

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN RELEASED, INCLUDING KEY DATES FOR COMMUNITY INPUT
FOR DOWNTOWN BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT EFFORT**

ROCHESTER, N.Y. — The Rochester Downtown Development Corporation (RDDC), on behalf of the Rochester Downtown Partnership (RDP), today announced the release of a Community Engagement Plan for the Downtown Business Improvement District (BID) effort.

Legislation to explore a Downtown Business Improvement District (BID) was introduced by Rochester Mayor Malik D. Evans and approved by Rochester City Council in 2022. The RDP is now exploring what a potential BID could provide for Downtown Rochester, and the Community Engagement Plan is an important milestone during the multi-year process. Central to each step in the BID effort process is an effort to engage with the community — to listen, discover, and respond to community needs and preferences.

“I want to thank the members of the RDP for their work to establish an accessible public input process for the BID effort, ensuring that we hear from any and all who want to be heard,” said Mayor Evans. “Activities like marketing and programming for Downtown Rochester and our riverfront can help create and sustain vibrancy, support small businesses, attract investment, and enhance quality of life for residents and visitors alike. Downtown is the heart of the city, Monroe County, and the nine-county region, so keeping it healthy is in everyone’s best interest.”

Late last year, the Rochester-based public engagement firm Highland Planning was brought on to help ensure community engagement for the Business Improvement District (BID) formation process is rich and robust. The Partnership has centered next steps of the process around the importance of community input and dialogue. Several key dates for public participation have been scheduled, including two Public Meetings next month, continued monthly office hours and walkshops, and an additional community survey, along with many more opportunities for engagement.

The Community Engagement Plan for the potential BID clearly defines a timeline for conversations with and input from the public.

“Our community is invested and interested. We were told there would be opportunity to be heard and these events show that commitment, and that what we think really matters,” says artist and activist Shawn Dunwoody.

KEY DATES:

- In step with the goals of the plan, the first two **Public Meetings** take place on March 29 at 12pm via Zoom and on March 29, from 5:30 – 7pm, location TBD.

- The next Downtown **WalkShop** is this Wednesday, February 15 at 12pm, meeting on the corner of Court St. and Chestnut St. (Will continue monthly, check <https://www.rochesterdowntownpartnership.org>)

- The Rochester Downtown Partnership **Office Hours** take place this Thursday, February 16 at 12pm, at the Bausch & Lomb Library Building. (Will continue monthly, check <https://www.rochesterdowntownpartnership.org>)

The **Community Engagement Plan is available now**, along with several other project-related documents including preliminary survey data collected in late 2022 from 550+ people and summaries from all WalkShops conducted to date. Initial survey data indicates that respondents enjoy downtown food and beverage options, but see room for growth in shopping and convenience. Respondents also generally shared that they saw room for improvement in public spaces (e.g. green spaces, outdoor seating, landscaping and plantings) but gave walkability and public art high marks. The Community Engagement Plan outlines future opportunities to share thoughts and engage in this process, and is available now at: <https://www.rochesterdowntownpartnership.org/>.

Patrick Dutton, downtown developer and long-time resident, says, "Downtown is everybody's neighborhood. I'm energized to see what we can develop together: a BID that is community-focused, with community involvement, that sets the stage for immense growth and opportunity. I don't want to miss any progress or steps during this process, and the engagement plan clearly outlines what we can expect as a community in the months ahead. Together, we can do it. Now's the time!"

BIDs are public private partnerships that leverage private dollars to provide new services and programs in the public environment. With more than 1,200 BIDs across the country, BIDs are flexible, accountable, and responsive to the needs of the communities where they're located, and can help address economic, environmental, and social challenges on hyper-local levels.

The Rochester Downtown Partnership is available to hear thoughts and answer questions at: connect@rochesterdowntownpartnership.org.

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About the Rochester Downtown Development Corporation and the Rochester Downtown Partnership:

Established in 1977, RDDC is a 501c3 not-for profit organization whose mission is to drive economic vitality in Downtown Rochester. RDDC accelerates downtown development by positioning and marketing the assets that attract businesses and investment, and it catalyzes innovative ideas that make

downtown a more vibrant and inclusive community. RDDC founded and operates The Commissary, the region's first and only food business incubator and shared kitchen for small and local businesses.

Established in 2021, The Rochester Downtown Partnership, a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit, is a public-private partnership between RDDC, 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 sites.