



*Our **City**. Our **County**. United for **Change**.*

MONROE COUNTY **CITY OF ROCHESTER**

Commission on Racial
and Structural Equity

2022 Progress Report

The Commission on Racial and Structural Equality (RASE) is an intergovernmental collaboration between the County of Monroe and the City of Rochester. In acknowledgement of national and local calls for systemic and institutional change, RASE was established to review, identify and recommend changes to local laws, policies and practices that will eliminate inequities across our county and city.

The Commission's work involved three Co-Chairs, 21 Commissioners and more than 200 community members who reviewed, discussed and put forth more than 200 recommendations aimed at dismantling structural inequities across nine sectors of our city and county.

The Commission released its report "No Time for Excuses: It's Time for Action" on March 18, 2021. Since, Monroe County and the City of Rochester have enacted a number of groundbreaking initiatives rooted in those recommendations and continues to explore avenues for fulfilling the Commission's vision of making transformative change and creating a more equitable community.

Our government and our community must be inclusive and welcome all, regardless of race, color, status, sexual orientation or any other identifying factor. The work of the RASE Commission is a significant step toward building a community and a government that ensures all people are treated fairly. We are committed to making effective and lasting changes to County and City policies, practices and procedures that have created barriers that unfairly hold people back and create disproportionate outcomes for our Black and Brown citizens.

By implementing the recommendations of the RASE commission, we will create an environment of diversity, of respect and inclusion. Monroe County and the City of Rochester will set the standard for equitable communities. As we move forward, we will continue to set goals based on RASE Commission recommendations, develop strategies that position us for success and hold ourselves accountable for achieving them.



Adam J. Bello
Monroe County Executive



Malik D. Evans
Mayor, City of Rochester



City and County efforts have embraced the RASE Commission's Five Systemic Solutions:

- 1.** Create and invest in sustainable economic opportunities in Black and Latinx communities to promote and maintain self-sufficiency, entrepreneurship, and career advancement.

- 2.** Implement and incentivize practices and programs that increase the racial/ethnic diversity and cultural competence of employees, vendors, and contractors.

- 3.** End practices that disproportionately drain resources from Black and Latinx communities.

- 4.** Decentralize services and embed them in trusted agencies throughout the community.

- 5.** Embed accountability measures in all policies to ensure equity and fairness across all services, programs, and delivery models.

Business Development

Recommendation: Create a City/County Minority and Women Business Enterprise (MWBE) Certification Program.

Action: This new county program was officially announced on January 27, 2022. www.monroecounty.gov/dei-mwbe.

Recommendation: Host a joint City/County MWBE Business Development Fair.

Action: Monroe County's Department of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion will host this event in the spring of 2022.

Education

Recommendation: Integrate Monroe County Youth Services into school systems to provide a continuation of learning and access during suspension and long-term absences.

Action: Under development as part of an ongoing redesign of the Monroe County Department of Human Services.

Recommendation: Develop a system for the County Office of Mental Health to lead and partner in setting expectations for certification and yearly training for teachers, school therapists, social workers and the community.

Action: Under development as part of an ongoing redesign of the Monroe County Department of Human Services.

Healthcare

Recommendation: Make a formal statement that racism is a health crisis.

Action: Monroe County Executive Adam Bello signed a declaration declaring Racism is a Public Health Crisis in May 2020.

Recommendation: Establish a standing Health Committee in the Monroe County Legislature.

Action: This action falls under the purview of the Monroe County Legislature. If the legislature selects to create such a committee, County Executive Bello would fully support their decision.

Recommendation: Allocate funds and personnel to the Department of Public Health to study and create anti-racist health interventions.

Action: Every county department is working with the Department of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion to establish a Diversity Action Plan that roots out systemic inequities and racist practices and establishes new pathways for equitable decision-making.

Recommendation: Establish a funded Department of Equity and Justice.

Action: County Executive Bello created the Department of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in March 2021.

Recommendation: Decentralize the Monroe County Department of Public Health (DPH) and put locations in neighborhoods with high populations of BIPOC.

Action: The ongoing redesign of the County Department of Human Services (DHS) seeks ways to decentralize all programs and find ways to work with community-based organizations to bring services directly into neighborhoods.

Recommendation: Pay living wages to all staff employed or contracted by DPH and Monroe Community Hospital.

Action: County Executive Bello raised the minimum wage for all county employees to \$15 per hour, effective January 1, 2022.

Recommendation: Enact County procedures to ensure rapid availability of translators and ASL interpreters so all residents can effectively communicate with County departments.

Action: Language Access Plans are being implemented in all county departments in 2022.

Recommendation: Mandate training on racism, implicit bias cultural and linguistic competency for all individuals who provide health services, screening or counseling through the Department of Public Health.

Action: The County's Department of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is currently updating all legally-required trainings to reflect this recommendation, and is developing new trainings that will be rolled out in coming years.

Recommendation: Allocate funding to train and employ BIPOC healthcare workers at all levels of the Department of Public Health.

Action: The MPower workforce development initiative and a new career ladder program for Monroe County healthcare staff provide additional training and support for BIPOC healthcare workers.

Health and Human Services

Recommendation: Implement a “blind removal” process for foster care.

Action: Child Protective Services has implemented this recommendation, which means all demographic and identifiable information must be removed from case files when workers are determining whether a child must be removed from their home to avoid imminent risk to the safety and health of the child.

Recommendation: Hire Cultural Brokers.

Action: Under review as part of ongoing Department of Human Services redesign.

Recommendation: Support and invest in Livable Communities for Older Adults initiative.

Action: The County’s Office for the Aging is seeking designation as an “age-friendly” livable community from the AARP and World Health Organization.

Job Creation

Recommendation: Better market civil service opportunities.

Action: The state is currently reviewing the Civil Service process and Monroe County supports state-level changes that would increase equity for civil service exams. The County’s Department of Human Services is hiring a recruiter to do more outreach regarding job opportunities to people of color and individuals living in rural communities.

Recommendation: Develop clear MWBE purchasing requirements and increase MWBE percentage goals for all contract types.

Action: MWBE percentage goals have been implemented for contracts beyond construction. Contractors must submit plans for 12% MBE utilization and 3% WBE for service contracts over \$20,000 and public works contracts over \$60,000.

Recommendation: Adopt a drug testing policy congruent with the City of Rochester’s policy.

Action: Monroe County no longer tests for marijuana usage for employees not subject to such testing under federal regulations. Additionally, County Executive Bello changes a policy that prohibited individuals who had failed a drug test from ever applying for new employment within the county. Now, individuals are banned from applying for new jobs for a one-year period.

Recommendation: Review promotion and advancement policies to ensure they contribute to equity.

Action: Promotion and advancement policies and practices will be an essential piece of the Diversity Action Plans under development in each County department.

Mental Health and Addiction Services

Recommendation: Develop a community Behavioral Health Advocates program to employ local residents trained and certified to assist people with advocacy, help individuals connect with and navigate behavioral health services, identify distressed persons who need services before emergencies occur and provide low-complexity therapeutic interventions as appropriate.

Action: The Office of Mental Health will roll out a peer program. The Improving Addiction Services Team has already begun deploying peers as part of its work.

Recommendation: Redesign the Department of Human Services to make it consumer oriented, person/family friendly .

Action: This redesign is underway.

Recommendation: Examine and modify interpretation of DHS regulations that affect people with mental health and substance use disorders, including attendance and compliance requirements that may otherwise disqualify individuals from accessing services.

Action: This is being considered as part of the Department of Human Services redesign.

Business Development

Recommendation: Increase access to city/county financial assistance.

Actions:

- Kiva program support – Empowering Rochester’s entrepreneurs with accessible small business loans.
- Targeted Business Revitalization Grant program.
- Health Care Workforce Resiliency Program (SEIU).

Recommendation: Establish reasonable timelines and enforcement of these timelines so that MWBE companies can be paid in a timely manner.

Action: The City has established the use of LCP Tracker and B2Gnow software to ensure timeliness of payments.

Recommendation: Provide culturally competent mentorship and support that is proactive at reaching MWBE businesses and entrepreneurs where they currently are: design appropriate outreach to both meet them in their current physical locations and to meet them where they are in the business development cycle.

Action: Investigating opportunities for MWBEs to mentor young workers looking for work experience.

Recommendation: Make comprehensive MWBE certification information more accessible on the City of Rochester and Monroe County websites.

Actions:

- ESD website updates. Ongoing updates to NYS directory link quarterly.
- Integrated Qwally software into the City’s website to create a more inclusive digital landscape for online small business, procurement, and supplier diversity programs. Website in development (www.rocmybiz.cityofrochester.gov).

Recommendation: Engagement and outreach to MWBEs.

Actions:

- City’s MWBE team conducted monthly 1:1 meetings with MWBE business owners to provide guidance and support (pre-COVID; efforts to resume in 2022).
- Sponsorship of MWBE meetings that brought together business owners for education and networking.

- Hired a Compliance Analyst to manage an apprenticeship/work development program and conduct compliance field investigation work that is required on all state and federal contracts.
- Hired an MWBE Analyst to provide direct training and outreach events including OSHA 10 training, bidding, insurance and bonding training, and RFP and grant workshops.

Criminal Justice

Recommendation: End Pre-Textual Stops.

Action: Lt. Joseph Hayes, Research and Evaluation, has reviewed current department procedures regarding Pre-Textual Stops and is reviewing current literature and case studies. He will draft an updated policy for the Department, expected to be presented to the Chief in mid-March 2022.

Healthcare

Recommendation: Make a formal declaration that racism is a public health crisis.

Action: On March 8, 2022, Mayor Evans joined the Black Agenda Group to remind members of the Rochester community to sign the “Racism is a Public Health Crisis” pledge and to help introduce the organization’s new Implementation Tool.

Recommendation: Funding for comprehensive developmental screenings (through the GROW program) and to bring those screenings to neighborhoods with high racial health and education disparities.

Action: The City has entered into a professional agreement contract with GROW through the Children’s Institute since 2021. Grow will provide free training for childcare, family childcare and health care providers on the implementation of early childhood screening, which will look at developmental milestones and physical well-being including vision, hearing and dental. All training and screening will be provided at no cost to participants.

Housing

Recommendation: Monroe County and the City of Rochester should adopt a policy in support of “greenlining.”

Action: Earmark more than \$24M to the City’s new Buy the Block greenlining program, subsidizing purchases of new houses by qualified applicants, making capital improvements to existing homes and investing in mixed-use buildings in the neighborhood.

Recommendation: Explore the feasibility of a Tenant Opportunity to Purchase law in Rochester.

Actions:

- The Mayor has created a Quality Housing Task Force that will consider this and other recommendations; Task Force to present recommendations by the end of April 2022.
- Exploring options to create a Housing Trust Fund that could support this type of initiative.

Recommendation: Just Cause Eviction: Adopt tenant protections, such as right to counsel in eviction and “just cause” eviction mandate.

Action: The Mayor has created a Quality Housing Task Force that will consider this and other recommendations; Task Force to present recommendations by the end of April 2022.

Job Creation

Recommendation: Make the Civil Service test free for all.

Action: Team actively working on ways City would pay NYS directly; considerations include variable cost (number of exam candidates, especially when entry Police Officer or Firefighter exams are held.)

Recommendation: Expand Civil Service-related Explorer programs in high schools. These have been shown to boost applicants by modeling a career pathway.

Action: Reestablishing Career Pathways for Public Safety, a program with the Rochester City School District that connects students to career opportunities with the Rochester Police Department, Rochester Fire Department, Emergency Communications Department, and Emergency Medical Technician Team.

Recommendation: Ensure that companies are paying well for the work done by implementing Living Wage criteria.

Actions:

- Raised minimum wage to \$15 per hour across the City, and signed on to RMAPI's Level-Up initiative
- Since 2018, as part of the Workforce Planning Framework Initiative, the Department of Human Resource management (DHRM) has been working on succession planning and ensuring departmental leadership is reflective of the City's demographics.
- Exploring opportunities to engage vendors, grantees, and partners embrace Living Wage criteria.

Mental Health and Addiction Services

Recommendation: Practices: Develop Community Behavioral Health Advocates (CBHA), a program employing local residents who are trained and certified to assist people with advocacy; offer help to connect with and navigate behavioral health services; identify distressed persons who need services before emergencies occur; and provide low-complexity therapeutic interventions, as appropriate.

Actions:

- Creation of The Office of Crisis Intervention Services, a unit of the City's Department of Recreation and Human Services, to provide a comprehensive, community-based response to support victims and families dealing with homicides, mental health, domestic violence, and other related crises.
- Creation of the Person In Crisis (PIC) Team, a unit that responds alongside (or in lieu of) the police in mental health and substance abuse crises.

Policing

Recommendation: We are recommending the City of Rochester enhance the Career Pathways to Public Safety program offered by the Rochester City School District, and the PREP program offered by Monroe Community College to firmly establish a direct pipeline for youth to enter the ranks of local law enforcement.

Action: Reestablishing Career Pathways for Public Safety, a program with the Rochester City School District that connects students to career opportunities with the Rochester Police Department (RPD), Rochester Fire Department, Emergency Communications Department, and Emergency Medical Technician Team. (con't)

Policing (con't)

Recommendation: We are recommending that uniformed personnel be provided training on the consequences of trauma for themselves and the community and have more resources available for officer wellness.

Action: Funding approved in February 2022 for trauma impact training program for RPD recruits, officers, investigators, and supervisors.

Recommendation: We are recommending local police agencies adopt the recommendation and action items outlined in the Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing as it pertains to community engagement, a guardian mindset, procedural justice, and officer wellness. Additionally, we recommend the Rochester Police Department review and adopt the community engagement strategies outlined in the City of Rochester's Blueprint for Engagement.

Actions:

- Officers from RPD participated alongside other law enforcement agencies throughout the county in city events throughout the summer with a goal of improving police-community relations.
- Updates made to procedures and policies with input from the community.
- Body worn cameras (BWC) worn by patrol officers.
- Proposed purchase of BWCs for other sworn members of the Department.
- Creation of the RPD Wellness Unit to keep Officers safe, along with ensuring Officers are supplied with equipment to keep them safe such as bulletproof vests.
- Currently planning Trauma Training for all sworn members of the RPD.
- Purchase in progress of a wellness app that provides wellness information to Officers and their family members, and allows confidential emails to be sent to the Wellness Unit by Officers.
- A second Civil Service test will be offered in April 2022 to increase the number of community residents that have the opportunity to take the test.