

# Opportunity Agenda



**Governor's Cuomo's Opportunity Agenda initiative is a vehicle by which the Council can build upon existing and forge new efforts to help poor communities overcome the challenges that prevent them from fully participating in the region's economic revitalization.**

In order to maximize the impact of community redevelopment and establish an evidence-based proof of concept for future efforts, the Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council has selected a single high poverty area within the City of Rochester for its Opportunity Agenda proposal. The El Camino neighborhood consists of approximately 35 blocks within northeast Rochester with a population of 5,652. A distressed community in need of transformation, El Camino faces a number of challenges: chronic urban poverty; a transitory population subjected to substandard housing; a significant and impactful lack of educational attainment; and high unemployment. The Council's Opportunity Agenda proposal for El Camino directly addresses the link between education and employment, with a fundamental belief that creating access to jobs will help rebuild and revitalize this and other urban neighborhoods.

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## Statement of Opportunity

The El Camino neighborhood lies within an area known as Rochester's "Crescent of Poverty." Historically, this area was a magnet for immigrants to the city, seeking mobility into the country's growing middle class. Today, this area represents Rochester's highest proportion of African-American, Latino, and recent immigrant residents, who comprise almost 80 percent of the area's population.

More than half the households in the area have incomes of less than \$25,000, and almost three quarters of residents have annual household income levels of less than \$35,000. The neighborhood has a poverty rate of 48 percent, with 38 percent of residents receiving public assistance. This limited economic means is reflected in the composition of the area's housing; close to 80 percent of residents in the 14605 zip code live in rental housing.

Almost a third of the households in the area are led by single females with children and only 10 percent of the homes with children are classified "two parent." These data, along with household income, explain why Rochester ranks seventh in the nation in child poverty. The rate of childhood poverty in El Camino is 63 percent.

One source of this poverty is the lack of economic opportunity driven by poor education. Of those 25 and over living within the Crescent, 48 percent have not completed high school and another 41 percent hold only a high school diploma as their highest academic credential. Only 12 percent have attained any college credential. Whereas postsecondary credentials are essential to participation in the region's growing knowledge-based economy, many El Camino residents find themselves locked out of opportunity. Consequently, the unemployment rate in the neighborhood is 27 percent, more than double the Rochester rate as a whole (11 percent).

These challenges and conditions are present in too many other urban neighborhoods in Rochester. The Opportunity Agenda offers the Council an opportunity to rethink community development, using the Governor's innovative initiative to create a community collaboration designed to maximize the collective impact of multiple projects. The El Camino neighborhood has multiple existing assets that can be leveraged to support the Opportunity Agenda. These include:

- Neighborhood affinity groups: the Los Flamboyanes Tenant Association, the North Clinton Avenue Business Association, Huntington Park Neighborhood Watch, and the Rochester Hispanic Youth Baseball League.
- Community-based service providers: Clinton Family Health Center, the Ibero-American Action League and Development Corporation, Project HOPE, and local schools and city facilities.
- Emerging community revitalization efforts: the El Camino Butterhole-Seneca Park Trail and the El Camino Estates housing development.

The missing element in this list of assets is a clear pathway to meaningful employment for El Camino residents. Consequently, the Council proposes an Opportunity Agenda that provides access to education and training directly linked to employment in the high demand sector of advanced manufacturing. By highlighting education and employment, the Council's proposal creates a pathway to the economic stability that will chart a better future for the historically disadvantaged residents of El Camino and establish a blueprint for similar projects in other challenged neighborhoods.

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# Opportunity Agenda Strategies

The Council proposes to design a roadmap to opportunity for El Camino that leads directly through workforce training linked to entry level, living-wage employment in high-demand advanced manufacturing settings. In so doing, this agenda supports the Council's strategy to Align Workforce Development Efforts with Sector Needs.

## The central Opportunity Agenda program is **Monroe Community College's Accelerated Precision Tooling Certificate Program.**

Based on a successful public-private partnership between Monroe Community College (MCC) and the Rochester Technology and Manufacturing Association (RTMA), this innovative certificate program links workforce training to high demand occupations within the growing advanced manufacturing cluster. Participants complete a full certificate program within six months – as opposed to one year – and are offered employment placement assistance through RTMA. Significantly, the certificate provides graduates with credits equivalent to one half of an associate's degree, building a clear pathway not just to a job but to a college degree. The accelerated timeline of this training program and the direct placement assistance will translate opportunity into real employment for program participants in less than a year.

Complementing this program is a supportive set of public-private partnerships that address other fundamental needs of the participants, both in the El Camino neighborhood and other areas of the City's "Crescent." These partnerships help to eliminate risk factors for attrition in job training programs, including a lack of access to affordable housing, creating a community safety net that will help move these students and their neighborhood forward. Additional support programs designated by the Council for inclusion in the Opportunity Agenda include:

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## Access to Affordable Housing

- Sibley Downtown Affordable Housing Project: Project will provide affordable housing for approximately 135 seniors and 300 jobs in adult care, building management, and residential operations.
- Urban League of Rochester Affordable Housing Project: M&M Rochester will create 59 affordable, energy efficient rental units through adaptive reuse of a historic structure, resulting in 20 construction jobs and two permanent management jobs.
- Sector 4 CDC Main Street: The Thurston Road project will renovate and restore eight buildings, creating 15 units of affordable housing, and 25 construction and 10 permanent jobs.

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## Access to Healthy, Nutritious Food

- Foodlink Food Hub: The Food Hub will build and equip a processing center that will make healthy, nutritious, local food available out-of-season to low-income residents. It will also create an anticipated 43 construction jobs, 32 food industry jobs, and train 200 residents in food production.
- Rochester Public Market: Project increases the Market's capacity by 20 percent, and greatly enhances the availability of fresh produce and healthy, local food products to the urban core of Rochester.

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## Access to Quality Health Care and Health Education

- Finger Lakes Health Collaborative High Blood Pressure Advocate Program: Project includes education and outreach to address a key urban health issue – high blood pressure.
- Bivona Child Advocacy Center: Center will relocate to a new location on Mount Hope Ave, enabling it to triple its space and expand existing and create new programs for children who have been sexually or physically abused.

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## Access to Immediate and Sustained Employment

- RIT Center for Urban Entrepreneurship: The Center will create a hub for entrepreneurial programs and business creation, adding jobs and creating new companies in Rochester's urban core.
- Sibley Affordable Historic Redevelopment Project and Sibley Mixed-Use Downtown Redevelopment Project: Project will create 312 construction jobs and has the potential to create 422 permanent jobs.
- Weldrite Closures: Company's expansion project will create greater opportunity for employment at the Rochester Tech Park.
- 265 North Clinton Improvements: Urban League of Rochester will renovate and improve its headquarters in a historic building, adding construction jobs and ensuring that the organization can continue its community development programs.

A unique aspect of the Council's Opportunity Agenda is its focus on building and strengthening access to career pathways at the secondary education level. This approach promotes greater linkages between learning and earning within the El Camino neighborhood. The Council proposes a three-pronged approach:

- 1 Recruit El Camino youth for the newly created NYS P-TECH high school in Rochester;
- 2 Leverage the Middle Skills Mobile Learning Labs funded by New York State last year; and
- 3 Seek state support for the Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection Job Creation in Middle Skills & Beyond program.



- MCC, the Rochester Central School District, and Wegmans Food Markets are co-leaders for the recently funded **P-TECH High School**. Planning for this school is underway with initial enrollment expected in fall 2014. Students will complete their studies with a high school diploma, an Associate of Applied Science in Information Technology (at no cost), and a strong connection to local employers. Focusing on the Business Services sector, the Rochester P-TECH will provide a concrete, regional career pathway. A priority will be placed on recruiting students from the El Camino neighborhood.
- The **Multiple Pathways to Middle Skills Jobs** project creates three mobile learning labs devoted to closing the significant regional “skills gap” in the healthcare, advanced manufacturing, and skilled trades fields. MCC will partner with the Ibero-American Action League to host these labs in the El Camino neighborhood, where they will function as recruitment, initial intake, and early training centers. From this initial engagement, El Camino residents will be provided with a pathway to the appropriate educational and personal resources needed to improve their employability.
- The **Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection (HW-SC) Job Creation in Middle Skills & Beyond** project will connect at-risk youth with supportive and meaningful employment during high school, engaged school-based advocates, and foundational employment training. Through this comprehensive approach, HWSC will dramatically improve the likelihood that these students graduate from high school and move on to post-secondary education. HW-SC will place a priority on serving El Camino youth in the Job Creation program.

## Performance Measures

The Council will base the quantified performance measures directly on the metrics associated with the central Opportunity Agenda project: **MCC’s Accelerated Precision Tooling Certificate Program**. Metrics include:

- Enrollment of 18 students in the 22-week certificate program;
- Enrollment demographics will include at least 75 percent low-income students, and at least 50 percent El Camino residents;
- Placement of all qualifying students completing the program in related positions within six months of completion.

The Council will also closely track the supportive, wrap-around programs identified above (pending funding by the state) to ensure they are serving El Camino neighborhood residents.

The Council will also establish baseline educational attainment data on the El Camino neighborhood with a goal of increasing high school/GED attainment and access to post-secondary education or training through the Rochester P-TECH, Multiple Pathways to Middle Skills Jobs, and Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection Job Creation in Middle Skills & Beyond programs.

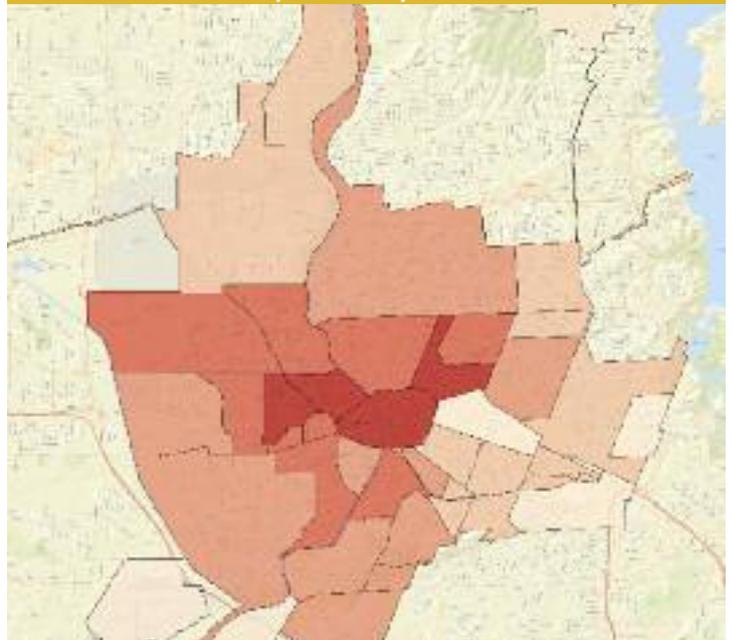
## Implementation Plan 2013–14

The central Opportunity Agenda project, **MCC’s Accelerated Precision Tooling Certificate Program**, is based on an existing curriculum and partnership. This enables it to be implemented in a rapid manner as soon as funding is received, ideally within the 2013–2014 cycle.

The wrap-around programs have been submitted by a number of different organizations, and their inclusion was recommended by a Task Force comprised of 15 key community stakeholders led by leaders of MCC, the City of Rochester, and the Ibero-American Action League. This group will continue to meet bi-monthly to ensure the Opportunity Agenda’s central and supporting projects are meeting appropriate implementation milestones.

In addition, the Task Force will create a dashboard that will enable it to track key metrics related to the region’s efforts to close the economic and social mobility gaps in the El Camino neighborhood. These include unemployment and poverty rates and educational attainment, among others.

Concentrated Poverty in the City of Rochester



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Wegmans Food Markets  
Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency  
Unity Health System  
Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency  
Rochester Institute of Technology  
Rochester Business Alliance  
LiDestri Food & Beverage  
Wegmans Food Markets  
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Rochester General Medical Group  
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St. John Fisher College  
Nazareth  
SUNY Geneseo  
Rochester Institute of Technology  
Keuka College  
University of Rochester  
Hobart and William Smith Colleges  
SUNY Brockport  
Monroe Community College  
Roberts Wesleyan College  
Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency  
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Rochester Institute of Technology  
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Eastman Business Park  
National Grid  
Seneca County IDA (Army Depot)  
Frontier Communications of Rochester  
Rochester Genesee Regional Transportation Authority  
Genesee & Wyoming Railroad  
LLD Enterprises  
LaBella Associates  
Greater Rochester Regional Airport  
Finger Lakes Technology Group  
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NYS Senate  
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UR Center for Emerging & Innovative Sciences  
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JML Optical  
MCC  
Lucid  
QED Technologies, retired  
Lumetrics  
Rochester Precision Optics  
Optimax Systems  
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Sydor Optics  
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The Strong  
Finger Lakes Museum  
Campground Owners of New York  
Livingston County Chamber of Commerce  
Wegmans Food Markets  
Constellation Brands  
NYS Canal, Palmyra Rep  
Bristol Mountain/Roseland Waterpark  
Orleans County Planning and Tourism  
Memorial Art Gallery  
Jazz Fest  
Dixon Schwabl  
Visit Rochester  
Genesee-Orleans Regional Arts Council  
Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance  
Finger Lakes Visitor Connection  
Darien Lake Theme Park  
NYS Canal Corp  
Arts & Cultural Council for Greater Rochester  
City of Rochester  
Yates County Chamber of Commerce  
Three Brothers Winery & Estates  
NYS Parks & Historical Preservation  
Geva Theatre  
Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra  
Genesee County  
Eastman School of Music  
Seneca County Chamber of Commerce  
WXXI  
Jay Advertising  
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NYS Parks & Historical Preservation  
New York Wine Grape Foundation  
Wayne County Tourism  
Visit Rochester

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Wegmans Food Markets  
Wegmans Food Markets  
Earthlink  
Finger Lakes Community College  
Hillside Work-Scholarship Connection  
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NYS Department of Labor  
Rochester Teachers Association  
Builders Exchange  
Rochester Tooling and Machining Association  
Monroe Community College  
Wegmans Food Markets  
Rochester City School District  
Optimax Systems  
Rochester Educational Opportunity Center  
Wayne-Finger Lakes BOCES  
Irondequoit High School  
Hillside Work Scholarship  
Greece Central School District  
SPEX Precision Machine Technologies  
New York State Board of Regents  
Monroe Community College  
Rochester Works  
University of Rochester Medical Center  
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Finger Lakes WIB  
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