

Highlights of What's in the City of Rochester Budget for Children 2023



Overview

The Children's Agenda provides these highlights of the City of Rochester's proposed 2023-24 budget to draw attention to how the budget impacts children. We make recommendations based on what children need most and what works best to meet those needs. We find that the proposed City budget includes a number of new and existing investments that will help build a better future for Rochester's young residents. We also urge the Mayor and City Council to take further steps to make even more progress.

The City of Rochester's proposed 2023-24 budget is its largest budget to date. It totals **\$674.69 million**, an **increase of 4.7%** over the 2022-23 Amended Budget. The proposed budget includes a \$3.72 million increase in expenditures funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and proposes **no increase to the property tax levy**.

Overview of City Expenditures by Department, 2019-2023

<i>Department</i>	2019-20 Actual	2020-21 Actual	2021-22 Actual	2022-23 Estimated	2023-24 Proposed	% Change 2022-23 Estimated → 2023-24 Proposed
City Council & Clerk	\$2.00 M	\$2.30 M	\$4.54 M	\$4.73 M	\$7.36 M	56%
Administration	\$12.08 M	\$11.82 M	\$13.00 M	\$17.43 M	\$23.74 M	36%
Information Technology	\$7.47 M	\$6.58 M	\$7.40 M	\$8.80 M	\$9.31 M	6%
Finance	\$11.24 M	\$9.76 M	\$10.25 M	\$11.38 M	\$12.93 M	14%
Neighborhood- Business Development	\$10.84 M	\$10.48 M	\$12.96 M	\$24.43 M	\$29.27 M	20%
Environmental Services	\$82.79 M	\$83.73 M	\$87.86 M	\$89.65 M	\$99.84 M	11%
Emergency Comm.	\$14.44 M	\$14.43 M	\$14.56 M	\$15.70 M	\$17.13 M	9%
Police Department	\$99.37 M	\$99.42 M	\$99.88 M	\$110.68 M	\$109.53 M	-1%
Fire Dept	\$51.89 M	\$53.22 M	\$57.09 M	\$58.63 M	\$61.34 M	5%
Public Library	\$11.23 M	\$11.38 M	\$11.94 M	\$12.72 M	\$13.45 M	6%
Rec & Human Services	\$11.17 M	\$12.41 M	\$15.20 M	\$21.47 M	\$25.49 M	19%
Undistributed Expenses	\$142.14 M	\$158.05 M	\$165.24 M	\$167.60 M	\$171.07 M	2%
Capital Expense (incl. debt service)	\$75.51 M	\$60.94 M	\$65.92 M	\$77.91 M	\$94.14 M	21%
Total	\$531.20 M	\$534.49 M	\$565.83 M	\$621.39 M	\$674.69 M	9%

Summary of Support and Recommendations

	We Support	We Recommend
Early Childhood	<p>The use of ARPA dollars to fund Lead Service Line Replacement</p> <p>Funding for a second R-Center site for SummerLEAP</p>	<p>The new Business Liaison position created within the Business Development Division should work with home-based child care providers to expand their capacity</p>
Youth Development and Mental Health	<p>Investments in R-Center programming, including longer summer hours</p> <p>The addition of 33 seasonal staff and conversion of part-time positions to full-time, promoting relationship-building between staff and youth</p> <p>Health, Wellness and Social-Emotional supports at 4 R-Centers</p> <p>Funding for non-law enforcement response to mental health crises</p>	<p>Collaborate with Monroe County and the Rochester City School District to strengthen prevention and protective factors, improve integration of mental health services and participate in intergovernmental joint advocacy for funding and policy changes to expand youth mental health services</p> <p>Reduce law enforcement-only response to mental health crises by decreasing the percentage of crisis intervention calls answered by Rochester Police Department officers alone, without Person in Crisis (PIC) team members</p> <p>Pilot a program model based on <i>Steel Smiling</i> in Pittsburgh, PA to provide neighborhood-based trained navigators</p> <p>City staff who are present when a child experiences violence or trauma should suggest to parents that they call their pediatrician and arrange follow-up care</p> <p>Individuals who have interacted with the PIC team should be given an opportunity to provide feedback on their experience and make suggestions for improvement</p>
Youth Violence Prevention	<p>Increased funding for Pathways to Peace, youth employment and R-Center programs</p>	<p>Eliminate Rochester Police Department positions that have consistently been unfilled to free up City funds for more effective approaches to suppress violence</p>
Libraries	<p>Investments in the Rochester Public Library</p>	<p>Fully commit to construction of a new library branch in the Northeast area of the city and add Toy Library services to community libraries</p>

Positive Notes on the Budget Document and Process

Transparency: A new online budget format provides more information in an easily accessible format. Like the City’s Open Data Portal and dashboards for ARPA expenditures and the Persons in Crisis team, more accessible information for City residents promotes accountability.

Equity: The 2023-24 proposed budget continues the commitment to the budget equity process. City departments are required to report on the impact of their proposed expenditures on advancing racial equity. The Children and Families section, once again included in the proposed budget document, summarizes City spending on children and youth across departments.

The remainder of this summary highlights key parts of the budget that impact Rochester’s children and youth in four areas:

1. Early Childhood
2. Youth Development and Mental Health
3. Youth Violence Prevention
4. Libraries

Early Childhood

Early investments are smart investments

The Need

The earliest years provide the best opportunity to spur development that can change the trajectory of children’s lives. When Rochester’s young children have access to quality early childhood experiences, they are more likely to be **ready for kindergarten** and for success in school and beyond.

Early childhood development is supported through the care many receive in **licensed child care programs**. Rochester is considered a “child care desert,” with far fewer slots available in child care programs compared to the need. In 2020, there were approximately 9,000 children under age 3 in Rochester at any given time, but only 959 child care center slots for children 6 weeks to 3 years within city limits.¹ The pandemic made the shortage of affordable, quality child care in Rochester even worse with 10% of licensed programs in the city closing during that time.² In terms of the workforce, those closures disproportionately affect women of color. In Monroe County, 94% of child care programs are run by women and 60% are led by people of color. These essential workers are severely underpaid with the median annual wage for child care workers in the Finger Lakes being \$30,530.

A bright spot in Rochester’s early childhood education is the SummerLEAP program. This summer learning program happens between the end of Universal Pre-Kindergarten and the start of Kindergarten. SummerLEAP has been shown to increase the number of children who start kindergarten academically, socially and emotionally ready to learn because they do not lose academic skills over the summer and, in fact, make significant gains from June through August. The most recent evaluation of SummerLEAP found that at the end of the regular school year 50% of students were ready for kindergarten, but that increased to 70% in August after they took part in SummerLEAP.³

¹ The Children’s Agenda. (2020). *Declining Child Care Options for Young Children*. https://thechildrensagenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Declining-Child-Care-Options-for-Young-Children-01_09_20-Final.pdf

² The Children’s Agenda. (2022). *Rebuilding Our Future: Child Care Closures in New York During the Pandemic*. <https://thechildrensagenda.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Child-Care-Closures-Report-FINAL.pdf>

³ Greater Rochester Summer Learning Association. (2019). *Community Impact*. <https://www.summerleap.net/community-impact>

Rochester continues to be a leader in the nation in mitigating lead exposure through municipal codes and code compliance. This benefits all residents, but most especially young children. Children are more susceptible to lead exposure because they more often put their hands and objects in their mouths, their bodies absorb more lead than adults, and their brains and nervous systems are more sensitive to lead than adults. Lead exposure during early childhood can result in irreversible damage, including⁴:

- Damage to the brain and nervous system
- Behavioral health challenges and learning difficulties
- Hearing problems
- Chronic headaches
- Anemia

The Budget

In the proposed budget is funding for a new **Business Liaison** position created within the Business Development Division to nurture small minority and women-owned businesses.

The Greater Rochester **Summer Learning Enrichment to Achieve Potential** (SummerLEAP) program improves kindergarten readiness for participants. In 2019, a pilot program was offered at the Adams St. R-Center. The Department of Recreation and Human Services is allocating **\$19,400** for a second SummerLEAP program site, making this 6-week program for rising kindergarten students available at the Jackson and Adams Street R-Centers.

The City's continued spending on **parks and playgrounds (\$2.1 million)** promotes healthy development and its **summer food program (\$244,500)** helps prevent food insecurity.

The City has allocated ARPA dollars to fund **Lead Service Line Replacements, \$2.13 million** for Lead Hazard Control, and **\$77,500** for a Lead Paint Initiative Grant program.

Support & Recommendations

The City's use of ARPA dollars to fund Lead Service Line Replacements is a commendable investment that will benefit all residents, especially young children. The ongoing commitment

⁴ Stanford School of Medicine. (2023). *Lead Poisoning in Children*.
<https://www.stanfordchildrens.org/en/topic/default?id=lead-poisoning-in-children-90-P02832>

to Lead Hazard Control and the Lead Paint Initiative Grant will ensure the significant progress made on lead exposure prevention continues.

Given the dire need for more child care programs, the work of the Business Liaison should include working with home-based child care providers to expand their capacity, benefitting both the business owners and the families who struggle to find a child care program.

Youth Development and Mental Health

No child should struggle alone

The Need

Across the United States and in the Rochester area, young people are facing a well-documented **mental and behavioral health crisis** that began even before the COVID-19 pandemic. In its *Protecting Youth Mental Health Advisory*,⁵ the **U.S. Surgeon General** identifies “a national emergency in child and adolescent mental health,” citing significant increases in rates of anxiety, depression, and mental health challenges among youth.

In Rochester, 42% of **parents polled** by The Children’s Agenda in March 2023 said at least one of their children has struggled with their emotional or mental health, with even higher rates for Latino parents, parents with low or middle income, and those with children with disabilities. Our parent poll also found that 80+% of Rochester parents said **barriers to accessing services** included: finding and navigating services, affordability, transportation, and/or long wait times.

The 2022 Youth Risk Behavior Survey at the **Rochester City School District** (March 2022)⁶ found:

- 45% of girls at RCSD reported “feeling so sad or hopeless for two or more weeks in a row in the past year that they stopped doing usual activities” (a sign of depression).
- 19% of all students reported they were feeling depressed, anxious, afraid, empty, or confused because of the death of a close family member or friend.
- 11% of girls at RCSD reported attempting suicide in the past year.

The Budget

The City does not have a major ongoing role in funding or providing mental health care, but it can make a difference through its interactions with youth and with ARPA expenditures. The City’s role in youth development and mental health comes primarily through the programs and services provided by the Department of Recreation and Human Services. The proposed budget

⁵ U.S. Surgeon General. (2023). *Youth Mental Health Advisory*. <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-youth-mental-health-advisory.pdf>

⁶ Monroe County Department of Health. (2022). *Youth Risk Behavior Survey, Rochester City School District*. <https://www.monroecounty.gov/files/health/health-action/MC%20YRBS%202021-22%20FINAL.pdf>

includes a **19% increase in the department’s total budget**, including a **25% increase in Recreation and Youth Services**.

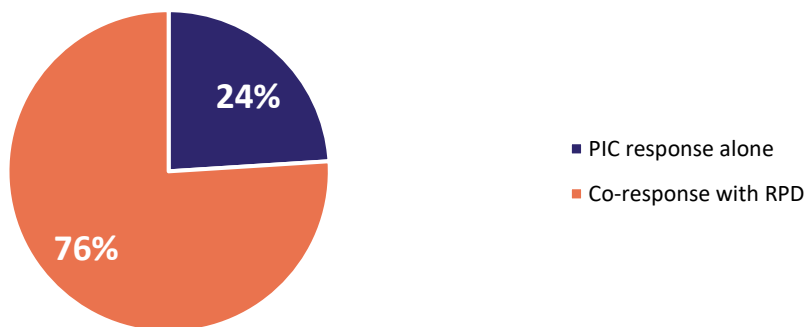
<i>Dept. of Recreation and Human Services</i>	2017-18 Actual	2018-19 Actual	2019-20 Actual	2020-21 Actual	2021-22 Actual	2022-23 Estimated	2023-24 Proposed	% Change 2022-23 Estimated → 2023-24 Proposed
Office of the Commissioner	\$2.19 M	\$2.32 M	\$1.99 M	\$3.46 M	\$4.28 M	\$4.07 M	\$4.57 M	12%
Recreation and Youth Services	\$7.87 M	\$8.41 M	\$7.13 M	\$6.55 M	\$8.41 M	\$9.66 M	\$12.03 M	25%
Human Services	\$1.73 M	\$1.33 M	\$2.04 M	\$2.40 M	\$2.51 M	\$7.73 M	\$8.89 M	15%
DRHS TOTAL	\$11.79 M	\$12.06 M	\$11.16 M	\$12.41 M	\$15.20 M	\$21.47 M	\$25.49 M	19%

The proposed 2023-24 budget includes:

- **\$666,700** in ARPA funds to contract with the Center for Youth Services to provide **Health, Wellness, and Social-Emotional Supports at 4 R-Centers** in 2023-24. Center for Youth staff will offer social-emotional and wellness support to youth and their families.
- **Increased resources for R-Centers** to fund 33 summer seasonal positions, extended summer hours, conversion of part-time positions to full-time to allow for relationship-building with youth, more consistent front desk staffing, and more enriched programming.
- **Increased funding for youth employment programs** (totaling \$1.79 M) through the Summer of Opportunity Program, the My Brothers Keeper initiative, and \$380,300 in ARPA funds for a new workforce development program.
- **Funding for the Person in Crisis Team (PIC)** to provide a non-law enforcement response to community crises. The PIC team is part of the DRHS Crisis Intervention Services (CIS) along with the Homicide Response Team and the Community Support Team. The CIS proposed budget for 2023-24 (\$2.6 million) increases 40% over the estimated 2022-23 budget and adds 2 authorized positions.
- The Department of Recreation and Human Services defines the **PIC team’s** goals as connecting with community crisis services, strengthening post-crisis supports, and diverting 911 calls to the most appropriate response option, activating law enforcement only when needed. Based on the PIC dashboard on the City’s website, the most

common presenting needs are mental health and relationships. Yet 76% of PIC calls still involve law enforcement response.

**PIC Calls by Response Type
Jan-May 2023**



Support & Recommendations

TCA supports funding for the Health, Wellness, and Social-Emotional Supports at 4 R-Centers, additional investments in R-Center staffing and hours, and funding for youth employment programs.

TCA recommends:

- The Department of Recreation and Human Services reduces the percentage of mental health crisis intervention calls answered by Rochester Police Department officers alone, without Persons in Crisis (PIC) team members, especially if a child is present.
- The City consider piloting a program model based on *Steel Smiling*⁷ in Pittsburgh, PA. Steel Smiling strengthens the connection between Black people and mental health services, in part through Community Mental Health Advocates who receive 6 months of training and serve as neighborhood-based peer navigators.
- City staff who are present when a child experiences violence or trauma should suggest to parents that they call their pediatrician and arrange follow-up care for their child.

⁷ Steel Smiling. (2023). <https://www.steelsmilingpgh.org/>

- Individuals who have interacted with the PIC team should be given an opportunity to provide feedback on their experience and make suggestions for improvement.
- The City collaborate with Monroe County and the Rochester City School District to strengthen prevention and protective factors, improve integration of mental health services and participate in intergovernmental joint advocacy for funding and policy changes to expand youth mental health services.

Youth Violence Prevention

Supportive communities prevent violence

The Need

After many years of declining youth crime rates in the U.S., preliminary data show an uptick in 2021 and 2022. While more recent data indicate we may be starting to turn the corner on this crisis, the fact remains that too many of Rochester’s children are experiencing violence, with potentially lifelong consequences. The Centers for Disease Control identifies quality early childhood experiences and connections to caring adults and protective communities as effective strategies to reduce youth violence.⁸

The Budget

The 2023-24 proposed City budget includes resources for two key programs contributing to youth violence prevention:

- Pathways to Peace
- Rochester Peace Collective

<i>Office of Violence Prevention</i>	2021-22 Actual	2022-23 Estimated	2023-24 Proposed	% Change 2022-23 Estimated → 2023-24 Proposed
Pathways to Peace	\$548 K	\$3.31 M	\$3.51 M	6%
Office of Neighborhood Safety	\$117 K	\$637 K	\$1.17 M	84%
Total	\$665 K	\$3.94 M	\$4.68 M	19%

Pathways to Peace (P2P), a longstanding youth violence prevention program, is administered through the Mayor’s Office of Violence Prevention Programs.

⁸ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021). *Strategies and Approaches to Prevent Youth Violence*. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/youthviolence/prevention.html>

- During the 2022-23 year, Pathways to Peace staffing changed from 15 part-time staff to **10 part-time and 4 full-time** Community Outreach Specialists positions.
- Although not included in the 2023-24 proposed budget, the City anticipates renewal of an intermunicipal agreement with the **Rochester City School District** to fund Pathways to Peace in City schools. In 2022-23 this agreement funded outreach to students, mediation services, assistance to students returning after a period of absence due to violence, and response to emergency situations.

The **Rochester Peace Collective** was created in 2022 using \$5 million in ARPA funds over 3 years to reduce violence through grants for community-based initiatives. In December 2022, the City announced the selection of 20 programs to receive grants, many serving children and youth through job skills, re-entry support, social-emotional learning, and mental health care.⁹ The proposed 2023-24 does not include new funding for the Peace Collective but notes continuation of the program for a second year.

In addition to these initiatives, the **Rochester Police Department** plays a role in violence prevention. The Rochester Police Department’s proposed budget of \$109.534 million is slightly (1%) lower than the 2022-23 estimated budget. There will be funds added to the RPD budget throughout the year as grants are received.

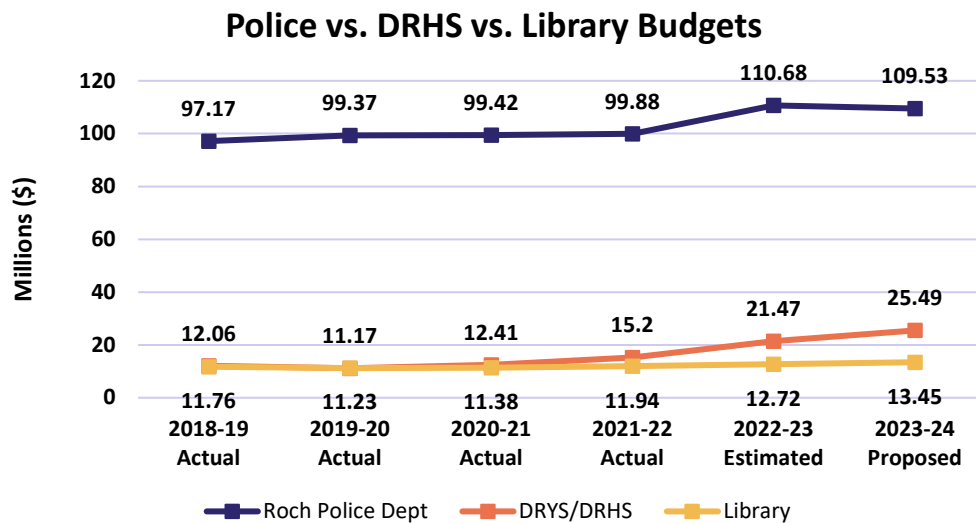
<i>Rochester Police Department</i>	2021-22 Actual	2022-23 Estimated	2023-24 Proposed	% Change 2022-23 Estimated → 2023-24 Proposed
Operations	\$71.91 M	\$81.96 M	\$81.37 M	-1%
Office of the Chief	\$6.58 M	\$7.93 M	\$9.66 M	22%
Administration	\$18.50 M	\$20.37 M	\$18.50 M	-9%
Community Affairs	\$2.88 M	\$423 K	\$0	-100%
Police Total	\$99.88 M	\$110.68 M	\$109.53 M	-1%

⁹ City of Rochester. (2022) Rochester Peace Collective. <https://www.cityofrochester.gov/rochester-peace-collective/>

The total number of **authorized positions remains unchanged** from 2022-23, with the shift of 2 from sworn to unsworn positions. The Chief of Police reported that there are currently **80 vacant positions** and that despite recruitment efforts and plans for a new class, that number will likely not change significantly.

RPD is working with the **Rochester City School District** on youth-focused programs such as internships, a reading challenge, and youth-police conversations to improve youth perception of police.

The Rochester Police Department budget is more than four times the size of the Department of Recreation and Human Services budget for 2023-24, and almost three times larger than the combined Library and DRHS budgets. **Rochester continues to have a high officer to resident ratio.**¹⁰



Support & Recommendations

We recommend:

- **Eliminate positions** that have consistently been unfilled to free up City funds for more effective approaches to suppress violence. More City funds should be spent on prevention efforts, to reduce the need for interventions that are more expensive and less effective.

¹⁰ Nationwide Police Scorecard. (2023). *Police Scorecard*. <https://policescorecard.org/>

Rochester Public Library

Libraries show children new worlds

The Need

Rochester’s public library system serves as a hub of resources and programming for young people. With creative use of resources in recent years, the library system has developed programming to engage children and youth well beyond book lending.

The Budget

The library budget has **grown 20% since 2019-20**.

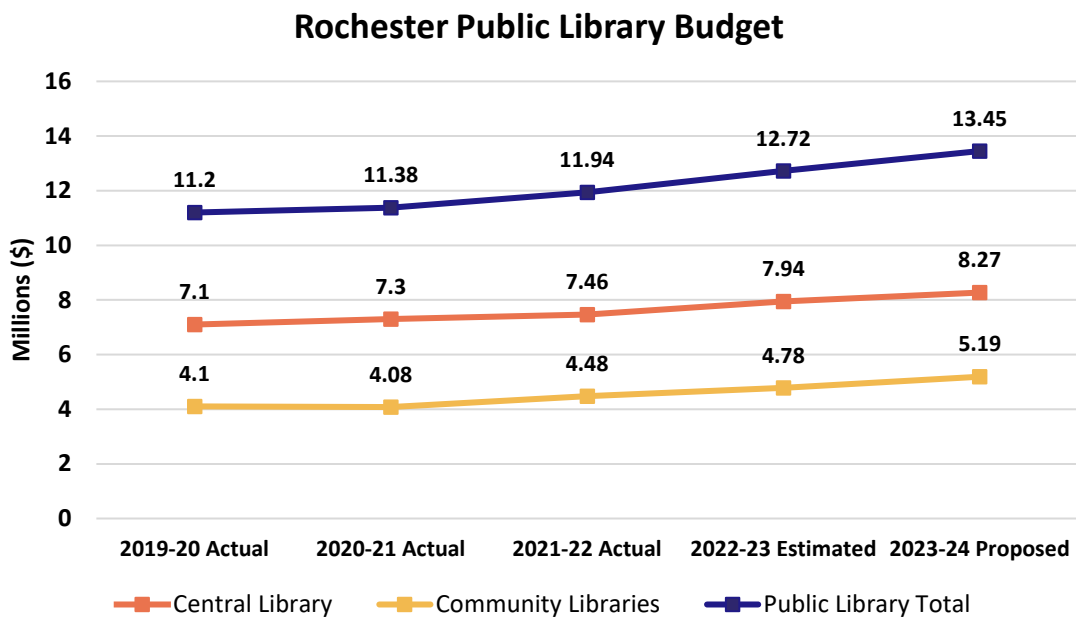
<i>Central Library</i>	2021-22 Actual	2022-23 Estimated	2023-24 Proposed	% Change 2022-23 Estimated → 2023-24 Proposed
Library Administration	\$2.27 M	\$2.42 M	\$2.67 M	10%
Public Services	\$3.56 M	\$3.86 M	\$3.89 M	1%
Technical and Support Services	\$1.64 M	\$1.67 M	\$1.71 M	2%
Central Library Total	\$7.46 M	\$7.94 M	\$8.27 M	4%

<i>Community Libraries</i>	2021-22 Actual	2022-23 Estimated	2023-24 Proposed	% Change 2022-23 Estimated → 2023-24 Proposed
Branch Administration	\$1.33 M	\$1.35 M	\$955 K	-29%
Branch Libraries	\$3.15 M	\$3.42 M	\$4.23 M	24%
Community Libraries Total	\$4.48 M	\$4.78 M	\$5.19 M	9%

The 2023-24 budget allows:

- Elimination of all fines, reducing revenue by \$140,000 and expanding access to all City residents
- Plans for mobile services based at the Lyell branch
- Launch of an expansion at the Maplewood branch, which has traditionally served a large number of refugee families

- Funding for Literacy Aides through the Summer of Opportunity Program, the Raising a Reader early literacy program, and loans of MiFi hotspots to help residents access the internet
- Continued support for Teen Central programs at the Central branch, housing Safe-To-Be-Smart, the ImagineYou Digital Learning Lab, gaming and other activities
- In July 2023, renovations of the Toy Library housed within the Lincoln branch will be complete. The Toy Library circulates play materials to families, therapists and teachers to support early childhood development, maintains a public play space and provides training to providers of early childhood services.



Support & Recommendations

The Children’s Agenda commends the City’s investments in the Rochester Public Library. We recommend:

- The City fully commit to construction of a new branch library in the Northeast area of the city.
- The City should begin replicating the Toy Library at other neighborhood branches to make this valuable resource more accessible to more children.