

Redevelopment and Community Health Toolkit



Photo credit: Communications Bureau, City of Rochester NY

December 2015

Produced by the University of Rochester Environmental Health Sciences Center
Funded by the Greater Rochester Health Foundation

This toolkit was last updated in December 2015 and is meant to be a work in progress. If you need copies or have updates, please contact:
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We hope this toolkit is useful to people working to improve community health in Rochester. This toolkit is available for download in electronic form at:
<https://www.urmc.rochester.edu/environmental-health-sciences/coec/projects-partnerships/brownfield-redevelopment-and-public-health.aspx>

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Welcome to the Redevelopment and Community Health Toolkit!

Development projects throughout the City of Rochester are ongoing and can lead to changes in housing, transportation, parks, public facilities, and businesses. Many of these projects will be redevelopments of “brownfields” - commercial or industrial properties that are more difficult to buy, sell and redevelop because of the costs and liabilities associated with possible environmental contamination. Not all redevelopment projects are on brownfield properties. However, due to the potential for contamination, brownfield redevelopment has a unique layer of complexity for community members and groups interested in public health. For this reason we focus on brownfield redevelopment in this toolkit; however, the resources may be helpful in other development plans, projects, and contexts.

This Toolkit was written primarily as a resource for community groups and leaders. Community leaders frequently hear from residents about problems in the neighborhood and need to access resources that may be new to them. Groups often have questions about innovative ways to solve problems that have been tried in other cities. We have collected resources from Rochester and beyond to address some of these questions. In addition to community group leaders, residents and professionals working in areas that are new to them may also find this Toolkit useful.

This Toolkit includes materials to help community groups shape redevelopment projects and other changes in their neighborhoods to promote community health. The topics addressed in this toolkit relate to challenges faced by many communities in Rochester. The goal of this Toolkit is to help communities connect redevelopment and other plans, projects, and programs to health promotion.

The materials in the Toolkit address housing, jobs, food access, economic security and other topics. In these materials, we provide short summaries of research related to each issue, experiences and examples from other cities, contacts to relevant local resources, and suggestions for community action to promote health.

Redevelopment involves actions by community groups, government agencies, private citizens, developers, and investors. In these brief materials, there is no way to capture the full complexity of these issues. Instead, our goal is to summarize information to help groups be as effective as possible in promoting redevelopment decisions and activities that improve



community health. Additional resources and citations for more detailed information are listed in each short summary.

This Community Toolkit was adapted from a toolkit developed in the context of the Vacuum Oil Brownfield Opportunity Area in the Plymouth-Exchange neighborhood (PLEX) in southwest Rochester. In addition to detail specific to that neighborhood, the original toolkit also contained a document discussing student housing, and another describing projects in southwest Rochester. Contact the authors for access to the original toolkit.

This toolkit was prepared by Dr. Katrina Smith Korfmacher and Valerie Garrison of the University of Rochester Medical Center’s Environmental Health Sciences Center, with input from staff at the City of Rochester Department of Environmental Services. The authors would like to thank the many contributors who gave extensive feedback on drafts of the toolkit products. This project was supported by a grant from the Greater Rochester Health Foundation. The toolbox content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily reflect the views of the Greater Rochester Health Foundation or any of the project partners. Please notify the authors of any omissions or errors.

Background: About the Redevelopment and Community Health Toolkit

Brownfields and Community Health

“Brownfields” are typically commercial or industrial properties that are more difficult to buy, sell and redevelop because of the costs and liabilities associated with potential environmental contamination. Examples of brownfields include former manufacturing facilities, gas stations, dumps, and businesses such as printers or dry cleaners. Many neighborhoods in the City of Rochester have potential brownfield properties that are abandoned or vacant. Redevelopment of such properties can create healthier neighborhoods by providing affordable housing, recreation, and opportunities for new businesses. Redevelopment can also improve safety and



strengthen the sense of community within neighborhoods. The State of New York supports several programs to help cities and private developers reuse these properties in productive ways. For more information on Brownfields programs in the City of Rochester, see: <http://www.cityofrochester.gov/BOA>

Brownfield Opportunity Areas (BOA)

Under the Brownfield Opportunity Areas (BOA) Program, the New York State Department of State (DOS) provides financial and technical assistance to municipalities and community-based organizations to study former industrial sites (brownfields) whose vacancy and blight is negatively impacting a neighborhood. Funding can be used to complete revitalization plans and implementation strategies for areas affected by the presence of brownfield sites. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) provides relevant technical assistance and advice to the Department of State BOA grantees, particularly regarding site assessments on strategic brownfield sites in BOA study areas.

For more information about BOA projects in the City of Rochester, visit or contact the City Division of Environmental Quality at (585) 428-6698.

Process: Brownfields Health Analysis

In 2012-2013, the University of Rochester Environmental Health Sciences Center (EHSC) conducted a Health Impact Assessment of the City of Rochester's Local Waterfront Revitalization Program ("Healthy Waterways") (Korfmacher & Garrison, 2013). Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is a planning tool to provide information on how decisions will impact the health of communities.

In 2014, the Greater Rochester Health Foundation provided support for the EHSC to work with the City of Rochester to conduct a "Brownfields Health Analysis." The goal was to build on the general recommendations of Healthy Waterways and provide specific tools to include health in community planning efforts.

After identifying the key issues and questions to be addressed, EHSC identified relevant initiatives in other cities. These were summarized in an Interim Report in June 2014. With additional input from community groups and other local stakeholders, EHSC and city staff reviewed these collected experiences to identify the issues most relevant to redevelopment around the Vacuum Oil BOA in Rochester. EHSC then produced short

research summaries, fact sheets, resource lists, and action recommendations related to these key issues. As noted above, the parts of these materials that are relevant to the entire City of Rochester were extracted and are provided in this Toolkit.

For More Information

This Toolkit was drafted by EHSC staff Katrina Korfmacher and Valerie Garrison, and reviewed by community stakeholders and staff in the City of Rochester Department of Environmental Services Division of Environmental Quality. For additional information or questions, please contact:

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Economic Security and Health



What is Economic Security, or Financial Security?

Economic Security is the condition of having stable income, or other resources, to meet basic needs now and in the foreseeable future. Basic needs include food, housing, clothing, health care and other goods and services necessary for participating in family and community life.¹

How is Economic Security Important for Health?

People who are economically secure can meet their basic physical health needs such as good nutrition and health care, and are less likely to experience excessive stress about

personal finances. Both physical and mental factors are common health outcomes that may be affected by health determinants such as economic security. Health determinants are conditions of our home, work and other environments that can influence health. Figure 1 highlights the relationship between economic security and health. Taken together, these connections suggest that promoting community residents' economic security can improve public health and reduce health care costs by reducing stress, increasing access to safe and

Economic Security: More than Just Income

Economic security cannot be measured simply as income; it also refers to a person's daily living expenses and future expectations. For example, someone working three part-time jobs may have sufficient income to cover food and rent, but may lack health care benefits and may not have enough to save for other basic or emergency costs. They may also have limited time to cook healthy food and exercise. If they have worries about losing these jobs, this may result in unhealthy levels of stress. Thus, a person's economic insecurity may result in poorer health than if they had one secure full-time job with benefits, but had lower income.



healthy housing, and increasing access to health-promoting goods and services.

Below, we summarize research linking economic security to health outcomes. Community groups advocating to increase job opportunities, develop social support services, or reduce residents' cost of living may find this information helpful to support new programs, policies, or grant proposals.

What Contributes to Residents' Economic Security?

Economic security is dependent on many factors. Some of these include:

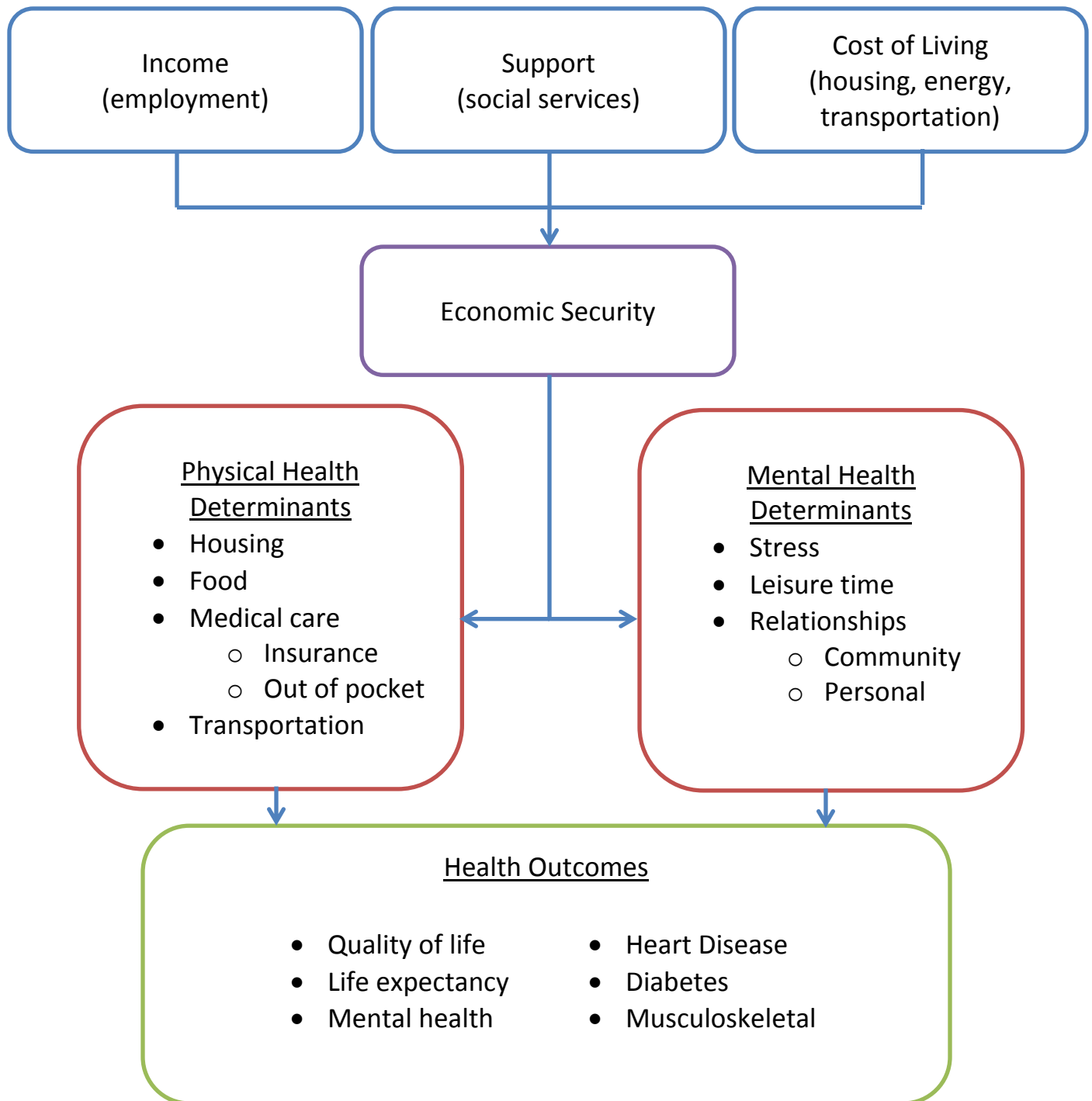
Employment

Access to consistent (regular, safe, and reliable) income is an important factor in economic security.¹ Employment in a well-paying job is the most reliable way to achieve stable income.³ Un- or under-employed people may be less able to afford health care. It is also important for income to increase at or above the rate of inflation and living expenses to maintain security.¹ On the other hand, some employment can negatively affect an individual's health. Employment that offers low wages that do not cover all necessary living expenses – like rent, utilities, food, child care, transportation and health care – may also disqualify an individual from federal and state benefits that might have been able to fill the gaps. The inability to cover expenses on one's own in addition to being disqualified for services that may help can decrease economic security and increase stress. Jobs with limited autonomy, insecurity, difficult schedules, and hard physical labor can also negatively affect health.^{5,7} Finally, it is important to be properly trained and protected at work to avoid on-the-job risks and occupational hazards.⁷

Social Services

Social Services can reduce some economic stresses by providing resources (e.g., Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), unemployment), reducing costs (e.g., programs provide food or shelter) or covering certain costs (e.g., Medicaid, WIC).

Figure 1: Pathway showing the relationship between economic security, health determinants, and health outcomes²⁻⁷



Costs of Living

As mentioned above, individuals and families may lose economic security if income does not keep up with increasing costs related to inflation, taxes, etc. Programs such as property tax exemptions for long-term owner-occupants, energy efficiency changes that lower energy bills, and reduced transportation costs can help lower residents' costs of living.

By increasing employment, supporting social services, and reducing living costs, community groups, agencies, and governments can help improve economic security of neighborhood residents.

Economic Security and Public Health in Rochester, NY

Improved economic security helps individuals access healthy foods, adequate health care, safe and secure housing, and other important health-supportive resources. This can lead to improvements in some of the most common health ailments, including diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure, heart disease and stroke.³ This is particularly important in Monroe County, NY, where there is a difference of 13 years of potential life lost (a measure of premature death) between certain zip codes within the City of Rochester (14605, 14608, 14611, 14613 and 14619) and others just outside its boundaries (14618 and 14625).⁸ Income and employment are two measures that are likely to influence these health disparities – zip codes with higher years of potential life lost typically have lower mean incomes and a high unemployment rate.

Economic Statistics for Monroe County, New York

According to 2012 American Community Survey estimates...

- ❖ 21% of Monroe County homeowners with a mortgage spend 35% or more of their income on housing.⁹ A commonly accepted threshold of housing affordability for low-income homeowners is spending less than 30% of income on housing.¹⁰
- ❖ 47% of Monroe County renters spend 35% or more of their income on housing.⁹ A commonly accepted threshold of housing affordability for low-income renters is 30%.¹⁰
- ❖ 13% of Monroe County residents rely on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP/food stamp) benefits.¹¹
- ❖ 31% of Monroe County residents rely on public health insurance; 7% are uninsured.¹¹

Economic Statistics in Your Neighborhood

The US Census offers economic data tract level. Neighborhood information is not available, but tracts can be used to estimate your neighborhood area. You can access this information for free at www.factfinder.census.gov.

If you are not sure which tracts are in your neighborhood, contact the City of Rochester Bureau of Planning and Zoning.

The screenshot displays the American Factfinder website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with 'MAIN', 'COMMUNITY FACTS', 'GUIDED SEARCH', 'ADVANCED SEARCH', and 'DOWNLOAD OPTIONS'. Below this, the 'Community Facts' section is highlighted with a red box. It includes a search bar with the text 'Enter a state, county, city, town, or zip code' and a 'GO' button. To the right of the search bar, there is a callout box labeled 'Community Facts'. Below the search bar, there are three navigation options: 'Guided Search', 'Advanced Search', and 'Download Options'. The background of the page features a photograph of a young girl smiling in a classroom.

Image source: factfinder.census.gov

What Community Groups Can Do

- ❖ Help keep track of economic security in your neighborhood by:
 - ❖ Using census data to show local economic statistics. The US Census Bureau reports household income, employment and other statistics at the tract level. Contact the City of Rochester Bureau of Planning and Zoning for census tract information in your neighborhood.
 - ❖ Recording stories from local residents about how their economic status affects their health. Record both positive and negative experiences. These stories can provide powerful support for grant applications, advocacy to city government, and other proposals to help improve economic security in a neighborhood.
- ❖ Work with community members and social service providers to ensure that everyone eligible for different benefits receives those benefits.
- ❖ Work with schools and other youth focused organizations to improve education, which is a key predictor of financial security.
- ❖ Engage in community-building activities to promote resilience to the adverse health and well-being effects of poverty.
- ❖ Work with other communities and groups throughout the City of Rochester to advocate for living wage initiatives.

Help With Reducing Costs

There are several free programs that help people file their taxes to assure that they receive any refunds or credits to which they are entitled. For example, Action for a Better Community's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program provides free state and federal income tax preparation services during tax season to income qualified individuals and families.

Contact: (325) 325-5116 x3440
49 Stone Street
Rochester, New York 14604

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Redevelopment and Local Jobs

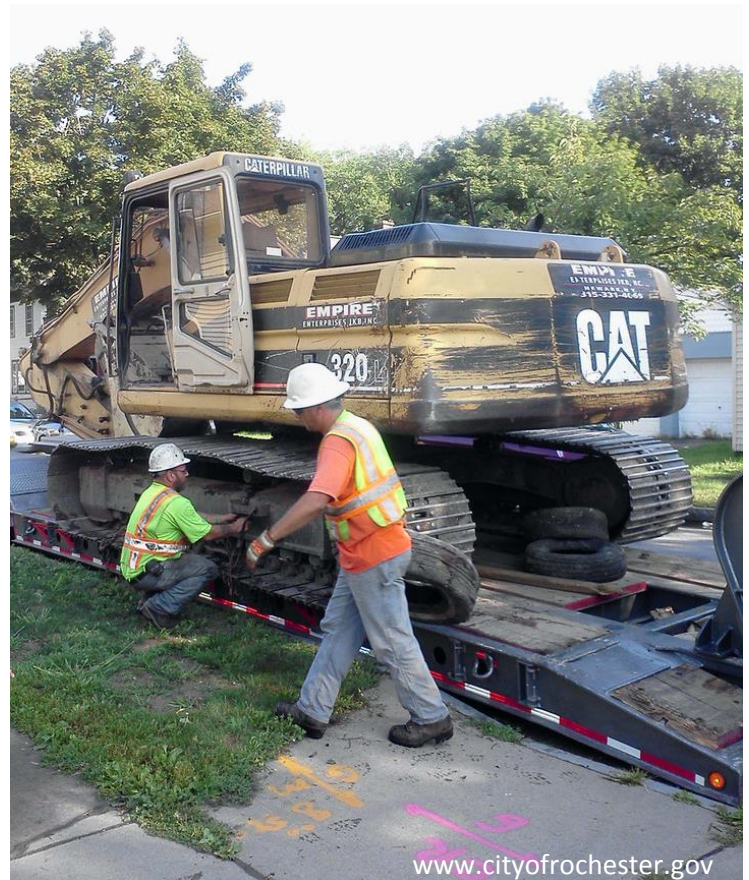


Having regular, safe, and secure employment not only improves residents' economic status, but also has been shown to improve health. Redevelopment of homes, businesses, and public spaces can create new jobs. There are many organizations, programs, and government agencies in Rochester that work to create new jobs, train workers, and increase employment. Community groups can help unemployed local residents connect with these resources.

New jobs may include work associated with redevelopment (construction, etc.) or long-term opportunities in newly created or expanded businesses, services, or developments. Increasing employment for local residents involves at least three steps:

- ❖ Making sure residents are trained for available jobs (**Workforce Development**)
- ❖ Encouraging employers to hire local residents (**Local Hiring Practices**)
- ❖ Helping residents connect with potential employers (**Connecting with Employers**)

In the bigger picture, it is also important to make sure that local schools are appropriately preparing neighborhood youth for employment. In addition, development plans can encourage businesses and services that provide long-term employment opportunities. Below, we summarize ways community groups in Rochester can increase employment opportunities for local residents.



Workforce Development

The first step in increasing local employment during redevelopment is to train underemployed residents for jobs that may become available in their neighborhoods. There are several organizations in Rochester that promote workforce development (see **Resources**). Some programs focus on specific groups like youth and veterans; others are available to all.

Youth Uprising Oakland, CA, www.youthuprising.org



Youth Uprising is a youth engagement program that offers a multitude of services free of charge to Alameda County youth, including employment and career training. The organization operates toward a vision of community

change through personal transformation, community development and systems change, and is funded by contributions from over 25 institutional donors.

What Community Groups Can Do

- ❖ Survey residents to identify the number of un- and under-employed people in the neighborhood and what education/skills they have.
- ❖ List the skills and number of employees likely to be needed for redevelopment activities (i.e. construction) and future businesses.
- ❖ Invite workforce development programs to provide information on services to prepare local residents for future jobs.
- ❖ Track income and employment over time. The US Census Bureau publishes employment data by census tract. Contact the City of Rochester Bureau of Planning and Zoning for census tract information in your neighborhood.

Local Hiring Practices

Developers and new businesses may be encouraged, or in some cases required, to hire local workers. These are sometimes called “first source hiring” or “hiring preference” agreements. Selecting the best tools to encourage businesses to hire local workers depends on whether or not the project has public funding (i.e. grants, tax credits, etc.), because some public funding sources may require businesses to hire local workers.



Publicly funded projects:

When government funding is involved in development projects – including grants, loans, or tax breaks - a hiring preference agreement may be included in the contract. The City of Rochester tracks local hiring resulting from businesses that receive funds through their Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Privately funded projects:

When new development, existing businesses, or new businesses are entirely privately funded, there are no requirements to hire local workers. However, some communities have established “good neighbor” programs to encourage, support, and publicize businesses that provide local employment. “Good neighbor” agreements may be arranged with individual stores. Or, community groups may develop a program that offers a set list of agreements, allowing stores and other businesses to opt in. Programs should include benefits to both businesses and the surrounding community.

Community Jobs Pipeline

www.pushbuffalo.org/workforce



PUSH (People United for Sustainable Housing) Buffalo:

“The mission of PUSH Buffalo is to mobilize residents to create strong neighborhoods with quality, affordable housing, expand local hiring opportunities and to advance economic justice in Buffalo.” PUSH supports a “Community Jobs Pipeline” to promote employment of local residents in redevelopment activities.

The Community Jobs Pipeline combines conventional workforce development activities - recruitment, referral, job development and placement - with opportunities for community building and leadership development.

What Community Groups Can Do

- ❖ Work with the City to develop a “good neighbor” program.
- ❖ Make sure local residents know about any agreements in place and who to talk to with questions or concerns.
- ❖ Monitor implementation of “good neighbor” agreements. For example, community groups can track whether local residents are considered or hired for jobs, how long local residents stay in their positions, and whether local hiring policies have an effect on income.

Connecting with Employers

Community groups can also play a role in helping to connect employers with local workers. There are several agencies in Rochester that help connect potential employers and employees (see **Resources**). In addition to focusing on matching local residents with local employers, some agencies help residents get jobs outside the neighborhood by advocating for public transportation to areas with jobs, and advertising regional workforce development and job placement programs. Finally, several of the resources listed below may be able to help residents develop new businesses themselves.

What Community Groups Can Do

- ❖ Organize job fairs at a community center and invite developers/new businesses to attend.
- ❖ Maintain a list of residents seeking employment.
- ❖ Talk with employers and workers in your neighborhood to make sure workers are treated fairly, trained properly, and protected from workplace hazards.
- ❖ Support businesses that adhere to “good neighbor” agreements.

Resources

Action for a Better Community

The *Focus on Self-Sufficiency* peer support program helps individuals and families reach a greater level of self-sufficiency. Services include GED preparation, job readiness training, and employment support.

Contact: (325) 325-5116 ext.3440
 49 Stone Street
 Rochester, New York 14604

City of Rochester

There are several departments within city government that can support employment efforts, including:

Employment Skills Training & Youth Services, Operation Transformation Rochester:
www.cityofrochester.gov/otr

Operation Transformation Rochester (OTR) serves city youth and adults by offering five comprehensive programs geared toward education, vocation and employment.

Contact: Department of Recreation and Youth Services
Bureau of Employment Opportunities
(585) 428-6342
www.cityofrochester.gov/otr

Department of Neighborhood and Business Development
Bureau of Business and Housing Development

Contact: (585) 428-6944
www.cityofrochester.gov/development

PathStone

Among other services, PathStone operates an Enterprise Center (www.theenterprisecenterinc.com) that promotes the economic self-sufficiency and quality of life of individuals and communities through entrepreneurial and business skills training, technical assistance and access to financing for new and expanding businesses throughout Upstate New York.

Contact: (585) 442-2030
400 East Avenue
Rochester, NY 14607

RochesterWorks!, Inc.

RochesterWorks! “manages over \$11 million in employment and training resources designed to serve job seekers and businesses” and staffs two career centers. They offer a wide range of job training and placement programs. All services are free.

Contact: (585) 258-3500 (downtown office)
(585) 266-7760 (Waring Rd office)
www.rochesterworks.org

Worker Justice Center of New York (WJCNY)

The WJCNY has an office in Rochester that can help workers who have legal concerns about work, or about workplace health and safety. Although much of their focus is on agricultural workers, they also serve other low-wage workers.

Contact: (585) 325-3050
www.wjcny.org

An example of a partnership to employ local workers in Rochester, NY

Background

In 2014, Constantino's Grocery finalized plans to open a grocery store in College Town, located southeast of the University of Rochester in a federally-recognized "food desert."¹ A grant writer worked on behalf of the store owner to apply for a federal development loan through the US Department of Health and Human Services' "Healthy Food Financing Initiative."² The grant writer connected Constantino's with Action for a Better Community (ABC) to help meet their goals for hiring local workers. The loan application was successful, and Constantino's market opened in 2015, employing about 30 full time workers, most of whom will be from local neighborhoods.

The Partnership

The federal funding provided low-interest capital for building the grocery store, and the partners agreed that Constantino's would fill at least 75% of their positions with low-income or currently unemployed workers who live in the City of Rochester. Workers will be trained through ABC's self-sufficiency program. This training will be done in partnership with Focus Plus Mobility Mentoring, an informal faith-based collaborative. The training program offers ongoing coaching and support to maintain employment and increase wages over time. Constantino's employee training will be integrated with ABC's existing training curriculum.

Recruitment and Referrals

ABC recruits potential candidates through the media, existing client networks, job fairs and word of mouth. ABC screens potential candidates and refers them to Constantino's with position recommendations.

Monitoring and Reporting

ABC will monitor the program and submit reports to the US Department of Health and Human Services; over time, the agency will also track job retention and changes in household income to ensure the program is successful in employing local residents in living wage jobs. If so, this partnership could serve as a model for ABC to partner with other businesses in Rochester.

For more information on the project's development and status, contact:

Naimah Sierra

Deputy Director for the Division of Youth & Community Services

Action for a Better Community

(585) 325-5116

NSierra@abcinfo.org



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2. To learn more about the Healthy Food Financing Initiative, visit: <http://bit.ly/healthyfoodfinancing>

Property Taxes



Property taxes are based on the assessed value of your home. Every four years in Rochester, NY, the City Tax Assessor compares your property to the “market value,” or the price at which homes in your “market neighborhood” have recently sold. “Market neighborhoods” are areas with similar housing.

After estimating its value based on the “market neighborhood,” an assessor then visits your property to make sure the estimated value is accurate. Improvements made to the house or the overall condition of the property may factor in the final assessment.

This assessment is used to calculate how much property tax you owe the city every year. All one, two, and three family properties pay the same tax rate applied to their assessed value. In a city-wide reassessment, assessed values are adjusted to reflect current fair market value. This results in a shifting of taxes to the properties that have experienced the greater increase in value. If your individual assessed value goes up more than the percentage of overall change in the city’s value, your taxes will go up.

A higher tax assessment is a good sign that the value of your property is increasing, should you choose to sell it. However, higher taxes can be a burden for people living on fixed incomes. There are two ways to try to limit property tax increases:

- ❖ Individual tax assessment reviews
- ❖ Tax exemption/relief programs.



Individual Tax Assessment Review

Homeowners who believe their property is over-valued may request a review with the city assessor's office. To address taxes for the coming year, homeowners must request an informal review by February 1st.

The review process¹:

1. Upon request by a homeowner (by February 1st), the property goes through a preliminary review by an assessor, who makes a judgment on the value based on information provided.
2. If the homeowner does not agree with the new assessed value, he or she may appeal to the Board of Assessment Review by filing the required complaint form by the 3rd Tuesday in March.
3. The decision of the Board of Assessment Review may be appealed in two ways: 1) an owner occupant of a one, two, or three family home may file a petition for Small Claims Assessment Review; 2) any property owner may file a legal action in the state Supreme Court under Article 7. These actions must be filed by May 30.

Individuals may reduce their assessments through this review process, but there is a role for community groups in making sure that residents understand this process. It may also be useful to share assessment information among neighbors to better understand patterns of assessment and change within the neighborhood (see "About Tax and Assessment Freezes" text box). This information may be useful to community groups and policy makers as they consider how neighborhoods are changing, at what speed, and how different residents are affected.

About Tax and Assessment Freezes

A few states allow municipalities to enact **Property Tax** or **Property Assessment Freezes**. These programs are only offered in about a third of the states, not including New York.

Tax freezes prevent property tax increases for eligible individuals. New York State does not permit tax freezes.

Assessment Freezes limit the annual increase in assessed value of a property.² New York State does not permit assessment freezes.

1. <http://www.cityofrochester.gov/article.aspx?id=8589936274>

2. National Conference of State Legislatures. State Property Tax Freeze and Assessment Freeze Programs. Available at: <http://www.ncsl.org/research/fiscal-policy/state-property-tax-freezes-and-assessment-freezes.aspx>.

Tax exemption/relief programs

The state government determines which types of property tax relief options can be offered. Municipalities and school districts have some options to adopt or not, or to set eligibility requirements or benefit levels.

There are three common tax relief options to lessen some homeowners' property tax burdens. Only the "tax exemption" approach is permitted in the State of New York, so we focus here on tax exemptions available to homeowners in Rochester.

Table 1 – Property Tax Exemptions in the City of Rochester

Exemption	Benefit	Eligibility	Taxes exemption applies to	Renewal
Basic STAR	Exempts up to \$20,100 of full home value (amount may change annually)	Homeowners who reside on the property as their primary residence and earn less than \$500,000 per year.	City School	Not Required
Enhanced STAR	Exempts up to \$43,010 of full home value (amount may change annually).	Homeowners who reside on the property as their primary residence and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Are aged 65 or older and earn less than \$83,300 per year, OR ❖ Are a surviving spouse aged 62 or older and earn less than \$83,300 per year. 	City School	Annual
Senior Citizens Aged Exemption	Exempts up to 50% of home value.	Homeowners who reside on the property as their primary residence, are earning less than \$37,400 per year and who are aged 65 or older, or are a surviving spouse aged 62 or older.	County City School (if no public school student lives on the property)	Annual
Veterans' Exemption	Exempts a percentage of the home value. Check with the City Assessor's Office (585-428-7221).	Homeowners who reside on the property as their primary residence, and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Veterans who served during defined periods of war/conflict, OR ❖ Veterans who served during the Cold War between September 2, 1945 and December 26, 1991, OR ❖ Unmarried surviving spouses of qualified veterans. 	County City	Not Required
Exemption for Persons with Disabilities	Exempts up to 50% of home value.	Homeowners who reside on the property as their primary residence and earn less than \$37,400 and receives one or more of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Social Security disability ❖ Railroad Retirement disability benefits ❖ Veterans Affairs (VA) Disability Pension ❖ A state certificate designating them as legally blind 	Local government School	Annual

Additional exemptions available in the City of Rochester are offered for:

- ❖ Capital improvements to property (not maintenance)
- ❖ Properties with solar, wind, and farm waste energy systems
- ❖ Residences owned by members of the clergy
- ❖ Construction of living quarters for a parent or grandparent
- ❖ Improvements to designated historic properties
- ❖ Property owned by religious, educational, charitable, hospital, and other non-profit organizations

Resources

Contact the city assessment office for more information.

City of Rochester Assessment Bureau
 Assessment Hotline: (585) 428-7221
 Exemption Hotline: (585) 428-6994

For information and links to forms and resources, visit the City of Rochester's "Assessment Adjustment" webpage at: <http://www.cityofrochester.gov/article.aspx?id=8589936274>

Visit the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance for more information, including how properties are assessed, and what to do if you disagree with your assessment at: www.tax.ny.gov/pit/property/default.htm.

What Community Groups Can Do

Community groups may want to track property values in their area as a measure of housing affordability.

- ❖ Visit the City of Rochester's online Neighborhood Data Map to conduct a general analysis of average property values by block group. The change in assessed values can be compared to census statistics like home ownership and household income. This kind of analysis won't answer questions about a specific property, but can be used to answer questions about your neighborhood.

www.cityofrochester.gov/neighborhooddatamap

- ❖ To better understand change over time on specific properties, individuals may visit the City's tax assessment office to look up historical assessed values.

Current assessed values can be viewed online at

www.cityofrochester.gov/propinfo/

Redevelopment, Housing Diversity and Health



When communities are redeveloped – either by building new housing or updating existing housing – there may be opportunities to affect the type of housing available in a neighborhood. While neighborhood improvement often increases all property values, in some cases existing residents may no longer be able to afford healthy, safe housing in their neighborhood. This can contribute to stress and health problems. However, tools like community benefit agreements, zoning laws, and grants can help create diverse housing options that meet a wide range of residents' needs.

Residential Development to Protect Housing

A common concern with redevelopment projects is that increases in property values may cause housing to become unaffordable. For example, these concerns were expressed during Vacuum Oil BOA public input meetings, in which residents emphasized the importance of access to affordable housing and the benefits of residents' long-term investment in the neighborhood. To address these concerns, the Vacuum Oil BOA Draft Nomination Study included as a goal to “strive to ensure housing options for all incomes and ages.” This 8-15 year plan includes both mixed commercial and residential development.



Image created by Bergmann Associates.
Source: Draft Nomination Study, 2013

What is Housing Diversity?

A neighborhood with “housing diversity” has a wide range of housing options for people of different incomes, abilities, ages, and family sizes. Housing diversity promotes community health by ensuring that all residents have the opportunity to live in health-supportive housing. Both the type of housing (owner-occupied, single family rental, multi-family properties, -accessible housing) and cost of housing are important to make sure all community members have safe and stable housing. Housing that is affordable to a wide range of income levels and needs is key to housing diversity. Lastly, aging and handicapped residents benefit from diverse housing options by having physically accessible housing in their own communities.

Here, we define housing diversity as “the availability of many housing options within a community to meet the diverse needs of residents.” We briefly summarize some of the major research findings about how diverse housing options support community health.

How is Housing Diversity Important for Health?

Lack of housing that is safe, affordable and accessible can pose social, psychological, and physical health risks to residents. For example, unaffordable housing is associated with budget trade-offs, reducing resident access to health-supportive services. Housing diversity helps protect low-income residents from these risks by ensuring choices for healthy, affordable housing and neighborhoods.¹⁻³ Housing diversity also prevents income segregation and the concentration of poverty, which is associated with negative health effects.^{4,5} In addition, diverse housing can positively influence mental health outcomes for aging residents by helping them stay in their communities and maintain social contact with family and friends.^{1,5} For example, aging residents may find it difficult to keep up with maintenance and costs associated with owning a house. They may find it beneficial to “downsize” or move into a smaller, more cost-effective unit where maintenance is taken care of. Such an option may be easier to access in a neighborhood with more diverse housing options.

Tools to Promote Housing Diversity during Redevelopment

In housing projects with public funding, the agency funding the development may set a certain number or percentage of required “affordable housing” units. A commonly accepted threshold of housing affordability is housing for which the occupant is paying no more than 30 percent of his or her income for housing costs.⁶ Recommendations vary in terms of how many units to set aside, depending on the needs of the community³; most programs set aside 10-20% of units as affordable (below market rate).^{5,7} Increased housing diversity may make it easier to find affordable housing options for residents with varied needs.

Creative tools can also be used to encourage privately funded housing projects to include affordable units. For example, some non-profit organizations have established Housing Development Equity Funds to offer low-interest loans to developers in exchange for a specified number of affordable units. This strategy reduces financial strains on developers, allowing them to reduce the price of some units while reaching their needed profit margin.²

Housing Diversity and Public Health in Rochester, NY

Many Rochester neighborhoods have a high number of vacant properties. While this is typically considered a negative impact on communities, it offers a unique opportunity for maintaining housing diversity during redevelopment. Building new housing of varying types on vacant lots can help support existing homes while adding to housing diversity. Overall, redevelopment builds equity for homeowners through increased property values, and helps attract new businesses and jobs by increasing the wealth and consumer base in the neighborhood. It can also attract new businesses and jobs. Increased wealth is associated with many health benefits, including lower rates of obesity, diabetes, heart disease and mental health issues.⁸⁻¹³

While redevelopment builds wealth and is a benefit to health for many residents, the associated property tax increases can pose a burden to those living on a fixed income. Aging residents may also find themselves needing to leave their homes due to physical challenges or disabilities. If there are affordable and accessible housing choices then they are more likely to be able to stay in their neighborhoods. In other parts of this toolkit we outline strategies to help older residents remain in their properties or neighborhoods (see *Resources for Homeowners*; *Resources for Renters*; and *Property Taxes*).

If homeowners are unable to stay in their home for any reason, they are more likely to find housing near their existing social communities if they live in a neighborhood with diverse housing options. Community ties are extremely important for physical and mental health.¹

What Community Groups Can Do

Communities can impact the housing diversity of neighborhoods by being vigilant about tracking changes over time in their neighborhoods, both positive and negative. To do this, communities can use indicators (“metrics”) to measure change over time.

There are many indicators that can be used to measure the housing diversity in a neighborhood. Many indicators focus on social and economic characteristics of neighborhood residents, such as the proportion of minority residents in a neighborhood (racial integration is often connected with economic integration), economic statistics, educational achievement, and housing tenure (renter- or owner-occupied). Housing metrics to track include statistics on housing type (for example, percentage of single and multi-family units, total # of housing units, level of subsidy, tenant type (senior, disabled, family, etc.)). Other metrics could relate to affordability of housing, such as percentage of income spent on housing or percentage of low-rate housing units. Other studies have looked at the rate of housing sales, with higher rates indicating more turnover in longtime residents.¹⁴⁻¹⁶

Accessing Data for Housing Indicators

Local housing data can be found on the City of Rochester’s online Neighborhood Data Map (www.cityofrochester.gov/neighborhooddatamap). Contact the city for help with defining the geographic boundaries for your neighborhood. Some data is only available by census tract and block group, which may cross more than one neighborhood, making it difficult to define characteristics of a given neighborhood.

To track changes over time, community groups can revisit the city website for updated information. For information about indicators not available on the city site, or to get information in table instead of map form, visit <http://factfinder2.census.gov>.

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Resources for Homeowners



Redevelopment of neighborhoods can reduce crime, beautify public spaces, and increase property values. However, rising property values can lead to higher property taxes, which can be a financial challenge for owner occupants who are struggling to pay their bills. Even without increased taxes, many owner-occupants on fixed incomes struggle to maintain their properties. If the burden of home ownership becomes too high, long-time residents may be forced to move to less expensive housing. This can be stressful, particularly when a family has lived in the same home for many years, and when affordable housing is not available in the neighborhood where these residents have social, cultural, or family connections. Public health research has shown that such ‘involuntary relocation’ can lead to negative mental and physical health effects. Refer to “Redevelopment, housing diversity and health” to learn more about how housing connects to health.



Home maintenance assistance can help homeowners with limited income. Here, we provide an overview of resources, tools, and approaches available to owner occupants in Rochester, NY to maintain their properties. Resources for homeowners include grant and loan programs from government, community groups, and banks. This summary focuses on ways community groups can help local residents take advantage of these resources.

Community groups can help residents afford home repair costs by connecting them with financial planning services, volunteer assistance programs, and other cost-saving programs. Community groups can also advocate to make sure that diverse housing options are available in the neighborhood so longtime residents who must leave their homes but wish to stay in the community are able to do so. For example, community involvement in development plans can encourage – or even require – a certain amount of affordable housing in new development. Here, we focus specifically on how community groups can assist owner-occupants with maintaining their current residential properties.

What Community Groups Can Do

Post notices in community spaces about available programs, updating frequently.

- ❖ **Help residents apply** for these programs. Figuring out which programs residents are eligible for and how to apply can be a challenge for individuals.
- ❖ **Work with the City and others to develop new programs to fill gaps.** If many residents find they have needs that are not filled by existing programs, City staff or the groups listed above may be able to help develop a new program to meet those needs.
- ❖ **Develop or coordinate with voluntary or contracted assistance programs,** for example by connecting youth with seniors who need help with snow shoveling, lawn mowing, etc.

City of Cleveland: Senior Home Maintenance Assistance

www.bit.ly/seniorhomeassist



Image credit:
www.wkyc.com

- ❖ Supported by the City of Cleveland Department of Aging
- ❖ Maintenance assistance, grants and loans for income-qualified seniors for:
 - ❖ General and heavy cleaning
 - ❖ Lawn care, outdoor maintenance
 - ❖ Home weatherization
 - ❖ Repair assistance to avoid citations
 - ❖ Hazardous tree and branch removal

Rebuilding Together



- ❖ A national program with 178 local chapters that support volunteers to work on homes as needed. To explore starting a local chapter, visit www.rebuildingtogether.org
- ❖ Funded by local businesses and corporate partners
- ❖ Work completed by skilled tradespeople and other volunteers
- ❖ Helps homeowners make repairs
- ❖ Build or repair other community resources like playgrounds, community gardens and community centers

Resources: Home Repair Grants and Loans

Action for a Better Community (ABC)

- Emergency Assistance Repair Program:
Owner-occupants based in the City of Rochester with non-working furnaces, water heaters, or broken water mains can apply. Eligible owner-occupants will receive free repairs or replacements to non-working units.
- Energy Conservation Program (ECP) EMPOWER. ECP and EMPOWER provide home weatherization services to reduce the cost of heating expense for families and businesses.

Contact: (585) 325-5116
917 East Main Street
Rochester, NY 14605
www.abcinfo.org

City of Rochester

The City of Rochester has a number of programs that can help homeowners in different situations. These programs change every year, so it is a good idea to check in regularly.

Contact: Bureau of Business and Housing Development
(585) 428-6808
www.cityofrochester.gov

Flower City Work Camp

A volunteer youth group that does painting and minor repairs for homeowners who meet income qualifications.

Contact: Charles Stechna, City of Rochester
Chuck.Stechna@cityofrochester.gov
www.flowercityworkcamp.org

The Housing Council at PathStone: www.thehousingcouncil.org

The Housing Council serves City residents through:

- The Housing Hotline
- Landlord and tenant training and other programs
- First-time homebuyer education and counseling
- Financial education and foreclosure prevention services

Contact: (585) 546-3700
75 College Avenue
Rochester, NY 14607

Lifespan

Lifespan can assist with safety-related home repairs and connect seniors with volunteer help and services to help them stay in their homes.

Contact: (585) 244-8400
<http://www.lifespan-roch.org>

Monroe County

The Monroe County Department of Public Health has a Healthy Homes grant program that can pay for repairing lead hazards and some other small repairs in homes with children under age six. In addition, the Healthy Neighborhoods Program conducts home health assessments in select zip codes, including 14608, and provides supplies to make homes safer.

Contacts:
Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program
(585) 753-5087
<http://www2.monroecounty.gov/eh-leadpoisoning.php>

Healthy Neighborhoods Program
(585) 753-5070 or (585) 753-5073 (en Español)
<http://www2.monroecounty.gov/eh-hnp.php>

NeighborWorks® Rochester

NeighborWorks® Rochester offers a number of programs to assist homeowners, including low interest loans and several energy improvement programs.

Contact: (585) 325-4170

www.nwrochester.org

PathStone: www.pathstoneenergyinfo.org

- Free energy audits
- Income-based free or reduced cost energy improvements, grants and loans, including loans for non-energy improvements
- Monthly workshops to educate landlords and home owners about the various programs available
- Give workshops by request in interested communities
- Tracks programs available from other agencies to help homeowners combine various programs for whole house solutions

Contact: (585) 442-2030

400 East Avenue

Rochester, NY 14607

Sector 4 Community Development Corporation (CDC)

Sector 4 Community Development Corporation administers a targeted housing grant program for the City of Rochester, and provides referral information on additional housing programs serving the SW Quadrant of the City of Rochester. Call their office for updated information.

Sector 4 Community Development Corporation (Sector 4 CDC) also maintains a “Resources for Home Rehabilitation and Repair” list. Contact Sector 4 CDC for the most recent detailed list.

Contact: (585) 328-5750

www.sector4cdc.org

Energy Efficiency Programs:

Reducing energy bills is a good way to free up money home maintenance, and many home improvements like insulation and window replacement also help reduce energy bills.

As noted above, Action for a Better Community, NeighborWorks® Rochester, and PathStone all offer free energy audits” to help homeowners decide whether such improvements will save them money in the near term.

These programs also have grants and loans available to those who qualify.

Private lenders:

For residents who do not qualify for the programs described above, many private banks and credit unions give small loans at low rates (see the Sector 4 CDC Resource list for several examples).

Resources for Renters



Redevelopment of neighborhoods can reduce crime, beautify public spaces, and increase property values. However, rising property values can lead to higher rents, which can be a financial challenge for low-income renters. When rental rates increase too much, long-time residents may be forced to move to less expensive rental housing. This can be stressful, particularly when affordable housing is not available in the neighborhood where these residents have social, cultural, or family connections. Public health research has shown that such ‘involuntary relocation’ can lead to negative mental and physical health effects. Refer to “Redevelopment, housing diversity and health” to learn more about how housing connects to health.

Here, we provide a summary of resources available to help Rochester renters stay in their neighborhood of choice. We focus on ways community groups can help local residents take advantage of these resources.

In the bigger picture, it is also important to make sure that diverse housing is available in the neighborhood to meet a broad range of residential needs. Community involvement in development plans can encourage – or even require – a certain amount of affordable units in new development.



<http://www.rochesterhousing.org>

What Community Groups Can Do

- ❖ Post notices in community spaces about available rental housing, updating frequently.
- ❖ Document instances of renters being faced with steep increases in rent and whether or not they are able to quickly find alternate affordable housing in the neighborhood. Communicate this information regularly to the community and local government.
- ❖ Help connect renters with the resources listed below.

Renter Assistance Resources

Action for a Better Community Energy Conservation Program:

The Energy Conservation Program and EMPOWER provide home weatherization services to reduce the cost of heating expenses for families and businesses.

Contact: (585) 442-4160

917 East Main Street

Rochester, NY 14605

<http://www.abcinfo.org>

City of Rochester: www.cityofrochester.gov

The City Division of housing works with developers to ensure City residents have access to safe, affordable housing. This office may be able to connect residents with projects that will be renting units in the future.

Contact: (585) 428-6808

Emergency Housing Services:

Renters who have urgent housing needs may wish to contact:

Monroe County Department of Human Services

Emergency assistance; child and family services

(585) 753-6298

www2.monroecounty.gov/hs-index.php

Salvation Army

Temporary shelter for the homeless

(585) 987-9500

rochesterny.salvationarmy.org/Empire_RochesterNY/ways-we-help

Catholic Family Center

Emergency housing assistance

(585) 232-2050

www.cfcrochester.org/our-services/emergency-services

Neighborhood-based agencies and settlement houses may have additional resources

The Housing Council at PathStone: www.thehousingcouncil.org

The Housing Council at PathStone provides the Housing Hotline to landlords, tenants, homeowners and the homeless; rental registry apartment listings; landlord training; tenant education; DHS inspections; veterans assistance; first time homebuyers pre- and post-purchase counseling; foreclosure prevention and home equity conversion mortgage counseling.

Contact: (585) 546-3700

75 College Avenue, Rochester, NY 14607

Legal Aid of Western New York:

Provides free legal representation and advice for low-income residents who have housing-related legal issues.

Contact: (585) 325-2520

<http://www.lawny.org/>

Lifespan:

Lifespan can help seniors find affordable rental housing.

<http://www.lifespan-roch.org/lower-income-older-adults.htm>

Monroe County Department of Public Health:

The Healthy Neighborhoods Program can conduct home health assessments in zip codes 14605, 14608, 14609, 14611, and 14621, and provide some supplies to make homes safer.

Contact: (585) 753-5070 or (585) 753-5073 (en Español)

www2.monroecounty.gov/eh-hnp.php

Neighborhood Service Centers:

Residents can contact their NSC with code violation complaints.

Northwest Quadrant Neighborhood Service Center
(585)428-7620

Northeast Quadrant Neighborhood Service Center
(585)428-7660

Southwest Quadrant Neighborhood Service Center
(585) 428-7630

Southeast Quadrant Neighborhood Service Center
(585) 428-7640

Rochester Housing Authority (RHA):

RHA's primary mission is to help low income renters find affordable housing. A variety of programs and services are available to qualified renters. RHA has a Family Self-Sufficiency department that assists residents and participants with training, employment, homeownership and many other areas to achieve self-sufficiency. RHA also works with other agencies to provide services and programs for its residents/participants.

Contact: (585) 697-6145

www.rochesterhousing.org/

The Broader Picture: Projects Near You that Support Healthy Living



Community groups often advocate for new services, resources or businesses that improve the neighborhood and support community health. Although neighborhood groups often focus on projects within their boundaries, it is important to remember that projects in nearby neighborhoods can also affect the health of the community. For example, a grocery store in one neighborhood can serve residents in nearby neighborhoods. To help keep track of projects in other neighborhoods that may impact the health of your neighborhood, it may be helpful to map planned, developing or recent projects. Mapping projects about a mile from the center of your neighborhood will cover most of the resources within walking or biking distance of residents.

There are many possible sources of information for these projects. Start by contacting the City of Rochester Bureau of Planning and Zoning and Bureau of Business and Housing Development.

The City Planning Process

City plans, such as the Comprehensive Plan or neighborhood plans, are often generated in departments within the City of Rochester with the support and direction of city stakeholders. Private and public projects are generally required to be consistent with adopted plans, which is why it is important for the City and its neighborhoods to engage in city planning.

Funding for public projects is accounted for in the City of Rochester's Operating Budget and the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Residents interested in learning more about the funding status of a City project can refer to the Capital Improvement Program. Money for City projects comes from local taxes and fees, federal and state grants, investments, and bond sales.

The City "Capital Improvement Program" (CIP) Process

The City of Rochester's 5-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is updated every year and approved as part of the budget planning process. To see the budget and other city links related to the budget, go to <http://www.cityofrochester.gov/budget>. The Capital Improvement Program is Section 15 of the currently approved budget (<http://www.cityofrochester.gov/article.aspx?id=8589937542>); projects are described under different categories like Municipal Facilities. For each project, the CIP lists the expected funding amount and source for the next five years. Note that while most projects the City sponsors appear in the CIP, sometimes new projects are added when unexpected grant opportunities arise.

Community Actions to Support Enforcement



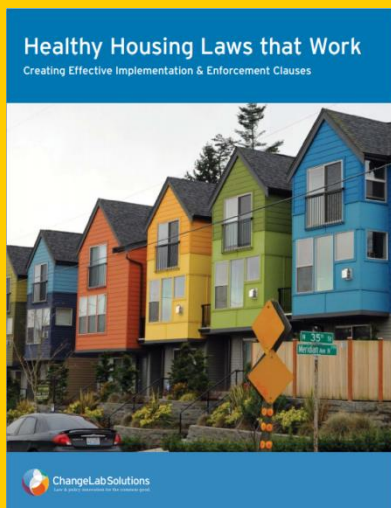
Community leaders frequently hear concerns from residents about problems in the neighborhood. Some of these problems, like excessive noise, illegal parking, crime, and trash, can have negative effects on health. In many cases, there are existing laws or processes in place to address these concerns. Below, we briefly summarize their connections to health and the tools that individuals and community groups can use to help address them.

How Do Local Governments Enforce Housing Laws?

www.bit.ly/HousingLaws

ChangeLab Solutions, a California-based law and policy non-profit, offers free resources to help community groups take action. These resources help agencies identify funding strategies, encourage healthy neighborhood planning, support tobacco control, and promote obesity prevention and healthy housing initiatives.

“Healthy Housing Laws that Work” outlines the tools that local governments can use to implement and enforce housing code violations.



Knowing about tools the City of Rochester and other local governments use to enforce local codes could help community groups work with the City of Rochester to improve neighborhoods.



Rochester's PAC-TAC teams

City of Rochester residents who wish to be actively involved in their community should consider participating in their local Police and Citizens Together Against Crime (PAC-TAC) group. Trained volunteers patrol their neighborhoods with an on-duty police officer, and interact with local businesses and residents to help prevent crime. Contact the City's PAC-TAC Volunteer Coordinator to learn more about how to sign up: (585) 428-7496.

Some communities also have “Dogs on Patrol” or similar programs. Volunteers include dog walkers or others who are regularly out walking in the community. Residents who regularly walk their neighborhoods are the most likely to notice when something seems wrong, and can report the situation in detail to law enforcement.

What Community Groups Can Do

- ❖ Help city enforcement grants and programs to target the biggest problems.

Work with your Neighborhood Service Center to identify problems and work together on ways to approach them. For example, in 2014 the Southwest Quadrant NSC partnered with a University of Rochester student to survey the condition of roofs in the neighborhood. This information may help identify needs for roof repair grants.

- ❖ Track complaints/concerns and their resolution over time.

Keep track of the complaint, the number of times called, and the result.

Some community groups have developed forms to help residents report concerns to the Neighborhood Service Center. This lets them keep a copy and makes it easier to track and follow up over time on problem areas.

- ❖ Advocate for additional inspection, enforcement, and police resources.

The ability of city staff to respond quickly and effectively to community concerns is often limited by a shortage of staff time or resources. Community groups can take part in the budget planning process to support additional funding or to focus these resources on needs they have identified in the community. Information about the city's budget process is online at: <http://www.cityofrochester.gov/budget/>

- ❖ Identify needs for new laws, regulations or programs.

Sometimes community groups identify problems that require changes in regulations or laws. For example, community groups were very important in adoption of the city's lead law and the inspection requirement for single-family rentals. A good starting point is to contact your city council members (council@cityofrochester.gov).

- ❖ Help monitor the impact of existing laws

When new programs and laws are put in place, it is important to track how they are affecting different areas over time. For example, in 2013, the City passed a new program for categorizing retail outlets in an effort to reduce the concentration of stores selling unhealthy products like lottery tickets, alcohol, and tobacco. Community groups could survey the corner stores in their area and how they change over time, reporting their results to City Council.

What Individuals Can Do

Crime/Safety

Crime and safety are often of great concern to neighbors. The direct connection to health may seem obvious – victims may be physically or mentally harmed. However, research has documented indirect effects, such as contributing to stress, reducing community cohesion, and preventing residents from exercising outside.

Who to call?

If you are the victim of a crime or are experiencing an emergency, call 911.

If there is an emergency and you are not able to make a voice call, the City of Rochester and Monroe County now also receive 911 texts from Verizon, T-Mobile, AT&T and Sprint customers. **Only text if voice calling is not an option.** Include the address and nature of the situation in your first text.

Crime Prevention:

Residents can be part of the effort to prevent crime in their communities. The City organizes many crime prevention programs, including:

- ❖ Do the Right Thing: Recognizes children setting positive examples
- ❖ Police and Citizens Together Against Crime (PAC-TAC): Residents help police patrol neighborhoods
- ❖ Clergy on Patrol: Clergy help build relationships between neighborhood residents and police

Community Policing and Reporting

The U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community-Oriented Policing Services (COPS) offers grants and other support for communities that wish to initiate or expand citizen policing and enforcement programs. Visit <http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/> for more information.

Neighborhood Watch is perhaps the most common example of community monitoring. Operated by the NYS Department of Justice, this program encourages members to report suspicious activities in their neighborhood, carefully recording details. Contact the City of Rochester Police Department to initiate a Neighborhood Watch program in your community.

COPS recently funded a pilot university-police-community partnership model at three colleges. The programs aimed to reduce violent crime and gang related activity on the campuses through community-university partnerships. Program goals were identified through focus groups of community residents. Work groups who designed programs to address these concerns included law enforcement officers and community stakeholders representing faith-based organizations, local schools, nonprofits, civic leaders, local citizen groups, and local industry. Academic partners and student interns collected and analyzed data to support their efforts and monitor success. For more information see: www.bit.ly/COPSprogram

For more about City crime prevention programs, visit <http://www.cityofrochester.gov/category.aspx?id=8589935109> or contact your Neighborhood Service Center.

Noise

Ongoing exposure to excessive noise can contribute to stress and cause health problems. “Acute” noises (for example from neighbors making noise late at night) and “Chronic” noises (for example a constantly barking dog or loud car regularly visiting the neighborhood) can disrupt sleep, cause stress and create tension among neighbors.

What’s the Law?

Chapter 75 of the City of Rochester noise ordinance limits “excessive noise,” which is defined differently based on location and time of day:

Location	Time of Day	Law
Private Property	8am – 10pm	Noise should not be heard more than 50 feet past property line
Private Property	10pm – 8am	Noise should not be heard past the property line
Public Spaces (streets, parks, etc)	All times	Noise should not be heard more than 50 feet from the source

Who to call?

To report chronic (ongoing) or acute (one-time, immediate) noise problems during business hours, contact your Neighborhood Service Center.

For noise complaints after business hours (such as a late night party), call 911 (police).

Traffic/parking

Most concerns about traffic and parking in urban neighborhoods are related to the nuisance and inconvenience for other residents. For example, an idling truck outside a neighbor’s window, or cars parked over a sidewalk, may contribute to stress and reduce community cohesiveness.

What's the Law?

Cars are parked illegally if they are on the sidewalk, within 15 feet of a fire hydrant, in a no parking zone, or otherwise in violation of posted parking signs.

Parking on private property must also follow guidelines for municipal codes. Section 120-173 (subsection F) of the municipal zoning code states that all single- and two-family homes may have a maximum of 3 cars per unit. Cars may not be parked on the front lawn or in a side yard, unless they are on a legal driveway that provides access to the rear yard, or to a detached or attached garage.

Who to call?

To report illegally parked cars, contact the Parking and Municipal Code Violations Bureau:

(585) 428-7484 or pvb@cityofrochester.gov

If you are having trouble with legally parked cars in your neighborhood (such as regular difficulties finding space to park), contact your Neighborhood Service Center, which may be able to help you reach an agreement with your neighbors.

Remaining in contact with city planning staff can help them address such problems in new development projects. For example, they may require additional parking to be built for new business or housing developments.

Poor property maintenance

Poorly maintained properties (contributing to “blight”) can impact health in direct and indirect ways. An example of a direct impact on health is a vacant property where children can get hurt. Another is trash or overgrown vegetation that serves as a breeding ground for pests. Less directly, poorly maintained homes can reduce property values, increase crime rates, and contribute to stress.

What's the Law?

Property owners are required to pick up trash, mow grass and maintain weeds below 10 inches, and to secure vacant properties to prevent people from entering. There are additional aesthetic requirements, such as taking care of peeling paint.

Who to call?

Code violation complaints may be submitted online at www.bit.ly/code_complaints. To report a complaint over the phone, call 3-1-1 (585-428-5990) or your Neighborhood Service Center.

Resources: Neighborhood Service Centers

Northwest Quadrant
(585)428-7620

Northeast Quadrant
(585)428-7660

Southwest Quadrant
(585) 428-7630

Southeast Quadrant
(585) 428-7640

Raising Awareness

Community groups can play a role in raising awareness of code violations in their neighborhood. Frequent reporting and documentation can help the city identify code violations and enforce these laws. For example, community groups can develop a form for residents to fill out with complaints. These can be sent to the Neighborhood Service Center, and a copy can be kept by the community group. The forms help residents know what kind of information to include in a complaint, and keeping records allows community groups to monitor complaints and responses. If a property is sold, communities may also wish to reach out to the new owner to discuss neighborhood expectations.

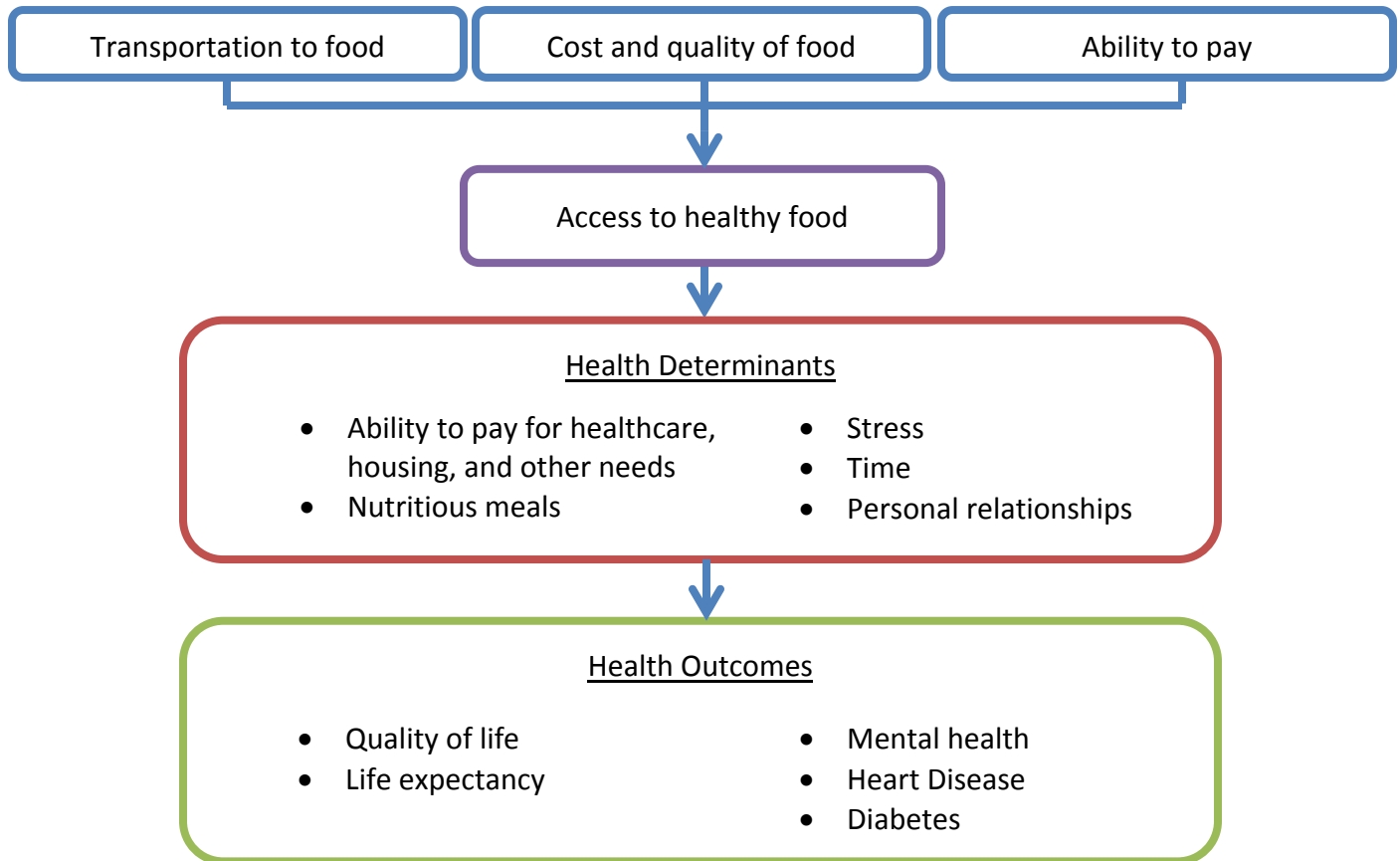
Healthy Food Access Initiatives in Rochester



Good nutrition is an important foundation for good health. Research and experience have shown that not having access to healthy, affordable food can contribute to poor nutrition. This may result in hunger, obesity, and other health problems. Although being able to buy healthy food easily does not necessarily mean people will eat better, many studies have shown that lack of access to healthy food can be a significant barrier to good nutrition. In addition, if residents have to spend more of their income on high-priced food, they will have less money for other health-promoting resources, like health care. If people have to spend more time driving or taking a bus to buy food, this may also reduce the time they have for health-promoting activities such as exercise. The pathway diagram below shows how increasing food access could improve residents' health.

The USDA defines food access based on residents' average income and distance from the nearest supermarket.¹ Residents in several Rochester, NY neighborhoods have identified food access as a challenge, and community leaders have expressed a strong desire to increase access to healthy food.

Figure 1 - Linking Food Access and Health



In other cities, many different approaches have been used to increase residents' food access. These initiatives work at many levels of the "food system" – how food is produced, sold, purchased, and consumed. These include:

- ❖ Advocating for and supporting new full-service grocery stores
- ❖ Encouraging "corner stores" to add more healthy foods
- ❖ Starting farm markets, trucks or stands
- ❖ Supporting community gardens and urban farms
- ❖ Improving transportation to increase access to food options

There are several good summaries available online at ChangeLab Solutions that provide more information about these options, including "Health on the Shelf" and "Getting to Grocery."² Similar initiatives have been implemented or are underway in Rochester. A brief summary is provided below, along with contacts for more information.

1. USDA USDa. Food Access Research Atlas. Available at: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/go-to-the-atlas.aspx>
 2. ChangeLab Solutions. Food Retail. Available at: <http://changelabsolutions.org/childhood-obesity/healthy-food-retail>



Full Service Grocery Stores

One of the most commonly suggested ways to increase food access is to open a new full-service grocery store in the neighborhood. A full-service grocery store sells a wide range of food types, including fresh fruits and vegetables, at competitive prices. However, it is often difficult to get new grocery stores to locate in low-income neighborhoods because they need a large amount of business to be profitable and survive over time. Also, the nearest stores are not necessarily the stores used most by residents, due to transportation, price, or preference (see Transportation, below).

What Community Groups Can Do

- ❖ Work with other neighborhoods to identify regional needs for new stores
- ❖ Conduct a study on where residents currently shop and their food access needs
- ❖ Explore models for cooperative or community-run stores from other cities

Resources

City of Rochester Department of Neighborhood and Business Development: NBD supports efforts to bring new businesses into the City, including food stores. Contact them for resources or to connect with others who are working on this issue.

Contact: (585) 428-6883

www.cityofrochester.gov/nbd

Improving Food Options in Corner Stores

Some neighborhoods have numerous corner or convenience stores that sell packaged foods, but few fresh fruits, vegetables, dairy products, etc. In Rochester, as in other cities, there have been recent efforts to encourage these stores to sell healthier products. Challenges include things like needing additional coolers or refrigerators, lack of demand, and difficulty obtaining products over time.

What Community Groups Can Do

- ❖ Identify corner store owners interested in expanding their healthy food offerings.
- ❖ Encourage residents to buy healthier foods from neighborhood stores that stock them.
- ❖ Monitor the stores' success, challenges, and needs over time.

Resources

Foodlink: Foodlink's Community Store Program has worked with a number of corner stores.

Contact: Mitch Gruber
mgruber@foodlinkny.org
www.foodlinkny.org

City of Rochester Neighborhood Service Centers: Check to see if there are convenience stores in your area that have converted to or propose to convert to a full-line food store.

Contact the City for your Neighborhood Service Center information:
<http://www.cityofrochester.gov/article.aspx?id=8589936730>
 or call 3-1-1

Check Out Healthy Retail

http://changelabsolutions.org/healthy_retail

Check Out Healthy Retail is an infographic designed to help community residents and store owners visualize what a corner store selling healthy food might look like. Healthy food is front and center, and ads promoting alcohol and tobacco are absent.



Farmers Markets, Stands, and Other Direct Sale Outlets

Farmers markets are a popular way to get locally grown produce into neighborhoods, sometimes at lower costs than stores.

There are many other ways to sell directly to consumers that can increase access to healthy foods. For example:

- ❖ Temporary farm stands or trucks may provide access to produce in areas without farmers markets.
- ❖ Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) connects farmers directly with consumers, which may increase access healthy food at lower costs. In CSAs, consumers agree to pay farmers a set amount for a “share” of what they grow. There are many variations in how CSAs are organized, including cost, type of produce, delivery arrangements, etc.

Did You Know?

Many farmers markets in the City of Rochester allow shoppers to use Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. Several markets offer bonus tokens to SNAP customers. Contact your local market to learn more.



<https://foodnutritioncoalition.wordpress.com>

What Community Groups Can Do

- ❖ Support “direct sale” efforts by identifying needs, advertising programs, and getting resident and vendor feedback on their success.
- ❖ Maintain a list of CSAs, markets, and other sources of affordable healthy food and promote these to residents.
- ❖ Encourage residents to support and sustain these efforts by buying from them regularly
- ❖ Provide support for direct sale efforts (CSA, farm markets, etc.) such as space, staff time, promotional events, or free advertising.

Resources

Local Farmers Markets:

The New York State Department of Agriculture maintains a list of local farmers markets:

[www.agriculture.ny.gov/ap/communityfarmersmarkets.asp#Monroe County](http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/ap/communityfarmersmarkets.asp#Monroe%20County)

Farm Stands and Farm Trucks:

Foodlink currently has a program to bring low-cost fruits and vegetables to a number of sites in Rochester. For example, Foodlink organizes “pop up” farm markets at community organizations/sites and “curbside markets” that bring produce to a central location (health center, housing development, etc.) for an hour once a week.

Contact: Mitch Gruber
mgruber@foodlinkny.org
www.foodlinkny.org

Consumer Supported Agriculture/Buying Collectives:

Contact or visit the Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York (NOFA-NY) for more information about CSAs and to access a list of CSAs near you.

Contact: (585) 271-1979
info@nofany.org
www.nofany.org/organic-farming/food-justice-program/csa

The Rochester Democrat & Chronicle maintains an online database of CSA programs in New York:

rochester.nydatabases.com/database/local-community-supported-agriculture-csa-programs

Community Gardens and Urban Farms

Helping residents grow more of their own food is another solution to increase food access – residents get more healthy food at low cost, with their own labor and start-up costs. Community gardening can be complicated, however, by the need to test soil for contamination or to bring in clean soil, obtain needed resources (like tools, water, fencing, seeds, etc.), and the time required to organize the gardeners. The short growing season in Rochester also limits productivity. Nonetheless, there is an increasing range of successful models for growing food in the city. Over 100 community garden permits were issued by the City of Rochester in 2014 for city-owned lots; there are many more on privately owned land.

What Community Groups Can Do

- ❖ Keep an up-to-date inventory of community gardens in the neighborhood to refer interested residents.
- ❖ Identify residents interested in community gardens and connect them to existing gardens or resources for starting new ones.
- ❖ Share information on safe and successful gardening.
- ❖ Host classes on gardening, preserving produce, and healthy cooking.
- ❖ Start a community garden and oversee its operations.

Resources

Communities interested in starting a community garden in the City of Rochester should contact Sara Scott, Coordinator of Horticultural and Environmental Programming, to learn more about the resources available to community gardeners.

Contact: Sara Scott
 (585) 428-8820
scotts@cityofrochester.gov

Cornell Cooperative Extension offers education/resources to help support community gardens.

Contact: (585) 753-2550
www.monroe.cce.cornell.edu

Foodlink currently supports over 20 community gardens.

Contact: Mitch Gruber

(585) 328-3380

www.foodlinkny.org

Improving Transportation to Healthy Food Sources

As noted above, the nearest store may not be the most accessible, particularly for people who take public transportation. Improving public transportation to food stores is one option. Another may be shuttles or organizing private transportation. Some grocery stores currently provide shuttles to senior housing, for example. Or, there are on-line systems to organize private ride-shares that could be used for food shopping.

What Community Groups Can Do

- ❖ Identify where residents currently shop, how they get there, and barriers they face (such as time).
- ❖ Share results with private groceries and encourage shuttle service, if needed.
- ❖ Explore a community-based private ride share system.

Resources

Regional Transit Service

Contact: (585) 288-1700

www.myrts.com

Updates and Coordination

This information was current as of December 2014. However, this is a very active area of community activity; it is important to check frequently for updates, changes, or new programs. Because the “food system” is so complex, changes in one activity can affect others. Therefore, it is essential to be aware of ongoing initiatives throughout the city and

region. For example, starting a farmers' market a few blocks away from a planned grocery store may be less useful than locating it where there are no stores. Good coordination among initiatives is essential to effectively improve residents' access to healthy food. In the past there have been efforts to bring together the many groups working on improving the local food system, but currently no such coordinating group is in place.

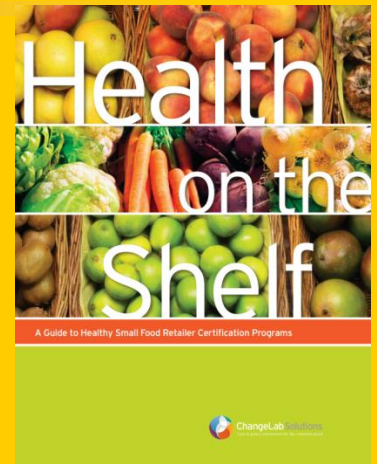
“Health on the Shelf”

http://changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/Health_on_the_Shelf_FINAL_20130322-web.pdf

ChangeLab Solutions, a California-based law and policy non-profit, offers free resources to help community groups take action. These resources help agencies identify funding strategies, encourage healthy neighborhood planning, support tobacco control, and promote obesity prevention and healthy housing initiatives.

“Health on the Shelf: A Guide to Healthy Small Food Retailer Certification Programs” is designed to help governments and community agencies support and incentivize corner stores and other small food retailers in selling healthier food options.

In 2012, a partnership of Baldwin Park, CA residents and local advocates worked together to develop and pass the Baldwin Park Healthy Corner Store policy. The voluntary, incentive-based policy incorporates several ideas outlined in “Health on the Shelf.” The policy helps store owners understand and incorporate best practices, and encourages collaboration among store owners and the community. ChangeLab Solutions highlighted this success in their Fall 2014 newsletter. To learn more, visit: http://bit.ly/CL_Newsletter_Fall2014



Health Impact Assessment



The field of Health Impact Assessment (HIA) supports using health arguments to influence public decisions, including those related to economic security. HIA can be a powerful tool to help community groups partner with local agencies during the decision making process, and can bring multiple stakeholders together around a common goal: protecting the health of communities.



In 2012, the University of Rochester Environmental Health Sciences Center (EHSC) conducted Healthy Waterways, an HIA of the City of Rochester's Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP). The LWRP focused on a narrow boundary (about half a mile) along the Genesee River, Erie Canal and Lake Ontario. Healthy Waterways introduced considerations about potential health impacts for local residents and communities surrounding the LWRP that would not have otherwise been included because of the narrow boundary. Healthy Waterways recommendations for the whole LWRP area related to improving access to the Genesee River for neighboring communities, and adding community health to the LWRP vision statement and goals.

As part of Healthy Waterways, the EHSC conducted community surveys in the Southwest quadrant to collect information about residents' health and well-being, including where they buy food, how much they exercise, and how safe they feel. The survey also asked residents about how potential neighborhood changes might impact their health. The Healthy Waterways survey could be used in other neighborhoods to assess community health, and repeated to track change over time.

The Healthy Waterways report, which includes the survey used, can be found online at www.bit.ly/healthywaterways.

The Health Impact Project – a collaboration between the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and The Pew Charitable Trusts – hosts an interactive map of HIAs completed in the US. Explore this map to learn more about how communities have used HIA to bring health considerations into economic development decisions: www.bit.ly/HIAintheUS.