

## Rochestermade website cheers benefits, ingenuity of area

It was a simple first step in a still-broadly defined project to help Rochester get its swagger back. It became a mini Web sensation locally, getting nearly 15,000 unique visitors in the first 72 hours.

The site is rochestermade.com, and it smugly claims ownership of the photograph and photocopy, Jolt Cola and Jell-O Jigglers, women's suffrage and the [computer](#).

"You're welcome," visitors are told as the slide show of notable achievements scrolls by. "Sincerely, Rochester."

Is it snarky? Yes.

Elitist? That's the point.

The site, launched earlier this month, touts Rochester's achievements or contributions as a means to energize locals to reclaim the community's prominence through entrepreneurship, doing whatever they do bigger or better.

Ultimately, the goal is to convince [businesses](#), investors and college grads that they need not look elsewhere.

Rochestermade.com is the brainchild of a Web software engineer and a designer — both named Nick, both 27, both too stubborn to leave and tired of people knocking the place they call home.

"The goal is to inspire people," said co-creator Nick Sergeant of Canandaigua, a graduate of Le Moyne College. "We didn't think it was going to have this kind of [traction](#)."

The retort, "You're welcome," came from the other partner in this, Nick Adams, who grew up in Clifton Springs, graduated from Rochester Institute of Technology and now lives in Rochester.

Adams got frustrated at seeing all his classmates move away, and tired of friends urging him to move to New York, Chicago, San Francisco. He phrased his rebuttal in much the way the [website](#) reads today.

"There's a role just to stand up, and there's a lot to be proud of," Adams said, quick to add that what is highlighted on

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rochestermade.com is not meant to be a comprehensive list. He calls it their "opening remarks."

Not that they are the first to see the potential, or feel the frustration. There are large-scale efforts under way that mirror some of what Sergeant and Adams are trying to accomplish in their spare time.

A prime example is a proposed \$35 million Finger Lakes Business Accelerator Cooperative that recently was awarded \$2.5 million in state [funding](#). High Tech Rochester, a local nonprofit, has pledged \$3 million, and is working on federal grants and private fundraising with hopes of breaking ground at a downtown site in another year.

The cooperative is the only really new idea proposed by the region's economic development council, said Kent Gardner, president and chief economist for the Center for Governmental Research. It would expand and bring together various incubators as well as support programs now dispersed throughout the region to a central hub. There would be shared workspace for collaboration and video uplinks to satellites in the nine-county region.

Organizers have talked to the city about locating at Midtown, among other sites, said Jim Senall, president of HTR.

Though admittedly biased, Senall said the project "would do more to revitalize downtown than any project they have on

the horizon because it's an engine of new company and new job creation."

The need is to support startups, Senall said, attract local investors and then tout success stories to get the attention of venture capital firms.

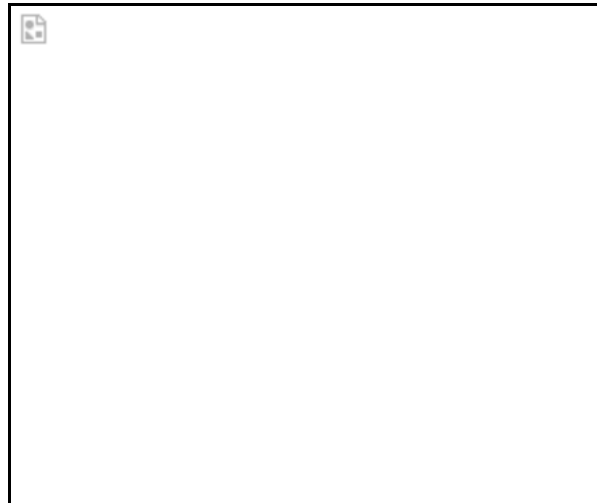
Adams and Sergeant don't argue with that. But — maybe it's the change-the-world mentality of 20-somethings, or not having a multi-million-dollar budget — they have an alternate theory: Make something great, success will follow.

The next step for rochestermade.com is to get businesses, artisans or other entities started here to advertise that with a Rochester Made "badge" on their website or a sticker in their [business](#) window.

They plan to record interviews or profiles of notable innovators from the Rochester area and maybe create an online forum or meeting place for investors and startups.

Two faces and profiles you will not see on

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the website are theirs.

"We don't want to see ourselves come through," Sergeant said. "It's really about the movement. We don't want to turn it into everything about us."

Yet they do see an obligation. Each has their own projects, their own fledgling startups or ideas. "Rochester Made," Adams said. "We're going to try and prove that."

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