

# Forbes: Small businesses key to Rochester's economic success



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**Messenger Post**

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Rochester, N.Y. — The Rochester area has stayed afloat — even prospered — after a drastic decline in employment at its three major companies, Eastman Kodak, Xerox and Bausch & Lomb and a recession that hit the entire country.

Rochester thrives because all the employees of these big businesses fled to area small businesses, says [a new "Best Places for Business" report by Forbes Magazine](#).

Forbes reporter Kurt Badenhausen said that 25 years ago those companies "employed 60 percent of local workers. Today those companies account for 6 percent of Rochester's workforce."

Now 97 percent of Rochester companies have fewer than 100 employees, Forbes reported.

On Thursday, Sandy Parker, president and chief executive officer of the Rochester Business Alliance, agreed that small businesses have supported the Rochester economy in recent years.

She agreed that "small businesses make up the bulk of the employment in the region." At the Rochester Business Alliance, of the 2,000 members, over 85 percent of members employ fewer than 100 people. Parker says that is a

good reflection of the area business make-up.

She continued that the small business trend "was really the salvation of the region." With the number of people that left Kodak, Xerox, Bausch & Lomb years ago, they all needed employment. So, they ended up being absorbed by small businesses.

Bruce Zicari, past president of the Small Business Council and partner in The Bonadio Group LLP, said that when the big three companies downsized, "there was an incredible amount of talent that left [those companies] to create their own small businesses."

He said, "We were able to stay pretty stable through this last recession," because of the talented small business community.

With an unemployment rate a full two points below the national average, as reported by Forbes Magazine, the **region has proven resilient** despite economic difficulties nationally.

Badenhausen cited Rochester as a place where people decide to stay despite economic turmoil years ago because of their "affordable housing, short commutes and strong cultural options."

Parker attributes the phenomenon to something a bit more intangible: the residents' love for the area. "This region, has not necessarily been one that has people coming in" but those who live here "are reluctant to move. They like the standard of living and they have their families here."