

LIVING WELL CENTER OF NORTHERN ILLINOIS

CITY OF ROCKFORD FUNDING BRIEF

Request for Reconsideration of Previously Approved ARPA Funding

Prepared for Mayor Tom McNamara and the Rockford City Council

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Living Well Center of Northern Illinois respectfully requests reconsideration of the previously approved \$300,000 ARPA allocation to support operating expenses during the Center's first three years of operation.

The funding was previously approved by the Rockford City Council and was later withdrawn when our chosen location changed. Since that vote, the project has secured a more sustainable location, strengthened community partnerships, obtained significant outside funding, and moved substantially closer to opening.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Location:

1111 South Alpine Road, Suite 100
Rockford, Illinois 61108

Facility Size:

5,000 square feet

Target Opening Date:

December 4, 2026

Facility Features:

- Multipurpose auditorium with capacity for 50 participants
- Flexible classroom space divisible into three separate classrooms
- Fitness center designed for a full eGym circuit
- Dedicated art studio
- Community café and gathering space
- Card and game room (The Vault)

OUR MISSION

The Living Well Center exists to help older adults remain connected, active, engaged, and thriving through lifelong learning, wellness programs, social opportunities, volunteerism, and meaningful community connections.

THE REQUEST

\$300,000 in ARPA funding over three years

Year 1: \$100,000

Year 2: \$100,000

Year 3: \$100,000

These funds will support staffing, programming, outreach, and operational expenses during the critical launch period.

WHY NOW?

Today, the project has:

- Secured a permanent location
- Established nonprofit governance
- Secured state infrastructure funding
- Developed community partnerships
- Completed facility planning
- Advanced lease negotiations
- Established a realistic sustainability model

WHY THE LIVING WELL CENTER MATTERS

Approximately 25,000 adults between the ages of 55 and 85 live independently throughout the Rockford area.

While many community resources exist, there is currently no dedicated community hub designed to bring together lifelong learning, fitness, arts, technology education, social engagement, and volunteer opportunities under one roof.

As our community ages, creating opportunities for connection becomes increasingly important.

Research consistently demonstrates that social isolation among older adults is associated with:

- Increased healthcare utilization
- Higher rates of depression and anxiety
- Increased risk of cognitive decline
- Reduced quality of life
- Greater caregiver burden on families

The Living Well Center was designed to address these challenges proactively.

THE VISION

The Center will provide a welcoming destination where older adults can:

- Build meaningful friendships
- Participate in fitness and wellness activities
- Explore arts and creative programming
- Learn new technology skills
- Attend educational programs
- Volunteer and remain engaged in the community
- Age with dignity, purpose, and connection

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

The Living Well Center is already building strong partnerships throughout the region.

Current partners and supporters include:

- Rockford University
- Rockford Public Library
- AARP Tax-Aide volunteers
- Northwestern Illinois Area Agency on Aging
- State Senator Steve Stadelman
- State Representative Dave Vella

These partnerships will bring programming, educational opportunities, resources, and services directly to older adults in a single accessible location.

A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE

The idea for the Living Well Center emerged from years of caring for older adults in Rockford.

As a physician, I have seen firsthand that the patients who remain connected to their community often thrive. Those who become isolated frequently struggle with declining physical health, worsening mental health, and loss of independence.

I also understand the importance of belonging on a personal level. When I first moved to Rockford more than twenty years ago, I knew very few people in the community. Building relationships transformed my experience of this city.

The Living Well Center is founded on a simple belief:

Every person deserves a place where they belong, continue learning, remain active, and build meaningful relationships.

ACCOUNTABILITY, SUSTAINABILITY, AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

MEASURABLE GOALS

Year One

- 1,000 members
- 50 daily participants by year-end
- 15 classes/sessions per week
- Hundreds of educational, wellness, and social programs annually

Year Two

- 1,500 members
- Expanded programming and community partnerships
- Increased volunteer opportunities and member engagement

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

The Living Well Center is designed to become financially sustainable through a diversified funding model.

Revenue Sources

- Memberships (\$25 per month)
- Foundation grants
- Private and Corporate sponsorships
- Annual fundraising campaigns
- Community donations
- Program partnerships

LEVERAGING OUTSIDE INVESTMENT

The City's investment will unlock and complement significant external support already secured.

Funding and Commitments Secured:

- \$250,000 in state infrastructure funding
- \$150,000 in Private & Corporate Founding Campaign
- \$50,000 in operational funding
- \$17,000 contribution from the Northwestern Illinois Area Agency on Aging
- Landlord commitment to absorb buildout costs exceeding \$250,000

This demonstrates broad confidence in the project's viability and community value.

LEADERSHIP

The Living Well Center is governed by a volunteer board that brings expertise in healthcare, engineering, education, and community advocacy.

Current board leadership includes:

- Physician
- Engineer
- Retired College Professor
- Retired Nurse and Community Advocate

This multidisciplinary leadership team provides strong oversight, accountability, and community credibility.

CONCLUSION

The Living Well Center represents an opportunity to create a lasting community asset for Rockford's older adults.

The project has secured a location, developed partnerships, obtained outside funding, and established a clear path toward sustainability.

The requested ARPA funding will help transform a proven vision into a reality that serves thousands of older adults for years to come.

We respectfully request restoration of the previously approved \$300,000 ARPA allocation and look forward to partnering with the City of Rockford to build a stronger, healthier, and more connected community.

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