



Monroe County is a community on the move: Be part of the plan to unlock a brighter future - by Cheryl Dinolfo

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Construction Career Day helps connect young people with rewarding careers in the skilled trades—an essential part of our workforce development strategy.

Monroe County is a community on the move. After years of stagnant economic growth caused primarily by the exodus of jobs following the demise of Rochester’s “big three” (Eastman Kodak, Xerox, and Bausch & Lomb), our community has turned the corner—we see an even brighter future is within reach.

To unlock a brighter future, we’ve implemented strategic policy decisions and made important community investments that will ensure our continued success. We’ve connected dynamic public programs with private resources to spur the growth of smaller, more innovative companies that take advantage of Monroe County’s wealth of human capital. As the home of some of our nation’s top universities, such as the University of Rochester and the Rochester Institute of Technology, there is a large pool of smart, talented, and hard-working individuals who have fallen in love with our community and are looking for jobs that will keep them here.

Prioritizing Economic Development

As county executive, my primary objective has always been to create more jobs here in Monroe County. That means putting boots on the ground to meet with employers to hear their challenges and meet their needs—but it also means utilizing the policy tools we have available to us. Imagine Monroe, our economic development agency, has helped create or retain nearly 20,000 jobs and leveraged \$1.6 billion in private investment. These are real jobs for real people, providing thousands of Monroe County residents with the ability to support their families, buy a home, and enjoy our world-class quality of life.

Our County Economic Development team meets on-site with local employers to hear their concerns and meet their needs. Our team recently toured the new Riverwood

Tech Campus, home to Innovative Solutions.

We focus on growing companies in in-demand industries like advanced manufacturing, health care, and Information Technology (IT.) One example we love to highlight is Innovative Solutions, founded by Rochester-native and RIT grad Justin Copie. The company has grown rapidly over the last decade, and Monroe County has been there to assist with every new stage of expansion. Just recently, Innovative Solutions moved into a new, modern space—an area previously vacated by Eastman Kodak. The company employs almost 75 highly-skilled workers but continues to grow. This is just one success story, but there are countless others.

But we know that companies cannot always find workers with the skills they're looking for. We've developed an innovative workforce development program called LadderzUp, which creates custom job-training programs for companies looking for employees with specific skills. We've helped almost 1,000 job-seekers gain skills they need to move into a new industry or climb the ladder into greater success. LadderzUp specializes in fields like metal fabrication, precision welding, customer service, nursing, and more—but we continue to add new programs based on feedback from employers. This is an incredible attention to detail and we're proud to have an ongoing dialogue with local companies in order to meet their needs and keep them here in Monroe County.

And as far as skills go—we know that our friends in the skilled trades are looking for help right here, right now. We've hosted countless events like Construction Career Day, which exposes young people to careers they never considered—careers in fields like metalworking, carpentry, and more. These are good-paying jobs that don't require a four-year degree—all you need is to get connected with an apprenticeship! That is a necessary connection that we continue to make here in Monroe County. We want to help get people back to work, earning a salary that will unlock future success for them and their family.

Investments in Quality of Life

Our community has benefitted from strong national economic trends: robust financial markets, strong real estate markets, and low unemployment. Because of this, we have to make sure that Monroe County stands out in a crowded field of communities hoping to attract business. It's no secret that New York State ranks near the bottom in terms of friendliness to business, but one selling point we offer in Western New York is our world-class quality of life.

Despite high taxes driven by policymakers in Albany, the cost of living in Rochester is quite low. It is very affordable to buy a house, start a family, or simply enjoy a night out on the town. But this is a selling point that requires our constant attention, so we've made it a priority to invest in our quality of life assets that make Monroe County an outstanding place to live.

The Seneca Park Zoo has consistently been ranked as one of the best, most family-friendly zoos in the entire nation. We recently completed construction of an expansion of the zoo, which added a Cold Asia Exhibit, an Animals of the Savannah Exhibit, and a new passenger tram that transports

visitors from one end of the zoo to the other. Next up? A Tropics exhibit, representing the ecosystems of Congo, Borneo, and Madagascar. These exhibits are all part of a ten year, \$85 million expansion which will transform the Seneca Park Zoo for generations.

We also just completed a massive renovation at the Greater Rochester International Airport. With a budget of \$79 million, we finished the project in under two years with minimal impact on travelers. In the process, we built a next-generation airport that includes a new terminal entrance canopy, enhanced food and beverage options, and state-of-the-art communications technology that improves the passenger experience for all travelers. The airport isn't just a quality of life asset though—it's a tangible selling point in our effort to attract new business to Monroe County. While the old airport was functional, the new airport shows off the vibrancy of our community, sending a clear message that Rochester is the place to be.

There is so much for residents and visitors alike to do in Monroe County. From the world-famous Lilac Festival to the incredible Rochester International Jazz Festival, our community cherishes the warm weather (when it finally arrives!). Every weekend, there is a strong lineup of reasons to be out and about in the community: a vibrant nightlife; a diverse array of festivals; assets like The Strong National Museum of Play, the Rochester Museum and Science Center, and the Susan B. Anthony House; as well as athletic attractions like the Rochester Red Wings and Rochester Americans. Furthermore, as the gateway to the Finger Lakes Wine and Beer Region, Monroe County is just a quick day trip from some of the most beautiful and exquisite craft beverage spots in the world.

Monroe County on the Move

The Greater Rochester area has a wealth of resources that position us well for future success. To take full advantage of those resources, however, requires a little bit of planning, proactivity, and the experience necessary to generate results. As county executive, my team has leveraged relationships with community stakeholders, universities, private enterprise, and elected officials from both parties to ensure we are moving forward in unison, with a strategic vision in mind. We will continue working diligently to create more jobs while cutting local property taxes. We will continue investing in quality of life assets that our residents have come to enjoy. And we will continue to build stronger families and share our vision for a vibrant, thriving Monroe County that is on the move.

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