

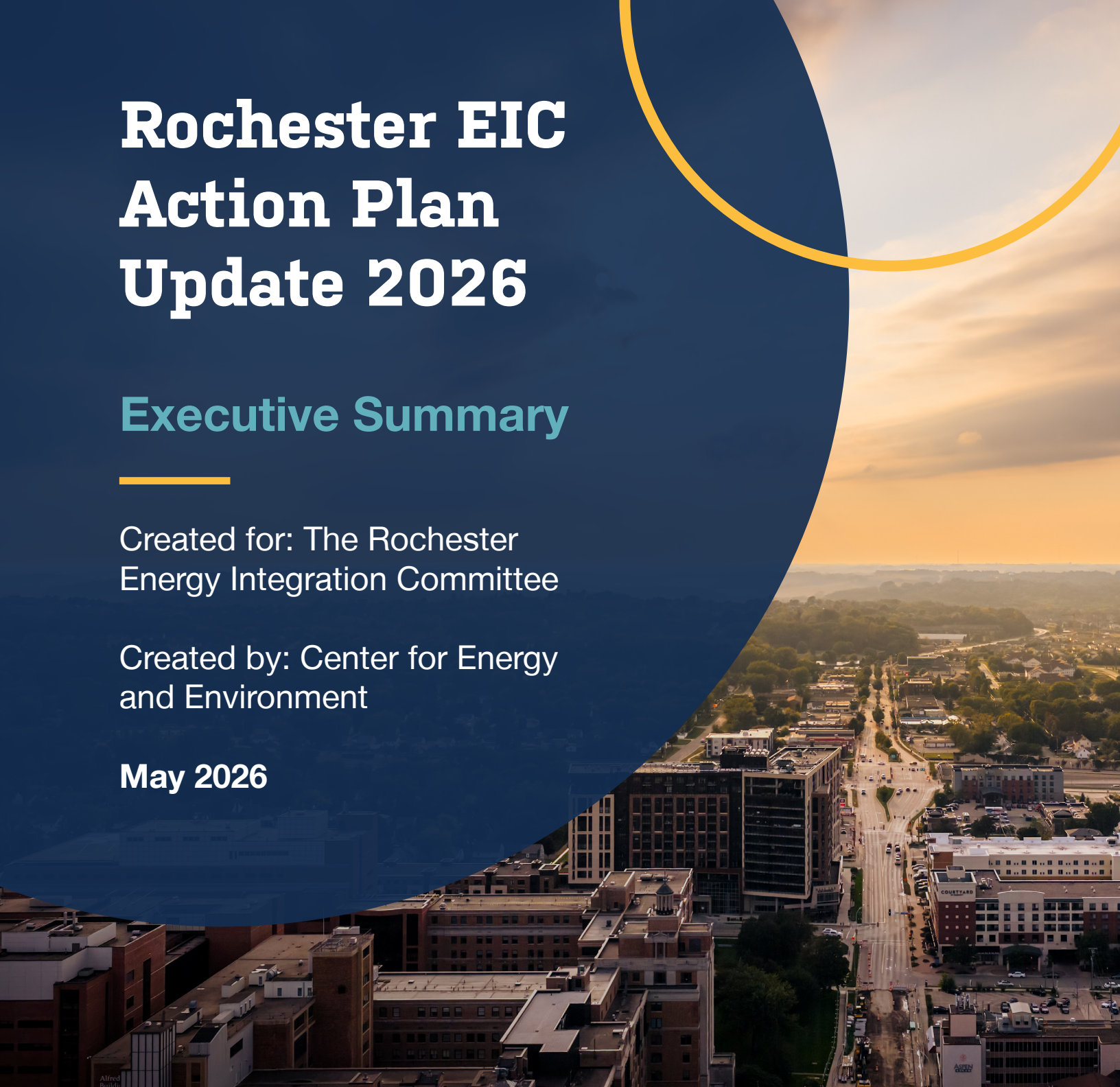
Rochester EIC Action Plan Update 2026

Executive Summary

Created for: The Rochester
Energy Integration Committee

Created by: Center for Energy
and Environment

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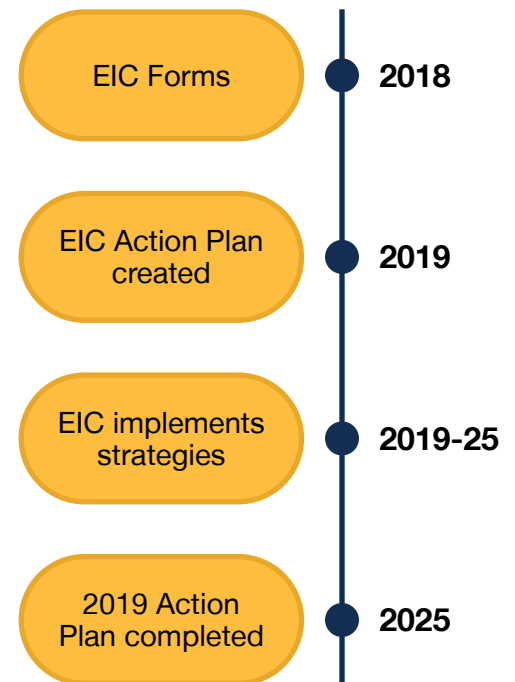
Leading Energy Action in Rochester

Rochester is home to many organizations and local government institutions leading the way on energy efficiency, electrification, and climate action. The Rochester Energy Integration Committee (EIC) was formed in 2018 to bring these organizations together to collaboratively advance their energy and carbon goals. The EIC is made up of representatives from the City of Rochester, Destination Medical Center (DMC), Mayo Clinic, Minnesota Energy Resources (MERC), Olmsted County, Rochester Public Utilities (RPU), and University of Minnesota Rochester (UMR). The EIC's unique and innovative model has proven effective. The representatives of the EIC coordinate as an advisory body, then work within their respective organizations to advocate for and implement actions, policies, and investments that transform and decarbonize buildings, infrastructure, energy generation, and transportation in Rochester.

Success of the 2019 EIC Action Plan

After forming, the EIC's plans first materialized in the creation of the [2019 EIC Action Plan](#). The five-year plan served as a roadmap, outlining strategies for achieving energy and carbon goals of the EIC organizations in alignment with those of the broader community. In 2025, the organizations comprising the EIC had completed or substantially advanced all 23 strategies outlined in the 2019 EIC Action Plan, a reflection of collaboration, innovation, and local leadership. Some of the high-impact actions completed include:

- RPU committed to providing 100% net-renewable electricity by 2030.
- The City of Rochester launched the state's first thermal energy network, connecting four municipal buildings to a geothermal heating and cooling system.
- DMC funded an electric vehicle (EV) fleet conversion study and the City, County, and Mayo installed or approved plans to install over 100 new EV chargers.
- The EIC reviewed member organizations' capital improvement plans and integrated investment in recommissioning and energy efficiency improvements to large buildings.



With the on-time completion of the 2019 EIC Action Plan, the committee was ready for a new roadmap looking to 2030. This spurred the creation of the 2026 EIC Action Plan Update.

Purpose of the 2026 EIC Action Plan Update

The 2026 EIC Action Plan Update will build on the successes of the 2019 plan while also forging new strategies that accommodate the ever-changing political, economic, and technological landscape. Since 2019, nearly every EIC organization has adopted new energy or climate goals and strategic priorities, and the 2026 EIC Action Plan Update creates a roadmap of actions to take to achieve these new goals and priorities.

To create the Action Plan Update, CEE facilitated three workshops where the EIC brainstormed, refined, and prioritized the focus areas, strategies, and action steps of the plan and prioritized when they should be initiated based on upcoming opportunities, decisions, and development plans. In addition, the EIC and CEE gathered stakeholder input on where to focus the plan through a survey sent to other large energy users and institutions in Rochester.

This executive summary is an overview of the outcome of this planning process. CEE also created a full EIC Action Plan Update document that will serve as a living work plan, with roles and action steps the committee will refer to and update while implementing the plan through 2030. **As economic, policy, and technological conditions change, the Committee will continuously assess the feasibility of each strategy and adapt accordingly to advance its goals and those of the community.**

EIC Member Adopted Goals

City of Rochester

- Reduce community-wide greenhouse gas emissions **50% by 2030**
- Achieve **100%** reduction in GHG emissions, or net zero, by **2050**

Destination Medical Center

- Reduce energy use intensity (EUI) and energy consumption by **25% below 2010 levels by 2030**
- Reduce DMC-wide emissions per square foot by **80% below 2005 levels by 2050**

Rochester Public Utilities (RPU)

- **100%** net renewable energy by **2030**
- **1.5%** gross annual retail energy savings

Mayo Clinic

- **50%** reduction in GHG intensity by **2032**
- **20%** reduction of EUI by **2032**

University of Minnesota Rochester

- Reduce GHG emissions **85% by 2034** and achieve carbon neutrality by **2050**

Components of the 2026 EIC Action Plan Update

Cross-Cutting Themes

The EIC identified themes to incorporate across all focus areas and strategies:



Communications



Engagement and Education



Energy Policy

Focus Areas

To meet the EIC's updated goals, the plan's strategies are organized into the following four focus areas.

BIT

Building Efficiency, Innovation, and Technology Adoption

RER

Renewable Energy, Resilience, and Thermal Energy Networks

IBE

Infrastructure and the Built Environment

R&I

Resources and Incentives



Strategies

The EIC developed the strategies in this plan to establish a five-year work plan of measurable and timebound actions to advance the organizations’ goals. This Action Plan Update focuses on 19 urgent strategies that can be acted on between 2026 and the end of 2030. Implementation of these strategies may vary by organization, recognizing that not every strategy will apply equally to all member organizations or require the same actions. To operationalize the plan, the strategies are organized into three phases, indicating when work on the strategy should be initiated.

Phase 1 Strategies: 2026 and 2027

Phase 1 includes 12 priority strategies that are intended to be initiated in 2026. These strategies will act on opportunities arising in 2026, pave the way for future action, or take advantage of momentum created by previous EIC work.

Strategy	Objective
BIT 1) Advocate during key decision points for carbon neutral and energy efficient new development and retrofits.	To meet greenhouse gas (GHG) goals, energy efficiency, electrification, and multi-modal transportation need to be prioritized in planning and construction decisions in all building projects to go beyond energy code.
2) Develop educational opportunities for key audiences that support adoption of electrification and energy efficiency.	Educating building owners, managers, contractors, consultants, and residents on electrification and efficient technologies will help them choose low-carbon options for projects.
3) Encourage electrification options for large buildings.	Reducing dependence on natural gas while maintaining reliability and cost-effectiveness is critical to meeting GHG goals as large buildings are the highest natural gas users in Rochester.
4) Update and align sustainable building guidelines and innovate on funding mechanisms.	Sustainable building guidelines allow EIC organizations to provide funding to new developments to require construction beyond energy code. Aligning these guidelines and funding structures across EIC organizations will make participation for developers easier and more efficient.

Strategy	Objective
RER 5) Develop Thermal Energy Network (TEN) enabling policy and ownership, operation, and financial models.	A district thermal energy network that connects multiple buildings with different owners has the potential to equitably decarbonize entire swaths of Rochester. Models clarifying ownership, operating, and financial structures are needed to advance this TEN.
6) Support Olmsted County Waste-to-Energy Facility (OWEF) as renewable.	Maintaining the OWEF's designation as a renewable energy source will help meet the County's sustainability goals and RPU's 100% net renewable goal.
7) Develop a renewable energy credit accounting framework.	EIC organizations' GHG goals are tied to RPU providing 100% net renewable electricity by 2030. Resolving renewable energy credit (REC) accounting questions will clarify if all organizations can claim 100% net renewable.
IBE 8) Consider energy infrastructure during any development or redevelopment.	Construction projects present a timely opportunity to install energy infrastructure (i.e., the physical systems, networks, and facilities) such as infrastructure for thermal energy networks or transmission for EV chargers or renewable energy projects.
9) Expand transportation hubs and a regional network to and from hubs.	Transportation hubs can bolster GHG reductions by addressing vehicle emissions and enabling dense housing that reduces vehicle miles traveled.
10) Support EV adoption with charging infrastructure and fleet upgrades.	Electric vehicles provide a clear solution to reduce transportation emissions, but adoption hinges on robust charging infrastructure and cost-effectiveness.
R&I 11) Develop and support incentives for local vendors and contractors for electrification or other costly energy projects.	Well-designed and well-communicated incentives increase the likelihood that contractors and vendors will recommend and implement electrification and energy efficiency improvements and that customers will adopt them.
12) Increase institutional capacity to accelerate energy projects.	Advancing the goals of this plan will require sufficient staffing, technical expertise, and organizational capacity across the EIC organizations.

Phase 2 Strategies: 2027–2028

Phase 2 includes five strategies. During the planning process, the EIC selected the following strategies to be initiated in Phase 2 because they either build on Phase 1 strategies, align with critical path opportunities arising in 2027 and 2028, or the committee would need time to prepare to implement them.

Strategy	Objective
BIT 13) Support and set building performance standards and targets.	It is critical to create policies that incentivize or require existing buildings to decarbonize at a pace in line with Rochester’s net zero by 2050 goal.
RER 14) Generate support and commitment for Thermal Energy Networks (TENs) in Rochester.	TENs are one of the most promising solutions for decarbonizing large buildings in Rochester. Aligning goals and commitments will enable shared TENs to be created.
15) Develop energy storage options for large and small users and build large-scale energy storage partnerships.	Energy storage will ensure consistent electricity supply, peak demand savings, and grid reliability as more wind and solar are brought online.
R&I 16) Develop financial modeling and planning support for energy projects.	Limited access to financial modeling and planning tools, particularly for innovative or emerging technologies, has been identified as a key barrier to energy project implementation. Providing accessible tools and templates will support smaller organizations, contractors, and community stakeholders in planning and development.
17) Support rates and programs that prioritize equity.	Equity is central to achieving the plan’s goals and ensuring that GHG reductions produce meaningful community benefits. Utility rates and program design have significant equity implications.

Phase 3 Strategies: 2029–2030

Two strategies are planned to be initiated in Phase 3. Many of the strategies that will be initiated in Phases 1 and 2 will continue to be implemented in Phase 3.

Strategy	Objective
RER 18) Explore renewable and alternative fuel options where they can support EIC goals.	Alternative fuels can be a tool to decarbonize hard-to-electrify end uses, especially in industrial operations and heavy-duty vehicles.
R&I 19) Support and create workforce development options and programs focused on the energy work in this plan.	Decarbonizing Rochester will require a skilled and diverse workforce. Addressing workforce shortages and inequities will involve leveraging existing programs and developing targeted initiatives aligned with anticipated project needs.

Strategic Next Steps

The EIC is operating from a strong base of collaboration, technical expertise, and momentum established over the past five years. During the planning process, the EIC identified next steps and system improvements for successful implementation of the Action Plan Update. The EIC will create a project management tool for strategy implementation role assignment, status tracking, and reporting on progress toward goals. In addition, the EIC will develop regular public communications to showcase progress made by EIC member organizations, case studies of successful developments, and tools that other partners can use to advance energy goals.

Implementation of this plan will also reinforce and expand the strong partnerships developed among Committee members over the past five years. The outcomes of this plan carry significant implications for energy performance, climate impact, and long-term cost savings in Rochester. As such, the investment of time, resources, and sustained collaboration required to implement this plan is worthwhile and essential.

**Assign &
Track**

Implement

**Communicate
Progress**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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