



TESTIMONY

Mayor Malik D. Evans • Rochester, New York

Joint Legislative Hearings

2023-24 New York State Executive Budget Proposal

February 15, 2023



 Malik D. Evans, Mayor



City of Rochester, NY
Rochester City Council



Greetings Chairwoman Kreuger and Chairwoman Weinstein, members of the Ways and Means and Finance Committees; and other members of the Senate and Assembly. I am Mayor Malik D. Evans and I am honored to have this opportunity to speak on behalf of the residents, business owners and all of our city's stakeholders.

As you know, I recently completed my first year in office as Rochester's Mayor. Since my first day, collaboration has been the Number One principle of my Administration, guided by the mantra: *"It's not me, it's we."* Collaboration requires partnership and Governor Kathy Hochul has been a tremendous partner to the city of Rochester, as have all of our representatives in the State Legislature. Together, they've delivered unprecedented levels of state investment to Rochester.

Reflecting on this past year, I am reminded of what I said in my inauguration speech: Rochester has a past to remember, a present to live, and a future to build. The future we are building is becoming more clear and it's more exciting and hope-filled than ever. The source of that hope is the people of Rochester—residents and stakeholders who fight for our city every day, and who refuse to give up on our most challenged neighborhoods. They are the true heroes in our community and deserve our deepest gratitude and support.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Malik D. Evans". The signature is fluid and stylized, with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Mayor Malik D. Evans
City of Rochester, NY

The key to building our future is revitalizing our Downtown and our waterfront, and reconnecting neighborhoods. I am grateful for the support Rochester has received from the state in three areas:

The first is Inner Loop North. The Governor has pledged to fund this project – which will create more than 20 acres of development parcels between Downtown and Northeast Rochester – delivering environmental justice to neighborhoods that were ripped apart and isolated across our city.

The second is ROC the Riverway. Using state funding, we completed several ROC the Riverway projects, most notably the Rundel Library North Terrace, which links to our keystone ROC the Riverway project, Aqueduct Reimagined.

Finally, funding provided through the Downtown Revitalization Initiative, along with Restore New York, will allow us to bring much-needed investment to create a sense of place throughout our Downtown by restoring historic buildings and adding affordable housing, a hotel, and vibrant commercial spaces.

Rochester is attracting private-sector investment. The State-supported investments I just described are having a significant effect, and are generating substantial, additional private-sector investments, including global beverage firm Constellation Brands moving its national headquarters to Downtown. Throughout our Center City, large office towers and vacant buildings are being reimagined into vibrant spaces to live, work, and play.

Speaking of play, our Inner Loop East investments are also generating tremendous private development, including the expansion of the Strong Museum, which will celebrate its completion later this year within the newly created Neighborhood of Play. And if that wasn't enough, just last month General Motors announced a \$68 million investment at its Rochester manufacturing facility.



While we build our future, we must confront our challenges. In Rochester, like cities across New York State and the nation, our greatest challenge is gun violence. The City continues its aggressive strategies of prevention, intervention and suppression, which reduced homicides in 2022 to 76 – lower than in previous year 2021, but still far too high.

A spirit of collaboration with our law enforcement partners at the local, state and federal level has been key in targeting the most violent offenders and taking illegal guns off our streets, as has State funding through the Gun Intervention Violence Elimination (GIVE) Initiative and our SNUG Street Outreach Program. However, all of these things will not be truly effective unless we come together to ensure that we prevent violent offenders from obtaining firearms and making sure there are consequences for possession.

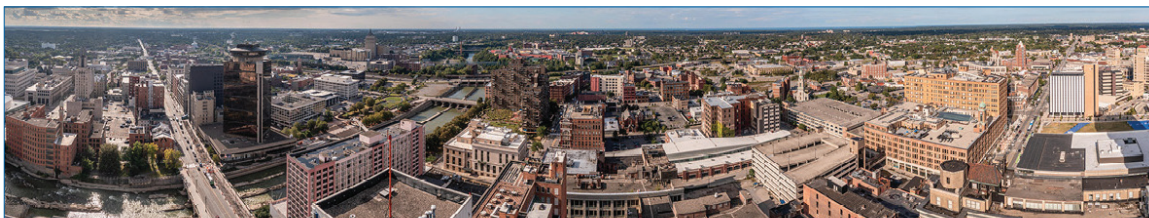


There are many things to be excited about in the Executive Budget: The State’s numerous investments in public safety initiatives, including youth employment programs, the GIVE program, crime reduction, youth justice, and gang prevention programs, as well as the SNUG outreach program; economic development investments, including continued funding through the Regional Economic Development Councils, the Downtown Revitalization Initiative and NY Forward; and funding for infrastructure through the BRIDGE-NY, PAVE NY, the Consolidated Highway Improvement or CHIPS, and the Pave our Potholes Programs.

I appreciate the Governor’s continued dedication to fund housing to create and preserve affordable homes, support the operation of shelters and supportive housing units, provide rental subsidies, and reduce lead exposure risks in our housing stock.



I applaud the Governor’s commitment to care for and educate our children through an increase in school aid, including funding to establish high-impact tutoring to assist students recovering from pandemic-related learning loss.



 **City of Rochester**
Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI)

I am here today to ask you to support these initiatives in the Executive Budget. And I also ask for these three things:

- An increase to our AIM aid,
- Funding to fully eliminate lead pipes in and around city homes, and
- Financial support to continue advancing our ROC the Riverway initiative.

Regarding AIM, Rochester has had this funding reduced to its current level of \$88.2 million since 2012, where it has remained ever since. Yet Rochester’s concentrations of poverty remain high. In fact, Rochester is home to three of the top five poorest zip codes in New York State.

Poverty is at the heart of so many of the challenges that Rochester residents face, including the high rates of violence I just mentioned. It is incumbent upon every New York lawmaker to deliver equity in funding by eliminating the historic disparity in the Aid and Incentives to Municipalities (AIM) that Rochester receives.

Equitably increasing AIM aid to Rochester would provide up to an additional \$34 million to Rochester annually. Imagine the impact those funds would have on our city’s residents. They will enable us to better fight violence, extend weekday and evening hours at our recreation centers, provide jobs to city youth who wants one, get dollars into the hands of our city residents through our Financial Empowerment Centers so they can better provide for their families – all truly transformational initiatives. Additional AIM aid would further stabilize Rochester’s finances by reducing our projected budget gaps, avoiding gap closure measures that force us to decrease annual investments in maintaining infrastructure and services our residents use daily, and diminishing the need to pass on increased costs caused by inflation to those least able to afford it.

TOP 25 POOREST ZIPCODES IN NEW YORK

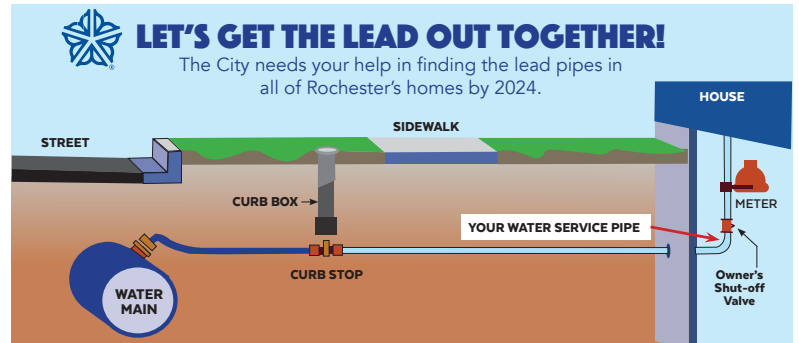
Rank	Zipcode	City	County
1	12307	Schenectady	Schenectady
2	14605	Rochester	Monroe
3	14211	Buffalo	Erie
4	14611	Rochester	Monroe
5	14621	Rochester	Monroe

**ROCHESTER, NY:
THREE
IN THE
TOP FIVE**



SOURCE: zipdatamaps.com/economics/income/agi/state/poorest-zipcodes-in-new-york

Secondly, funding is needed to achieve our goal of becoming “Lead Free by 2030.” Removing lead pipes is an environmental justice investment impacting our poorest neighborhoods, and an economic investment that will provide access to good-paying union jobs. Rochester has prioritized getting rid of every single lead pipe by 2030. While we’ve made significant progress in removing lead pipes using ARPA and City funds, more money is needed to finish the job. So, I am advocating for \$48 million in the current year and similar levels of funding in future years so we can achieve our goal.



And finally, I ask for financial support to continue advancing our ROC the Riverway initiative. As I mentioned earlier, we continue to make significant progress in revitalizing our Downtown and our waterfront through ROC the Riverway. As we look ahead, adding to the Blue Cross Arena at the War Memorial along its Genesee River side, expanding the Joseph A. Floreano Rochester Riverside Convention Center to better attract out-of-town visitors and restoring the Pont de Rennes Bridge adjacent to our Downtown High Falls waterfall, and the future High Falls State Park, are all investments that will further contribute to the economic vitality of our city. So, I am advocating for \$24.5 million so we can continue this important work.

In closing, I again thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today on behalf of the people of Rochester. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.





For more information contact
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