

Executive Summary City of Rochester Budget Analysis

June 2018

Priority Recommendations

Among local public entities who touch the lives of children and youth, the City has unique opportunities. City decisions impact every aspect of a child's life – housing, neighborhoods, education, literacy, public safety, healthy environments, physical activity, recreation, employment and more.

The City does not have sole responsibility for any of these touchpoints, and its resources and authority are limited. But the City has a powerful and significant role to play in changing the trajectory of kids' lives in our community. It is already playing that role in a number of initiatives and yet, like all of us, it should do more.

Most notably, the City can act as a catalyst, a leader, and a convener. **The Mayor and City Council should call on other public and private entities to join them to act boldly so that the greater Rochester area becomes a community poised to offer our young residents what they need to thrive and succeed.**

Priority Recommendation 1:

Place children and families at the center of the City's Comprehensive Plan Update. We commend the City for creating the Office of Planning and for extending the community engagement period for gathering input on the Comprehensive Plan. The Plan Update process provides an opportunity to create action steps toward a future in which Rochester is a "Ready Community" as envisioned by ROC the Future. A vision where children are born healthy into safe homes and neighborhoods, with high quality educational programs, ample access to nutritious food and safe play spaces, and opportunities to grow into their potential.

Specifically, we recommend that in 2018 the City review Youth Master Planning processes in other communities such as Alexandria, VA, Seattle WA, and Palm Beach County, FL to identify first steps toward spearheading a similar process locally. We stand ready to assist in this effort.

The Comprehensive Plan Update should also call for what evidence shows works best and is needed most for young children, such as high quality child care and Pre-K, and summer learning programs. In addition, TCA recommends adoption of Healthi Kids' recommendations to put kids and play first in the Comprehensive Plan Update.

Commendations:



COMMENDATION: We commend the City for supporting the GROW developmental screening program for the 3rd year. We encourage its participation in state-level advocacy so that services are available on timely basis for children who need them.



COMMENDATION: We support the creation of a Rochester Police Department (RPD) Youth Advisory Council to provide ongoing feedback to RPD from youth who are impacted by police activities and services.



COMMENDATION: We commend the City and Rochester City School District (RCSD) for continuing the successful partnership to support reading, literacy, and healthy play through placement of RCSD students as aides at libraries and R-Centers.

Additional Recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION: We urge the City to explore the following recommendations in 2018 -19 in order to strengthen the early childhood education (ECE) workforce in Rochester:

- Use City incentives or influence to promote SUNY Brockport's expansion of ECE courses to its downtown campus, with a goal of increasing the number of City residents with degrees in early childhood fields.
- Centralize access to programs that might support ECE staff in their housing, transportation and other needs on the City's website.
- Include early childhood staff in home purchasing and repair assistance programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Expand the use of "ReadyRosie" in all R-Centers and libraries. ROC the Future introduced the evidence-based "Ready Rosie" program to Rochester in 2016. To date there are 1,103 parents and teachers using this mobile app that is provided free of charge.

RECOMMENDATION: Prepare for trauma-informed implementation of Raise the Age, internally as well as externally. As the Police Department prepares and trains its officers and staff, the RPD should also use its relationships with local organizations to inform the community of this future change in interactions between the criminal justice system and youth.

Priority Recommendation 2:

Strengthen Rochester's early childhood sector and address shortages in child-related fields through three efforts:

1. Via the City's OWN program, support the creation of child care cooperatives to reduce back-office costs and/or facilitate quality improvements in child care businesses;
2. Create a waiver specifically for child care providers so they are exempted from the City's prohibition on home-based businesses' participation in small business loan programs; and
3. Ensure that businesses providing early childhood services, including individual for-profit providers of child care and early childhood developmental services, are eligible for the Office of Community Wealth-Building initiatives.

Priority Recommendation 3:

Utilize initiatives such as Quality of Life teams and the Office of Community Wealth-Building to identify innovative uses of City programs and authority to support the diversity of needs among children and youth:

- Explore how the City can further increase access to affordable, safe housing for families, particularly for the 74% of children (including the 87% of female headed households with children) who live in rental units. Consider how the Rochester Housing Authority can increase access to affordable housing as a measure to promote students' academic success. For example, Tacoma, WA has had success reducing school instability and improving academic achievement through provision of targeted rental assistance.
- Open up small business loans to home-based child care providers who are struggling to stay afloat, and who care for a large number of infants, toddlers and preschoolers in Rochester.
- Replicate the new Quality of Life teams of Commissioners and high-level staff to address issues regarding nuisance locations and similarly address how best to deploy City resources to remove challenges facing our young people.

Priority Recommendation 4:

Pay it forward - increase investments in City staff. Too many City workers who regularly interact with young people are in part-time positions with low wages and limited professional development. Yet research shows that it is these relationships that have the most potential to positively impact a child's life. The City should redirect resources to upgrade these positions and provide up-to-date training in youth development principles, trauma-informed care, and other relevant topics.

Tacoma Washington Housing:
https://www.tacomahousing.net/sites/default/files/tha_eshap_summary_2017-10-11.pdf



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