



TESTIMONY

Mayor Malik D. Evans • Rochester, New York

Joint Legislative Hearings

2025-26 New York State
Executive Budget Proposal

Local Government Budget

February 4, 2025



Chairwoman Krueger, Chairman Pretlow; members of the Senate Finance and Assembly Ways and Means Committees; and other members of the New York State Senate and Assembly, thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the people of Rochester.

For the second year in a row, I appear before this body with a joint advocacy agenda that combines the funding requests for both the city of Rochester and the county of Monroe.

This synergy, along with my administration's proven record of fiscal responsibility and effectiveness, should inspire confidence that your investments in Rochester will achieve maximum returns and pay dividends for the entire State of New York.



We used our share of American Recovery Plan Act funds on transformational projects that continue to achieve racial equity, create generational wealth, stimulate economic growth, and reverse decades of disinvestment in our most challenged neighborhoods.

These include our Buy the Block homeownership program, the historic Lead Service Line Replacement Project, accelerated progress on our ROC the Riverway waterfront revitalization program, and many more initiatives that will help us meet our goals for affordable housing, workforce development, violence reduction, and the restoration of critical facilities such as libraries, recreation facilities, and fire houses.

Likewise, the direct funding we receive from New York State has produced tangible results.

We're witnessing tremendous momentum in Rochester, with an accelerating pace of positive change and each new improvement generating more improvements. But serious financial challenges in the years ahead threaten that momentum.

Our most significant financial concerns include declining sales tax revenues, increasing pension and health care costs, and an end to ARPA funding.

What's more, while we are very grateful for the additional \$5 million we received last year in Temporary Municipal Assistance, Rochester's \$88.2 million allotment in AIM Aid continues to be lower on a per-capita basis than our peer cities of Buffalo, Syracuse and Yonkers. On top of that, the State-mandated Maintenance of Effort agreement that requires us to provide \$119.1 million to the Rochester City School District results in a much larger contribution for Rochester than our peer cities.

Beyond City Hall's financial concerns, we are serving citizens who live in some of the highest concentrations of poverty in the nation. Rochester is home to three of the five poorest zip codes in New York State. These are the conditions that drive most, if not all, of our most pressing challenges, including violent crime, low employment, and decreased educational outcomes.

These are the conditions that require the delivery of extraordinary levels of critical services even as we continue making strategic investments that attract private development and fuel Rochester's growth.

To confront these challenges and perpetuate Rochester's forward momentum, we respectfully ask for the following support.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Malik D. Evans'.

Mayor Malik D. Evans,
City of Rochester

Baseline AIM Aid Increase: First, we are once again asking for Rochester’s fair share of AIM funding with a baseline increase of \$32.7 million, which would bring us to parity with Buffalo.

The current disparity significantly threatens our ability to provide the critical services our citizens depend on, repair and replace aging infrastructure, continue the success of ARPA-funded initiatives, and keep up with an estimated \$20 million increase in pension and healthcare costs.



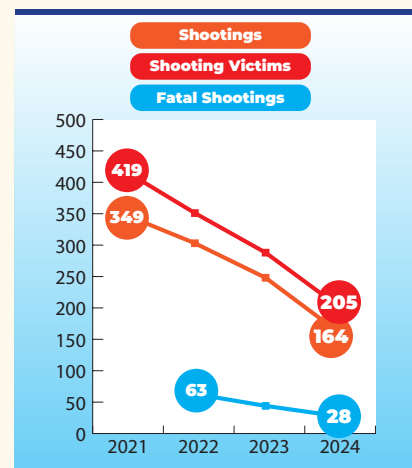
Affordable Housing and Homeownership: New York State is an important partner in our housing programs, which help residents escape the cycle of poverty and build generational wealth with homeownership.

We seek \$1.8 million in gap funding per year for three years for nine affordable housing projects; and another \$1.8 million a year for three years to support 18 renovation projects for small landlords who own no more than 20 units, so they can rent their units to low-income individuals or families for 10 years.

To create new homeowners, we seek \$11.25 million a year for three years to renovate or build a total of 75 houses for resale to income-eligible owners. And to help existing homeowners stay in their homes, we are seeking \$1.9 million a year for three years to help with repair costs.

Gun Involved Violence Elimination Aid: Gun violence in Rochester has declined by more than 50 percent since the peak years of the pandemic, and the State’s support through the Gun Involved Violence Elimination Initiative (GIVE) has been critical to that success.

To continue this progress and drive gun crimes even lower, we are seeking \$4.2 million in GIVE Aid—a \$1 million increase over last year.





ROC Vision Zero: Rochester is the only city in the State outside of New York City to take on the Vision Zero initiative to eliminate traffic fatalities through environmental design, enforcement, and education. ROC Vision Zero is not just a goal, it is a commitment to ensure that every individual can move safely throughout Rochester.

To move forward with this commitment, we are seeking \$18 million for projects including advancing our Bicycle Spine Network, implementing a 25-mile per hour city speed limit, and improving pedestrian priority zones.

Transformative Construction Projects: Rochester is in the midst of a physical transformation that emphasizes quality of life and environmental justice.

Chief among these projects are those in our ROC the Riverway waterfront revitalization program, and the Inner Loop North Transformation. This progress has already generated significant private sector investment, most notably the decision of Constellation Brands, a Fortune 500 company, to move its international headquarters to Downtown.

To build on this momentum, we are seeking funding for four ROC the Riverway projects:

- Rehabilitation and redevelopment of the Vacuum Oil site upon full remediation;
- modernization of the Rochester Riverside Convention Center;
- reimagining of the Erie Canal Aqueduct;
- and the renovation and expansion of the Blue Cross Arena at the War Memorial.

We are seeking \$35 million to “restore the shore” at the Vacuum Oil Site, a former oil refinery that occupies 15 acres and 4,000 linear feet of prized waterfront property along the Genesee River.



The Joseph A. Floreano Rochester Riverside Convention Center has been one of Rochester's primary economic engines and a major presence at the intersection of the Main Street and the Genesee River for more than 40 years. To ensure the future of a competitive convention and visitors industry in Rochester, we are seeking \$59.6 million in State support for necessary updates.

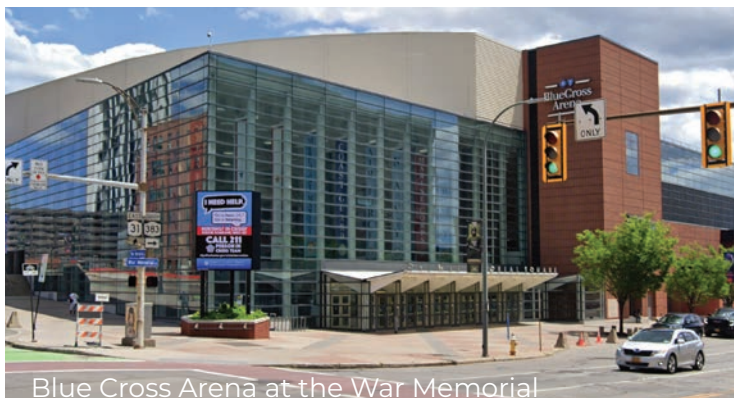
The Blue Cross Arena at the War Memorial is another major Downtown visitor destination and a critical element of Rochester's quality of life as the city's largest sports and entertainment venue, including as home of the Rochester Amerks hockey team.

We are seeking \$78 million in State support for a much-needed renovation project to replace its obsolete systems and maintain compliance with AHL standards to keep the Amerks in Rochester.

In addition, as part of our ROC the Riverway program, we also plan to expand the eastern wall of the War Memorial to open it up to the riverfront and bring much-deserved added visibility to the War Memorial's eternal flame.

Rochester's historic Erie Canal Aqueduct has the potential to be the postcard image of Rochester's revitalized waterfront and a regional attraction that would entice Erie Canal travelers to the heart of our city.

We are seeking \$175 million to convert this engineering marvel from an underused vehicle bridge into a dynamic public gathering space situated between the Convention Center and Blue Cross Arena and just a short walk from our newly designated Erie Canalway harbor at Corn Hill Landing.



Blue Cross Arena at the War Memorial



Erie Canal Aqueduct



Inner Loop North: Notorious power broker Robert Moses once said: *“To operate in an overbuilt metropolis, sometimes you have to hack your way with a meat axe.”*

This quote perfectly illustrates the urban-renewal mindset that prompted the removal of hundreds of homes, churches and businesses in Black and Brown neighborhoods with the Inner Loop North expressway. It’s much easier to aim your meat axe at those with no voice.

The Inner Loop North Transformation will restore these neighborhoods with thriving commercial districts, green space, and housing, delivering much-deserved environmental justice.

With a footprint more than three times the size of the Inner Loop East project, which now serves as a national model for reconnecting neighborhoods and generating new investment, the Inner Loop North project has the potential to surpass that success by orders of magnitude.

We are seeking an additional \$125 million for new construction costs and elements identified in the initial scoping.

As I said, we’re witnessing tremendous momentum in Rochester and Monroe County as a result of our strategic investments and valuable partnerships. As fellow public servants, I urge you to support these investments and join the “we not me” partnerships that are once again turning Rochester into an economic driver for the entire state of New York.

I welcome your questions.

For more information contact
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