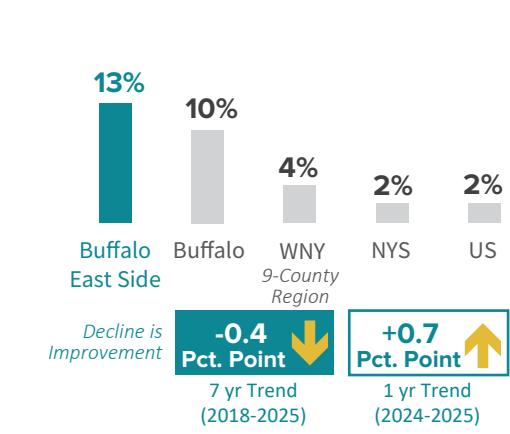
Source: Data Axle

Vacancies

Commercial Vacancy Rate, 2025



Residential Vacancy Rate, 2025



Source: USPS Vacancy Data

\* DataAxle is constantly improving data processing methods to construct their business database. Raw data is cleaned to exclude data revisions from percentage change calculations so that annual RRP indicator updates best reflect actual business dynamics, but some data revisions may still influence the percentage changes shown. As this data is refined each year, figures shown here should not be directly compared to previous or future RRP reports.



INDICATORS

SMALL BUSINESS

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



The development and growth of small businesses along the four corridors can spark economic growth and community development across Buffalo's East Side. Trends in business records show that employment is growing on the East Side, propelled by the growth of new and small businesses.

The number of new businesses on Buffalo's East Side continues to grow. The East Side is now home to 120 new businesses—locations that were established in the previous seven years. As of 2025, there are nearly 3.5 times as many new businesses on Buffalo's East Side as there were in 2018. Most new businesses start small, and this is reflected in the coinciding growth of small businesses along the East Side Corridors.

About 70% of the businesses on Buffalo's East Side are small with under 50 employees on site. Small businesses provide jobs for nearly 14,000 workers--about 8 workers per business site. Nearly one out of five (19%) of the East Side's small business employees works along the four commercial corridors.

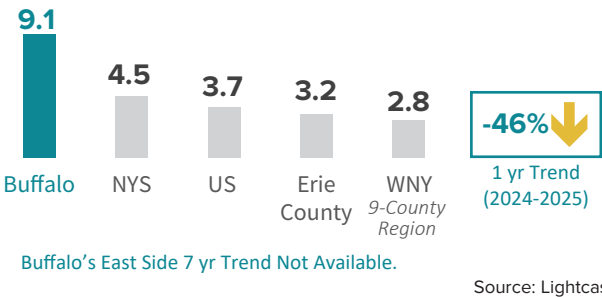
Most small businesses on the East Side are microbusinesses with less than five employees, including 189 sole proprietors. While the number of sole proprietors on Buffalo's East Side declined since 2018, the count of microbusinesses is up nearly 8% and jobs at microbusinesses grew by 2% from 2024 to 2025. Despite the heightened challenges small businesses faced during and after the pandemic, small businesses are driving overall job growth on the East Side.

Entrepreneurship can spark broad, transformative economic impacts for communities. The percentage of workers who are self-employed on the East Side (3%) remains relatively unchanged over the past seven years, continuing to lag figures for the city, region, state and nation. The number of self-identified entrepreneurs in the city of Buffalo declined significantly (-46%) over the past year, but remains well above the state, nation, and region as a whole.

These trends suggest that economic momentum is building on Buffalo's East Side. Implementing strategic entrepreneurship and small business development programs that are focused along the four East Side Corridors can help continue these trends. Coordinating support services for new and small businesses with other RRP programs can catalyze investments in placemaking, accelerate job growth and spur economic opportunity for East Side communities.

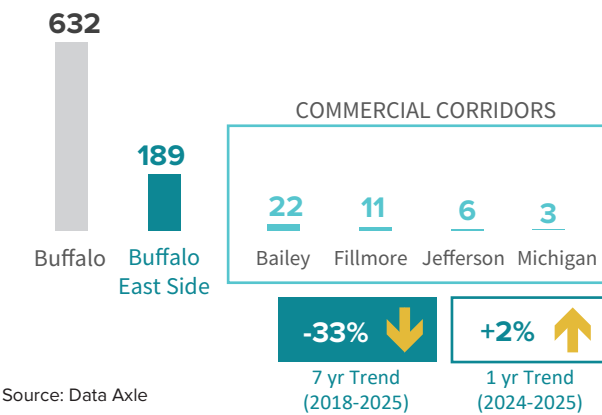
Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurs per 10,000 people, 2025

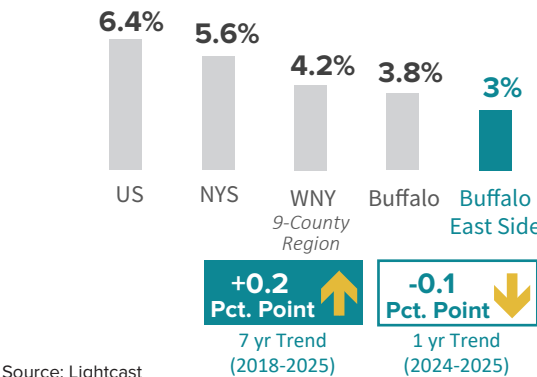


Sole Proprietorship

Sole Proprietors, 2025

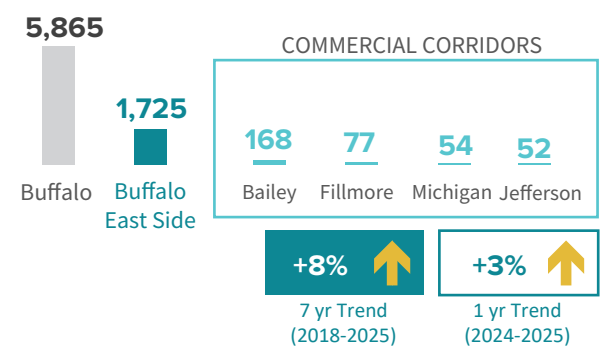


Self Employment as Percentage of Total Employed, 2025

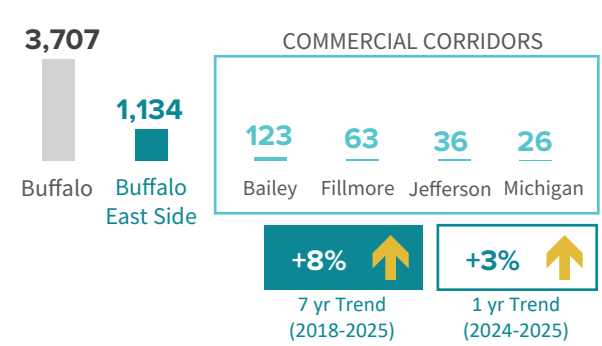


Small Business Growth

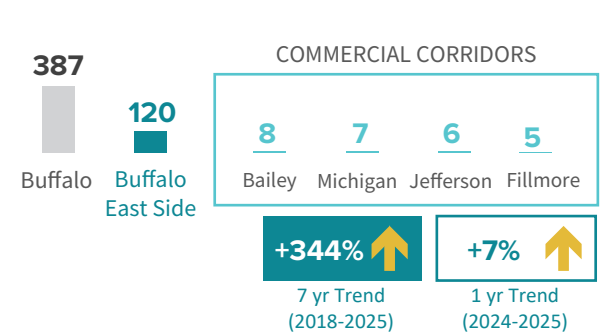
Small Businesses (Under 50 Employees), 2025



Microbusinesses (Under 5 Employees), 2025



New Businesses\*, 2025

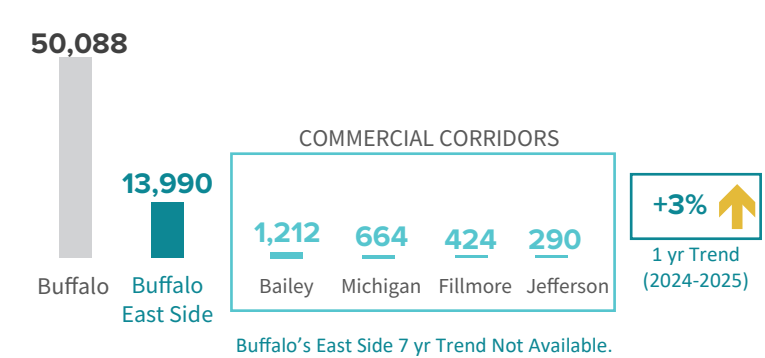


Source: Data Axle.

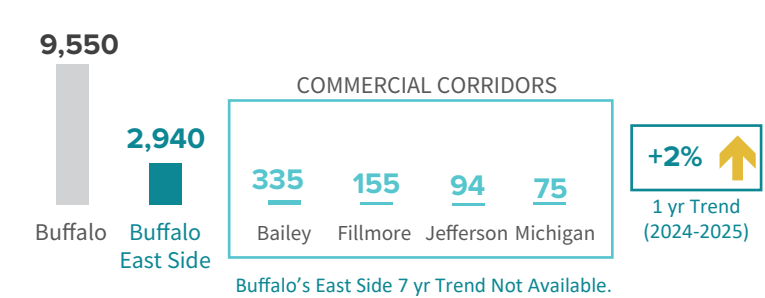
\* New businesses are those that opened 2018 or after. In 2018, New businesses included those established since 2013.

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

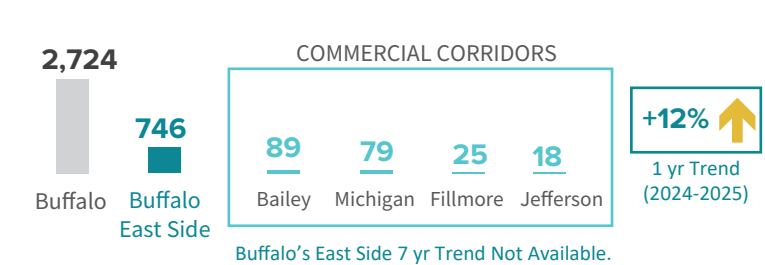
Employment at Small Businesses\*\* (Under 50 Employees), 2025



Employment at Microbusinesses\*\* (Under 5 Employees), 2025



Employment at New Businesses\*\* (Up to 5 years), 2025



Note: DataAxle is constantly improving data processing methods to construct their business database. Raw data is cleaned to exclude data revisions from RRP indicator progress updates, but changes in business counts and employment may reflect improvements in the data rather than actual changes in business dynamics. Figures shown here should not be compared to previous or future RRP reports.





# 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 \$40 million investment through RRP is building an ecosystem in Niagara Falls centered on 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.



2025 PROJECT MILESTONES

2025 PROJECT MILESTONES

# Niagara Falls Investments

RRP investments in Niagara Falls seek to attract visitors, increase visitor spending, and strengthen commercial corridors and neighborhoods within walking distance of Niagara Falls State Park.

In Niagara Falls, RRP projects and programs leverage key strengths of the city and region to spur revitalization, such as agritourism, food entrepreneurship, waterfront development, and community anchors. This includes eight construction projects, with one complete (NACC Phase I), one under construction (Gorge Gateway Park and Hydraulic Power Plaza), and the other six in the pre-development or design phase.

From September 2024 to August 2025, RRP projects in Niagara Falls attracted nearly 60,000 visitors while leveraging \$8.6 million in additional funding—2.6 times more than the previous year.

CONSTRUCTION PROGRESS:

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

PROJECT IMPACTS  
Sept. 2024 to Aug. 2025

\$8,610,000  
additional funding leveraged

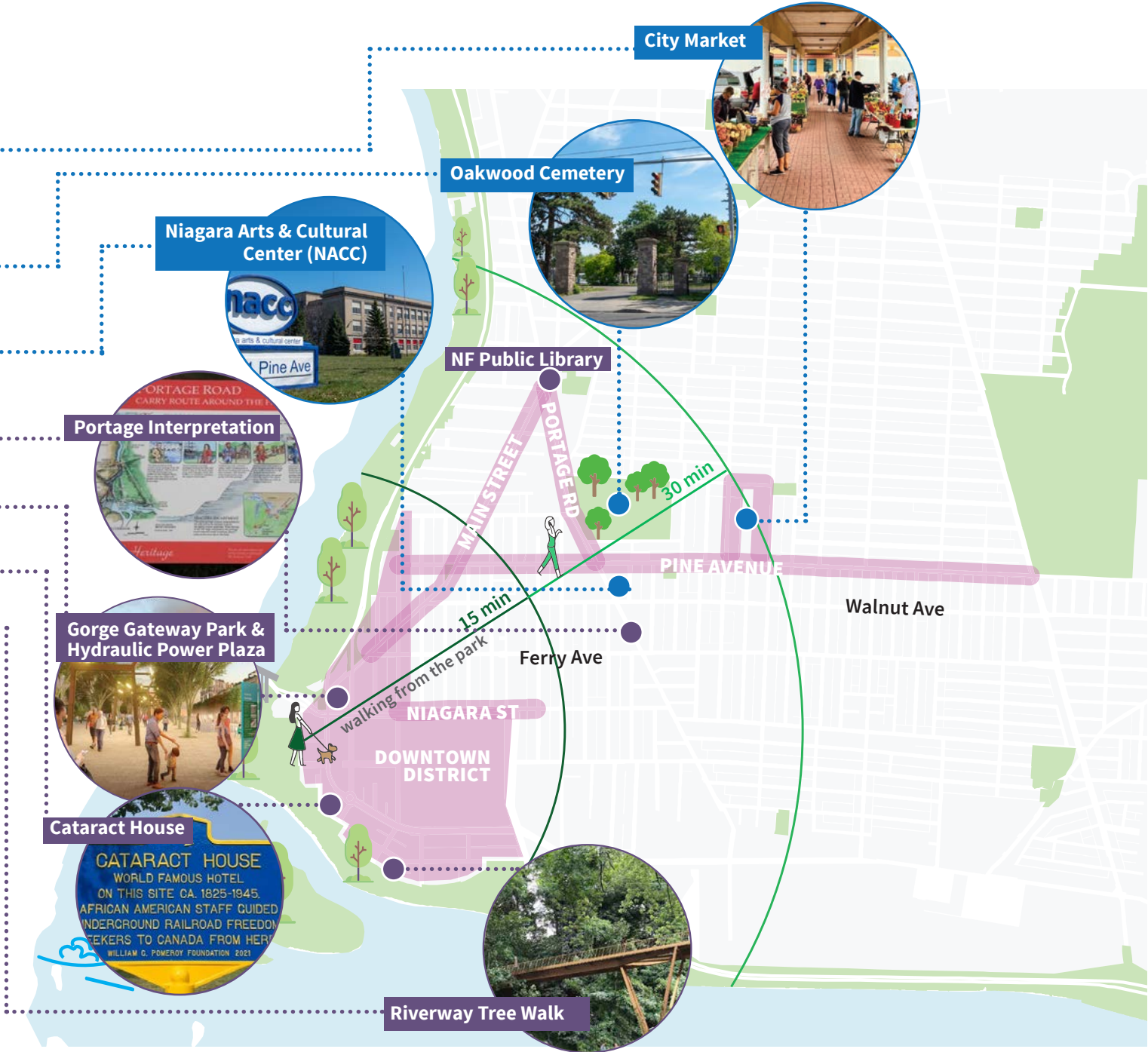
59,750 visitors  
at the NACC and City Market

21 applications  
to the Small Business Property Improvement Program

Source: RRP Annual Survey of Local Program Administrators, October 2025.

NF Small Business Property Improvement Program

- RRP Anchor Investments
- RRP Asset Investments



2025 PROJECT MILESTONES

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.*

- Finalized business plan for the new Niagara Falls City Market (The Market),** including income sources, rental rates, staffing model, and expense budget.
- Issued RFP for an A&E contract to design Phase 1** of capital improvements to the Market, including a new market shed. Finalize conceptual design and initial estimates by summer 2026.
- Selected Owner’s Representative to guide negotiation with a new Market operator** and ensure capital improvements are consistent with the business plan.
- Drafted Development Agreement for the Market—** currently in final review by the City of Niagara Falls and USA Niagara Development Corp.

Niagara Falls Small Business Property Improvement Program (NFSBPIP)

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

- Conducted targeted outreach** to market the program to eligible properties.
- Completed updates to NFC webpage.**
- Recommended changes to the program** to NFC Board to simplify application process.
- Twenty-one projects submitted applications to the NFSBPIP.** Of these, nine projects were accepted for participation in the program. Grant agreements were executed for eight of these projects. These eight projects represent \$573,063 of the initial \$1.5 million grant.
- Worked with grantees to advance projects to completion** and submit grant utilization requests to ESD.
- Five projects were completed.** One of these projects received a grant disbursement; the other four are awaiting project cost documentation in order to submit grant utilization requests to ESD.

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.*

- The Niagara Arts and Cultural Center (NACC) completed Phase I of its theater restoration project** marking the reopening of six newly renovated restroom facilities as part of the multi-phased effort.
- For Phase II of the restoration project, the NACC issued initial bid documents.** This phase will restore and upgrade the historic theater’s auditorium, stage, HVAC system, and audio/visual equipment to meet modern standards for safety, accessibility, and performance.
- Construction began on Gorge Gateway Park & Hydraulic Power Plaza.** Construction is being administered by ESD Niagara Falls subsidiary USA Niagara Development Corporation who selected a general contractor for the project. Construction of the Gorge Gateway Park will be completed by summer 2026.
- Final design drawings are in progress and nearly complete for the upper-river waterfront site** (“Riverway Tree Walk”) at 305 Buffalo Avenue to build a scenic overlook of the upper Niagara River.
- Oakwood Cemetery is working with an A&E team to finalize schematic design for the three significant structures on its grounds:** 1877 chapel, the 1913 Green & Wicks mausoleum, and the 1922 stone office. Work will include new roofs, stone repointing, and other structural repairs to stabilize and restore these historic buildings. The project is being administered by the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area on Oakwood Cemetery’s behalf. The project team is currently seeking historic preservation approval for the 1877 chapel.

2025 PROJECT MILESTONES



INDICATORS

Niagara Falls Corridors  
Neighborhood Indicators

The following pages provide a snapshot of trends related to workforce development, placemaking, and small business growth in Niagara Falls, highlighting neighborhoods near the RRP corridors. The indicators show both encouraging and concerning trends in Niagara Falls and the Corridor Neighborhoods. Increasing incomes, labor force participation, access to higher-paying jobs and economic security show upward momentum. Entrepreneurship is also showing some positive signs, with rising self-employment, more new businesses and small business growth.

While some trends are pointing in the right direction, more improvement is needed as Niagara Falls Corridor Neighborhoods fall behind regional, state, and national benchmarks across many indicators. Particular areas of opportunity are evident in rising vacancy rates and lagging population growth. While many indicators reflect years prior to initial RRP investments, this data underscores the need for coordinated actions to strengthen the workforce, grow small businesses and benefit communities in Niagara Falls.



INVESTMENTS

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

		MOST RECENT 7-YEAR TREND	MOST RECENT 1-YEAR TREND	MOST RECENT DATA YEAR
WORKFORCE	Access to Higher-Paying Jobs	Number of higher-paying jobs	↑	2022
		% of higher-paying jobs held by residents	↑	2022
	Economic Security	% with incomes above 200% of the federal poverty level	↑	2023
		Median Household Income	↑	2023
	Educational Attainment	% of adults ages 25-64 with some education beyond HS	↓	2023
PLACEMAKING	Labor Force Participation	% of ALL adults ages 16-64 who are in the labor force	↑	2023
		% of PEOPLE OF COLOR ages 16-64 who are in the labor force	↑	2023
	Population Growth	Total Population	↓	2023
		Young Adults (25-34)	↓	2023
		People of Color	↑	2023
		Foreign Born	↑	2023
		White	↓	2023
	Business Growth	Employment	↓	No Change 2025
		Employers	↑	↓ 2025
	Vacancy	Commercial Vacancy Rate	↑	↓ 2025
		Residential Vacancy Rate	↑	↓ 2025
SMALL BUSINESS	Entrepreneurs	Entrepreneurs per 10,000 people	n/a	↓ 2025
	Sole Proprietors	Sole Proprietors	↓	↓ 2025
		Self Employment as % of Total Employed	↑	↓ 2025
	Small Business Growth	Small Businesses	↑	↑ 2025
		Employment at Small Businesses	n/a	↑ 2025
		Microbusinesses	↓	↑ 2025
		Employment at Microbusinesses	n/a	↑ 2025
		New Businesses (Up to 5 years old)	↑	↑ 2025
		Employment at New Businesses	n/a	↑ 2025

Chart summarizes recent trends for the RRP Corridor Neighborhoods, excluding Entrepreneurs per Capita which represents the city overall. Yellow marks positive trends. For vacancy rates, decline is improvement.



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.



Increasing the number of good-paying jobs accessible to residents is critical to the success of industry-driven workforce training programs. Access to higher-paying jobs in Niagara Falls Corridor Neighborhoods grew by 20% over the most recent seven years of data (2015-2022). This corresponds with the broader trend of increasing wages. The share of higher-paying jobs held by residents also increased by two percentage points, but most higher-paying jobs in the Corridor Neighborhoods (86%) are held by people living outside the area. This is a sign of continued need for placemaking efforts to attract new residents paired with workforce and economic development strategies.

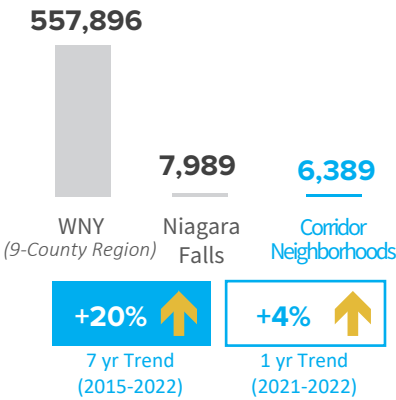
Poverty rates are declining overall. As of 2023, nearly half (49%) of households in the Corridor Neighborhoods are economically secure (with incomes above 200% of the poverty line). This is up by ten percentage points overall from 2016, including a 1.5 percentage point increase over the most recent year of data (2022-2023). Median household incomes also grew by 13% over that same year, but economic security and income levels in Niagara Falls Corridor Neighborhoods remain below the region, stressing the need for workforce development to extend economic benefits to a wider range of households.

As of 2023, educational attainment levels in Niagara Falls are below regional and national figures. This disparity is more pronounced in the Corridor Neighborhoods surrounding RRP investments, where less than half (45%) of adults age 25 to 64 have training beyond high school, compared to 65% in the US and 68% across the region. Workforce training initiatives that are driven by the demands of industry and needs of the local population can help reverse trends in the Corridor Neighborhoods where educational attainment levels are declining, based on the latest estimates (2022-2023).

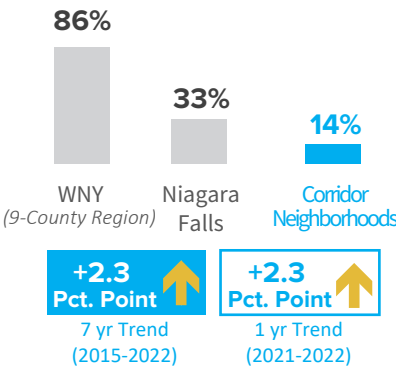
Education and training can also increase labor force participation rates. The percentage of residents age 16 to 64 who participate in the labor force increased by nearly two percentage points from 2022 to 2023, though labor force participation rates continue to lag state and national benchmarks. Expanding job opportunities and connecting workforce training programs with employer needs can increase labor force participation and access to higher paying jobs.

Access to Higher-Paying Jobs

Number of higher-paying jobs (\$40,000 per year or more), 2022



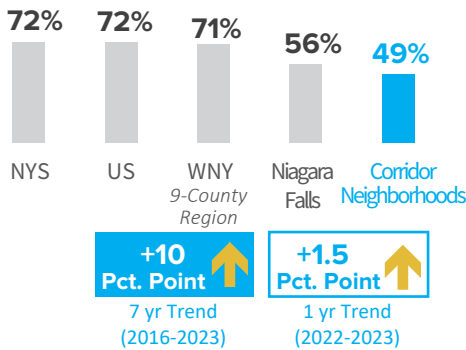
Percentage of higher-paying jobs in the geography held by residents, 2022



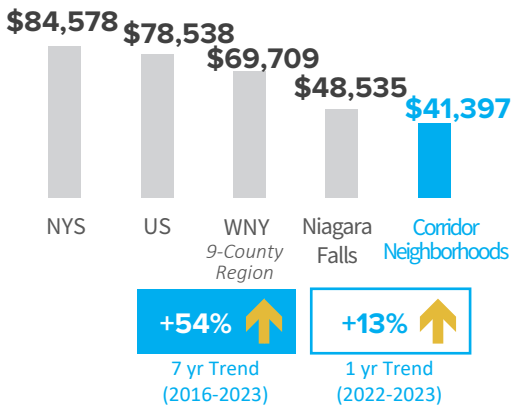
Source: US Census, OnTheMap

Economic Security

Percentage of households with income above 200% of the federal poverty level, 2023



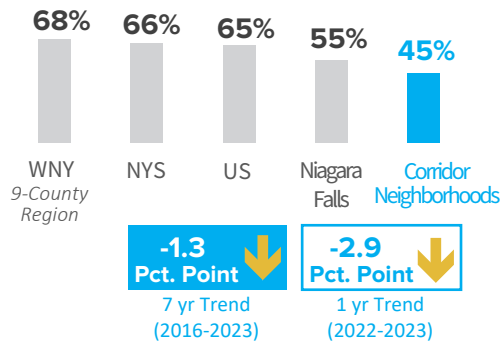
Median Household Income, 2023



Source: American Community Survey

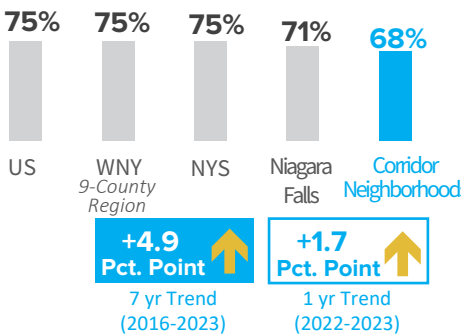
Educational Attainment

Percentage of adults ages 25-64 with some education or training beyond high school, 2023

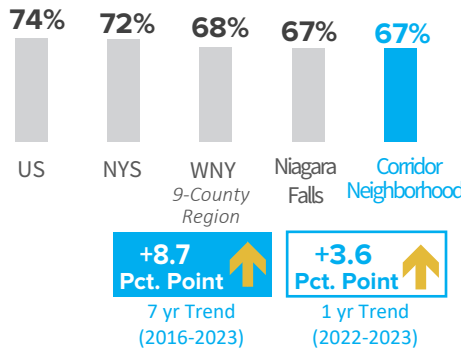


Labor Force Participation

Percentage of ALL adults ages 16-64 who are in the labor force, 2023



Percentage of PEOPLE OF COLOR ages 16-64 who are in the labor force, 2023



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.



Focusing investments in strategic assets and commercial corridors can create vibrant, attractive places to improve quality of life for area residents. In Niagara Falls, the opportunity for placemaking efforts to revitalize neighborhoods is clear, as signaled by high vacancy rates and population decline. These conditions are more prevalent in the Corridor Neighborhoods. Understanding these recent trends will help strategize how RRP programs can improve these trends in future years as planned placemaking initiatives take root and progress.

The population of Niagara Falls continued to decline over the most recent year of population estimates (2022 to 2023), declining by 1% across the City and by 3% in the Corridor Neighborhoods. Looking at the longer-term trend from 2016 to 2023, population loss in the Corridor Neighborhoods is on par with the city (-2%), although the regional population grew by 1% over that time.

The population near the RRP corridors is also changing, as the number of foreign born residents increased by 12% overall from 2016 to 2023 even while the foreign born population declined across the City as a whole (-10%). The white population continues a decline, falling by 3% from 2022 to 2023. The people of color living in the Corridor Neighborhoods is up by 6% from 2016 to 2023, but showed a steep decline (-8%) in the most recent year of data (2022 to 2023). The population of young adults (age 25 to 34) living in the neighborhood also declined from 2022 to 2023 (-5%). Placemaking efforts can help reverse these trends by revitalizing commercial corridors and creating more economic opportunities to benefit existing communities and attract new residents.

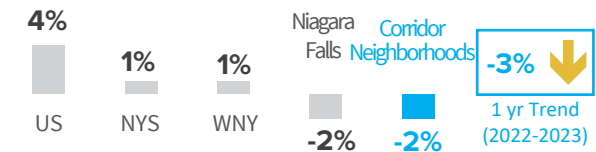
The abundance of vacant building spaces in Niagara Falls is a clear sign of the opportunity for placemaking efforts. Although the percentage of commercial and residential addresses that sit vacant declined slightly from 2024 to 2025 (-1%), vacancy rates in the Corridor Neighborhoods are higher than the region and city overall. Strategic investments and programs to promote community-led development of housing and commercial spaces can help reverse population and employment loss.

Coordinating placemaking investments with workforce and small business development strategies can help grow jobs at local employers. In the neighborhoods around the RRP corridors in Niagara Falls, employment at business locations fell by nearly 5% from 2018 to 2025 as recovery from the pandemic has been slower in WNY and in smaller downtown areas like the Corridor Neighborhoods of Niagara Falls.

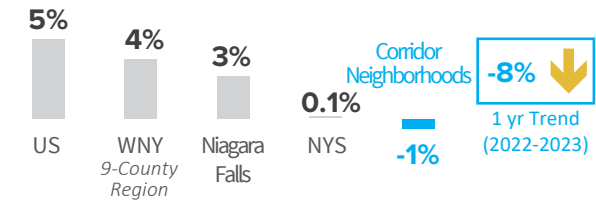
Source: American Community Survey

Population Growth

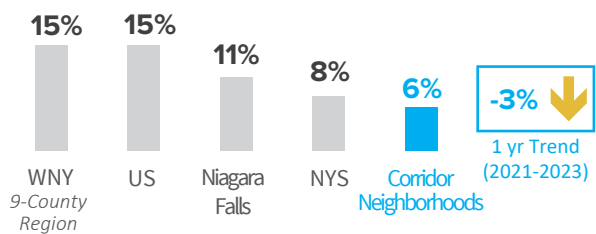
Percentage change in TOTAL population, 2016-2023



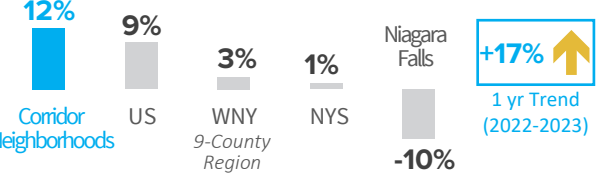
Percentage change in YOUNG ADULTS (25-34), 2016-2023



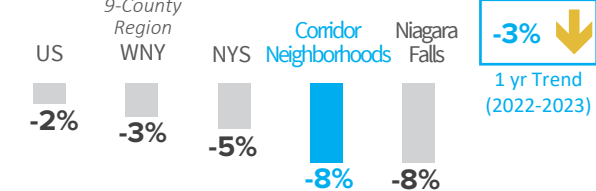
Percentage change in PEOPLE OF COLOR, 2016-2023



Percentage change in FOREIGN BORN, 2016-2023

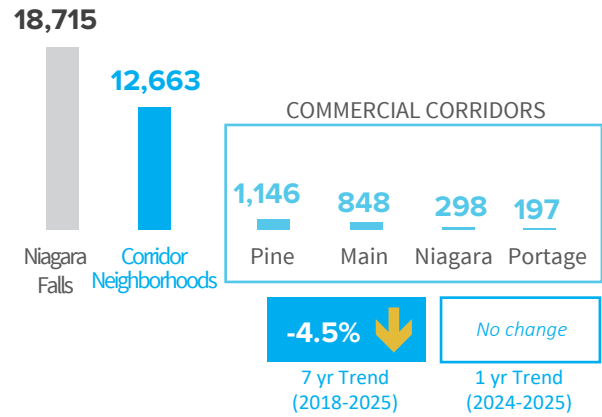


Percentage change in WHITE population, 2016-2023

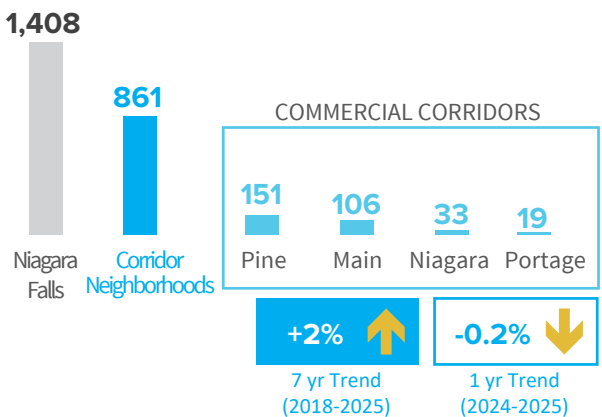


Business Growth

Employment at All Employer Locations, 2025\*



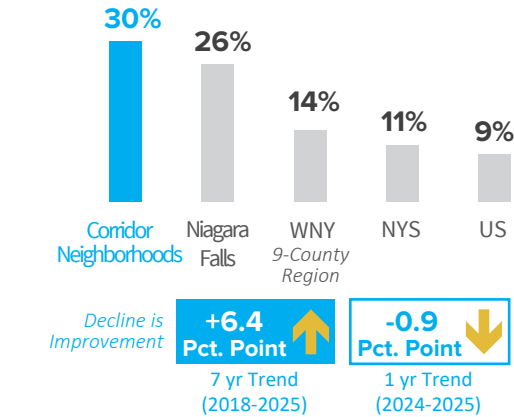
All Employer Locations, 2025



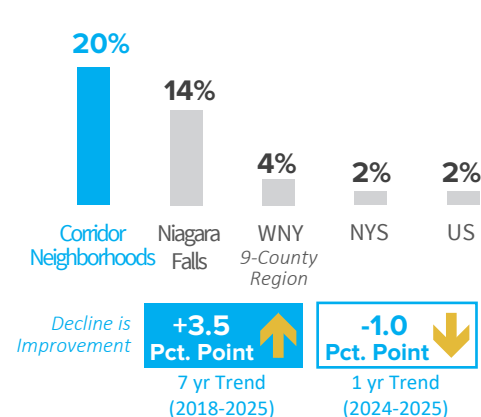
Source: Data Axle

Vacancies

Commercial Vacancy Rate, 2025



Residential Vacancy Rate, 2025



Source: USPS Vacancy Data

\* DataAxle is constantly improving data processing methods to construct their business database. Raw data is cleaned to exclude data revisions from percentage change calculations so that annual RRP indicator updates best reflect actual business dynamics, but some data revisions may still influence the percentage changes shown. As this data is refined each year, figures shown here should not be directly compared to previous or future RRP reports.

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.



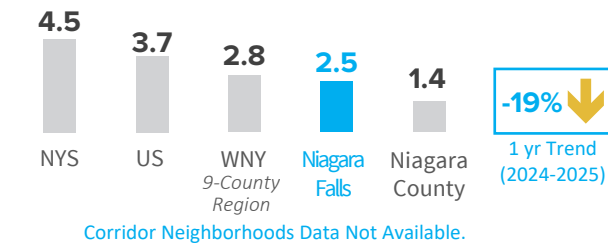
Small businesses are a critical driver of wealth building opportunities and economic benefits for neighborhood residents. There are about 1,400 business locations of all sizes in Niagara Falls that employ an estimated 12,660 workers (see page 41). About two-thirds (67%) of these jobs are in the Corridor Neighborhoods. Job growth in these neighborhoods was stagnant over the past year, as job losses at businesses that closed were offset by jobs created at new and existing businesses. Coupling investments that promote new business formations with pathways for long-term small business stability can spur neighborhood job growth.

Although small businesses continue to face challenges in the post-pandemic economic landscape, indicators suggest that new businesses, small businesses, and microbusinesses in Corridor Neighborhoods performed better than the overall business sector in recent years. While overall job growth in the neighborhoods stalled, employment at small businesses grew over the past year. The number of small businesses in Niagara Falls Corridor Neighborhoods grew by 5% from 2024 to 2025 while employment at business locations with less than 50 employees grew by 6%. However, most of this small business growth occurred near, but not along the four RRP investment corridors. Niagara Street was the only corridor to show growth of small businesses from 2024 to 2025, while some small businesses along the other three corridors either closed or lost employment.

Entrepreneurship can catalyze a neighborhood economy. Despite some positive trends, the city of Niagara Falls continues to lag state and national benchmarks for entrepreneurship. The number of new businesses in the Corridor Neighborhoods increased by 7% while employment at new businesses grew by 51% from 2024 to 2025. Meanwhile, the number of self-identified entrepreneurs per capita declined by 19%, and the number of sole proprietors fell slightly (-1%) from 2024 to 2025. Meanwhile, the number of microbusinesses (under 5 employees) in the Corridor Neighborhoods increased by 2% and employment at these establishments grew by 1% over the past year. Providing support for new, small and growing businesses can create workforce development opportunities and bolster placemaking efforts along the RRP investment corridors and in the surrounding neighborhoods.

Entrepreneurship

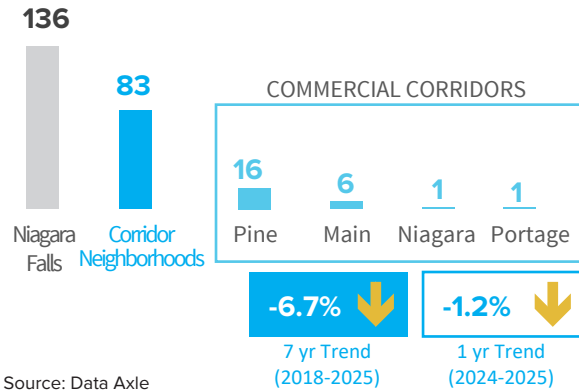
Entrepreneurs per 10,000 people, 2025



Source: Lightcast

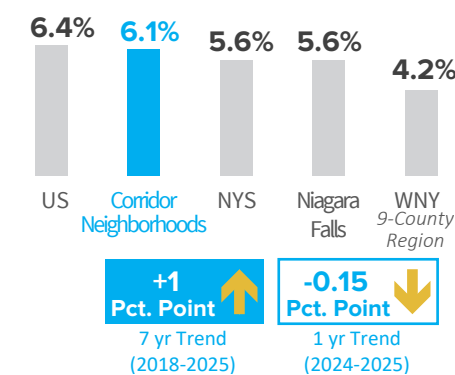
Sole Proprietorship

Sole Proprietors, 2025



Source: Data Axle

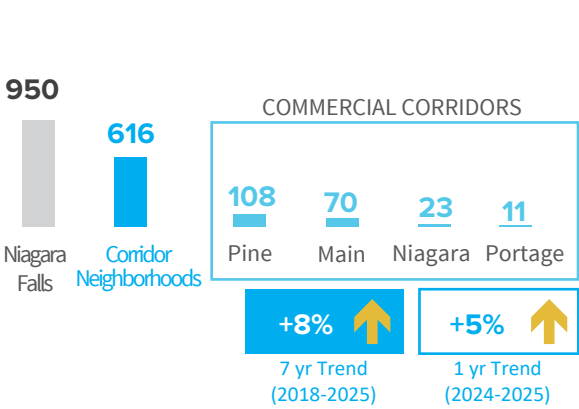
Self Employment as Percentage of Total Employed, 2025



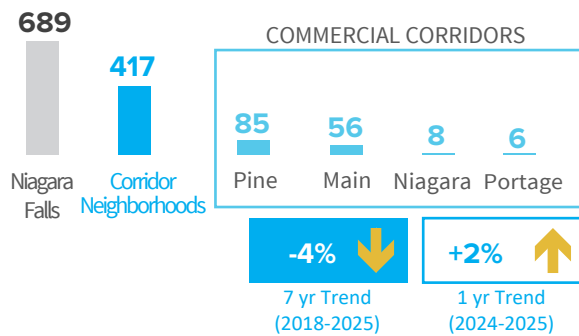
Source: Lightcast

Small Business Growth

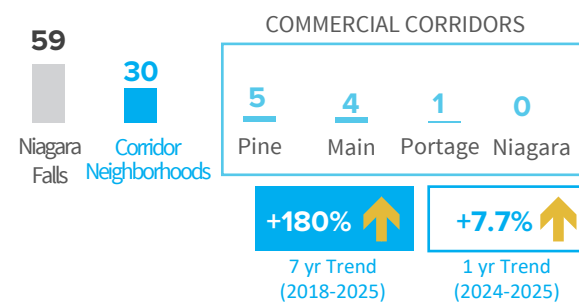
Small Businesses (Under 50 Employees), 2025



Microbusinesses (Under 5 Employees), 2025



New Businesses\*, 2025

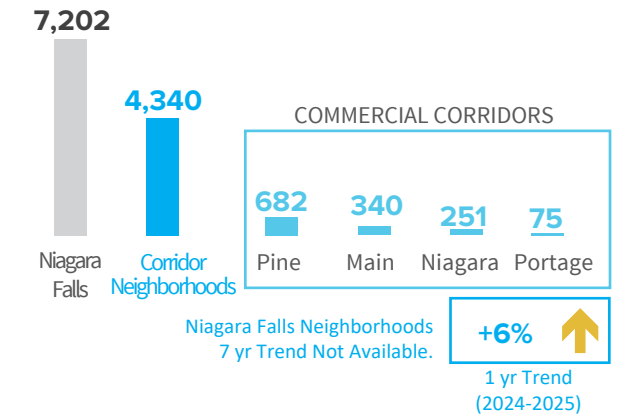


Source: Data Axle.

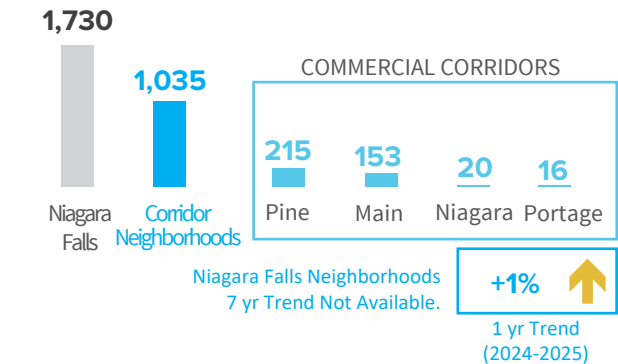
\* New businesses are those that opened 2018 or after. In 2018, New businesses included those established since 2013.

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

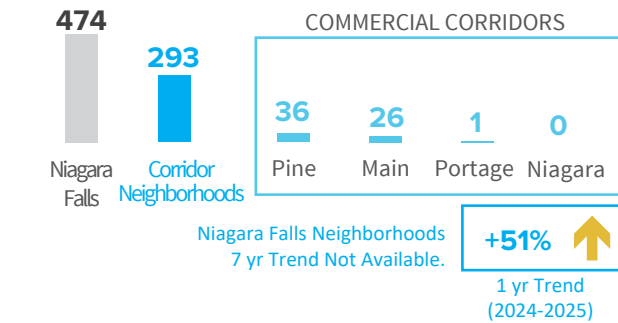
Employment at Small Businesses\*\* (Under 50 Employees), 2025



Employment at Microbusinesses\*\* (Under 5 Employees), 2025



Employment at New Businesses\*\* (Up to 5 years), 2025



Note: DataAxle is constantly improving data processing methods to construct their business database. Raw data is cleaned to exclude data revisions from RRP indicator progress updates, but changes in business counts and employment may reflect improvements in the data rather than actual changes in business dynamics. Figures shown here should not be compared to previous or future RRP reports.





# Rochester

Aqueduct Park



Harper's Corner



RochesterWorks  
Downtown Career Center



ROC City Skatepark



Genesee Riverway Trail

NextCorps



RochesterWorks  
School-to-Work Navigator



YAMTEP

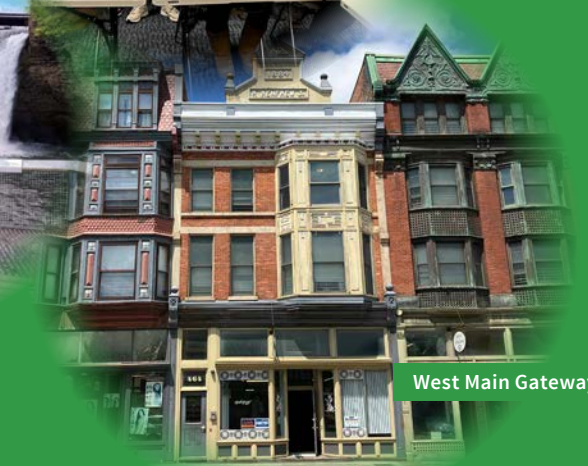
Falls Street Remediation



TRACS



West Main Gateway



**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.**

Rochester's \$80 million investment strategy is 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.



2025 PROJECT MILESTONES

# Rochester Investments

With 14 projects underway, RRP investments in Rochester are taking a multi-faceted approach to revitalization. These projects focus on enhancing downtown commercial corridors, strengthening community anchors and small businesses, and empowering underserved residents for in-demand jobs.

Five construction projects are redeveloping 234,000 square feet of building space. Three projects completed construction—Harper’s Corner, and the Neighborhood HUB and Connect Lab at the Greenwood Project.

While construction projects are concentrated in specific neighborhoods, RRP workforce programs are citywide, benefiting all Rochester residents who need training or seek employment. RRP investments in Rochester leveraged \$26.3 million in additional funding between September 2024 and August 2025—that’s 73% more than the previous year.



**PROJECT IMPACTS**  
Sept. 2024 to Aug. 2025

\$26,302,947

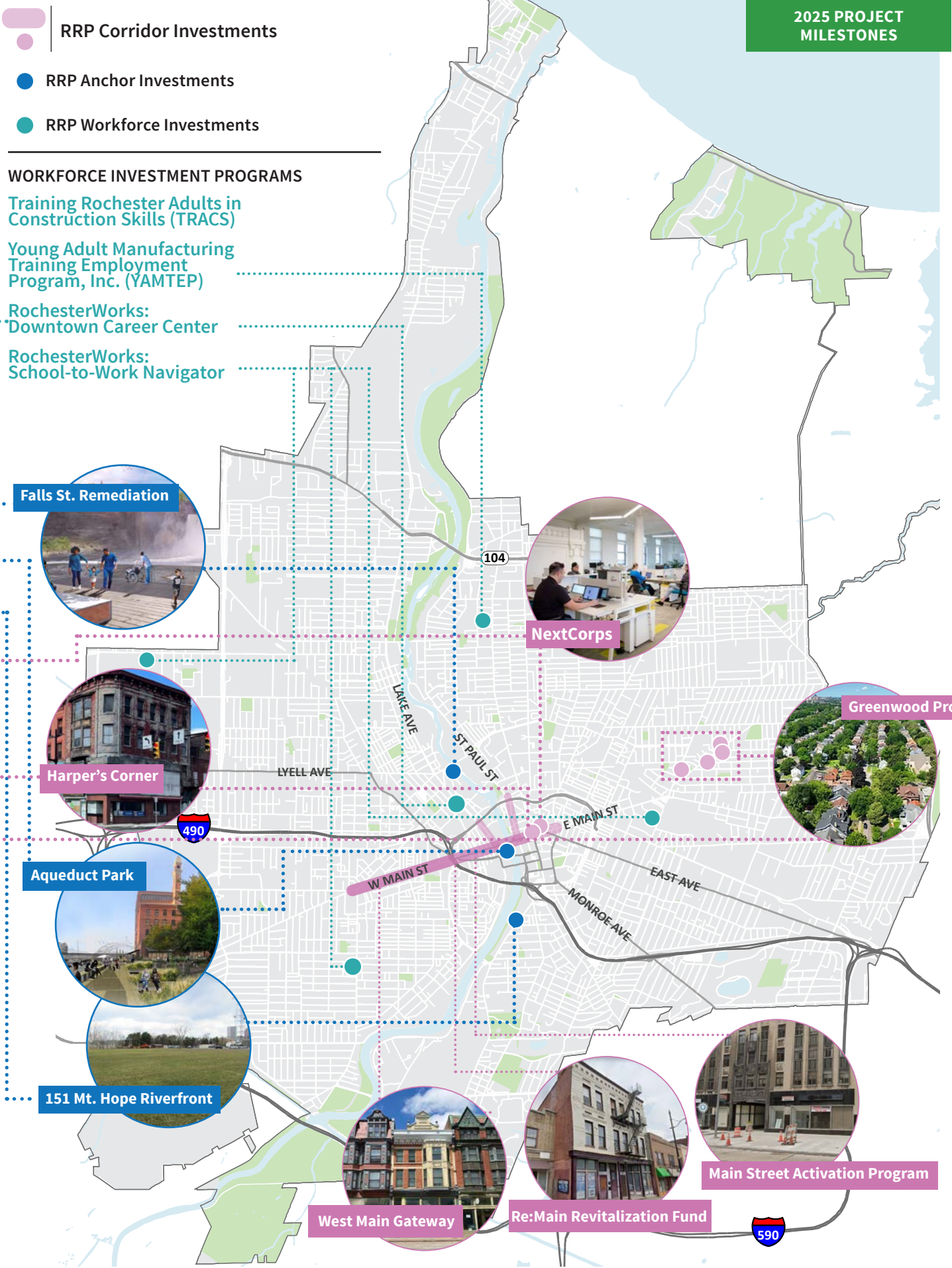
additional funding leveraged

929

applications to workforce training and capital improvement programs

Source: RRP Annual Survey of Local Program Administrators, October 2025.

2025 PROJECT MILESTONES





2025 PROJECT MILESTONES

2025 PROJECT MILESTONES

NextCorps, Inc.

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

**Continued work on A&E design.** When renderings, pricing estimates, and drawings are complete, NextCorps will launch a capital campaign to raise \$3 million needed for physical expansion. Construction is expected to begin in 2026.

**Sibley Incubation capacity building program** awarded 16 Design, Marketing and Branding micro grants, connecting startups with regional experts to move their businesses forward.

**Hired Incubation Community Manager and onboarded six Entrepreneurs-in-Residence (EIR)** to provide coaching and mentoring to local startups. EIRs conducted a total of 170 one-on-one meetings with startup clients since July 1, 2025 (averaging 57 meetings per month).

**Onboarded 23 Subject Matter Experts and continued to grow the volunteer Subject Matter Expert pool—**service providers and industry experts who meet with startups on a facilitated one-to-one basis to provide specific advice or connections.

**Embark program came to its conclusion with all resources spent.** Sent proposal to Monroe County for follow-on funding.

Main Street Revitalization

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

**Harper’s Corner**

- **Construction reached substantial completion in October**, and a full certificate of occupancy is expected by the end of the year.
- **Marketing is underway for the apartments.** The housing lottery is complete with move-ins planned for December.
- **Marketing is underway for the commercial spaces.** There is a signed Letter of Intent for the three spaces on East Main Street. The commercial space on North Clinton is available for leasing.

**West Main Gateway**

- **The program launched in July.** The Project Administrator team actively engaged the community in preparation of the grant application period. The program received 32 applications in the first round for business property improvement grants. The program will award its first round of grants by the end of the year.
- **Work continues on the urban design standards, commercial real estate study, and community engagement** around public realm improvements.

Re:Main Revitalization Fund

- **The City published a Notice of Funding Availability**, and continues to market and promote the program to property owners and developers along Main Street.
- **The City is currently in discussion with developers to support the redevelopment of three buildings** on Main Street in the program area.

Main Street Activation Program

- **The planning committee is in place. A consultant was hired** to conduct a retail study to identify key opportunities and priority spaces for investment.
- **The program received 207 pre-applications**, which are being reviewed by the selection committee to advance into the application round.

The Greenwood Project

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

**Neighborhood HUB**

- **Completed all exterior building renovations** and began ground improvements.
- **Officially opened with a ribbon-cutting ceremony in August.**
- **Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) were formalized** with each of the economic development, entrepreneur, and nonprofit partners, who will deliver direct services to residents and identified neighborhood entrepreneurs. Continue recruitment for community partner members.
- **Currently home of Teen Empowerment’s East Side site** and Hope585’s staff office.
- **Hosted TapRoot Collective’s summer youth employment program.**
- **Hosted monthly Beechwood Neighborhood Coalition meetings** and other community partner meetings.
- **Launched Neighborhood HUB Workshops** with community partners and business owners offering multiple weekly sessions focused on health and wellness and financial management.

Connect Lab

- **Completed interior renovations** and celebrated with a ribbon-cutting in September.
- **Secured \$300,000 through a CREST grant sponsorship** via Assemblymember Bronson’s office for exterior building renovations.
- **Currently home to four co-working members, two dedicated desk members, and one private office member.**
- **Engaged with the following business networking and training consultants:** RIT Center for Urban Entrepreneurship, St. John Fisher University School of Business, SUNY Brockport Small Business Development Center, Urban League, Pathstone, Rochester Public Library Business Insight Center and Beechwood Neighborhood Coalition.

- **Economic Empowerment Director was hired** to oversee work with local businesses, entrepreneurs, and service provider partners.
  - **Continued recruitment for entrepreneurs.**
- 359 Webster Avenue**
- **Received a \$150,000 Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) planning grant** to conduct a marketability and feasibility study for a fresh food market.
  - **Consultants completed the assessments** and found that the site is not currently financially viable for a grocery or food retail operation.
  - **Working with residents, partners, and local providers through focus groups and interviews** to explore how to strengthen existing food infrastructure and improve access to fresh, healthy food in the neighborhood.

256 Webster Avenue

- **Applied for a Renew America’s Nonprofits grant** through the Department of Energy to upgrade energy efficiency at 256 Webster Avenue (commercial restaurant).

2025 PROJECT MILESTONES

2025 PROJECT MILESTONES

RochesterWorks

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

Downtown Career Center

- **Monroe County and Monroe Community College finalized the lease arrangement** with SUNY and amended the County’s capital plan.
- **A design contract was awarded by the County in June 2025** and design is expected to be complete by the end of the year, followed by some demolition and asbestos remediation. The project expects to break ground early in 2026.
- **Engaged prospective partners for co-location.**
- **Some staff will move into the 5th floor of the MCC FWD Center** to begin a strategic partnership with NYS ON-RAMP.
- **Continued to build out employer partnerships** making connections with Plug Power, Power and Construction Group and AmeriCOM. The University of Rochester is interested in exposing students to job opportunities in healthcare.
- **Connected with RCSD’s Career and Technical Education Department** to advance both clean energy/hydrogen power and optics training in the district in alignment with industry standards.
- **Looking for opportunities to connect students to feeder program for apprenticeship or occupational skilled training**, post high school (i.e. Finger Lakes Youth Apprenticeship Program).

School-to-Work (S2W) Navigator

- **Two S2W Navigators are embedded at Edison and Wilson High Schools** with plans for a third high school (Padilla).
- **Most participants were supported with employment through Monroe County’s ROC Your Job (RYJ) after school jobs program and the City of Rochester’s Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP)** and summer career institute, while career exposure and training opportunities continue to expand. Additional programs support English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students. 366 students gained career exposure and 139 were placed in jobs (not including SYEP).
- **There have been successful job placements with employers** such as Kovalsky Carr, Rochester Central School District (RCSD) Central Office, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, and Valley Cadillac.
- **Developed boots-on-the-ground marketing strategy** and expanded printed/visual material to help staff, students, and parents understand RYJ and SYEP processes.
- **Held field trips** to Roc With Your Hands, College & Career Expo at Blue Cross Arena, and Careers in Construction Day at Monroe County Fleet Center.

YAMTEP and TRACS

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

YAMTEP

- **Projected total enrollment of 250 by year-end.**
- **Entering Year 3 of their High School Program with promising outcomes.** YAMTEP will expand the High School program to at least one additional school to continue to grow and serve 100–150 students annually.
- **Participated in major transportation and training expansions** including growing their fleet to 16 vehicles for the transportation program. They will increase the transportation fleet by at least another two vehicles in 2026.
- **Hired systems analyst** to improve data tracking and retention analysis.
- **Piloted an apprenticeship program** that included soft skills and basic manufacturing skills. There was 79% placement rate for participants who completed the program.
- **The ESL Workforce Partnership Organization (WPO) was approved and entered the planning phase.** YAMTEP will launch the pilot to riders starting in 2026.
- **YAMTEP plans to add an additional employer partner** next year.

TRACS

- **Graduated two cohorts with another beginning in January.** Completed first cohort with Center for Employment.
- **42% of graduates are placed in construction union jobs.** Plans to reach goal of 50% in 2026.

ROC the Riverway

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

Falls Street Remediation

- **City Council approved grant agreement and appropriation.**
- **Brick Chimney Inspection Report was completed** and presented the findings of a structural assessment of the smokestack present on site.
- **Environmental consultant was selected and the contract was executed for site characterization to be performed on subsurface conditions.** Consultant collected necessary data and a report will be completed by January 2026.
- **Remove the debris piles** that are present throughout the site by the end of the year.

Aqueduct Park District

- **Funding and design are in development for the park.**
- **Aqueduct Reimagined is in scoping and design phase.** The State Historic Preservation Office gave its concurrence with the City’s preferred design.

151 Mt. Hope Riverfront

- **The City Council authorized the donation of land from Charter to the City,** and subsequently the transfer of land from the City to the Rochester Urban Renewal Agency (RURA) allowing the City/RURA to assemble the full parcel needed for redevelopment.
- **The land transfer to RURA is anticipated to be completed** and an RFP released by the end of the year.



INDICATORS

Rochester Corridors  
Neighborhood Indicators

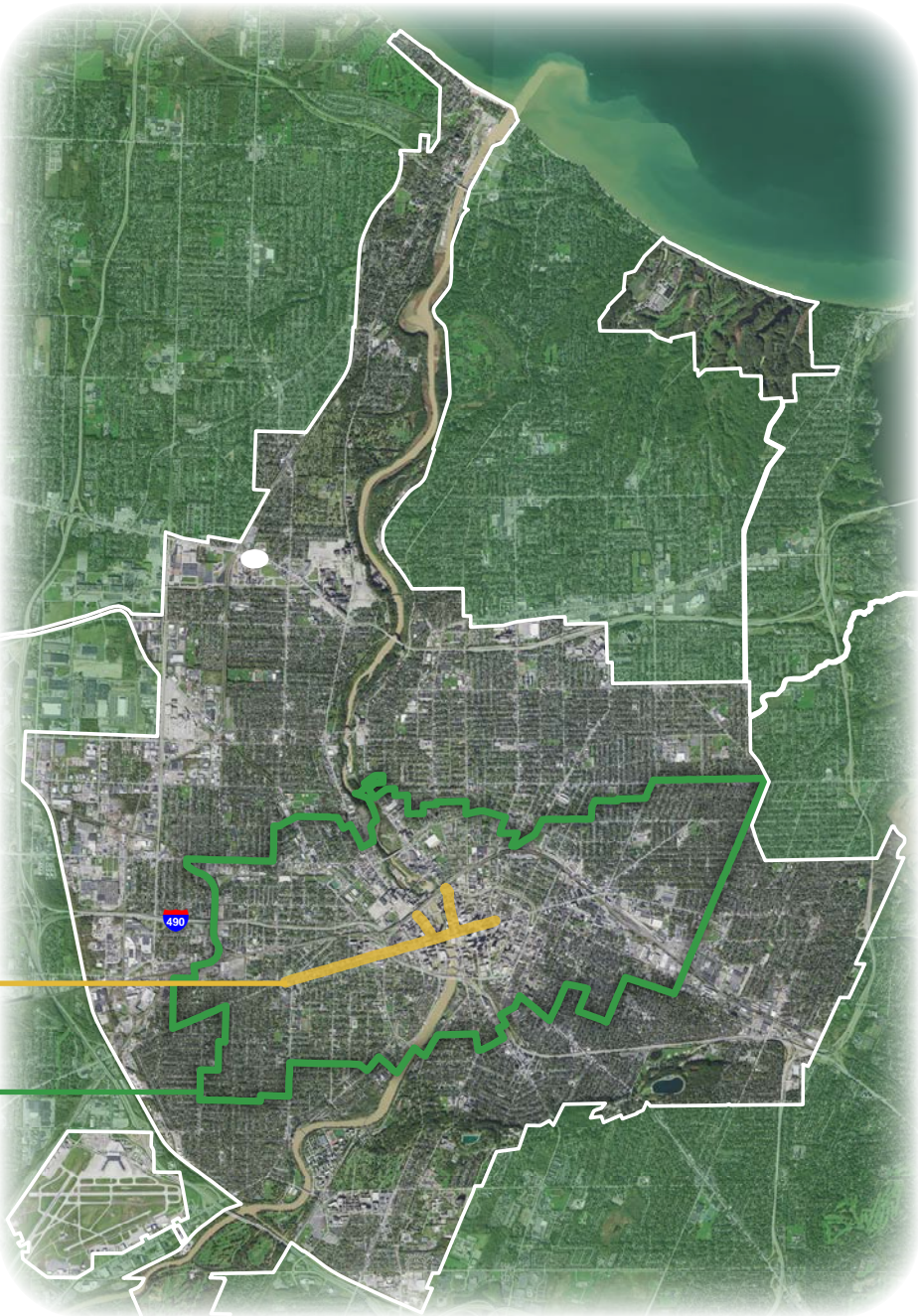
The city of Rochester continues to face significant challenges, especially in the RRP Corridor Neighborhoods, but indicator trends show positive momentum for the local workforce, communities, and small businesses.

Corridor Neighborhoods experienced an increase in new businesses, small businesses and microbusinesses over the past 12 months, fueling overall employment growth. Economic benefits are extending to residents near Rochester Corridors, as shown by recent increases in labor force participation, incomes, economic security, and access to higher-paying jobs.

However, recent population loss, increasing residential vacancy, and a slight downturn in educational attainment highlight the significant challenges the Rochester Corridor Neighborhoods face. As many indicators predate the implementation of RRP projects and programs, this context can help coordinate strategies across workforce, placemaking and small business investments by leveraging positive trends and overcoming systemic barriers to 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.

INDICATORS

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

		MOST RECENT 7-YEAR TREND	MOST RECENT 1-YEAR TREND	MOST RECENT DATA YEAR
WORKFORCE	Access to Higher-Paying Jobs	Number of higher-paying jobs	↑	2022
		% of higher-paying jobs held by residents	↑	2022
	Economic Security	% with incomes above 200% of the federal poverty level	↑	2023
		Median Household Income	↑	2023
	Educational Attainment	% of adults ages 25-64 with some education beyond HS	↑	2023
			↓	2023
PLACEMAKING	Labor Force Participation	% of ALL adults ages 16-64 who are in the labor force	↑	2023
		% of PEOPLE OF COLOR ages 16-64 who are in the labor force	↑	2023
	Population Growth	Total Population	↓	2023
		Young Adults (25-34)	↑	2023
		People of Color	↓	2023
		Foreign Born	↓	2023
		White	↑	2023
	Business Growth	Employment	↑	2025
		Employers	↓	2025
	Vacancy	Commercial Vacancy Rate	↑	2025
		Residential Vacancy Rate	↑	2025
SMALL BUSINESS	Entrepreneurs	Entrepreneurs per 10,000 people	n/a	2025
	Sole Proprietors	Sole Proprietors	↓	2025
		Self Employment as % of Total Employed	↑	2025
	Small Business Growth	Small Businesses	↓	2025
		Employment at Small Businesses	n/a	2025
		Microbusinesses	↓	2025
		Employment at Microbusinesses	n/a	2025
		New Businesses (Up to 5 years old)	↑	2025
		Employment at New Businesses	n/a	2025

Chart summarizes recent trends for the RRP Corridor Neighborhoods, excluding Entrepreneurs per Capita which represents the city overall. Yellow marks positive trends, decline is improvement.

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.**



Strategic workforce development is a driver of economic development. Industry-driven workforce training that serves local population needs can expand economic opportunities for residents while building a diverse, highly-skilled pool of potential workers so employers can succeed and grow. The most recent available trends on workforce conditions point to improvements in the local workforce conditions, with significant opportunities for RRP investments to accelerate positive momentum as RRP strategies advance implementation in future years.

For residents, accessing higher-paying job opportunities is essential to promote household economic mobility and security, and this starts with educational attainment. In the Rochester Corridor Neighborhoods, educational attainment levels remain below state and regional figures as just over half of adults (55%) have some education beyond high school. While this share fell by two percentage points in the most recent year of data (2022 to 2023), it does represent an increase since 2016.

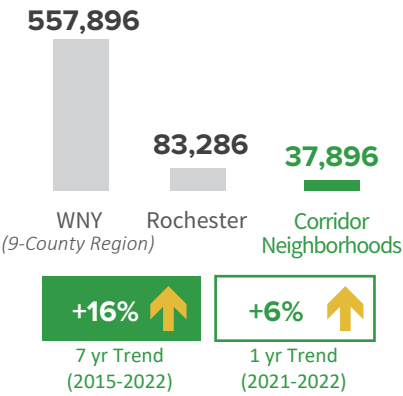
Acquiring new skills with education and training increases an individual’s likelihood of participating in the workforce and securing higher-paying jobs. As educational attainment levels have increased, so have labor force participation rates—up by about five percentage points from 2016 to 2023 for the overall population and for people of color who live in the Corridor Neighborhoods.

The number of higher-paying jobs in the Corridor Neighborhoods is up by 6% in the most recent year of data (2021 to 2022). Workers living in the Corridor Neighborhoods are slightly more likely to have a higher-paying job in the area than in previous years, but only 5% of these local higher-paying jobs are held by area residents as of 2022. Access to higher-paying jobs can open financial pathways to purchase a vehicle for commuting, buy a home, or start a small business, and limit reliance on public assistance programs.

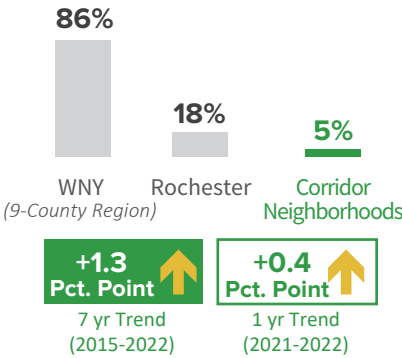
Although median incomes continued to grow while poverty rates declined over the past year of data, residents in the Corridor Neighborhoods are still 1.8 times more likely than the average WNY resident to live on incomes under 200% of the federal poverty line. While signs point to rising economic conditions for residents in the Corridor Neighborhoods, there remain substantial opportunities for RRP investments to catalyze positive economic momentum for the local workforce as RRP programs and strategies are implemented in the coming years.

Access to Higher-Paying Jobs

Number of higher-paying jobs (\$40,000 per year or more), 2022



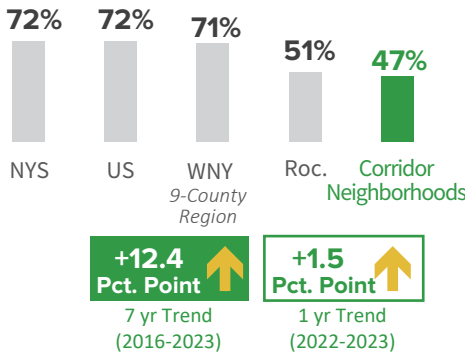
Percentage of higher-paying jobs in the geography held by residents, 2022



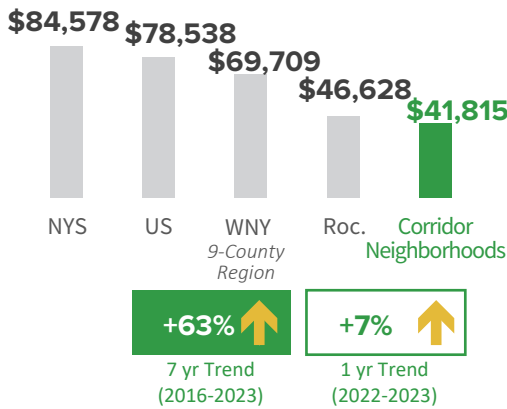
Source: US Census, OnTheMap

Economic Security

Percentage of households with income above 200% of the federal poverty level, 2023



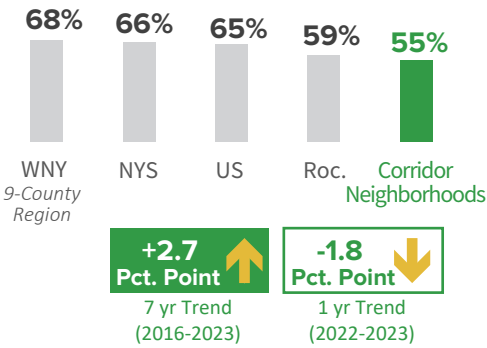
Median Household Income, 2023



Source: American Community Survey

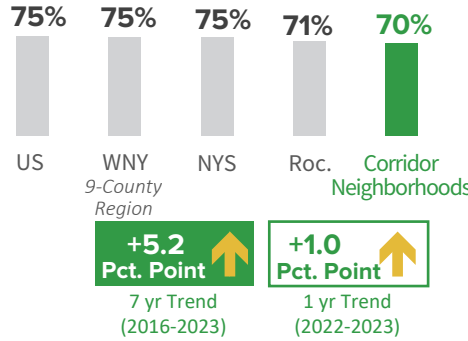
Educational Attainment

Percentage of adults ages 25-64 with some education or training beyond high school, 2023

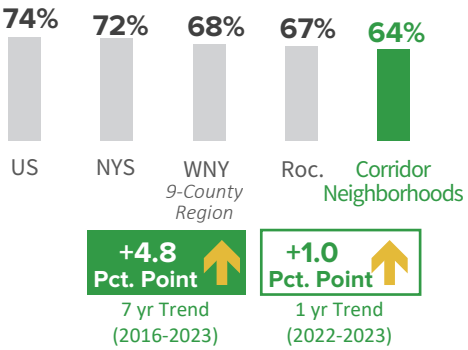


Labor Force Participation

Percentage of ALL adults ages 16-64 who are in the labor force, 2023



Percentage of PEOPLE OF COLOR ages 16-64 who are in the labor force, 2023





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.



Placemaking initiatives can spur neighborhood revitalization to attract new investments, visitors, and residents while growing economic opportunities for existing residents. Monitoring changes in vacancy rates, employment levels, and population trends can provide helpful context to understand how RRP investments may enhance the quality and vibrancy of Corridor Neighborhoods to spur economic benefits across Rochester and beyond.

Vacancy rates for commercial and residential spaces remain higher in the Corridor Neighborhoods compared to the city and region overall. Commercial vacancy rates declined slightly over the past year but remain double the national average (18% vs. 9%). Meanwhile, the residential vacancy rate increased in the corridor neighborhoods to 11% in 2025. With about one out of every ten residential spaces, and one out of five commercial spaces in the Corridor Neighborhoods sitting vacant, there is ample opportunity for placemaking efforts to rehabilitate commercial spaces to stabilize and revitalize neighborhoods.

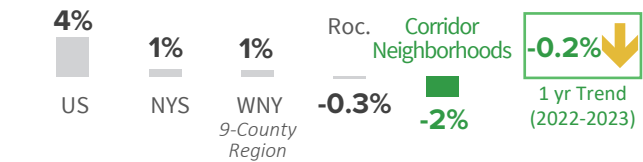
Successful placemaking strategies can also promote job growth. Businesses along the corridors employ over 10,900 workers, which is up by 6% over the last seven years (2018 to 2025). Coordinating placemaking strategies with strategic programs for workforce training and small business development through RRP investments can help accelerate recent employment trends, which showed slow growth from 2024 to 2025 (0.1%).

Creating employment opportunities can help attract new residents and businesses. The total population in the Corridor Neighborhoods is relatively stagnant in the most recent year of data (-0.2% from 2022 to 2023) but is down by 2% from 2016. Population loss was felt by diverse population groups including foreign born residents (-9%) and people of color (-5%). One positive population trend is the increase in young adults (age 25 to 34) of 5% from 2016-2023, which outpaces trends for the region, state and nation. Focusing on placemaking efforts to attract and retain young adults and other population groups can spur broader economic impacts for the Corridor Neighborhoods, city of Rochester and beyond.

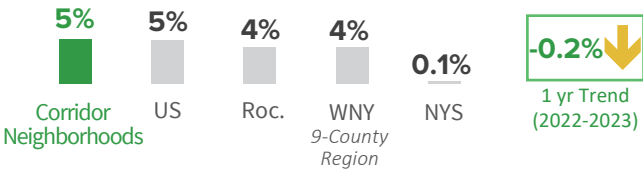
Source: American Community Survey

Population Growth

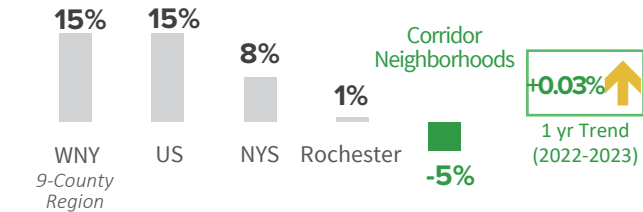
Percentage change in TOTAL population, 2016-2023



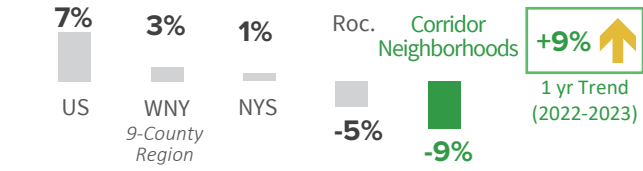
Percentage change in YOUNG ADULTS (25-34), 2016-2023



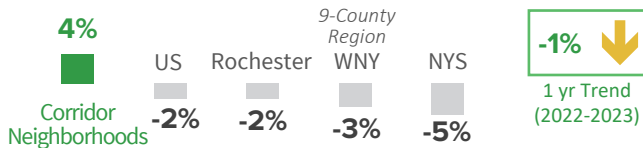
Percentage change in PEOPLE OF COLOR, 2016-2023



Percentage change in FOREIGN BORN, 2016-2023

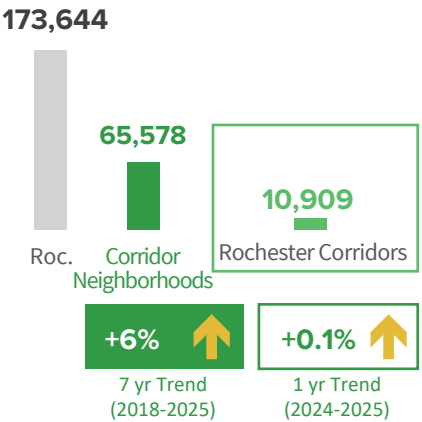


Percentage change in WHITE population, 2016-2023

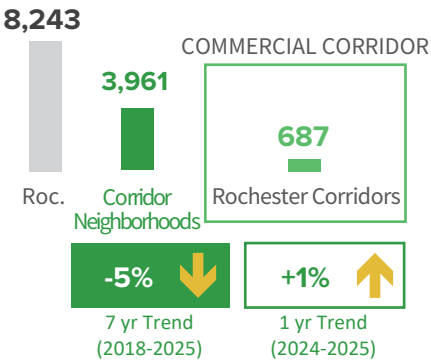


Business Growth

Employment at All Employer Locations, 2025\*



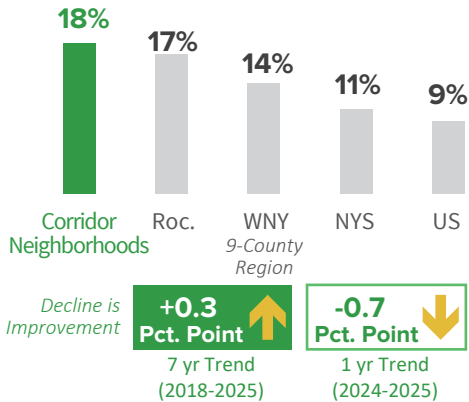
All Employer Locations, 2025



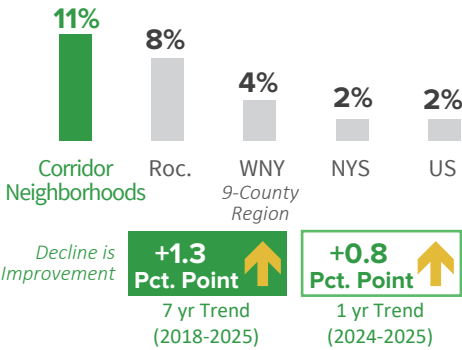
Source: Data Axle

Vacancies

Commercial Vacancy Rate, 2025



Residential Vacancy Rate, 2025



Source: USPS Vacancy Data

\* DataAxle is constantly improving data processing methods to construct their business database. Raw data is cleaned to exclude data revisions from percentage change calculations so that annual RRP indicator updates best reflect actual business dynamics, but some data revisions may still influence the percentage changes shown. As this data is refined each year, figures shown here should not be directly compared to previous or future RRP reports.

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 is home to over 8,200 business locations that provide employment to more than 173,600 individuals. Nearly half of these establishments (over 3,900) are located in Corridor Neighborhoods, including 687 businesses along the Rochester Corridors that employ nearly 11,000 workers.

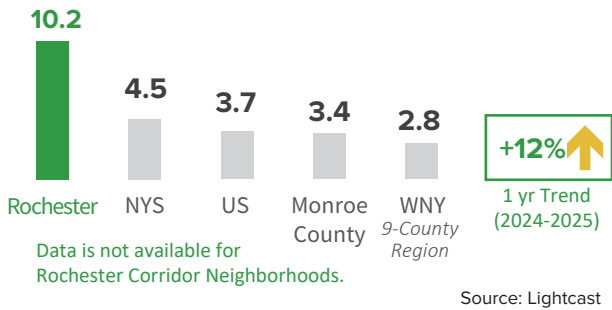
Small businesses continue to serve as the backbone of Rochester’s economy, despite facing steep challenges in the post-pandemic economic landscape. As of 2025, about 9% of the small businesses and microbusinesses in the city of Rochester are along the Rochester Corridors. Small businesses in the Rochester Corridor Neighborhoods grew over the past year. The number of microbusinesses (under 5 employees) increased by 3% from 2024 to 2025, as did employment at these establishments. The number of small businesses also increased, growing by 2% from 2024 to 2025. While the number of small businesses remains below 2018 estimates (-5%), employment at small business locations showed strong growth over the past year (+4%).

Promoting entrepreneurship can fuel job growth and economic prosperity. Rochester’s long history of innovation is still evident in metrics such as the number of entrepreneurs per capita, which is 3.5 times higher in the city of Rochester than the nine-county WNY region. Within the Corridor Neighborhoods, the percentage of employees who are self-employed fell slightly over the past year but remains higher than the region overall. Meanwhile, the number of sole proprietors is down compared to 2018 estimates (-34%), but this number increased slightly over the past year (0.3%).

The number of new businesses in the Corridor Neighborhoods more than doubled from 2018 to 2025. Although employment growth at new businesses slowed in the past year (+4% from 2024 to 2025). The expansion of new businesses is a positive sign for the city’s economy. Across all business locations, employment is up by 6% since 2018, including a nominal increase (+0.1%) over the past year (see page 57). Job growth occurred despite the number of business locations declining by 5% since 2018. Programs to help businesses stay open, grow, and succeed can help accelerate these trends. As RRP investments and programs are implemented in Rochester, these positive economic trends should continue to improve in Rochester’s Corridor Neighborhoods, with benefits extending through the entire city and region.

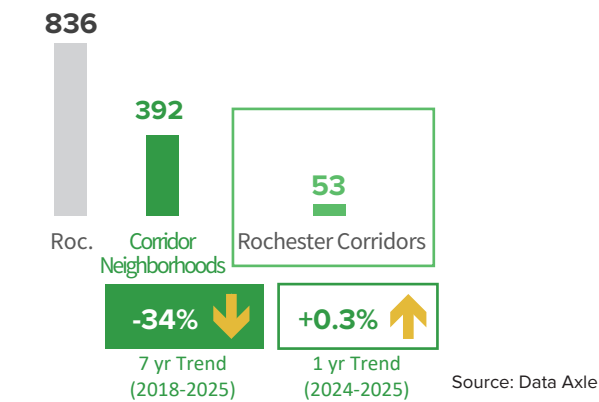
Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurs per 10,000 people, 2025

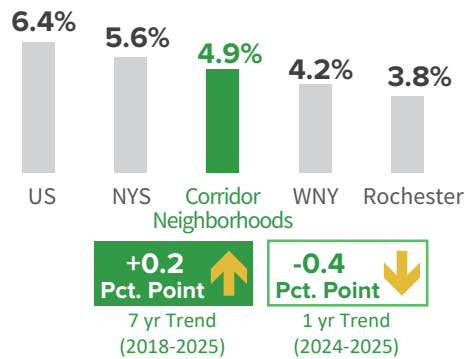


Sole Proprietorship

Sole Proprietors, 2025

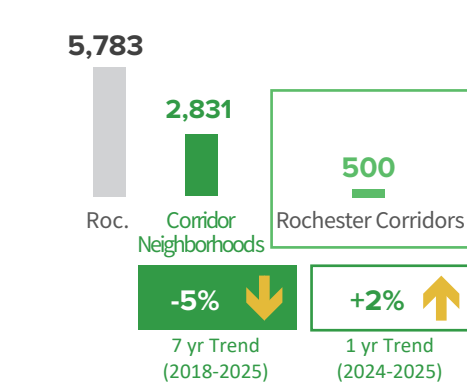


Self Employment as Percentage of Total Employed, 2025

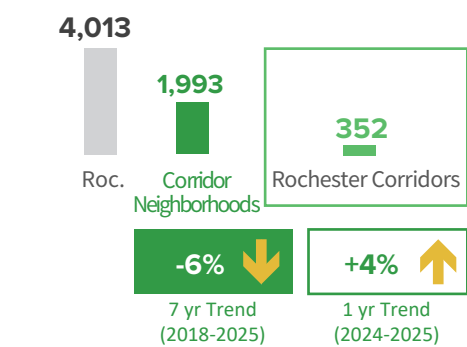


Small Business Growth

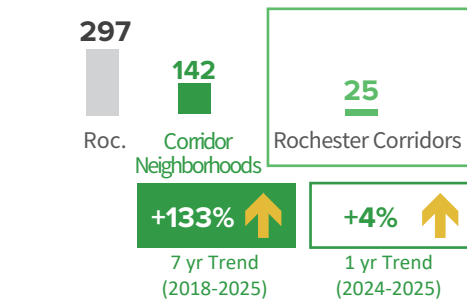
Small Businesses (Under 50 Employees), 2025



Microbusinesses (Under 5 Employees), 2025



New Businesses\*, 2025

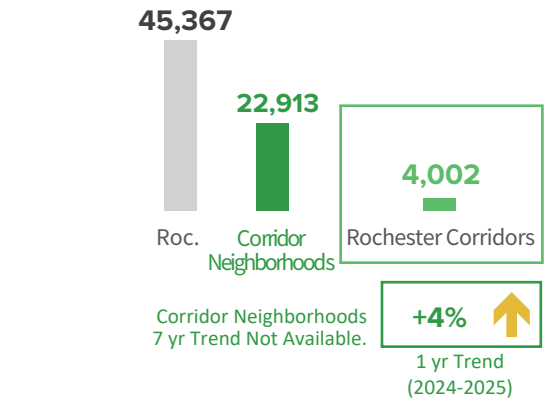


Source: Data Axle.

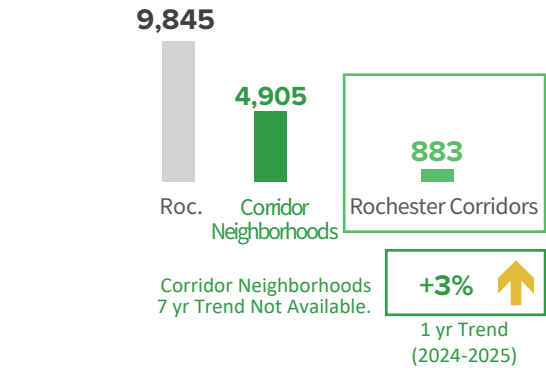
\* New businesses are those that opened 2018 or after. In 2018, New businesses included those established since 2013.

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

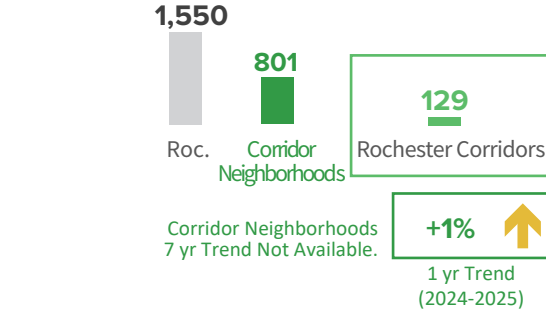
Employment at Small Businesses\*\* (Under 50 Employees), 2025



Employment at Microbusinesses\*\* (Under 5 Employees), 2025



Employment at New Businesses\*\* (Up to 5 years), 2025



Note: DataAxle is constantly improving data processing methods to construct their business database. Raw data is cleaned to exclude data revisions from RRP indicator progress updates, but changes in business counts and employment may reflect improvements in the data rather than actual changes in business dynamics. Figures shown here should not be compared to previous or future RRP reports.



# Lessons Learned

## RRP programs continue to build on lessons learned from five years of implementing East Side Avenues.

Previous models and lessons learned, such as those from East Side Avenues—the government/philanthropic partnership launched on Buffalo’s East Side in 2019—are very helpful as we implement RRP initiatives. While there is no “one size fits all” model for different geographies, the learnings can translate to create programs that work based on regional needs and context. We are taking those foundational building blocks and using them to make informed decisions in RRP geographies, and using lessons learned in program development to shorten the learning curve.

## Capitalizing on opportunities to expand RRP.

We must double-down on our RRP partners and projects—through increased commitments to funding, collaboration, and strategy—to have the greatest impact. Just as East Side Avenues led to RRP, we had a tremendous opportunity in 2025 to build on the foundation of RRP through NYS’s new ACHIEVE initiative. ACHIEVE funds transformational regional initiatives that emphasize regional collaboration, build on strategic

planning and regional assets, and leverage additional funding. Having built solid collaborations across geographies through RRP, the Western New York and Finger Lakes regions together submitted a joint \$75 million proposal that builds and expands on RRP initiatives in Placemaking, Workforce and Entrepreneurship/Innovation. If successful, ACHIEVE funds will leverage an additional \$30 million from the RCWJF.

## Solidifying the partners who are fully invested in RRP and ready to advance the mission.

The cadre of the willing is the momentum builder needed in collaboration. The broad partnership that makes up RRP is fundamental to its effectiveness and success. We are looking at the growth and evolution of program partners—determining if we need to add new partners in some areas, grow existing partnerships in others, or disengage with partners if our goals are not the same. In the end, it’s most important to rally around people and projects for the greater good. Those that aren’t in the partnership for the right reasons, can hinder the momentum and spirit needed to push forward.

## Organizations heading into major capital deployment and construction face growth and capacity needs.

We are entering next-level planning and capacity building for transformational capital projects. As the scale of capital projects and a greater level of program implementation is growing and becoming more complex, we are evaluating and addressing program partner staffing and other needs. This involves an increase in monitoring, managing and resourcing to help partners build the skill sets to bring their projects to the next level for full realization of the RRP vision.

## The impact of a unified strategic portfolio is significant, but needs consistent care and communications to be successful.

Communication processes were developed and continue to evolve to maximize efficiency and ensure smooth, consistent communication between CRS, consultants, community partners and funders. It is this consistent communication network that both ensures that project-specific problems are addressed in a timely way as they arise; and that the portfolio

is united across geographies and across projects in various stages of their life cycles. Building and keeping trust as the partners work together toward common goals is key. As initiatives grow, the responsibilities of the partners also grow and unexpected issues can emerge, which is where the trust is critical to help each other advance the collective goals.

## Organizational leadership cannot be underestimated.

Organizational leadership, at both the staff and board level, is critically important. Regardless of the mission, leadership can make all the difference in successfully implementing programs and projects. Succession planning for future leadership changes is an organizational best practice and promotes good financial stewardship of RRP funds invested in nonprofit organizations.

## Collaboration across geographies is paying off as national audiences are noticing our regional model.

RRP is creating a national model for ecosystem building —compelling to other places and funders looking for sustainable revitalization strategies. We are illustrating that planning must be driven by solid data and

community voices. There must be an unprecedented level of public and private collaboration and co-investment that is targeted, coordinated, and large enough to drive real, transformational change. The investments must create vibrant neighborhoods; strengthen historical, cultural, and natural assets; and connect people with family-sustaining jobs. Investments must be made in human capital to equip residents and businesses with tools to invest in their own assets, start or expand businesses, and generate economic wealth for the people in the community. The RRP model also reinforces the important role for intermediaries in ecosystem building.

## We are always learning, evolving and growing.

The best way to learn is to experiment. We take a hard, honest look at what is working and what needs work. We reflect on where we succeed, identify challenges with community partners and make thoughtful improvements to expand our reach and strengthen our programs. We have the best intentions entering into program development, but making thoughtful changes is often the best way to successfully grow household incomes. Launching portfolios with a longer runway for implementation gives us the ability to experiment and learn from experience, so we can shorten the learning curve in the future.

# 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 August to October 2025. The reporting period was September 2024 through August 2025 unless otherwise noted.

## 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, 2021 and 2022.

**Economic security, Educational attainment, Labor force participation, and Median household income:** US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2016, 2022 and 2023.

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

**Population growth:** US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-year estimates, 2016, 2022 and 2023.

**Business growth:** DataAxle, ReferenceUSA Business Database, August-October 2025. \* See note on Small Business Growth.

**Vacancy Rates:** US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Aggregated US Postal Service (USPS) Administrative Data on Address Vacancies, March 2018, 2024 and 2025.

## 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. For 2018 historical comparison, new businesses are defined as those established 2013 or later.

**Note on business/employment data:** DataAxle’s ReferenceUSA Business Database is used to track RRP indicators on businesses and employment. DataAxle is a comprehensive source of business location information, applying over fifty years of experience and 300 data technicians to compile location-based business data from public directories, business filings, company websites, direct company outreach, and user feedback. DataAxle continually enhances its methods to improve accuracy of its business records. When updating business indicators for RRP Annual Reports, steps are taken to discern the most accurate business employment estimates given by the data, and changes in employment that are clearly due to improved data accuracy are excluded from percentage change calculations. This ensures RRP indicators reflect actual business dynamics as accurately as possible. However, due to ongoing data improvements, indicators in this 2025 report may differ from past RRP reports and are subject to future revisions.

# RRP is driving impacts

## RRP investments...

“... helped ideate over 45 new businesses that have the potential to create more than 300 jobs.”

“... [created] a critical new service that is seeding vibrancy and growth in the very heart of downtown.”

“...have an immense impact on the region’s economic development.”

“... allowed us to take on the largest capital project [our organization] has ever supported.”

“*This impact is still being realized.*”

Source: Quotes from RRP local program administrators, RRP Annual Survey, 2025.

# 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

Max and Marian Farash Charitable Foundation

Five Star Bank

KeyBank/First Niagara Foundation

William & Sheila Konar Foundation

M&T Bank

NBT Bank

John R. Oishei Foundation

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