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Julianna Monacelli, Director of Public Relations

Phone: 617-571-5569

Email: julianna_monacelli@dixonschwabl.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 28, 2023

**Partnership for Downtown Rochester Unveils
DRAFT District Plan for a Potential Downtown Rochester Business Improvement District**

-Community invited to review, provide feedback, and engage in community input opportunities-

Rochester, NY (November 28, 2023) — Mayor Malik Evans, Monroe County Executive Adam Bello, and downtown Rochester community business and not-for-profit leaders joined [Partnership for Downtown Rochester \(PDR\)](#) Executive Director Galin Brooks and Board Chair and ROC2025 President and CEO Joe Stefko today at Rochester City Hall to announce the rollout of a draft district plan for a potential Downtown Rochester Business Improvement District (BID).

The purpose of a BID in the core of downtown Rochester¹ is to support and enhance the area with new funding (that is otherwise unavailable), delivering new programs and services. A Downtown Rochester BID would be a key driver in the creation of new jobs, providing support for small and local businesses and entrepreneurs getting their start, all while working to solidify downtown Rochester “as the region’s historic and innovative center of bustling community activity... [where] active street life will make all feel welcome and safe.” The draft district plan is a direct response to the broad and diverse [community input received](#). It is a draft outline of the services a Downtown Rochester BID could offer and how it would be run. Through the guidance and leadership of the [BID Formation Committee](#), it reflects the consensus of a diverse group of community builders.

The draft district plan is available for public review and feedback at [partnershipfordowntown.org](#) and at the Central Library of Rochester and Monroe County through Dec. 31. Community members are encouraged to take the online survey that accompanies the draft district plan and invited and encouraged to attend the community open house on Dec. 13 and [pop-up events](#).

PDR in partnership with Rochester Downtown Development Corporation (RDDC) has conducted an unparalleled and extensive community outreach process, engaging with more than 1,000 community members at more than 35 events as part of the planning process for a potential Downtown Rochester BID. A recurring theme from the collective feedback and aspirations for the future of downtown Rochester is that people want more from their downtown. Through the guidance and leadership of the [BID Formation Committee](#), the resultant community-informed [vision](#) for downtown Rochester and set of guiding principles are framing the process to form a potential Downtown Rochester BID and the drafting of the district plan. From creating a community-centered, accessible, welcoming, and safe environment, to working to ensure equitable access to living, working, and enjoying downtown, and vibrancy and vitality, the guiding principles serve as the values and goals framework for the draft district plan for a Downtown Rochester BID, putting community building front and center.

A potential Downtown Rochester BID would apply to the heart of downtown and help bolster activity and vibrancy with a variety of services, including free community programming in parks and public spaces; marketing and promotion of downtown amenities, cultural attractions, events, and small businesses; championing livability and smart growth practices for downtown to ensure a thriving, healthy, and inclusive downtown; on-street hospitality services to residents, workers, and visitors; and providing additive maintenance and beautification services.

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¹ See proposed service area on page 10 of the draft district plan. Also referred to in this press release as “downtown” or “area.”

BIDs are proven players in urban environments and help make some of America's most loved cities even better. While no two BIDs are alike, more than 1,200 exist today in municipalities across the country. There are over 75 in New York City alone, and they exist throughout upstate and western New York, including in Ithaca, Canandaigua, Syracuse, Geneva, Buffalo, and right here in Rochester: High Falls has had a BID since 2004.

Downtown Rochester is a place for everyone, and community engagement is an integral part in both the BID formation process and the long-term management of a BID. The work to develop a proposed BID is in the planning phases, and a thorough community engagement process will continue throughout. The next community open house meeting on Dec. 13 is set for 5-7 p.m., at the Kate Gleason Auditorium of the Central Library of Rochester and Monroe County (115 South Ave, Rochester) to share input on the draft district plan for a potential Downtown Rochester BID. The community meeting will be an open house format attended by community members, leadership for the effort, and elected officials. The agenda includes reviewing findings from the first phase of engagement, sharing how the input was used to develop the draft district plan, and obtaining feedback from the community.

The draft district plan will be adapted based on community input with the leadership and guidance of the BID Formation Committee. To move forward, a draft district plan will then need to be presented to property owners for petition and, if there is a majority of support from property owners, it will then be presented to the Rochester City Council for review in 2024. The City Council will then need to vote on the proposed plan, and if it advances, hold a public hearing to receive feedback on the proposal and complete several more steps per [New York State law](#) before a Downtown Rochester BID could be established.

PDR Executive Director Galin Brooks said: "The primary objective of a BID is to support and enhance the area it serves through new programs and services. Downtown Rochester is everyone's downtown. The BID Formation Committee is committed to listening and learning from the Rochester community. For more than a year, PDR in partnership with RDDC conducted an unparalleled and extensive community outreach process, and what has been heard time and time again is that people want to see change and they want more from their downtown. With a BID, the right tools can be in place to generate new economic growth and reinvigorate the magnetic and bustling heart of Rochester."

City of Rochester Mayor Malik D. Evans said: "We are so close to the day when Downtown becomes the bustling live-work-play community that it can be, and a BID can help us get there. The community's input will make this draft plan even better, so I am encouraging our residents and employers to be part of this important process."

Monroe County Executive Adam Bello said: "Rochester is the heart of Monroe County and Downtown is the heart of Rochester. Public input on the BID will help us create a downtown that's not just a place on a map – but is a vibrant, thriving neighborhood where people, businesses and special events want to be."

City Council President Miguel A. Meléndez Jr said: "The community must play a pivotal role in the revitalization of Downtown Rochester. For me, broad-based citizen engagement will be of the upmost importance in any process to consider a Business Improvement District (BID) Downtown. I encourage residents to actively participate in providing valuable feedback to ensure that any future plans for Downtown reflect the collective aspirations and priorities of our diverse community."

ROC 2025 President & CEO and Partnership for Downtown Rochester board chair Joe Stefko said: "Community input is vital and Partnership for Downtown Rochester has done its due diligence to hear directly from residents, workers, business and property owners through its extensive community outreach. The draft district plan is a direct response to this input and provides a path forward, creating a community-informed vision for downtown Rochester. The community must continue to play a pivotal role in the revitalization of Downtown Rochester, and we are excited for what the future holds."

Empire State Development Finger Lakes Regional Office Executive Director Laura Fox O'Sullivan said: "Ensuring that our Center City is the absolute best that it can be- for everyone — is the objective of the BID effort in Rochester. I hope that those in our beautiful community will take the time to review the objective of the plan, and to weigh in on the important next steps. Through that input, and with the help of our community partners, I have no doubt that there is a bright future ahead for Downtown Rochester."

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ESL Federal Credit Union President & CEO Faheem Masood said: “At ESL, we want to see all of Rochester's neighborhoods thrive, and believe the creation of a business improvement district (BID) is a proven solution to help make that happen in downtown Rochester. A BID has the potential to provide important resources that could support a vibrant downtown for businesses, residents, and visitors. As a downtown employer, property owner, and community partner committed to helping our community thrive and prosper, ESL will do its part to help make the BID beneficial for all who live, work, and visit the downtown neighborhood. We commend the Partnership for Downtown Rochester and RDDC for the thoroughness and openness in which they have managed this process to get to this stage for the district plan draft.”

President and CEO of The Strong National Museum of Play Steve Dubnik said: “With the Neighborhood of Play and other developments in the City of Rochester continuing to attract more and more guests to experience all that downtown has to offer, it's important to welcome and help guide these guests. The BID will help put the people and resources in place to showcase the city as the attractive tourist destination that it is—and to help highlight its vibrant arts and cultural scene.”

Urban League of Rochester President & CEO Dr. Seanelle Hawkins said: “As the leader of a fellow nonprofit committed to advancing the upward mobility of community members through the promotion of economic parity, entrepreneurial assistance, and the revitalization of Rochester, I take pride in our collaboration in support of a BID that actively strives for a vibrant future downtown. The close proximity of the BID and the Urban League of Rochester's corridor will undoubtedly contribute to the enrichment of our flourishing neighborhood. By directly addressing capacity challenges and fostering vibrancy and activity, in an all-encompassing and balanced approach that sets the stage for the prosperity of future generations.”

Owner of MillRace Design and member of the High Falls Business Improvement District (HF BID) Kathryn D'Amanda said: “This is an exciting time for the Rochester community and our area's history. More than 1,200 BIDs are in place across the county; one of which has been a proven success in High Falls since 2004. I love downtown, and have long chosen to keep my business here, and now to live here as well—but I also know it can be even better. I hope that people will be open to the benefits and possibilities of a downtown BID. It's important to note that no two BIDs are alike, and it is critical that community members get involved in helping to shape what ours can be. Designed well, it can generate new resources for services to boost the economy, promote a vibrant downtown, and address significant issues to plan for a viable future -- and one that is a place for all people. I'm glad to be a part of fostering the process and to share in this important milestone today.”

Endless Highway President & CEO Rob Tortorella said: “Being a part of an initiative to help revitalize downtown Rochester and improve the area amenities and accessibility is important to me personally and professionally as both a downtown resident and business owner. A Downtown Rochester BID will support and enhance the area to create a more community-centered and welcoming space for residents, the workforce community, and visitors, and promote a healthy, equitable, and sustainable downtown. I'm proud to be a member of the BID Formation Committee and look forward to supporting the next steps towards a fruitful approval process and hopeful BID in the central area of downtown in the near future.”

Second Avenue Learning Chief Executive Officer Victoria Van Voorhis said: “As a downtown business owner, I committed to being a part of revitalizing Rochester and appreciate the many amenities downtown offers our team from dining to activities and events that enhance our professional efforts and our personal lives. A well-managed BID can help to spur additional economic development and contribute to enhancing the many wonderful amenities that downtown offers well into the future.”

The Hideaway, Bar Bantam and The Penthouse Chief Executive Officer Max Gordon said: “Rochester has much to offer and draws interest and visitors from across the region to experience our great city and the many amenities it provides. As a business owner and Rochester native I'm committed to growth and I try to keep track of where the market is heading, what people want, and what our area needs. This has contributed to my ability to serve the community. As the owner of several restaurants downtown, I appreciate and rely on the help from community entities to invest in making Rochester a destination where people want to be. A BID tailored to the needs of downtown Rochester will do just that and benefit everyone, not just business owners, but our patrons, visitors, workers, and fellow residents. I appreciate that its informed directly by the people as it helps me tailor my approach to best meet them where they are.”

About the Partnership for Downtown Rochester

Established in 2021, Partnership for Downtown Rochester, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit, is a public-private partnership between Rochester Downtown Development Corporation, Finger Lakes Empire State Development, City of Rochester and ROC2025. This partnership is jumpstarting a new, collaborative way of managing downtown and ROC the Riverway. The goal is to increase private-sector participation to better activate public spaces and help guide the revitalization of Rochester for the benefit of downtown stakeholders, visitors and the overall community. For more information, visit partnershipfordowntown.org.

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