

# Community leaders push 4 key projects



Written by

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A coalition of leaders from local colleges, government, businesses, community groups and labor says that state funding of four key Rochester-area projects would make economic sense.

Members of the Rochester Community Coalition are urging state officials to consider funding these projects as an investment.

"They have to do something to revitalize the economy. So what we wanted to do is to make sure we have our items that we thought would be most beneficial to the region," said Rochester Business Alliance President Sandy Parker, in presenting the coalition's agenda Tuesday to the Democrat and Chronicle editorial board.

Other coalition members told of the importance of the four projects.

University of Rochester President Joel Seligman said that the Interstate 390 Interchange Project would overhaul a stretch of that highway from the Genesee River to the I-390/I-590 interchange.

Without a ramp to I-390 from Kendrick Road, near UR's Medical Center, the continued growth of the college would be jeopardized.

The state has already committed \$28 million to this project, which is estimated to cost about \$130 million. Almost all this money originates from the federal government.

"Either we are able to work out a road network system that will support the further expansion of the university or we can't expand," Seligman said.

Seligman said another coalition priority is seeking \$33 million in state money to help UR establish a Health Sciences Center for Computational Innovation, now in its early stage of development.

UR has teamed up with IBM on this \$100 million initiative, which would feature high-powered computers to give UR unique capabilities for research in the biological sciences and medical treatment.

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"This will provide us the basis for doing world-class research," said Seligman.

The third initiative is \$25 million for Rochester Institute of Technology's Golisano Institute for Sustainability.

RIT will soon begin construction of a new facility on its campus for the institute. The state money would help RIT equip the labs and test areas to service businesses seeking clean technologies to make them more cost-effective.

"We have become world leader in that kind of technology — industrial sustainability," said RIT President Bill Destler about the work done at the institute to create new products and save businesses money.

Jennifer Leonard, president of the Rochester Area Community Foundation, discussed the importance of the fourth proposal: \$5 million for the Rochester After-School Initiative.

Currently, she said, only 7 percent of area youths between the ages of 5 and 17 are in any form of after-school care, even though most of them don't have a stay-at-home parent.

The money sought would be allocated over four years — and would provide 625 Rochester youths a year with after-school care. It would also help get the After-School Initiative established so that it can seek additional funds and programs.

This expenditure is seen as an investment

in the future of the city that would bring returns in more young people graduating from high school and going on to college, Leonard said.

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