

INTRODUCTION

Planning for Monroe County's Future

Monroe County is shaped by its people, communities, institutions, natural resources, and shared investments. Plan Forward was created to help guide how the County grows and adapts over time while preserving the qualities that make Monroe County a desirable place to live, work, and visit.

Plan Forward examines current trends, opportunities, and challenges facing the county and establishes a framework for future action. From economic competitiveness and housing needs to infrastructure, transportation, environmental resilience, public health, and public safety, the plan provides a coordinated vision for how Monroe County can continue building strong communities and expanding opportunity for future generations. Plan Forward is intended to be both visionary and practical, a living document that can evolve over time as community priorities, technologies, and conditions continue to change.

About Plan Forward

Plan Forward is Monroe County's Comprehensive Plan, a long-range vision and policy framework that guides decisions about growth, infrastructure, economic opportunity, public health, public safety, and quality of life across the county. The plan identifies priorities, challenges, and opportunities while establishing strategies that can help Monroe County remain resilient, competitive, and prepared for the future.

Developed through collaboration with residents, municipalities, businesses, institutions, community organizations, and County departments, the plan reflects a shared vision for how Monroe County can grow and adapt over the next decade. Plan Forward is organized around four interconnected pillars - Economic & Workforce Development, Infrastructure, Public Health, and Public Safety, recognizing that each plays an important role in supporting healthy communities and long-term prosperity.

The plan is intended to serve as both a visionary and practical tool for guiding future decision-making, strengthening partnerships, coordinating investments, and improving quality of life for current and future generations throughout Monroe County.

The Engagement Process

Since August 2021, Monroe County has worked closely with residents, municipalities, stakeholders, and community partners to better understand priorities for the future of Monroe County. Through this process, the County has held more than 50 pop-up meetings, two public meetings, six steering committee meetings, four municipal-focused group meetings, five topic-focused stakeholder meetings, and received more than 250 comment cards, along with countless in-person conversations and phone calls.



PILLAR 1

ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

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).

TREND 1

Economically competitive places perform well with unique combinations of growth indicators.

TREND 2

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

TREND 3

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

TREND 4

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



What Do We Build On?

Economic Transformation

Monroe County is transitioning from a manufacturing-heavy past toward an "Eds, Meds, and Manufacturing" economy that increasingly relies on STEM professionals, emerging technologies, and specialized training. While small businesses and niche, experience-based retail serve as the region's economic backbone, the workforce must adapt to new technical demands driven by AI and automation. To sustain this growth, the county leverages its top-tier academic institutions and business resources to bridge skill gaps and provide the capital necessary for local innovation.

A High Quality of Life

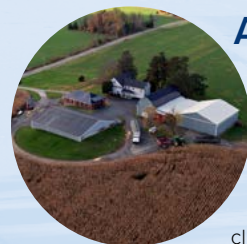
Monroe County leverages a high quality of life—characterized by exceptional affordability, top-tier educational institutions, and a robust multimodal transportation network—to attract both businesses and a skilled workforce. The region is shifting toward community-oriented, mixed-use development and recreational tourism centered around its historic waterways and vibrant cultural scene. By investing in these amenities and its 16 higher education institutions, the County aims to sustain its competitive edge as a premier hub for innovation and regional growth.

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

Monroe County is positioning itself as a central player in the federally funded NY SMART I-Corridor, leveraging its historic strengths in optics and photonics to secure a competitive share of the booming semiconductor industry. While the region has attracted significant research hubs and supply chain firms, it still faces challenges in securing a major anchor fabrication facility and providing startups with essential cleanroom space and early-stage capital. To overcome these hurdles, the County is actively utilizing state incentives and academic partnerships to build a specialized workforce and a robust infrastructure capable of sustaining long-term high-tech growth.

Untapped Potential of the Transportation Network

The Monroe County Multimodal Freight Initiative (MMFI) is a strategic effort to bolster the manufacturing and transportation sectors through data-driven market feasibility studies and scalable infrastructure planning. By identifying optimal sites for development, the project aims to expand market access and reduce costs for local businesses while creating high-paying jobs. Crucially, the initiative partners with labor and industry to establish apprenticeships and applied learning pathways, offering viable career opportunities for residents outside of traditional higher education.



Agriculture-Driven Economics

Monroe County’s agricultural sector provides essential food security and supports a robust regional food and beverage manufacturing industry. The county faces a steady loss of farmland to development and consolidation, making it increasingly difficult for small family farms to compete amidst rising overhead and climate uncertainty. To adapt, local producers are pivoting toward technological automation and agritourism supported by county programs like Grow Monroe to ensure long-term economic resilience.

What Do We Need to Address?

Underemployment

Monroe County is navigating an economic shift where manufacturing and healthcare increasingly require high-tech skills, leaving low-skilled workers behind and widening economic disparities. To bridge this gap, the County is focusing on aligning educational curricula with industry needs while addressing primary employment barriers like the high cost of childcare and transportation. By expanding access to technical training and early childhood education, the region aims to create inclusive workforce pipelines that provide residents with the credentials necessary for high-demand, high-wage careers.

Need for Strategic Sites & Power Capacity

Monroe County faces a critical shortage of "shovel-ready" sites, as aging energy infrastructure and a lack of utility capacity hinder the recruitment of high-tech semiconductor and photonics manufacturers. To stay competitive, the County is working to identify and remediate brownfields and outdated industrial spaces while leveraging state programs like FAST NY and POWER UP to fund essential infrastructure upgrades. By proactively preparing these sites and expanding its inventory of power-ready land, the County aims to reduce development timelines and secure large-scale investments in emerging industries.

Retaining and Attracting Future Residents

Monroe County leverages its low cost of living and high quality of life to attract talent, yet it faces a significant "brain drain" due to one of the lowest college student retention rates in the country. To address a looming labor bottleneck in the optics and semiconductor sectors, the County must bridge the mismatch between educational output and industry needs while expanding STEM pathways for its aging workforce. Furthermore, overcoming systemic hurdles like limited public transit, childcare shortages, and regulatory friction is essential to fully integrating skilled residents into the local economy.

Need for Housing

Monroe County is experiencing a severe housing shortage and a "missing middle" inventory gap that serves as a significant drag on workforce recruitment and high-tech industry growth. With a vast majority of the housing stock consisting of aging, single-family homes, there is a critical misalignment with modern demands for affordable, walkable, and senior-friendly options. To address this, the County has launched a comprehensive housing study to guide tax incentives and strategic development, aiming to stabilize the market and support regional economic expansion.



PILLAR 1

ECONOMIC AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Goals & 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.

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,
- 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.

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).
- 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.



Identify and Prepare Suitable Sites for Development

- 1 Organize and facilitate a task force to study available sites including brownfields or underutilized sites.
- 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.
- 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.

Share your thoughts!

Please add your comments, ideas, or feedback on issues or topics that are most important to you on sticky notes below.

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PILLAR 2

INFRASTRUCTURE

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.



What Do We Build On?

A Comprehensive Transportation Network

Monroe County maintains a robust multimodal transportation network that integrates extensive highway systems, a nationally recognized international airport, and a modernized active transportation plan. By prioritizing safety through technology-driven signal systems and expanding bike and pedestrian infrastructure, the County aims to provide equitable mobility options that support community health and workforce reliability. Furthermore, ongoing investments in airport logistics and inter-municipal connectivity ensure the region remains a competitive hub for global trade and high-tech manufacturing.

Water Resource Protection

Monroe County leverages its abundant water resources and glacier-carved landscape to support both a vibrant recreational economy and a sophisticated infrastructure system that ensures clean drinking water and effective wastewater treatment. To combat climate change and intense weather events, the County is integrating green infrastructure with its massive tunnel systems while exploring further consolidation of sewer districts to improve operational efficiency. Additionally, forward-looking initiatives like the Climate Action Plan and the Local Solid Waste Management Plan aim to enhance regional resiliency and attract sustainable business investment through modernized waste diversion and resource recovery.



High-Quality Parks & Trails System

Monroe County manages a sprawling 12,000-acre park system that offers diverse recreational amenities and protects vital water resources across urban, suburban, and rural landscapes. The County is actively expanding this network, recently adding its 23rd park and seeking to further integrate local trails with regional systems like the Empire State Trail to improve multimodal access. Through strategic master planning and city-county collaboration, Monroe County continues to prioritize equitable access to nature, enhancing community health and the overall quality of life for residents.

What Do We Need to Address?

Monroe County’s Resilient Future

Monroe County is bolstering its climate leadership by implementing a Climate Adaptation and Resilience Plan (CARP) to mitigate environmental vulnerabilities and transition toward 100% carbon-free electricity. The County is actively expanding its electric vehicle infrastructure and municipal energy aggregation programs while prioritizing the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to protect marginalized communities disproportionately affected by pollution. By providing municipalities with technical toolkits and funding resources, Monroe County aims to foster sustainable land use and "climate-smart" infrastructure across the region.



The Infrastructure-Land Use Connection

Monroe County is aligning its land use and infrastructure policies to foster compact, walkable developments that integrate housing, services, and transit. By prioritizing infrastructure upgrades in existing community centers and villages, the County aims to reduce urban sprawl, lower energy consumption, and preserve vital agricultural and open spaces. This integrated approach is designed to create more equitable and sustainable neighborhoods that enhance public health while attracting diverse businesses and residents.

Multimodal Infrastructure

In some strategic locations, Monroe County is shifting from a car-centric model toward transit-oriented development by integrating higher-density housing with more frequent and efficient multimodal transportation. By leveraging historical crash data and smart traffic technologies, the County is implementing targeted safety measures like road diets and "Vision Zero" strategies to protect pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users. This data-driven, collaborative approach aims to reduce travel times and improve economic equity by ensuring all residents have reliable access to jobs and essential services.

Broadband Access


Monroe County is working to bridge a significant digital divide that leaves nearly 20% of urban and 33% of rural households without high-speed internet. By leveraging the 2023 Community Access Plan and a dedicated Broadband Advisory Task Force, the County is deploying fixed wireless technology and expanding digital literacy programs through the library system. This comprehensive strategy treats broadband as essential infrastructure, aiming to remove barriers to economic mobility, healthcare, and education for all residents.

TREND 1
Monroe County’s land has urbanized at a faster rate than its population growth.

TREND 3
Transportation systems are facing new safety challenges.

TREND 2
Climate change is contributing to rising temperatures and more extreme weather events.

TREND 4
Ongoing changes in regional freight operations.



PILLAR 2

INFRASTRUCTURE

Goals & 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 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.

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.



Share your thoughts!

Please add your comments, ideas, or feedback on issues or topics that are most important to you on sticky notes below.

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PILLAR 3

PUBLIC HEALTH

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.

TREND 1

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

TREND 3

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

TREND 2

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

TREND 4

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



What Do We Build On?

Healthy Environments

Monroe County is integrating urban planning with public health to address systemic disparities, focusing on lead remediation, the revitalization of vacant properties through the new County Land Bank, and the expansion of walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods. The County is also tackling environmental health challenges by improving air quality monitoring and addressing "food deserts" through specialized incentives for grocery operators and urban farming. By aligning housing, land use, and climate resiliency policies, the region aims to create safer, more connected communities that foster long-term wellness for all residents.

Mental Health Service Expansion and Integration

Monroe County is addressing a higher-than-average mental health crisis by integrating behavioral health services into primary care, schools, and digital platforms like the Monroe Mental Health Mobile App. To combat provider shortages and substance use disorders, the County is investing in peer advocate certification and school-based counseling, particularly in underserved districts. These holistic initiatives aim to improve local productivity and long-term community resilience by prioritizing early intervention and inclusive career pathways in the mental health field.



Preventive Care and Chronic Disease Prevention and Management

Monroe County's preventive healthcare model prioritizes proactive disease prevention and early intervention through a vast network of clinical services, environmental health monitoring, and maternal-child health programs. By addressing social determinants of health via the Healthy Neighborhood Program and the Community Health Improvement Plan, the County targets chronic diseases and family stability to reduce long-term medical costs. Supported by a nearly \$100 million budget and regional health partnerships, these efforts aim to foster a resilient, healthy population capable of contributing fully to the local economy.

What Do We Need to Address?

Substance Use Disorders

Monroe County saw a significant 50% decrease in opioid overdose deaths in 2024, a shift attributed to the large-scale distribution of naloxone and the deployment of "Addiction Services" teams that provide harm reduction tools and peer support. Despite this progress, the crisis remains concentrated in the City of Rochester and disproportionately affects Black and Hispanic residents, highlighting the critical link between substance use and social determinants like poverty and housing insecurity. To address these inequities, the County is investing in holistic wraparound services, such as family shelters and school-based prevention, to target addiction at its root causes.

Health Equity

Monroe County is addressing the critical link between concentrated poverty and lower life expectancy by targeting systemic inequities that disproportionately impact Black and Hispanic families. Key initiatives include ARPA-funded home healthcare outreach and specialized maternal health programs, such as the PAMPER Mom and Building Healthy Communities projects, which provide culturally tailored medical and behavioral support to vulnerable families. By aligning these efforts with the Community Health Improvement Plan, the County aims to dismantle longstanding racial and economic disparities to improve long-term wellness for its most distressed neighborhoods.

Food Insecurity

Monroe County faces a critical food insecurity crisis that disproportionately affects Black and Hispanic residents, with rates tripling in recent years and nearly 40% of the food-insecure population earning too much to qualify for SNAP benefits. The County is addressing these disparities through the ROC Food Policy Council and partnerships with organizations like Foodlink to strengthen urban agriculture and bridge the gap for seniors and rural residents facing transportation barriers. By integrating sustainable farming practices from the 2025 Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan with expanded data-driven outreach, the County aims to build a more resilient and equitable local food system.

Age-friendly Communities

Monroe County is adapting to an aging population by integrating age-friendly principles into housing, zoning, and workforce policies to support "aging in place" and combat rising food insecurity among seniors. Through its participation in the WHO and AARP networks, the County is promoting walkable, transit-accessible neighborhoods and intergenerational mentorship programs that leverage the institutional knowledge of older adults. These inclusive design strategies—ranging from traffic calming to improved grocery proximity—aim to enhance the quality of life for seniors while creating a more resilient community for residents of all ages.

PILLAR 3

PUBLIC HEALTH

Goals & 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.



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.



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.

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PILLAR 4

PUBLIC SAFETY

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.



What Do We Build On?

Supportive Programs

Monroe County is reimagining its public safety framework by addressing the root causes of crime through integrated rehabilitation and wrap-around services for over 4,500 adults and youth on probation. Key initiatives like the Juvenile Enhanced Diversion Stabilization (JEDS) program aim to reduce recidivism by providing rapid intervention and family support, specifically targeting recent spikes in juvenile offenses. To build safer communities, the County is prioritizing collaboration with community organizations to tackle systemic issues such as opioid addiction and domestic violence while working to bridge service gaps in underserved areas.



Community Partnerships

Monroe County is strengthening public safety by fostering deep partnerships with faith-based organizations and nonprofits to address youth violence through data-driven initiatives like Pathways to Peace and CURE Violence. These collaborations provide essential wraparound services, mentorship, and emergency preparedness training to ensure that residents—particularly vulnerable populations—have the resources needed to recover from crises. By prioritizing inclusive communication and acting as a regional facilitator, the County aims to build community trust and transparency while developing holistic strategies to reduce violence and improve overall resiliency.

Multi-Agency Collaboration

Monroe County utilizes a multi-agency "system of care" that integrates law enforcement, emergency response, and intelligence through centralized hubs like the 911 Center and the Regional Investigative Operations Center. Initiatives such as the Rochester Threat Advisory Committee (ROCTAC) and the Public Safety Training Facility leverage interoperable technology and cross-sector partnerships to prevent targeted violence and provide efficient, high-quality emergency services. To maintain this level of coordination, the County is currently focusing on upgrading complex communication systems and expanding training infrastructure to meet evolving community needs.

Traffic Safety Initiatives

Monroe County is tackling high crash rates by establishing the state's first Community Traffic Safety Team and deploying data-driven technologies, such as school bus stop-arm cameras and multimodal detection systems, to protect vulnerable road users. By aligning these efforts with a "Vision Zero" framework, the County aims to eliminate traffic fatalities through safer roadway design, youth education programs, and equitable infrastructure investments that prioritize underserved communities.

What Do We Need to Address?

Diversify Crime Reduction and Prevention Approaches

Monroe County is adopting a holistic crime prevention strategy that links public safety to economic opportunity, recognizing that job training and neighborhood reinvestment are essential to breaking the cycle of poverty and disinvestment. This approach incorporates Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) to improve physical safety through better lighting and natural surveillance, alongside the integration of mental health professionals into emergency responses to reduce recidivism. By combining these place-based interventions with data-driven collaboration via the Monroe Crime Analysis Center, the County aims to address the root causes of crime while fostering more resilient and connected communities.



Emergency Response

Monroe County's Office of Emergency Management coordinates disaster relief and mitigation by developing comprehensive contingency plans and ensuring outreach reaches all municipalities, including hard-to-access communities. The County maintains a vast radio and microwave network through the Monroe County Radio Center, which supports over 2,500 units and 63 remote sites to facilitate secure communication across jurisdictions. Recent federal grants are further enhancing this system by creating regional interoperability, allowing multiple counties and state agencies to seamlessly coordinate resources during large-scale emergencies.



Public Safety Workforce Development and Recruitment

The Monroe County Public Safety Training Facility serves as a regional hub for standardized emergency response training, though it currently faces capacity constraints and staffing shortages exacerbated by the pandemic. To bolster the workforce, the County has implemented new collective bargaining agreements for sheriff and jail employees alongside the JEDI-focused Public Safety Internship Program to recruit a more diverse, younger generation of first responders. By investing in expanded facilities and multidisciplinary career development, the County aims to create a sustainable, community-focused public safety system capable of handling complex modern challenges.

TREND 1

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

TREND 3

Human behavior increasingly drives traffic safety issues.

TREND 2

Climate change-induced emergencies are intensifying.

PILLAR 4

PUBLIC SAFETY

Goals & 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.

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.
- 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.



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 advanced 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.

Share your thoughts!

Please add your comments, ideas, or feedback on issues or topics that are most important to you on sticky notes below.

Want to be in touch later?

email:
PlanForward@MonroeCounty.gov
website:
www.monroecounty.gov/planforward

COMMENTS AND FEEDBACK

Make Your Voice Heard

Since August 2021, Monroe County has worked closely with residents, municipalities, stakeholders, and community partners to better understand priorities for the future of Monroe County. Through this process, the County has held more than 50 pop-up meetings, two public meetings, six steering committee meetings, four municipal-focused group meetings, five topic-focused stakeholder meetings, and received more than 250 comment cards, along with countless in-person conversations and phone calls. Plan Forward represents the culmination of those community conversations. As the comprehensive plan development process comes to a close, we are asking for your feedback one last time to make sure we got the priorities right. Please leave comments here!

Share your thoughts!

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What Goals Should the County Prioritize Over the Next 10–20 Years?

What Partnerships Will Be Most Important to Make these Recommendations Successful?

Are there Important Considerations that You Feel are Not Addressed by this Plan?

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