



CITY of ROCHESTER
Malik D. Evans, Mayor



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Mayor Evans Announces First Round of Neighbors In Action (NIA) Grantees City, ESL and Rochester Area Community Foundation Provide Support to Nearly 50 Resident-Led Projects

(Thursday, April 10, 2025) – Mayor Malik D. Evans was joined today by Simeon Banister, President and CEO of Rochester Area Community Foundation, and John Paul Perez, Executive Director of Community Impact at ESL Federal Credit Union, to announce the inaugural group of recipients of the City’s Neighbors In Action (NIA) grants—marking a major milestone in the City’s effort to support community-driven solutions for safer, stronger, and more connected neighborhoods.

In this first round of grants, 47 resident-led projects across all four city quadrants will receive more than \$230,000 to support initiatives ranging from community gardens and public art to youth programs, neighborhood cleanups and block parties. The announcement was held at The People’s Pantry on Avenue D, whose successful application will support the creation of a vegetable garden and mural that will also serve as an educational space for the Cornell Cooperative Extension to offer nutrition classes to pantry patrons and the wider community.

Also in attendance were other grantees, including the Rotary Club of Southwest Rochester, which will conduct a community needs assessment; Sassy in the South Wedge, which received support for events that celebrate and showcase the diversity and creativity of the LGBTQ+ community; and the Charles House in Action and the Jay and Orchard Street Neighborhood Association (JOSANA) who will work together to strengthen neighborhood connections through community events, park restoration, cleanups, and youth engagement. The full list of projects can be found at: www.cityofrochester.gov/NIA.

“These projects are proof that when neighbors come together with purpose, great things happen,” said Mayor Evans. “I’m incredibly proud of this first cohort of NIA grantees and excited to see their ideas take shape and make a difference in every corner of our city.”



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“NIA is a civic engagement booster and that’s important now more than ever,” said Simeon Banister, President & CEO, Rochester Area Community Foundation. “Applications from every quadrant of the city show residents’ enthusiasm for putting dollars to work where they live. People take notice when they see neighbors making improvements right on their street, and each small win can bring more people to the table.”

“We’re excited to partner with the City of Rochester and Rochester Area Community Foundation to drive neighborhood prosperity across the city,” said John Paul Perez, Executive Director, Community Impact, ESL Federal Credit Union. “These chosen grantees will implement initiatives that create meaningful connections between residents, deepen community bonds, and cultivate neighborhoods that are both vibrant and resilient.

Mayor Evans launched NIA in Fall 2024 with support from ESL Federal Credit Union and the Rochester Area Community Foundation. Each organization contributed \$100,000 in matching support, bringing the total funding pool to \$300,000. Rochester Area Community Foundation manages and distributes the funds, and the City’s Neighborhood Service Centers will provide on-the-ground support to grantees and project leaders. Projects were selected by a review committee made up of representatives from the three organizations.

The partners plan to announce another round of NIA grant applications in early 2026, when residents, block clubs, neighborhood associations, and other local groups will be invited to once again bring their best ideas for community improvement to life.



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The Administration of [Mayor Malik D. Evans](#) strives to create a safe, equitable and prosperous Rochester by inspiring hope and delivering opportunity for everyone. Guided by the Administration's [Mission, Vision and Values](#) and the principles of the "[Rochester 2034](#)" [comprehensive plan](#), City employees are committed to providing exceptional customer service, transparent stewardship, and collaborative leadership to foster a vibrant community that empowers personal, professional and generational growth for all who live, work or play in the city of Rochester.

With more than 100 years of locally owned history, [ESL Federal Credit Union](#) serves as a full-service financial institution to more than 434,000 members and 16,800 businesses. Founded in 1920, the company provides personal banking, business banking, mortgage services, and wealth management services through its locally based 24-branch network; telephone, mobile and online banking; and live chat center. The Rochester-based financial institution employs approximately 950 people in the Greater Rochester area and holds more than \$9.5 billion in assets. Since 1996, ESL has paid out 29 consecutive Owners' Dividends to its members totaling more than \$290 million. Since the creation of its Community Impact initiative in 2018, ESL has reinvested more than \$122 million in grants throughout the community. The company has appeared on Great Place to Work® lists since 2010. ESL Federal Credit Union is headquartered at 225 Chestnut Street, in Rochester, and can be found online at www.esl.org.

In partnership with generous philanthropists and community partners, [Rochester Area Community Foundation](#) works to improve the quality of life for people who live and work in the eight-county region through its leadership and strategic grantmaking. Known as the steward of charitable funds and endowments, the Foundation connects donors with the region's current and evolving needs. As a leading grantmaker, the Foundation is focused on two broad goals: creating an equitable community and strengthening our region's vitality. Since it was founded in 1972, the Community Foundation has distributed more than \$730 million in grants and scholarships.