



City of Erie

Mayor Daria S. Devlin's Transition Team Report

January 2026



Letter from the Mayor

Erie is a city with tremendous potential and a deep sense of pride. It is a place shaped by strong neighborhoods, creative energy, and people who care deeply about its future.

I ran for Mayor because I believe in this city — in its people, its possibilities, and the role City Hall can play in helping Erie meet this moment.

Over the past several months, I convened a Transition Team made up of community leaders, practitioners, and public servants to help us listen carefully and honestly before taking action. Their charge was not to create a list of promises, but to take an honest look at what is working, where we are falling short, and how City government can better serve the people who call Erie home.

What we heard was consistent: Erie has momentum, talent, and heart, but our systems are often siloed, outdated, or unclear. Residents experience this when services are hard to navigate, communication is unclear, or accountability feels inconsistent.

City employees experience it when they are asked to do important work without the clarity, coordination, or tools they need to succeed.



"The work ahead will require partnership, clear communication, and a focus on outcomes that matter in people's everyday lives."



Letter from the Mayor

This report is a starting point. It outlines priorities and direction that will guide our work at City Hall, grounded in three core values: care, excellence, and trust — and in the understanding that we're all in this together.

Care shapes how people are treated. Excellence defines what residents should expect from their City government. Trust is built through transparency, follow-through, and accountability. These values will guide our decisions, our policies, and how we show up for this community.

The work ahead will require partnership, clear communication, and a focus on outcomes that matter in people's everyday lives. I am honored to serve Erie at this moment, and I am committed to leading with urgency, responsibility, and optimism as we move forward together.

Thank you to the Transition Team, to City staff, and to the many residents who shared their time, insights, and hopes. I am excited for the work ahead and grateful for the opportunity to serve as your Mayor as we write Erie's next chapter together.

Mayor Daria S. Devlin
City of Erie





A Note from the Transition Team

We came together as a Transition Team with a shared love for this city and a belief that Erie is entering a defining moment in its story.

This Transition Report reflects that belief.

Across our work, we encountered a city bursting with potential. People are investing in neighborhoods, starting businesses, building community, and searching for ways to be part of shaping Erie's future. Institutions and employers are looking for deeper collaboration. Young people are asking to be engaged and heard.

At the same time, we heard clearly about the challenges Erie faces. Housing pressures, workforce changes, public safety concerns, and long-term financial constraints affect daily life for many residents. Too often, these challenges are compounded by systems that feel disconnected, unclear, or difficult to navigate — even when people are working hard and with good intentions.

“What people are asking for now is leadership that brings clarity and direction, so that hard work leads to real results.



Key Focus Areas

- ✓ Identifying what is working well
- ✓ Where we are falling short
- ✓ How City Hall can better serve
- ✓ Systems improvement & clarity



A Note from the Transition Team

The recommendations that follow are offered to Mayor Devlin and her administration in that spirit. They are intended to help guide priority-setting and early action, with the understanding that this work will continue to evolve in response to community needs.

We are grateful to Mayor Devlin for welcoming us into this process and for setting an expectation of openness, honesty, and shared responsibility. We also thank the City staff, community partners, business owners, elected officials, and residents who shared their time and perspectives so generously.

We are hopeful about Erie's future under Mayor Devlin's leadership. The people, ideas, and energy needed to move this city forward are already here.

We believe Erie is ready for this next chapter, and we stand ready to support this work in the months and years ahead.

AJ Antolik

Lori Radder Spicer

Amy Eisert

Mark Dombrowski

Amy Murdock

Natalie Fatica

Brian Polito

Rasheeja "Nicci" Page

Corey Cook

Rob Lee

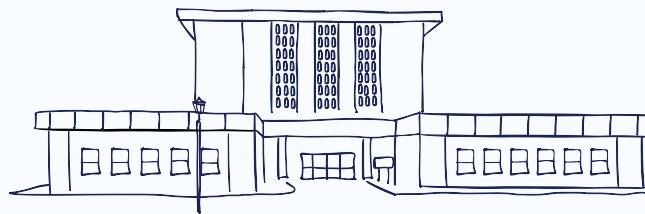
Curtis Jones, Jr.

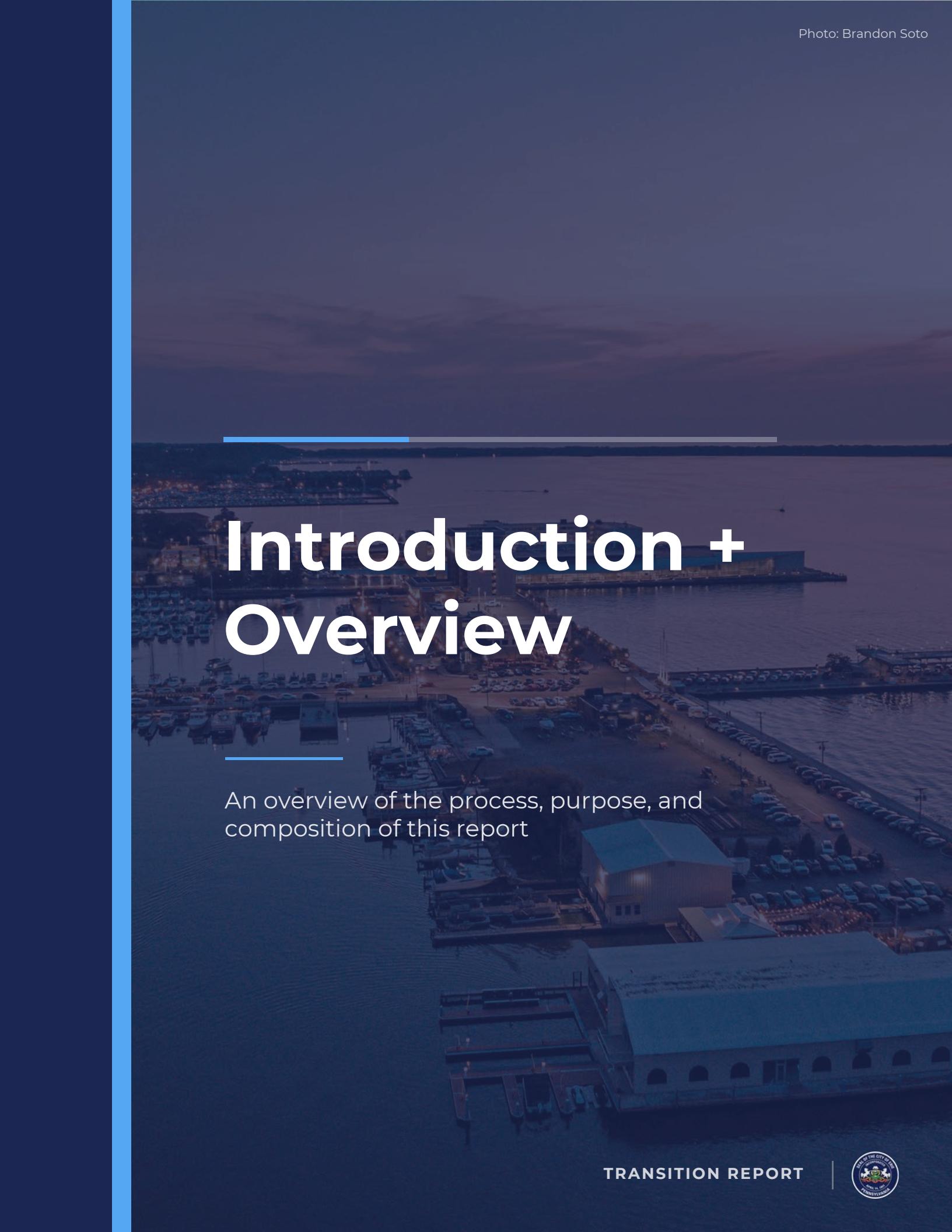
Tina Mengine

Erin Carey

Wujdan "Wuji" Ahmad

Jenessa Norton





Introduction + Overview

An overview of the process, purpose, and composition of this report





Introduction + Overview

Purpose and Composition

In November, Mayor Devlin convened a Transition Team composed of community leaders, practitioners, and public servants with diverse experience across various sectors.

The team's role was to assess City operations and help identify what is working, where the City is falling short, and how City government can better serve the people who call Erie home.

Core Objectives

- **Assess current operations**
- **Identify effective practices**
- **Highlight improvement areas**
- **Actionable recommendations**



Community Engagement

Mayor Devlin with Transition Team Members at a Community Conversation

Process Overview

The Transition Team's multi-month process involved rigorous assessment and engagement to build a foundation for action. Key activities included:



Working sessions and facilitated discussions



Review of existing City plans and policies



Input from staff, partners, and residents



Written recommendations by team members



Introduction + Overview



How This Report is Organized

The sections that follow are organized by **core issue areas that shape daily life in Erie** and **the City's long-term health**:

- 1 **Housing and Neighborhood Development**
- 2 **Youth**
- 3 **Workforce and Economic Development**
- 4 **Budget and Financial Sustainability**
- 5 **Leadership, Culture, and Service Delivery**

Together, these areas reflect what people need to build stable lives, feel supported by their city, and see a future for themselves and their families here — from safe housing and strong neighborhoods, to meaningful work, reliable services, and a City government that is clear, responsive, and worthy of trust. When these systems work well, Erie becomes a place where people can thrive.

They also support a central goal of the administration: stabilizing and growing Erie's population by making the city a place where people choose to stay, return, put down roots, and invest.

Each section provides context and key observations, followed by a set of recommendations outlining short-term, mid-term, and longer-term action items for the City. Taken together, these sections are intended to offer both a clear picture of Erie's current moment and a practical roadmap to guide the work ahead.



Introduction + Overview

Community Input and How It Is Reflected in This Report

After the Transition Team drafted its initial findings and recommendations, Mayor Devlin and the Transition Team hosted a **Community Conversation** on January 10, 2026 to hear directly from residents and community stakeholders across these issue areas.

This conversation served as an important public checkpoint in the transition process. Participants shared lived experience, concerns, and practical recommendations about what is working in Erie and what needs to change for City systems and services to better meet people's needs.

January 10 Community Conversation



Overall, community feedback strongly aligned with the Transition Team's findings, affirming the urgency of:

- Housing affordability and code enforcement
- Expanded youth opportunity and safe spaces
- Stronger workforce pathways
- Relationship-based public safety
- Clearer communication from City Hall
- Reliable core services such as snow removal, lighting, and neighborhood maintenance

Community input added important emphasis on landlord accountability, follow-through on reported concerns, accessible communication beyond online channels, public transit barriers, support for seniors and unhoused residents, and the importance of pride, storytelling, and belief in Erie's future.

To ensure community voices are clearly reflected throughout the report, the following formatting conventions are used:

- **Recommendations echoed by community participants are shown in bold.**
- **Recommendations surfaced exclusively through the Community Conversation are shown in bold italics.**



1

Housing and Neighborhood Development

Building stable foundations for strong neighborhoods and thriving communities across Erie





Housing + Neighborhood Development

Stable housing and strong neighborhoods are foundational to quality of life in Erie.

They shape whether people feel safe, whether families can stay rooted, and whether neighborhoods can thrive across generations. Housing is also deeply connected to community safety, workforce development, economic opportunity, and our overall capacity for growth as a city.

Erie's housing challenges are not new, but the urgency to address them has grown. Rising costs, limited supply, aging housing stock, and long-standing disinvestment in some neighborhoods require coordinated action at a scale that matches the need.

Why It Matters

"Housing is foundational... deeply connected to community safety, workforce development, economic opportunity, and our overall capacity for growth."

Key Challenges

- **Rising housing costs**
- **Limited housing supply**
- **Aging housing stock**
- **Long-standing disinvestment**





Housing + Neighborhood Development

💡 Current Opportunities

Erie has committed partners, thoughtful plans, and meaningful tools to address housing needs.

- There is growing recognition that housing efforts must extend beyond the production of units alone.
- Strong neighborhoods depend on safety, infrastructure, connectivity, and access to opportunity alongside housing investment.

⚠ Challenges & Fragmentation

Housing-related responsibilities are spread across multiple City functions and partner organizations, sometimes without clear alignment. Progress is often slowed by fragmentation and a lack of coordination.

- 1 Developers, nonprofit organizations, and residents experience confusion around processes, timelines, and points of contact.
- 2 At the neighborhood level, the impacts of vacancy, blight, and underinvestment remain visible even when broader strategies are in place.



Housing + Neighborhood Development

Aligning for Impact

Meeting Erie's housing needs requires a more coordinated and strategic approach. Aligning zoning, planning, code enforcement, redevelopment efforts, and funding strategies allows these tools to reinforce one another rather than operate in isolation.

Focusing investments geographically — in partnership with neighborhood organizations — can help build visible momentum, strengthen trust, and support long-term stability. Clear accountability for absentee ownership, consistent enforcement practices, and improved communication with residents are essential to restoring confidence and producing lasting results.

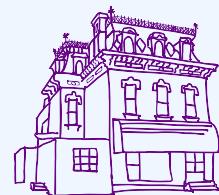
Delivering housing outcomes at scale also depends on stronger local capacity and partnerships. This includes supporting nonprofit and private developers, expanding the pool of qualified contractors, and coordinating more effectively with County, regional, and authority partners.

Clear roles, predictable processes, and shared priorities make it easier for partners to engage and invest — and help housing efforts move more quickly from planning to visible impact in neighborhoods across Erie.

Housing strategies must also address the full continuum of need, including attainable housing for working families, solutions for seniors, and pathways to homeownership, alongside deeply affordable housing options.

Strategic Alignment

- **Coordinated zoning & planning**
- **Geographically focused investment**
- **Stronger local capacity**
- **Predictable processes**
- **Full continuum of housing needs**





Short Term Recommendations

- Publicly name housing stability and neighborhood reinvestment as top priorities of the administration, signaling a commitment to bold, coordinated action.
- Align development of the City's housing plan with community-led initiatives, including coordination with Infinite Erie's Housing Accelerator and other partners working to increase housing supply.
- **Strengthen partnerships with neighborhood organizations, clarifying how community groups help shape priorities, engage residents, and connect people to resources.**
- **Demonstrate accountability for blight and vacancy by strengthening enforcement and shifting toward preventative, early-intervention approaches that stabilize neighborhoods before decline accelerates.**
- Communicate clearly with residents and developers about housing priorities, expectations, and pathways for engagement.
- Establish a neighborhood development leadership role with authority to coordinate HOME, CDBG, code enforcement, planning, and housing rehabilitation efforts.

Recommendations echoed by community participants are shown in bold.

Recommendations surfaced exclusively through the Community Conversation are shown in bold italics.



SHORT TERM

MEDIUM TERM

LONG TERM

Medium Term Recommendations

- **Focus early investments in targeted neighborhoods, signaling a shift from scattered projects to coordinated, place-based strategies, and pair them with infrastructure, safety, and quality-of-life improvements.**
- Support an increase in housing production and rehabilitation across the continuum, including affordable, workforce, attainable, senior, and market-rate housing, by initiating a comprehensive zoning review and modernization effort.
- Expand capacity among local developers, nonprofit organizations, and contractors by reducing barriers to participation, including access to training, technical assistance, and clearer guidance.
- Improve coordination across housing-related City entities — including the Department of Neighborhood and Economic Development, Housing Authority of the City of Erie, Redevelopment Authority of the City of Erie, and the City of Erie Land Bank — to reduce confusion, duplication, and delays for partners and applicants.
- **Strengthen neighborhood stabilization and planning strategies to ensure residents benefit from reinvestment without displacement.**
- Update and align the Comprehensive Plan, Housing Strategy, Consolidated Plan, and Capital Improvement Plan.
- **Conduct a permitting and land-development process audit to clarify decision rights, timelines, staffing gaps, and escalation pathways.**
- **Create a clearer tenant and landlord accountability system, including a stronger landlord registry and consistent follow-up on violations.**
- **Increase transparency and education about renting rights and responsibilities, home maintenance resources, and assistance programs.**
- **Expand small home repair support—especially for seniors, low-income residents, and differently abled homeowners/renters—so residents can stay safely housed.**



SHORT TERM

MEDIUM TERM

LONG TERM

Long Term Recommendations

- Pursue creative capital solutions at scale, including innovative financing tools and partnerships capable of generating significant investment in housing and neighborhood development that includes connectivity, safety, and overall quality of life.
- Educate and engage private and philanthropic leaders as long-term partners in addressing Erie's housing needs.
- Institutionalize a comprehensive, citywide housing strategy that aligns planning, funding, and implementation over time.
- Build a housing ecosystem capable of sustaining affordability, neighborhood stability, and opportunity across economic cycles.
- ***Evaluate housing-related enforcement and resident-protection tools (e.g., housing court models, escrow/rent withholding mechanisms where legally feasible, and strengthened landlord registration/enforcement follow-up).***
- ***Create centralized, offline-accessible housing resource information (flyers/cards included in water/tax bills; distribution through community centers, churches, hospitals).***

A close-up photograph of a woman with long, dark hair. She is looking down with a serious, contemplative expression. The lighting is soft, and the background is blurred.

2

Youth

Investing in Erie's future by supporting, engaging, and empowering the next generation





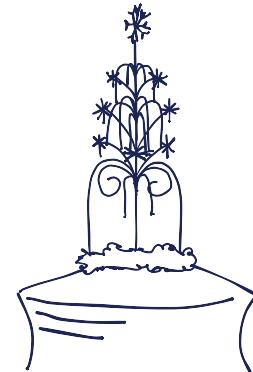
Erie's youth are Erie's future.

Their access to opportunity, belonging, and meaningful pathways to education, work, and civic life will shape the city's long-term vitality, workforce strength, and population stability.

When young people feel supported and connected, they are more likely to stay, return, and invest in Erie as adults. Youth outcomes are also deeply connected to broader systems, including schools, public safety, parks and recreation, workforce development, and neighborhood conditions.

Improving outcomes for young people requires coordination across these systems and a shared commitment to creating environments where youth can thrive.

"Structured opportunities for youth voice strengthen civic trust and ensure programs reflect their real needs and aspirations."



Key Connections

- › **Education Systems**
- › **Public Safety**
- › **Parks and Recreation**
- › **Workforce Development**
- › **Neighborhood Conditions**





💡 Current Opportunities and Challenges

Erie has a strong foundation of youth-serving organizations, committed educators, higher education institutions, and community leaders working to support young people. However, coordination across City departments, schools, nonprofits, and workforce partners remains limited.



Barriers to Access

Many young people face barriers related to poverty, safety, transportation, and access to programs and opportunities. Families and youth can struggle to navigate available resources.



Need for Youth Voice

Opportunities for youth voice, leadership, and civic engagement are not consistently integrated into City decision-making.



Connecting to Outcomes

There is also a growing need to strengthen connections between youth programming and long-term outcomes — including career exploration, workforce pathways, and opportunities that encourage young people to build their futures in Erie.



Helping young people thrive in Erie requires a more intentional, coordinated approach that connects education, recreation, workforce development, and civic engagement. Schools play a critical role as community anchors, and partnerships between the City, Erie's Public Schools, higher education institutions, employers, and youth-serving organizations are critical to delivering meaningful outcomes.

Youth engagement efforts are most effective when young people are not only participants in programs, but active contributors to shaping the policies and investments that affect their lives. Structured opportunities for youth voice strengthen civic trust and ensure programs reflect real needs and aspirations.

Youth strategies must be grounded in a long-term vision: making Erie a place where young people can see a future for themselves — where they choose to stay, return, and build their lives as adults.

Achieving that kind of impact requires clear roles, shared goals, and aligned investment across City departments, schools, nonprofits, higher education institutions, and employers to ensure youth-serving efforts reinforce one another rather than operate in isolation.

"This strategic alignment will help connect young people to opportunity — from education and career pathways to civic belonging and long-term stability."



January 10 Community Conversation

Core Components

- **Intentional Coordination**
Connecting education, recreation, & workforce
- **Active Contribution**
Youth as shapers of policy, not just participants
- **Long-Term Vision**
Creating a future where youth choose to stay
- **System Alignment**
Reinforcing efforts across all sectors





Short Term Recommendations

- **Affirm youth engagement as a community safety strategy, prioritizing prevention, mentorship, and positive relationships.**
- **Implement creative ways to consistently celebrate young people when they succeed (e.g. awards programs, social media shoutouts).**
- Convene a Youth Summit to align City, school district, nonprofit, and workforce partners and identify gaps in youth services and opportunities.
- Improve communication about existing youth programs, so families can easily access opportunities already available.

Recommendations echoed by community participants are shown in bold.

Recommendations surfaced exclusively through the Community Conversation are shown in bold italics.



Medium Term Recommendations

- Designate dedicated staff capacity within City government to coordinate youth engagement and youth-related initiatives.
- Strengthen partnership with Erie's Public Schools (EPS) as a core driver of the city's health and youth outcomes (attendance, graduation, youth leadership, postsecondary pathways), including:
 - ***Expand language access for families (interpretation and translated/accessible documents).***
 - ***Address transportation barriers for non-driving households.***
 - ***Develop a truancy and youth safety coordination plan with EPS and EPD.***
- ***Expand and coordinate comprehensive youth programming across the City, including recreation, arts, leadership development, and career exploration.***
- Strengthen partnerships with higher education institutions and employers to create clearer career pathways for young people.
- ***Align City funding for youth-serving organizations with clear priority outcomes (including early literacy and access to healthy food), and pair those investments with technical assistance and outcomes-based evaluation.***
- ***Strengthen parks and recreation as core youth development and prevention assets, prioritizing safe, well-programmed, and accessible public spaces across neighborhoods.***
- ***Improve access to safe spaces, transportation, and programming that support youth participation across neighborhoods.***
- ***Establish a Youth Council to educate and build capacity among local youth.***
- ***Convene a Youth Consortium (community centers, nonprofits, school district, City) focused on shared outcomes, coordinated calendars, and joint grant-seeking.***



Long Term Recommendations

- **Integrate youth engagement into broader workforce and economic development strategies, including internships, apprenticeships, and mentorship.**
- Create sustained pathways from school to careers, in partnership with employers, unions, higher education, and training providers.
- Develop scholarship and incentive programs that encourage youth to stay in or return to Erie.
- Institutionalize youth voice in City decision-making structures.
- Ensure youth development strategies are integrated with public safety, neighborhood stabilization, and economic development efforts.
- Develop strategies to attract, retain, and re-engage young people as part of Erie's broader talent and population goals.
- ***Support expansion of neighborhood-based community hubs (including culturally specific spaces) that can host after-school programs, childcare supports, and community learning.***
- ***Support childcare and wraparound supports for displaced youth, teen parents, and young families.***

Workforce and Economic Development

Aligning growth, talent, and opportunity to build a strong local economy for Erie's long-term stability





Workforce + Economic Development

A strong local economy is essential to Erie's long-term stability and growth. Thriving businesses create jobs, generate revenue, support neighborhoods, and expand opportunity for residents across the city.

Workforce development and economic growth are also central to reversing population decline and ensuring Erie remains competitive in a rapidly changing economy. Economic development is most effective when it is inclusive, coordinated, and aligned with the needs of both employers and workers.

When economic opportunity expands — through business growth, entrepreneurship, and stronger job pathways — the benefits ripple across the entire city.

Current Opportunities and Challenges

Erie has significant economic assets, including anchor institutions, higher education partners, a strong base of small and family-owned businesses, and growing entrepreneurial activity. There is increasing interest in innovation, downtown revitalization, and new economy sectors, as well as a strong desire to welcome and integrate New Americans into the local workforce.

At the same time, economic development efforts are often fragmented across organizations and systems, making it difficult for businesses and entrepreneurs to navigate resources, permitting, financing, and support.

Key Challenges

- **Barriers to training and transportation**
- **Clear Vision for City's Leadership Role in Economic Development**
- **Lack of Quality Housing for Workforce**
- **Unpredictable macroeconomic forces**



Photo: Brandon Soto



Workforce + Economic Development

Aligning Growth, Talent, and Opportunity

Sustainable economic growth requires stronger alignment between business development, workforce training, education systems, housing, and infrastructure. Employers, schools, training providers, and City leadership all play a role in ensuring that economic strategies translate into real opportunity for residents.

Erie's approach must reflect the realities of today's workforce — including the vital contributions of New Americans and historically marginalized communities — so that economic growth is inclusive and benefits neighborhoods across the city. Downtown revitalization and neighborhood-based business growth should be pursued together as complementary strategies that strengthen the local economy.

Effective economic development requires clear roles, predictable processes, and strong partnerships among City departments, economic development organizations, educational institutions, and the private sector. When City services move at the speed of business and partners are aligned around shared goals, businesses are better positioned to invest, expand, and create jobs in Erie. Strategic use of incentives, financing tools, and infrastructure investments can help unlock private capital and support long-term growth.

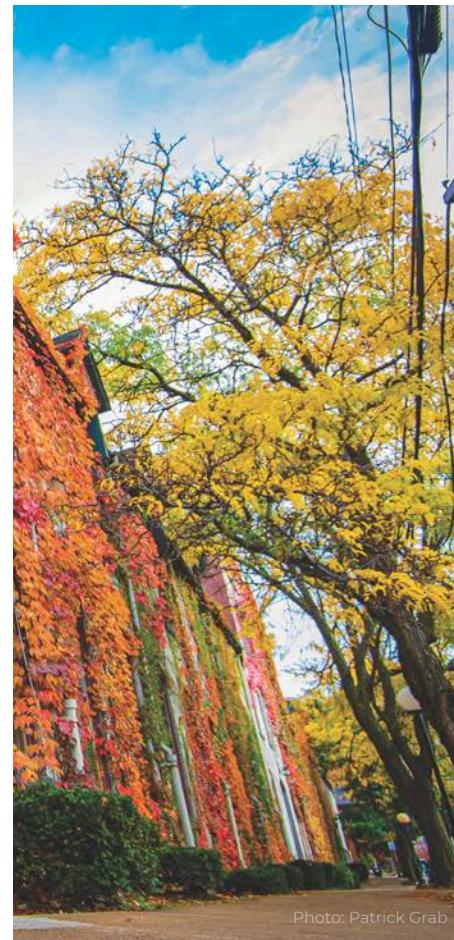


Photo: Patrick Grab



Short Term Recommendations

- **Streamline and modernize City development services to make permitting, licensing, and land development clear, coordinated, and predictable — with defined timelines, roles, and points of contact that support business growth.**
- Lead Bayfront master planning process to support development of a shared vision for a world-class bayfront.
- Inventory sites for development readiness and assess gaps in critical infrastructure, including water, sewer, roads, bridges, electric, gas, and broadband.

Recommendations echoed by community participants are shown in bold.

Recommendations surfaced exclusively through the Community Conversation are shown in bold italics.



SHORT TERM

MEDIUM TERM

LONG TERM

Medium Term Recommendations

- Establish a New Economy Agreement aligning the City, Erie's Public Schools, higher education institutions, employers, and workforce partners around workforce development, **education-to-career pathways**, and inclusive participation in the local economy.
- Strengthen site readiness and redevelopment efforts in close partnership with the Erie County Redevelopment Authority (ECRDA), aligning land assembly, infrastructure, and incentives to support housing, commercial, and mixed-use development.
- **Strengthen partnerships with employers to recruit, retain, and invest in local talent.**
- **Expand support for entrepreneurs and small to mid-sized family-owned businesses, including access to financing and technical assistance.**
- Prioritize innovation and Erie-based growth, supporting businesses that commit to local investment.
- Support downtown vitality and corridor-based economic development strategies.
- Align economic development strategies with housing availability to ensure workers can live in the city.



Long Term Recommendations

- Establish a long-term action plan, in partnership with economic development entities and business leaders, to retain and add jobs in the City of Erie.
- Break down barriers to growth for existing businesses and support business expansion within the city.
- Rebrand Erie's economic narrative to attract investment, businesses, and talent.
- Actively invest in and grow Erie's talent base, including university students, New Americans, and historically marginalized communities, by:
 - Strengthening education-to-career pipelines connecting youth, higher education, and employers.
 - ***Addressing key workforce barriers including transportation access (EMTA routes), IDs/certifications needed for employment, and discrimination in hiring.***
 - ***Strengthening re-entry workforce programs and second-chance employment pathways.***
 - ***Creating a focused strategy to reduce barriers for New Americans entering the workforce, including navigation supports, language assistance, employer partnerships, and pathways beyond entry-level manufacturing work.***
 - ***Supporting workers' upward mobility by promoting on-the-job training, soft skills development, and employer commitment to advancement.***
- Create an easily accessible citywide job opportunities hub (online + offline) that includes job fairs, training programs, and entry pathways.
- Advocate to the Commonwealth for a competitive set of economic development tools and incentives, positioning Pennsylvania and our region to compete with other parts of the country for family sustaining jobs.



4

Budget and Financial Sustainability

Stewardship, transparency, and strategic planning for Erie's long-term financial health





Budget + Financial Sustainability

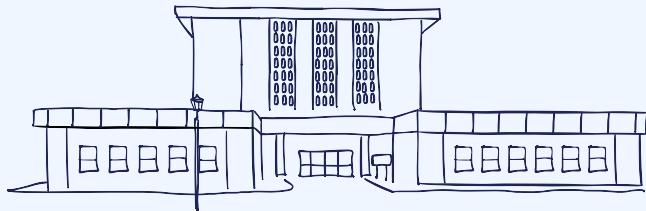
Financial stability determines what residents can count on from City Hall — from reliable trash pickup and safe streets to timely repairs, strong staffing, and the ability to invest in neighborhoods. Budget decisions shape whether services are consistent, whether maintenance is proactive instead of reactive, and whether the City can follow through on commitments over time. Strong financial stewardship is also a foundation of public trust: residents deserve to understand how public dollars are managed and why decisions are made.

Erie faces real fiscal constraints that require careful planning, transparency, and long-term thinking. Addressing these challenges openly and strategically is essential to maintaining core services and positioning the City for stability and growth.

Current Opportunities and Challenges

The City's financial position reflects both structural pressures and missed opportunities for long-term planning. A shrinking tax base, rising costs, and legacy obligations place strain on annual budgets. One-time revenues and short-term fixes have been used in the past without clear policies to guide their use or mitigate long-term risk.

At the same time, Erie has meaningful opportunities to strengthen its financial footing through better forecasting, clearer financial policies, stronger internal controls, disciplined capital planning, and more intentional alignment of state and federal funds with City priorities. There is also an opportunity to make budgeting more transparent and understandable, so residents can see how resources connect to outcomes in their neighborhoods.





Budget + Financial Sustainability

Strengthening Financial Stewardship and Transparency

Addressing Erie's financial challenges requires a shift toward long-term, outcome-focused financial management. This includes clear financial policies, realistic projections, disciplined use of resources, and regular evaluation of spending and revenue strategies.

Transparency and participation are also essential. When residents can understand how decisions are made and how resources are allocated, confidence in City government increases. Aligning budgets with clearly defined priorities helps ensure that financial decisions support tangible improvements in services and quality of life.

Key Stewardship Principles

- Clear financial policies & realistic projections
- Disciplined use of resources
- Regular evaluation of spending & revenues
- Public Transparency & Participation





Short Term Recommendations

- Establish a Financial Advisory Committee of public and private sector experts.
- Commit to clear and transparent budgeting practices that residents can understand.
- Meet with the City's auditors to review the current financial system and identify areas for improvement.
- Engage external expertise to assess financial systems and long-term risk.
- ***Work with other taxing bodies to acknowledge, assess, and align timing of overall tax burden and ensure fiscal decisions reflect quality-of-life outcomes that help retain residents.***

Recommendations echoed by community participants are shown in bold.

Recommendations surfaced exclusively through the Community Conversation are shown in bold italics.



Medium Term Recommendations

- Take steps to stabilize near-term finances, including maximizing one-time revenues.
- Modernize internal finance workflows and fully leverage accounting systems.
- Develop a five-year capital improvement plan in conjunction with the annual operating budget.
- Establish clear milestones for a transparent, citizen-engaged budgeting process.
- Develop and regularly update long-range financial projections.
- Act on recommendations from prior financial reviews that remain unresolved.
- Evaluate revenue strategies for long-term sustainability rather than short-term fixes.
- Tie policy proposals (e.g., taxes, downtown tools) to clear fiscal impact analysis.
- Explore longer-term debt restructuring options.
- Establish a fund balance policy for the Risk Management Fund.
- Align spending across state and federal funding sources to maximize impact.



SHORT TERM

MEDIUM TERM

LONG TERM

Long Term Recommendations

- Improve budget transparency by creating a public-facing budget dashboard.
- Implement recommendations from the City's STMP Financial Recovery Plan.
- Pursue and prioritize strategic revenue generation.
- Align financial planning with population growth, housing stability, and workforce development goals.
- Leverage the New Economy Agreement to encourage employers to incentivize their employees to live in the City.
- Institutionalize long-term financial planning practices that reduce risk and support sustainable investment.

Leadership, Culture, and Service Delivery

Building a culture of care, excellence, and trust to deliver results residents can see and feel





Restoring Trust

How City Hall operates — and how residents experience it — shapes trust in government and confidence in the City's ability to deliver. Leadership, organizational culture, and service delivery affect whether services are reliable, whether employees feel supported, and whether priorities move from plans to results. Even strong policies fall short when systems are unclear, communication is inconsistent, or roles and accountability are not clearly defined.

This section focuses on how the City leads, how work gets done inside City Hall, and how residents experience government in everyday interactions. Improving how the City serves requires clear roles, consistent expectations, strong coordination, and a culture grounded in care, excellence, and trust.





Leadership, Culture + Service Delivery

Current Opportunities and Challenges

The City of Erie benefits from dedicated public servants who care deeply about their work and the community. At the same time, outdated systems, siloed departments, and undefined processes create friction for both residents and staff.

Residents experience these challenges when it is unclear where to start, how long something will take, or who is responsible for follow-through. Employees experience them when roles are ambiguous, systems rely on manual workarounds, and priorities shift without clear communication or alignment across departments.

Leadership challenges also extend beyond City Hall. Coordination with authorities, regional partners, and state and federal agencies influences the City's ability to advocate effectively, secure resources, and deliver on shared goals.





Building a Culture of Care, Excellence, and Trust

Effective leadership is not only about decision-making — it is about creating conditions where good work can succeed. Shared values, clear expectations, and consistent operating practices support collaboration and accountability across City government.

Strong public service also depends on solid operational foundations. Functions such as Human Resources, grants management, information technology, and communications form the backbone of City operations and support every department's ability to serve residents well. When these systems are modern, aligned, and well-coordinated, residents experience City government as clear, responsive, and reliable.



Equity is an essential part of service design. When systems are fragmented or unclear, the burden falls most heavily on residents with fewer resources, limited time, or language barriers. Improving clarity, accessibility, and consistency helps ensure City services work fairly and reliably for everyone.

Public safety, communications, and community engagement are central to how residents experience City government. Prevention, relationship-building, and responsiveness play a critical role in building safety, trust, and confidence in public institutions, particularly for youth and historically marginalized communities.

Finally, delivering results with excellence and care requires strong partnerships beyond City Hall. Clear coordination with state and federal partners — and a unified voice across City leadership, authorities, and regional entities — strengthens advocacy, increases access to funding, and improves follow-through. When systems are aligned internally and externally, the City is better positioned to deliver results residents can see and feel.



Short Term Recommendations

Core Leadership + Operating Culture

- Establish clear expectations for professionalism, responsiveness, and follow-through across City government.
- Clarify roles, responsibilities, and decision-making authority across departments.
- Establish a consistent operating rhythm for leadership coordination and communication.
- Establish an outcomes-focused leadership style, articulating goals for Erie's future and clear pathways to achieving these goals.

Human Resources + Workforce Systems

- Clarify HR roles and responsibilities, including its role in shaping organizational culture.
- Improve onboarding and orientation for new employees.
- Begin reviewing employee benefits, contracts, and administrative processes for clarity and sustainability.
- Establish cross-training practices to reduce operational vulnerability.

Grants

- Establish clear protocols to ensure all internal and external partners are aligned before grant applications are submitted.
- Identify both a fiscal lead and a programmatic lead for every grant.
- Designate oversight responsibility within the Mayor's Office for grant compliance and reporting.

Recommendations echoed by community participants are shown in bold.

Recommendations surfaced exclusively through the Community Conversation are shown in bold italics.



Short Term Recommendations

Government Relations

- Establish regular, structured engagement with state and federal delegations.
- Begin coordinating outreach and advocacy across City leadership and authorities to present a unified voice.
- Align City priorities with state and federal policy objectives using data and impact statements.

Equity & Service Design

- Clarify the City's approach to DEI to ensure consistency, shared understanding, and legal compliance.
- Begin identifying where fragmented systems disproportionately burden residents with fewer resources or language access.

Police & Public Safety

- Reinforce prevention, youth engagement, and relationship-building as core components of public safety.
- Strengthen coordination between police, schools, and youth-serving organizations.
- Review and update emergency preparedness and response plans for multiple scenarios.



Short Term Recommendations

Communications & Community Engagement

- Clarify roles and expectations for community affairs and outreach.
- **Improve consistency and accessibility of City communications across channels.**
- Begin developing crisis communication protocols.
- Develop a cohesive City storytelling and branding approach that reflects Erie's strengths, supports economic growth, and reinforces public trust.
- **Ensure translators/interpretation are available at key public meetings and community engagement opportunities, and expand multilingual communication for major announcements beyond English-only formats.**
- **Expand communication beyond the internet: distribute updates through churches, centers, hospitals, news media, printed materials, and text notifications, especially for time-sensitive updates.**
- **Launch a City newsletter and/or podcast to share progress, timelines, and positive impact stories.**
- **Keep City Hall open one evening per month (e.g., until 8pm) to improve access for residents with nontraditional work schedules.**

Public Works & Core City Services

- Clarify priorities, workflows, and expectations for core services such as streets, sanitation, and maintenance.
- Improve coordination between Public Works and other departments.

Innovation, IT, & Performance

- Begin assessing City IT operations and systems.
- Identify opportunities for public-facing service dashboards.

Facilities & Physical Environment

- Begin evaluating City Hall and departmental space needs.



SHORT TERM

MEDIUM TERM

LONG TERM

Medium Term Recommendations

Core Leadership + Operating Culture

- Lead through articulating clear goals for Erie's future, where City employees understand their part in moving the needle.
- Establish key performance metrics and routines for performance measurement.
- Create mechanisms to celebrate exemplary public service.
- Strengthen internal coordination so residents are not required to navigate silos.

Human Resources + Workforce Systems

- Improve benefits administration and workforce planning.
- Expand training opportunities for HR staff.
- Clarify Risk Management roles and responsibilities.
- Establish an HR advisory committee.

Grants

- Establish a centralized grants database tracking applications, awards, reporting requirements, deadlines, and partners.
- Improve coordination of internal grants awarded to the community.
- Improve how grant opportunities are communicated and advertised. Expand technical assistance for grant recipients.

Government Relations

- Coordinate regular visits to Harrisburg and Washington with clear goals.
- Track commitments, deadlines, and outcomes.
- Strengthen relationships with regional partners and authorities



Medium Term Recommendations

Police & Public Safety

- Strengthen support for existing and new relationship-based youth engagement initiatives.
- **Improve consistency and follow-through in community policing efforts, including:**
 - *Increase visible, relationship-based presence in neighborhoods where residents report police are “rarely seen,” with special emphasis on youth engagement and trust-building.*
 - *Pilot an assigned community officer for high-need communities so residents know specific officers by name and have a stable relationship-based point of contact.*
 - *Review how surveillance and security footage are used in City-connected contexts to ensure it supports resident safety; where feasible, create clear protocols for residents to access footage when needed for protection (e.g., stolen packages).*
 - **Create opportunities for ongoing community conversations between law enforcement and residents.**
- Align public safety strategies with youth development and neighborhood stabilization.

Communications & Community Engagement

- Strengthen two-way communication with residents.
- Improve website usability and accessibility.
- Reduce reliance on reactive or disjointed communication practices.
- **Create a resident-facing concern reporting and tracking system so people can submit issues and see status/follow-up in real time.**
- **Create opt-in multilingual notification systems so residents can receive city updates via mobile-first methods (text/WhatsApp), not only websites or English newsletters.**



Medium Term Recommendations

Public Works & Core City Services

- Improve communication with residents about service timelines and disruptions.
- Ensure infrastructure decisions align with neighborhood, housing, and economic development priorities.
- ***Improve neighborhood lighting and prioritize safe routes to schools as core safety and quality-of-life commitments.***

Innovation, IT, & Performance

- Establish an Office of Innovation, Strategy, and Performance (or interim support).
- Expand use of data and dashboards for transparency and accountability.

Facilities & Physical Environment

- Advance redesign or reconfiguration of City Hall and departmental spaces.



Long Term Recommendations

Core Leadership & Operating Culture

- Institutionalize a culture of accountability, learning, and service excellence. Strengthen succession planning and leadership development

Human Resources & Workforce Systems

- Build a resilient workforce system that supports recruitment, retention, and growth.

Grants

- Ensure grant funding aligns with established City plans and priorities.
- Expand contractor pools and training to support housing and infrastructure grants.

Government Relations

- Build durable, trust-based relationships with state and federal partners.
- Secure funding and policy support aligned with City priorities.

Equity & Service Design

- Ensure City systems consistently deliver equitable outcomes across neighborhoods.
- Reduce administrative burden for residents accessing services.

Police & Public Safety

- Integrate prevention, youth engagement, and community partnerships into long-term safety strategies.



SHORT TERM

MEDIUM TERM

LONG TERM

Long Term Recommendations

Communications & Community Engagement

- Build consistent, accessible, and resident-centered communication systems.
- ***Create a “citizens academy” style program (e.g., public safety / City operations) to build public understanding and trust in how systems work.***

Public Works & Core City Services

- Deliver core services with reliability, transparency, and responsiveness.

Innovation, IT, & Performance

- Modernize City technology systems to support long-term performance and transparency.

Facilities & Physical Environment

- Maintain facilities that support effective service delivery and employee well-being.



What Happens Next

Photo: Patrick Grab



A Starting Point

Moving from recommendations to action.

Not a Final Plan, But a Guidepost

This Transition Report is not a final plan — it is a starting point.

The recommendations in this report reflect the Transition Team's assessment of Erie's current context, challenges, and opportunities. They are offered to Mayor Devlin and her administration as guideposts for early priority-setting and long-term planning.

Not every recommendation will be pursued immediately, and some may evolve or shift as City leadership completes further review, engages departments, and hears continued feedback from residents.

Forward Momentum

"Progress will depend on collaboration, transparency, and a willingness to learn and adapt along the way."



What Happens Next

Guiding Our Work

In the months ahead, City leadership will use this report to guide:

- › Departmental goal-setting and alignment
- › Budgeting and capital planning
- › Ongoing community engagement
- › Internal operational improvements
- › Strategic planning and development

Some priorities outlined here can move quickly. Others will require longer-term planning, partnership, and capacity-building. Progress will depend on collaboration, transparency, and a willingness to learn and adapt along the way.

Residents can expect continued communication about priorities, progress, and opportunities to engage. The City is committed to governing openly and to focusing on outcomes that strengthen neighborhoods and improve daily life.

"Erie's future will be shaped not only by decisions made at City Hall, but by the collective efforts of residents, organizations, businesses, and institutions across the community. The work ahead is both urgent and full of possibility, and we are strongest when we work together toward a common vision."



CITY OF ERIE

Pennsylvania

Mayor Daria S. Devlin

TRANSITION TEAM REPORT 2026