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Office of the Mayor**



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Racine Selected to Join National Initiative to Increase Economic Mobility In Partnership with Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and Ballmer Group

City of Racine – Racine Mayor Cory Mason joined with Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and Ballmer Group today to announce that Racine is one of just ten American cities chosen to participate in a new national initiative to identify, pilot, and measure the success of interventions to accelerate economic mobility for their residents.

Racine was selected through a competitive process that looked at local commitment to addressing economic mobility, willingness to use data and evidence to accelerate progress, and ability to dedicate a team to accomplish the initiative's goals. The initiative is supported by a \$12 million investment from Bloomberg Philanthropies, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and Ballmer Group that was [announced](#) last fall. With the support of What Works Cities and their partners, Racine will develop, pilot, and measure the early impacts of a program designed to help improve residents' long-term economic mobility. Racine will also work closely with other cities participating in the initiative to share lessons and experiences to further advance the work and build a model for future collaboration among cities on the topic.

Over the next 18 months, Racine, in collaboration with local partners such as the Racine Unified School District, Gateway Technical College, the YWCA of Southeast Wisconsin, Racine County, and Higher Expectations for Racine County will work to get more Racine residents their high school equivalency diploma, which is a prerequisite for high-mobility jobs. Currently, the City has more than nine thousand residents without a high school diploma or equivalency. Not having this credential is often a barrier for individuals to get into college, various training and apprenticeship programs that exist locally, and direct employment.

"As Mayor, I want to break down barriers that prevent our residents from getting into the middle-class. I am proud of the partnerships we have created around workforce training and pre-apprenticeship, but as a pre-requisite for many of the training, college, and job opportunities that exist, we know you need a high school diploma or equivalency," said Mayor Cory Mason.

Higher Expectations for Racine County is partnering with the City to help align resources and institutions across the community.

"Our community has shown time and again that when we work together, we can help Racine's families thrive. This Economic Mobility initiative gives us the opportunity to work with the City, County, school district, YWCA, and many others to connect adults with education that can help move them into family-sustaining employment. Higher Expectations is extremely proud to support the City's leadership in this work," said Chelsea Powell, Deputy Director of Higher Expectations for Racine County.

The YWCA of Southeast Wisconsin in collaboration with Racine County and Gateway Technical College currently runs a very successful 5.09 HSED program. Cohorts for this program start every 8 weeks and they have graduated more than 100 individuals in just less than two years. The goal for the City and its partners is to find ways to scale up this program and make it more accessible to more residents.

“We are proud to partner with the City of Racine through the What Works Cities initiative,” noted Jennifer deMontmollin, YWCA Southeast Wisconsin Chief Program Officer. “The impact of YWCA Southeast Wisconsin’s High School Equivalency Diploma (HSED) program has been remarkable to date and we look forward to further aligning our efforts to benefit Racine’s future.”

“Gateway Technical College is proud to be partnering in the delivery of the Racine What Works City initiative. Supporting city and county residents with the knowledge and skills necessary to earn job ready credentials is the gateway to a family sustaining career. The partnership between Gateway, RUSD, YWCA, Racine County Workforce Development and the city of Racine serves a model of collaboration strengthening the future for individuals, employers and the local economy,” said Bryan D. Albrecht, President and Chief Executive Officer, Gateway Technical College.

“Racine County has made a strong push to assist residents in obtaining their high school equivalency diploma, including helping more than 100 community members graduate from the 5.09 HSED program in about two years,” County Executive Jonathan Delagrave said. “A high school credential is a crucial part of attaining a family-sustaining job. We appreciate the work of our partners to build on these efforts and improve the lives of our residents.”

The school district will be opening its second community school in the fall. The City and RUSD believe there is a real opportunity to bring an HSED program to the community school setting. Community schools provide additional wrap-around services such as mental health care, dinner programs, and academic enrichment among others.

“We look forward to the opportunity to continue to open our schools as true learning centers for the entire community,” stated Dr. Eric Gallien, RUSD Superintendent. “Through maximizing our great partnerships within the community for the What Works City initiative we will ensure that Racine builds a college, career and life ready workforce.”

The defining characteristic of the American Dream is upward mobility, but new data from Opportunity Insights shows that the current generation’s chances of earning more than their parents are [declining](#). In many communities, young people and families [face significant barriers](#) to climbing the economic ladder based on the neighborhoods in which they live.

“I want to create as many pathways for our residents to achieve the American Dream and have a solid middle class life. I appreciate our local partners and the investment of organizations like Bloomberg, Gates, and Ballmer in Racine to help us tackle this barrier to economic mobility,” continued Mayor Mason.

Racine staff have already begun working with a team of advisors from [Results for America](#) and the [Behavioral Insights Team](#), both partners in [What Works Cities](#). Racine city staff will deepen their data skills and strengthen their ability to deliver results to residents with the help of experts from other What Works Cities partners, including [Johns Hopkins University’s Center for Government Excellence](#), the [Harvard Kennedy School’s Government Performance Lab](#) and the [Sunlight Foundation](#).

Additionally, [Opportunity Insights](#) at Harvard University is helping Racine staff draw insights regarding economic mobility in the community using data from the [Opportunity Atlas](#), an interactive resource developed in collaboration with the U.S. Census Bureau.

The ten cities participating in the economic mobility initiative are:

Albuquerque, NM; Cincinnati, OH; Dayton, OH; Detroit, MI; Lansing, MI; New Orleans, LA; Newark, NJ; Racine, WI; Rochester, NY; and Tulsa, OK.

About the City of Racine

With a population of 78,000, **Racine, Wisconsin** is the fifth largest municipality in the state of Wisconsin. It is home to manufacturing businesses that enjoy world-wide reputations, SC Johnson, CNH Industrial, Twin Disc, Modine, and In-Sink-Erator among them. Racine is also home to diverse cultures, a thriving downtown, and world-class beaches along the shores of Lake Michigan.

About Bloomberg Philanthropies:

Bloomberg Philanthropies invests in 510 cities and 129 countries around the world to ensure better, longer lives for the greatest number of people. The organization focuses on five key areas for creating lasting change: Arts, Education, Environment, Government Innovation, and Public Health. Bloomberg Philanthropies encompasses all of Michael R. Bloomberg's giving, including his foundation and personal philanthropy as well as Bloomberg Associates, a pro bono consultancy that works in cities around the world. In 2018, Bloomberg Philanthropies distributed \$767 million. For more information, please visit bloomberg.org or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and [Twitter](#).

About Ballmer Group:

Ballmer Group works to improve economic mobility for children and families in the United States who are disproportionately likely to remain in poverty. We believe that building pathways to opportunity requires broad, systemic change. We invest in many stages of a child's life by supporting strong community partnerships among public, private, and nonprofit organizations that use data to more effectively serve families. Ballmer Group was co-founded by philanthropist and civic activist Connie Ballmer and her husband Steve Ballmer, former CEO of Microsoft, founder of USAFacts, and chairman of the Los Angeles Clippers. Learn more at www.ballmergroup.org and on Twitter [@BallmerGroup](#).

About Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation:

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people—especially those with the fewest resources—have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, Washington, the foundation is led by CEO Susan Desmond-Hellmann and Co-chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett.

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