

PLAN FORWARD

A Comprehensive Plan
for Monroe County

2026



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FORWARD**
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Acknowledging the Land

A land acknowledgment creates a more accurate picture of the history of the lands and waterways we call home. In this way, we pay respect to the Indigenous People who have stewarded these precious resources from time immemorial and honor their cultural and ecological knowledge. The County recognizes our indebtedness to these Indigenous cultures as we remain guests on ancestral lands.



Monroe County sits squarely upon the ancestral and unceded land of the Haudenosaunee people. Often described as the oldest, participatory democracy on Earth, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy's constitution is believed to be a model for the American Constitution. What makes it stand out as unique to other systems around the world is its blending of law and values. For the Haudenosaunee, law, society and nature are equal partners and each plays an important role. Through the confederacy, each of the nations of the Haudenosaunee are united by a common goal to live in harmony. We pay respects to their elders past, present and future.

Respecting this indigenous relationship with the land, planning efforts must be coupled with informed actions as guardians of Monroe County's rich natural resources, abundant fresh water, and prime soils—in order to maintain social equity and a healthy habitat for all life. Decisions should consider the implications for the seventh generation, as often we fail to recognize the potential for long-term unintended consequences.

Contents

Acknowledgments

Introduction

0.1.1 The Four Pillars	II
0.1.2 Plan Organization	III
0.2 Public Engagement	IV

1 Economic and Workforce Development

1.1 Introduction	1-1
1.2 Trends	1-2
1.3 What Do We Build On?	1-11
1.3.1 Economic Transformation	1-11
1.3.2 A High Quality of Life	1-18
1.3.3 Position in the SMART I-Corridor (High-Tech Manufacturing)	1-20
1.3.4 Untapped Potential of the Transportation Network	1-23
1.3.5 Agriculture-Driven Economics	1-24
1.4 What Do We Need to Address?	1-29
1.4.1 Underemployment	1-29
1.4.2 Need for Strategic Sites & Power Capacity	1-32
1.4.3 Retaining and Attracting Future Residents	1-36
1.4.4 Need for Housing	1-40
1.5 Goals and Strategies	1-44

2 Infrastructure

2.1 Introduction	2-1
2.2 Trends	2-2
2.3 What Do We Build On?	2-9
2.3.1 A Comprehensive Transportation Network	2-9
2.3.2 Water Resource Protection	2-14
2.3.3 High-Quality Parks & Trails System	2-21
2.4 What Do We Need to Address?	2-23
2.4.1 Monroe County's Resilient Future	2-23
2.4.2 The Infrastructure-Land Use Connection	2-29
2.4.3 Multimodal Infrastructure	2-30
2.4.4 Broadband Access	2-33
2.5 Goals and Strategies	2-34

3 Public Health

3.1 Introduction	3-1
3.2 Trends	3-3
3.3 What Do We Build On?	3-8
3.3.1 Healthy Environments	3-8
3.3.2 Mental Health Service Expansion and Integration	3-11
3.3.3 Preventive Care and Chronic Disease Prevention and Management	3-13
3.4 What Do We Need to Address?	3-15
3.4.1 Substance Use Disorders	3-15
3.4.2 Health Equity	3-18
3.4.3 Food Insecurity	3-22
3.4.4 Age-friendly Communities	3-25
3.4.5 Housing Instability and Homelessness	3-28
3.5 Goals and Strategies	3-30

4 Public Safety

4.1 Introduction	4-1
4.2 Trends	4-2
4.3 What Do We Build On?	4-7
4.3.1 Supportive Programs	4-7
4.3.2 Community Partnerships	4-8
4.3.3 Multi-Agency Collaboration	4-9
4.3.4 Traffic Safety Initiatives	4-11
4.4 What Do We Need to Address?	4-13
4.4.1 Diversify Crime Reduction and Prevention Approaches	4-13
4.4.2 Emergency Response	4-14
4.4.3 Public Safety Workforce Development and Recruitment	4-15
4.5 Goals and Strategies	4-17

5 Plan Implementation

5.1 Implementation Matrix	5-1
County and Stakeholder Roles	5-1

6 References

Figures

Acknowledgments

Introduction

1 Economic and Workforce Development

Figure 1	2025 Best-Performing Large Cities Rankings by Metric.....	1-3
Figure 2	U.S. Manufacturing as a Percentage of GDP.....	1-4
Figure 3	Educational Attainment in Monroe County as Compared to High-Ranking BPC Counties.....	1-6
Figure 4	Regional Educational Attainment.....	1-7
Figure 5	Finger Lakes Region Over-the-Year Change in Jobs by Sector.....	1-8
Figure 6	Annual Earnings of Degree Holders by Industry.....	1-9
Figure 7	Changing Household Configurations in the U.S.....	1-10
Figure 8	Largest Industry Clusters by Employment.....	1-12
Figure 9	Specialized Skills Score.....	1-13
Figure 10	Labor Market Briefing.....	1-14
Figure 11	Higher Education Institutions by County.....	1-19
Figure 12	NYS Smart-I Corridor.....	1-20
Figure 13	Tech Investments in Monroe County.....	1-21
Figure 14	Land Cover in Monroe County.....	1-25
Figure 15	Market Value of Products Sold, by Commodity or Commodity Group.....	1-26
Figure 16	Farm Sales vs. Expenses.....	1-27

Figure 17	Monroe County Median 12-Month Earnings by Degree.....	1-31
Figure 18	Lifetime Earnings by Degree.....	1-31
Figure 19	Home Sales.....	1-43

2 Infrastructure

Figure 20	Population Growth Compared to Land Urbanization 1970–2020.....	2-2
Figure 21	1901–2025 Average Temperature Trend.....	2-4
Figure 22	Projected Temperature Changes in Western New York Region 1.....	2-5
Figure 23	Pedestrian Fatalities in Monroe County 2014–2023.....	2-6
Figure 24	Bicyclist Fatalities in Monroe County 2014–2023.....	2-7
Figure 25	Commodity Flow Tonnage and Value by Mode, 2021 Data and 2050 Projection.....	2-8
Figure 26	Commodity Flow by Direction, 2021.....	2-9
Figure 27	Monroe County Transportation Network.....	2-10
Figure 28	Monroe County Water Resources.....	2-15
Figure 29	Pure Waters Districts.....	2-16
Figure 30	Monroe County Water Authority (MCWA) Public Water System.....	2-18
Figure 31	Monroe County Parks, Trails, and Recreation.....	2-22
Figure 32	Park Walksheds for Upstate Metro Areas.....	2-23
Figure 33	NYS Climate Targets.....	2-24

Figure 34	
Greenhouse Gas Reduction Targets.....	2-25
Figure 35	
CAP Phase II Goals & Strategies Framework Diagram.....	2-25
Figure 36	
EV Charging Stations in Monroe County.....	2-26
Figure 37	
Location of RTS Services.....	2-31

3 Public Health

Figure 38	
Social Determinants of Health.....	3-2
Figure 39	
Deaths Due to Opioids in Monroe County.....	3-3
Figure 40	
Distribution of Opioid Overdoses in Monroe County (2024).....	3-3
Figure 41	
Percent Change in Age Cohort 2010–2025 in Monroe County.....	3-5
Figure 42	
Residential Structures by Decade Built.....	3-6
Figure 43	
Median Age by Municipality in Monroe County, 2023.....	3-7
Figure 44	
Lead Inspections as part of the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, 2011–2022.....	3-9
Figure 45	
Monroe County Overdose Death Rates by Race/Ethnicity.....	3-15
Figure 46	
Monroe County Overdose Rates per Hundred Thousand Persons by Age and Race/Ethnicity.....	3-16
Figure 47	
Naloxbox Locations at Businesses Near Overdose Hotspots.....	3-17
Figure 48	
Poverty and Life Expectancy.....	3-18
Figure 49	
Geographic Distribution of Race and Life Expectancy.....	3-19
Figure 50	
Maternal Morbidity Rates by Race/Ethnicity (Per 10k Deliveries).....	3-20

Figure 51	
Geographic Links Between Female Poverty and Early Childhood Health.....	3-21
Figure 52	
Rates of Food Insecurity.....	3-22
Figure 53	
Monroe County Older Adult Population Projections 2015–2040.....	3-25
Figure 54	
Eight Domains of Livability.....	3-26
Figure 55	
Reasons for Placement in Emergency Housing - 2025.....	3-28
Figure 56	
Total DHS Temporary Housing Assistance Placements.....	3-29

4 Public Safety

Figure 56	
Total Crime by Category in Monroe County.....	4-3
Figure 57	
Total Property Crime in Monroe County.....	4-3
Figure 58	
Total Violent Crime in Monroe County.....	4-3
Figure 59	
Total Hazard Ranking Values for the Hazards of Concern for Monroe County.....	4-5
Figure 60	
Primary Contributing Factor to Crashes Resulting in Injury or Death.....	4-5

5 Plan Implementation

Pillar 1	
Economic and Workforce Development.....	5-3
Pillar 2	
Infrastructure.....	5-8
Pillar 3	
Public Health.....	5-11
Pillar 4	
Public Safety.....	5-14

6 References

Acknowledgments

Plan Forward was made possible through the efforts of the following individuals and organizations:

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Monroe County Planning and Development Staff

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Special thanks to the staff from the Monroe County Departments, Offices, and Divisions and stakeholder groups that helped throughout this planning process.

County of Monroe Industrial Development Agency

This plan was supported by the County of Monroe Industrial Development Agency and Monroe County.

Community Members

Special thanks to the stakeholders and members of the public who took time out of their work and life to share their expertise and viewpoint on this planning effort.



Introduction

A comprehensive plan is a tool that will help guide Monroe County toward its desired future. The process of developing a comprehensive plan is an opportunity for the County to ask questions like “Who are we?,” “Who do we want to be?” and “How can we accomplish our goals?” This process allows the County to identify aspirations, understand how current trends may affect communities, and formulate a vision for the collective future.

Plan Forward encourages a forward-thinking approach that positions Monroe County to be well-equipped for the future. The development of this Plan began in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. This, along with subsequent local and national events, highlighted the need for a Comprehensive Plan to guide Monroe County's future while remaining flexible. The County worked to create a document that is both visionary and adaptable, with clear, actionable strategies to

achieve goals through collaboration among a wide range of stakeholders. The planning process for this Plan was iterative and included consultation with County Leadership, multiple County offices, municipal constituents across the County, stakeholders with specialized knowledge in the topic areas, and community members at large. Through this inclusive approach, Plan Forward integrates diverse perspectives into a document that reflects Monroe County, identifies priorities, and aims to create a positive future for everyone.

This Plan sets a long-term vision and framework; however, planning is an ongoing process that requires regular evaluation and adjustment to remain relevant and effective. To support this ongoing process, this Plan is designed to be a living document that should be reviewed regularly and updated every 5 to 10 years to be responsive to changing conditions, policy focuses, and community needs.

Other Planning Efforts: Completed and Underway

Plan Forward builds on work already underway to improve Monroe County on many different fronts. Much of this work is articulated in the planning efforts listed below. Plan Forward compliments and aligns with the values, goals, and strategies laid out in these plans, however it does not comprehensively reiterate them. Where appropriate, these complimentary documents are referenced throughout Plan Forward. Click on the links below to learn more about these planning initiatives and specific topics of interest.

[Racial and Structural Equity \(RASE\) Report](#)

[Monroe County Climate Action Plan – Phase I and Phase II](#)

[Climate Adaptation & Resiliency Plan](#)

[County-wide Active Transportation Plan](#)

[County-wide Active Transportation Implementation Plan*](#)

[Bring Monroe Back – Monroe County, NY Recovery Plan](#)

[An Action Plan for an Age-friendly/Livable Rochester and Monroe County](#)

[Multimodal Freight Initiative*](#)

[Monroe County Housing Study & Needs Analysis – COMIDA](#)

[Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan Update](#)

[Local Solid Waste Management Plan *](#)

[Organic Management Plan*](#)

[Community Access Plan and Funding Strategy for Broadband](#)

[Monroe County Hazard Mitigation Plan](#)

[Monroe County Hazardous Materials Response Plan](#)

[Monroe County Arts and Culture Plan*](#)

**Denotes that the document was in development at the time of publication*

0.1.1 The Four Pillars

Monroe County is committed to advancing initiatives and making progress with respect to the Four Pillars: Economic and Workforce Development, Infrastructure, Public Health, and Public Safety. These Pillars include systems that cross municipal boundaries and promote collaboration among the County, municipalities, community organizations, businesses, residents, and other stakeholders to enhance the quality of life in Monroe County.

The four pillars are interconnected, each supporting the others to create communities where everyone can thrive. Focusing on the pillars both individually and collectively will help build a Monroe County that is forward-thinking and well-equipped for the future.

Economic and Workforce Development



Economic and Workforce

Development prioritizes the workers who power Monroe County's diverse economy. It is their well-being, skills, and dedication that allow longstanding manufacturers, emerging industries, and local entrepreneurs to thrive in Monroe County. At the same time, strong economic development is essential to creating the conditions in which both workers and the businesses that employ them can succeed. By attracting investment, supporting business growth, strengthening infrastructure, and fostering an environment that encourages innovation, economic development complements and amplifies workforce efforts. Together, aligned workforce and economic development strategies help build a resilient economy that expands opportunity, supports local employers, and enhances quality of life for all residents.

retention and creation, making it a cornerstone of Monroe County's economic prosperity. The future of Monroe County infrastructure is modernized, inclusive, and elevates the quality of life for the entire community through sustainable investments, resilient systems, and equitable access.

Public Health



Public Health

encompasses everything people need to live full, healthy lives. Monroe County recognizes that good health is shaped not only by medical care, but also by social, economic, environmental factors. This pillar emphasizes the importance of physical and mental health, access to nutritious foods, and equity across all residents and visitors in Monroe County.

Infrastructure



Infrastructure is fundamental for a healthy, safe, sustainable society and plays a critical role in supporting economic development. Monroe County residents rely on infrastructure daily for transportation, power, drinking water, waste management, and other essential services. In addition, public infrastructure and the related services it provides are key to job

Public Safety



Public Safety

provides safety, security, legal, prevention, education, and emergency services to all residents and visitors in Monroe County. When people feel safe, they are more likely to engage in their community, enjoy shared public spaces, and contribute to the economy. This pillar outlines the County's comprehensive public safety strategy, centered on coordinated prevention, response, and recovery efforts that extend beyond traditional law enforcement.

Monroe County is dedicated to strengthening all four pillars, and this plan is designed to advance in each of them, offering a clear path forward to reach its goals.

Plan Organization

Monroe County's Four Pillars also serve as the organizational framework for Plan Forward. Each section of the Plan focuses on a specific pillar, incorporating insights from the community engagement process to establish goals and strategies that will help advance the County. Each section is divided into subsections, starting with an introduction and a review of current trends that offer context and introduce key data points. The inventory and analysis is contained within two sections that examine the pillar through two lens intended to help assess the state of Monroe County.

The section titled **"What do we build on?"** is a review of what is working well in the County and how to build on strengths and ongoing successes.

The section titled **"What do we need to address?"** is an analysis of emerging or foreseeable issues that the County will work to solve over the time horizon of this Plan.

The Goals and Strategies section lists action items that the County and its partners can undertake over the next decade to make this plan a reality. The Implementation Matrix serves as a tool that can be used by a variety of stakeholders for tracking progress toward achieving these goals.

Introduction

PILLAR 1



Economic and Workforce Development

PILLAR 2



Infrastructure

PILLAR 3



Public Health

PILLAR 4



Public Safety

Implementation Matrix

Each Pillar Includes:

Introduction

✓ **TRENDS**

✓ **What Do We Build On?**

✓ **What Do We Need to Address?**

✓ **Goals and Strategies**

0.2 Public Engagement

The perspective of the community was critical to this planning effort. The Plan Forward project team engaged with Monroe County residents to understand county-wide issues, concerns, values, and assets.

Steering Committee

The Plan Forward Steering Committee was comprised of a group of individuals representing diverse backgrounds and important organizations within the County. The primary purposes of the Committee were to advise the planning department and consulting team; communicate to constituents, neighbors, and community about the plan; inform the planning process by providing first-hand knowledge of current issues, challenges, and opportunities; and help ensure the Plan aligns with community priorities and values.

Web and Social Media Presence

An online presence through the Monroe County website and social media channels allowed the public to access news, updates, documents, event details, and general information related to Plan Forward and the planning process.

Pop-Up Meetings

Pop-up meetings were held throughout the Plan Forward project, during which members of the project team informed the community about the planning effort while soliciting feedback about plan topics and community concerns. Over 30 pop ups were held around the County, including at the Rochester Public Market, The Genesee Country Village & Museum Holiday Market, and the Lilac Festival.





Public Workshops

Two public workshops were held in 2022 to provide opportunities for the public to engage with the project team and participate in activities with the goal of soliciting information to inform the recommendations made in this plan.

Focus Groups

Two rounds of focus groups targeted municipalities as well as topic-specific stakeholder groups within the County. The purpose of the municipal focus groups was to understand the concerns, needs, and opportunities of Monroe County's diverse municipalities to identify areas of potential collaboration, support, resource sharing, or facilitation. The topic-specific stakeholder groups were convened to gather input on key issue areas, explore emerging trends and challenges, and incorporate subject-matter expertise into the planning process.

The stakeholder focus groups occurred during the earlier stages of plan development to inform the existing conditions analysis. The stakeholder focus groups help the project team develop a deeper understanding of issues, opportunities, and potential strategies associated with each of the plan topics.



**JAVA
JUNCTION**
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56



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1 Economic and Workforce Development

1.1 Introduction

A thriving economy and a resilient workforce are essential to Monroe County's long-term prosperity and quality of life. The County benefits from a diverse industrial base, world-class educational institutions, and a growing reputation as a hub for innovation in advanced manufacturing, life sciences, optics, photonics, imaging, and information technology. Monroe County also benefits from the size and diversity of its population base. Monroe County is the 88th largest county in the nation (of 3,144) based on the 2020 Census and sits at the center of the 54th largest metropolitan statistical area (of 387).

Recent investments, such as the establishment and expansion of a Workforce Development Fund, creation of the Equip Monroe rebate assistance program, strategic partnerships with employers, and targeted support for small businesses, demonstrate the County's commitment to nurturing both emerging and established sectors. Companies like **Amazon, Constellation Brands, and fairlife** are choosing Monroe County for major investments, signaling confidence in the region's workforce and economic potential.

However, challenges remain. Persistent barriers to employment, such as transportation access and digital connectivity, continue to limit opportunities for many residents. The County is actively addressing these gaps through initiatives like the new pilot partnership with the Rochester-Genesee Regional Transportation Authority and the Monroe County Department of Human Services to improve mobility for job seekers, and broadband initiatives aimed at bridging the digital divide. Additionally, workforce development efforts need to continuously evolve to meet the changing demands of employers and ensure that training programs are aligned with current and emerging industries.

PILLAR 1

ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

GOALS

- ✓ Develop the Workforce and Support Entrepreneurship
- ✓ Create Places that Enhance Quality of Life
- ✓ Enhance Housing Access and Quality
- ✓ Strengthen Existing and Growing Economic Sectors While Investing in Emerging Industries
- ✓ Identify and Prepare Suitable Sites for Development



Monroe County seeks to build a strategic framework that builds on its strengths, confronts its challenges, and creates an inclusive, dynamic economy where all residents can thrive. By investing in people, infrastructure, and innovation, Monroe County is laying the foundation for sustainable growth and equitable opportunity for generations to come.

1.2 Trends

Trend 1

Economic competitiveness is linked to strong performance across multiple growth indicators.

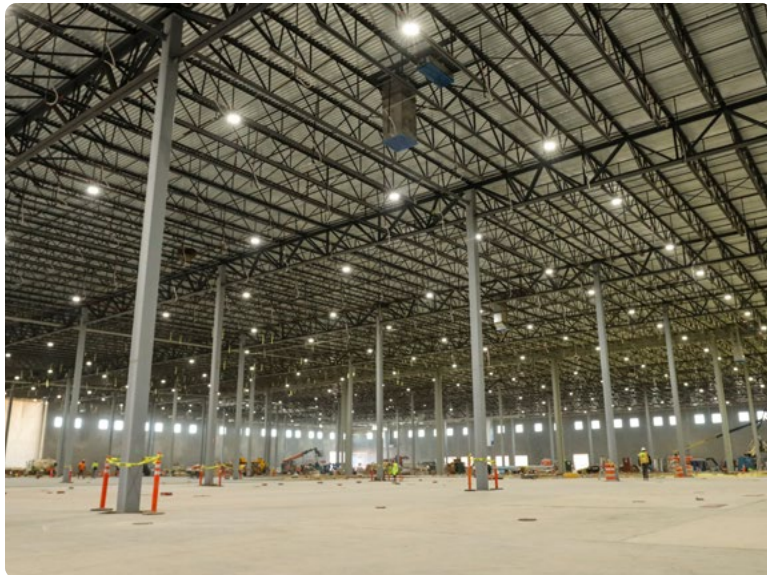
Monroe County and the Rochester Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) have endured several challenges, including population stagnation, limited venture capital activity, and a slower transition from traditional manufacturing to knowledge-based industries. However, recent years have seen targeted investments in photonics, advanced manufacturing, and higher education partnerships that have begun to shift the region's economic profile. These efforts have helped the County and the MSA to improve their standing relative to other Upstate metros, such as Buffalo and Syracuse, which continue to face similar structural hurdles. Rochester exhibits strong innovation-driven growth across multiple high-tech sectors, reinforcing its competitive position within Upstate New York.

The Rochester Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) has shown modest and meaningful progress in recent years, climbing in the rankings due to improvements in labor market conditions, access to broadband, and a growing presence in high-tech sectors. Compared to other upstate metros, the County and MSA stand out for their diversified economy and legacy of innovation, though they still trail behind national leaders in metrics like wage growth and high-tech Gross Domestic Product (GDP) concentration.

Despite these gains, the work ahead for Monroe County remains substantial. The region needs to continue to strengthen its innovation ecosystem, attract and retain talent, and address persistent disparities in economic access. Enhancing housing affordability, expanding broadband infrastructure, and fostering inclusive workforce development are critical next steps. Moreover, the County's ability to leverage its academic institutions and research assets into scalable commercial ventures will be key to sustaining upward momentum.

In the national context, the Rochester MSA is not yet among the top-tier performers, which are typically characterized by robust tech sector growth, dynamic labor markets, and strong wage gains. Nonetheless, upward movement in national rankings, such as the **Milken Institute**, signals a positive trajectory; one that, with strategic focus and regional collaboration, could position the County as a model for mid-sized metro revitalization in the Northeast.¹

Figure 1 provides a comprehensive look at how the Rochester MSA broadly competes with other MSAs by comparing metrics tracking a variety of growth indicators.



1. As Monroe County seeks to become a national leader in today's economy, identifying key indicators of market performance can inform policymakers as they develop strategies to foster economic growth. A competitive economy and workforce require a combination of metrics. Trends in metrics such as job growth and wages, high-tech GDP, household resilience, and more are often used as indicators of overall economic growth. The Milken Best-Performing Cities (BPC) report compares metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) to provide a comprehensive look at the growth of an MSA by combining 13 metrics related to high-tech growth, access to economic opportunities, and labor market performance. In that vein, the Rochester MSA ranks 156th among 200 large cities in the 2025 Milken Institute BPC index, an improvement from 188th in 2024. The Rochester MSA made significant progress in short-term job growth, rising to 55th from 159th during the 2022–2023 period and 194th for the five-year period from 2018 to 2023. A similar trend is seen in Rochester's wage growth, jumping from 168th over the five-year period to 86th in 2022 and 2023.

For example, Huntsville, AL, Ogden-Clearfield, UT, and Raleigh, NC are among the highest-ranking metropolitan areas in the nation. They tend to excel in traditional economic measures like job growth, wage growth, and affordable housing.

Still, variation exists between them, demonstrating that an MSA can succeed through different economic paths. To better compete on a national level, the Rochester MSA and Monroe County will need to continue to focus on their strengths, including recent job growth and the number and concentration of high-tech industries in the area.

FIGURE 1
2025 Best-Performing Large Cities Rankings by Metric
Rankings Out of 200

GROWTH INDICATOR METRIC	ROCHESTER, NEW YORK MSA	HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA MSA	OGDEN- CLEARFIELD, UTAH MSA	RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA MSA
Labor Market Performance				
2025 Rank	156	4	2	1
Wage Growth (2022-2023)	86 (6.8%)	9	36	41
Wage Growth (2018-2023)	168 (24.6%)	34	38	18
Short-Term Job Growth (July 2023-July 2024)	55 (2.1%)	58	20	22
Job Growth (2022-2023)	159 (1.3%)	5	22	19
Job Growth (2018-2023)	194 (-2.5%)	7	29	9
High Tech Impact				
High-Tech GDP Growth (2022-2023)	199 (-0.5%)	36	18	54
High-Tech GDP Growth (2018-2023)	175 (13.3%)	63	18	65
Number of high-tech industries with LQ>1	15 (10 industries)	26	105	5
High Tech Concentration Rank (LQ)	63 (0.9)	10	117	11
Access To Economic Opportunities				
GINI Index (income inequality)	106 (46.5%)	107	1	38
Resilient Households	126 (79.3%)	100	2	13
Households with affordable housing	79 (71.2%)	4	15	30
Households with broadband	158 (91.1%)	76	32	37

Source: Milken Institute, Best Performing Cities, 2025

Short-term wage growth is another metric that has recently improved and could keep rising, especially with the opportunities Monroe County offers in higher education.

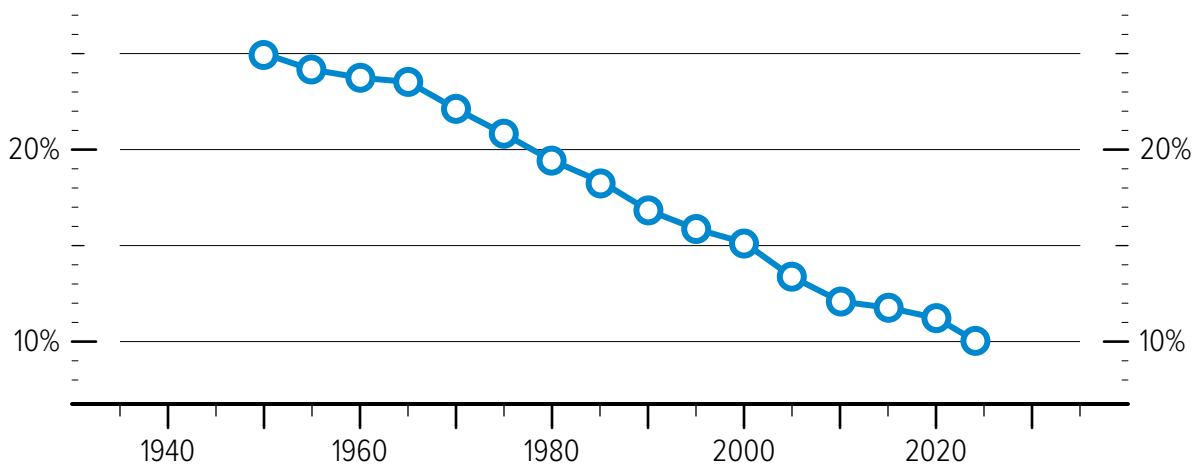
From a national perspective, the Rochester MSA’s location quotient (LQ) for high-tech industries is a compelling indicator of its potential for future economic performance.² The MSA’s elevated LQ in high-tech sectors, particularly in photonics, precision manufacturing, and software development, signals that the region has a strong foundation in industries that are key drivers of innovation and economic growth. This concentration reflects not only the legacy of companies like Xerox and Kodak but also the region’s ongoing transformation through investments in research institutions like the University of Rochester and RIT, as well as initiatives such as the AIM Photonics consortium and the New York Semiconductor Manufacturing and Research Technology Innovation Corridor (SMART I-Corridor) Tech Hub. Although Monroe County is not immune from the impacts a decades-long trend of manufacturing decline in the US, its

entrepreneurial legacy and strong educational institutions are indicators that reinvention and a thriving future are possible. (See Figure 2)

Nationally, regions with high LQs in high-tech industries tend to exhibit stronger job growth, higher wages, and greater resilience during economic downturns. These regions also attract talent, venture capital, and federal research funding at higher rates. For Monroe County, this means that the existing high-tech ecosystem can serve as a launchpad for broader economic revitalization, especially if it continues to foster entrepreneurship, scale startups, and integrate tech into traditional industries.

To fully capitalize on this advantage, Monroe County and community partners can continue to address gaps in commercialization, workforce development, and infrastructure. Strengthening the pipeline from research to market, ensuring inclusive access to tech jobs, and improving regional connectivity will be essential to translating its high LQ into sustained economic performance.

FIGURE 2
U.S. Manufacturing as a Percentage of GDP
1950–2024



US Manufacturing as Percentage of GDP | 1950–2024

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bureau of Economic Analysis, and Federal Reserve Economic Data.
Manufacturing value added as a percentage of total Gross Domestic Product.

2. The location quotient measures the concentration of a particular industry in a region compared to the national average. An LQ greater than 1.0 indicates that the industry is more concentrated locally than it is nationally, suggesting a regional specialization or competitive advantage.

Trend 2

Boosting educational attainment is critical to competitiveness in an increasingly complex, global economy.

For the last several decades, the developed world has been shifting into a complex global economy. To be a competitive player in that economy, it is increasingly crucial for Monroe County to attract and maintain highly educated and skilled labor. In the US, and particularly in New York's Erie Canal communities, manufacturing was traditionally the sector that brought wealth into the region through traded goods. However, this model has evolved significantly since the 1950s, as manufacturing as a percentage of U.S. GDP has steadily declined due to automation, globalization, and service sector growth.

While manufacturing remains an important driver of wealth for U.S. counties with large urban centers, it looks different today than it did 70 years ago. Technological advancements, combined with the position of the U.S. in global markets and trade policies, are leading manufacturing to focus on high-tech products and traded services that require fewer, more highly educated laborers with specialized technical skills.

Here again, it is useful to compare Monroe County to selected MSAs from the Milken Best Performing Cities (BPC) report to understand how educational attainment may need to shift in order to improve the County's competitiveness.

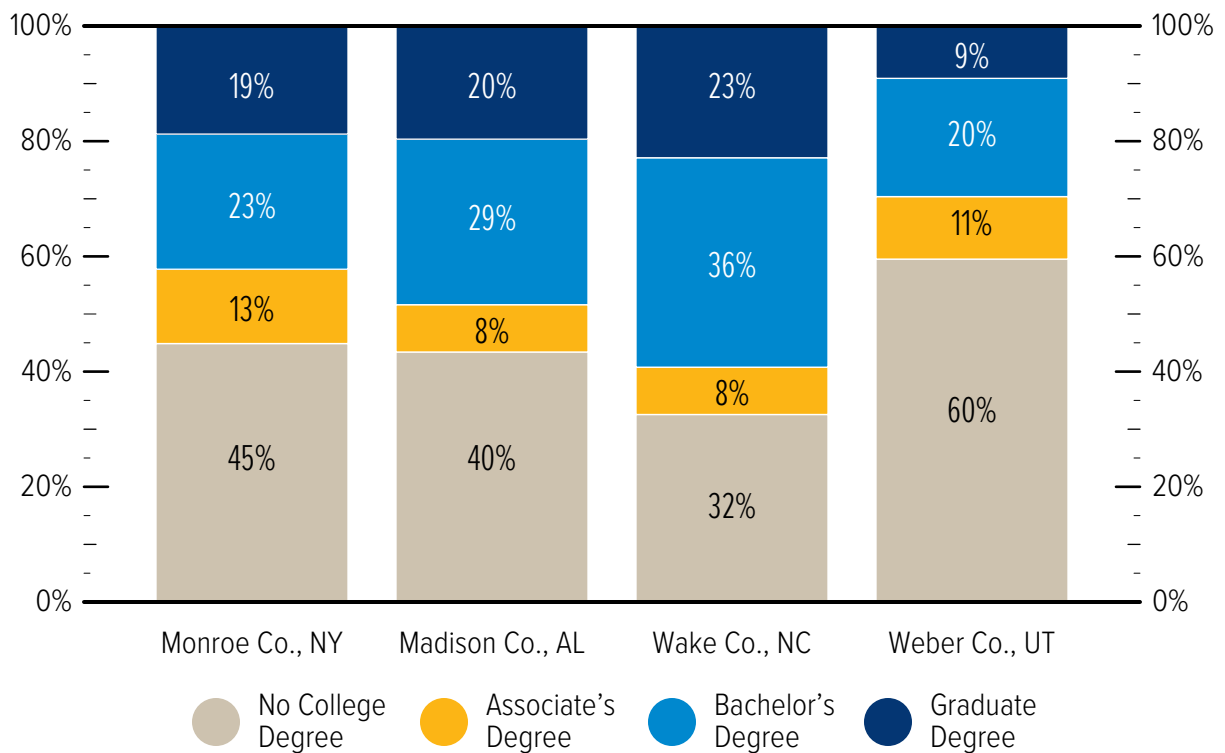
Madison County, AL, Wake County, NC, and Weber County, UT metro areas rank in the top four for competitiveness according to the Milken BPC Index. Compared to these (Figure 3), Monroe County has a relatively high share of the workforce with only a high school education or less. It outranks only Weber County, UT, in terms of workforce members with a bachelor's degree or higher. However, the economic makeup that Monroe County is pursuing closely aligns with Wake County, NC, home to the Research Triangle and the most well-established tech sector among the Best Performing Cities.



Growing Monroe County's tech industries will require increasing educational attainment rates, especially amongst those in the workforce who have a high school diploma or less. Even attaining an associate's degree would enable these workers to participate in skilled technician roles within high-tech manufacturing sectors or to engage in the economy as tradespeople. Supporting this talent development pipeline, Monroe Community College can serve as a critical asset, particularly through its optics program and strong partnerships with the University of Rochester and Rochester Institute of Technology.

Monroe County is well-positioned on a regional scale for further emergence into high-tech sectors. Monroe County's variety of educational institutions is one of its greatest assets. A high concentration of colleges and universities in the County continues to produce diverse graduates to enter the workforce. Compared to New York State as a whole, Monroe County has a higher rate of the population with a college degree and a much lower rate of individuals who did not finish high school (Figure 4). Overall, boosting educational attainment will help to align Monroe County's workforce with other peer counties across the nation.

FIGURE 3
Educational Attainment in Monroe County as Compared to High-Ranking BPC Counties



Education Attainment | 2024

Source: ArcGIS Business Analyst, 2024.

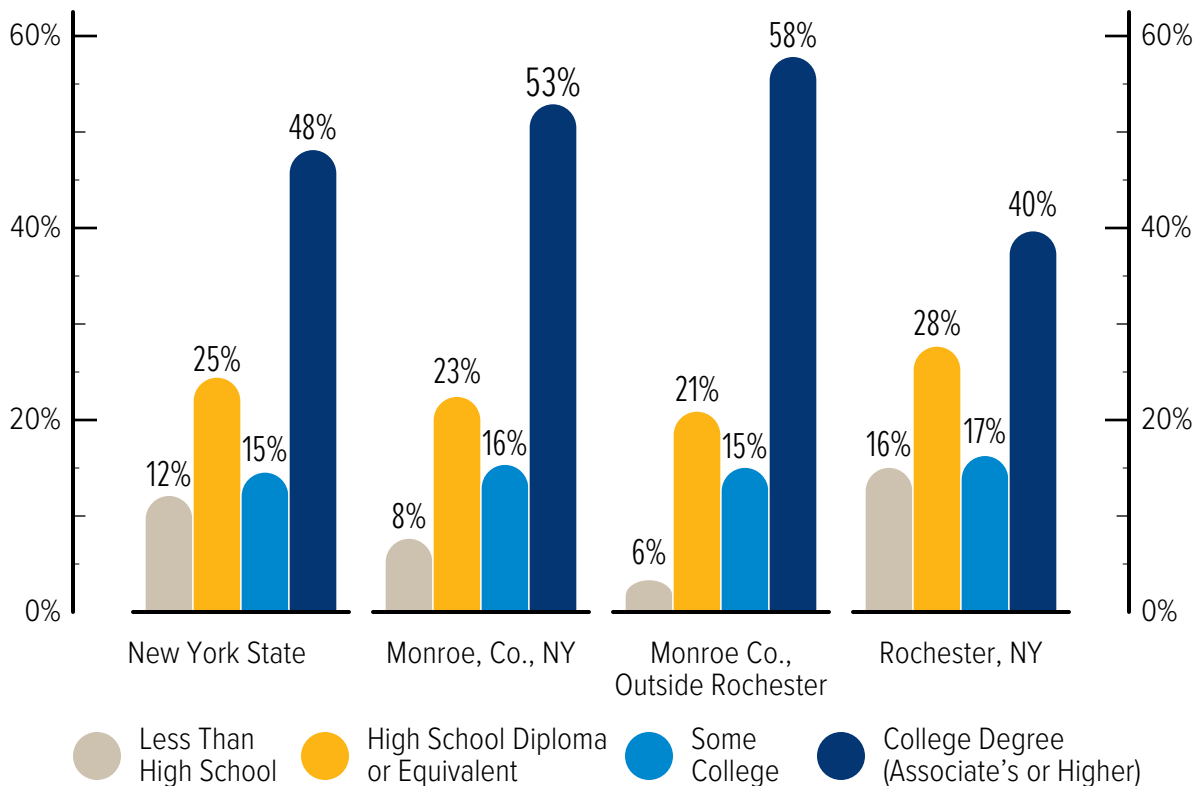
Trend 3

Widening gap between high-wage and low-wage earners highlights the changing nature of work, necessitating different skillsets for the future workforce.

Recent wage trends underscore a widening inequality between high- and low-wage earners in Monroe County, with earnings strongly tied to the type of training and education individuals receive (U.S. Census Bureau, 2025). From 2019 to 2023, the median household income in the County was approximately \$74,400, trailing both the New

York State median (approx. \$84,600) and the U.S. median (approx. \$78,500) (USA Facts, 2025). At the household level, 34.4% earned less than \$50,000 annually, while just 9.9% reached or exceeded \$200,000, illuminating a broad income spectrum with pronounced polarization. This trend highlights the shifting nature of today's labor market, where traditional skills-based jobs and hospitality continue to supply low-wage jobs, and low-skill jobs in science and tech industries are increasingly replaced or reshaped by automation, technology, and new business models. Meanwhile, high salaries are often concentrated in positions that require advanced education, specialized training, and adaptability to evolving technologies.

FIGURE 4
Regional Educational Attainment



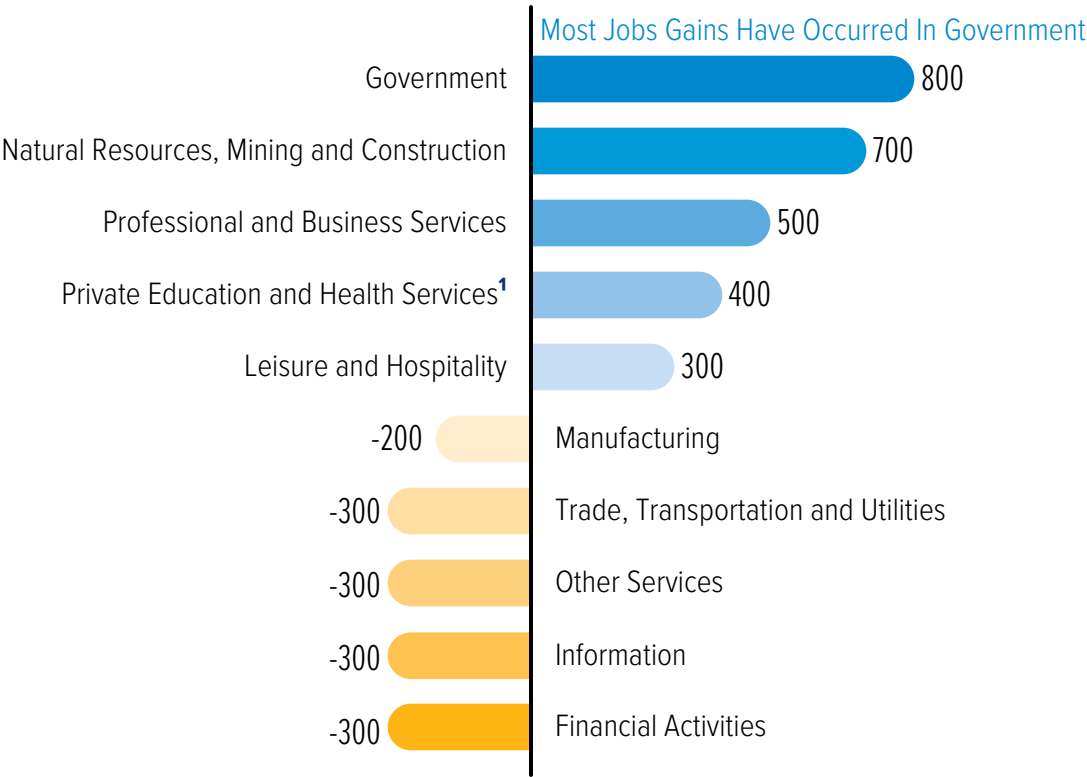
Education Attainment, Regional | 2023

Source: 2023 ACS 5-year Estimates.

The Finger Lakes region economy is increasingly dependent on leisure and hospitality jobs; however, these jobs provide low wages, are vulnerable to instability, and do not significantly raise average annual earnings. Nationally, average hourly earnings for this sector remain modest; as of July 2025, workers in leisure and hospitality earned approximately \$22.83 per hour (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2025a), compared to \$35.52 per hour (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2025b) for those working in the education and health services, which are on the rise in Monroe County (New York State Department of Labor, 2025) (Figure 5).

As illustrated in Figure 5, manufacturing is one of the sectors that has been declining and has seen job losses over the years (New York State Department of Labor, 2025). On the other hand, data indicate that the total number of jobs in the private sector continues to rise, including Private Education & Health Services and Leisure & Hospitality.

FIGURE 5
Finger Lakes Region Over-the-Year Change in Jobs by Sector
June 2025

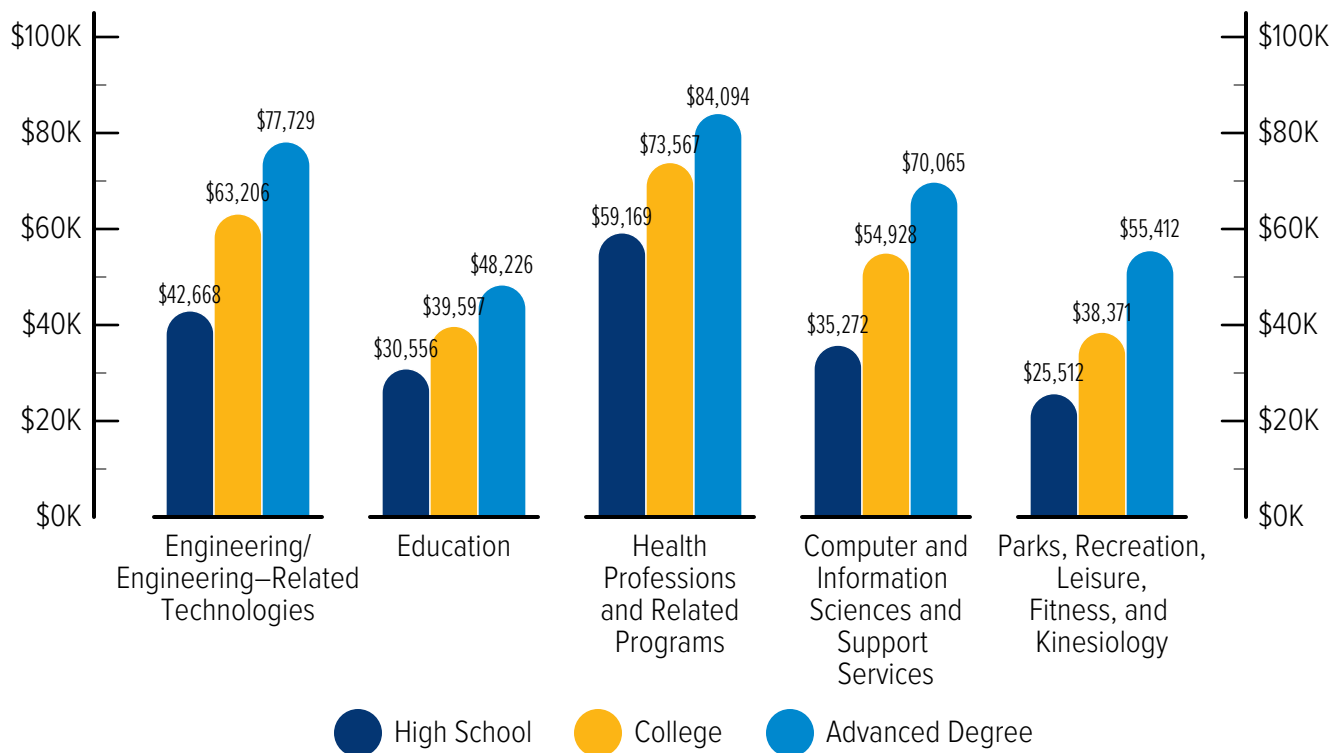


¹. Private education and health services is in the private sector. Government includes public education and public health services.
Sources: NYS DOL, 2025.

To pursue strategies to strengthen its competitiveness in higher-wage industries, the County can pivot strategically toward diversifying its economic base and support development in engineering, information technology, health and medical services, and related programs **(Figure 6)**. These sectors also offer substantially higher wages and have more sustainable earning potential over the long term.

There is a need for adequate workforce development strategies that equip future workers with a more diverse skillset, including digital literacy and technical expertise, to ensure they can access competitive opportunities and thrive in an economy that increasingly rewards knowledge and innovation. By diversifying employment opportunities and attracting investment in sectors that generate higher average annual wages, Monroe County can build a more balanced economy that supports upward mobility and long-term prosperity for its residents.

FIGURE 6
Annual Earnings of Degree Holders by Industry



Annual Earnings of Degree Holders by Industry, 2022

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Longitudinal Employer–Household Dynamics (LEHD) Data, 2025.

Trend 4

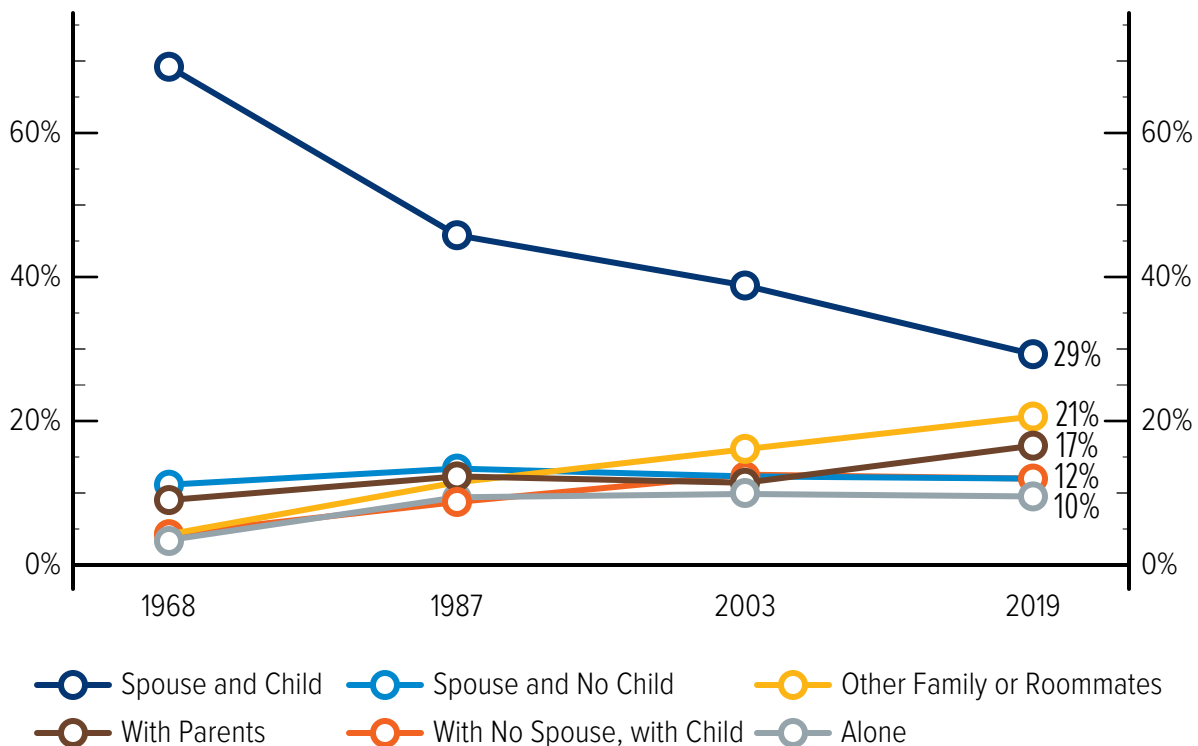
Household configurations and lifestyle preferences are changing, and housing development can change to meet new consumer needs.

The nature of American households is undergoing significant transformation, with traditional nuclear families now representing a minority of living arrangements. Increasingly, households consist of single adults, multigenerational families, and nontraditional groupings, driven by economic pressures, cultural shifts, and demographic changes. Younger generations are delaying marriage and childbearing, while older adults are aging in place, creating demand for more flexible and diverse housing options.

Household arrangements for people between the ages of 23 and 38 are an essential driver for trends in housing needs, as they are typical first-time home buyers. In 1968, these households were driven by decisions related to raising a family. **Figure 7** demonstrates that in 1968, nearly 70% of American households aged 23 to 38 consisted of parents with children. By 2019, less than 30% of these households were parents with children (Loh and Farrar, 2020).

Contemporary lifestyle preferences emphasize walkable communities, access to transit, smaller and adaptable living spaces, and sustainability. However, the housing market has been slow to respond, continuing to prioritize large-lot single-family homes that do not align with current needs.

FIGURE 7
Changing Household Configurations in the U.S.



Changing Household Configurations in the U.S.

Sources: Brookings analysis of ACS and Census data via IPUMS USA, University of Minnesota, www.ipums.org.

This mismatch between housing supply and demand has significant implications for metropolitan competitiveness. Metropolitan regions that fail to provide affordable, inclusive, and well-located housing risk losing their appeal to skilled workers and businesses. High housing costs, restrictive zoning, and inadequate infrastructure can deter talent and exacerbate inequality. Conversely, metropolitan regions that embrace zoning reform, invest in transit-oriented development, and support innovative housing models, such as co-living and adaptive reuse, are better positioned to attract and retain a dynamic workforce. In summary, housing policy is now central to economic development, social equity, and regional resilience.



1.3 What Do We Build On?

1.3.1 Economic Transformation

Over the past several decades, Monroe County has experienced a noticeable shift in its economic development, seeing a higher need for service and trade-oriented jobs as well as low-skilled health care positions taking over formerly dominant technology manufacturing jobs. Driven mainly by small businesses and supported by larger industries that form a substantial part of the local economy, the region has historically been known for its strong optics, photonics, and imaging industry, for which it still ranks first in the nation (Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council, 2023). Today, some of the most significant industries shaping the region include health care, manufacturing, and educational services (Figure 8), collectively known as the "Eds, Meds, & Manufacturing" economy. As a result, there has been a continued increase in demand for science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) professionals, which has influenced the County's efforts to retain and attract highly skilled workers and recent graduates in those fields (Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council, 2023).



FIGURE 8

Largest Industry Clusters by Employment

Source: ArcGIS Business Analyst, 2025

The Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council identified emerging regional industries in IT automation, artificial intelligence, augmented and virtual reality, distributed computing, machine learning, hardware description languages, optics, internet security, wind energy, and virtual private networks (Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council, 2023). These sectors are expected to continue growing and will require a highly skilled workforce. **Figure 9** shows gaps for specialized skills sectors that will require training programs. The higher the number, the more training programs will be necessary to ensure desired skills are being adequately supported, with agriculture and food production having the largest training gap.

FIGURE 9
Specialized Skills Score
Higher Number Equals Larger Skills Gap

SECTOR

Next Generation Manufacture and Optics, Photonics, and Imaging	28.47
Agriculture and Food Production	42.38
Clean and Renewable Energy	33.0
Software and Information Technology	25.69
Healthcare and Life Sciences	37.22

Source: FLREDC Strategic Plan Update, 2023

The County's top-tier colleges and universities play a vital role in advancing the entrepreneurial ecosystem through their expertise in securing grants and other funding sources, developing project proposals, research and development (R&D) testing, platforms for nurturing startups, workforce training, advisory and technical assistance, and sophisticated research labs. The added capacity provided by the numerous academic institutions in Monroe County can continue to be leveraged to develop and expand partnerships with emerging industries, thereby enhancing economic

development efforts focused on region-wide collaboration and creating workforce pathways and pipelines (Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council, 2023).



The average number of employees for a business in Monroe County is 13.1 (ESRI Business Analyst 2025). Small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs), including niche and experience-based retail stores, play a pivotal role in the economy of the Finger Lakes Region and Monroe County (**Figure 9**). According to the Milken Institute, SMBs form the backbone of the American economy, contributing significantly to job creation and local economic resilience (Milken Institute, 2015). Other research shows that SMBs actually have a greater impact on the local economy because they tend to buy their materials from local suppliers (Wagner et al., 2005). Moreover, small businesses and retail stores generate a positive ripple effect by creating places and neighborhoods people want to visit. This helps foster a greater sense of community in downtown and commercial areas, attracting more new businesses (**Figure 10**).

FIGURE 10
Labor Market Briefing

Finger Lakes • August 2025

More than Half of Businesses in the Finger Lakes Have Fewer than 5 Employees.

Number of Firms and Average Monthly Employment, Private Employment.

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES	FIRMS				EMPLOYMENT			
	Number		Percentage		Number		Percentage	
	2020	2025	2020	2025	2020	2025	2020	2025
A. 1-4	11,100	11,310	52.5%	53.2%	21,420	21,970	4.6%	4.8%
B. 5-9	4,020	3,960	19.0%	18.6%	26,400	26,200	5.7%	5.7%
C. 10-19	2,610	2,670	12.3%	12.6%	35,290	36,200	7.6%	7.9%
D. 20-49	2,020	1,980	9.6%	9.3%	61,660	60,030	13.3%	13.1%
E. 50-99	710	680	3.4%	3.2%	49,260	47,430	10.7%	10.4%
F. 100-249	460	450	2.2%	2.1%	71,850	66,180	15.5%	14.5%
G. 250-499	130	130	0.6%	0.6%	44,470	46,080	9.6%	10.1%
H. 500-999	70	60	0.3%	0.3%	45,120	37,330	9.8%	8.2%
I. 1,000+	30	30	0.1%	0.1%	106,590	115,190	23.1%	25.2%

Note: Size class 1-4 indicates firms that have average employment that is >0 but <1.

Source: Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 2020 Q1 and 2025 Q1.

However, since the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, the nature of business has changed, and the retail industry has shifted from providing goods and services toward experiential and niche markets, such as salons, health and fitness centers, outdoor and sporting goods stores, art galleries, gift shops, and restaurants, amongst others (Alexander and Varley, 2025). While online shopping became more prevalent during the pandemic emergency period, brick-and-mortar stores remain popular, and in-person services continue to serve as a strong foundation for fostering and sustaining entrepreneurship. In addition, the rise of experience-based retail has been part of a larger, ongoing national trend (Pine and Gilmore, 1998), highlighting the shift from service-based industries to experience-based economic offerings that utilize emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and virtual reality (Solanki, 2025). The expanded

use of technology in retail, increasingly applied in creative ways to attract customers and boost sales, will require a new set of skills, even for positions that have traditionally been considered lower-skilled (Williams, 2025).

Nevertheless, access to capital remains a critical factor for SMBs to thrive, especially in regions like Rochester, where legacy industries are transitioning. Tailored financial strategies and supportive public policies can empower these businesses to expand and innovate, thereby fueling regional economic growth (Milken Institute, 2015).

Following is the list of Business Support Resources in Monroe County that assist businesses at every stage, from startup to expansion.



- ✓ **Financial Assistance:** Composed of the County of Monroe Industrial Development Agency (COMIDA) and the Monroe County Industrial Development Corporation (MCIDC), Monroe County Economic Development (2025) offers loans, rebates, tax incentives, and workforce training to support businesses from startups to enterprise-scale expansion.
- ✓ **Advisory & Development Services:** Small Business Development Centers (SBDCs) provide free, confidential counseling; SCORE Greater Rochester offers mentorship and practical tools for startups and growing enterprises. Greater Rochester Enterprise (GRE) provides free, 'concierge'-style services to businesses of all sizes seeking to grow within or relocate to the 9-county Finger Lakes region, as well as access to support services for existing businesses navigating challenges around facility needs, costs, and access to talent or infrastructure.
- ✓ **Certification & Contracting Opportunities:** Programs such as the Minority & Women-Owned Business Enterprise (M/WBE) Certification Program designed to streamline processes and expand market access, particularly for minority-, women, and veteran-owned businesses. The Monroe County-Upstate NY (MCUNY) APEX Accelerator helps businesses enter and participate in government supply-chain opportunities by providing education and training necessary for firms to access DoD and other federal, state, and local contracts.

- ✓ **Educational & Research Institution Support:** The Rochester Technology and Manufacturing Association (RTMA), Workforce Development Institute (WDI), and area colleges/universities such as Monroe Community College's FWD Center and Applied Technology Center provide technical expertise, workforce training, and innovation-driven assistance. The Business Insight Center at the Rochester Public Library offers no-cost access to market research, business plan assistance, patent viability and filing guidance, and referrals to funding sources. NextCorps is a non-profit helping innovative technology companies launch and grow in Rochester, affiliated with the University of Rochester and funded in part by Empire State Development's Division of Science, Technology and Innovation, the MEP National Network, and NYSEERDA. NextCorps, home to Luminate NY, is New York State's first and only incubator and accelerator dedicated to optics, photonics, imaging, and laser technology startups.
- ✓ **Recruitment and Hiring:** RochesterWorks offers businesses free access to its job board for posting and filling vacancies, hosts industry- and company-specific job fairs, and offers a variety of programs funded at the federal, state, and local levels that cover training and recruitment costs for new hires. The Greater Rochester Chamber administers Beyond TalentEdge, a full-service hiring agency that can handle the process from recruitment to onboarding for Chamber members. The Chamber's Talent Strategy Division also manages several initiatives focused on retaining college and university talent, hiring veterans, and relocation assistance.

In Monroe County and similar regions, SMBs are seen as catalysts for revitalization, especially when integrated into land use planning and civic infrastructure. Monroe County and the Rochester MSA are well-positioned to harness the power of SMBs, particularly those rooted in local culture and consumer experience, as engines of sustainable and inclusive economic transformation and renewal.

Case Study**The Commissary Downtown Food Incubator and Mercantile on Main**

The Mercantile on Main, located inside the former Sibley's Department Store, is the first successful food court-style space in Rochester in recent decades and an example of successful adaptive redevelopment of a historic space and long-vacant facility into a vibrant community asset and hub for commercial activity. The redevelopment project is helping to revitalize downtown Rochester, support entrepreneurship, and provide permanent jobs to residents. When the Mercantile on Main opened, five of the seven vendors were minority or women-owned businesses. Mercantile provides entrepreneurs with the space to effectively grow their businesses and clientele, while minimizing equipment costs and not requiring long-term leases.

The Mercantile is a centerpiece of the Sibley Square's mixed-use reimagining undertaken by WinnCompanies that also includes market-rate, affordable, and senior housing; commercial and industrial suites, and NextCorps, Greater Rochester's primary startup accelerator, coworking space, and launchpad for technology innovation. Connected to the Mercantile, the Commissary is a New York State certified Commercial Kitchen, which means vendors can prepare food that meets NYS guidelines to be sold and consumed by the public.

The Commissary, established in 2020, provides current and aspirational entrepreneurs access to a fully-permitted commercial kitchen and equipment and viable facility within which to make, refine, and launch products and dishes for local consumers.



Shared space within the Commissary can be used by members for hosting private meals or events, preparing food to be sold in food trucks, and storing equipment and ingredients. The Mercantile's proximity offers Commissary members further access to established business owners and space to market and sell product. Rentable space minimizes entry costs into the food industry by eliminating the need for members to own a professional kitchen or storefront.

Of the total 43 members of The Commissary, 57% are BIPOC-owned and 52% are women-owned, inspired by successful models in New York City and other larger metros and pioneered by the Rochester Downtown Development Corporation, also provides workshop opportunities and an "entrepreneur-in-residence" program that connects members with local food industry owners who help them expand their business. This serves as an example of how to successfully support and remove barriers for entrepreneurs in the County.



1.3.2 A High Quality of Life

Monroe County is situated along the southern edge of Lake Ontario in Western New York. People are drawn to its distinctive parks and trail systems, community amenities, cultural resources, high-rated public schools, employment opportunities, strong sense of place, and high quality of life. Nationally, planning efforts are increasingly focused on elevating quality of life as a key driver for economic growth. The link between quality of life and economic development is multifaceted; a high quality of life positively influences things like community health and well-being, education, and public engagement. Meeting people's basic needs allows them to be more productive and contribute more meaningfully to the economy. Likewise, as an economy grows and develops, it generally leads to higher incomes, improved public services, technological advancements, and better job opportunities (Appio et al., 2019).

While competitive rent is one factor businesses consider when choosing a workplace location, workplace design, location, worker talent, and growth potential all play a role in this decision. The greater Rochester area continues to offer a strong job market for young professionals and has been recognized among the top metro areas in the U.S. for affordability, competitive wages, technology innovation, and future growth. Maintaining and building on Monroe County's quality of life will strengthen its appeal to new businesses and residents.

As companies consider where to locate, they also evaluate the type of environment their workforce will want to live in. Monroe County's median sales price for a single-family home in September 2025 was \$270,000, compared to \$435,295 for the nation (Redfin, 2025). Along with its lower cost of living, Monroe County offers quality of life features that appeal to young people, empty nesters, and seniors alike. For example, walkable, higher-density, mixed-use neighborhoods enable residents to live, work, and play within their communities. These neighborhoods already exist in Monroe County's villages as well as neighborhoods in Rochester, and there is growing

demand and some progress in suburban and rural areas. Monroe County is shifting its focus toward community-oriented development projects, such as providing sufficient housing options, multimodal transit access, and maintaining neighborhood green spaces.



Through an extensive multimodal network, Monroe County residents are well-connected both regionally and globally. Major interstates from all directions improve access to goods and services in rural and suburban areas, while train and bus services link the County to surrounding regions. The Frederick Douglass Greater Rochester International Airport (ROC) has received national recognition for its quality and quick service, offering daily flights to major U.S. and Canadian hubs. ROC provides flights to cities such as Boston, New York, Detroit, Toronto, and Washington, D.C., all less than 1.5 hours by air. Recently, new direct service routes and more budget-friendly airlines have emerged due to increased demand and advocacy, with leadership focusing on business development in collaboration with airlines. The County recently completed a major modernization of the airport and continues to invest in key capital improvements supported by state and federal funds. Recent upgrades focused on enhancing the customer experience, including the installation of a parking guidance system, extended canopy walkways for all-weather protection, larger entryways for better accessibility, and faster baggage handling systems. These improvements, along with renovated passenger areas and expanded dining and amenity options, aim to make travel easier, more convenient, and to attract more users.



Monroe County's historical development is intrinsically linked to its waterways.

The Genesee River, a tributary of Lake Ontario, was central to the growth of the County. The completion of the Erie Canal in 1825 allowed mills to ship products and materials to New York City, opening the region to new opportunities for commerce, leading to transformational economic growth. While the Genesee River and the Erie Canal are no longer the industrial engines of commerce they once were, they are recreational corridors that attract tourists and support waterfront municipalities today. Waterway corridors guided the urban development pattern of the County, with villages like Fairport, Pittsford, Spencerport, and Brockport, as well as the City of Rochester, located along historical routes of the Erie Canal, parts of which are now the NYS Barge Canal and Empire State Trail.

Monroe County's artistic, cultural, recreational, and educational resources contribute to a high quality of life. Monroe County has an excellent parks system, including the newly proposed High Falls State Park, one of only two NYS parks located within a city, and the Seneca Park Zoo, which has been open since 1893 and features hundreds of animal species to encounter year-round. Sports fans can watch the Triple-A Affiliate Rochester Red Wings baseball team in Rochester, while music fans can enjoy world-class performances by the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra (RPO) across classical and contemporary genres. Monroe County is known for vibrant annual festivals, including the International Jazz Festival, Rochester Lilac Festival,

Bright Minds

The **Greater Rochester area** attracts and produces some of the brightest minds in the country. According to the Greater Rochester Enterprise website:

8 PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS
RATED AMONG THE TOP

10%

IN THE NATION

91%

OF RESIDENTS HAVE
A HIGH SCHOOL
DEGREE OR
EQUIVALENT



66%

OF RESIDENTS
HAVE SOME
COLLEGE
EDUCATION

FIGURE 11
Higher Education
Institutions by County

COUNTY	HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS
Monroe County	16
Erie County	13
Onondaga County	11
Albany County	13

Source: NYS GIS Clearinghouse, 2025

Fairport Canal Days, Rochester Fringe Festival, and Harbor Fest at Ontario Beach Park. These and other events that feature local food, music, vendors, historical tours, and more can continue to be leveraged to solidify Monroe County as a regional hub for creative expression and cultural engagement. The County is developing an Arts and Culture Plan to advance the impact of the arts.

Businesses are also attracted to places where they know they will find desired skills. Compared to peer counties in Upstate NY, Monroe has the highest number of higher education institutions (Figure 11). Monroe County has the advantage of skilled graduates from 16 higher education institutions, including schools in the SUNY system, private universities, and specialized schools. In addition, the Monroe County Library System consists of 20 independent public libraries working together to provide enriching library services to community members of all ages. Continuing to invest in equitable educational opportunities for its residents is one of the most critical things Monroe County can do to increase competitiveness on a broad scale.



1.3.3 Position in the SMART I-Corridor (High-Tech Manufacturing)

Semiconductor and other high-tech manufacturing operations present one of Monroe County's most promising emerging economic opportunities. The New York Semiconductor Manufacturing and Research Technology Innovation Corridor (NY SMART I-Corridor Tech Hub), an initiative to advance semiconductor manufacturing capabilities, has been awarded \$40 million in federal funding for projects dedicated to workforce, supply chain, research and development, and strategic support (U.S. Economic Development Administration. 2025). Five major semiconductor fabrication plans (fabs) and nearly 100 supply chain firms are underway across the NY SMART I-Corridor. Within the next decade, the U.S. Economic Development Administration projects that one in four American-made chips will be produced within 350 miles of the NY SMART I-Corridor (Figure 12).

The NY Smart I-Corridor is a coalition of over 100 organizations—spanning businesses, higher education, economic development groups and community-based organizations—convened by the Buffalo Niagara Partnership, CenterState CEO and OneRoc. Together, they are positioning Upstate New York as a global leader in semiconductor manufacturing, innovation and workforce development.

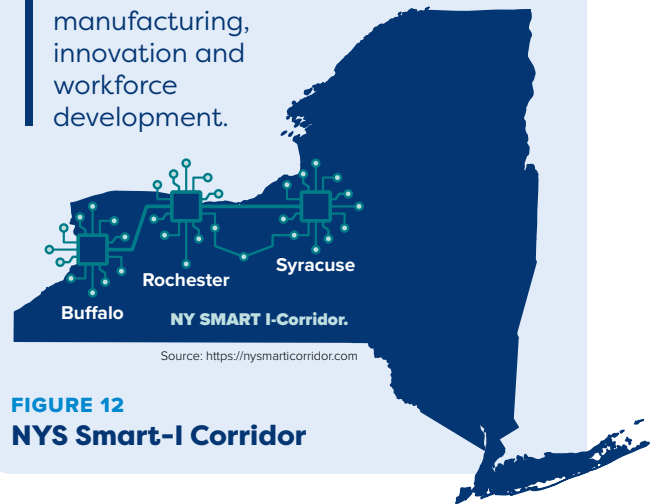
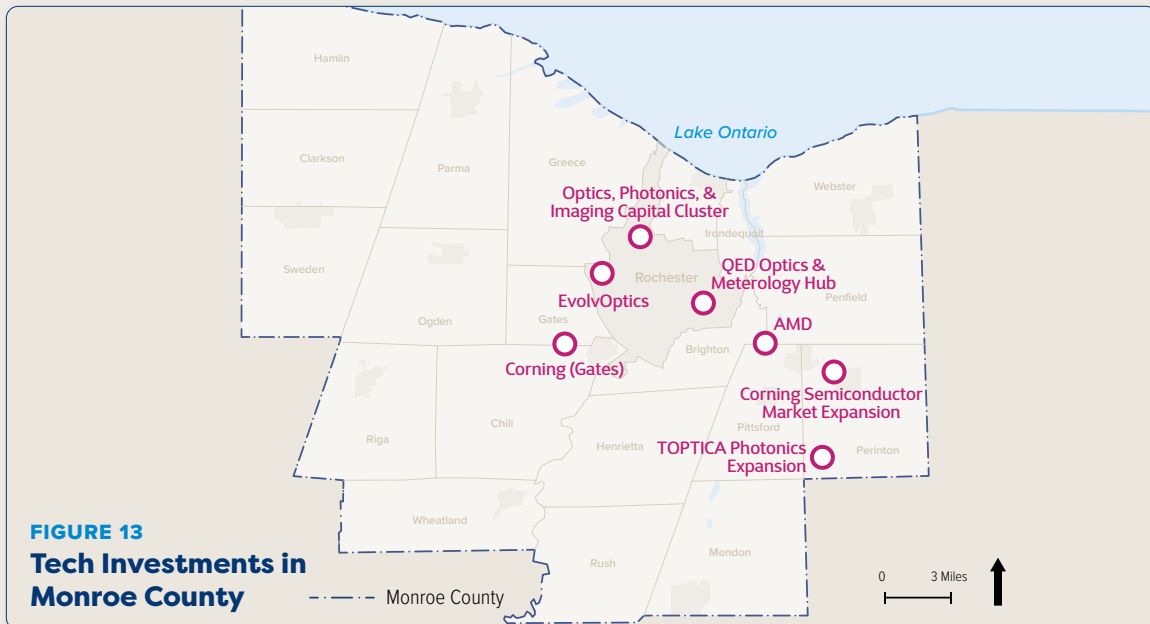


FIGURE 12
NYS Smart-I Corridor





Case Study

Tech Investments in Monroe County

Monroe County has already witnessed **multiple major investments in the photonics and semiconductor sectors** within this corridor including:

- ✓ **AMD's New Research and Design Hub (Pittsford).** A state-of-the-art research and design facility in 2023, establishing operations at Linden Oaks Office Park- create up to 165 new semiconductor R&D jobs.
- ✓ **Corning Semiconductor Market Expansion (Fairport & Gates).** In 2022, Corning Inc. announced a \$139 million expansion at two Monroe County sites (Fairport and Gates) to meet surging semiconductor industry demand—add nearly 270 jobs in Fairport with new manufacturing space and a Development & Engineering Center of Excellence and a new laser optics production facility in Gates.
- ✓ **American Institute for Manufacturing Integrated Photonics (AIM Photonics) Test, Assembly & Packaging facility at Eastman Business Park**—a key national photonic integrated circuit development hub.
- ✓ **TOPTICA Photonics Expansion (Perinton).** TOPTICA Photonics, a laser systems manufacturer, opened a 30,000 sq. ft. facility in Perinton—\$2.7 million expansion added ISO Class 7 cleanrooms, labs, and offices, QED Optics & Metrology Hub (City of Rochester): QED Technologies International, a Rochester-based maker of precision optics manufacturing equipment, launched an \$18.7 million expansion in 2025 to create a world-class optics fabrication and R&D center.
- ✓ **EvolvOptic Formation and Growth (City of Rochester).** Advanced Glass Industries (AGI) acquired Glass Fab Inc., merging two legacy Rochester optics firms into a new entity EvolvOptic. The combined company is investing \$5.1 million to expand operations in Monroe County, with plans to create up to 40 new jobs over five years.

For Monroe County, the challenge is to secure a competitive share of this growth. In 2023, New York State created the Governor’s Office of Semiconductor Expansion, Management, and Integration (GO-SEMI) with \$45 million to coordinate chip industry development. Along with the Green CHIPS incentive law (2022), these initiatives signal the state’s commitment to attract chip fabs and suppliers. Industry projections suggest that by 2030, the semiconductor industry could support about 500,000 NY jobs (115,000 new) statewide. While not a Monroe-specific metric, it underscores the scale of opportunity the County is aligning with. Recent project announcements, such as AMD’s New Research and Design Hub and Corning Semiconductor Market Expansion, highlight progress toward these larger targets.

While there may not be a single formal scoreboard solely for photonics/semiconductors, several concrete measures are used to monitor progress in this area:

- 1 Jobs Created/Retained in OPI and semiconductor projects (with recent examples contributing several hundred new jobs and thousands retained);
- 2 Capital Investment Attracted (e.g., over \$1.77 billion in private and public co-investment has been leveraged in the Finger Lakes via 100+ projects under “Finger Lakes Forward,” much of that in high-tech industries);
- 3 Number of Firms/Startups in the Sector (growth from around 100 to 150+ optics/photonics firms in the past decade, and new semiconductor firms establishing a local footprint, like AMD);
- 4 Workforce Development Milestones (for example, Monroe Community College launching the nation’s first optical systems technology A.A.S. degree, or new apprenticeship programs—indicating a pipeline of skilled workers).

Despite recent momentum, Monroe County has yet to secure a major anchor semiconductor fabrication facility. In addition, emerging startups in the region continue to face significant barriers, including limited access to cleanroom space and early-stage capital, both of which are critical to scaling operations in the semiconductor industry. Integrating into regional networks like the Supply Chain Activation Network (SCAN), fostering partnerships, and advocating for state and federal support will be critical to closing these gaps.

To compete with other regions, Monroe County could also leverage its skilled workforce, R&D Institutions, comprehensive incentive packages, and regional collaboration to ensure the County captures long-term growth in photonics and semiconductors. To fulfill this need, Monroe County continues to invest and proactively participate in Greater Rochester Enterprise and OneROC efforts to promote and advance investment in Monroe County through competitive site selection projects and participation in major industry events, such as SEMICON.

Greater Rochester Enterprise (GRE) is a not-for-profit economic development organization committed to attracting new capital investments, creating regional wealth, and new jobs throughout the Greater Rochester, NY region.

OneROC is a regional economic development alliance accelerating investment, collaboration, and growth across Greater Rochester, NY. As the regional lead for the Regional Revitalization Partnership (RRP) and NY SMART I-Corridor Tech Hub, OneROC aligns public and private sector efforts to create even greater positive impact.

1.3.4 Untapped Potential of the Transportation Network

Monroe County has undertaken a study, the Multimodal Freight Initiative (MMFI), to explore investment in manufacturing, transportation, and other key economic sectors, creating good-paying jobs for county residents across all socioeconomic backgrounds and educational attainment levels. The MMFI can serve as a strategic, commonsense approach to economic development that expands access to markets and reduces costs for local businesses.

The initial phase of the MMFI is an economic assessment and market feasibility analysis. This evaluation builds upon previous economic development and transportation planning through new quantitative and qualitative research regarding projected benefits and impacts to Monroe County and the larger Finger Lakes Region. Freight investment strategies that incorporate this original research are being formulated and screened relative to their market feasibility.

Following the selection of the freight investment strategy with the greatest economic benefit, candidate sites will be identified and refined. Master planning of the preferred site(s) will be conducted in a manner that is scalable, coordinated, and can be phased to ensure development adheres to changes in market conditions and the availability of resources. Based on this advanced site planning, preliminary and schematic design—sufficient to conduct environmental reviews—will be advanced for infrastructure and facilities, respectively.



Beyond physical development, a qualified workforce to build, maintain, and operate the facilities and infrastructure that will drive increased competitiveness for goods-producing firms will be key to the success of the MMFI. By partnering with labor and industry, apprenticeships and other applied learning opportunities can be created for and promoted to individuals seeking well-paying careers who do not want to pursue additional skills development via traditional higher education.

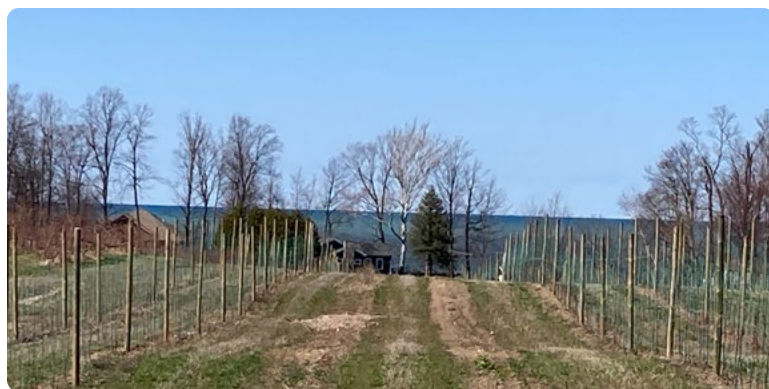


1.3.5 Agriculture-Driven Economics

Monroe County has highly productive agricultural soils and a rich legacy of farming operations and expertise. Agriculture constitutes approximately 33% of the County's land cover (**Figure 14**). However, more recently agricultural land has been lost to low-density single-family housing and other development projects, which have fragmented traditional agricultural working lands and operations. Moreover, farms in Monroe County follow the national trends of consolidation of large producers, pushing out small, family-owned farmers. This makes it challenging for newer farmers, particularly those with smaller operations, to compete in agricultural markets or stay afloat. Farm loss has been gradually happening over the past 30 years, with a 15% decrease in the total acreage of farmland (Monroe County, 2025g). County-level planning is crucial in ensuring that farmers and farm workers can secure living wages, receive adequate benefits, and work in safe conditions. The County can work with local municipalities to facilitate protective measures, to help preserve agricultural lands as viable working spaces and reduce conflicts with neighbors.

Although agriculture in Monroe County is not as strong as other industries in the County (i.e. it generates the lowest Gross Regional Product (GRP), is the smallest industry cluster and employing occupation and makes up only a relatively small portion of the economy 1.3% of the Statewide value of sales, 4% of County earnings and 0.25% of all Monroe County jobs), the agriculture-driven economy significantly contributes to the economy and quality-of-life for local residents (ESMI Estimate, 2021). Agriculture provides the County with essential food supply, increases community engagement, supplies food and cover for wildlife, contributes to economic growth, and enhances rural development.

The top-selling agricultural products in Monroe County are grains and legumes, vegetables, and nursery/ greenhouse products (**Figure 15**). The 511 farms in the County provide \$101,082,000 dollars of market value of agricultural products sold (USDA NASS, 2022) and provide jobs for 1,289 seasonal or year-round workers (USDA NASS, 2022b).



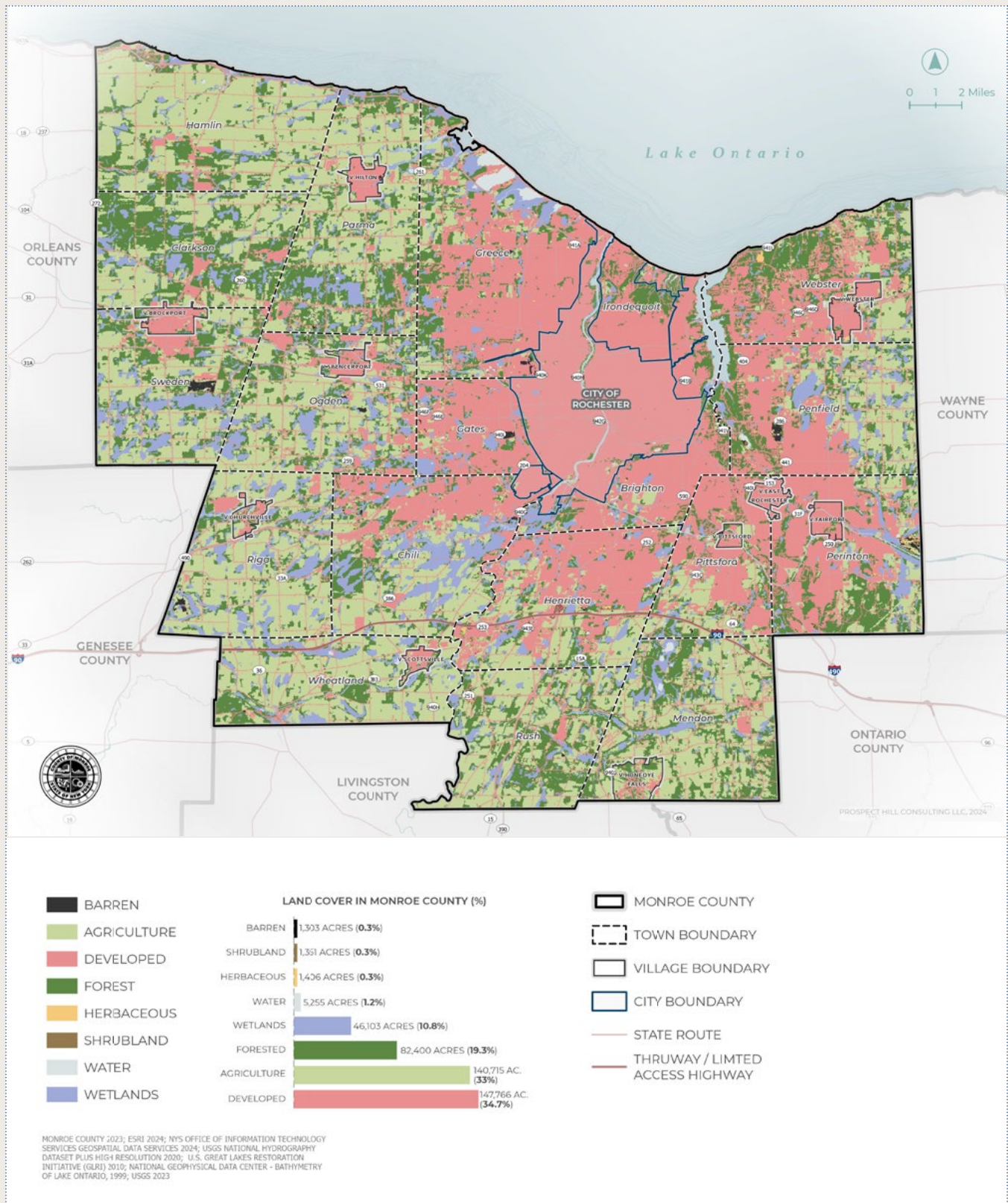


FIGURE 14
Land Cover in Monroe County
 Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan

Source: Monroe County Agricultural & Farmland Protection Plan, 2025

The agricultural producers in the Greater Rochester Area have contributed to a strong regional food and beverage manufacturing sector represented by employers such as Wegmans, LiDestri Foods, Constellation Brands, FIFCO USA, Baldwin Richardson Foods, and others. Over 250 food and beverage companies take advantage of Monroe County's supply chain assets including precision manufacturing, engineering, packaging support, transportation systems, and collaborative research institutions. Regionally, this industry employs over 10,000 workers with a range of skills.

Technological innovations and advancements have enabled more efficient food production, which in turn reduces the need for human labor. Providing adequate educational opportunities to retrain and reskill workers will be pivotal to the shift towards more technology and automation in agriculture. The agricultural sector currently faces challenges due to shifting regulations, high overhead costs, climate change, and volatile product prices. Nevertheless, even as farm sales continue to increase, so do the farm expenses such as the cost of production, equipment, labor, petroleum, seed, feed, fertilizer and livestock, essentially evening out the gains and losses (Figure 16).

FIGURE 15
Market Value of Products Sold, by Commodity or Commodity Group
2012–2022

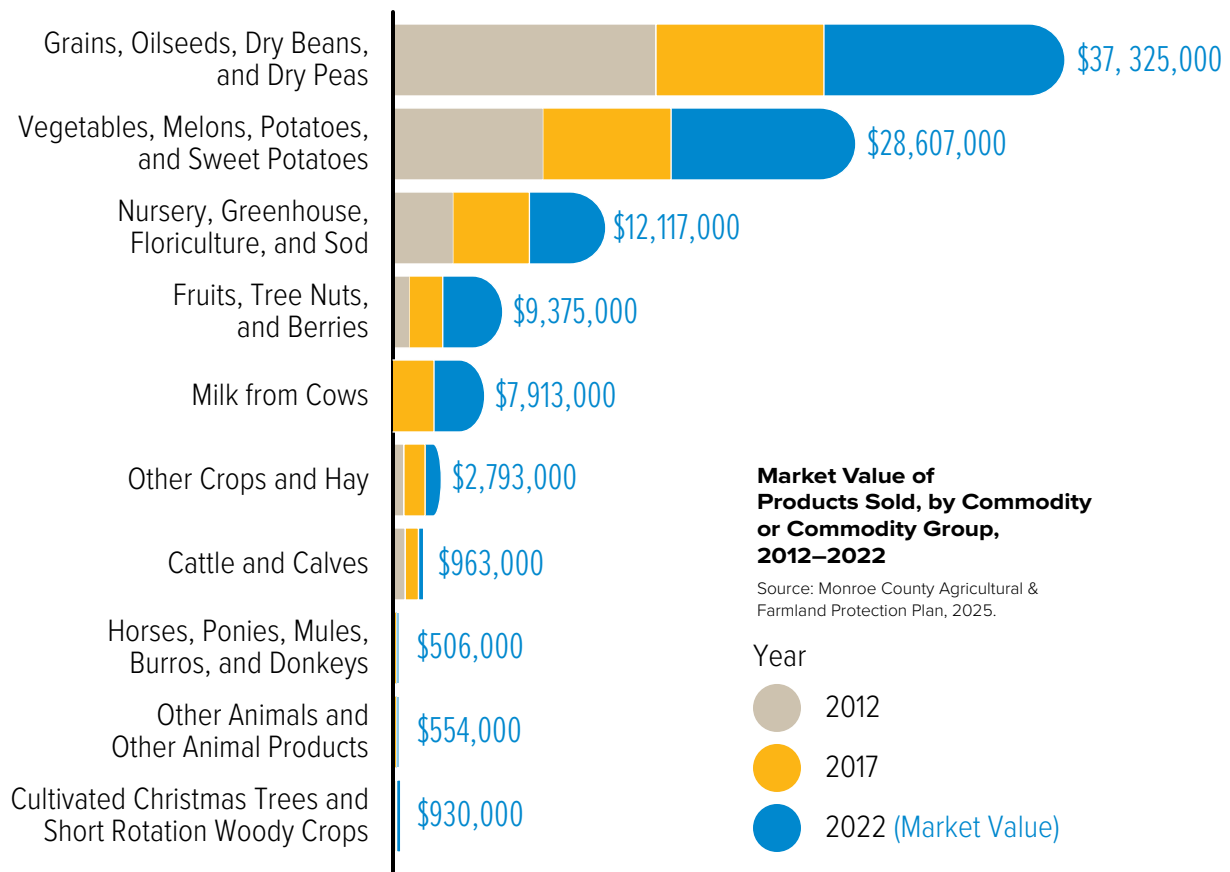
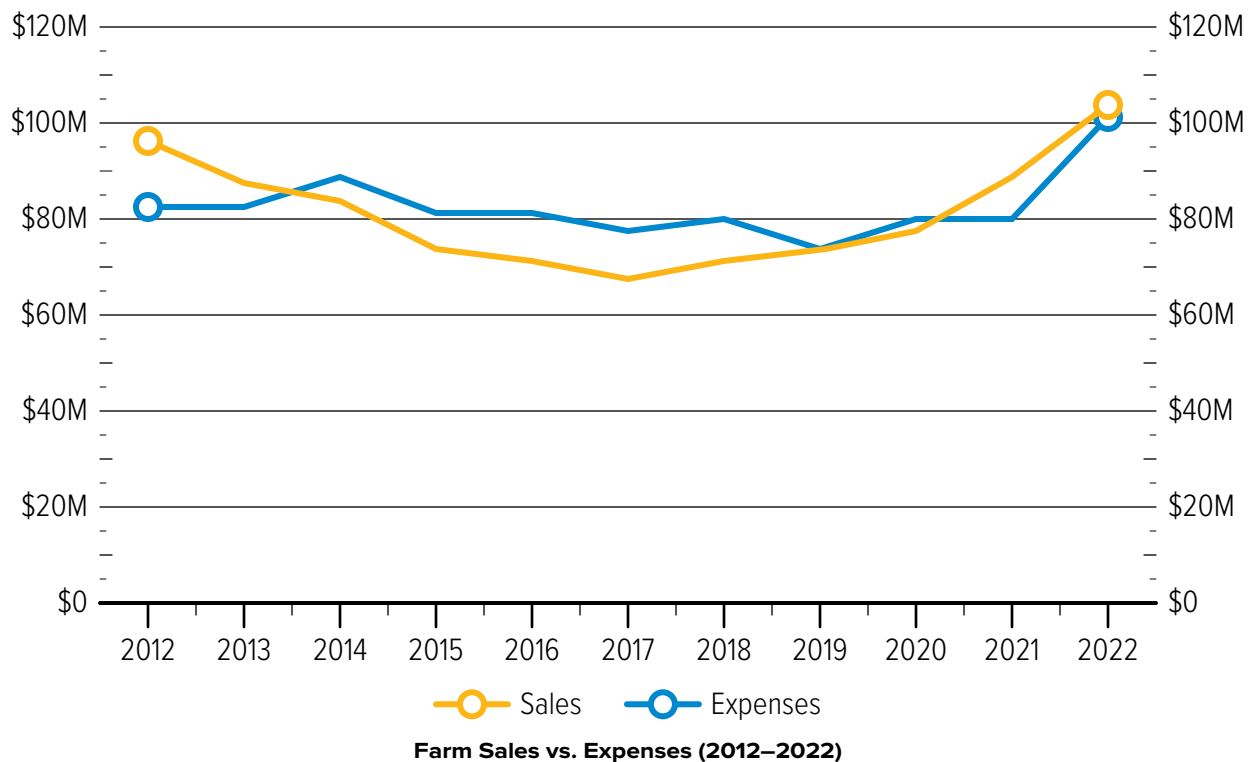


FIGURE 16
Farm Sales vs. Expenses
 2012–2022



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, Bureau of Economic Analysis, and Federal Reserve Economic Data.
 Manufacturing value added as a percentage of total Gross Domestic Product.

In response to this economic uncertainty, some Monroe County farms have adopted diversification strategies to remain competitive in a rapidly evolving market. Some of these strategies include agritourism and value-added agriculture, such as farm breweries, u-pick experiences, and direct marketing of locally produced foods, crafts, and other goods. Farm breweries and craft beverage producers have introduced attractions like farm tours and seasonal tasting events, enhancing the region's appeal as a destination for both residents and tourists. These experiences celebrate Monroe County's agricultural heritage while creating immersive visitor experiences that highlight the County's agricultural heritage.

To help further agritourism and local buying, the Grow Monroe program connects the community with the farm-related



events and festivals in Monroe County each year. Monroe County Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) also features a guide for farmers to use when developing agritourism operations. As a partnership between Monroe County Economic Development and Monroe Community College, the Grow Monroe program promotes the benefits of supporting local agriculture and highlights the wide variety of fresh produce and other agricultural products. These activities not only offer farmers new sources of income but also strengthen the relationship between rural producers and the broader community. By supporting and expanding these programs and partnerships, the County can strengthen its commitment to investing in agricultural production, processing, and marketing while ensuring that local agriculture continues to thrive as a vital contributor to both the economy and the regional food system.



Case Study

Fairlife LLC Investment in Webster, NY

A Historic Economic Development Win.

Fairlife, LLC, a dairy-based subsidiary of The Coca-Cola Company, selected Webster, NY for its new \$650 million production facility, presenting the County with enormous economic potential. The facility will be the largest milk processing facility in the Northeast (745,000 square feet) adding regional storage and processing capacity, creating 500 construction jobs, 250 permanent jobs, and directly impacting more than 850 regional dairy farming jobs (Monroe County, 2023).

Despite the dairy industry not being as prominent in Monroe County as it is in other counties (1,800 cows compared to 47,500 in neighboring Wyoming County as of 2024), dairy remains New York's largest agricultural sector, producing 16.1 billion pounds of milk annually (NYSAGM, 2023).

The site selection was competitive, with Webster selected over a comparable site near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, for its proximity to dairy producers and available land, despite Pennsylvania's readily available infrastructure and strong incentives. To offset logistical challenges and infrastructure barriers, the developers were granted a comprehensive package of incentives. New York State provided up to \$21 million in Excelsior Jobs Program tax credits, low-cost power from the New York Power Authority, and an additional \$20 million for the Town of Webster to upgrade its wastewater treatment plant. The County of

Monroe Industrial Development Agency (COMIDA) offered local tax incentives, including a special Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) agreement. This multi-tiered partnership, uniting state, county, and local stakeholders, was instrumental not only in securing the project but also in accelerating critical infrastructure improvements. It serves as a model for how coordinated public-sector collaboration can drive economic development and regional competitiveness.

The project's long-term impact will extend beyond the creation of direct jobs, generating sustained demand for utilities, maintenance services, and other local support industries. At the same time, the project underscores both the opportunities and challenges that large-scale developments pose for the local community, particularly the constraints posed by limitations in power infrastructure at potential sites across the County. To better position itself for future investments, Monroe County can proactively inventory shovel-ready sites and address critical infrastructure gaps, especially related to energy capacity and site readiness.

1.4 What Do We Need to Address?

1.4.1 Underemployment

The Monroe County economy is in transition. While manufacturing remains important to the County's economy, its role as a driver of employment is evolving. Manufacturing companies are shifting toward high-tech methods to boost productivity, which reduces the need for low-skilled jobs. At the same time, healthcare has become a high-tech industry that still depends on low-skilled positions, from personal care aides to account clerks. Since Monroe County is looking to grow in the high-tech manufacturing sector, the County can offer educational support to help residents gain the necessary skills and degrees for modern careers in high-skilled fields. With that, the County can continue to encourage inclusive hiring and fair compensation in these fields. In addition, the County can continue to work with local higher education institutions, grade schools, and trade schools to align curricula with industry needs and foster a pipeline of skilled workers to meet them. Offering free or subsidized training, including tuition assistance, transportation, and child care, would open doors for individuals to enter high-demand fields—opportunities they could not afford on their own. Access to and affordability of childcare and transportation are the two primary barriers to employment opportunities in Monroe

Underemployment is the condition in which people in a labor force are employed at less than full-time or at jobs inadequate with respect to their training or economic needs.

County. In addition, enhanced job placement and career counseling services could help students without access to the proper pipelines get started. A shared understanding of Monroe County's education and workforce needs will strengthen the economic well-being and future of the County as a whole.

Educational attainment is an important measure because it impacts not only personal opportunities and lifetime earnings, but also how well Monroe County's workforce supports and drives the local economy. Steps can be taken to advance educational attainment among all students, positively impacting their futures and Monroe County's emerging industries' workforce in the long term. Investment in early childhood education can help to minimize achievement gaps throughout a student's lifetime. Often, poverty-related barriers to success can be helped by providing affordable childcare, quality pre-K programs, health and nutrition support, and parental engagement.



Career and technical classes can allow high school students in Monroe County to explore skills that do not require a college education. Monroe 1 and Monroe 2, local branches of BOCES, offer Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs. However, school districts are required to pay to become a member and to enroll students in BOCES coursework. Due to school budget constraints, schools often have to limit the number of students enrolled in BOCES courses. While the County does not have direct budget oversight of school districts, it can support partnerships with the State, BOCES, and school districts to improve financial aid options and provide more opportunities for expanding students' skill sets and fostering career development (Moore, 2022).

Economic disparity remains a significant challenge for workforce development in Monroe County. In the City of Rochester, 25.5% of residents live below the poverty line, which can create barriers to accessing education, financial resources, and stable employment (U.S. Census, 2025c). Factors such as low wages and systemic inequities contribute to limited job opportunities, reduced entrepreneurial potential, and impacts on overall quality of life. Monroe County has seen an upward trend in low-wage jobs (e.g., hospitality and leisure industry), with the most significant employment



Job Training

49% OF JOBS IN NEW YORK REQUIRE SKILLS TRAINING

37% OF NEW YORK WORKERS ARE TRAINED AT THIS LEVEL

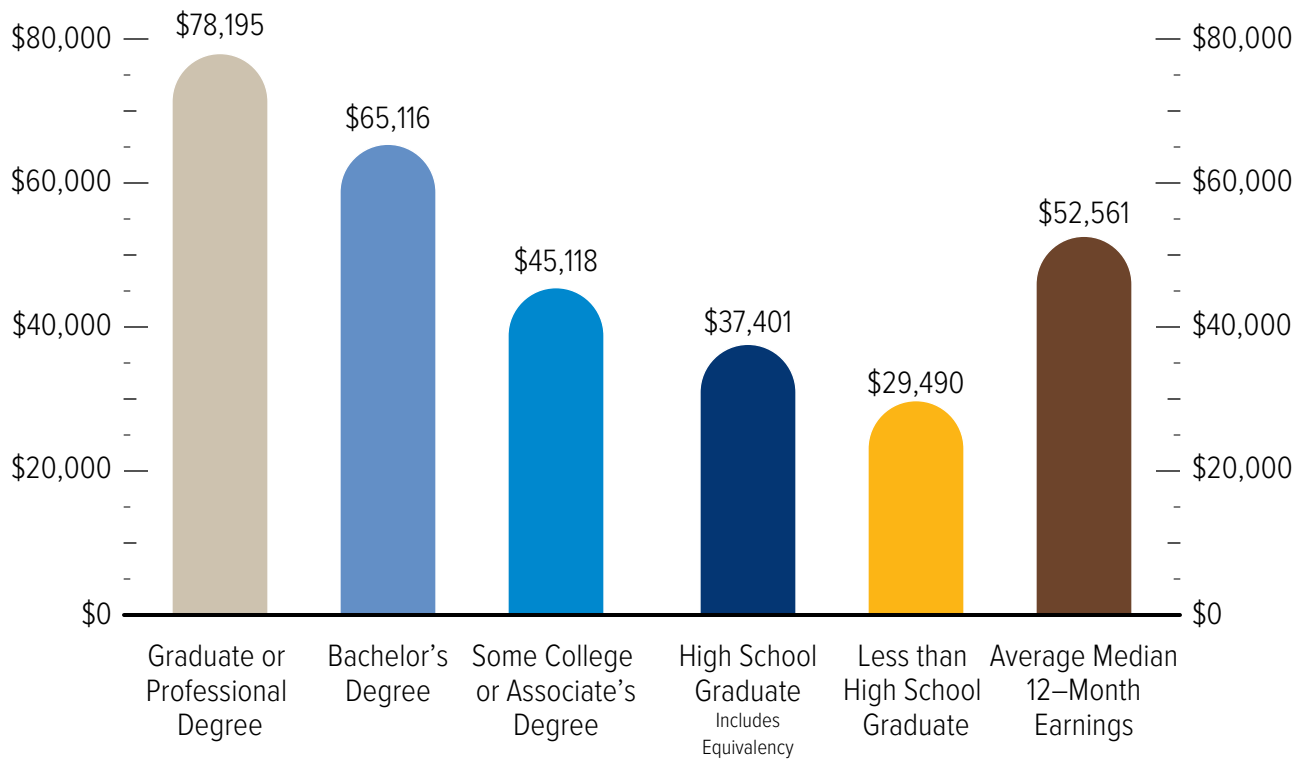
growth for low-skilled workers. The Post-Secondary Employment Outcomes Explorer (PSEO) data demonstrates that individuals with higher levels of education (an associate's degree or higher) or specialized types of training in areas such as health professions, IT, and engineering earn significantly better wages, compared to those in hospitality and leisure industries (U.S. Census, 2025). Though lifetime earnings tend to rise with higher levels of education (**Figure 17**), variations in worker occupation, location, and systemic inequities like race or ethnicity often create overlap in lifetime earnings (**Figure 18**). Advancing a more diversified workforce and promoting equitable compensation for workers at the lower end of high-skilled jobs is essential to reducing income disparities and building a more inclusive and resilient economy.

Workforce Growth Through Apprenticeship

A cornerstone of this effort is the **Finger Lakes Youth Apprenticeship Program (FLYAP)**, which connects students, particularly historically underserved learners, to high-wage, in-demand careers through job shadowing, paid co-ops, and hands-on industry experience. The Finger Lakes Youth Apprenticeship Program (FLYAP) ensures all learners, including historically underserved learners, have access to high-quality programs in high-wage and in-demand career fields. FLYAP is a program that offers high school students opportunities for job shadowing, paid co-ops, and hands-on experience. FLYAP has connected more than 800 students with over 150 advanced manufacturing businesses in the region since its launch in 2019 (Rochester Technology and Manufacturing Association, 2025). FLYAP also partners with Monroe Community College and its Dual Enrollment Program, allowing some students to earn college credits at no cost.

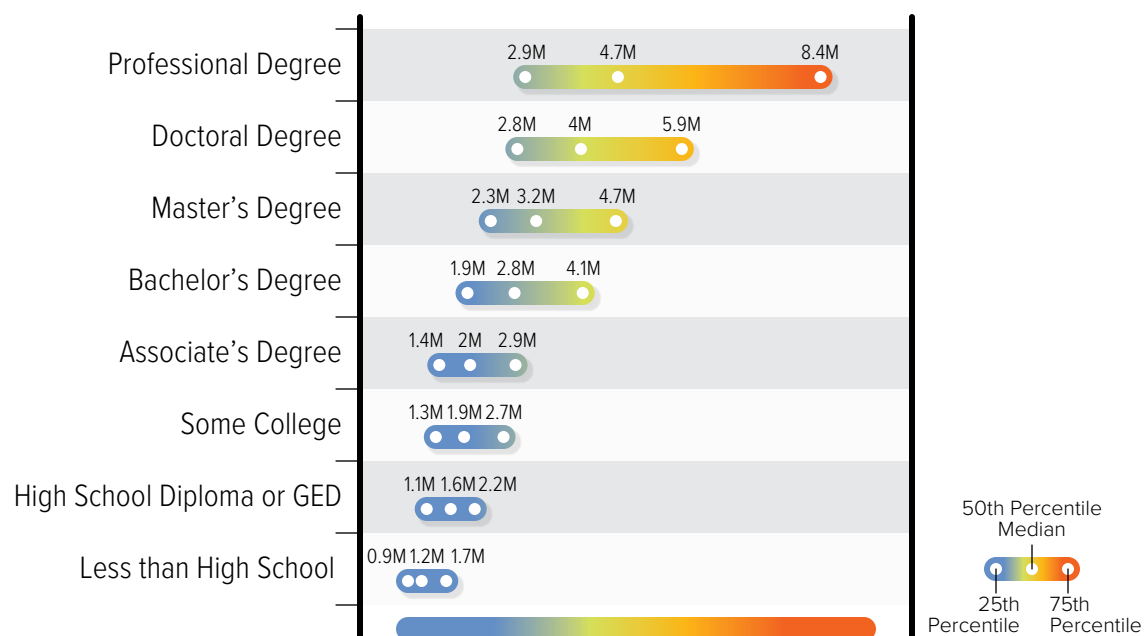
The **Multi-Craft Apprenticeship Preparation Program (M.A.P.P.)** provides Rochester-area residents with direct entry pathways into construction trades apprenticeships. It focuses on preparing and connecting historically disadvantaged populations to high-quality union career opportunities in the building trades, serving as a key bridge between the community and the construction workforce.

FIGURE 17
Monroe County Median 12-Month Earnings by Degree



Monroe County Median 12-Month Earnings by Degree

FIGURE 18
Lifetime Earnings by Degree



Lifetime Earnings

Note: The figure is based on data for 25 to 64-years olds working full-time, full year.

Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce analysis of the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS), 2009–2019.

1.4.2 Need for Strategic Sites & Power Capacity

Monroe County's Economic Development Division and its



partners, including the County of Monroe Industrial Development Agency (COMIDA) and the Monroe County Industrial Development Corporation (MCIDC), actively recruit businesses by leveraging assets such as established industry clusters, research institutions, workforce development programs, and technical expertise. However, a shortage of shovel-ready sites with sufficient power capacity has recently hindered these efforts.

Many businesses in the region are eager to expand, build housing, and create jobs, but their ability to do so increasingly depends on the strength and reliability of New York State's energy infrastructure. A lack of power access has prevented the Finger Lakes Region and Monroe County from capitalizing on business development opportunities across various industries, including advanced manufacturing, research and development, and supply chain management, among others. Some shovel-ready sites in the County sit idle due to energy concerns. Semiconductor fabs and photonics manufacturers require enormous and reliable power capacity, robust water supply, and state-of-the-art facilities.

New York's energy system is experiencing reliability and capacity challenges, according to analysis by the New York Independent System Operator (NYISO). Aging and decommissioned generation facilities, rapidly growing load demand, and difficulty developing new energy resources are compounding problems that may result in a power capacity shortfall of up to 10,000 megawatts over the next decade. (NYISO, 2025). System-wide generation and distribution challenges can hamper development opportunities in Monroe County if power is not delivered to shovel-ready sites within a timeframe aligned with developer interest and project readiness.



Case Study

Henrietta Electric Substation Upgrade

Strategic and collaborative investments in the energy grid are necessary for Monroe County's economic growth. This concept is exemplified by electrical infrastructure upgrades which were made in the Town of Henrietta in 2025. State and local officials collaborated to procure a \$4.7 million grant from Empire State Development. The grant supported a \$17 million project to upgrade Substation 255, adding 50MW of additional capacity.

This added capacity supports retention and attraction of businesses including a solar panel manufacturer, beverage production R&D, and a semi-conductor supply chain company. In addition, there are several housing proposals slated for the Town of Henrietta that require additional power supply. Up to 1,000 units could be added as a result of this investment.



In addition, some prime sites in Monroe County and the Finger Lakes Region lack the electric power, water, or sewer capacity to meet the “exacting requirements” of high-tech projects. Upgrading infrastructure or building new substations and water treatment facilities can be time-consuming and costly. Monroe County faces hurdles in ensuring that its industrial parks and development sites can deliver the needed power and utilities for large photonics or semiconductor operations. This infrastructure gap can delay projects or divert them to other regions if not addressed. New wetlands regulations via the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) present further challenges related to the timely permitting and development of future shovel-ready sites for projects.

In-demand industry sectors like optics and imaging, advanced manufacturing, medical device production, and clean technology require large, flat, well-drained sites near existing infrastructure and with reliable power supplies. In Monroe County, the availability of suitable sites is further limited by competition with other land uses such as housing, commercial development, agriculture, and industrial-scale clean energy. Some available sites, such as the former Eastman Kodak Site are promising sites that continue to attract businesses, but require significant retrofitting of infrastructure to support modern industry. Most existing opportunities will also need demolition of outdated industrial buildings and/or environmental remediation, both of which can be costly. When prospective firms express interest in locating in Monroe, the lack of shovel-ready sites often places local, county, and state agencies in a challenging position to quickly prepare suitable locations.



Monroe County has limited vacant industrial buildings or build-ready land that meet the specifications for cleanrooms, fabs, or optics labs. The Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council (FLREDC) has identified the need to “prioritize shovel-ready sites with infrastructure and capacity aligned” to what advanced technology businesses require. Preparing sites (through environmental clearances, zoning, and infrastructure build-out) often lags behind market demand. This means when an opportunity arises, for instance, a chip supplier or laser manufacturer looking to expand, the County can promptly secure suitable real estate, a process that is often complex. Expanding the site inventory (industrial parks, tech parks, certified sites) is crucial to capturing future photonics, semiconductor, and other high-tech manufacturing investments.



The fairlife development exemplifies both the problem and a solution with respect to shovel-ready sites in Monroe County. Given the difficulty of identifying appropriate sites in the County, fairlife would have moved on in its site search had the Greater Rochester Enterprise (GRE) not been creative in identifying and aggressively promoting the company's ultimate location in Webster. Learning from this and other experiences, the county has identified that further study is needed to inventory what undeveloped acreage exists that meets the minimum essential requirements for industries and markets the County wishes to attract. Further analysis into available infrastructure and data about site control and use (who owns the land, how it's zoned, etc.) would bolster the inventory and support targeted economic development effort. Such efforts are a priority, especially in light of newer state grant opportunities (POWER UP NY, FAST NY) and COMIDA's capabilities under state law. It is possible for COMIDA to develop strategic sites over

years, alleviating businesses of the burdensome process of getting NYS approvals and organizing infrastructure improvements. This approach has seen success in neighboring counties. STAMP in Genesee County (where Edwards Vacuum is locating) and White Pines Commerce Park in Onondaga County (where Micron is building) are examples of IDA-led site development that took decades but ultimately manifested real economic development opportunities.

Monroe County can expedite the site preparation process by pursuing funding opportunities offered by New York State. The FAST NY Shovel-Ready Grant Program provides funding to counties and municipalities working to prepare sites that are 40 acres or more. The program funds pre-development site planning as well as capital infrastructure improvement projects, including water, sewer, transportation, electricity, and gas upgrades (Empire State Development, 2025b).



In fact, COMIDA was proudly the first recipient of a FAST grant which funded the rapid implementation of utility infrastructure improvements at the fairlife site in Webster. Similarly, New York's Promote Opportunity with Electric Readiness for Underdeveloped Properties (POWER) Fund offers funding for extending electrical infrastructure to sites associated with projects that provide public and economic benefits (New York State, 2025). The legacy of manufacturing in the County has resulted in the need to clean former industrial sites to prepare them for new investment. The State's Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) Program has

the potential to increase the availability of sites with infrastructure by preparing contaminated sites for redevelopment through remediation and planning. Assessing the County's inventory, expanding a portfolio of shovel-ready sites, and aligning these sites to appropriate economic development opportunities is a complex process that will require collaboration within the development community. The County can play a vital role in convening specialists who can steadily and strategically advance the identification and preparation of sites where new businesses can be established.

Promote Opportunity with Electric Readiness for Underdeveloped Properties (POWER UP)

New York State and Monroe County are attracting investment in new manufacturing and high-tech development, outpacing the existing energy system planning and funding mechanisms' ability to keep up. Power-ready sites are a key factor in where companies decide to locate. Choosing a power-ready site can significantly reduce the time between site selection and a plant's opening day.

To help secure more business and jobs in New York, Governor Hochul is launching a new initiative called Promote Opportunity with Electric Readiness for Underdeveloped Properties (POWER UP). This program will fund proactive development of electric capacity to create power-ready sites and attract new businesses to the state. Governor Hochul is investing an initial \$300 million into the fund, enabling the development of dozens of sites.



1.4.3 Retaining and Attracting Future Residents

Employees consider various factors when choosing where to live and work, including lifestyle amenities, recreational opportunities, and cultural vitality. Improving the appeal of Monroe County from a lifestyle standpoint will assist the County in attracting and retaining skilled residents.

Companies consider quality-of-life features when looking for new office or branch locations that appeal to skilled workers. Monroe County's low cost of living, access to recreational features, and moderate climate make it an attractive residential destination. The County's efforts to recruit and retain workers through marketing are starting to take shape and could be strengthened by enhanced data tracking and creative outreach approaches.

Retaining residents in Monroe County involves focusing on the needs of the workers who already reside here, including ensuring that services, communication, and community systems are accessible and responsive to diverse populations.

Placemaking to Attract Residents

Placemaking is the process of creating quality public spaces that foster community, social interaction, and a sense of belonging. The intentional design and management of public spaces can improve community well-being and help Monroe County adapt to the wants and needs of new and existing residents. The region's numerous cultural festivals and musical events are important to life in Monroe County and can be leveraged and marketed to attract and retain residents.



Monroe County is home to one of the largest and most established Deaf, DeafBlind, and hard of hearing communities in the United States, anchored by the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID), Rochester School for the Deaf, the University of Rochester, Deaf professionals across sectors, Deaf-owned businesses, one of only two interpreter education programs in New York State, and a broad network of Deaf-led and Deaf-serving organizations. This established ecosystem represents a unique economic and workforce asset that Monroe County can leverage to attract and retain talent, businesses, educational opportunities, and investment.

Monroe County's Deaf Community

Monroe County's Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing community is one of the largest per capita in the United States – over 40,000 residents, roughly 5% of the County's population.

Accessibility is a key component of economic competitiveness, strengthening the County's ability to fully engage a diverse workforce and create a more inclusive environment for workers, employers, entrepreneurs, and institutions. By reducing communication, transportation, and service barriers, Monroe County can expand opportunities for residents of all abilities to participate fully in education, training, employment, entrepreneurship, and civic life.

Investments in accessible communication, inclusive workplace practices, and strong community partnerships benefit the broader economy by helping employers connect with skilled talent, supporting innovation, and enhancing long-term economic resilience. By leveraging its established Deaf, DeafBlind, and hard of hearing community network, Monroe County can further position itself as a national leader in accessibility, innovation, and inclusive economic development.

Through the Deaf Equity Council, Monroe County Department of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and other community partnerships, Monroe County can integrate accessibility as a core component of economic competitiveness, helping distinguish the County as a welcoming place to live, work, learn, and invest.

Attracting residents and workers to Monroe County requires job opportunities, potential for upward mobility, and a high quality of life. However, there is a skills gap, or employment gap, in Monroe County, meaning there is a mismatch between educational achievement and available jobs in the County. This

partly stems from the educational system, which often emphasizes participation in post-secondary education. Monroe County has approximately 53,830 students in college or university, yet the region has one of the lowest student retention rates in the United States (NYS Dept. of Education; Underwood et al. 2020). In 2023, universities in Monroe County awarded 14,951 degrees (Data USA). Retaining graduates of the County's educational and vocational programs will help existing and incoming employers fill jobs requiring advanced technical skills and create the conditions for innovation.

Deaf Equity Council

The Deaf Equity Council was established in 2025 by joint action of Monroe County and City of Rochester. The Council will serve as a resource for, and advise municipal and County officials on policies and issues that are relevant and important to Deaf residents.

The Council aims to ensure that Deaf people thrive in each and all unique intersections of the “Deaf

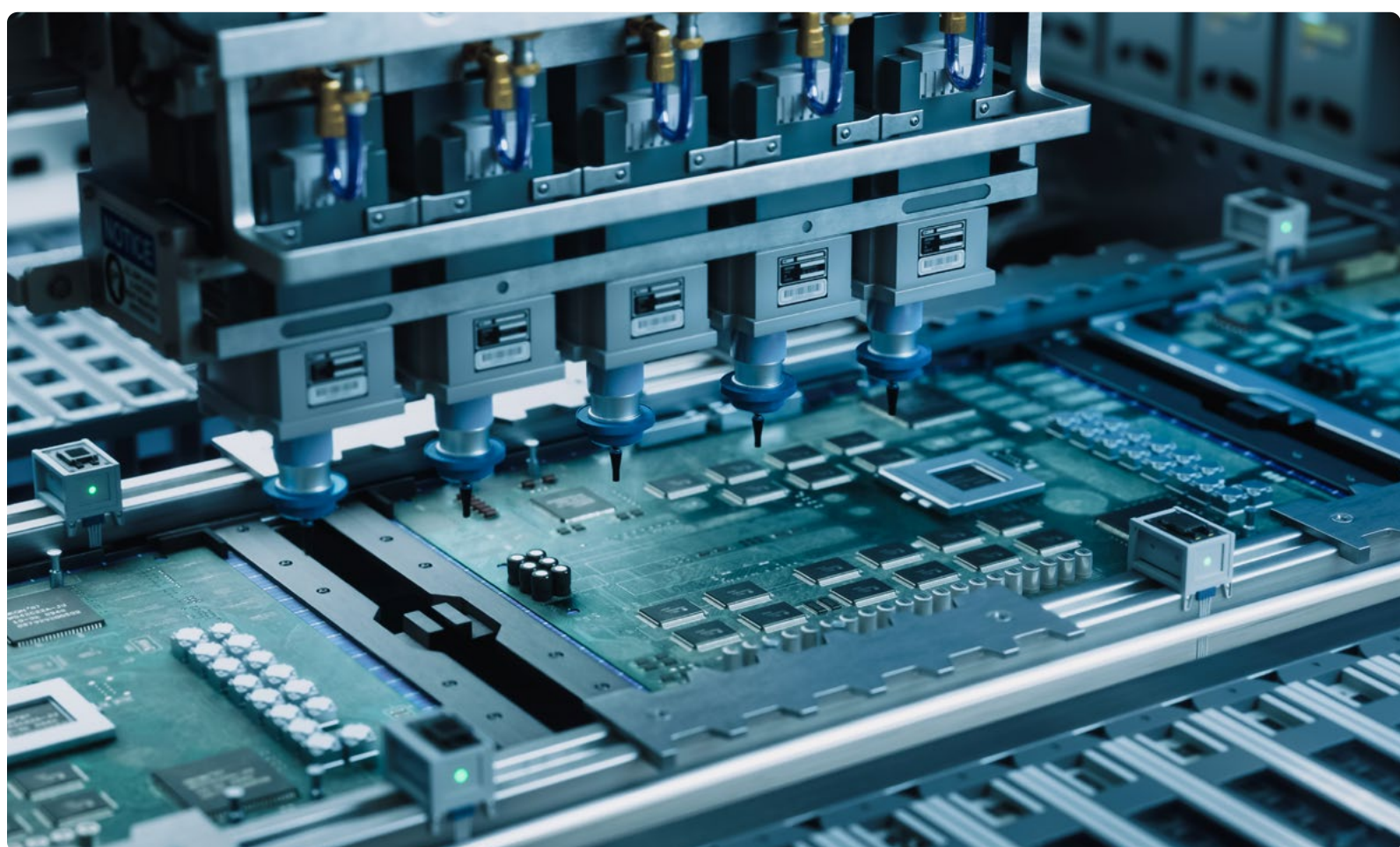
experience,” including but not limited to: Deaf people as a cultural and linguistic minority, day-to-day communication and access to information, accommodations that meet or exceed the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and intersectional Deaf identities such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, hearing status, nationality, gender identity, and more.



The optics/photonics and semiconductor industries require a spectrum of talent (e.g., PhD-level scientists, engineers, and technicians) for which there is a global shortage. MCC's optical technician program and RIT and UR engineering programs help, but demand still outpaces supply. Key challenges facing the region's optics industry include an aging workforce, with many experienced professionals approaching retirement, increased competition for talent from larger technology hubs, and insufficient STEM education pathways beginning in K–12 to prepare future workers. As mentioned in Section 1.4.1., there is a need for targeted efforts to expand training, upskill the existing workforce, and recruit new talent to prevent a labor bottleneck that could limit growth in these industries.

Beyond core infrastructure and training, several ancillary factors pose challenges to industry growth. Transportation limitations can make it hard for workers to reach jobs—Monroe County's public transit is limited, and not all workforce can afford personal vehicles. Childcare and elder care shortages also constrain labor force participation; some skilled individuals cannot join or stay in the workforce without these supports. Additionally, ensuring robust telecommunications/broadband infrastructure is available region-wide is important for high-tech companies and remote workers.

While Monroe County offers an affordable cost of living compared to larger cities, state and local taxes and regulatory processes in New York State are sometimes cited by firms as challenges. The County can continue working on these quality-of-life and business climate factors, from streamlining permitting to investing in transit and childcare, to remove friction points for companies and employees in the photonics and semiconductor sectors.



Case Study

County Retention Initiatives

Monroe County can further promote workforce development by connecting individuals with programs that enhance skills in the existing workforce population and support those re-entering the workforce.

RETAIN Program

A recent initiative to increase graduate retention is the **RETAIN (Rochester Emerging Talent and Innovations Network)** program through Monroe County, which encourages recent graduates to remain in the County for work by offering them a \$4,000 lump sum payment after having lived, worked, and networked in Monroe County for one year. The program is administered by the Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce and funded by COMIDA's Workforce Development Fund and the Monroe County Industrial Development Corporation. RETAIN currently supports 35 recipients per year, with opportunities to expand the program in the future.

RochesterWorks

RochesterWorks is an organization that offers employment and workforce development services for adults at any career stage. It also provides programs and resources for youth to find jobs and helps businesses grow their workforce. The organization offers career advisory services such as job search tools, resume editing, career transition counseling, e-learning, and workshops. The Enhanced Recovery Services (ERS) Program creates a pathway to economic independence for individuals recovering from substance abuse disorder or facing mental health challenges. RochesterWorks is designated by Monroe County and the City of Rochester to administer federal workforce development funds as Monroe County's fiscal agent and contracts with a One-Stop Operator to coordinate efforts among various partners, including NYS Department of Labor and American Job Center.



1.4.4 Need for Housing

A tight housing market in the Rochester/Monroe County area is creating ripple effects in workforce availability. The region is facing a housing shortage and affordability challenge, which the local business community notes is “impacting all of us” and acting as a drag on growth. In practical terms, insufficient housing—especially affordable homes and quality rentals—makes it harder to attract and retain the skilled workers needed for high-tech industries and economic growth. Population growth is muted when workers struggle to find housing. Moreover, without enough housing, companies have trouble recruiting young professionals or technicians from outside the region. Addressing this by encouraging new housing development, particularly near job centers in the urban core, is seen as a key solution to mitigate the skilled worker shortage. Monroe County’s economic professionals recognize that adequate, quality housing is directly linked to workforce growth, making it a top priority to support industry expansion.

Much of Monroe County’s housing stock was built shortly after World War II, when demand for large neighborhoods of detached homes was driven by family formation and the resulting population boom (baby boomers). Today 69% of all housing units in the County are in single-family homes (outside of the City of Rochester 80% of all housing units are in single-family homes). Approximately 72% of today’s housing stock was built prior to 1980.

This existing housing stock is not well aligned with today’s homebuyers, who are increasingly seeking out apartments, condominiums, and moderately priced detached and attached homes on smaller lots in more walkable neighborhoods, also known as ‘missing middle’ housing. Additionally, the growing senior population is expressing a desire to age-in-place and age-in-community, which requires additional diversity in housing stock and building diversity in communities. In order to meet the needs of seniors, specific housing and support services need to be incorporated into housing developments.





In Monroe County there were fewer sales closed in 2024 than in 2023. Most communities in New York State have experienced declines in the number of closed sales since 2020, ranging from -11.6% in Erie County to -19.3% in Monroe County. In 2024, Monroe County saw 7,868 new listings and had 0.6 months supply of inventory, which means if no new homes were listed, everything would be sold in less than 3 weeks. That's a clear sign of a very tight seller's market—high demand and very limited supply. Additionally, Monroe County saw homes sell for an average of 16% over asking price in 2024. This indicates that the available housing stock is limited and is driving prices higher than in other regions.

It is critical to understand the housing market to identify and develop needed housing types in strategic locations. Monroe County has taken an essential first step in responding to this demographic and demand shift by developing a housing market assessment to inform COMIDA tax incentives for new multi-family housing.

This completed Monroe County Housing Study and Needs Analysis (2025), developed for COMIDA, provides a foundation for understanding and addressing the housing needs of current and future residents and identifies barriers to developing missing housing types.

Monroe County has a role to play in convening the various stakeholders that will need to work together to bring new housing products to the market, including elected municipal officials, housing developers, builders, financing entities, utility service providers, new homebuyers, and residents of existing neighborhoods. The County can continue to facilitate assistance for homeowners who wish to improve existing housing stock by providing incentives or grants for repairs and upgrades. For example, the Monroe County Home Improvement Program (HIP) provides direct assistance to income-eligible homeowners in

'Months of Supply' tells you how many months it would take for all the current homes for sale on the market to sell, given a monthly sales volume. Four to five months of supply is average.

A lower number means that buyers are dominating the market and there are relatively few sellers; a higher number means there are more sellers than buyers.

the suburban towns and villages, excluding the City of Rochester and the Towns of Greece and Irondequoit, through grants or grant/low-interest loans for necessary home repairs and upgrades.



FIGURE 19
Home Sales
2024

	TOTAL CLOSED SALES	CHANGE FROM 2023	CHANGE FROM 2020	NEW LISTINGS	INVENTORY OF HOMES FOR SALE	MONTHS SUPPLY OF INVENTORY	PERCENT OF LIST PRICE RECEIVED
Monroe County	6,817	(0.8%)	(19.3%)	7,868	322	0.60	116.0%
Onondaga County	4,059	0.5%	(18.4%)	4,718	465	1.40	105.5%
Erie County	7,260	0.7%	(11.6%)	8,808	733	1.20	105.7%
NYS	104,698	(1.6%)	(17.7%)	139,293	23,198	2.60	101.9%

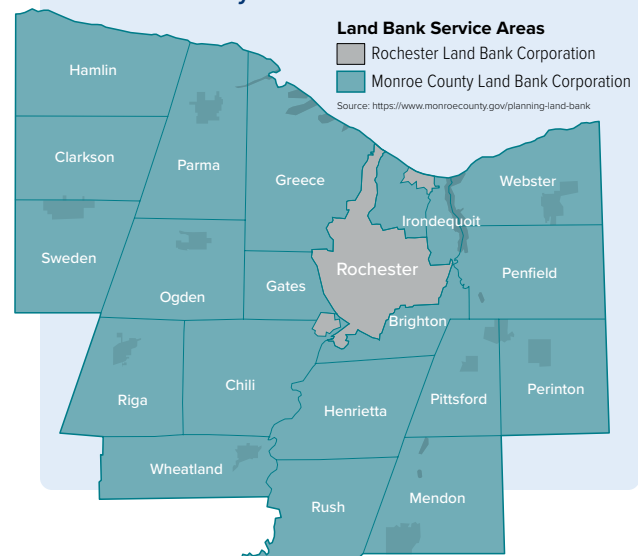
Source: NYSAR Annual Report, 2024

Additionally, the Monroe County Land Bank Corporation can play an important role in revitalizing communities by acquiring and restoring vacant, abandoned, and tax-delinquent properties within Monroe County to productive use.

MONROE COUNTY HOUSING STUDY & NEEDS ANALYSIS

Completed in December 2025 and commissioned by COMIDA, this study evaluates Monroe County's population and housing trends and offers recommendations for how COMIDA can support housing development. The findings highlight significant market pressures driven by rising demand and limited supply, particularly a shortage of units affordable to households earning 60–80% of Area Median Income (AMI), contributing to a growing “missing middle.” The study also noted the importance of a boarder mix of housing types and price points so residents at different life stages and income levels have greater housing choice and can remain within the community as their needs change.

The Monroe County Land Bank Corporation (MCLBC) works to reduce vacant and “zombie” properties across the county by returning them to productive uses that support community revitalization, quality housing, and economic and environmental resilience. The organization focuses on acquiring and redeveloping tax-delinquent and foreclosed properties to stabilize neighborhoods. Through these efforts, MCLBC also expands opportunities for affordable homeownership throughout Monroe County.



1.5 Goals and Strategies



Develop the Workforce and Support Entrepreneurship

- 1 Support small business development and entrepreneurship with funding, technical assistance, and marketing.
- 2 Assist startups, small-to-midsize, and minority-owned businesses in accessing resources for innovation and entrepreneurship.
- 3 Provide resources and education for young people to explore a full range of career pathways and education requirements, from skilled trades to higher education.
- 4 Provide career transition support to individuals interested in upskilling or reskilling due to industrial shifts or personal goals.
- 5 Provide competitive incentives or other resources to employers and skilled workers to support career advancement and retention of top talent.
- 6 Reduce key barriers to employment such as childcare, housing, and transportation to create more opportunities for stable and sustainable employment.
- 7 Enhance collaboration between universities and the workforce development ecosystem to improve alignment with employer needs, close workforce gaps, and measure success.
- 8 Develop targeted initiatives to address current and future workforce needs in the skilled trades by increasing apprenticeship opportunities, strengthening partnerships with trade schools and unions, and promoting career awareness programs in K-12 education.
- 9 Support employer-led training programs and workforce re-entry initiatives to grow and sustain a robust pipeline of skilled workers for the region's development needs.
- 10 Support the development of specialized training programs, internships, and apprenticeships that equip individuals with the skills needed for high-demand roles in automation, robotics, photonics, and other cutting-edge industries. Promote awareness and access to these career opportunities to ensure a steady flow of talent into the region's growing technology sectors.
- 11 Integrate accessibility into workforce initiatives to expand talent participation, support inclusive employment practices, and strengthen Monroe County's ability to attract, retain, and engage a diverse workforce.
- 12 Partner with educational institutions, employers, and community organizations to expand language-learning opportunities, including American Sign Language (ASL), to strengthen workforce development and economic competitiveness.



Create Places that Enhance Quality of Life

- 1 Expand recreation options and connections to parks and amenities.
- 2 Foster the development of vibrant community centers that incorporate mixed-use development and greater residential density where infrastructure supports.
- 3 Promote walkability and development of pedestrian-friendly areas.
- 4 Encourage the growth of local businesses, farmers' markets, and artisan shops that reflect the community's identity, boost the local economy, and foster unique cultural experiences.
- 5 Create and maintain public spaces that are accessible, safe, and inclusive for all members of the community.
- 6 Leverage the County's vibrant arts, cultural, and public enrichment programs, including festivals, performances, and local museums, to enhance quality of life and attract both residents and visitors.
- 7 Prioritize investment in arts infrastructure and community partnerships to further solidify Monroe County as a regional hub for creative expression and cultural engagement.
- 8 Invest in tourism assets, projects, and organizations that promote Monroe County's unique attractions, from natural landmarks to cultural and historical sites.
- 9 Enhance multimodal access, including train, bus, roadway, and air, by partnering with state and regional stakeholders to attract additional services that expand mobility for residents across the region.
- 10 Promote accessibility into all public services offered by county and municipal providers, including communications, transportation services, public spaces, events, etc. to ensure residents of all abilities can fully participate in and contribute to community life.
- 11 Make public spaces and parks more inclusive and welcoming to members of the community who have physical or cognitive disabilities.



Enhance Housing Access and Quality

- 1 Promote diverse housing options to address gaps in the housing market, including single-family homes, rental units, workforce housing, and adaptable housing types that accommodate various household needs.
- 2 Convene stakeholders and industry professionals to work on developing creative solutions to the housing shortage in Monroe County.
- 3 Improve the quality of existing homes and reduce disinvestment by providing additional incentives or grants for repairs and upgrades.
- 4 Develop strategies to increase the availability of various housing options to accommodate the diverse needs of the workforce.
- 5 Regularly assess housing needs and market dynamics to ensure that housing policies adapt to changing conditions and continue to meet community demands.
- 6 Leverage on-going major capital projects to expand homeownership opportunities and support active transportation-oriented communities



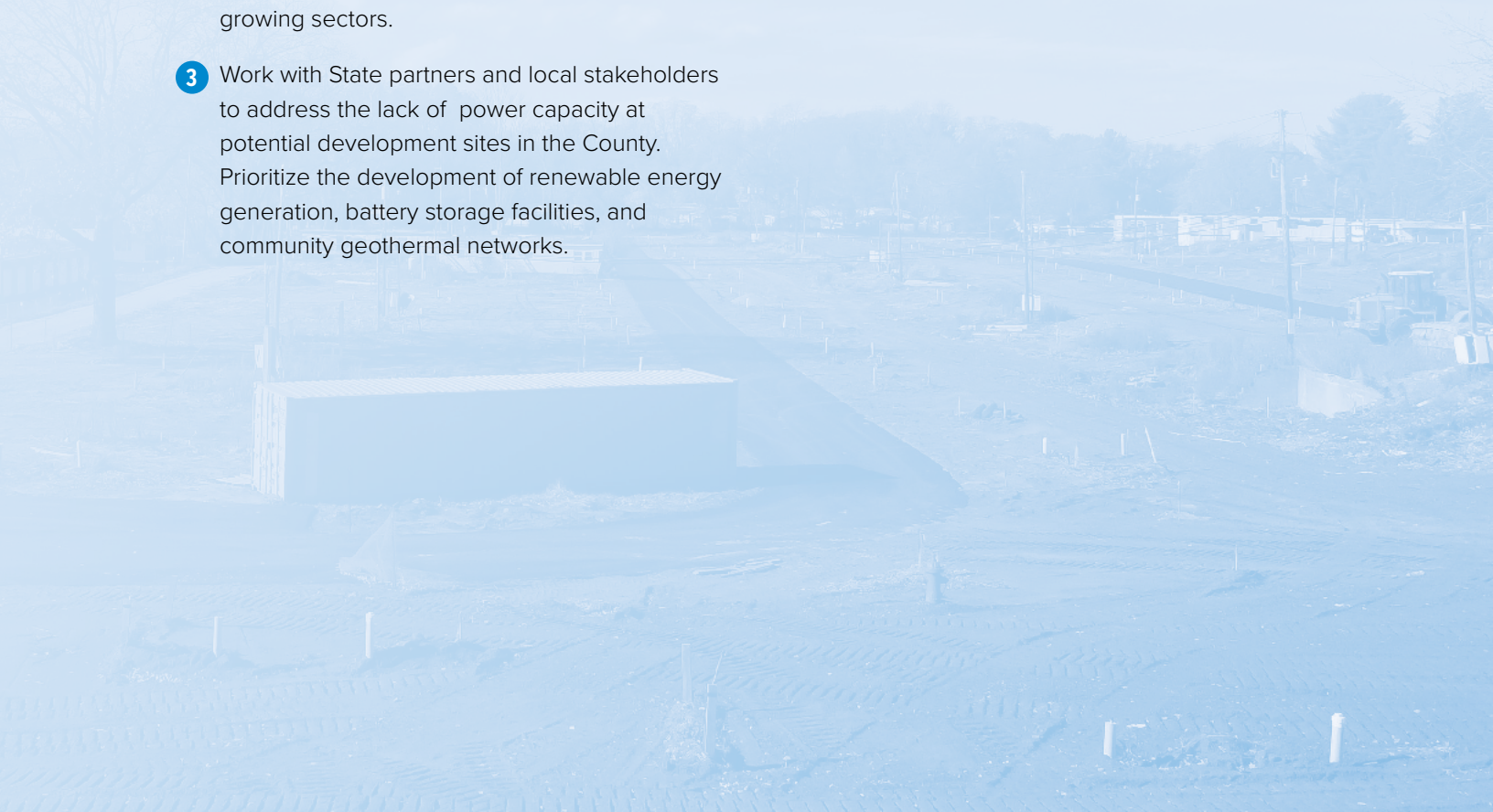
Strengthen Existing and Growing Economic Sectors While Investing in Emerging Industries

- 1 Expand retention and recruitment efforts to strengthen local businesses involved in the supply chains of key industries, such as manufacturing, logistics, energy, and healthcare.
- 2 Support business retention and recruitment efforts related to growth industries where Monroe County maintains competitive advantages, such as Optics, Photonics, Imaging, and Lasers (OPIIL), such as photonics, semiconductors, and supply chain and logistics.
- 3 Encourage partnerships between businesses and local colleges, universities, and trade schools to align curricula with industry needs and foster a pipeline of skilled workers.
- 4 Invest in agricultural production, processing, and marketing of industries such as agritourism, farmers' markets, farm-to-table programs, breweries, and cideries to enhance the impact of local agriculture on the economy and food system.
- 5 Promote Monroe County's Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ) as a resource for companies engaged in import/export activities. Collaborate with key stakeholders to increase awareness and utilization of the FTZ, driving economic growth through enhanced global trade opportunities.



Identify and Prepare Suitable Sites for Development

- 1 Organize and facilitate a task force to study available sites, including brownfields or underutilized sites that strategically support both the County's economic development and climate action plan goals agenda. Prioritize the redevelopment of brownfields and prepare them for future development.
- 2 Identify and prioritize resources to facilitate the development of sites suitable for emerging and growing sectors.
- 3 Work with State partners and local stakeholders to address the lack of power capacity at potential development sites in the County. Prioritize the development of renewable energy generation, battery storage facilities, and community geothermal networks.
- 4 Clearly identify site development opportunities and pursue grant funding—including the FAST NY Shovel-Ready Grant Program and the Promote Opportunity with Electric Readiness for Underdeveloped Properties (POWER UP) Fund—with New York State and other entities as available.



2



2 Infrastructure

2.1 Introduction

Infrastructure is a cornerstone of the County's vision for a resilient, equitable, and future-ready community. Infrastructure is not merely about roads, bridges, and water pipes; it is the physical and increasingly digital backbone that supports every aspect of life in Monroe County. Modernized and inclusive infrastructure is fundamental to public health, safety, economic prosperity, and sustainability. To accomplish its goals, the County will need to maintain and invest in critical systems such as transportation, water recovery, solid waste management and recycling, broadband access, multimodal freight networks, and active mobility pathways, all of which are essential to connecting residents with opportunities and services. By investing in infrastructure, Monroe County will lay the groundwork for long-term economic growth, climate adaptation, and social equity, ensuring that every resident, regardless of background or socioeconomic status, can thrive in a safe, healthy, connected, and vibrant community.

Infrastructure systems connect us to vital services that serve as the foundation for a fully functioning community. These systems improve the quality of life; shape and enhance the public realm; contribute to health, wellness, safety, and security; and promote economic growth. A variety of county departments, affiliated entities, municipal partners, and private sector actors work in coordination to manage and maintain the complex infrastructure systems and equipment that people living and working in Monroe County rely on. In collaboration with stakeholders and various agencies, Monroe County continually seeks to improve public infrastructure and services through ongoing initiatives and efforts to modernize and enhance coordination between its stormwater, sanitary sewer, solid waste management, energy, information and communications technology, and transportation sectors.

PILLAR 2

INFRASTRUCTURE

GOALS

- ✓ Invest in 21st-Century Infrastructure
- ✓ Protect Water Resources
- ✓ Improve Waste Management and Recycling Practices
- ✓ Invest in and Diversify the Transportation System



By applying a systems-based approach to infrastructure management, the County seeks to improve its resilience in response to changing preferences and needs associated with demographic changes, technological advances, and a changing climate. The County will continue to invest in the development of a twenty-first-century infrastructure system that helps to increase equity by investing in underserved areas with improved access to transportation and broadband internet, resiliency through investments in wastewater infrastructure, sustainability through waste management and energy investments like conservation, renewable energy, and electric vehicle infrastructure, and by strengthening connectivity and mobility options throughout the County.

A systems-based approach recognizes the interconnected nature of infrastructure, focusing on its various components and relationships with people and the greater environment.

2.2 Trends

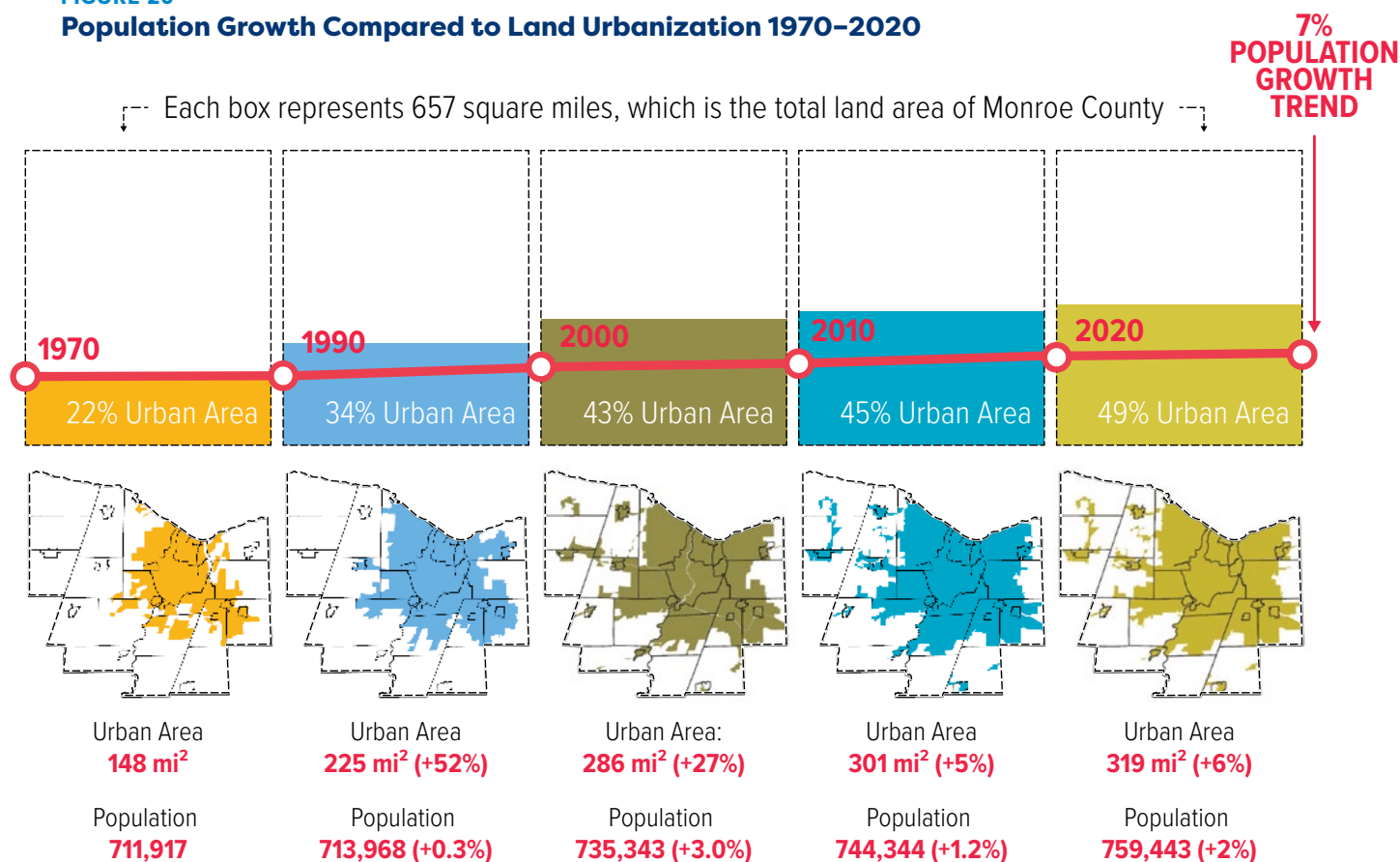
Trend 1

Monroe County's land has urbanized at a faster rate than its population growth

In the past 50 years, land has been urbanized at a faster rate than the population has grown in Monroe County, aligning with broader trends of urban sprawl seen across New York State and the nation. Between 1970 and 2020, the County's urbanized land area doubled while the population grew by only 7%. **Figure 20** shows the progression and pattern of the urbanizing portions of the County.

In 1970, the average household size in the County was approximately 3.0 people per household; by 2020, the number reduced to 2.37. Although shrinking household sizes generally mean more housing units are needed to accommodate the same number of people, the number of households in Monroe County increased only by 9%, rising from 220,554 in 1970 to 239,675 in 2020. During the same period, 80,721 housing units were constructed, representing a 54% increase over the total units available in 1970. As housing unit growth outpaced household growth, disinvestment in some parts of the County with older housing stock also occurred.

FIGURE 20
Population Growth Compared to Land Urbanization 1970–2020



Source: U.S. Census Bureau.



As the County's urbanized land area increases, the roads, water lines, and emergency services need the capacity to serve a broader area. Without corresponding population growth, the cost of public services and utilities goes up, as fewer users are responsible for the costs of the extended infrastructure. In rural areas, sprawl can also negatively impact wildlife habitat and threaten agricultural productivity as forest and farm fields are converted into predominantly single-family residential uses.

At the same time, this pattern exerts a noticeable impact on core urban areas, which have lost population as residents move into new suburban developments. Population and density loss in the urban core weakens the tax base, which places additional burdens on the maintenance of existing infrastructure. Population loss can also diminish the quality of the social fabric and present challenges for sustaining commerce and business development.

There are signs that the urban sprawl trend is slowing significantly. For example, according to the 2020 Census, the population of the City of Rochester grew for the first time since the 1950 census. This fact demonstrates that the trend is not irreversible. The County can work to encourage new development to occur where existing infrastructure is in place by partnering with local municipalities to develop and implement model land use regulations that local municipalities can use to guide local development. This practice is already evident in the new housing being added to the downtown area of Rochester, such as the

former Inner Loop East, East End, and recent developments just west of the Genesee River. Additionally, incentives offered through COMIDA can also encourage new development at densities that support both cost-effective infrastructure maintenance, the creation of a healthy environment for business growth, neighborhood vitality, and additional housing options that are new to Monroe County.

Trend 2

Climate change is contributing to rising temperatures and more extreme weather events.



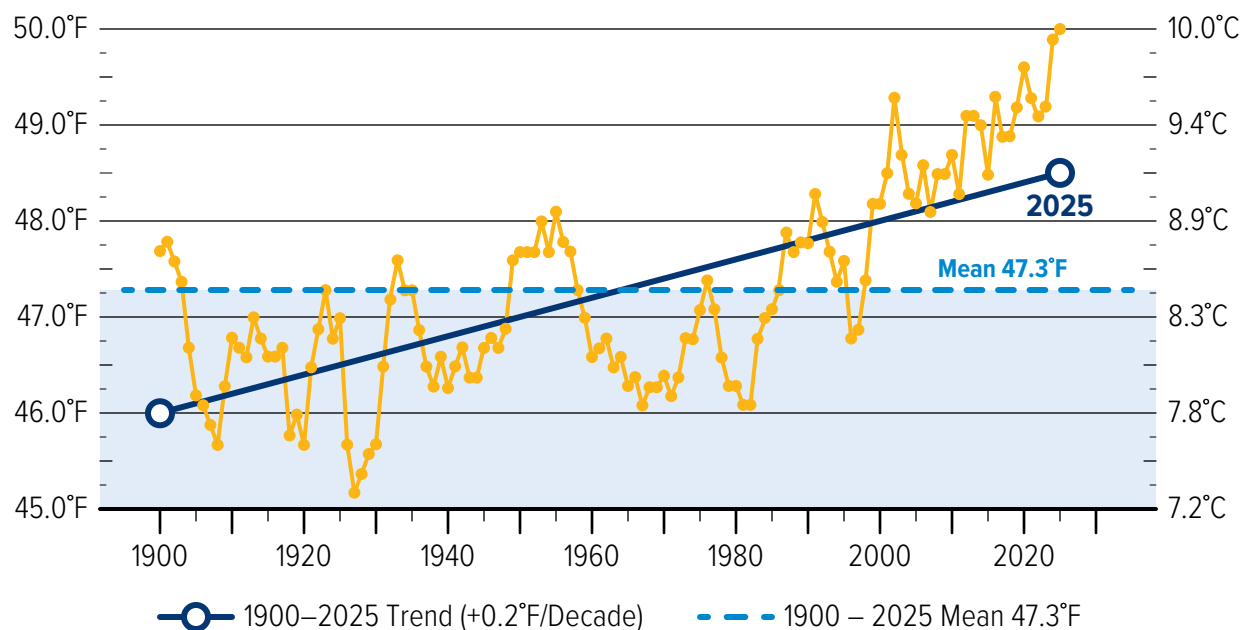
Climate change includes both the increase in the Earth's surface temperature and its related effects (NOAA). Trends linked to climate change are already impacting Monroe County residents and they are projected to continue and worsen. In Monroe County, residents have been primarily affected by increased flooding, extreme weather events, damage from ice and wind, periods of intense heat, and more frequent instances of reduced air quality, which most heavily impact already vulnerable populations. The current climate conditions and future projections highlight the urgent need for climate action planning.

The average temperature in New York State has increased by almost 2.6°F since 1901. Since the year 2000, temperatures have been rising faster than in any other period in recorded history. The average temperature in Monroe County from 2020 to 2025 was 2.3°F higher than from 1895 to 1900 (Figure 21). Average temperatures in New York State are projected to rise between 5°F and 11°F by 2100, and Monroe County is expected to experience a more than 2°F increase (NYSERDA, 2025). The rate of warming since 2000 has also accelerated, as shown in National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) data. Depending on the rate of acceleration over the next several decades, temperatures in Western New York could rise as much as 14°F, as outlined in the Monroe County Climate Action Plan (CAP) (Figure 22).

While this warming trend may introduce some welcome effects like extended growing seasons and increased yields for certain crops, it will also exacerbate many negative effects, such as heat stress on crops and livestock, increased pest, drought, loss of cold-dependent species. In the Rochester region, projection ranges for the year 2050 include precipitation increases of 2% to 12%, 8 to 34 additional days over 90°F, an increase from 1.3 to 4.3 heat waves per year, and 55 to 31 fewer days below 32°F per year (NYSERDA, 2025). These trends have the potential to increase flood events, introduce wide fluctuations in lake water levels, stress the ecosystems that support native plants and animals, and introduce a wide range of health hazards for residents. In addition, climate change impacts on other regions can have secondary effects in Monroe County, as experienced in 2023, 2024, and 2025 when smoke from wildfires in Canada caused smoky skies and degraded air quality and across the East Coast (Tine, 2023).

FIGURE 21
1901-2025 Average Temperature Trend

5-year period

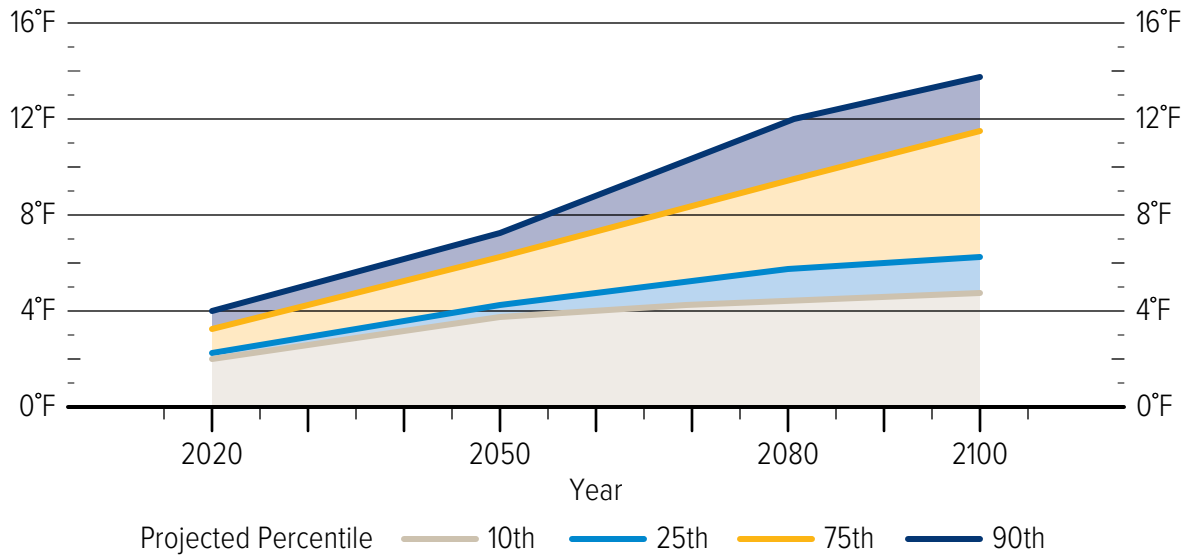


Monroe County, New York Average Temperature

60–Month Period Ending in August

Source: NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information, 2025.

FIGURE 22
Projected Temperature Changes in Western New York Region 1



Projected Temperature Changes in Western New York Region 1

Source: Monroe County Climate Action Plan, 2024 (ClimAID)

<https://www.monroecountyclimateaction.com/>

The County is taking steps towards a more resilient future. The County Climate Action Plan (CAP) was developed in two phases with the first completed in 2022 covering County government operations and the second completed in 2024 for communitywide activities. The CAP establishes a framework to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, turning climate goals into measurable actions both for its own operations and to work with local municipalities and community partners to advance coordinated shared sustainability goals.



Trend 3

Transportation systems are facing new safety challenges

Many people want the option of walking, biking, and public transit as part of healthier, climate-conscious lifestyles; however, infrastructure improvements have not kept up. Meanwhile, vehicles that are faster and larger pose increasing dangers for vulnerable road users. Technological advances have created more demands on the transportation system, with e-bikes and e-scooters leading to an increased frequency of users somewhere in between the speeds of a car and pedestrian travel. Together, these have led to an increase in users and competition for the same limited transportation space available.

From 2013 to 2022, U.S. traffic-related death rates increased by a relative 50% for pedestrians, and in Monroe County, pedestrian and cyclist fatalities also showed an overall upward trend, based on data from 2014 to 2023 (Naumann et al., 2025; TSSR). **Figures 23 and 24** present Pedestrian and Bicyclist fatality statistics for the County as a whole, including the City of Rochester. The figures do not break out City-specific data, so they may not fully capture patterns across the

County. Further analysis of where pedestrian and bicyclist fatal crashes are occurring—such as at intersections, mid-block locations, along roadway segments, or in urban and rural contexts—would help the County and local municipalities better target safety improvements. In response to the rising trend in pedestrian and bicyclist crashes, the County developed its first [Countywide Active Transportation Plan \(CATP\)](#) in 2023, which includes recommendations aimed at improving safety for vulnerable road users through policy updates and infrastructure investments. Additionally, the County is developing an implementation plan in 2025 to guide the County on the implementation of active transportation recommendations from the CATP. This effort focuses on enhancing active transportation and facilities within Monroe County jurisdiction, aiming to turn CATP’s objectives into actionable projects. For roads outside of Monroe County’s control, the County can collaborate with the state and local municipalities to advocate for safety measures on state and local roads, as well as provide technical and engineering support. For example, the County Department of Transportation works closely with the City of Rochester as their traffic engineer for City roadways, supporting the City’s Vision Zero and Active Transportation initiatives.

FIGURE 23
Pedestrian Fatalities in Monroe County 2014–2023

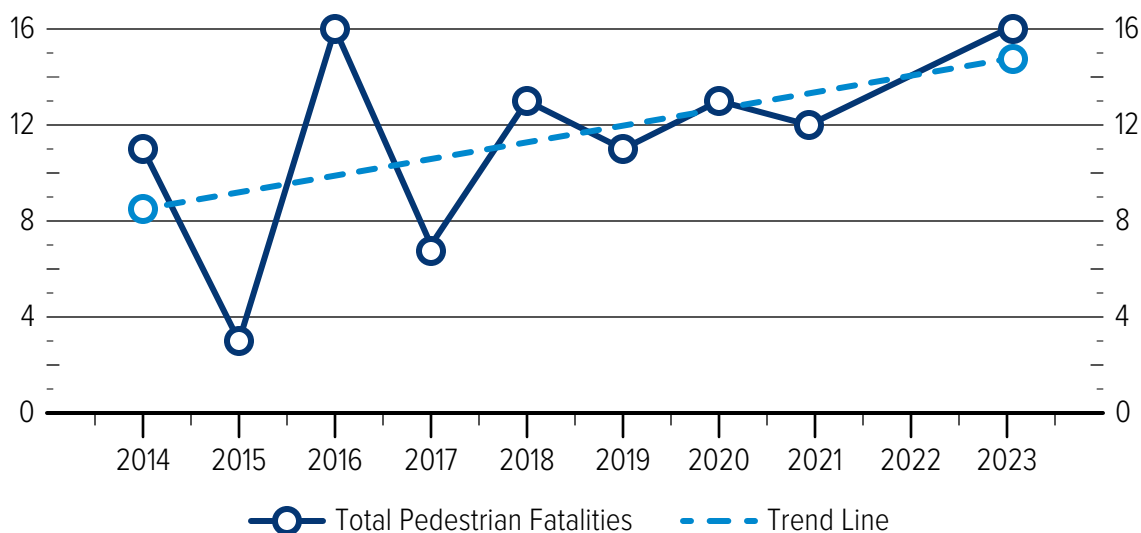
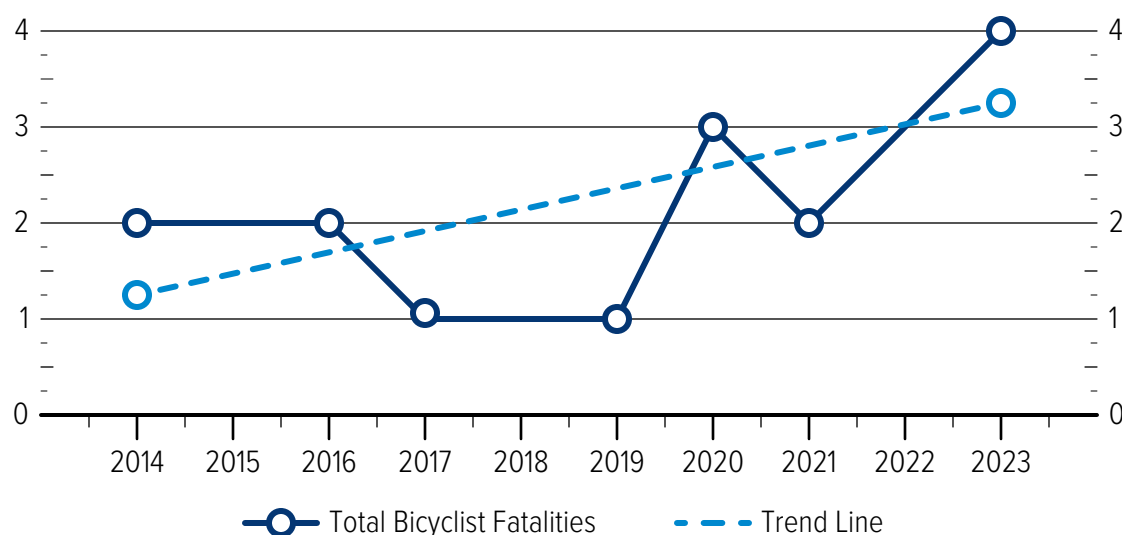


FIGURE 24
Bicyclist Fatalities in Monroe County 2014–2023



Monroe County Bicyclist Fatalities

Source: Traffic Safety Statistical Repository (TSSR) • ITSMR.

Trend 4

Ongoing changes in regional freight operations

A thorough understanding of multimodal freight flows, key corridors, and infrastructure needs is vital for guiding transportation investments, encouraging sustainable and reliable goods movement, reducing negative community impacts, and aligning regional priorities with state and national freight goals. Freight plays a crucial role in the region's economic success, as efficient freight transportation directly influences growth. Some of the Genesee-Finger-Lakes Region's most competitive industries rely on its transportation infrastructure. According to

the GTC's Genesee-Finger Lakes Regional Freight Plan Update, freight-dependent industries—such as agriculture, manufacturing, utilities, retail trade, wholesale trade, construction, transportation and warehousing, and mining/quarrying—make up 24% of the regional GDP. The condition of transportation infrastructure in Monroe County is critical to maintaining the region's top industries' effectiveness and supporting the future expansion of these sectors, thereby ensuring the region's ability to stay competitive amid rapid change and growth.

Trucks move the majority of freight and goods throughout the region, followed by rail, both of which are expected to see significant increases in volume and value by 2050 due to freight-dependent industry investments, population growth, and e-commerce expansion (GTC, 2025) (Figure 25). Trucking activities in the Genesee-Finger Lakes region are served by interstates I-590, I-490, I-390, and I-90.

These highways offer access to nearby Buffalo and Syracuse, as well as to Ontario, Canada, New York City, and surrounding states, and the nation. In 2021, the region's multimodal freight transportation system moved more than 400 million tons of goods valued at over \$440 billion, with passthrough freight making up the majority of the flows (Figure 26).

FIGURE 25
Commodity Flow Tonnage and Value by Mode, 2021 Data and 2050 Projection

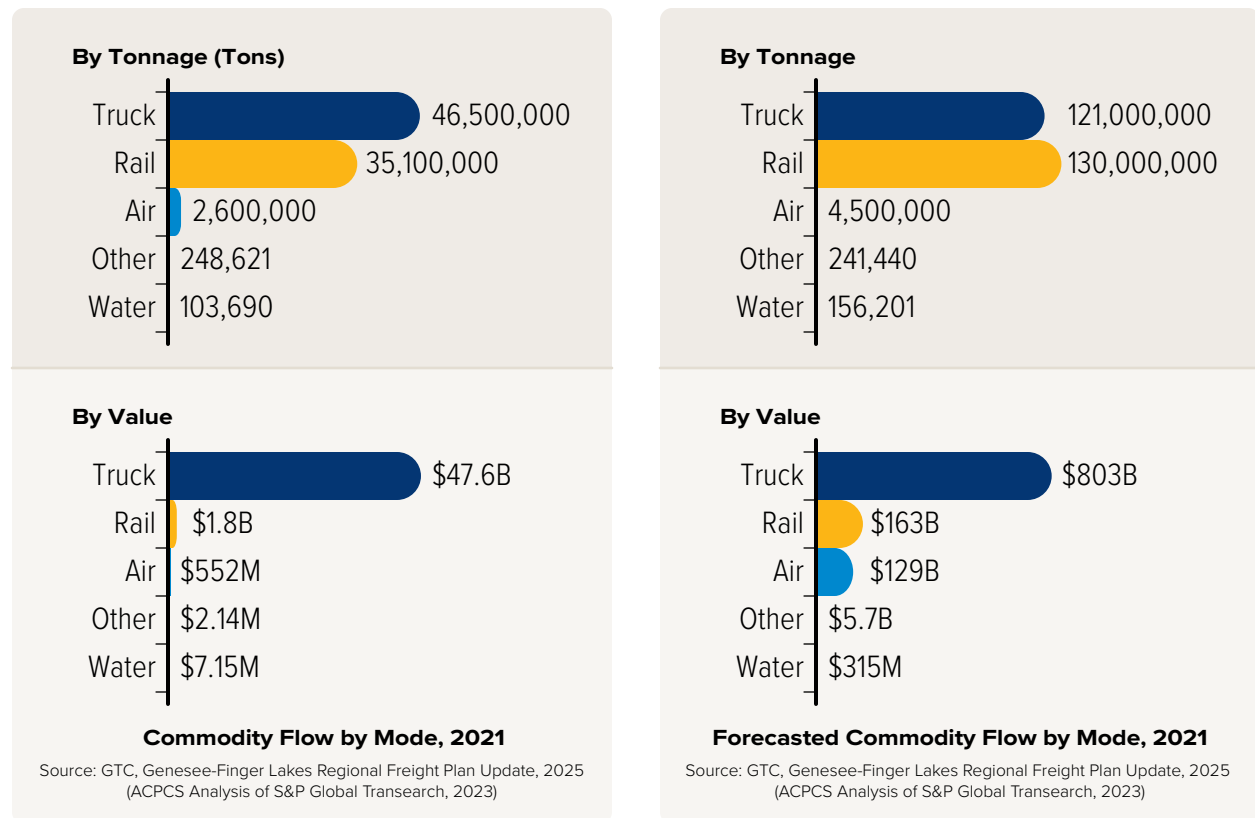
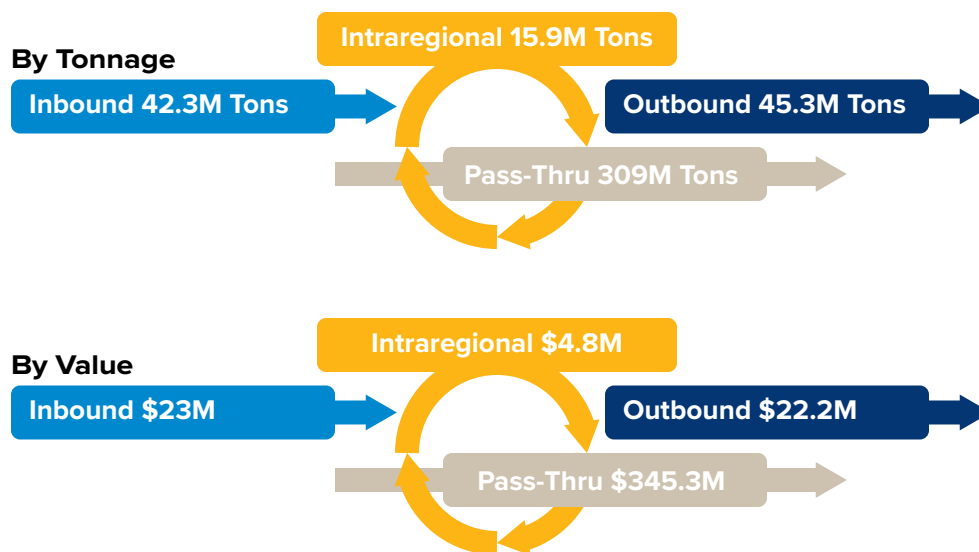


FIGURE 26
Commodity Flow by Direction, 2021



Commodity Flow by Direction 2021

Source: GTC, Genesee-Finger Lakes Regional Freight Plan Update, 2025 (ACPCS Analysis of S&P Global Transearch, 2023).

2.3 What Do We Build On?

2.3.1 A Comprehensive Transportation Network

Monroe County has a well-established transportation network that includes roadways, intercity travel, public transit, and active transportation system, serving the varied mobility needs of residents and visitors (Figure 27). This multimodal network provides a strong foundation for continued investment to strengthen multimodal connectivity, improve safety and accessibility, and ensure all modes can effectively support current and future travel demand.

Interstate highways form the backbone of the road network, linking the region to destinations across the country. The New York State Thruway (I-90) connects the area with communities throughout Upstate New York and beyond to the east and

west, while I-390 provides a southern connection. I-490 and I-590 handle high traffic volumes within the region, including the City of Rochester and densely populated suburban areas. The New York State Thruway Authority and the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) are responsible for operating and maintaining these interstate highways. State highways, managed by NYSDOT, and county highways, overseen by the Monroe County Department of Transportation (MCDOT), serve as vital links between the interstates and local roads; these are the main routes many of residents use daily, whether for commuting to work, shopping, or visiting family in nearby towns. Local roads account for two-thirds of all road miles in Monroe County. Municipalities (i.e., cities, towns, and villages) are responsible for maintaining local roads.

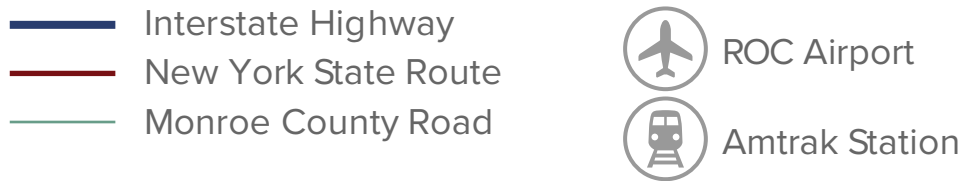


FIGURE 27
Monroe County Transportation Network

MCDOT handles numerous transportation-related responsibilities, including overseeing the safe and efficient operation of county-owned infrastructure and manages approximately 664 miles of highways, 192 bridges, 344 major culverts, 140 retaining walls, and 830 traffic signals and flasher devices, including those operated and maintained by MCDOT on City streets (Monroe County, 2025f).

Building on safety as MCDOT's top priority, system efficiency also plays a critical role in reducing risk-taking behavior. This is achieved through a coordinated, systems-based approach at signalized intersections that integrates technology and operations. Tools such as pedestrian push buttons, Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS), non-intrusive detection systems, optimized signal timing, targeted safety treatments, and data analytics are deployed in combination. Together, these elements create a layered, performance-driven transportation system that improves safety, enhances reliability, and supports more predictable and efficient travel for all users.

Sidewalk Incentive Program

In June 2023, the County Legislature approved a \$10 million allocation from the general fund to establish the sidewalk incentive program. Previously, the cost of adding sidewalks along county roads was fully covered by towns. Through this program, an intermunicipal agreement will be offered to the town that includes a partial county subsidy, up to 50%, to offset the sidewalk's cost. This cost-sharing initiative aims to make crucial infrastructure improvements more affordable and attainable for the towns, while encouraging investment in safer, more connected pedestrian networks and to promote active transportation across the county.

Veo E-Scooter and E-Bike Sharing Program

Launched in June 2023, the Veo E-Scooter and E-Bike Sharing Program marked a significant expansion of shared micro-mobility options in the City of Rochester. Veo, an independent shared mobility company, operates a mixed fleet of e-scooters and e-bikes. Devices are distributed throughout neighborhoods in each quadrant of the city, helping residents and visitors with the first mile/last mile transportation need of connecting to bus stops, commuting to work, or exploring city attractions. Veo employs a team of local staff responsible for distributing and maintaining the fleet and responding to issues or complaints as they arise.

The 2024 season, running from March through early December, was the program's first full year of operation and saw impressive uptake: over 425,000 total rides were taken by 26,000+ unique riders, with a peak deployment of 1,200+ devices. The busiest hub was the RTS Transit Center, highlighting the program's strong integration with the public transit network. To support accessibility, the program offers several rider options. Low-income users may qualify for Veo Access, a reduced-price monthly membership designed to remove cost barriers. Additionally, users can sign up for VeoPlus, a monthly membership that waives unlock fees, making frequent use more affordable.





The County has made significant progress in promoting sustainable and inclusive mobility through its 2023 Countywide Active Transportation Plan, which focuses on non-motorized transportation modes such as biking and walking not only for recreation but also as a practical way of everyday commuting while accommodating people of all ages, incomes, race, and abilities. The plan is strategically designed to enhance safety, expand the current networks of sidewalks, trails, and bike lanes, and address critical infrastructure gaps to ensure equitable access to transportation for all community members. There are also programs, campaigns, and initiatives such as the County's Sidewalk Incentive Program, Road-diet and Complete Street Policies, and numerous bike lane projects that all work to promote a comprehensive, integrated, and connected multi-modal transportation network.





The Frederick Douglass Greater Rochester International Airport (ROC) has been awarded among the USA TODAY 10 Best Readers' Choice Award for Best Small Airport in 2023, 2024, and once again for 2025, continuing its strong track record of excellence, passenger satisfaction, and national recognition (USA TODAY).

Increasing transportation options offer opportunities for Monroe County residents to find a mode of transportation that fits their needs, preferences, budget, and activity level. This, in turn, helps promote active lifestyles, boosts community health, and supports local economic development in two main ways: reducing absenteeism by providing workers with more transportation choices and making Monroe County a more attractive and livable place. Looking ahead, the County plans to improve inter-municipal corridors, enhancing connectivity between towns and villages and ensuring safer, more efficient travel within and across communities (Monroe County, 2023).

The Frederick Douglass Greater Rochester International Airport (ROC) is a vital part of Monroe County's transportation system. A major regional hub offering over two dozen nonstop domestic flights along with international travel, the airport connects the County to the rest of the country and the world (ROC, 2025). The airport has recently undergone several upgrades focused on improved customer experience, including the installation of a parking guidance system, extended canopy walkways for all-weather protection, larger entryways for improved accessibility, and faster baggage handling systems. These enhancements, along with renovated passenger zones and expanded dining and amenity options, are designed to make the travel experience easier, more convenient, and attract more users. The airport also plays a critical role in freight and logistics for consumers and businesses in Monroe County. Continued investment in air-related logistics will allow Monroe County businesses to stay competitive. Major carriers like FedEx and UPS operate at ROC, providing overnight and next-day service, linking Rochester to national and global networks. The airport links the region to global markets, facilitating advanced manufacturing and high-tech industries' demand on quick delivery of parts and products.

Together, these ongoing improvements to transportation infrastructure and assets highlight Monroe County's commitment to creating a safer, healthier, and more interconnected community that supports growth, mobility, economic progress, and quality of life for all its residents.

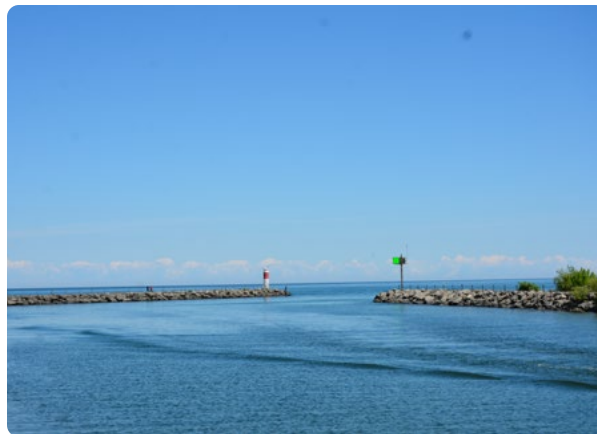


2.3.2 Water Resource Protection

Monroe County's location affords it the benefit of abundant water resources and a moderate climate. Monroe County's waterways, shaped by glaciers that once covered the entire landscape, offer scenic beauty and recreational opportunities while playing a vital role in the County's economy. The Genesee River and the Erie Canal, once drivers of our manufacturing economy, now host regional trails like the Genesee Valley Riverway Trail and the Empire State Trail. Major water resources, such as Lake Ontario, the Genesee River, Irondequoit Bay, Black Creek, Honeoye Creek, Oatka Creek, their tributaries, and groundwater are part of the system that provides the County with fresh, clean drinking water (**Figure 28**).

Monroe County also contains about 461,000 acres of identified wetlands, making up more than 10% of its landscape. Wetlands and floodplains are critical components of ecosystems and provide various benefits to the County's resiliency, including filtering excess pollutants from stormwater runoff and providing habitats for a diverse range of plants and animals. They also temporarily store floodwater, reducing the effects of flooding events on infrastructure and drinking water quality.

Changing climate and precipitation patterns in western NY will impact many aspects of the water system, and Monroe County Water Authority (MCWA) has been proactive in addressing its long-term sustainability. The Monroe County



Department of Environmental Services (DES) coordinates and supports the Stormwater Coalition of Monroe County, a partnership of 29 municipal members, to advance watershed management via a wide range of projects and programs that include public education, training, technical assistance, and knowledge transfer. Additionally, the Monroe County Climate Action Plan (CAP) highlights environmental projects aimed at protecting communities, infrastructure, and preserving ecosystem health against current and future climate risks. Some of the projects include enhancements to the Lake Ontario Shoreline to mitigate flooding and erosion damage from severe lake level fluctuations through the establishment of living shorelines and further supporting stream and shoreline stabilization.



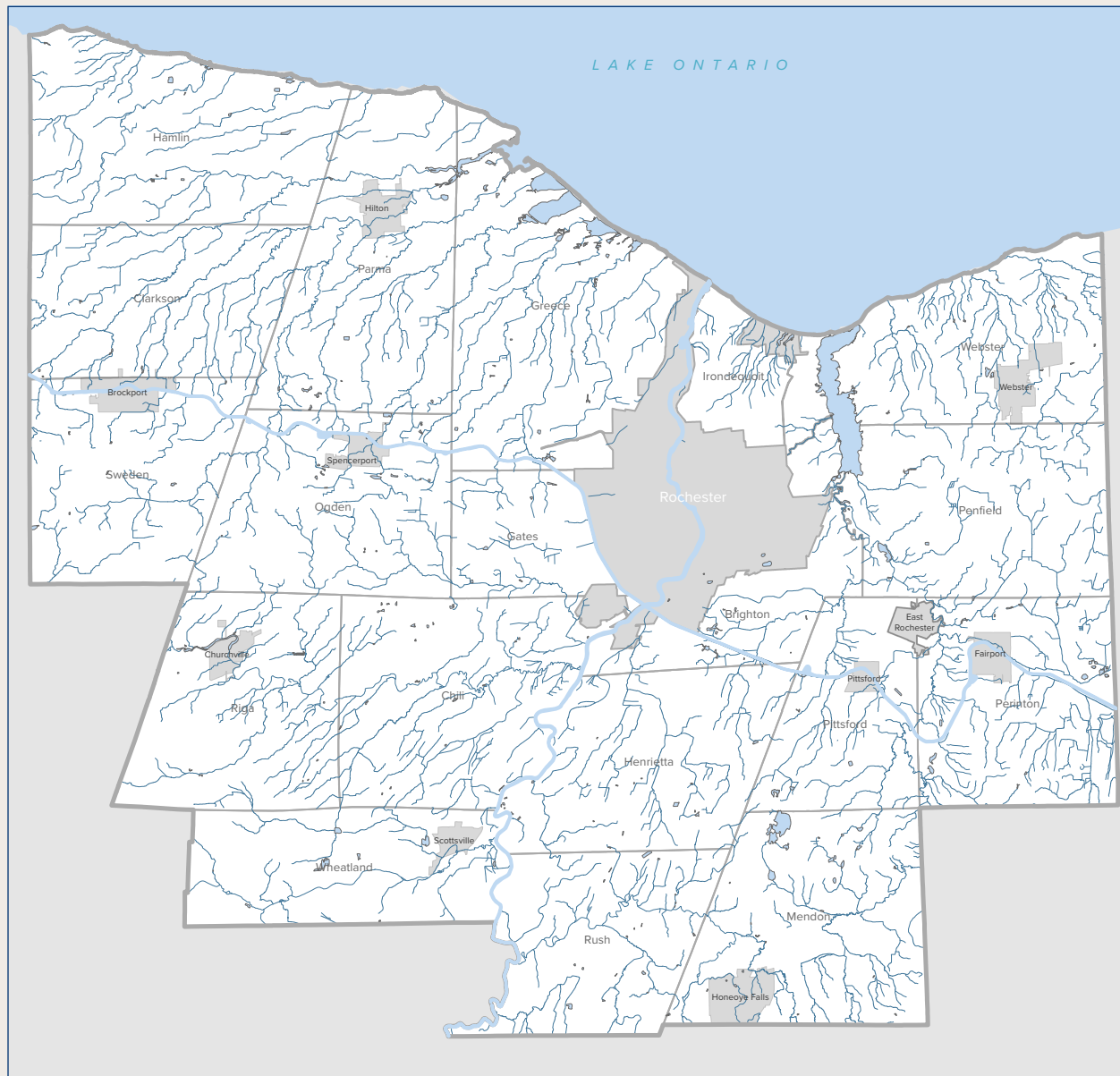


FIGURE 28
Monroe County Water Resources

Source: Monroe County GIS

In Monroe County, the management of water and sewer infrastructure is distributed among the Monroe County Water Authority (MCWA), City of Rochester Water Bureau, Monroe County Division of Pure Waters (MCPW), and local municipal governments (**Figure 29**). MCPW was established in 1967 with the goal of reducing the levels of pollution in Monroe County waters to safe and healthy levels. From the late 1970s through the early 1990s, Monroe County Pure Waters (MCPW)

took advantage of nearly \$500 million in federal construction grants to construct a sophisticated deep-rock tunnel system in the Rochester Pure Waters District known as the Combined Sewer Overflow Abatement Program (CSOAP) that has dramatically reduced combined sewer overflow events in the Genesee River and Irondequoit Bay; thereby, improving the water quality of the Genesee River, Irondequoit Bay and the Rochester Embayment.

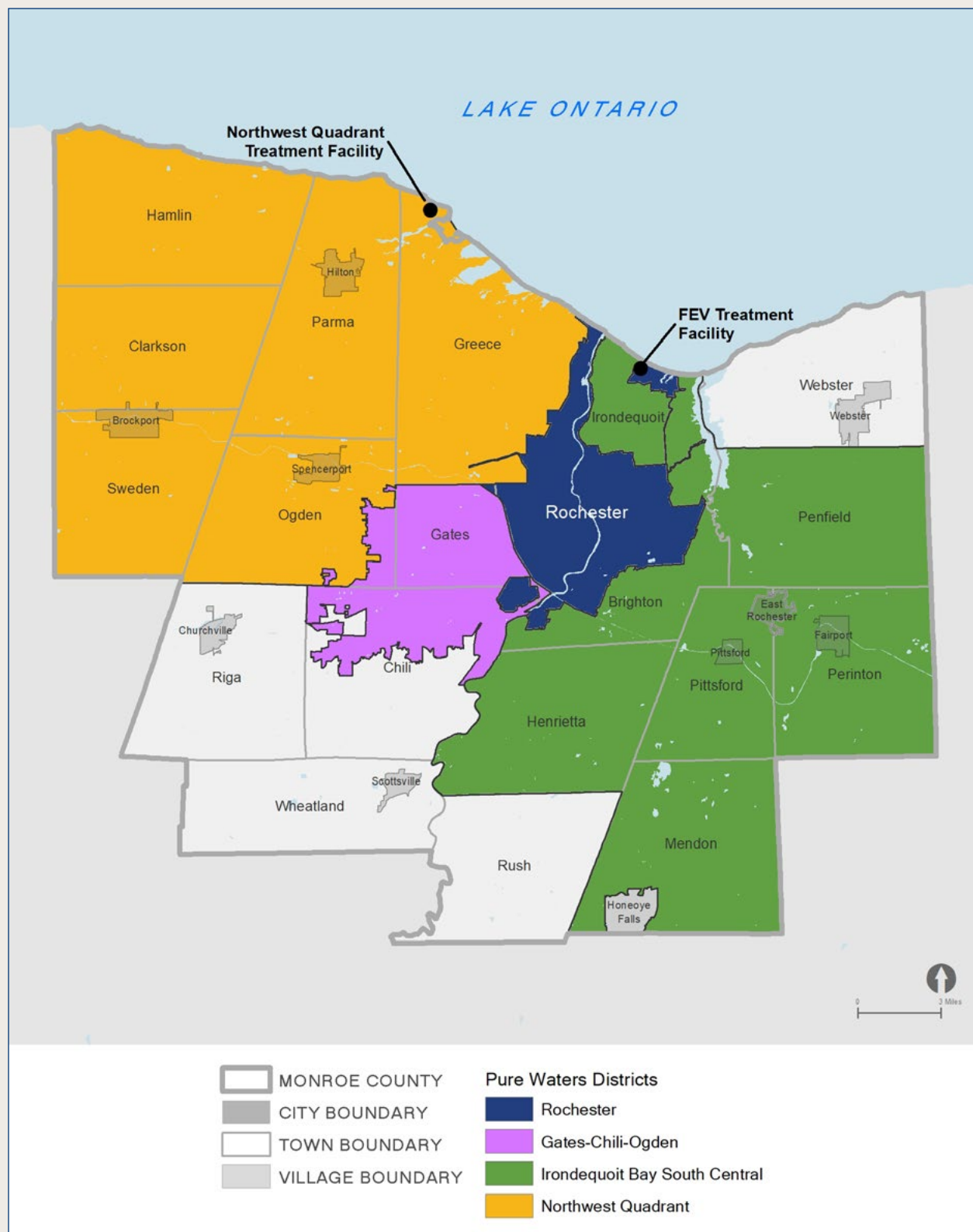


FIGURE 29
Pure Waters Districts

The MCPW CSOAP deep-rock tunnel system in the Rochester Pure Waters District has significantly reduced combined sewer overflow events, however, intense wet weather events can cause tunnel system capacity exceedances. Incorporating green infrastructure such as permeable surfaces or green roofs, and reinforcements of bridges and culverts along the main water bodies, such as the Genesee River corridor, could help reduce stormwater runoff that contributes to tunnel system capacity exceedances and storm damage, as well as provide additional ecosystem benefits.

Today, MCPW manages four sewer districts, Northwest Quadrant, Gates-Chili-Ogden, Rochester, and Irondequoit Bay South Central, containing two water resource recovery facilities (WRRFs), pump stations, and sewer collection systems. This complex system of ownership and responsibility of providing potable water and treating wastewater and stormwater requires continual coordination between local municipalities and planners throughout Monroe County to review land use decisions that will impact water demands. Since inception, MCPW has successfully consolidated over 35 town and village sewage treatment plants into two regional WRRFs; thereby, improving overall efficiency,

Schools Food Waste Diversion Pilot Program

Launched in 2025 as a pilot program, this county program provides funding via grants to assist public school districts within Monroe County and BOCES #1 and #2 in starting or expanding food waste diversion programs. This pilot program provides up to 50 % matching funds for local schools wishing to implement new initiatives—or build on current efforts—to divert food waste from landfills. This pilot program aims to improve environmental outcomes in Monroe County while engaging our youngest residents as the next generation of stewards responsible for protecting the County's future.

treatment compliance and rate stabilization. The potential for consolidation of the four (4) MCPW Districts into one (1) District with separate zones of assessment will be explored to achieve ongoing operational efficiencies and fiscal stabilization. The County's upcoming review and plan to allow for the forthcoming issuance of a new permit for the Frank E. VanLare Water Resource Recovery Facility (WRRF) will guide future MCPW improvements and protect water resources in a changing climate with changing community needs.

In addition to the importance of supplying existing residents with clean drinking water and wastewater services, a resilient potable water infrastructure system is a key component of the growth and development of metropolitan areas (Figure 30). Adequate and modern infrastructure reduces business costs and enhances connectivity, making a location more attractive to investors. The MCPW CSOAP tunnel system has significantly



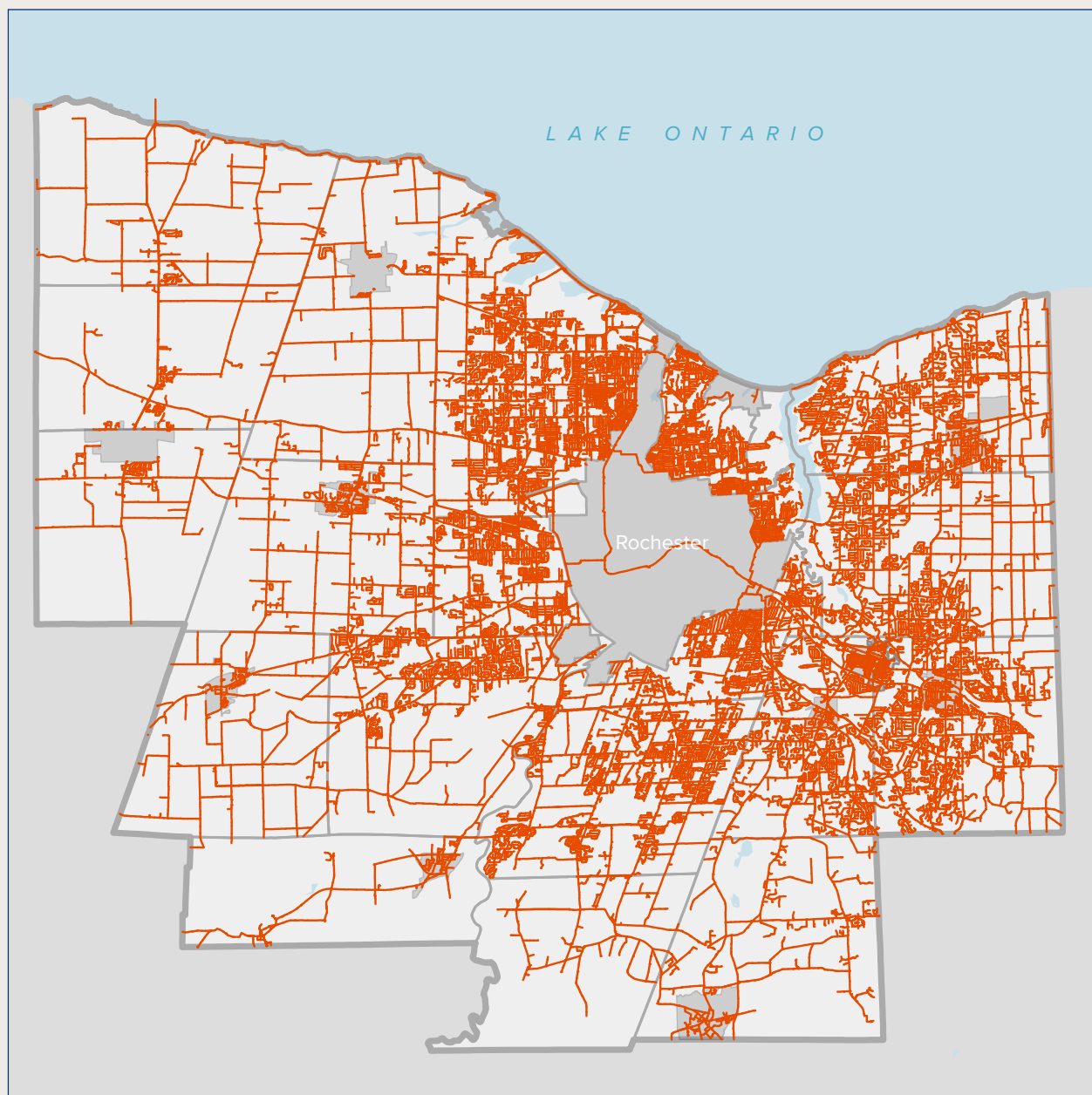


FIGURE 30
Monroe County Water Authority (MCWA) Public Water System

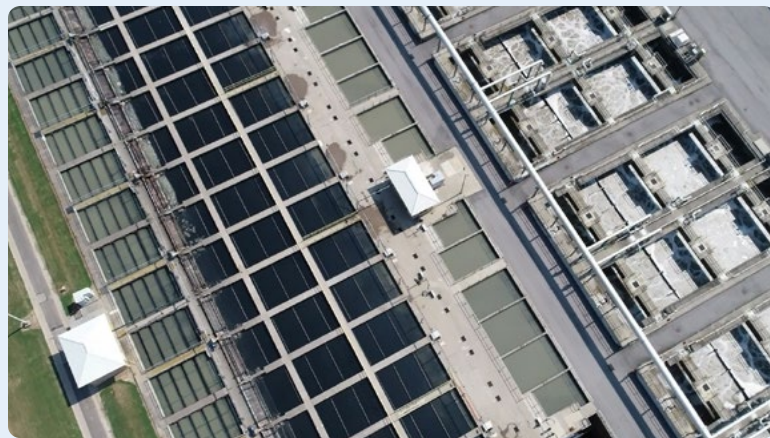
Source: Monroe County GIS

reduced combined sewer overflow events, however, intense wet weather events can cause tunnel system capacity exceedances. Incorporating green infrastructure such as permeable surfaces or green roofs, and reinforcements of bridges and culverts along the main water bodies, such as the Genesee River corridor, could help minimize these tunnel system capacity exceedance and storm damage, as well as provide additional ecosystem benefits (Monroe County, 2024).

Establishing a future vision for managing water and sewer infrastructure in Monroe County can guide local planning boards, elected officials, property owners, developers, and business owners in understanding how physical water resources may influence the location and costs of development.

Monroe County has adopted waste management and climate action plans that reinforce a forward-thinking approach to water resource protection and county resilience.

The County's Local Solid Waste Management Plan (LSWMP) offers a 10-year path for waste generation reduction and diversion, with specific strategies on how to increase recovery of resources while decreasing disposal of waste (Monroe County DES, 2015). Moreover, it advocates for waste diversification strategies not only on an individual level but especially in the manufacturing sector which produces a lot of materials that could be further reused. By putting greater emphasis on expanding waste diversion options, the County could become more attractive to businesses that are considering locating in or around the County. Scaling up and modernizing recycling centers as well as expanding privately owned and operated solid waste management and recycling facilities could aid with more streamlined and efficient operations. The current LSWMP was developed in 2015 and will be updated beginning in 2026 for the next 10-year plan to include programs that support waste reduction.





Monroe County Department of Environmental Services (DES) is advancing an Organics Management Plan (OMP) to provide a comprehensive assessment of organic waste generation across residential, commercial, institutional, agricultural, and industrial sectors. It inventories existing programs and infrastructure, evaluates regulatory frameworks, and proposes ten actionable strategies to reduce, recover, and repurpose organic materials. These strategies span food waste prevention, residential and institutional collection programs, centralized processing infrastructure, biosolids management, and expanded outreach and education. The OMP will be wholly incorporated and a new area of emphasis in the forthcoming LSWMP update, reducing greenhouse gas emissions as solid waste processes and markets change.



ecopark

The Monroe County/WM ecopark (ecopark), a partnership between Monroe County and WM, is a model for waste reduction and climate resilience. The ecopark is a comprehensive recycling and recovery center where nearly everything is diverted from the waste stream and redirected back into the supply chain. Through partnerships with various organizations, the ecopark collects and recycles a wide array of materials including electronics, appliances, rechargeable and button batteries, light bulbs, scrap metal, foam, textiles, propane tanks, and cooking oil, ensuring they are disassembled, properly treated, and reused or recycled.

ecopark is also home to the County's Household Hazardous Waste Facility, which prevents pollutants such as gasoline, oil-based paints, and pesticides from entering landfills and waterways. With over 7,000 appointments made each year, the ecopark keeps more than 300 tons of toxins out of the environment and recycles roughly 900 tons of materials.

Monroe County, NY • ecopark • Drop Off Specialty Recycling/Hazardous Household Waste



2.3.3 High-Quality Parks & Trails System

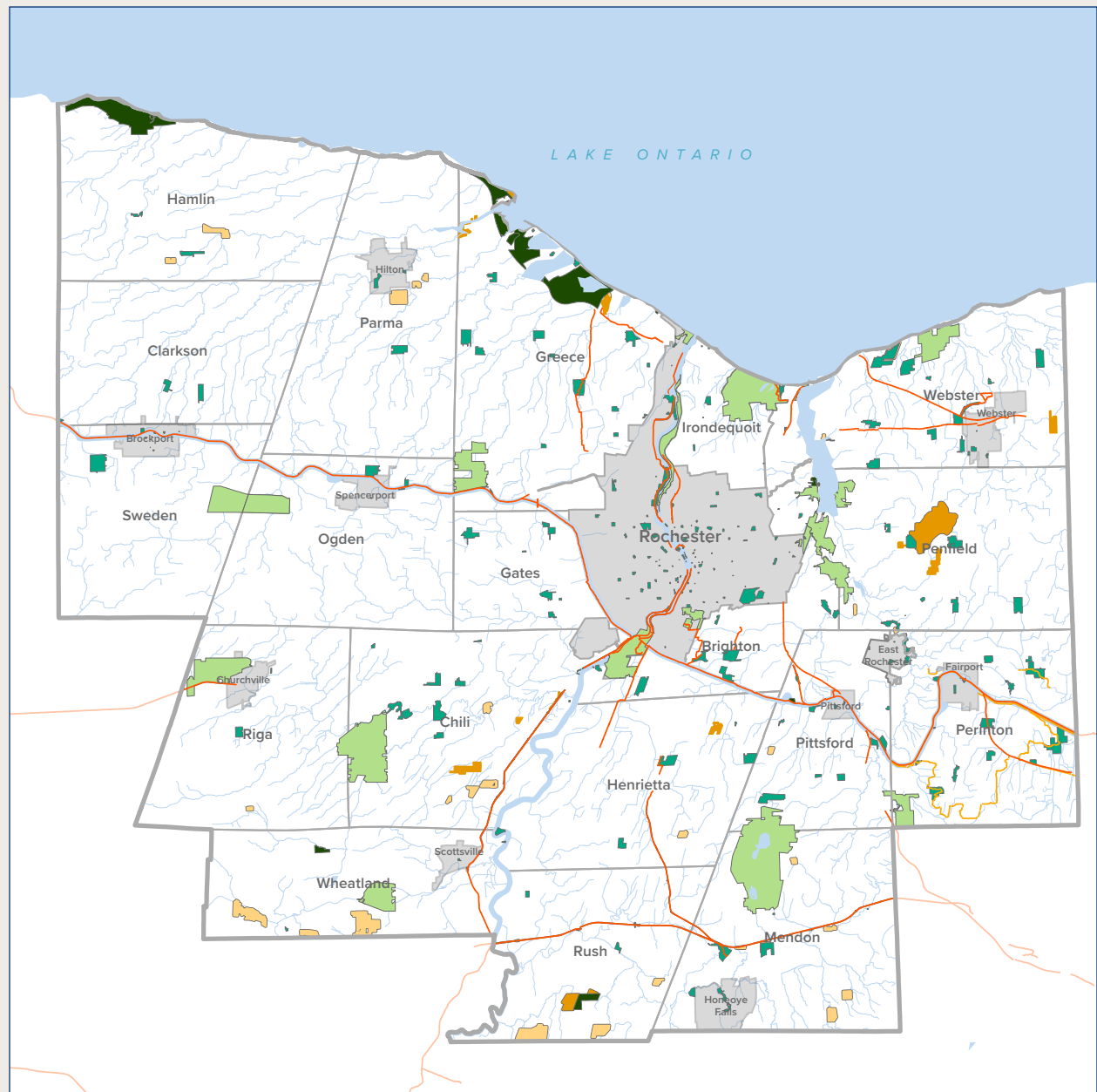
Parks and trails provide many benefits, some of which include strengthening quality of life, positively impacting individual and community health, and providing important spaces for gathering, exercise, connections, and exposure to nature. Monroe County's open space system includes state, county, and local parks; land trust properties; conservation easements; waterways; and trails. In aggregate, these systems provide opportunities for Monroe County residents and visitors to enjoy the natural environment, gather for events and activities, and travel throughout the County and region. Monroe County currently owns and operates 22 parks, covering approximately 12,000 acres and located throughout the County (**Figure 31**), and is in the process of acquiring its 23rd park. The County's parks feature athletic fields, nature and multi-use trails, campgrounds, dog parks, sledding hills, golf courses, ice skating rinks, and more. Special uses of the parks include fundraisers, festivals, concerts, summer camps, sports leagues, and exercise classes. Many parks are enhanced by, and protect, the County's water resources (e.g., lakes, bays, creeks, streams, ponds, and wetlands), providing opportunities for park users to experience and interact with the County's abundant water resources through activities like fishing, swimming, birding, and recreating along stream-side trails.

County owned or operated parks are located in fifteen of the twenty towns in the County, with five of those parks encompassed in part or fully by the City of Rochester. Two such parks include Highland Park and Ontario Beach Park, which exemplify city-county collaboration that benefits all users of Monroe County parks.



In 2025, Monroe County acquired 70 acres of parkland in Henrietta, establishing its 23rd park. This new addition to the County Park system, characterized by rolling contours and abundant natural beauty, offers enhanced passive recreational opportunities. Located adjacent to the popular Lehigh Valley Trail, this new county park provides residents with an ideal setting to connect with nature.

In urban places, proximity to parkland is an important measure for community health and well-being. Compared to peer cities, Rochester's Census-designated urban area has an above-average share of its land dedicated to public recreation, and 48% of residents in the City of Rochester and its surrounding urban area live within a 10-minute walk of a park (**Figure 32**). Similarly, in the surrounding suburbs and rural communities, it is important that people have access to safe, off-road, multimodal connections between parks and other destinations. Monroe County will continue to prioritize recreation access in urban, suburban, and rural communities.



- | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
|  Local Trail |  Municipal Park |  State Park |  Conservation Land |
|  Multi-Use Trail |  County Park |  Conservation Easement | |

FIGURE 31
Monroe County Parks, Trails, and Recreation

Source: Monroe County GIS

FIGURE 32
Park Walksheds for
Upstate Metro Areas

CENSUS-DESIGNATED URBAN AREA	RESIDENTS WHO LIVE WITHIN A 10-MINUTE WALK OF A PARK
Rochester	48%
Buffalo	58%
Syracuse	42%
Albany	43%

Source: Trust for Public Land (2025)

In addition to the trails within Monroe County-owned parks, regional hiking, biking, and snowmobile trails, like the Empire State and Genesee Greenway Trails, create connections between the County parks. Extending the trails of Monroe County Parks to further integrate with regional trail systems, local efforts (e.g., ROC the Riverway in Rochester), and residential neighborhoods would foster a more cohesive network of trails and parks, providing easy multi-modal access and highlighting the value of Monroe County's natural landscapes for everyday living.

Multiple parks within the county system have park specific master plans that guide the management and investment in facilities, vegetation, trails, access, and amenities. Building on this foundation, Monroe County can continue evaluating current and future recreational demands, prioritizing improvements through strategic planning, and coordinating resources across the entire County Park system.



2.4 What Do We Need to Address?

2.4.1 Monroe County's Resilient Future

Although many climate actions rely heavily on state, national, and international factors and trends, Monroe County is taking steps to expand and enhance its climate leadership capacity. Monroe County will experience limited impacts compared to other regions of the country, but it will not be immune to all effects of climate change. The stronger the County's focus on climate resiliency and adaptation, the better equipped its municipalities will be as the urgency of the climate crisis increases. The most pressing issue is reducing greenhouse gas emissions while implementing resilient adaptations to respond to projected future conditions associated with climate change.

Overall, Monroe County has a strong foundation to build on in advancing climate resilience by improving how energy is generated and used. Still, Monroe County's goal is to reduce its reliance on fossil fuels by promoting renewable energy sources and reducing energy consumption wherever possible. Statewide commitments, such as a climate target to generate 70% of its energy from renewable sources by 2030 and achieve 100% carbon-free electricity by 2040, provide an important framework for local progress (**Figure 33**).

To this end, Monroe County DES is advancing a Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan (CARP) in 2025 consistent with the County's Climate Action Plan (CAP). The CARP will assess the physical, social, and economic vulnerabilities of the County to climate change and recommend policies, strategies, and programs to improve the County's ability to respond and adapt to climate change. County departments and the public will help to shape the priorities of the CARP and provide feedback on proposed climate adaptation and resiliency policies and strategies.

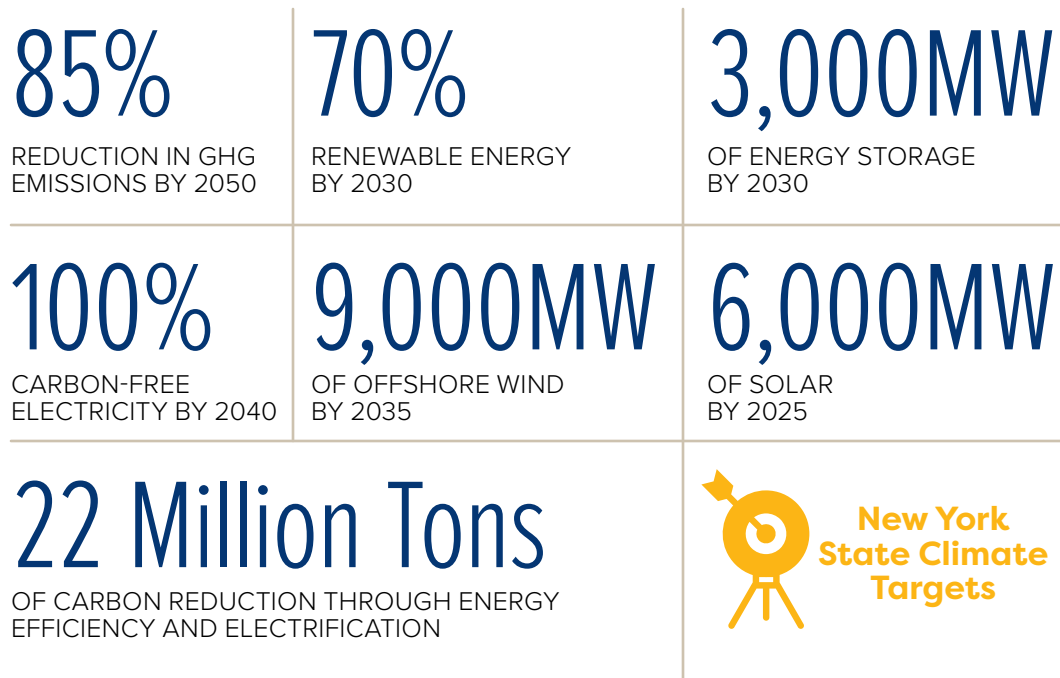


FIGURE 33
NYS Climate Targets
Source: <https://climate.ny.gov/our-impact/our-progress>

Climate Action Plan

The County finalized its two-phased Climate Action Plan (CAP) in 2024, outlining the steps necessary to achieve the GHG reduction target of 80% below 2019 levels by 2050. Phase I included a greenhouse gas emissions inventory and identified County operational goals, reduction targets, and supporting implementation plans by sector for activities directly undertaken by Monroe County. It provides a dynamic framework of goals, strategies, and actions for community-wide implementation (Figure 34). Given County government operations account for only 0.6% of the county's total greenhouse gas emissions, Phase II expands the scope focus on residential, commercial, industrial, municipal, and other energy-dependent activities in Monroe County that are outside of the County’s direct control. This two-phased approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of the County’s emission-producing infrastructure and activities, ultimately creating a dynamic framework of goals, strategies, and actions for community-wide implementation in the future (Figure 35).



FIGURE 34
Greenhouse Gas Reduction Targets

Sector	CO ₂ e(MT)		
	2019 Baseline	2050 Reduction	Percent
 Building and Facilities	26,073 CO ₂ e(MT)	-20,858 CO ₂ e(MT)	80%
 Expressway Lighting and Signals	1004 CO ₂ e(MT)	-1004 CO ₂ e(MT)	100%
 Pure Waters Infrastructure	9,225 CO ₂ e(MT)	-7,380 CO ₂ e(MT)	80%
 Solid Waste and Materials Management	6,035 CO ₂ e(MT)	-5,173 CO ₂ e(MT)	90%
 Transportation Fleets	3,295 CO ₂ e(MT)	-2,965 CO ₂ e(MT)	90%
Overall Reduction Target			80%

Source: Monroe County Climate Action Plan Phase I.

FIGURE 35
CAP Phase II Goals & Strategies Framework Diagram



Source: Monroe County Climate Action Plan Phase II.

There are several programs in action to help Monroe County achieve these ambitious goals. One example is Monroe Community Power, a renewable energy initiative that allows municipalities to provide residents and small businesses with electricity bill savings by pooling local electricity demand to secure better terms on supply or by offering access to solar benefits. In 2001, Monroe County created a municipal energy aggregation group (EAG) to offer lower-cost natural gas and electricity for municipalities, public benefit corporations and districts. To date, there are approximately 25 EAG customers. The County can continue to grow the EAG membership to achieve even greater savings. Additionally, Monroe County and other municipalities across New York State participate in the Climate Smart Communities and Clean Energy Communities Programs, which encourage communities to adopt adaptation and mitigation strategies. Monroe County is also investing in the efficiency of County facilities and operations through initiatives such as the Green Building Policy and promoting Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) financing.

Expanding electric vehicle charging infrastructure at County facilities can further advance resilience and lower Monroe County's carbon footprint by supporting plug-in electric vehicles. As of July 2025, there were 14,098 EVs on the road in Monroe County, with a steady 8.3% growth over the 3-month period (Atlas Public Policy, 2025). The EV charging stations are spread throughout the County, with over 1,200 ports across more than 340 charging locations (Figure 36). Of these, 146 ports are Direct Current Fast Charging (DCFC), while the rest are Level 2 ports. Monroe County is currently developing an EV Master Plan as part of the CAP to identify additional locations for charging stations and to create a practical strategy for transitioning the County's fleet (excluding the Monroe County Sheriff's Office) to clean-powered vehicles and equipment whenever feasible.

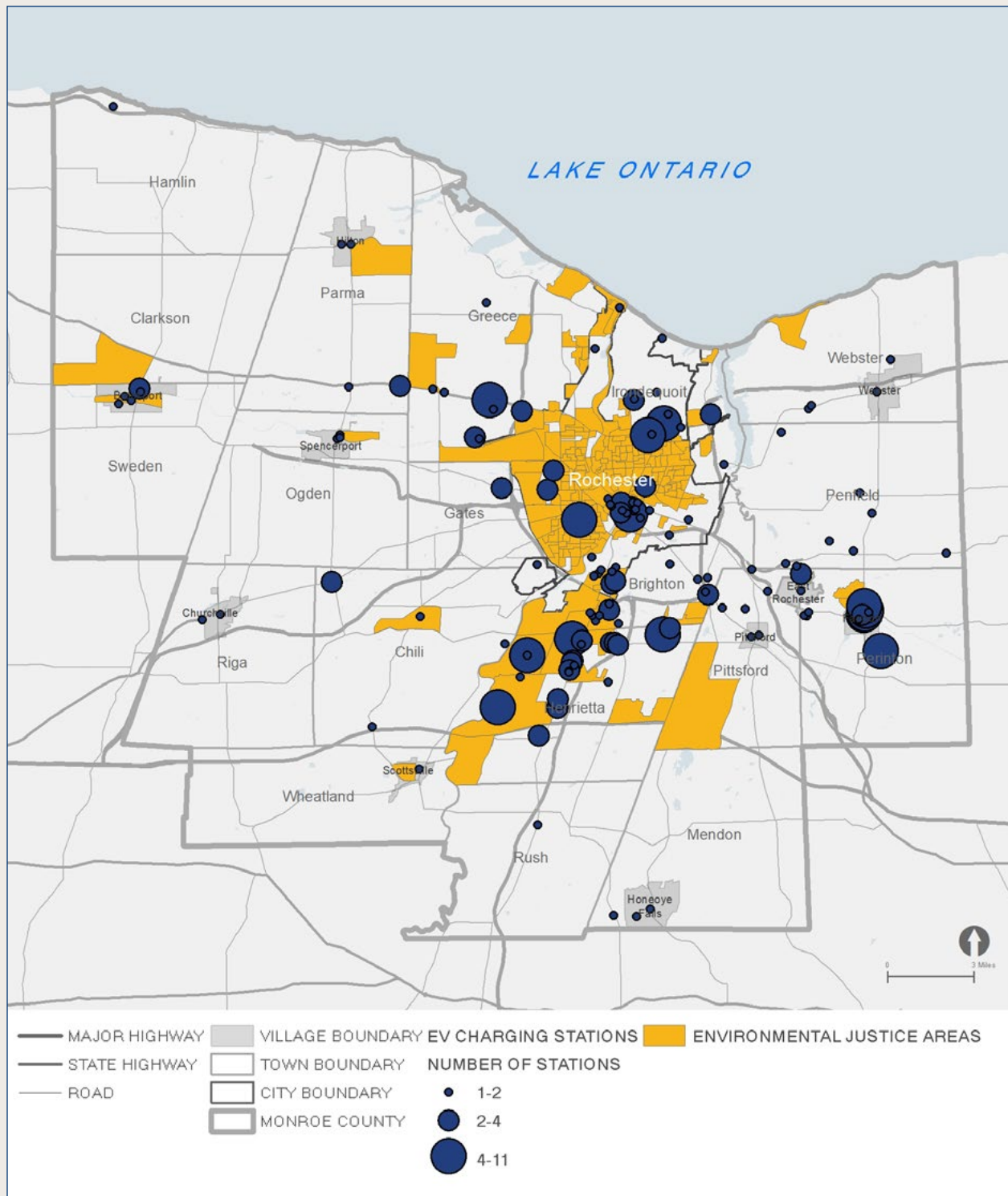


FIGURE 36
EV Charging Stations in Monroe County
As of 2022

Source: Atlas Public Policy, 2025



Together, these programs and initiatives help the County do its part to mitigate climate change's negative impacts and build local resilience through adaptation to an uncertain future. This is especially vital in marginalized communities, where climate impacts can exacerbate existing inequalities. Low-income communities and communities of color have been disproportionately exposed to environmental hazards, leading to higher rates of chronic illness and persistent poverty. This often results from the placement of toxic industries in these areas, causing residents to disproportionately experience the negative effects of pollution and environmental changes. Monroe County can serve as a leader and collaborate with municipalities on climate action planning, infrastructure improvements, nature-based solutions, waste reduction strategies, and the implementation of climate-smart building policies to prepare for and respond to both acute and chronic climate events.



The County can play a role in helping municipalities transition to more efficient infrastructure investments and provide resources and frameworks that support infrastructure sustainability. For example, the County can work with municipalities to participate in the New York State programs, such as Climate Smart Communities and NYSERDA Clean Energy Communities, which fund planning and implementation actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to a changing climate. The County can also pursue other state funding opportunities, such as the County Infrastructure Grant Program, which supports county-led infrastructure programs (Empire State Development, 2025c). Monroe County also plays a role in supporting local municipalities that may be interested in developing the land use regulatory framework to support mixed-use walkable development patterns through tools such as model ordinances and technical assistance for local comprehensive planning and zoning updates. In addition, the County has launched an initiative to develop climate action toolkits for communities, businesses, and organizations as a resource for implementing CAP Phase II.

Monroe County's natural systems play an important role in supporting community resilience by providing habitat, protecting water resources, and delivering essential ecosystem services. These systems face interconnected challenges, including climate change, habitat fragmentation, and the spread of invasive species. Habitat loss can reduce the ability of native plants and wildlife to adapt to changing environmental conditions, while invasive species can degrade habitats, disrupt ecosystem functions, and contribute to declines in native biodiversity.

Building ecological resilience includes maintaining and enhancing natural corridors, protecting and restoring habitats, and preventing the spread of invasive species. The Monroe County Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) supports these efforts through education and outreach programs and, in partnership with the Monroe County Department of Environmental Services and Finger Lakes PRISM, operates a watercraft steward program to help prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species.

Protecting biodiversity requires continued collaboration among local, regional, state, and federal partners. Through the PRISM network, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) coordinates invasive species prevention and response efforts while providing technical guidance and management resources that support municipalities, landowners, and other stakeholders.

Non-Native Species & Invasive Species

Non-native species are plants and animals (e.g., livestock or ornamental plants) living in areas where they do not naturally exist. They can either be intentionally introduced or accidentally brought into new areas.

Invasive species are non-native species that cause harm to the environment, economy, or human, animal, or plant health (NPS, 2022).



Spotted Lanternfly

Source: Finger Lakes PRISM



Phragmites australis

Source: Finger Lakes PRISM



Spiny Waterflea

Source: Monroe County SWCD

2.4.2 The Infrastructure-Land Use Connection

Land use policies shape where people live, work, and play, influencing infrastructure needs and priorities. In turn, infrastructure affects where people can go, how easily they can travel, and what transportation options are available. In other words, real estate development and infrastructure investment do not happen in isolation. Instead, development must consider social, economic, and physical elements to guide growth in a comprehensive and integrated way that adds lasting value to communities (Urban Land Institute, 2021). Policy frameworks can guide where development occurs and can be strategically used to support the County's goals for sustainability, adaptability, equity, livability, and housing options.

Monroe County plays a key role in maintaining existing water, sewer, transportation, and communications infrastructure, as well as developing new infrastructure in select areas to support future growth. As development styles have evolved in fast-growing areas, people are drawn to compact, convenient, walkable neighborhoods with services and amenities accessible within walking distance of home (Luscher, 2025). Encouraging infrastructure capacity upgrades in existing community centers supports growth where services and amenities are already concentrated. Monroe County's many villages and downtown urban areas already provide walkable neighborhoods with a mix of housing types, but they are often among the most expensive and



exclusive areas in the County. Building on existing infrastructure, the County can enhance what already exists or develop new areas that provide a broader range of lifestyle and housing options for a larger share of the Monroe County community. Thoughtfully placed infrastructure can also attract businesses to commercial centers where people like to shop, visit, or recreate.

These types of places are not only more valuable per acre but also require fewer resources and less energy than sprawling developments. They encourage walking, biking, and public transit, which can significantly reduce greenhouse gases while improving quality of life and public health. Dense developments also minimize land consumption, leaving space for farming or ecologically important open space.



2.4.3 Multimodal Infrastructure

Productive development patterns are vital to the success of an effective transportation system. The County understands that transportation and land use are deeply interconnected, and both are essential components in building thriving and sustainable communities. Higher-density neighborhoods with multimodal transportation infrastructure enable residents to use alternative transportation options like walking, biking, or public transit, giving them more freedom and increased access to transportation options that meet their needs.

Like much of the United States, Monroe County was largely developed during the mid-twentieth century, during the automobile and highway era of transportation system development. At this time, transportation systems were viewed through a traditional “car-focused” lens, prioritizing speed and efficiency in ways often incompatible with other modes of transportation (i.e., pedestrians, bicycles, and public transit). In recent years, the Monroe County Department of Transportation (MCDOT) has been implementing improvements on County-owned roadways, in parallel with updating guidance and supportive policies, to enhance the safety of all road users.



Creating transit-oriented development and land use policies that focus on enabling shorter trips, increasing public transit frequency, and bringing housing closer to jobs are effective ways to improve public transit use and efficiency. It would be beneficial to encourage increased density along existing RTS bus routes and consider extending routes to areas where growth is planned or expected. Additionally, providing reliable and affordable transportation options is especially important for promoting equity in our communities and ensuring everyone has equal economic opportunities. Moreover, local zoning updates can support the development of emerging transit-supportive neighborhoods.

Local governments can work together to maintain their local infrastructure and implement transportation planning approaches, strategies, and grant programs that make transportation safe and accessible.



First launched in 2004, Complete Streets is a universal approach to designing, operating, and maintaining streets that enables safe access for all who need to use them, including people without access to vehicles, older adults, and people living with disabilities (Smart Growth America, 2025).

The Regional Transit Service (RTS), the regional transit authority established by New York State, offers public transit in Monroe County through fixed-route bus lines and on-demand service zones (Figure 37). The fixed-route buses operate on a set schedule, mainly serving the City of Rochester and major corridors. This focus allows for more frequent service within Rochester's city limits, where higher density makes fixed-route service more efficient. Additionally, residents can request pick-up or drop-off services in designated on-demand areas. However, some bus trips can take much longer than traveling the same distance by car. Time efficiency and accessibility could be improved by ensuring bus stops are within a 5- to 10-minute walk from residents' homes and that buses run often enough for people to reach their destinations in a reasonable time.

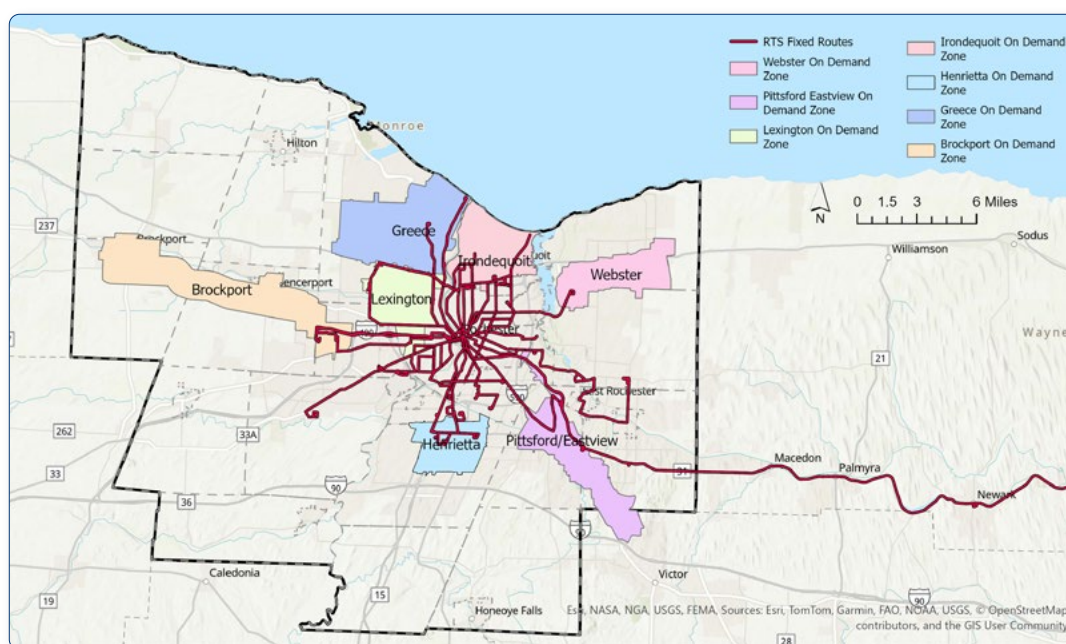


FIGURE 37
Location of RTS Services

Source: Regional Transit Service, September 2025

MCDOT plays a key role in advancing regional priorities, including those outlined by the Genesee Transportation Council's Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), which provides a framework for transportation planning over a 25-year period. The recommendations of Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) 2045 guide the Genesee Transportation Council's (GTC) Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), which identifies individual projects and funding allocations that will be advanced in the region over a five-year period (Genesee Transportation Council, 2021). The TIP includes highway, transit, staffing & operations, bridge, and bicycle/pedestrian.

A portion of the GTC TIP funding is allocated to Highway Safety, which addresses safety based on a framework defined by the NYS Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) (Genesee Transportation Council, 2022). Pedestrian safety initiatives in the TIP focus on highway striping and enhanced crosswalk facilities. Recent investments in Monroe County include making bridge improvements to boost safety and resilience and supporting multimodal projects like trail enhancements. MCDOT has also implemented technological upgrades like smart traffic management systems at intersections. Other technologies such as signal detection cameras can be used to recognize other road users such as transit, cyclists, and pedestrians. MCDOT also leverages the non-intrusive video detection system to analyze safety needs, improve traffic timing, and pinpoint high-risk areas. This data informs capital project scoping, needs assessment, and operational readiness while providing key performance metrics for internal and external stakeholders. In total, over \$19 million is being invested in a variety of safety projects in Monroe County (Genesee Transportation Council, 2022b). Preventing transportation fatalities and serious injuries starts with understanding what issues exist in Monroe County and where they occur, followed by prioritizing resources to implement systematic improvements.

Through the Priority Investigation Location (PIL) program, Monroe County uses historical data to identify and analyze high-crash locations with elevated risk for motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists. By prioritizing these areas, the County implements targeted countermeasures, such as road diets, leading pedestrian intervals, and curb extensions, to enhance multimodal safety. This data-driven approach ensures that improvements are strategically directed to where they are most needed, helping to proactively reduce crashes and improve safety outcomes for all road users.

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Additionally, by incorporating a Safe System approach such as Vision Zero, Monroe County can strengthen collaboration with municipalities to support the maintenance of local infrastructure and advance transportation planning strategies and grant programs that improve safety and accessibility for all users.

Vision Zero is a data-driven strategy that recognizes traffic fatalities and serious injuries are preventable and should not be accepted as the inevitable cost of mobility. Consistent with this approach, the County can prioritize transportation investments and policies that reduce fatal and severe injury risk, particularly for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and other vulnerable road users. This may include emphasizing speed management, context-sensitive roadway design, complete streets implementation, and targeted safety improvements at high-risk locations.



2.4.4 Broadband Access

Monroe County recognizes that high-speed internet access is critical for economic development, educational opportunity, and civic participation in the twenty-first century. High-speed internet is essential infrastructure and is critical to the County's future success. However a recent study commissioned by the County, *Community Access Plan and Funding Strategy for Broadband (2023)*, found that significant disparities in broadband access persist across the County, with nearly one-fifth of city households and one-third of rural households lacking access to high-speed service. This digital divide creates barriers to economic mobility, limits educational opportunities for students and families, and prevents full participation in increasingly digital civic and social activities. The County has established a comprehensive approach to addressing these connectivity gaps by creating a Broadband Advisory Task Force and developing the Community Access Plan and Funding Strategy for Broadband report to guide strategic investments and policy decisions.

Monroe County has implemented innovative partnerships and funding strategies that leverage both public and private sector resources to bridge the digital divide. Through these efforts, the County has partnered with providers to deploy fixed wireless access technology that uses radio frequencies instead of cables to provide low-cost, high-quality broadband service to rural and underserved areas. It has also expanded digital access and is offering free computer education through the library system to ensure that residents have the tools they need to succeed in today's digital age. The County recognizes that digital inclusion requires sustained partnership between government, private sector, and community organizations to ensure that all residents have access to reliable, affordable high-speed internet service.

To explore new opportunities to further address the digital divide for Monroe County residents, Monroe County's broadband strategy can prioritize comprehensive data collection, targeted



Monroe County has recently launched two initiatives funded through **American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)** funding.

First, a \$3.1 million grant to further the digital equity initiative provides courses on a wide range of topics, available in the **Monroe County Library System** or through remote access. The project expands the County's digital equity and access to these resources by installing solar tables with 24/7 internet access and device charging stations in Monroe County parks.

Second, the County announced a \$4.2 million partnership with **Community Broadband Networks (CBN)** to expand affordable high-speed internet access for over 26,000 residents in underserved Rochester neighborhoods. Eligible low-income households can receive free installation, a Wi-Fi router, two months of free service, and ongoing access to a new Fixed Wireless/Fiber Optic network for \$30 per month for five years (Monroe County, 2025h).

infrastructure investments, and ongoing community engagement to remove digital barriers to connectivity. The County has surveyed residents in low-income and rural areas to better understand gaps in broadband access, providing essential data that will guide infrastructure planning and resource allocation decisions. The County recognizes that many residents and businesses face barriers to reliable broadband, particularly in underserved urban and rural areas. Addressing these needs is central to Monroe County's identity as a center of innovation and its commitment to ensuring a high quality of life for all families. Broadband access is not merely a technological issue but a critical foundation for equitable community development, enabling workforce participation, educational achievement, access to healthcare, and economic competitiveness across the County.

2.5 Goals and Strategies



Invest in 21st-Century Infrastructure

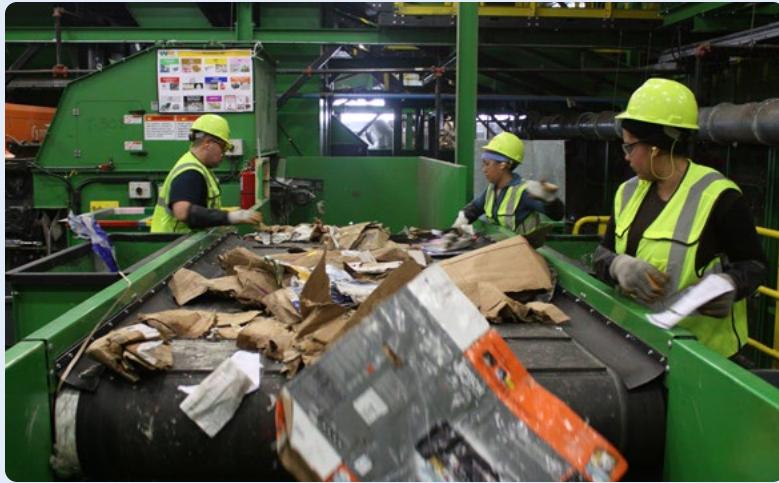
- 1 Reduce the environmental impact of county operations and facilities by improving building efficiency, electrifying vehicle fleets, and providing EV and active transportation infrastructure at county-owned properties.
- 2 Support municipalities' participation in state programs that promote clean energy and climate-smart practices and provide resources that help municipalities follow best practices for renewable energy.
- 3 Support the expansion and modernization of the EV charging network to meet growing electric vehicle demand, leveraging state and federal funding programs and public-private partnerships.
- 4 Support efforts to expand high-speed internet access and affordability, especially in rural areas, and aid residents in accessing digital literacy courses.
- 5 Continue to maintain and build connections to and between parks in the Monroe County Park system.
- 6 Invest in innovative and integrated technologies to support a safe, efficient, and connected multimodal transportation system that meets the diverse mobility needs of all users.



- 7 Develop and sustain a diverse, skilled workforce across County departments to support the adoption and scaling of innovative technologies that improve safety, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness.

Protect Water and Natural Resources

- 1 Take a proactive approach to establishing a resilient water infrastructure system capable of adapting to changing climate and community needs.
- 2 Improve water quality and mitigate the impacts of flooding and other increasing climate-related challenges, such as extreme precipitation events and urban runoff.
- 3 Work with Monroe County Water Authority (MCWA) and City Water Bureau to protect drinking water sources and infrastructure through comprehensive source water protection, pollution control, and infrastructure maintenance strategies.
- 4 Study the benefits of consolidating the four Monroe County Pure Water (MCPW) districts, and explore renewable energy opportunities in the MCPW collection and treatment infrastructure and activities.



- 5 Protect and strengthen ecological resilience by collaborating with municipalities, state agencies, conservation organizations, and private landowners to conserve natural habitats, enhance habitat connectivity, and prevent, monitor, and manage invasive species.
- 5 Identify priority lands for protection, ecological restoration, and green infrastructure development; apply sustainable property maintenance practices; and expand tree canopy to reduce heat impacts.

Improve Waste Management and Recycling Practices

- 1 Increase public awareness and participation in waste reduction programs, such as recycling and reuse, while exploring opportunities to expand services and improve accessibility.
- 2 Evolve recycling and reuse programs as processes and markets advance while partnering with private sector companies to identify opportunities and revenue streams from diverted and recyclable waste.
- 3 Update and expand the County's Local Solid Waste Management Plan to support waste reduction and recycling, incorporate organics diversion opportunities, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.



Invest In and Diversify the Transportation System

- 1 Adopt a state of good repair approach and invest in critical transportation connections that support economic growth and the needs of users and communities.
- 2 Promote transit-oriented design by collaborating with RTS, transportation providers, and municipalities to enhance public transit efficiency and accessibility while encouraging mixed-use development and zoning policies that support higher-density, walkable communities near transit hubs.
- 3 Invest in programs and projects that enhance safety for all road users, including pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers.
- 4 Implement Smart Traffic Management Systems to optimize traffic flow, reduce congestion, and enhance road safety.
- 5 Work with municipalities to adopt and implement complete street principles and policies on local roadways.
- 6 Continue to modernize Frederick Douglass Greater Rochester International Airport and improve operational efficiency to support growing freight logistic demand and regional economic competitiveness.
- 7 Ensure the ongoing maintenance and enhancement of the County's existing infrastructure and identify new infrastructure projects to meet future needs.

3



3 Public Health

3.1 Introduction

With an emphasis on prevention, community health initiatives can reduce the strains on healthcare, criminal justice, and transportation systems by lowering emergency response demands and reducing crisis-related service needs. Monroe County is leading the way by considering community health impacts and developing strategies that link health to the built and natural environment.

Decisions regarding land use, construction of the built environment, and transportation impact air and water quality, physical activity, and exposure to pollutants. In turn, these elements can link to some of the most complex public health problems, including obesity, inactivity, poor mental health, cancer, respiratory problems, and other issues. This section examines how community health is experienced by Monroe County residents, paying particular attention to the disparities in health outcomes, and shining a spotlight on organizations and initiatives working to promote health equity. Finally, this section presents goals and strategies to achieve more equitable community health outcomes in Monroe County.

Defining Public Health

Public health refers to environmental, social, and economic resources used to sustain the emotional and physical well-being of people in ways that advance their aspirations and satisfy their needs in their unique environment (World Health Organization, 2022).

Public health benefits residents in far-reaching and sometimes surprising ways. For instance, sustained preventative care investments like the development of recreational areas or increasing local nutritious food options can reduce cardiovascular-related mortality and lower overall

PILLAR 3

PUBLIC HEALTH

GOALS

- ✓ Provide Integrated Mental and Physical Care to Residents in Need
- ✓ Prevent Substance Use and Subsequent Substance Use Disorders
- ✓ Mitigate Environmental Health Hazards
- ✓ Support Policies and Programs that Improve Access to Nutritious Foods

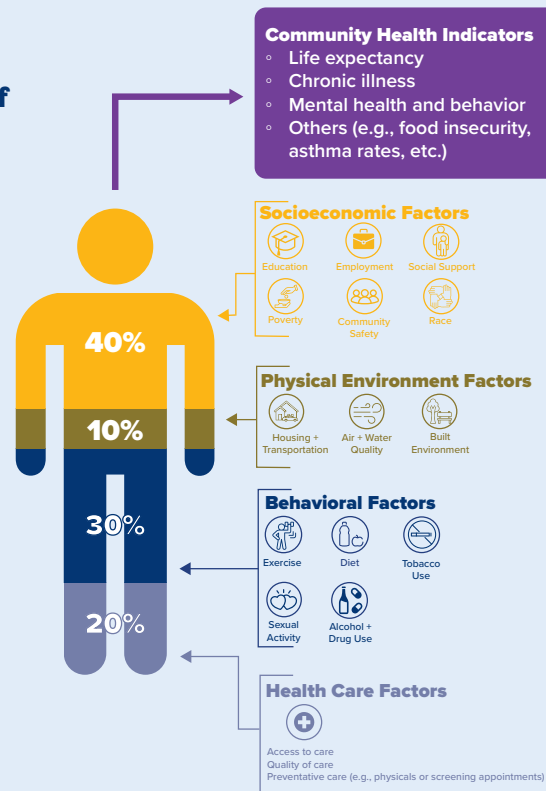


healthcare expenditures. Investing in community health enhances an individual's ability to learn, work, play, and grow. This in turn strengthens the overall economic and social vitality of the community.

Public health is more than access to high-quality affordable health care. It also includes the physical and mental well-being of all people in Monroe County. Many factors outside the healthcare system strongly influence community health, including addressing social determinants of health that are often barriers to health and well-being. Social determinants of health are broadly defined as the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age, and people's access to power, money and resources (WHO). Examples include unsafe/unstable housing, food insecurity, poverty, and social stigma. Public and Community health is shaped in part by non-medical factors that influence health outcomes, known as social determinants of health. **Figure 38** illustrates how these social determinants of health impact overall community health.

FIGURE 38
Social Determinants of Health

Source: UCLA Health
 (Graphic Developed by EDR)



Significant gaps and inequities currently exist in healthcare services across the U.S. Rural residents and people who don't drive often face challenges accessing healthcare due to limited transportation options. In addition to transportation, language and cultural barriers also hinder access to healthcare services.

Why Community Health Matters

Community health shapes the overall well-being and quality of life for everyone living in a community. Neglecting community health can lead to a range of complex and interconnected problems that become increasingly difficult to address over time. For example, in neighborhoods where crime is frequent, residents may experience negative health outcomes linked to stress and anxiety. This in turn can quickly become self-perpetuating and spur other negative outcomes including chronic illnesses like diabetes and heart disease. The CDC reports that 90% of the nation's \$4.1 trillion annual healthcare expenses are for chronic health conditions (CDC, 2025b). When individuals of a community are faced with

In the United States, each dollar invested in lead paint hazard control for families with exposed children under the age of six results in a return of up to \$221 or a net savings of up to \$269 billion in health benefits, increased IQ, higher lifetime earnings and tax revenues, reduced spending on special education, and reduced criminal activity (Gould, 2009).

poor health, all community members are impacted through health care costs and lost financial opportunities.

The strains of neglected community health can be re-routed or prevented through proactive investment, education, and access to essential resources. By prioritizing preventative care, supporting local health initiatives, and addressing social determinants of health, communities can build stronger, healthier futures for everyone. Allocating money and resources not only improves the health of vulnerable population groups, but it also saves money for the entire community.

3.2 Trends

Trend 1

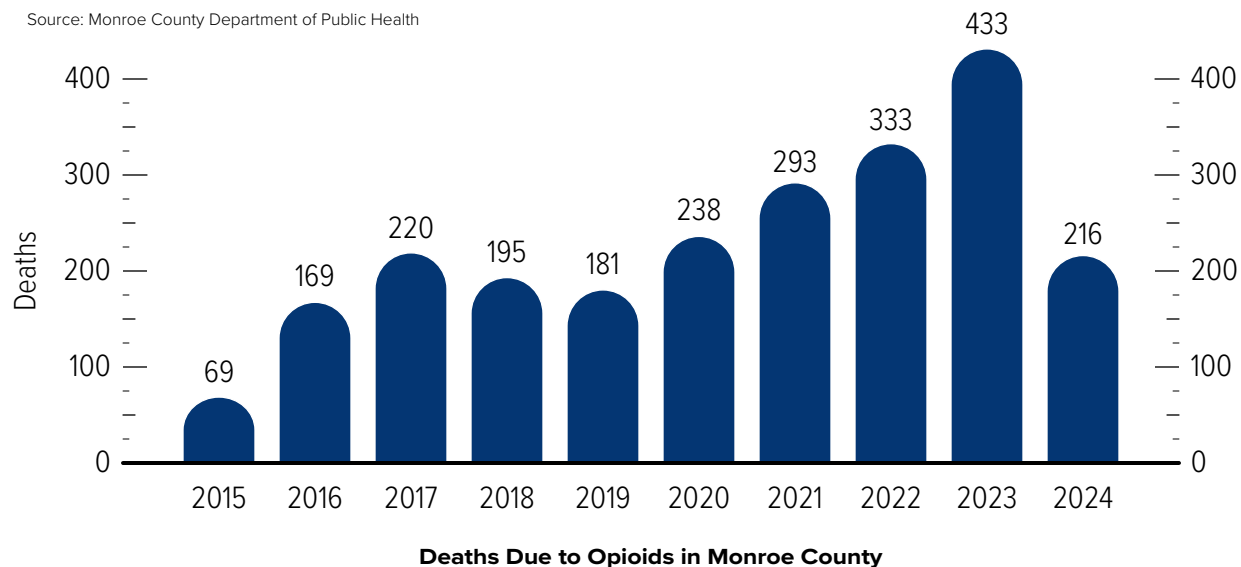
Monroe County continues to struggle with the impacts of substance use disorders.

Substance use trends in the County highlight a complex and evolving public health crisis. In 2024, there were 292 reported overdose deaths in Monroe County, representing a 43% decrease

from the 512 deaths reported in 2023 (Monroe County, 2025). In prior years, overdose deaths were predominantly attributable to opioids, however overdoses now comprise a broader spectrum of drugs than heroin/morphine, fentanyl, and/or fentanyl analogs and reflect a shift to more cocaine-involved deaths. Nonetheless, in 2024, there were 216 deaths in Monroe County attributed in whole or in part to the use of opioids—a decline of 50% since the previous maximum of 433 in 2023 (Figure 39).

FIGURE 39
Deaths Due to Opioids in Monroe County

Source: Monroe County Department of Public Health



Source: Monroe County Department of Public Health.

The crisis continues to disproportionately affect Black and Hispanic populations, as well as residents in the 50-70+ age bracket. Addressing the overdose epidemic requires comprehensive intervention strategies that go beyond traditional treatment approaches. This includes tackling the root causes of trauma that lead to substance use disorders, reducing the stigma associated with mental health treatment, and integrating treatment and support networks throughout the County (Figure 40).

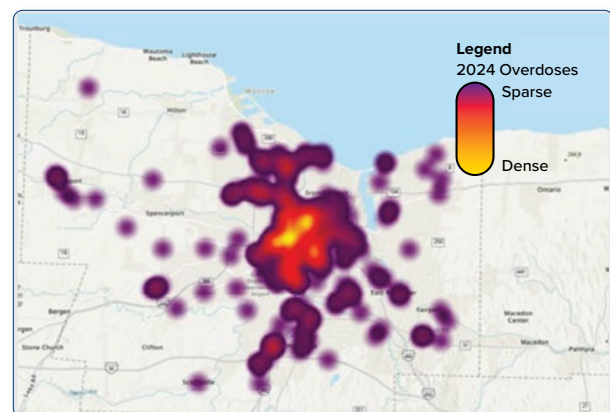


FIGURE 40
Distribution of Opioid Overdoses in Monroe County (2024)

Source: Monroe County Department of Public Health

Trend 2

Environmental health hazards are concentrated in Monroe County's older neighborhoods.

The Department of Public Health and its partners are working to address the environmental health hazards associated with aging housing stock as they present public health challenges that disproportionately affect vulnerable populations, particularly children, elderly residents, and low-income families. Older housing, while perhaps less expensive to purchase, requires consistent upkeep and can introduce toxins like lead into the living environment if not properly maintained, leading to significant health issues. Homes built before 1978³ commonly contain lead-based paint that deteriorates over time, creating lead dust and chips that can cause developmental delays, learning disabilities, and behavioral problems in children, while also contributing to cardiovascular and kidney problems in adults. Poor ventilation systems and moisture problems in aging structures create ideal conditions for mold growth, which can trigger asthma attacks, allergic reactions, and other respiratory issues. Additionally, outdated electrical systems, deteriorating plumbing that may contain lead pipes or fixtures, and inadequate heating systems that produce carbon monoxide all contribute to a complex web of environmental health risks that require comprehensive assessment and remediation strategies to protect community health and ensure safe, habitable living conditions.



Housing

ABOUT

72%

OF HOUSING UNITS IN MONROE CO. WERE **BUILT BEFORE 1980**

Trend 3

Recognition of the value of integrating mental health services into other social service provision programs.

In the last few decades, there has been a shift in the understanding of the relationship between mental and physical health. The traditional compartmentalized approach has moved toward a more integrated, holistic view of human health. Research has established compelling evidence for the bidirectional relationship between psychological and physical well-being, demonstrating that mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, and chronic stress can directly impact physical health through multiple pathways, including immune system dysfunction, cardiovascular disease, metabolic disorders, and chronic pain conditions (Hernandez et al., 2018; CDC, 2025).

In Monroe County, the Department of Public Health, the Office of Mental Health Services, and a network of healthcare providers have been integrating mental health services with other medical care, education, and outreach to provide residents with the help they need in an accessible way. They are working to bring mental health services to people where they live or go to school, rather than requiring special visits to clinics or offices. The County is working to reduce the stigma associated with mental health care by making it more widely accessible and normalized. Monroe County's Department of Human Services is the access point for income-qualified local residents to services such as SNAP, WIC, mental health programs, and other NYS benefits and services. Demand for those programs is expected to grow as economic dynamics continue to persist, exacerbating the disparities and poverty statistics outlined here. At the same time, funding for such programs is also expected to decline based on state and federal priorities.

3. In 1978, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) officially banned the use of lead-based paint in residential properties, public buildings, and toys due to growing evidence of its severe health risks, especially to children.



Since the 1980s, the percentage of Americans aged 65 and older has continued to rise. Between 2010 and 2025, the population aged 65 and older in Monroe County increased by over 50%. During the same period, the population 18 to 24 declined over 33% (**Figure 41**). These numbers are consistent with New York State's population trends. Within the next 20 years, it is expected that 34% of households will be headed by someone over 65. Additionally, younger generations are waiting until later in life to have children and typically have fewer children than previous generations.

FIGURE 41
Percent Change in Age Cohort
2010–2025 in Monroe County

AGE (YEARS)	2010	2025	PERCENT CHANGE
Monroe County			
Under 18	22.7%	22.2%	-2.2%
18 to 24	11.1%	10.4%	-6.3%
25 to 44	24.7%	25.8%	+4.5%
45 to 64	27.6%	23.7%	-14.1%
Over 65	13.9%	20.9%	+50.3%
New York State			
Under 18	22.3%	19.6%	-12.1%
18 to 24	10.3%	9.3%	-9.7%
25 to 44	27.2%	27.9%	+2.6%
45 to 64	26.7%	24.4%	-8.6%
Over 65	13.5%	18.8%	+39.3%

Source: ArcGis Business Analyst, 2025



Source: Monroe County GIS

Trend 4

Monroe County is aging; Residents age 60 years or older make up 25% of Monroe County's Population.

Not all communities across Monroe County have a similar age profile. Most towns and villages are, on average, older than Monroe County as a whole (**Figure 43**). However, other areas like Brockport and Henrietta have universities with large student populations, making their populations younger, on average. The City of Rochester is also younger than the County overall with a median age of 33.5 years compared to 39.5 years in Monroe County.

Monroe County's aging population is not unique, as across much of New York, the population is growing older. As the population ages, the needs of the population change. An aging population can increase demand for senior services. Seniors have different housing needs as they age. Some seniors desire to age in place and may require modifications to their living areas, while others may opt to downsize or move to a home with one level. Nationally, 75% of Americans over 50 have expressed a desire to age in place (Robinson-Lane et al., 2022).



FIGURE 43
Median Age by Municipality
in Monroe County, 2023

MUNICIPALITY		MEDIAN AGE
Rush (T)		52.2
Churchville (V)		52.1
Mendon (T)		47.4
Riga (T)		47.2
Honeoye Falls (V)		46.7
Perinton (T)		46.2
Fairport (V)		45.9
Penfield (T)		45.8
Webster (T)		45.2
Gates (T)		44.6
Irondequoit (T)		43.6
Clarkson (T)		42.8
Pittsford (T)		42.8
Chili (T)		42.8
Scottsville (V)		42.2
Spencerport (V)		42.2
Greece (T)		41.9
Hamlin (T)		41.6
Parma (T)		41.2
Webster (V)		41.2
Wheatland (T)		41.0
East Rochester (T,V)		40.7
Pittsford (V)		40.2
Ogden (T)		39.7
Communities with Large Student Populations	New York State	39.6
	Monroe County	39.5
	Brighton (T)	39.1
	Hilton (V)	36.8
	Henrietta (T)	34.0
	Rochester (C)	33.5
	Sweden (T)	31.9
	Brockport (V)	23.6

Key: Village (V) • Town (T) • City (C)

Source: 2023 ACS 5-Year Estimates

3.3 What Do We Build On?

3.3.1 Healthy Environments

Monroe County is home to many vibrant communities, enriched by thoughtful neighborhood design, quality public schools, access to well-maintained parks and public spaces, and affordable housing options. These assets lay a strong foundation for community health and well-being. Healthy environments and safe neighborhoods not only strengthen community cohesion but also have a positive effect on the personal health of individuals (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2021). The physical environment and higher-level policies can shape neighborhood opportunities, strengthen health, improve residents' affluence, and the overall well-being of communities. Expanding health promoting features, such as creating walkable neighborhoods, building and maintaining diverse, safe and affordable housing stock, protecting the natural environment, providing access to healthy foods, creating parks, trails, and welcoming community spaces amongst many others, can significantly improve the overall community health and further address health disparities in the County. In addition, the parks and trail system can do more to support County



residents of all abilities, including those with ambulatory challenges.

Communities with deteriorating housing conditions, including older homes with lead paint and structurally unsound design, pose significant risks, especially to children. Poor housing conditions often coincide with neighborhoods marked by high vacancy rates, blight, and lack of investment, which can contribute to increased crime, chronic stress, and social isolation, all of which negatively affect the physical and mental health of those residing in these communities. Programs aimed at lead hazard remediation, affordable housing development, and revitalization of vacant properties are essential. Focusing on code enforcement, financial support for home repairs, and incentives for reinvestment in distressed areas will help create safe stable and healthy environments.

Prominent Monroe County programs include the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, which provides medical case management and educational outreach to families for all children with blood lead levels ≥ 5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dl}$ (micrograms per deciliter) (**Figure 44**); The Leading in Lead Prevention Pilot Program, which offers reimbursement grants for lead remediation in pre-1980 multi-family homes cited for lead hazards; and the Lead Rental Registry, which requires property owners and landlords to remediate sources of lead in pre-1980 residential rental units with two or more units. These, and prior programs, have had a significant impact on improving public health, particularly for young children who are most vulnerable to lead exposure, helping to reduce the long-term developmental and cognitive impacts associated with lead poisoning. Since the 1990s, lead poisoning in children has gone down significantly (below 5%).⁴

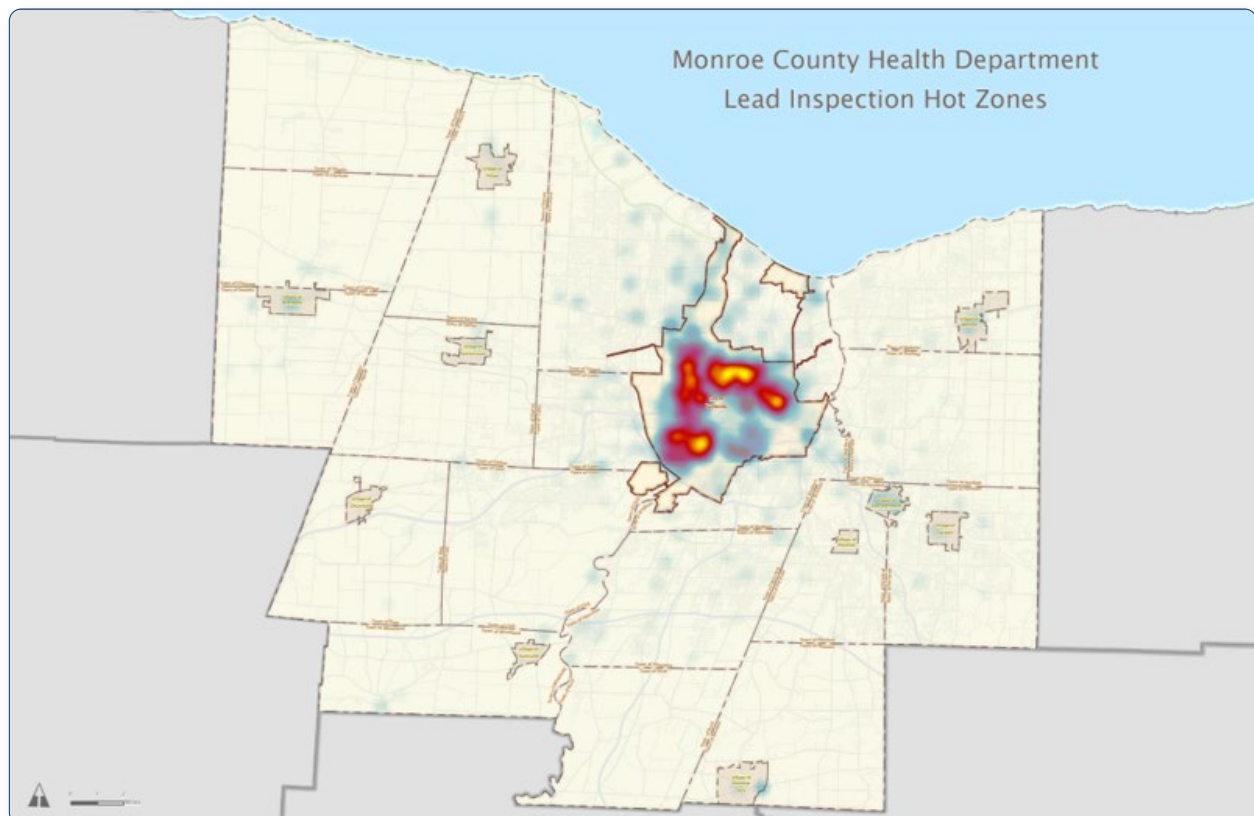
4. PowerPoint presentation from Dr. Mari

Another critical program is offered by the Rochester Housing Development Fund Corporation (RHDFC) which acquires vacant homes and works with regional partners such as the City of Rochester and Rochester Land Bank Corporation and other partners to rehabilitate homes for low and moderate-income first-time homebuyers in the City of Rochester. In parallel, the Monroe County Land Bank Corporation (MCLBC), established in 2025, seeks to acquire vacant and abandoned houses in order to address unsafe conditions caused by these properties while creating new affordable homeownership opportunities throughout the County's 29 suburban and rural communities. By providing financial support for home improvements, the RHDFC and MCLBC help combat blight while ensuring that residents have access to safe, quality homes.

Other simple improvements in the built environment can be accomplished in the form of improved street lighting, shorter blocks and mixed-use development. These changes can help improve community surveillance and safety (Golden, 2024). Proper sidewalks and accessible public transit further impact opportunities for physical activity and determine the level of accessibility residents have to employment, education, and healthcare. Neighborhoods that are thoughtfully designed to encourage walking, biking, and social interaction foster healthier and more connected communities.

FIGURE 44
Lead Inspections as part of the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, 2011–2022

Source: Monroe County Department of Health



In addition, expanding access to parks, trails, and other community-centered public spaces can serve as a powerful tool to promote health equity across Monroe County. Parks and green spaces not only provide opportunities for exercising but also serve as leisure spaces for social gatherings and community events, improving mental health and strengthening community connections. Trails and walkable paths, such as the Genesee Riverway Trail, encourage active transportation and provide transportation options that can reduce pollution and increase daily physical activity. Air pollution, noise, motor vehicle crashes, social exclusion, greenhouse gases, and contamination are just some of the examples of negative impacts car-focused design has on the health of communities and their people. These impacts are especially pronounced in underserved neighborhoods, that have experienced decades of disinvestment, leading to limited resources and opportunities.

Access to healthy foods is another factor impacting the well-being of people and communities, and several initiatives seek to address food insecurity and poor nutrition in low-income areas. The State released a Food Access Expansion Grant Program in 2025 to increase New Yorkers' food access and provide affordable, fresh food to underserved communities. There is a need for more healthy food initiatives to support local farmers' markets, community gardens, and urban farming projects to increase access to fresh, healthy foods in underserved neighborhoods. The County of Monroe Industrial Development Agency (COMIDA) and the Rochester Land Bank are in the early stages of developing policies and programs to address food access, potentially through providing specific incentives for grocery operators in areas of the County that meet the U.S. Department of Agriculture's definition of a "food desert" or facilitating the transfer of vacant parcels within food deserts to urban farming or community gardening stewardship.

Through the **Food Access Expansion Grant Program**, Foodlink food bank in Rochester was awarded \$291,420 (New York State, 2025b) , which will fund the purchase of a new Curbside Market vehicle., which will fund the purchase of a new Curbside Market vehicle.

To maintain healthy environments in Monroe County, ongoing support for initiatives that address the legacy of contaminated industrial sites polluted during the 20th-century along the Great Lakes is essential. In 1987, the United States and Canada identified the Rochester Embayment on the south shore of Lake Ontario, along with 42 other areas, as "areas of concern" on the Great Lakes. In 2024, after decades of collaborative efforts by public and private sectors, the Rochester Embayment was the seventh U.S. site to be delisted. The restoration mainly concentrated on wildlife habitats, including 340 acres of wetlands. Continual water monitoring and testing done by Monroe County Departments of Environmental Services (DES) and Public Health is necessary to ensure safe water quality for overall ecological health. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC) is responsible for the mitigation of any hazards to ensure communities along the 35-square-mile bay continue to have fresh clean water for recreation.



Efforts to improve air quality, such as reducing industrial emissions and promoting clean energy solutions in transportation, are also crucial for creating healthy, livable communities, especially for vulnerable populations. Increasing the efficiency of public transit could help decrease the number of single-passenger vehicles on the road, which in turn could reduce emissions and enhance air quality. In recent years, Monroe County has experienced several health advisories due to poor air quality, urging children, the elderly, and people with pre-existing conditions like asthma and other respiratory or cardiovascular diseases to stay indoors and limit outdoor activities (NYSDEC, 2025). Air quality tends to worsen during the summer months because of elevated ozone levels, a known respiratory irritant, which forms on hot, sunny days when pollution from cars, power plants, consumer products, and other sources react with sunlight (NYSDEC, 2025b). Rochester has multiple air pollution monitoring stations, but further efforts to record toxic air pollutants, including ozone, can be prioritized to improve the accuracy of the air quality alert system.

By aligning urban planning, public health efforts, housing and land use policies, Monroe County can create healthier, more resilient communities. These integrated approaches not only improve immediate health outcomes but also foster long-term wellness and economic stability for generations to come. With respect to building resiliency for the long-term viability of Monroe County, the previously discussed Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan (CARP) seeks to address climate change-related impacts on the built environment that are essential to promoting physical and mental well-being. Programs and policies that prioritize equitable investment can help to mitigate historical disparities and ensure all residents, regardless of zip code, have the opportunity to live healthy lives.

3.3.2 Mental Health Service Expansion and Integration

Monroe County recognizes that mental health is a cornerstone of public health and must be addressed with the same urgency and coordination as physical health. Mental health challenges can significantly impact local productivity, unemployment rates, and educational outcomes, and can contribute to family and community instability.

My Health Story (MHS) is a public health surveillance survey administered to residents in the Finger Lakes region of New York State. The main goal of the My Health Story survey is to collect detailed information on social determinants of health and health outcomes that go beyond what is typically available in public secondary data sources. The survey was first conducted in summer 2018, with a second wave in 2022. The 2022 version included new questions on perceived discrimination in healthcare settings, housing mobility and quality, children's health and well-being, and language access needs, along with additional language and text options. In 2022, 23% of respondents across the nine-county Finger Lakes Region identified mental and emotional health as their primary health concern. More than 55% reported experiencing mental or emotional health issues, such as anxiety, grief, depression, or substance use disorders, at some point in their lives (Common Ground Health, 2025).

Monroe County's 2025 Joint Community Health Needs Assessment further underscores the urgency of this issue, showing that residents experience poor mental health on average 5.5 days per month, higher than both the New York State (4.9 days) and national (5.1 days) averages. Substance use disorders, particularly those involving opioids and fentanyl, remain a critical concern (Monroe County, 2025i).



The **2025 Monroe County Joint Community Health Needs Assessment** is a collaborative report from the Community Health Improvement Workgroup (CHIW), managed by the Center for Community Health & Prevention, with data support from Common Ground Health. The CHIW includes several community partners who worked together to create a document that serves six hospitals/hospital systems and the Monroe County Department of Public Health.

In response, the County has launched a series of innovative and collaborative initiatives to expand access and integrate mental health services across multiple settings. The County is aligning with national best practices by embedding mental health support into primary care, schools, community programs, and digital platforms. Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) such as Anthony L. Jordan Health Center, Trillium Health, and Oak Orchard Health are leading efforts to provide comprehensive care to underserved populations, including Medicaid and Medicare recipients. Regional health systems like Rochester Regional Health and the University of Rochester Medical Center also play a pivotal role in expanding access to behavioral health services.

Recognizing the long-term impact of childhood trauma, Monroe County is prioritizing pediatric mental health, despite ongoing challenges such as a shortage of providers and extended wait time for services. The expansion of telehealth has helped bridge some gaps; however, inadequate broadband connectivity remains a barrier for many residents. To address this challenge, the Monroe County Office of Mental Health has strengthened school-based services, partnering with Liberty Resources to provide on-site counseling in districts such as Rochester City School District and East Irondequoit. These programs aim to deliver early intervention and prevent crises before they escalate.

To address workforce shortages and a lack of diversity in the mental health field, Monroe County is investing in career pathways for individuals in recovery and underrepresented communities. Programs like RochesterWorks' Enhanced Recovery Services (ERS) provide training and certification for peer advocates, enabling those with lived experience to become professionals in prevention and recovery services. These efforts not only strengthen the workforce but also enhance cultural competence and community trust. Through expanding health career pathways, Monroe County is improving individual well-being, boosting economic participation, and addressing broader social determinants such as unemployment and public safety. These initiatives reflect Monroe County's holistic and inclusive approach to mental health, one that is responsive to community needs and committed to long-term resilience.

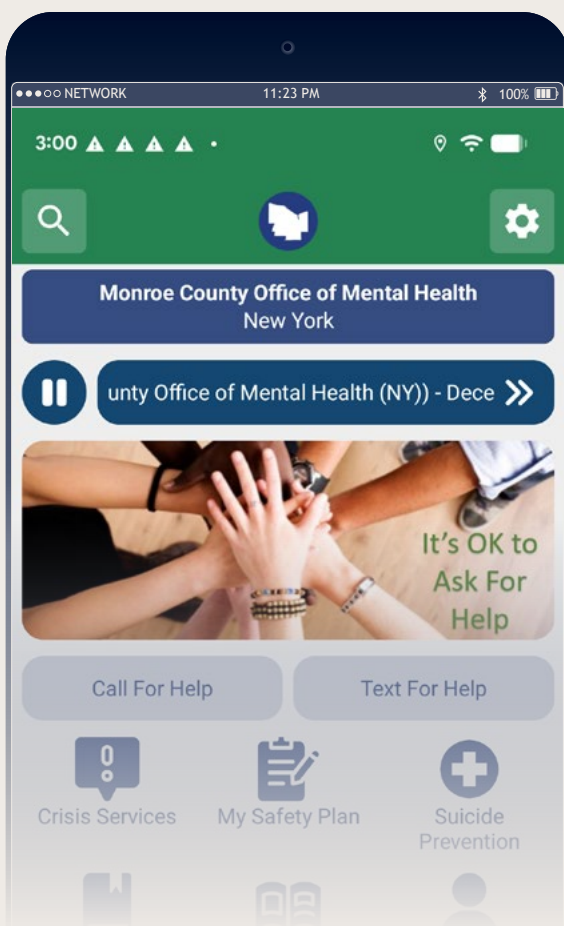
These efforts are complemented by initiatives that strengthen the quality and accessibility of behavioral and mental health services by promoting equitable access to care, enhancing provider capacity through training and support, and fostering partnerships that improve culturally and linguistically responsive services. Together, these efforts help ensure that Monroe County's behavioral and mental health system is inclusive, accessible, and responsive to the diverse needs of all residents, including people with disabilities and Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing individuals.

The **County's Office of Mental Health** offers a comprehensive continuum of care, including emergency and crisis services, inpatient and outpatient treatment, housing support, and community-based programs such as vocational training, respite care, peer support, and recreational opportunities.

The Monroe Mental Health Mobile App enhances accessibility to these resources and provides essential wellness information, direct access to emergency and crisis resources, and connections to nearby support services at the touch of a button.

Monroe Mental Health Mobile App

The Monroe Mental Health App provides essential mental and behavioral health information to Monroe County, New York residents. It features acute and outpatient resources, suicide prevention services, and Narcan information and training. You can also create your own safety plan with actionable steps for harm reduction.



3.3.3 Preventive Care and Chronic Disease Prevention and Management

Preventive health care is a foundational approach to improving community health by emphasizing disease prevention, health promotion, and early intervention, rather than relying solely on treatment after illness occurs. In Monroe County, the Department of Public Health and its partners have embraced this proactive model through a robust network of programs, policies, and partnerships that address health risks before they escalate into serious conditions. These efforts not only reduce healthcare costs but also improve quality of life and enhance overall community well-being.

Monroe County's approach includes a wide range of direct services such as tuberculosis and sexual health clinics, early childhood intervention programs, maternal health services, as well as lifestyle clinics targeting addiction and obesity. The County-owned Monroe Community Hospital plays a critical role in chronic disease management by offering long-term care, skilled nursing, short-term rehabilitation, and specialty services for residents with complex health conditions.

The County's Healthy Neighborhood Program reaches approximately 500 families annually, primarily in areas with poor social determinants of health. It provides education and resources on home safety issues including asthma triggers, fire and carbon monoxide prevention, and rodent control.

Environmental health initiatives also include lead poisoning prevention, air and water quality monitoring, facility permitting, and engineering plan reviews.



The **Community Health Improvement Workgroup (CHIW)** is a collaborative group of leaders from hospitals, the health department, and community organizations that meets monthly to advance the Community Health Improvement Plan's priorities for Monroe County, NY.

The Community Health Improvement Workgroup (CHIW) has been tasked with developing and implementing a Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP). The 2022–2024 CHIP identified chronic disease prevention and management as a top priority, with targeted interventions in healthy eating, food security, physical activity, and tobacco cessation. Programs like Healthi Kids, a partnership with Common Ground Health, promote whole-child health through interventions in relationships, environments, skill-building, and habit formation. Additionally, the County supports school-based health initiatives and collaborates with Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) and regional health systems such as the University of Rochester Medical Center and Rochester Regional Health to expand access to preventive services for underserved populations.

The County's Public Health Department tracks youth health risk factors like vaping and emotional challenges in an annual survey which informs evidence-based strategies developed for school districts, community partners, and families.

The Department of Human Services also plays a vital role in preventive care through its Preventive Services Division, which works to prevent foster care placements, reduce child maltreatment, and support family stability. In 2024 alone, the County contracted with 12 nonprofit organizations to deliver 22 programs serving over 1,200 families and nearly 2,000 children and youth. These services address challenges such as parental mental health, trauma exposure, and behavioral issues, with a growing focus on domestic violence prevention.

Monroe County's Epidemiology and Disease Control division provides expertise in epidemiology and data analysis related to public health data. It provides public health data for community organizations to utilize for grant writing, education, and policy development. Additionally, the division conducts surveillance and epidemiological investigations to prevent and control communicable disease outbreaks. The County Board of Health advises the Commissioner of Public Health on public health policy, ensuring that nearly \$100 million of the County's \$1.5 billion budget is strategically invested in health services that benefit all residents. Effective preventive health programs reduce the County's overall healthcare costs and result in healthier, happier individuals who are more fully able to contribute positively to the community and the economy.

3.4 What Do We Need to Address?

3.4.1 Substance Use Disorders

In line with national trends, Monroe County experienced a rise in substance use disorders between 2015 and 2023, particularly opioid-related overdoses, requiring a nuanced public health response involving identifying root causes and developing targeted interventions (CDC, 2025a). In 2024, however, the County recorded a 50% decrease in opioid overdose deaths, falling to 216, and overall overdose deaths decreased to 292. This reduction is a significant shift following years of escalation and suggests that Monroe County’s ongoing efforts to expand access to naloxone, treatment, and recovery supports are having a measurable impact.

Although trends are improving, ongoing efforts and time are still necessary to help meet people’s needs and continue to provide adequate support. Furthermore, the burden of opioid overdoses is not evenly distributed among demographic groups; some populations are more affected than others. Members of the Black and Hispanic communities are disproportionately impacted by

opioid deaths, along with younger and middle-aged adults who also face mental health illnesses (Figure 45; Figure 46). Additionally, most cases are concentrated in the City of Rochester, which has the highest poverty, unemployment, and lowest educational attainment in the county. Studies have shown that these social determinants of health increase the risk factors for opioid overdose cases (Pear et al., 2021).



FIGURE 45
Monroe County Overdose Death Rates by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity Distribution Among Opioid and/or Cocaine Deaths in 2024, and Estimates of the General Population Demographic Distribution of Monroe County.

RACE	PERCENT OF OVERDOSE DEATHS	MONROE COUNTY GENERAL POPULATION ESTIMATE ^A
White or Caucasian	67.5%	76.0%
Black or African American	31.2%	16.5%
Asian	1.4%	3.9%
Other ^B	0.0%	3.7%
Hispanic ^C	14.0%	10.1%

Notes:

A. Source: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/monroecountynewyork> Assessed 27 August 2024.

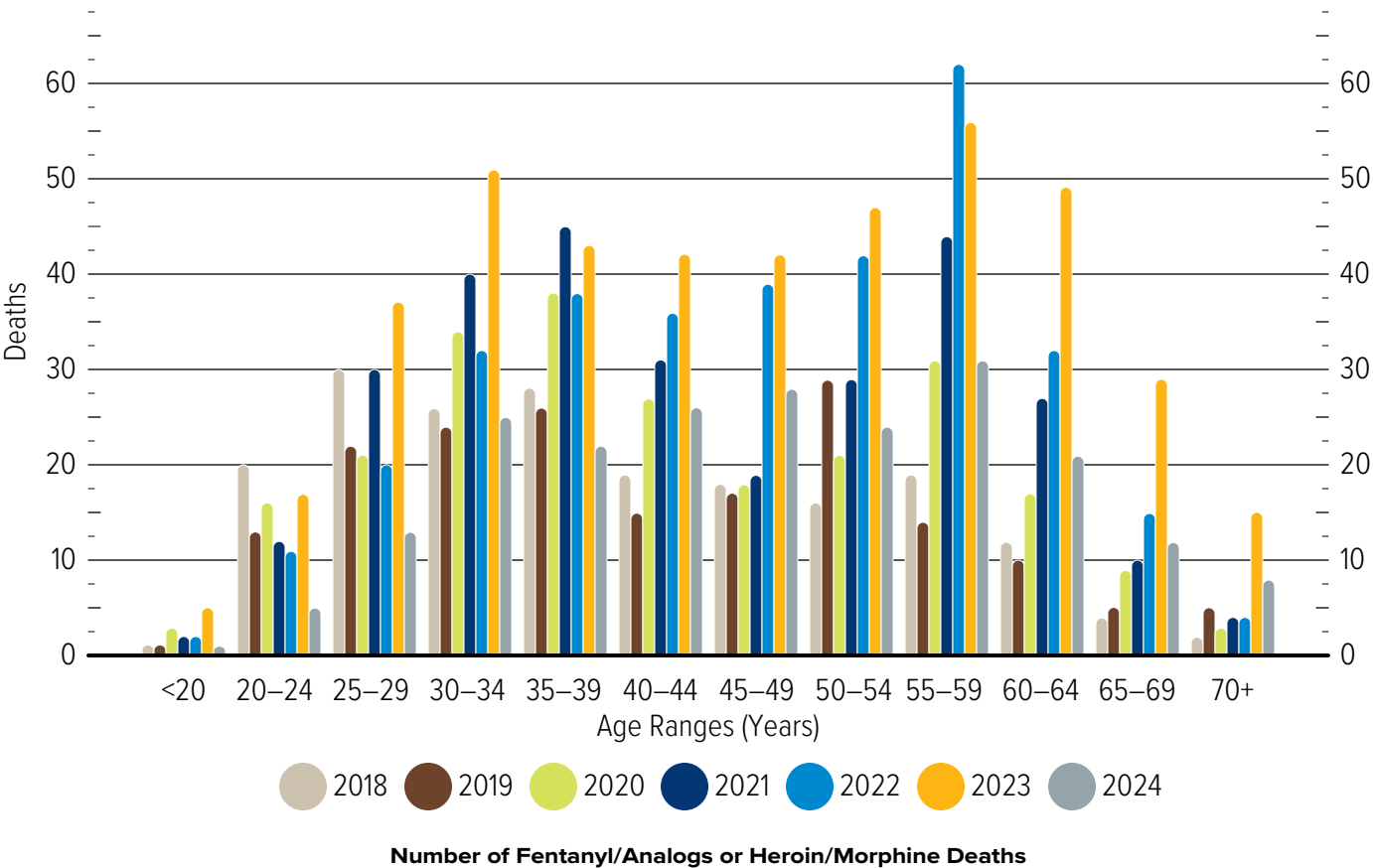
B. Other includes but is not limited to Native American, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and two or more races.

C. Hispanic Ethnicity Identification is Independent of race identification.

Source: Monroe County Office of the Medical Examiner, 2024.

FIGURE 46
Monroe County Overdose Rates per Hundred
Thousand Persons by Age and Race/Ethnicity

Source: Monroe County Department of Public Health



Source: Monroe County Department of Public Health.

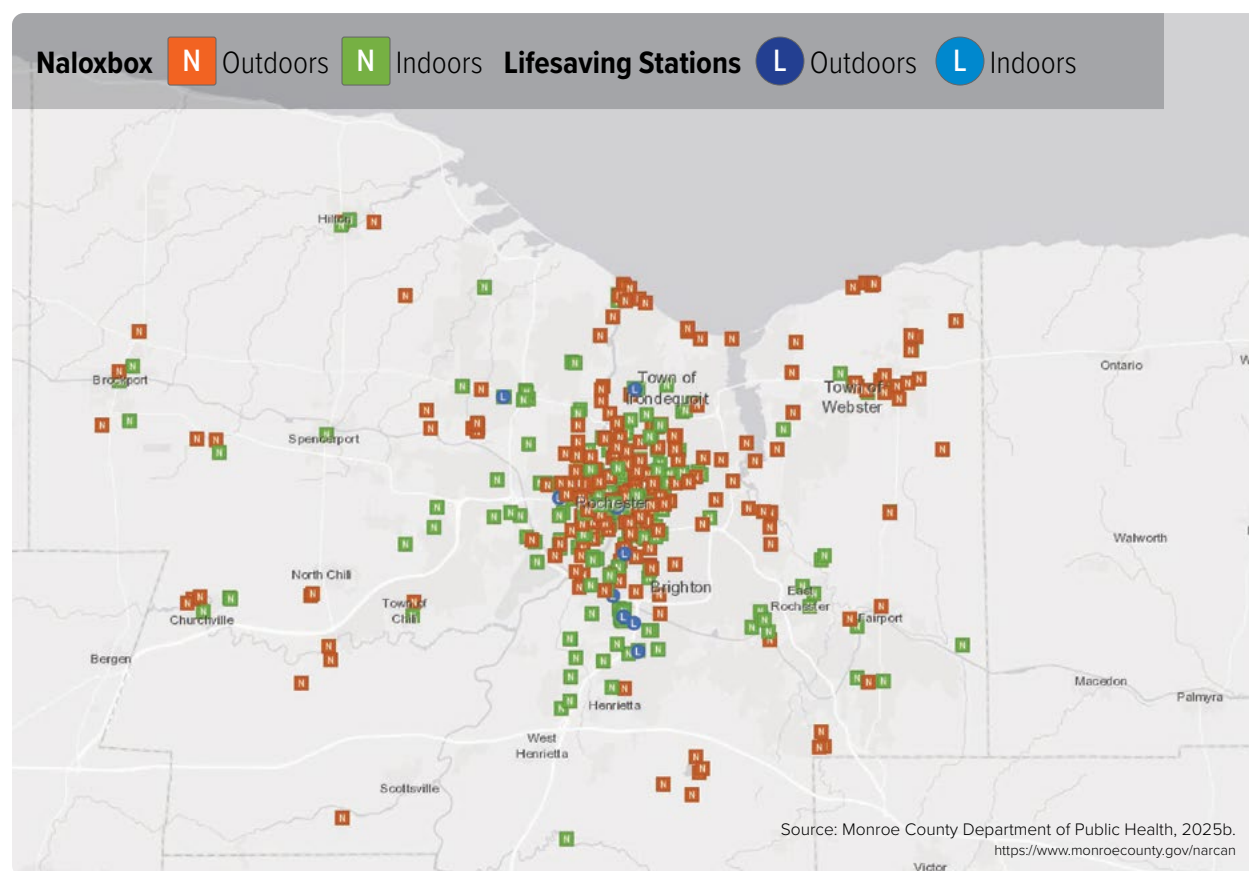
In response, the Monroe County Department of Public Health (MCDPH) and Monroe Crime Analysis Center (MCAC) have employed a robust and multilayered approach to mitigate the crisis through individual, institutional, and community responses. The County has pulled together a diverse group of partners, from non-profits, community organizations, housing authorities, parks and recreation departments, local businesses, religious institutions, schools, local governments, and civic institutions to tackle the epidemic head-on. A cornerstone of the County’s strategy has been large-scale distribution of naloxone, a life-saving overdose reversal medication. Since its launch in 2022, the County has distributed

over 35,000 Narcan kits. This distribution has been complemented by the installation of more than 600 free Naloxboxes, strategically placed near overdose hotspots, with almost all of these locations concentrated in the City of Rochester, further highlighting disparities in the County (Figure 47). At the institutional level, the County has supported training for Certified Peer Advocates, enabling individuals with lived experience to support others in recovery and work within emergency departments (EDs) and community organizations to help prevent further overdoses. With opioid settlement funds, the County has been able to

create an “Addiction Services team” to provide more comprehensive responses to opioid overdose (OD) survivors on the individual level. Since its creation in 2021, the team has grown rapidly and provided support to OD survivors by following up on their treatment, discharge plan, and offering harm reduction tools such as fentanyl and xylazine test strips, masks, gloves, condoms, and Narcan trainings. Standardized discharge protocols in EDs now include comprehensive resources such as contact information for needle exchange programs, medication-assisted treatment (MAT) providers, peer support networks, and QR codes linking patients to real-time service directories. This streamlined information aims to bridge the gap between emergency care and long-term recovery.

A key element of Monroe County’s broader substance use strategy includes housing support, recognizing the intersection of addiction, housing insecurity, and family instability. The Moving Forward Family Shelter in Rochester, opened in 2024, represents a critical investment in wraparound services, offering temporary housing while connecting families to healthcare, counseling, daycare, interim transportation to school and medical services, employment services, and ultimately, permanent housing solutions. This holistic model not only addresses immediate needs but also targets other social determinants of health needs, such as mental health and socio-economic status, that commonly occur with substance use disorders.

FIGURE 47
Naloxbox Locations at Businesses
Near Overdose Hotspots



Finally, expanding partnerships with schools to prevent addiction early and understanding how early childhood traumas impact later development of substance use disorders can help address problems at their initial stages. Monroe County has made significant progress in understanding the root causes of substance use disorders, and examining the issue from various perspectives continues to reveal opportunities for further improvement.



3.4.2 Health Equity

Poverty is a social determinant of health that affects communities worldwide. In many places, including Monroe County, populations living in poverty face significant barriers to accessing proper healthcare and nutritious food. This population also experiences high levels of persistent stress due to pressures associated with financial insecurity, which can eventually manifest in physical and mental ailments. In Monroe County, 13% of households (approximately 40,481 households) live in poverty (ArcGIS Business Analyst, 2025). The densest area of poverty in the County is within the City of Rochester, however there are also high poverty areas in the Town of Henrietta, the Village of Brockport, East Rochester, and in the Town of Greece. **Figure 48** shows that areas in Monroe County with the highest percentage of residents living below poverty level also experience lower

FIGURE 48
Poverty and Life Expectancy

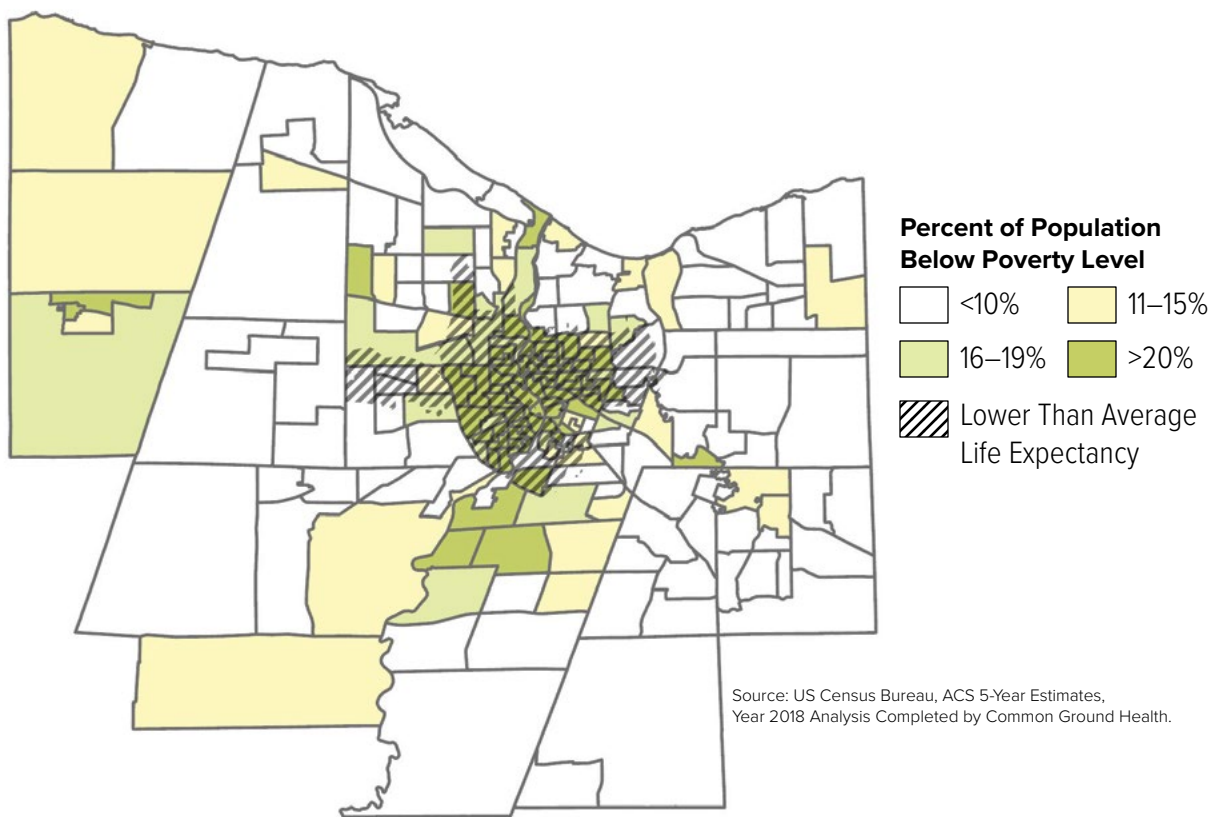
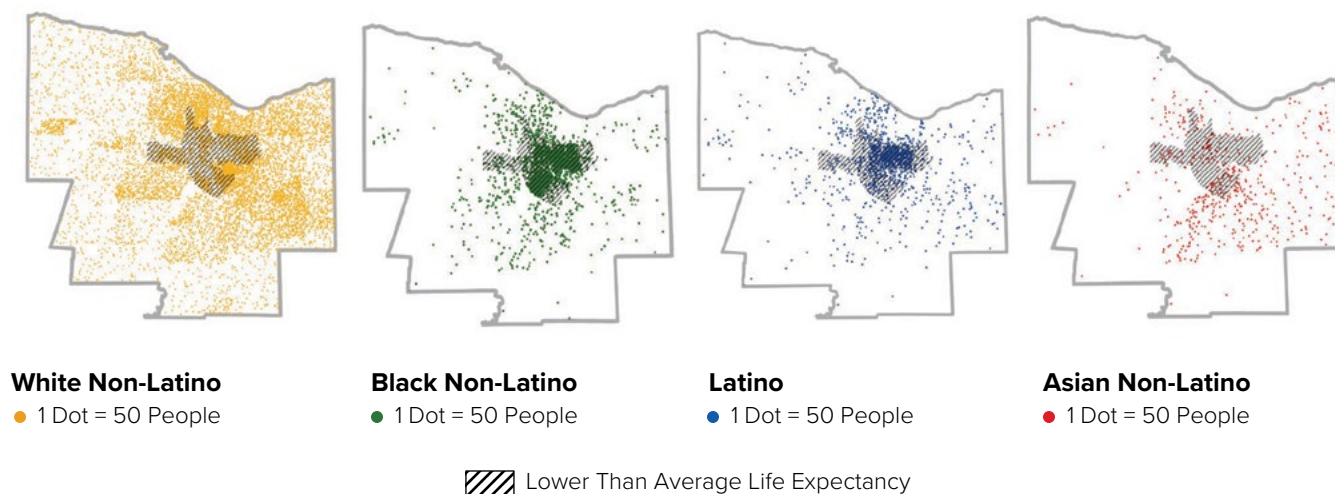


FIGURE 49
Geographic Distribution of Race and Life Expectancy

Source: U.S. Census, 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimate.

Race and Life Expectancy



Source: U.S. Census, 2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates.

than average life expectancy. People living in poverty are more likely to experience premature mortality caused by heart disease, cancer, and homicide. Additionally, residents from areas with low socioeconomic status have dramatically higher rates of potentially preventable emergency department visits and hospitalizations from chronic illness (Common Ground Health, 2018).

In many U.S. cities, geographic segregation and concentrated poverty are caused by historic land use policies that have contributed to lasting social and economic disparities. Similarly, the redistribution of population and jobs over time from Rochester to the suburbs of Monroe County has led to significant areas of concentrated poverty that tend to be racially segregated. **Figure 49** shows today's density of different racial populations within Monroe County. Additionally, the maps show the areas of Monroe County where the population experiences lower than average life expectancy (i.e., less than 75 years).

There is a growing recognition of the systemic inequities that have long impacted maternal health outcomes for Black women and families. **Figure 50** shows that severe maternal morbidity rates are increasing most significantly for Black mothers. **Figure 51** displays the association between female poverty and risks to early childhood health, such as low birth weight, premature births, and teen pregnancy.



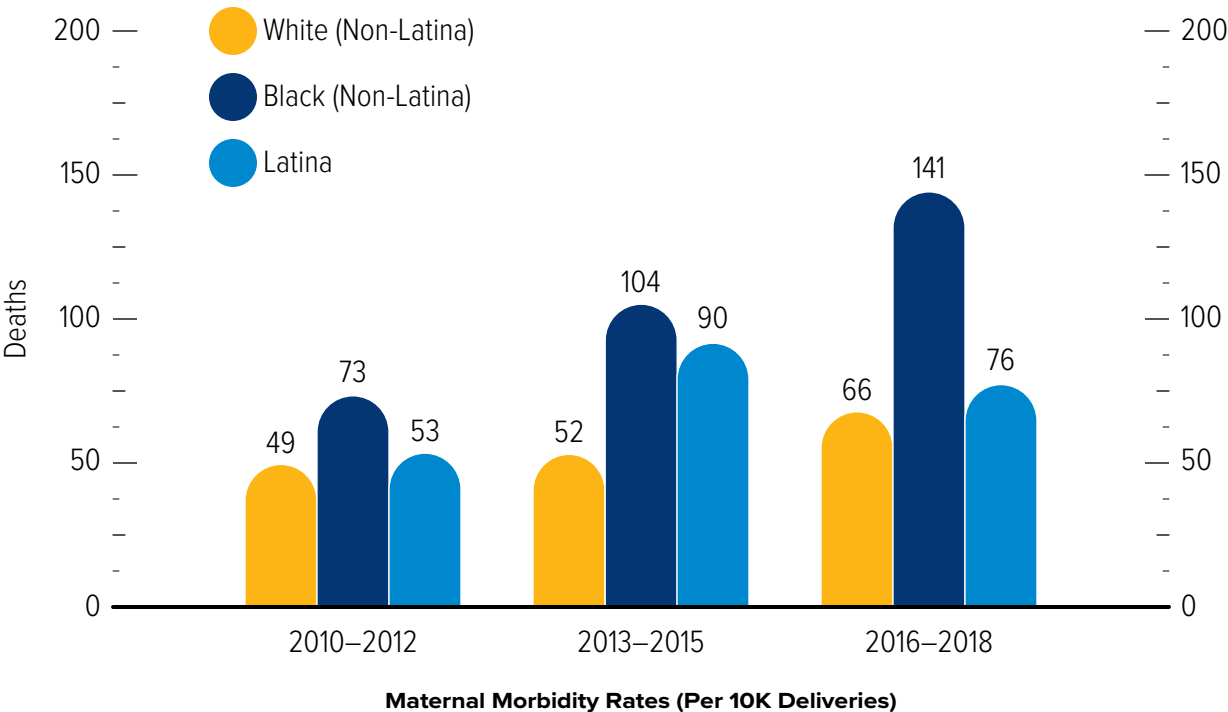
One of the most recent and impactful initiatives is a \$703,000 ARPA-funded outreach program launched in May 2025 in partnership with HCR Home Care. This initiative focuses on expanding access to home healthcare education and services for Black families. Through collaborations with the Max and Marian Farash Charitable Foundation, the Greater Rochester Health Foundation, and seven predominantly Black churches in Rochester, the program aims to educate older adults and their families about the availability, affordability, and benefits of home healthcare. The initiative includes culturally tailored materials, pastor-led briefings, video testimonials, and workforce training to build a pipeline of culturally competent caregivers.

A trio of initiatives kicking off in October 2025 seek to help prevent maternal and infant morbidity and mortality through evidence-based intervention

targeting vulnerable pregnant families. These include the PAMPER Mom program run by Equally Balanced Therapy & Wellness, which provides client-centered prenatal medical massage and health care interventions to low-income County moms in their third trimester of pregnancy; The URMCMt. Hope Family Center Building Healthy Communities Program, which will provide coordinated medical and behavioral treatment specifically designed for the postpartum period; and an expansion of the ROC Family Teleconnects Program, a United Way of Greater Rochester and the Finger Lakes initiative that focuses on improving outcomes for families in highly distressed ZIP codes and provides tele-health and home visiting services, referrals and connections to organizations that provide essential supports such as food, clothing and shelter.

FIGURE 50
Maternal Morbidity Rates by Race/Ethnicity (Per 10k Deliveries)

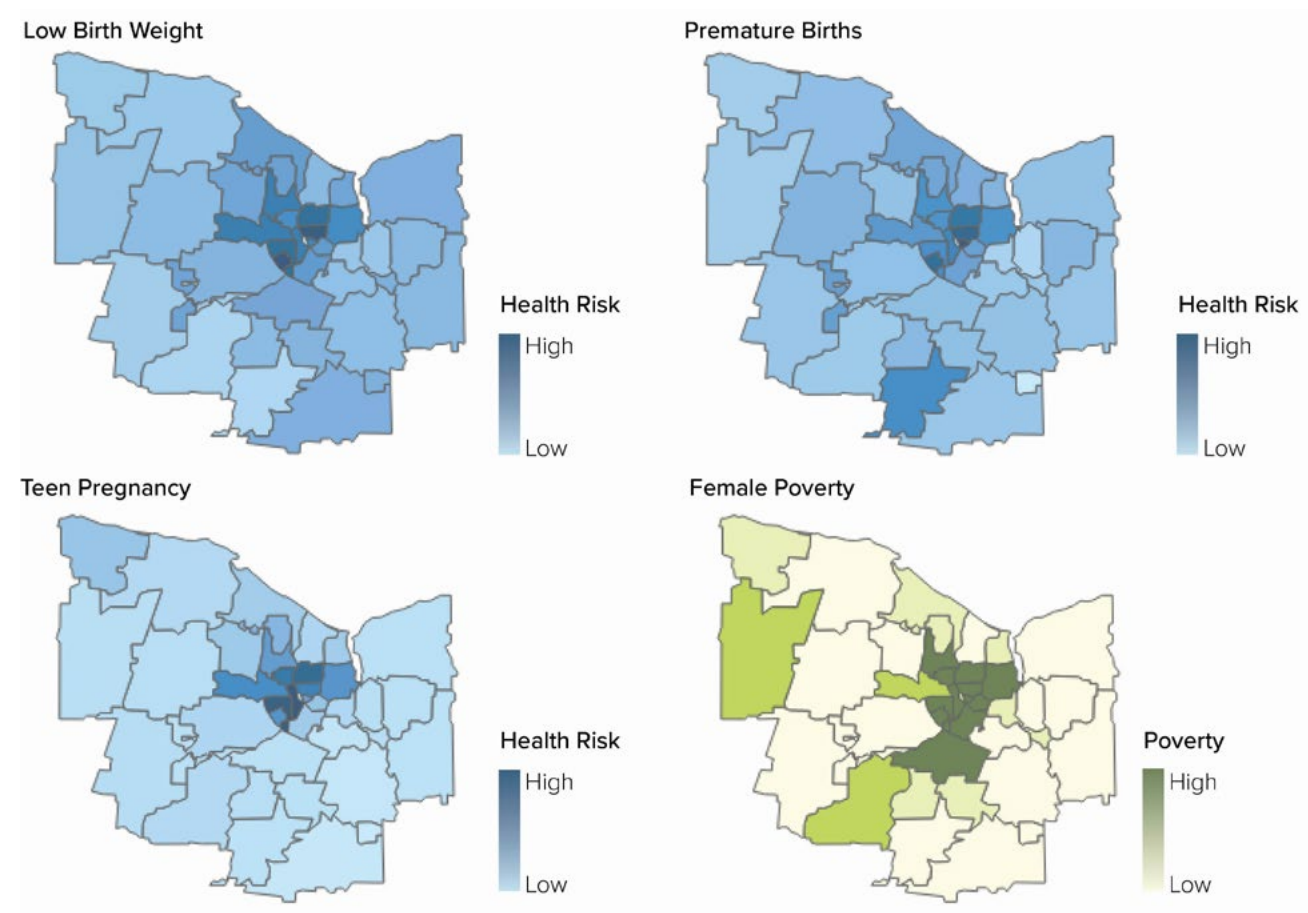
Source: NYSDOH SPARCS Inpatient Dataset; Analysis by Common Ground Health



Source: NYSDOH SPARCS Inpatient Dataset; Analysis by Common Ground Health.

FIGURE 51**Geographic Links Between Female Poverty and Early Childhood Health**

Sources: NYSDOH, Prenatal Data Profile 2017-2019, and U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2019; Analysis by Common Ground Health



The 2022–2024 Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) explicitly identified the reduction of racial, ethnic, economic, and geographic disparities in maternal and child health as a top priority. The plan calls for enhanced collaboration among healthcare providers, community organizations, and public agencies to address social determinants of health such as poverty, housing, and employment. The CHIP also supports the continuation and expansion of the Maternal Child Health Advisory Group, which includes voices from Black and Latino health coalitions to ensure community-driven solutions.

Together, these initiatives demonstrate Monroe County’s commitment to health equity, culturally competent care, and community engagement. By centering Black maternal health in its public health strategy, the County is taking meaningful steps to close longstanding gaps and improve outcomes for future generations.

The County can continue proactively working to address racial health disparities among Black mothers through a combination of targeted investments, community partnerships, and strategic planning.

3.4.3 Food Insecurity

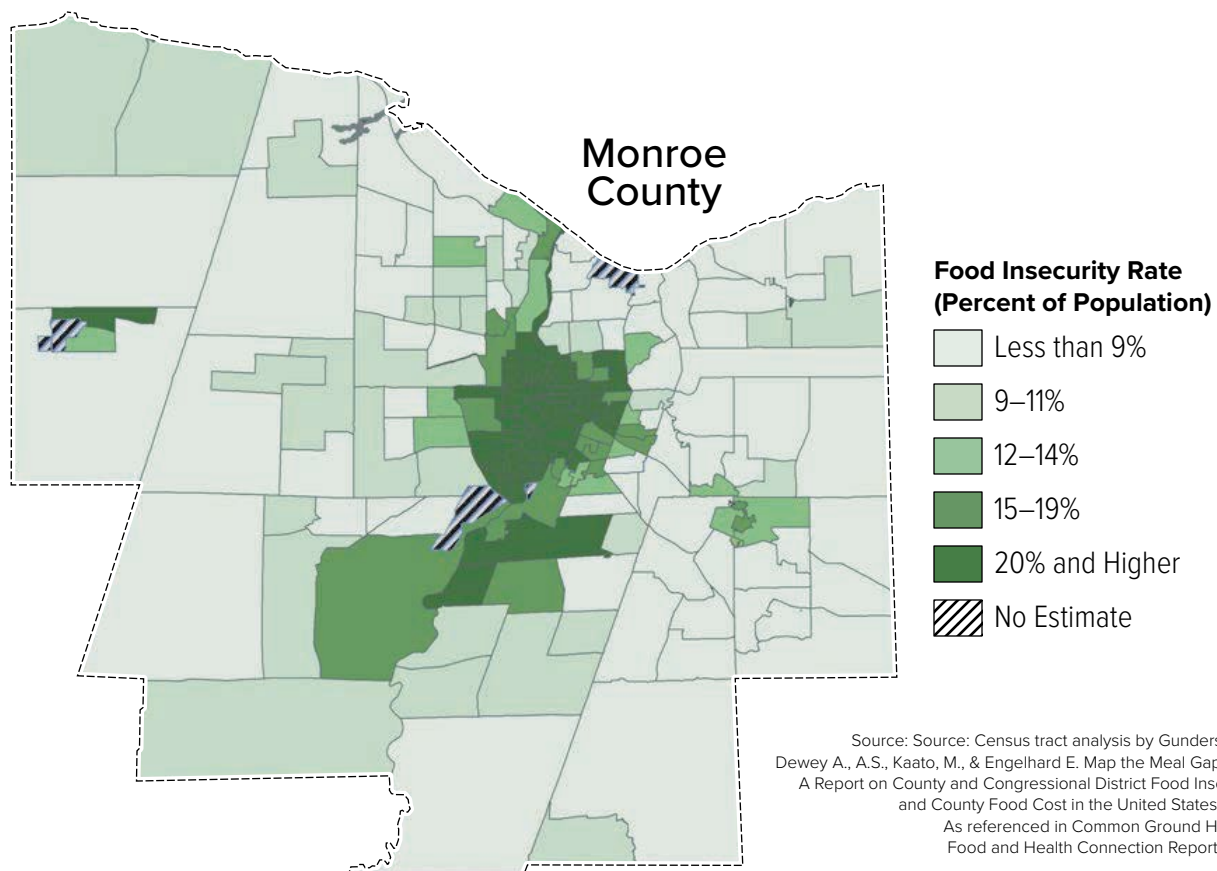
In Monroe County, food insecurity is deeply intertwined with broader social determinants of health, including poverty, transportation access, housing instability, and racial inequities. Residents who live in areas without nearby grocery stores, individuals with disabilities, seniors, and those without reliable transportation or income face significant barriers to accessing nutritious food. Rising food costs and limited eligibility for assistance programs compound these challenges.

Food insecurity has profound consequences for physical and mental health. For children, it can hinder cognitive development, learning capacity, and emotional regulation. Adults experiencing food insecurity often report higher levels of stress, anxiety, and chronic health conditions such as diabetes and hypertension. Monroe County has the second-highest rate of food insecurity in the Finger Lakes Region and ranks 27th out of 62 counties in New York State, which is higher than the state average (Feeding America, 2019) (Figure 52).

Food insecurity is an official term from the USDA. It's when people don't have enough to eat and don't know where their next meal will come from (Feeding America, 2025a).

According to **Feeding America**, 38% of food-insecure individuals in Monroe County are above the SNAP income threshold, leaving many older adults ineligible for food assistance despite significant need.

FIGURE 52
Rates of Food Insecurity



From 2021 to 2023, food insecurity rates more than tripled among Black and Hispanic residents, reaching 28% and 30%, respectively; compared to 9% among White residents. This stark disparity highlights the racial and ethnic inequities embedded in the local food system. Child food insecurity averaged 17.6% in 2023, underscoring the urgent need for targeted interventions.

Foodlink, the regional food bank serving 10 counties, including Monroe County, reported a sharp increase in food insecurity from 9.3% in 2021 to 12.8% in 2023, the highest rate in a decade. Geographic proximity to grocery stores with fresh produce is a major determinant of food security. Urban census tracts in Monroe County, particularly in the City of Rochester, have the highest rates of food insecurity, with Rochester's overall rate at 21.5% (Dwyer, 2025).

While urban residents often face challenges related to income and proximity to stores, rural residents struggle with transportation access. Seniors, especially those living in outlying areas, are particularly vulnerable due to mobility limitations and isolation. Addressing food insecurity requires tailored strategies for both urban and rural communities, as well as granular data analysis beyond the census tract level. A significant portion of Monroe County's food-insecure population (38%) falls above the SNAP income threshold of 200% of the federal poverty level, making them ineligible for food assistance (Feeding America, 2025b). This gap leaves many residents with few options for acquiring nutritious food. Rising food costs affect residents across both urban and rural areas, making affordability a countywide concern.



The City of Rochester's Community Food System Draft Plan was released in 2026. The Plan aims to gain a deeper understanding of the local food system across City neighborhoods, using block-level mapping, and develop targeted recommendations to inform policies, partnerships, and initiatives that improve food access, health, and resilience (City of Rochester, 2025b).

Collaboration among food providers, nonprofits, and government agencies is essential to developing affordable, coordinated solutions. The ROC Food Policy Council, supported by the Rochester City Council, is a key player in advancing equitable food policies. Formed through partnerships with Common Ground Health, Foodlink, and local residents, the Council promotes youth nutrition programs, farm-to-school initiatives, urban agriculture, and community gardens. It works with organizations such as Rochester Public Market, Headwater Food Hub, Taproot Collective, Grow Green, and Green Visions to strengthen local food distribution networks.

CCE Monroe County Food Insecurity Project

The Food Insecurity Project, funded by Monroe County and implemented by Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) Monroe, is a strategic investment in strengthening the county's food access network. Through targeted support for food pantries, community gardens, and nonprofit partners, the project addresses immediate food needs while building long-term capacity for sustainable food security. Since 2024, CCE Monroe has partnered with nearly 40 organizations, delivering more than \$300,000 in support for equipment, infrastructure, and educational initiatives. This approach not only improves operational efficiency and expands service reach, but also equips organizations to become self-sustaining food security hubs, reducing long-term strain on emergency food systems and increasing community resilience.

Foodlink Curbside Market

Foodlink's Curbside Market is a Rochester-based nonprofit that meets residents in their communities to provide fresh fruits and vegetables and encourage healthy diets. This program increases access to healthy foods and lowers the cost of fruits and vegetables by accepting the two main types of national food assistance, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). Foodlink has impacted the community by building trusted relationships with the public, farmers, and distributors who supply fresh, reliable produce year-round. The organization continues to explore ways to bring the most convenient, nutritious foods to its community. In addition to the Curbside Market, Foodlink seeks to reduce food insecurity through offering discounted community meals at the Community Café, nutrition education, nutritious meals for students and daycares, food for students when they are away from school, and emergency food relief.



Monroe County's farms and farmers' markets are vital components of the local food system, however, they have limited resource and funding to invest in infrastructure or sustain long-term collaborations. Supporting sustainable farming practices outlined in the [Monroe County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan \(2025\)](#) will provide long term benefits to Monroe County farmers and regional agriculture efforts. These include Best Management

Practices (BMPs) such as reduced pesticide use, cover cropping, stream buffers, and stormwater management to protect soil and water resources. Additionally, Monroe County could support cost-sharing programs and educational initiatives through Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE), the Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD), and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). County involvement in these efforts would help farmers implement BMPs and improve the resilience of the local food system. Enhanced communication between the County, municipalities, and farmers is essential for coordinating priorities and ensuring that food production and distribution align with community needs.

Food insecurity in Monroe County is a multifaceted challenge that requires a coordinated, equity-driven response. To make lasting progress towards a healthier and more resilient community, the County can invest in data-driven planning, support local agriculture, and expand access to nutritious food.

The Vineyard Farms

The Vineyard Farms is a Black-owned urban farm in Rochester that provides fresh produce to residents without a nearby supermarket within walking distance. It is situated in a food desert that lacks enough sources of nutritious food for the community living there. Since 2010, the Vineyard Farm has distributed fresh produce to at least 12,600 households, including 38,500 food boxes from October 2020 to January 2022, and 13,200 meals from January to March 2022 (The Vineyard Farms, 2025). The Farm has hosted over 275 grassroots fundraising events and Father Legacy Programming to help fathers create a better future for their children. It has also worked with URMC and Anthony Jordan Health Center physicians to provide Telehealth Training to hundreds of community residents.

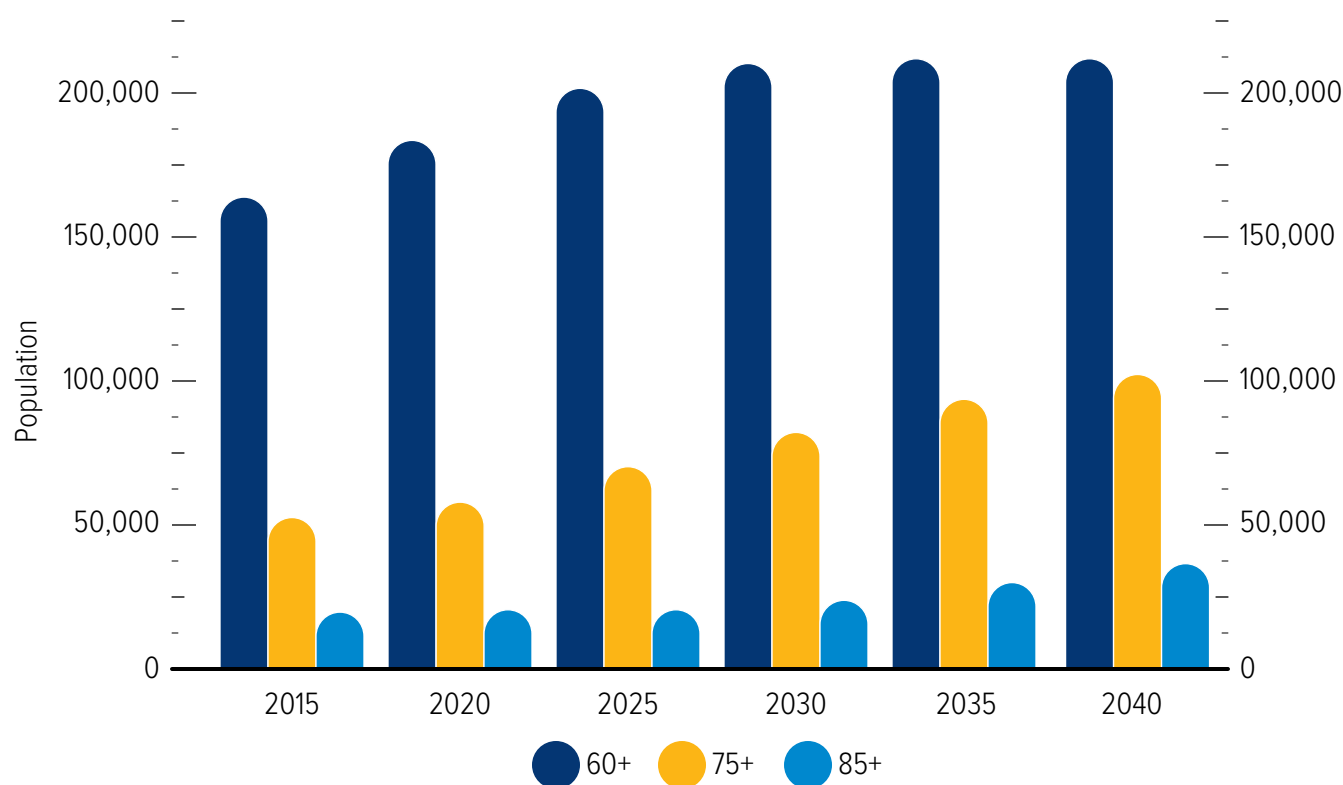
3.4.4 Age-friendly Communities

As Monroe County's population continues to age, adopting an age-friendly approach to food access, housing policies, and workforce development will be essential for maintaining equity and well-being for all residents. According to recent demographic projections, a growing proportion of residents will be over the age of 65 in the coming decades, a trend that mirrors broader national shifts

(Figure 53). Some of the current trends affecting

retirement decision-making among older adults include a lack of family support (more childless older people), insufficient retirement savings, higher educational attainment leading to extended work lives, and newly emerged health concerns such as increased obesity rates compared to previous generations. Moreover, climate change will exacerbate heat-related illnesses, especially for vulnerable populations, including older adults from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

FIGURE 53
Monroe County Older Adult Population Projections 2015–2040



Monroe County Older Adult Population Projections 2015–2040

Source: Monroe County Office for the Aging.

Older individuals contribute significantly to society through volunteerism, mentorship, and institutional knowledge. However, an aging population brings unique health-related challenges, including increased rates of chronic illness, mobility limitations, and social isolation. Furthermore, food insecurity is a growing concern among older adults. Seniors are particularly vulnerable due to fixed incomes, limited mobility, and isolation. Many live in areas classified as “food deserts,” where access to fresh, nutritious food is limited by distance, transportation barriers, or affordability. According to Common Ground Health, food insecurity in Monroe County disproportionately affects older adults, especially those living alone or in rural areas.

The general aging of the population will impact workforce development, with experienced workers gradually exiting the labor market while demand for caregiving and healthcare jobs increases. This shift presents an opportunity to reimagine the role of older adults in the workforce through flexible work arrangements, lifelong learning, retraining programs, and phased retirement options. Intergenerational mentorship programs not only support knowledge transfer but also improve the health and well-being of older adults. These programs can also be leveraged to address food insecurity by engaging older adults in community gardening, food distribution, and nutrition education initiatives.

FIGURE 54
Eight Domains of Livability

Source: Creating a Community for a Lifetimes, Monroe County, 2021





Housing policy must also evolve to support aging in place and reduce food insecurity. Many homes in Monroe County are not designed for residents with limited mobility, and there is a growing need for communal, transit-accessible housing near grocery stores and food pantries. Encouraging diverse housing types can improve financial security and access to food. Integrating age-friendly principles into zoning and land use planning can foster compact, walkable communities that support healthy aging and food access which are desired by a majority of older adults (AARP, 2022).

Age-friendly communities benefit all residents. Designing a built environment that supports older adults also serves families with young children, individuals with disabilities, and anyone facing mobility or access challenges. An age-friendly community ensures access to nutritious food, safe outdoor spaces, and opportunities for social participation. Features such as safe sidewalks, accessible public transit, traffic calming measures, and proximity to essential services, including grocery stores and food pantries, create a more inclusive and resilient community. These improvements enhance quality of life, promote equity, and strengthen the social fabric of the entire community.

Monroe County has developed an action plan for an age-friendly community: [Creating a Community for a Life Time](#), in 2022; and is member of the Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities, a World Health Organization initiative. The action plan and network membership provides a framework for addressing challenges associated with aging by connecting and advising regions, cities, communities and organizations on local actionable goals and strategies for achieving places people can age in healthily and actively (WHO, 2025). AARP has provided technical assistance with age-friendly planning since 2012 and accepted Monroe County and the City of Rochester into the AARP Network of Age-friendly States and Communities in 2019.

3.4.5 Housing Instability and Homelessness

Housing stability is closely linked to health and well-being. Individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability are more likely to face chronic health conditions, mental health challenges, substance use disorders, and increased reliance on emergency healthcare services. Stable, safe, and affordable housing provides the foundation for residents to maintain their health, access services, and participate fully in community life.

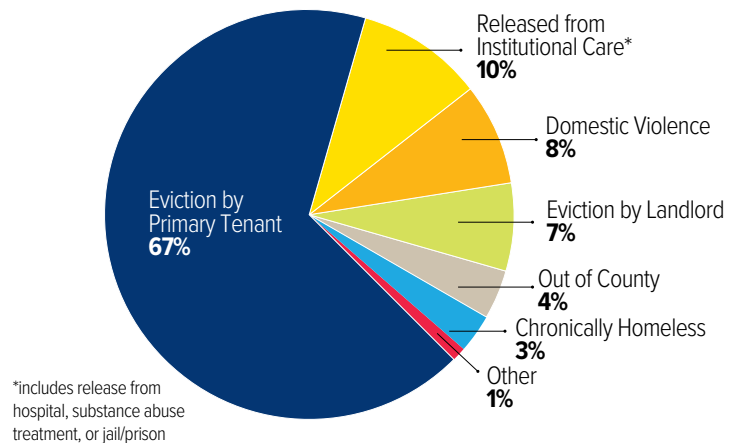
Although homelessness declined slightly nationwide in 2025 following a record high in 2024, rates remain historically elevated across the United States. New York State experienced the largest year-over-year decline in homelessness between 2024 and 2025, yet it continues to have one of the highest homelessness rates in the nation (HUD, 2026). Monroe County reflects these broader trends. The County's 2025 Point-in-Time Count, conducted January 2025, identified 1,194 people experiencing homelessness. This represents a significant increase from 803 individuals in 2019 and 748 individuals in 2022, highlighting the growing need for expanded housing options, prevention strategies, and coordinated support services. (HUD, 2026b.) The 2026 Point-in-Time Count identified 859 people experiencing homelessness, a notable decrease that may reflect the success of homelessness prevention efforts, expanded New York State Supportive Housing Initiative units, and declining eviction rates. (HUD, 2026b.) Continued investment in these initiatives will be important to sustain this progress while addressing the County's ongoing need for housing and supportive services.

The **Point-in-Time (PIT) Count** is an annual count of sheltered and unsheltered individuals experiencing homelessness on a single night. In Monroe County, the PIT count is conducted during the last week of January each year.

The primary causes of homelessness in Monroe County reflect housing instability rather than chronic unsheltered homelessness alone. In 2025, nearly 67% of Temporary Housing Assistance (THA) placements resulted from individuals being asked to leave shared housing arrangements ("eviction by primary tenant"), followed by 10% resulting from discharged from hospitals, treatment facilities, and correctional institutions. Although traditional landlord evictions remain a contributing factor, they have declined since the COVID-19 pandemic. (Monroe County, 2025k) (Figure 55)

FIGURE 55
Reasons for Placement in Emergency Housing - 2025

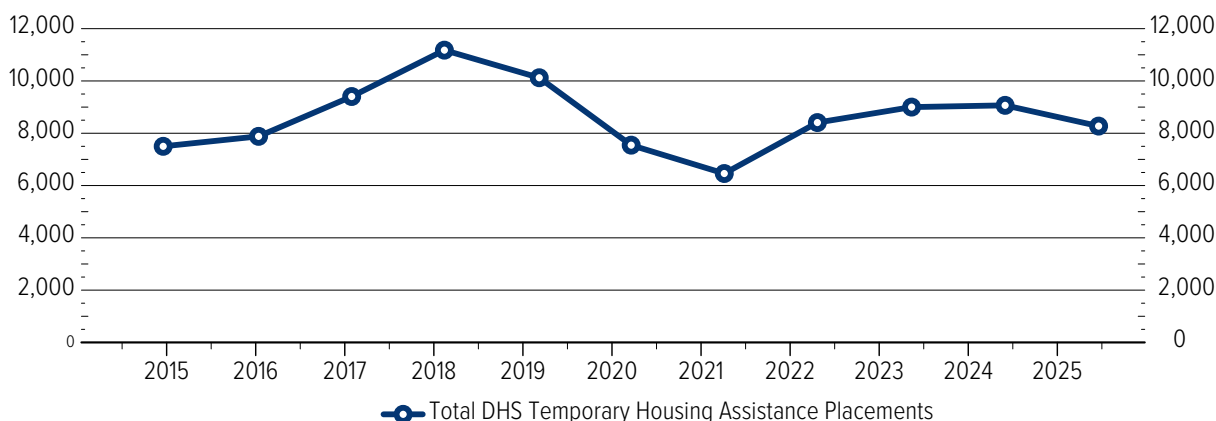
Source: Department of Human Services, Monroe County, 2026



Emergency shelters remain the primary entry point into Monroe County's homelessness response system, accounting for 93% of THA placements in 2025. (Source: Department of Human Services 2025 Housing Annual Report). This continued reliance on temporary shelter underscores the need for a broader continuum of housing options and stronger coordination with behavioral health, employment, and healthcare services to support long-term housing stability. Meeting the needs of residents experiencing homelessness requires a range of housing options in response to varying levels of need. While emergency shelter provides an essential immediate response, long-term stability depends on expanding access to permanent supportive housing, rapid rehousing, transitional housing, and other housing models.

FIGURE 56
Total DHS Temporary Housing Assistance Placements

Source: Department of Human Services, Monroe County, 2026



Addressing homelessness requires a coordinated, systems-based approach that expands access to a range of housing options while integrating housing with healthcare, behavioral health, employment, and other supportive services. Existing local initiatives demonstrate the value of this integrated approach. Programs such as Volunteers of America Upstate New York's housing and supportive service programs, Affinity Place by East House, and Project Anchor's rent subsidy program provide models for connecting individuals with stable housing, case management, and wraparound support. Monroe County should continue building on these efforts and supporting targeted housing assistance for specific populations, including veterans, through programs such as the Veterans Service Agency's Homeless Veteran Resource program, which connects eligible veterans with housing assistance, benefits, and supportive services. Strengthening collaboration among healthcare providers, housing organizations, community-based nonprofits, and public agencies can further improve coordinated outreach, expand housing stability, and make it easier for residents to access the services they need.

Advancing housing as a public health priority requires stability, prevention, and connection to care, ensuring that residents not only have access to housing, but also the health and supportive services necessary to remain stably housed and thrive in the community.

Coordinated Housing and Supportive Services in Action

Project Anchor

Project Anchor is a local rent subsidy program administered by Catholic Charities Family and Community Services (CCFCS), designed to help households in Monroe County at risk of homelessness remain stably housed. Project Anchor helps around 200 households in Monroe County annually by providing rental assistance of up to 100% of the metro-Rochester Fair Market Rent (FMR) for eligible households earning below 50% of the Area Median Income (AMI).

Volunteers of America Upstate New York

Volunteers of America Upstate New York provides a continuum of homelessness prevention and housing services in Monroe County that extends beyond emergency shelter. Programs include emergency family shelters, permanent supportive housing, rapid re-housing, housing for veterans and older adults, rental assistance, and intensive case management. These housing services are integrated with behavioral health referrals, employment assistance, life skills training, and other supportive services to help individuals and families achieve long-term housing stability.

3.5 Goals and Strategies



Provide Integrated Mental and Physical Care to Residents in Need

- 1 Improve the accessibility and delivery of health and mental health services in underserved areas by evaluating the needs of residents, identifying barriers to access, and developing strategies to address the challenges.
- 2 Work with community partners on addressing preventable healthcare issues, including identifying root causes and developing targeted interventions.
- 3 Support preventative services to reduce maternal and infant mortality and improve maternal health outcomes.
- 4 Work to prevent and address issues related to social isolation.
- 5 Support a healthy lifestyle by investing in open space, trails, water access, and other recreation amenities near population centers that promote physical activity and mental well-being.
- 6 Support the development and expansion of culturally and linguistically responsive behavioral and mental health services that address the needs of diverse populations, including but not limited to deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing individuals, through accessible communication, workforce development, provider training, and partnerships with community organizations and educational institutions.



Prevent Substance Use and Subsequent Substance Use Disorders

- 1 Support and expand programs that provide drug abuse prevention, education, treatment, and recovery services.
- 2 Ensure that county services for chemical dependency treatment are accessible to all residents, including those who face cultural, linguistic, and other barriers.

Promote Housing Stability and Reduce Homelessness

- 1 Expand collaboration between Monroe County, Municipalities, and Not-for-Profits, and other community partners working to expand homelessness prevention efforts and to increase supportive and transitional housing options across the county.
- 2 Support a range of innovative housing options that meet a variety of user needs and better integrate housing with behavioral health, employment, and healthcare services.



Mitigate Environmental Health Hazards

- 1 Address water-related hazards such as harmful algal blooms, legacy industrial contamination in the Genesee River and Lake Ontario Shoreline, and combined sewer overflow systems.
- 2 Improve air quality by promoting the reduction of industrial emissions, supporting clean energy in transportation systems, and monitoring elevated ozone levels during summer months.
- 3 Provide resources to mitigate building health hazards, particularly in older housing and school buildings, including mold, soil contamination, lead in drinking water, lead paint, and deteriorating structures and infrastructure.
- 4 Help farm operations adopt environmentally sustainable practices, such as reducing pesticide and fertilizer runoff and modernizing operations.

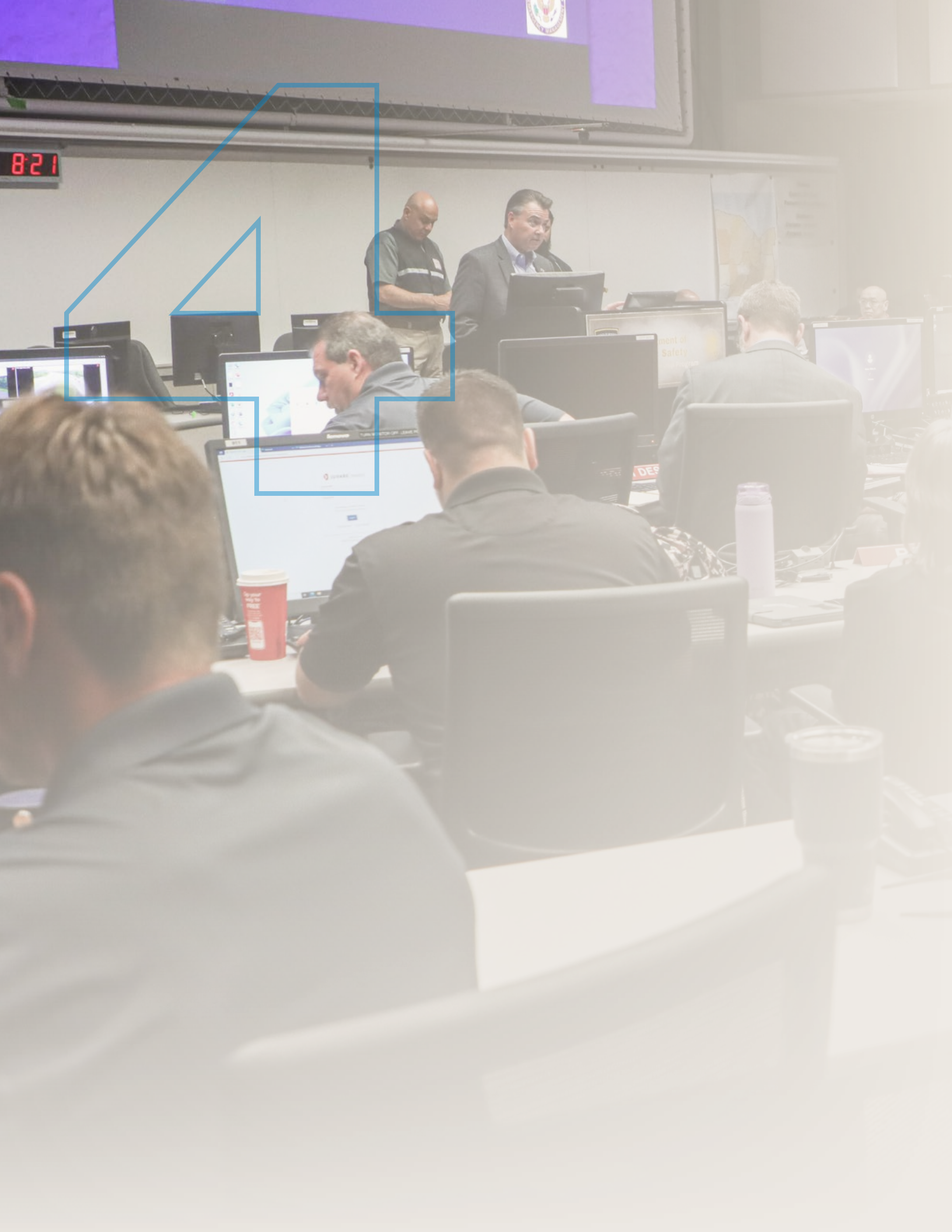


Support Policies and Programs that Improve Access to Nutritious Foods

- 1 Enhance and expand meal programs, collaborating with local organizations to support access to healthy, affordable foods for community members who are vulnerable, food insecure, or who face economic challenges.
- 2 Engage in dialogue with the ROC Food Policy Council and partner organizations about expanding regional food system coordination.
- 3 Identify and support all food distribution networks in the County to reach people across municipalities.
- 4 Support a regional food system plan to improve access to healthy, affordable food and reduce disparities in food access.

Foster an Age-Friendly Monroe County and Support Environments for Older Adults

- 1 Provide information and guidance to navigate challenging aging issues and concerns.
- 2 Continue the Office of Aging and Aging Alliance's prioritization of programming that addresses improved economic security for older adults.



4 Public Safety

4.1 Introduction

Monroe County is committed to the idea that everybody deserves to feel safe in their home and community. The County's public safety efforts focus on the comprehensive protection and well-being of all residents within the County's jurisdiction through coordinated prevention, response, and recovery services. This includes traditional law enforcement activities such as crime prevention, investigation, and emergency response, as well as broader protective services like fire suppression and prevention, emergency medical services, disaster preparedness and response, hazard mitigation, and public health emergency management. Monroe County public safety extends beyond reactive measures to include proactive community engagement, crime prevention programs, public education initiatives, inter-agency coordination with municipal and state partners, and the maintenance of critical infrastructure and communication systems that support overall community resilience. Monroe County uses a holistic approach to creating and maintaining conditions where residents in the city, suburbs, and rural areas can live, work, and participate in community life without undue risk of harm from crime, natural disasters, public health emergencies, or other threats to individual and collective well-being.



Image: monroecounty.gov

PILLAR 4

PUBLIC SAFETY

GOALS

- ✓ Reduce Violent and Property Crime County-Wide
- ✓ Enhance Emergency Response Capabilities and Reduce Response Times
- ✓ Build Stronger Police-Community Relationships
- ✓ Strengthen Disaster Preparedness and Community Resilience
- ✓ Build A Diverse and Talented Public Safety Workforce
- ✓ Significantly Reduce Traffic Fatalities and Serious Injuries Across the County



The County's approach to public safety extends beyond traditional law enforcement, embracing a comprehensive framework that recognizes the interconnected nature of community safety, economic opportunity, and social well-being.

Through innovative programs like the Juvenile Enhanced Diversion Stabilization (JEDS) initiative, youth who have become involved in the juvenile justice system have received assessments and interventions faster than in years past. Also, because of the more targeted and intense supervision that JEDS provides, a youth's negative and criminogenic behavior is interrupted. It was determined that in 2025, 84% of the youth who successfully completed JEDS also successfully completed Diversion and had their cases adjusted and sealed. The State average of successful Diversion completion is around 36%.

The County's commitment to multi-agency collaboration is exemplified through shared facilities like the Public Safety Training Facility, integrated communication systems including the County-wide 911 network, and strategic partnerships with community and faith-based organizations that strengthen neighborhood ties and build a comprehensive understanding of local safety needs.

Despite these achievements, Monroe County faces challenges that require sustained attention and strategic investment.

The County confronts growing concerns, including climate-related emergencies, persistent economic inequalities, and critical workforce shortages in public safety sectors, particularly in emergency

medical services, where certified personnel have decreased by 44% over the past five years (News10, 2023b). Additionally, traffic safety remains a pressing issue, with Monroe County historically ranking among New York State's highest for impaired driving incidents per capita, though recent technological innovations have begun to show promising results.⁶ These challenges, coupled with aging infrastructure and the need for continuous technology upgrades, underscore the importance of the County's forward-looking goals and strategies that emphasize community partnership, evidence-based prevention strategies, and comprehensive workforce development to build a more resilient and safer community for all residents.

4.2 Trends

Monroe County has experienced significant positive developments in public safety over the past two decades. Total crime counts have declined substantially from their early 2000s peak of approximately 32,000 incidents to around 21,000 by 2024, representing a notable improvement in overall community safety (Figure 56). This reflects the County's strategic shift toward evidence-based approaches that address underlying socioeconomic factors while implementing proven intervention methods. Property crimes have shown encouraging downward trajectories, falling from nearly 30,000 incidents in 2000 to approximately 19,000 in 2024, while violent crime patterns have remained relatively stable with some fluctuation around 2,000-2,500 total incidents annually. However, the continued need for vigilance and proactive intervention strategies persists.

Property crimes, the largest category of criminal activity, have shown a particularly encouraging downward trajectory, falling from nearly 30,000 incidents in 2000 to approximately 19,000 in 2024 (Figure 57). This trend includes steady decreases in burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft rates through most of the period, with only a modest uptick observed in recent years.

Trend 1

Property crime has declined, and violent crime has remained steady over the last 25 years.



6. Interview with Lindsay Tomidy; STOP-DWI Program Coordinator.

FIGURE 56
Total Crime by Category in Monroe County

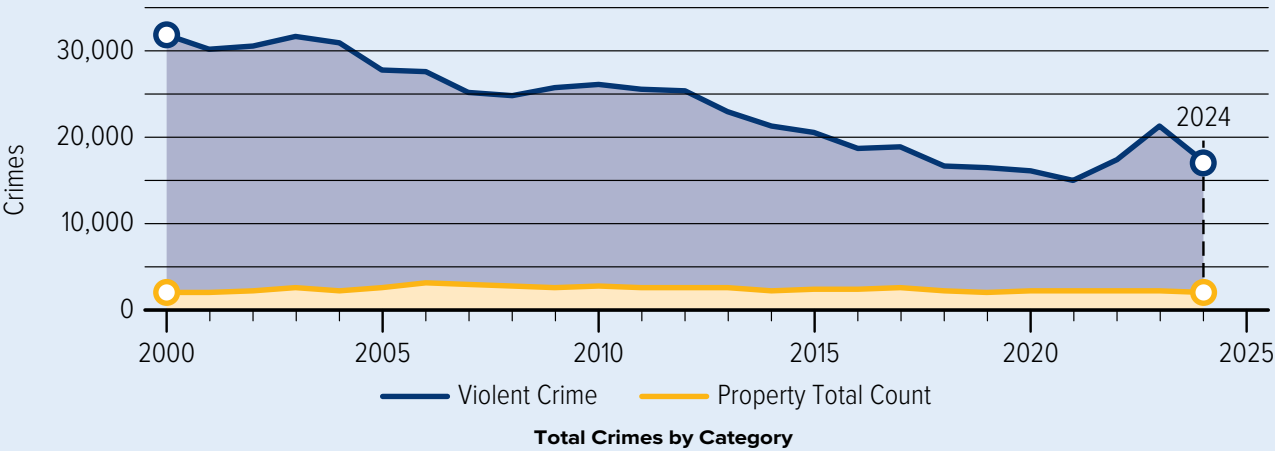


FIGURE 57
Total Property Crime in Monroe County

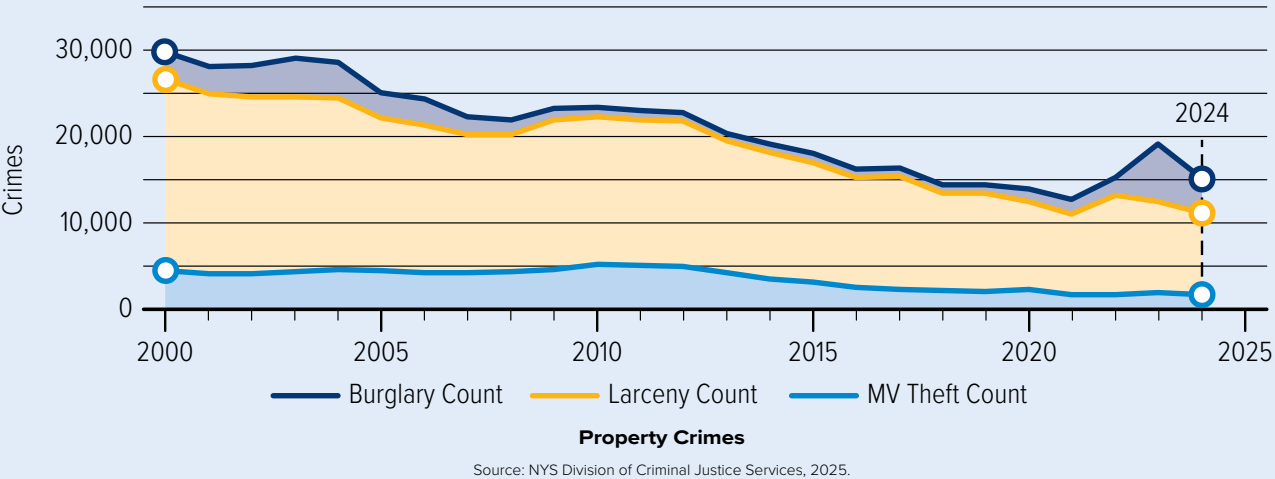
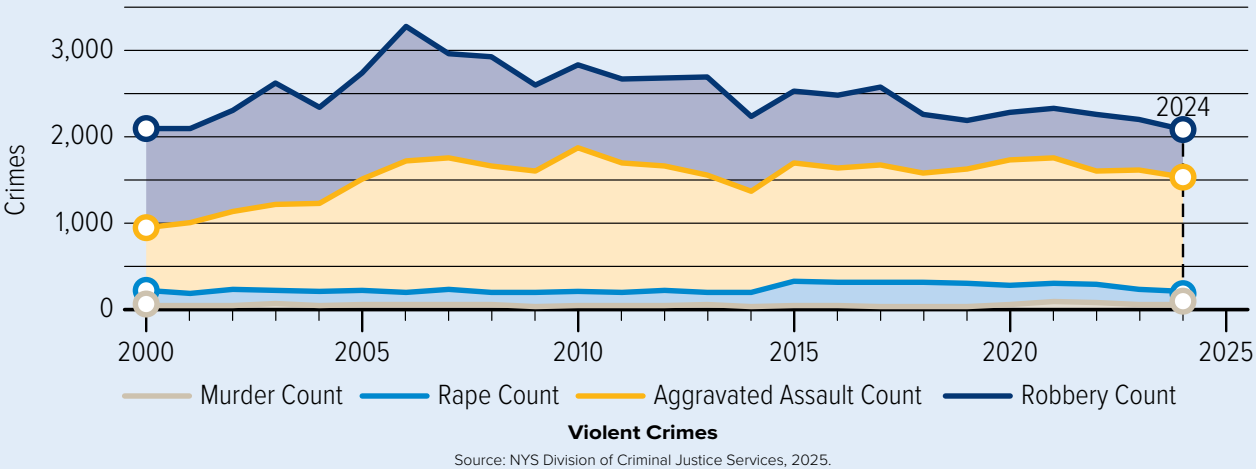


FIGURE 58
Total Violent Crime in Monroe County



The data reveal that robbery constitutes the most significant component of violent crimes, followed by aggravated assault, while murder and rape rates have remained consistently low. The recent uptick in both property and violent crimes from 2021 to 2024 warrants continued monitoring and proactive intervention, particularly given established research linking unemployment rates to property crime increases and economic instability to non-violent crime rates (Raphael and Winter-Ebmer, 1998; Jawadi et al., 2021). (Figure 58).

Research consistently demonstrates that unemployed individuals may become more susceptible to involvement in criminal activities due to financial desperation, limited social support networks, and a loss of purpose or identity associated with work (Vargas, 2023). The County's crime reduction strategies have been shifting toward evidence-based approaches that address underlying socioeconomic factors while implementing proven intervention methods. Improving public safety requires a comprehensive set of accountability and prevention strategies that seek to change behavior while addressing the conditions giving rise to crime (McLendon et al., 2024). Best practices include expanding community-based violence intervention programs, which have demonstrated effectiveness in reducing violent crime, and implementing community-led efforts, working with law enforcement and other local partners to support prevention and intervention efforts in neighborhoods where crime is concentrated or crime "hotspots" (Bureau of Justice, 2025). Additionally, investing in economic development, job training programs, youth engagement initiatives, and community policing strategies can help sustain the positive crime reduction trends observed over the past two decades.



Trend 2

Climate change-induced emergencies are intensifying.

Climate change is significantly intensifying environmentally based emergencies throughout Monroe County, creating new challenges for emergency response systems and community resilience planning. The County's comprehensive Hazard Mitigation Plan systematically ranks hazards of concern based on their probability, impact, and vulnerability factors, revealing that flood events, severe storms, and severe winter storms represent the highest-ranked threats to the community (Figure 60). These weather-related emergencies have become increasingly frequent and intense due to shifting precipitation patterns, rising temperatures, and more volatile atmospheric conditions associated with climate change. Following closely in the hazard rankings are drought conditions and extreme temperature events, which pose growing risks to public health, agriculture, infrastructure, and energy systems across the County. This escalating pattern of climate-driven emergencies is straining Monroe County's emergency response capabilities, requiring enhanced preparedness strategies, upgraded infrastructure, and expanded community education programs to protect residents from an increasingly unpredictable and severe environmental threat landscape that extends well beyond the County's historical experience with natural disasters.

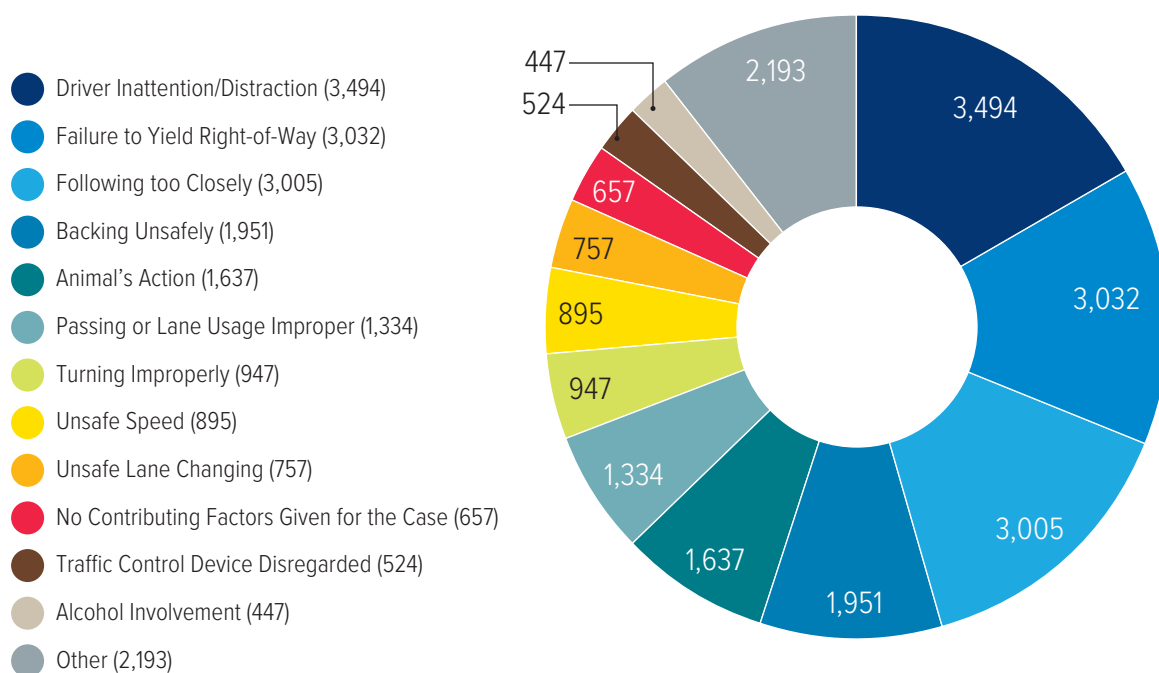
FIGURE 59
Total Hazard Ranking Values for the Hazards of Concern for Monroe County

HAZARDS OF CONCERN	PROBABILITY X 30%	TOTAL IMPACT X 30%	ADAPTIVE CAPACITY X 30%	CHANGING FUTURE CONDITIONS X 10%	TOTAL RISK RANKING VALUE
Disease Outbreak	0.6	2.7	0	0.2	3.5
Drought	0.6	3	0	0.3	3.9
Earthquake	0	3.6	0	0.1	3.7
Extreme Temperature	0.6	3	0	0.3	3.9
Flood	0.9	3.9	0	0.3	5.1
Hazardous Materials	0.3	3	0	0.1	3.4
Invasive Species	0.6	2.1	0.3	0.3	2.7
Landslide	0	3.6	0	0.2	3.8
Severe Storm	0.9	4.2	-0.3	0.3	5.1
Severe Winter Storm	0.9	4.5	-0.3	0.2	5.3
Wildfire	0.6	1.8	0	0.2	2.6

Notes: **LOW** Values less than 3.9; **MEDIUM** Values between 3.9 and 4.9; **HIGH** Values greater than 4.9

Source: Monroe County Hazard Mitigation Plan

FIGURE 60
Primary Contributing Factor to Crashes Resulting in Injury or Death



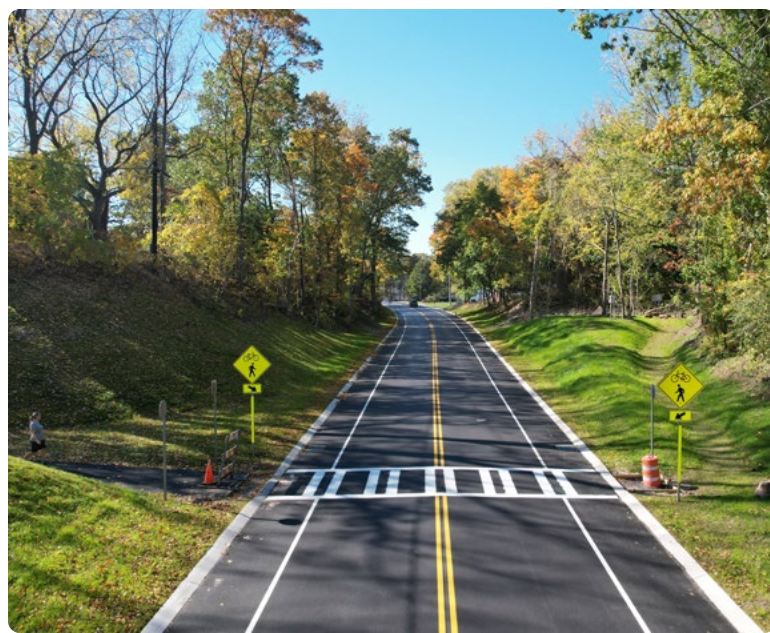
Primary Contributing Factor to Crashes Resulting in Injury or Death

Source: Monroe County Crash Data Hub.

Trend 3

Human behavior increasingly drives traffic safety issues.

From October 2023 to September 2024, a total of 20,873 traffic crashes resulted in 4,618 injuries and 39 deaths. Data showing the primary contributing factor for these crashes indicates that human behavior is at the root of many of the vehicle incidents that occur in Monroe County (**Figure 59**). The County's Public Safety Department is focused on addressing the human behavior causes of traffic crashes on the County's roadways.



4.3 What Do We Build On?

4.3.1 Supportive Programs

Building safe communities is a shared responsibility that requires county-wide collaboration, with roots at the community level. Approximately 2,443 violent crimes occur annually in Monroe County.⁷ The Monroe County Department of Public Safety is committed to law enforcement methods that address the root causes of crime. The department's wrap-around services and programs focus on stabilizing and preventing crime throughout the County. The department is actively working to re-imagine the probation system, re-evaluating its structure and policies to better serve residents. These efforts include probation services that support over 4,000 adults and 500 youth, focusing on supervision and rehabilitation through referrals and linkages for assistance in areas of employment, mental health care, drug abuse treatment, and behavioral therapy to name a few.

In response to a recent rise in juvenile crime and a spike in car thefts, the Monroe County Office of Probation-Community Corrections (MCOPCC)⁸ implemented enhanced diversion programs, such as the Juvenile Enhanced Diversion Stabilization (JEDS) program, which reduces repeat offenses by minimizing the time between arrest and intervention, keeping youth safe and providing family support services where appropriate.



Monroe County continues to enhance emergency preparedness and public communication through MonroeAlert, the County's official emergency notification and 9-1-1 public alerting platform. MonroeAlert provides a direct, real-time link to critical safety information from Monroe County 9-1-1 and Emergency Management.

The system delivers timely alerts on severe weather, public safety incidents, travel advisories, and other emergencies through text messages, emails, phone calls, and mobile app notifications. Designed with accessibility and inclusion in mind, MonroeAlert supports multiple languages and includes American Sign Language (ASL) video alerts to ensure information is accessible to all community members.

Recognizing that public safety extends beyond policing, Monroe County continues to promote a more integrated approach to address issues like opioid addiction, domestic violence, and systemic social problems. Monroe County Public Safety emphasizes the importance of engaging with community organizations and employing trained intervention specialists. The County still faces challenges, particularly in finding youth trauma therapists in underserved areas such as the west side of the County, and collaboration among public safety agencies across the region might be necessary to address the root causes of crime and better serve the community.

WXXI

Published June 27, 2024 at 3:52 PM EDT

"How Monroe County's JEDS Program is Addressing Youth Crime"

WXXI NEWS

NPR

<https://www.wxixnews.org/show/connections/2024-06-27/how-monroe-countys-jeds-program-is-addressing-youth-crime>

7. University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute, 2022.

8. The MCOPCC is divided into four (4) Divisions: Administration, Special Operations, Criminal Services, Administrative Services, and Family Services Divisions. The MCOPCC FSD collaborates with the Department of Human Services to offer interventions share resources and together develop initiatives to assist families who have touched the criminal and juvenile justice systems.

4.3.2 Community Partnerships

Monroe County recognizes that building and maintaining strong community partnerships is essential to fostering public safety, trust, and resiliency. The County works diligently to support collaboration with community- and faith-based organizations that strengthen ties within neighborhoods and help shape a more comprehensive understanding of public safety needs. Through ongoing outreach and engagement with organizations that have strong physical presence, the County can provide direct assistance to communities to address youth violence, emergency response, and community recovery from crises.

Many of the collaborative programs aimed at reducing violence are with the City of Rochester and other local nonprofits. An example of a program that supports these efforts is Pathways to Peace, a Rochester based street-level outreach initiative focused on reducing youth violence through mentorship, conflict mediation, and intervention (City of Rochester, 2025a). This program engages with young people who are at risk of becoming involved in violence, connecting them to resources, employment opportunities, and support networks. Similarly, the Rochester Youth Violence Partnership (RYVP) at the University of Rochester Medical Center's Trauma Center utilizes cross-sector collaboration, bringing together law enforcement, health professionals, social workers, and community organizations to provide wraparound services for youth impacted by violence (University of Rochester Medical Center, 2011). The University of Rochester Medical Center also offers outreach and injury prevention programs focused on reducing distracted driving among teenagers or educating people on how to 'stop the bleed' from an injury in high-risk situations, to ensure residents are prepared to act responsibly and respond appropriately (University of Rochester Medical Center, 2018). The ROC Against Gun

Violence Coalition, another significant initiative, brings together law enforcement, public health officials, nonprofits, and neighborhood leaders to coordinate efforts in violence prevention, data-sharing, and community engagement. By listening, learning, and integrating perspectives from across the community, the Coalition helps ensure that strategies are inclusive and grounded in local realities.

Recognizing the importance of reducing gun violence as a public health strategy, the Department of Public Health is partnering with CURE Violence Global to provide violence prevention training for the department and local nonprofits. CURE Violence uses a data-driven approach that aims to reduce violence using disease control and behavior change methods. Additionally, the Health Department has engaged with the Center for Youth and Rise Up Rochester to expand positive youth development and intervention programs with the aim of providing growth opportunities, skill and academic development and access to resources as a means to overcoming barriers and challenges that may lead to negative choices, behaviors and violence.



The County also partners with the American Red Cross on public preparedness campaigns and sponsors volunteer networks such as the Monroe Medical Reserve Corps that trains health professionals and community volunteers to help in large-scale health emergencies (Monroe County, 2025c). Other local coalitions of nonprofits, churches, and aid agencies are also prepared to mobilize to provide shelter, food, and clean-up after official responders leave and help with recovery efforts. They are key to addressing the needs of disaster victims, especially seniors, people with disabilities, the homeless population, people in remote areas without connectivity, non-English speakers, and others to provide quick and efficient relief.

Though impactful, such programs often struggle to gain visibility and broaden their reach. As a result, efforts can focus on improving public communication in order to build trust and ensure that community members are aware of county services that are available to them. Such public communication may include community initiatives to provide regular updates on current trends, open data sources, and community feedback loops and ensure that law enforcement's community engagement efforts involve diverse communication channels, such as social media, accessible public education initiatives, and other inclusive outreach programs.

Building strong partnerships is crucial to prepare for an uncertain future and to create a safer community for everyone. Monroe County can serve as a facilitator for decision makers to ensure collaboration on shared challenges and opportunities related to public safety. Expanding community-based efforts focused on public-facing initiatives and direct engagement can foster trust and transparency. Additionally, by working closely with other municipalities, agencies, businesses, nonprofits, and community partners, Monroe County can actively help develop healthy and safe communities.



4.3.3 Multi-Agency Collaboration

Monroe County's public safety 'system of care' relies on multi-agency collaboration to achieve goals related to workforce productivity, quality service, fiscal responsibility, and high-quality service to the community. The collaboration and coordination in this response system allow responses to be appropriately matched to need, resulting in affordable, effective service. By working together, the Office of Public Safety and Local police and emergency response offices are able to provide high-quality service to the residents of Monroe County efficiently.

Rochester Threat Advisory Committee (ROCTAC), established in 2018, is an active network of organizations representing Monroe County corporations, schools and colleges, social service agencies, mental health professionals, and local and federal law enforcement—partners working together to prevent acts of targeted violence in Monroe County. The Monroe County Sheriff's Office is a leading partner in ROCTAC, providing critical leadership, coordination, and expertise that strengthens prevention and response efforts across the county. In 2024, this mission was further strengthened by the establishment of the Regional Investigative Operations Center (RIOC),

a multi-jurisdictional center that consolidates technology, information, and operational control into a single location to assist those working on cases. RIOC combines law enforcement's technology with the intelligence analysis of the Monroe Crime Analysis Center (MCAC), tips from the public, and the work of investigators and patrol deputies to address identified crimes and threats.

Investment in the Monroe County Sheriff's Office

In 2023, Monroe County announced a historic \$7.3 million investment in the Sheriff's Office to significantly enhance public safety and law-enforcement capacity. The funding supports the addition of 41 sworn members to the Sheriff's road patrol in towns and villages. The investment also establishes the **Regional Investigative Operations Center (RIOC)**—a cutting-edge, multijurisdictional hub for real-time monitoring, intelligence sharing, and rapid response to emerging threats—bolstering countywide collaboration and ensuring a more coordinated, data-driven approach to public safety.

The Public Safety Training Facility (PSTF) exemplifies decades-long multi-agency collaboration between Monroe County, the City of Rochester, Monroe Community College, and regional partners. Located in Rochester, the facility runs fire training programs for municipal and industrial firefighters, as well as hosting regional training for public safety personnel and first responders. The operations performed at this facility are outgrowing the available space. A space utilization study is currently underway and will inform a strategic plan for the future of the PSTF.

The Monroe County 911 Center is a centralized Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) responsive to all calls for emergency services within Monroe County, including law enforcement, fire, and EMS. The Center manages all dialed 911 calls, dispatches emergency responders, and forwards or transfers service calls to the appropriate agencies in Monroe

County. This system is a crucial multi-agency collaboration that results in over one million dispatches of police, fire, and emergency services each year. Countywide coordination enhances service quality, advances technology, and improves collaboration for all parties involved in the system.

Similarly, the police and firefighter response communications systems are interoperable, making it fast and efficient to coordinate response efforts to catastrophic events, planned large events, or other times of emergency response needs. An integrated technology system, which includes radio, radio towers, surveillance systems, and mobile data terminals, makes this possible. However, these systems are complex, expensive to maintain, and need to be responsive to constantly changing technology and community needs through consistent investments and upgrades to technology.



The **Monroe County Crime Lab** was recognized by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF) for its vital role in solving gun crimes, specifically for reaching 4,000 investigative leads in the National Integrated Ballistics Information Network (NIBIN). The lab's recently expanded capabilities, including the addition of firearm identification technology, have dramatically increased the speed and number of leads generated. The Crime Lab's work has directly connected numerous firearms to multiple shooting incidents, demonstrating how scientific collaboration between local, state, and federal agencies enhances public safety and helps bring justice to Monroe County.

4.3.4 Traffic Safety Initiatives

Traffic crashes are a leading cause of injury-related deaths in Monroe County.⁹ Addressing traffic safety is a critical public safety priority, essential to preventing serious injuries and fatalities, and advancing equity, and strengthening community resilience.

Monroe County supports a range of campaigns and programs aimed at mitigating risk and educating the public about safe driving, walking, and bicycling behaviors. In October 2024, Monroe County established Community Traffic Safety Team (CTST), first in New York State. Comprised of the Monroe County Departments of Public Safety, Transportation, and Department of Planning and Development, the CTST works collaboratively with federal, state, city and local governments, law enforcement, non-profit and faith-based organizations, neighborhood associations and the public to tackle traffic safety issues across Monroe County.

Despite these efforts, challenges persist. High-risk corridors in Monroe County continue to experience elevated crash rates, particularly in areas with poor lighting, inadequate pedestrian infrastructure, or high-speed traffic. To address these issues, greater

The Monroe County Community Traffic Safety Team (CTST) is a multidisciplinary coalition of traffic safety advocates and professionals committed to preventing traffic-related injuries and fatalities. Through its Public Input Forum, residents can submit traffic safety concerns for evaluation. CTST members include representatives from local, state, and federal agencies, as well as community stakeholders. The team applies the “Four E’s” framework—Education, Engineering, Enforcement, and Emergency Response—to improve road safety. Core partners include the Monroe County Departments of Public Safety, Planning and Development, and Transportation, along with the City of Rochester Traffic Engineers and the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT).



collaboration between Monroe County, NYSDOT, municipalities and law enforcement is needed to implement automated traffic monitoring systems, improve signage and signal timing, and redesign intersections to enhance safety.

This effort could be further supported through layered, integrated technology systems that help identify safety needs early and deliver timely, data-driven solutions. For example, multimodal detection systems can collect real-time data on roadway users, which can then be analyzed through advanced analytics tools to identify patterns of conflict, such as pedestrian-vehicle interactions, and prioritize locations with the greatest safety needs.

Stop-DWI

Alcohol and drug-related traffic safety violations are preventable. **STOP-DWI** is a program that has been in Monroe County since 1982, educating the community on the dangers of impaired driving. STOP-DWI hosts educational events, offers resources to the public, and supports community organizations and groups dedicated to education on and prevention of driving under the influence.

9. NYS Department of Health, 2022.

In 2023, Monroe County launched School Bus Safety Program. The Program equips buses with stop-arm cameras, GPS, and LTE connectivity to capture violations and support enforcement. This technology-based initiative, offered at no cost to school districts, demonstrates the County's commitment to protecting students and promoting responsible driving behavior. By combining technology-based enforcement with education and public safety campaigns, drivers learn how to adjust their behavior around school buses and children (Monroe County, 2025b). During the 2024-2025 school year, the Monroe County School Bus Safety Program issued over 8,500 citations to motorists who illegally drove by stopped school buses (Monroe County, 2025e). As of January 2026, the program is operational in the Brighton, Greece, Hilton, East and West Irondequoit, Pittsford, Spencerport, and Webster school districts. Additionally, the City of Rochester also launched a School Bus Safety Program in the Fall of 2025.

In addition to the School Bus Safety Program, the Child Passenger Safety program plays a key role in protecting children and families by promoting proper car seat use and installation. Expanding on these efforts, Monroe County Traffic Safety program is extending focus on youth education and active transportation. The upcoming K–5 Child Walk and Bike Safety Education Program (2026), funded through the GTC Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), will equip students with foundational traffic safety skills. Complementing this program, the Safe Routes to School initiative (2024), funded by the NYSDOT Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP), will further enhance youth traffic safety through a range of activities, including a mobile safety village, school partnership, crossing guard training, and community engagement, with full implementation expected in 2027.

To build upon these traffic safety initiatives in Monroe County, opportunities should be explored to address systemic challenges, such as inconsistent infrastructure across urban and rural areas, limited funding for pedestrian and bicycle



improvements, and ensuring fair and data-informed enforcement. For example, vulnerable populations, such as low-income residents, people with disabilities, and communities of color, often live in areas with higher crash rates and fewer safety features. Addressing these inequities requires integrating traffic safety into broader infrastructure planning and public health strategies.

Vision Zero is a strategy aimed at eliminating traffic fatalities and severe injuries while promoting safe, healthy, and equitable mobility.¹⁰ The County can use Vision Zero as a unifying framework to align and strengthen its existing traffic safety programs and initiatives under a shared goal of zero deaths and serious injuries.

Building on current initiatives, the County can further advance a Safe System approach aligned with Vision Zero, emphasizing safer roadway design, speed management, and coordinated education, enforcement, and planning strategies. By embedding safety goals into infrastructure investments and prioritizing community engagement, the County can create safer streets for all users.

10. [Visionzeronet.org](https://www.visionzeronet.org)

4.4 What Do We Need to Address?

4.4.1 Diversify Crime Reduction and Prevention Approaches

Economic- and design-based approaches as a method of crime prevention present a holistic strategy for creating safer, healthier, and more resilient communities across Monroe County's urban, suburban, and rural landscapes. A key element of this approach is the relationship between economic development and public safety.

A growing body of research shows that communities with sufficient economic opportunities complimented by strong educational pathways, workforce development programs, and thriving local businesses tend to have significantly lower crime rates.¹¹ Linking public safety initiatives with efforts to bolster employment, education, and neighborhood quality not only reduces and prevents violent crime but also leads to considerable public cost savings. On the contrary, economic disinvestment in Monroe County, by, for example, large manufacturing companies leaving towns and leaving a lack of appropriate opportunities behind, has deepened the poverty-crime relationship, particularly in areas marked by poverty, weak professional networks, and high levels of economic inequality. These conditions further exacerbate social isolation and limited life choices, which can contribute to more criminal behavior.

However, this pattern is not exclusive to cities. It can transpire across the urban-rural divide as well, as small towns and rural areas grapple with similar economic shifts. For instance, the loss of large employers in smaller communities can have a ripple effect on the stability of housing, level of educational attainment, and public health, all of which influence public safety outcomes. To address these root causes, Monroe County would benefit from coordinated, strategic investments that support both economic revitalization and violence prevention, especially in the City of Rochester where poverty is concentrated. Approaches that integrate job training, local entrepreneurship, and place-based development with public safety planning can lay the foundation for long-term community well-being.

Alongside economic strategies, design-based approaches, such as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), offer tools to reduce crime and enhance safety through the design of the built environment. CPTED strategies use the physical environment to shape how humans interact with their surroundings and each other to reduce opportunities for crime and foster a sense of ownership and responsibility among community members. Strategies such as improving street lighting, activating vacant lots, and increasing natural surveillance can help to deter criminal activity and empower residents. These design interventions not only address physical safety but also reduce the fear of crime, encourage greater use of public spaces, and stronger social ties. CPTED also supports the creation of safer parks, walkable, well-connected commercial corridors, and welcoming public transit stops.

11. Youth Employment Programs Can Grow the Economy, Expand Opportunity, and Improve Public Safety—Youth Employment Programs Can Grow the Economy, Expand Opportunity, and Improve Public Safety—United States Joint Economic Committee.

To address root causes of many offenses and to reduce crime in Monroe County's communities, mental health services can be incorporated into the crime prevention approach. Research shows that individuals with untreated mental health conditions are disproportionately represented in arrests and incarceration, yet traditional enforcement alone does little to reduce recidivism (Hirschtritt and Binder, 2017). Therefore, integrating mental health services and pairing mental health professionals with law enforcement during crisis calls can not only help de-escalate the situation and prevent crime but also offer appropriate help to those who need it. By prioritizing mental health services, policymakers can reduce repeated offenses, lower criminal justice costs, and strengthen long-term public safety outcomes. The County can support cross-sector collaboration, funding for community-based care, and expand data-sharing between health and justice systems to make these approaches effective.

In tandem with these approaches, Monroe County's collaborative public safety infrastructure plays a pivotal role in supporting crime prevention efforts. The Monroe County Law Enforcement Council meets monthly, bringing together law enforcement leadership from local, county, state, and federal jurisdictions, to share intelligence, assess emerging threats, and align strategies. This ongoing coordination strengthens the County's ability to respond effectively to public safety challenges and prioritize prevention, rather than reaction. Additionally, the Monroe Crime Analysis Center, operated by the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services, provides data-driven insights that inform crime trends, hotspot identification, and aid in targeted interventions, if need be. Together, these efforts reflect a broader shift toward proactive, holistic crime prevention, one that recognizes the intertwined roles of economic opportunity, human-friendly design, and collaborative governance in building safer communities for all residents.

4.4.2 Emergency Response

The County Department of Public Safety is continually working to improve technology and services for the benefit of the public and community. Communication is paramount for the accurate, timely, and secure transmission of information during an emergency situation. In today's world, emergency response technology must be current and compatible to enable effective communication across disciplines and reach vulnerable populations.

Monroe County's Office of Emergency Management (OEM) is the main contact for all government and non-government agencies involved in emergency response and management. It coordinates disaster relief efforts before, during, and after natural or man-made crises. Their prevention and mitigation strategies include developing contingency plans for emergency response, providing public information, and offering education through workshops and training. Guided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), OEM develops and continually reviews the Monroe County Radiological Emergency Preparedness Plan (MCREPP). OEM also assists towns and villages in preparing their emergency response plans, as needed. It is vital to ensure that outreach and communication about emergency mitigation protocols and recovery efforts reach all municipalities, especially in hard-to-access communities, so they have the proper knowledge to stay prepared.

Emergency preparedness and public safety initiatives should continue to prioritize equitable access to information by integrating accessibility-by-design practices throughout planning, communication, and response efforts. Providing emergency notifications and preparedness resources in accessible formats, including visual alerts, captioning, interpretation services, and other communication accommodations, helps ensure that residents of all abilities can receive critical information, participate in preparedness activities, and effectively respond during emergencies.

The Monroe County Radio Center, located at Cobb's Hill Park, is responsible for planning, operating, and maintaining radio and microwave communication systems used by all Monroe County Departments, the City of Rochester, various municipal law enforcement agencies, and some fire and EMS departments across the County. The Public Safety Radio serves more than 700 police mobile radios, over 1,800 police portable radios, and includes a county-wide paging system. The dedicated radio team is also responsible for maintaining 63 remote communication sites, including locations such as the Greater Rochester International Airport Communications Center, the Monroe County Emergency Operations Center (EOC), and all city and county parks.

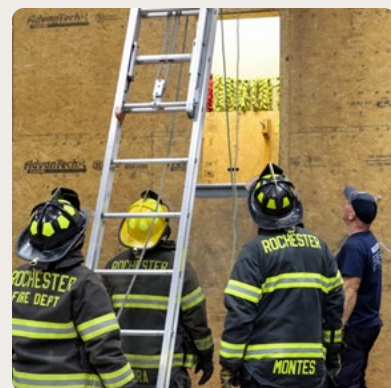
Monroe County has received a Public Safety Interoperable Communications (PSIC) grant to provide equipment that will connect the five surrounding counties, NYS Emergency Management Office, and New York State Police with Monroe County and each other. When systems are interoperable, police and firefighters responding to an incident can communicate to coordinate their efforts. Interoperability also allows Monroe County emergency response agencies to work together effectively during disasters and can enable emergency personnel to maximize resources when planning for major events and disaster recovery efforts. The County can continue to invest in emergency response teams and technologies, prioritizing the most effective ways to meet the current population's needs.

4.4.3 Public Safety Workforce Development and Recruitment

The Monroe County Public Safety Training Facility (PSTF) in Rochester, NY, exemplifies a national model of government cooperation that benefits the public in Monroe County. Its primary mission is to train the future public safety workforce using the latest available technology. The facility is a partnership between Monroe County, the City of Rochester, and Monroe Community College. It features state-of-the-art classrooms and simulators for medical, law enforcement, and firefighting responders, ensuring emergency personnel are adequately trained. The training provided helps standardize law enforcement, emergency medical, and firefighting procedures. Specialized facilities and full-scale, computer-controlled simulators allow students and professionals to learn how to operate cutting-edge technology and manage resources during emergencies. Since opening in 2001, the facility has outgrown its space and has grown into a regional training hub used by various county departments. Over 34 fire departments, 18 EMS agencies, 9 law enforcement agencies, and different levels of government utilize the County's training facility, which often operates at or near full capacity. To meet the growing workforce development needs of emergency response services, there is an increasing need to expand the current facility or secure additional training sites.

Countywide EMS Training Program Led by Pittsford Volunteer Ambulance

This ARPA-funded program aims to address an ongoing shortage of emergency medical personnel by training emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and paramedics. Pittsford Volunteer Ambulance (PVA), in partnership with Monroe Community College, American Medical Response, and Monroe Ambulance, will provide training for up to 256 qualified EMT candidates and up to 50 qualified paramedic candidates. Individuals who successfully complete the program will be qualified to work for any EMS provider.



Meanwhile, staffing shortages continue in public-facing roles, as trauma exposure, low pay, tough working conditions, and dealing with negative perceptions are just some of the challenges public safety workers face. For instance, the number of certified emergency medical technicians and paramedics has dropped in the past five years, a decline sparked by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2023, the Monroe County Sheriff's Office received funding that enabled it to swear in an additional 41 members to enhance its patrol capabilities (Monroe County, 2023c). In 2024, Monroe County approved a new collective bargaining agreement with the Monroe County Sheriff Police Benevolent Association (PBA), including annual pay increases, an advantageous health care plan, and other benefits. In September 2025, Monroe County secured a three-year collective bargaining agreement with the County's Deputy Sheriff Association (DSA), ensuring annual wage increases for jail employees. Investments and agreements like these further support public safety workforce retention in the County.

Monroe County Sheriff Police Benevolent Association (PBA) is the union representing the professionals of the Police Bureau of the Monroe County Sheriff's Office.

Further investments in workforce development and recruitment are crucial for strengthening public safety infrastructure and supporting broader community safety goals. To address current and future needs, especially as natural disasters linked to climate change are expected to rise and the population continues to age, commitment to developing and building a sustainable public safety workforce is critical. A more diverse, skilled pipeline of public safety professionals can be developed through initiatives like the Public Safety Internship Program, funded under the Justice, Equity,

The County's Deputy Sheriff Association (DSA) is the largest of the Sheriff Unions, representing 465 members who provide critical services in the Monroe County Jail and are a cornerstone of the County's public safety system.

Diversion, and Inclusion (JEDI) framework. This program is a vital strategy for engaging younger generations and broadening the future workforce in law enforcement, fire services, EMS, and related roles. All these efforts aim not only to stabilize and improve public safety staffing but also to enhance community well-being and resilience through stronger, more responsive systems.

Additionally, Strategic Investments in comprehensive career development programs designed to diversify the public safety workforce, offer continuous learning, promote cross-sector collaboration, and strengthen key skills in areas such as crisis management, mental health response, and community engagement will be beneficial. Building these programs requires bringing together partners from all levels of government—local, state, and federal—as well as higher education institutions and community- and faith-based organizations. By encouraging collaboration among stakeholders, the County can help create a staff onboarding curriculum that not only equips new recruits with modern, multidisciplinary training but also offers ongoing professional development opportunities for current staff members. This could include joint training exercises, specialized certifications, and cross-agency exchanges that prepare professionals to address complex public safety challenges more equitably and effectively. The effort to build a more diverse, adaptable, and community-focused public safety workforce will better position the community to meet changing public safety needs.

4.5 Goals and Strategies



Reduce Violent and Property Crime County-Wide

- 1 Continue to implement evidence-based violence interruption programs in high-risk neighborhoods, partnering with community organizations and trained intervention specialists.
- 2 Expand mental health co-responder teams that pair law enforcement with mental health professionals for crisis calls.
- 3 Support crime reduction by investing in job creation, workforce development, and economic revitalization in high-need communities.
- 4 Apply Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles, such as increasing visibility, promoting ownership of space through signage or landscaping, encouraging positive use of space, and keeping areas clean and in good repair.



Enhance Emergency Response Capabilities and Reduce Response Times

- 1 Enhance EMS system capacity by supporting local agencies in addressing workforce gaps through recruitment, training, and retention strategies.
- 2 Continue to invest in Public Safety facilities and infrastructure to meet changing needs and technology.
- 3 Make necessary technology investments and consolidations within the County-wide integrated emergency management system connecting police, fire, EMS, and emergency management agencies.



Build Stronger Police-Community Relationships

- 1 Continue to develop relationships between public safety officials and community- and faith-based organizations to implement safety goals and programs.
- 2 Develop a comprehensive community policing strategy that fosters trust, accountability, and collaboration between law enforcement and the communities.
- 3 Establish transparency initiatives that provide regular updates, open data platforms, and community feedback loops.
- 4 Ensure that law enforcement's community engagement efforts involve diverse communication channels, including the use of social media, accessible public education initiatives, and inclusive outreach programs.

Strengthen Disaster Preparedness and Community Resilience

- 1 Enhance outreach to individuals and families, particularly those in vulnerable and hard-to-reach communities, with the knowledge and resources needed to effectively respond to and recover from crises.
- 2 Explore creating a Community Education Team to work with and train community- and faith-based organizations to deliver disaster preparedness education, including developing skills and resources needed to respond to likely natural and human-made disasters.
- 3 Employ new state-of-the-art alerting options to allow better communication of pending or occurring emergencies that are timely and in multiple languages.
- 4 Continue to develop regular updates to the County's Hazard Mitigation Plan based on evolving environmental conditions and innovations in technology to improve community resilience in times of crisis.
- 5 Incorporate accessibility-by-design principles into county and local emergency communications, including visual alerts, captioning, interpretation, and other communication access features to better serve residents with diverse abilities and communication needs.



Build a Diverse and Talented Public Safety Workforce

- 1 Implement a career development program that diversifies the public safety workforce and enhances skill sets across areas such as crisis management, community engagement, and traditional enforcement.
- 2 Prioritize healthy staffing levels and relationships so that work can be performed in compliance with specific standards and regulations, including thoughtful onboarding and embracing cultural differences.



Significantly Reduce Traffic Fatalities and Serious Injuries Across the County

- 1 Continue to invest in and strengthen public education campaigns for all road users, with emphasis on the consequences of speeding, impaired, and distracted driving.
- 2 Expand law enforcement coordination on high-risk corridors to address dangerous driving behaviors and improve roadway safety outcomes.
- 3 Support and invest in the multi-agency Community Traffic Safety Team (CTST) to coordinate cross-sector efforts between public safety, transportation, and planning departments.
- 4 Explore and implement evidence-based technologies to support traffic enforcement and improve roadway safety, such as automated monitoring or other technology-based systems, with an emphasis on transparency, community engagement, and data driven decision-making.
- 5 Integrate advance traffic technology and data analytics to identify systemic risks and implement proactive safety treatments to protect vulnerable road users.
- 6 Adopt Vision Zero as a strategic framework to align policy, planning, infrastructure, programs, and operations for safer streets.

5



5 Plan Implementation

5.1 Implementation Matrix

This Implementation Matrix provides a framework for the County to guide, monitor, and track progress in advancing the Plan’s recommendations over time. It is intended to serve as a living tool that supports coordination among County departments and partners, helps identify accomplishments and opportunities for continued action, and provides a basis for measuring progress toward the Plan’s goals. Implementation progress will be reviewed annually, with a comprehensive assessment conducted every five years to reflect accomplishments, changing conditions, emerging priorities, and new opportunities.

 GOALS Specific action items that should be executed in order to accomplish the broad strategic visions that achieve long-term objectives.	 STRATEGIES More specific steps on how to achieve the goals given the available funding sources and urgency of the goal.
 COUNTY ROLES The County actively works to implement plan strategies and achieve plan goals through the life of the plan and updates County and Community Leaders the status of implementation.	 COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS Partners who may work collaboratively with Monroe County to implement goals and strategies or pursue independent efforts where interests and objectives align.

County and Stakeholder Roles

Implementation of the County comprehensive plan will require collaboration and shared commitment from the entire community. Depending on the strategy, the County and community stakeholders—the County, municipalities, community organizations, businesses, and individuals may assume different roles. The roles defined below outline the various ways each party can actively support and advance the Plan’s goals.

Convene

The County and community stakeholders exercise their ability to bring together diverse groups of people and stakeholders to work on solving mutual problems and achieving goals identified in this plan. Because issues and goals are often interconnected and complex, collaboration among multiple partners and the sharing of resources and knowledge are necessary.

Advocate

The County and community stakeholders can advocate for interests and priorities to regional, state, and federal entities. This may include promoting policies, programs, and initiatives that support the goals of the Comprehensive Plan, raising awareness of local needs, and helping to secure resources or regulatory support for implementation.

Establish Policy and Guidance

The County and community stakeholders can establish policies that guide decision-making and the allocation of resources. This includes developing plans, such as this Comprehensive Plan, as well as policies at municipalities and businesses that support Plan Forward goals.

Build Capacity

The County and community stakeholders can build capacity that strengthens the skills, knowledge, and resources of municipalities, organizations, and individuals to achieve plan goals.

Invest

The County and community stakeholders may allocate funding to support projects and initiatives that align with the goals of this Comprehensive Plan. Funding may come from a variety of sources, including federal, state, local, private, or philanthropic programs.

Market

The County and community stakeholders can engage in efforts and initiatives to attract and retain residents and business in Monroe County. The role of marketer includes understanding, communicating, and enhancing the factors that contribute to local quality of life and help make the County a more appealing place to live, work, invest in business, and raise a family.

The following matrix lists the goals, strategies, and the community stakeholders that can play a role in advancing this Plan's recommendations across Monroe County. Community Stakeholders may work collaboratively with Monroe County to implement goals and strategies outlined in this document, or pursue independent efforts where interests and objectives align.

This implementation matrix should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness. Ongoing monitoring, performance evaluation, and reporting will support progress tracking and inform necessary adjustments. As community needs,



economic conditions, regulatory environments, and opportunities evolve over time, flexibility in implementation will be essential while maintaining consistency with the Plan's long-term vision and guiding principles.



PILLAR 1 Economic and Workforce Development

STRATEGIES		County	Municipalities	Community Organizations	Businesses	Individuals
GOAL Develop the Workforce and Support Entrepreneurship						
1	Support small business development and entrepreneurship with funding, technical assistance, and marketing.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
2	Assist startups, small-to-midsize, and minority-owned businesses in accessing resources for innovation and entrepreneurship.	✓		✓	✓	
3	Provide resources and education for young people to explore a full range of career pathways and education requirements, from skilled trades to higher education.	✓		✓		
4	Provide career transition support to individuals interested in upskilling or reskilling due to industrial shifts or personal goals.			✓	✓	✓
5	Provide competitive incentives or other resources to employers and skilled workers to support career advancement and retention of top talent.	✓	✓	✓		
6	Reduce key barriers to employment such as childcare, housing, and transportation to create more opportunities for stable and sustainable employment.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
7	Enhance collaboration between universities and the workforce development ecosystem to improve alignment with employer needs, close workforce gaps, and measure success.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
8	Develop targeted initiatives to address current and future workforce needs in the skilled trades by increasing apprenticeship opportunities, strengthening partnerships with trade schools and unions, and promoting career awareness programs in K-12 education.		✓	✓	✓	
9	Support employer-led training programs and workforce re-entry initiatives to grow and sustain a robust pipeline of skilled workers for the region's development needs.	✓	✓	✓	✓	



PILLAR 1

Economic and Workforce Development

STRATEGIES	County	Municipalities	Community Organizations	Businesses	Individuals
10 Support the development of specialized training programs, internships, and apprenticeships that equip individuals with the skills needed for high-demand roles in automation, robotics, photonics, and other cutting-edge industries. Promote awareness and access to these career opportunities to ensure a steady flow of talent into the region's growing technology sectors.	✓		✓	✓	✓
11 Integrate accessibility into workforce initiatives to expand talent participation, support inclusive employment practices, and strengthen Monroe County's ability to attract, retain, and engage a diverse workforce.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
12 Partner with educational institutions, employers, and community organizations to expand language-learning opportunities, including American Sign Language (ASL), to strengthen workforce development and economic competitiveness.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
GOAL Create Places that Enhance Quality of Life					
1 Expand recreation options and connections to parks and amenities.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
2 Foster the development of vibrant community centers that incorporate mixed-use development and greater residential density where infrastructure supports.	✓	✓			
3 Promote walkability and development of pedestrian-friendly areas.	✓	✓			
4 Encourage the growth of local businesses, farmers' markets, and artisan shops that reflect the community's identity, boost the local economy, and foster unique cultural experiences.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5 Create and maintain public spaces that are accessible, safe, and inclusive for all members of the community.	✓	✓			
6 Leverage the County's vibrant arts, cultural, and public enrichment programs, including festivals, performances, and local museums, to enhance quality of life and attract both residents and visitors.	✓	✓	✓	✓	



PILLAR 1 Economic and Workforce Development

STRATEGIES	County	Municipalities	Community Organizations	Businesses	Individuals
7 Prioritize investment in arts infrastructure and community partnerships to further solidify Monroe County as a regional hub for creative expression and cultural engagement.	✓	✓	✓		
8 Invest in tourism assets, projects, and organizations that promote Monroe County's unique attractions, from natural landmarks to cultural and historical sites.	✓	✓	✓		
9 Enhance multimodal access, including train, bus, roadway, and air, by partnering with state and regional stakeholders to attract additional services that expand mobility for residents across the region.	✓	✓	✓		
10 Promote accessibility into all public services offered by county and municipal providers, including communications, transportation services, public spaces, events, etc. to ensure residents of all abilities can fully participate in and contribute to community life.	✓	✓			
11 Make public spaces and parks more inclusive and welcoming to members of the community who have physical or cognitive disabilities.	✓	✓			
GOAL Enhance Housing Access and Quality					
1 Promote diverse housing options to address gaps in the housing market, including single-family homes, rental units, workforce housing, and adaptable housing types that accommodate various household needs.	✓	✓	✓		
2 Convene stakeholders and industry professionals to work on developing creative solutions to the housing shortage in Monroe County.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
3 Improve the quality of existing homes and reduce disinvestment by providing additional incentives or grants for repairs and upgrades.	✓	✓	✓		
4 Develop strategies to increase the availability of various housing options to accommodate the diverse needs of the workforce.	✓	✓	✓		



PILLAR 1

Economic and Workforce Development

STRATEGIES	County	Municipalities	Community Organizations	Businesses	Individuals
5 Regularly assess housing needs and market dynamics to ensure that housing policies adapt to changing conditions and continue to meet community demands.	✓	✓	✓		
6 Leverage on-going major capital projects to expand homeownership opportunities and support active transportation-oriented communities.	✓	✓	✓		
GOAL Strengthen Existing and Growing Economic Sectors While Investing in Emerging Industries					
1 Expand retention and recruitment efforts to strengthen local businesses involved in the supply chains of key industries, such as manufacturing, logistics, energy, and healthcare.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
2 Support business retention and recruitment efforts related to growth industries where Monroe County maintains competitive advantages, such as Optics, Photonics, Imaging, and Lasers (OPI), such as photonics, semiconductors, and supply chain and logistics.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
3 Encourage partnerships between businesses and local colleges, universities, and trade schools to align curricula with industry needs and foster a pipeline of skilled workers.	✓		✓	✓	
4 Invest in agricultural production, processing, and marketing of industries such as agritourism, farmers' markets, farm-to-table programs, breweries, and cideries to enhance the impact of local agriculture on the economy and food system.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
5 Promote Monroe County's Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ) as a resource for companies engaged in import/export activities. Collaborate with key stakeholders to increase awareness and utilization of the FTZ, driving economic growth through enhanced global trade opportunities.	✓	✓		✓	

1

PILLAR 1
Economic and Workforce Development

STRATEGIES	County	Municipalities	Community Organizations	Businesses	Individuals
GOAL Identify and Prepare Suitable Sites for Development					
1 Organize and facilitate a task force to study available sites, including brownfields or underutilized sites that strategically support both the County's economic development and climate action plan goals agenda. Prioritize the redevelopment of brownfields and prepare them for future development.	✓	✓	✓		
2 Identify and prioritize resources to facilitate the development of sites suitable for emerging and growing sectors.	✓	✓			
3 Work with State partners and local stakeholders to address the lack of power capacity at potential development sites in the County. Prioritize the development of renewable energy generation, battery storage facilities, and community geothermal networks.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
4 Clearly identify site development opportunities and pursue grant funding—including the FAST NY Shovel-Ready Grant Program and the Promote Opportunity with Electric Readiness for Underdeveloped Properties (POWER UP) Fund—with New York State and other entities as available.	✓	✓	✓		

**PLAN
FORWARD**
 A Comprehensive Plan for Monroe County

2

PILLAR 2
Infrastructure

STRATEGIES		County	Municipalities	Community Organizations	Businesses	Individuals
GOAL Invest In 21st-Century Infrastructure						
1	Reduce the environmental impact of county operations and facilities by improving building efficiency, electrifying vehicle fleets, and providing EV and active transportation infrastructure at county-owned properties.	✓				
2	Support municipalities' participation in state programs that promote clean energy and climate-smart practices and provide resources that help municipalities follow best practices for renewable energy.	✓	✓	✓		
3	Support the expansion and modernization of the EV charging network to meet growing electric vehicle demand, leveraging state and federal funding programs and public-private partnerships.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
4	Support efforts to expand high-speed internet access and affordability, especially in rural areas, and aid residents in accessing digital literacy courses.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
5	Continue to maintain and build connections to and between parks in the Monroe County Park system.	✓	✓			
6	Invest in innovative and integrated technologies to support a safe, efficient, and connected multimodal transportation system that meets the diverse mobility needs of all users.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7	Develop and sustain a diverse, skilled workforce across County departments to support the adoption and scaling of innovative technologies that improve safety, efficiency, and cost-effectiveness.	✓	✓	✓		

2

PILLAR 2
Infrastructure

STRATEGIES		County	Municipalities	Community Organizations	Businesses	Individuals
GOAL Protect Water and Natural Resources						
1	Take a proactive approach to establishing a resilient water infrastructure system capable of adapting to changing climate and community needs.	✓	✓			
2	Improve water quality and mitigate the impacts of flooding and other increasing climate-related challenges, such as extreme precipitation events and urban runoff.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
3	Work with Monroe County Water Authority (MCWA) and City Water Bureau to protect drinking water sources and infrastructure through comprehensive source water protection, pollution control, and infrastructure maintenance strategies.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
4	Study the benefits of consolidating the four Monroe County Pure Water (MCPW) districts, and explore renewable energy opportunities in the MCPW collection and treatment infrastructure and activities.	✓				
5	Protect and strengthen ecological resilience by collaborating with municipalities, state agencies, conservation organizations, and private landowners to conserve natural habitats, enhance habitat connectivity, and prevent, monitor, and manage invasive species.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	Identify priority lands for protection, ecological restoration, and green infrastructure development; apply sustainable property maintenance practices; and expand tree canopy to reduce heat impacts.	✓	✓	✓		
GOAL Improve Waste Management and Recycling Practices						
1	Increase public awareness and participation in waste reduction programs, such as recycling and reuse, while exploring opportunities to expand services and improve accessibility.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2	Evolve recycling and reuse programs as processes and markets advance while partnering with private sector companies to identify opportunities and revenue streams from diverted and recyclable waste.	✓		✓	✓	

2

PILLAR 2
Infrastructure

STRATEGIES		County	Municipalities	Community Organizations	Businesses	Individuals
3	Update and expand the County's Local Solid Waste Management Plan to support waste reduction and recycling, incorporate organics diversion opportunities, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.	✓				
GOAL Invest in and Diversify the Transportation System						
1	Adopt a state of good repair approach and invest in critical transportation connections that support economic growth and the needs of users and communities.	✓	✓			
2	Promote transit-oriented design by collaborating with RTS, transportation providers, and municipalities to enhance public transit efficiency and accessibility while encouraging mixed-use development and zoning policies that support higher-density, walkable communities near transit hubs.	✓	✓	✓		
3	Invest in programs and projects that enhance safety for all road users, including pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers.	✓	✓	✓		
4	Implement Smart Traffic Management Systems to optimize traffic flow, reduce congestion, and enhance road safety.	✓	✓			
5	Work with municipalities to adopt and implement complete street principles and policies on local roadways.	✓	✓	✓		
6	Continue to modernize Frederick Douglass Greater Rochester International Airport and improve operational efficiency to support growing freight logistic demand and regional economic competitiveness.	✓				
7	Ensure the ongoing maintenance and enhancement of the County's existing infrastructure and identify new infrastructure projects to meet future needs.	✓	✓			

3

PILLAR 3
Public Health

STRATEGIES		County	Municipalities	Community Organizations	Businesses	Individuals
GOAL Provide Integrated Mental and Physical Care to Residents in Need						
1	Improve the accessibility and delivery of health and mental health services in underserved areas by evaluating the needs of residents, identifying barriers to access, and developing strategies to address the challenges.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
2	Work with community partners on addressing preventable healthcare issues, including identifying root causes and developing targeted interventions.	✓	✓	✓		
3	Support preventative services to reduce maternal and infant mortality and improve maternal health outcomes.	✓	✓	✓		
4	Work to prevent and address issues related to social isolation.	✓	✓	✓		✓
5	Support a healthy lifestyle by investing in open space, trails, water access, and other recreation amenities near population centers that promote physical activity and mental well-being.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
6	Support the development and expansion of culturally and linguistically responsive behavioral and mental health services that address the needs of diverse populations, including but not limited to deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing individuals, through accessible communication, workforce development, provider training, and partnerships with community organizations and educational institutions.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
GOAL Prevent Substance Use and Subsequent Substance Use Disorders						
1	Support and expand programs that provide drug abuse prevention, education, treatment, and recovery services.	✓	✓	✓		
2	Ensure that county services for chemical dependency treatment are accessible to all residents, including those who face cultural, linguistic, and other barriers.	✓	✓	✓		



PILLAR 3 Public Health

STRATEGIES		County	Municipalities	Community Organizations	Businesses	Individuals
GOAL Promote Housing Stability and Reduce Homelessness						
1	Expand collaboration between Monroe County, Municipalities, and Not-for-Profits, and other community partners working to expand homelessness prevention efforts and to increase supportive and transitional housing options across the county.	✓	✓	✓		
2	Support a range of innovative housing options that meet a variety of user needs and better integrate housing with behavioral health, employment, and healthcare services.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
GOAL Mitigate Environmental Health Hazards						
1	Address water-related hazards such as harmful algal blooms, legacy industrial contamination in the Genesee River and Lake Ontario Shoreline, and combined sewer overflow systems.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
2	Improve air quality by promoting the reduction of industrial emissions, supporting clean energy in transportation systems, and monitoring elevated ozone levels during summer months.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
3	Provide resources to mitigate building health hazards, particularly in older housing and school buildings, including mold, soil contamination, lead in drinking water, lead paint, and deteriorating structures and infrastructure.	✓	✓	✓		
4	Help farm operations adopt environmentally sustainable practices, such as reducing pesticide and fertilizer runoff and modernizing operations.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

3

PILLAR 3 Public Health

STRATEGIES		County	Municipalities	Community Organizations	Businesses	Individuals
GOAL Support Policies and Programs that Improve Access to Nutritious Foods						
1	Enhance and expand meal programs, collaborating with local organizations to support access to healthy, affordable foods for community members who are vulnerable, food insecure, or who face economic challenges.	✓	✓	✓		
2	Engage in dialogue with the ROC Food Policy Council and partner organizations about expanding regional food system coordination.	✓	✓	✓		
3	Identify and support all food distribution networks in the County to reach people across municipalities.	✓	✓	✓		
4	Support a regional food system plan to improve access to healthy, affordable food and reduce disparities in food access.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
GOAL Foster an Age-Friendly Monroe County and Support Environments for Older Adults						
1	Provide information and guidance to navigate challenging aging issues and concerns.	✓	✓	✓		
2	Continue the Office of Aging and Aging Alliance's prioritization of programming that addresses improved economic security for older adults.	✓	✓	✓		

4

PILLAR 4
Public Safety

STRATEGIES		County	Municipalities	Community Organizations	Businesses	Individuals
GOAL Reduce Violent and Property Crime County-Wide						
1	Continue to implement evidence-based violence interruption programs in high-risk neighborhoods, partnering with community organizations and trained intervention specialists.	✓	✓	✓		
2	Expand mental health co-responder teams that pair law enforcement with mental health professionals for crisis calls.	✓	✓	✓		
3	Support crime reduction by investing in job creation, workforce development, and economic revitalization in high-need communities.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
4	Apply Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles, such as increasing visibility, promoting ownership of space through signage or landscaping, encouraging positive use of space, and keeping areas clean and in good repair.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
GOAL Enhance Emergency Response Capabilities and Reduce Response Times						
1	Enhance EMS system capacity by supporting local agencies in addressing workforce gaps through recruitment, training, and retention strategies.	✓	✓			
2	Continue to invest in Public Safety facilities and infrastructure to meet changing needs and technology.	✓	✓			
3	Make necessary technology investments and consolidations within the County-wide integrated emergency management system connecting police, fire, EMS, and emergency management agencies.	✓	✓			

4

PILLAR 4
Public Safety

STRATEGIES		County	Municipalities	Community Organizations	Businesses	Individuals
GOAL Build Stronger Police-Community Relationships						
1	Continue to develop relationships between public safety officials and community- and faith-based organizations to implement safety goals and programs.	✓	✓	✓		✓
2	Develop a comprehensive community policing strategy that fosters trust, accountability, and collaboration between law enforcement and the communities.	✓	✓	✓		✓
3	Establish transparency initiatives that provide regular updates, open data platforms, and community feedback loops.	✓	✓			
4	Ensure that law enforcement's community engagement efforts involve diverse communication channels, including the use of social media, accessible public education initiatives, and inclusive outreach programs.	✓	✓	✓		

4

PILLAR 4
Public Safety

STRATEGIES		County	Municipalities	Community Organizations	Businesses	Individuals
GOAL Strengthen Disaster Preparedness and Community Resilience						
1	Enhance outreach to individuals and families, particularly those in vulnerable and hard-to-reach communities, with the knowledge and resources needed to effectively respond to and recover from crises.	✓	✓	✓		✓
2	Explore creating a Community Education Team to work with and train community- and faith-based organizations to deliver disaster preparedness education, including developing skills and resources needed to respond to likely natural and human-made disasters.	✓	✓	✓		✓
3	Employ new state-of-the-art alerting options to allow better communication of pending or occurring emergencies that are timely and in multiple languages.	✓	✓			
4	Continue to develop regular updates to the County's Hazard Mitigation Plan based on evolving environmental conditions and innovations in technology to improve community resilience in times of crisis.	✓				
5	Incorporate accessibility-by-design principles into county and local emergency communications, including visual alerts, captioning, interpretation, and other communication access features to better serve residents with diverse abilities and communication needs.	✓	✓	✓	✓	
GOAL Build a Diverse and Talented Public Safety Workforce						
1	Implement a career development program that diversifies the public safety workforce and enhances skill sets across areas such as crisis management, community engagement, and traditional enforcement.	✓	✓	✓		
2	Prioritize healthy staffing levels and relationships so that work can be performed in compliance with specific standards and regulations, including thoughtful onboarding and embracing cultural differences.	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓



PILLAR 4 Public Safety

STRATEGIES		County	Municipalities	Community Organizations	Businesses	Individuals
GOAL Significantly Reduce Traffic Fatalities and Serious Injuries Across the County						
1	Continue to invest in and strengthen public education campaigns for all road users, with emphasis on the consequences of speeding, impaired, and distracted driving.	✓	✓	✓		✓
2	Expand law enforcement coordination on high-risk corridors to address dangerous driving behaviors and improve roadway safety outcomes.	✓	✓			
3	Support and invest in the multi-agency Community Traffic Safety Team (CTST) to coordinate cross-sector efforts between public safety, transportation, and planning departments.	✓	✓	✓		
4	Explore and implement evidence-based technologies to support traffic law enforcement and improve roadway safety, such as automated monitoring or other technology-based systems, with an emphasis on transparency, community engagement, and data driven decision-making.	✓	✓			
5	Integrate advance traffic technology and data analytics to identify systemic risks and implement proactive safety treatments to protect vulnerable road users.	✓	✓	✓		
6	Adopt Vision Zero as a strategic framework to align policy, planning, infrastructure, programs, and operations for safer streets.	✓	✓			✓



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