



Photo Credit: Kevin Haas, Rock River Current

FY26, Q3

January - March, 2026

GO ROCKFORD
Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

The mission of GoRockford is to drive quality of life and economic growth for our citizens through tourism marketing and destination development.

gorockford.com



GoRockford Mission Statement

GoRockford drives quality of life and economic growth for our citizens through tourism marketing and destination development.

PRIORITY RESULTS

CREATE ECONOMIC WEALTH

The Rockford region experiences growth in tourism's leading indicators.

ENHANCE TOURISM PRODUCT

The Rockford region offers unique and marketable experiences and venues that meet or exceed visitor expectations and enhance quality of life for citizens.

ENGAGE CONSTITUENTS ON BEHALF OF TOURISM

GoRockford tourism marketing and destination development efforts have broad support among key stakeholders.

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT/CEO



As we close the third quarter of FY26, Rockford's momentum is being reflected in both national visibility and measurable economic impact across our work.

This quarter, Rockford earned significant national media attention, generating more than **1 billion impressions** and **\$9.8 million in earned media value** through placements in *The Atlantic*, *The Economist*, and *Morning Brew's The Playbook*. These stories reinforce

Rockford's position as one of the Midwest's most affordable and attractive markets, elevating our profile among both visitors and potential residents.

Rockford Restaurant Week delivered record-breaking results, with **82 participating restaurants**, more than **3.5 million social media views**, and strong increases in sales, with many businesses reporting gains exceeding a **25%**. This program continues to be a key driver of economic activity for our local hospitality industry.

Our sales team delivered strong results this quarter, generating **4,790 future hotel room nights** and **\$2.9 million in economic impact**, while hosting major events such as the **AHL All-Star Classic** and **Rockin' Rockford** volleyball tournament. In addition, securing the **IHSA Boys Soccer State Finals** through **2028** positions Rockford for continued long-term growth in sports tourism.

Destination development efforts including a new multi-year partnership supporting Stroll on State, new sculptures, and a new festival coming up that will be announced in May.

Through Made for Rockford, our team expanded national outreach by attending the **TravMedia Summit**, conducting more than **50 one-on-one meetings** with journalists to pitch Rockford's story and build future media opportunities.

Together, these efforts reflect a focused strategy to grow visitation, strengthen our economy, and elevate Rockford's visibility on a national stage.

Be well,

John Groh
GoRockford President/CEO

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GoROCKFORD NEWS

ROCKFORD RESTAURANT WEEK BREAKS RECORDS AND DRIVES ECONOMIC IMPACT



Franchesco's Ristorante accepts the Legacy Award to celebrate their community impact and 40th Anniversary at the post Rockford Restaurant Week news conference and awards ceremony in March 2026.

Rockford Restaurant Week continues to prove itself as one of GoRockford's most impactful economic and marketing initiatives, delivering measurable growth for the

region's hospitality industry. In 2026, a record **82 restaurants participated** (up significantly from 65 in 2025). The event not only drives awareness of the region's culinary scene but also directly supports local businesses, with many participating restaurants reporting their most successful Rockford Restaurant Week to date and sales increases exceeding **25%**, with some seeing gains of **50% or more** over previous years they participated.

The 2026 marketing campaign generated over **3.5 million social media views** (more than triple the previous year) and **87,724 website views** to the landing page. Advertising efforts included billboards and digital advertising targeted to Chicago suburbs, and Milwaukee area, which generated **1.5 million impressions**, while local and regional media coverage reached **473 mentions**.

Nearly **2,000 votes** were cast per category for the **"Best Of" awards** (see winners on sidebar).

Winners were honored at a news conference in March at **Franchesco's Ristorante**. More than **45,000 referrals** from GoRockford website went directly to restaurant partners.

Overall, Rockford Restaurant Week is more than a promotional event: It is a strategic economic driver that supports small businesses, amplifies regional visibility, and positions Rockford as an emerging culinary destination. With continued year-over-year growth in participation, engagement, and measurable business impact, the program is poised to reach new heights every year.

ROCKFORD EARNS NATIONAL MEDIA SPOTLIGHT

Rockford earned strong national media attention this quarter, with coverage in prominent outlets that positioned the region as a standout Midwest success story. **The Economist's** "The Midwest's Remarkable Turnaround" highlighted cities like Rockford as examples of economic revitalization and renewed relevance. **The Atlantic's** "How the Midwest Became the Place to Move" reinforced Rockford's appeal for those seeking value, space, and quality of life, while **Morning Brew's The Playbook** "Meet the Midwest Most Affordable Market" named Rockford the Midwest's most affordable market, emphasizing its accessibility for new residents and investors. Together, these placements provide strong third party validation and elevate Rockford into a national conversation about where people are choosing to relocate. This surge in media coverage aligns with strong housing market performance, as Rockford has ranked among the Top 10 nationally in **Realtor.com's Hottest Housing Markets** report for seven of the past 12 months. This consistent recognition signals sustained demand and growing visibility among prospective residents, driven by the region's affordability, lower cost of living, and quality of life. The combination of earned media and housing momentum strengthens GoRockford's positioning efforts and creates a compelling narrative that supports talent attraction, economic development, and long term destination growth.

FINAL ROUND OF RESTAURANT GRANT

GoRockford announced a final round of the Restaurant Relief Grant bringing an additional **\$427,631** in state funding awarded to area restaurants in the fifth and final round of its **Restaurant Relief Grant Program**, helping businesses continue to recover from elevated unemployment insurance taxes resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

STATELY AWARD

GoRockford was honored to receive the **2026 Stately Hospitality and Tourism**

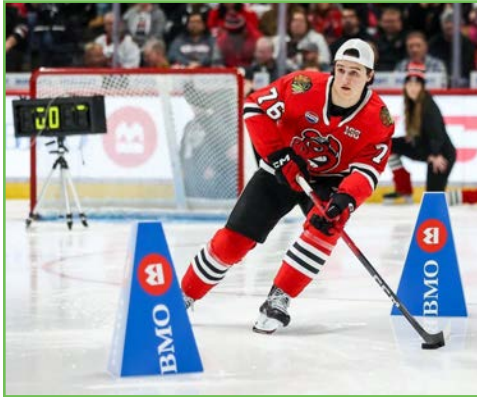
Award in March at the inaugural Stateline Honors Stately Gala hosted by the Stateline Chamber of Commerce. This recognition reflects the ongoing work of the team to promote Rockford and highlight what makes the region a great place to visit and live.



GoRockford receives the 2026 Stately Hospitality and Tourism Award from the Stateline Chamber of Commerce on March 3, 2026.

SALES EFFORTS & RESULTS

SPORTS AND MEETING SALES HIGHLIGHTS



Rockford IceHogs forward Nick Lardis shows his skills during the AHL All-Star Skills Competition in February 2026.

ROCKFORD HOSTS FIRST-EVER AHL ALL-STAR CLASSIC IN ILLINOIS

The quarter kicked off with **BMO Center** hosting the **2026 AHL All-Star Classic** on **February 10-11**, a premier two-day hockey showcase featuring top American Hockey League (AHL) players competing in skills competitions and an exciting 3-on-3 tournament. The event drew players and fans from across the United States and Canada, filling local hotels and restaurants and generating an estimated **\$772,000** in economic impact for the region. GoRockford enhanced the visitor experience by staffing welcome tables at host hotels and providing resources and way finding assistance throughout the weekend.

IHSA GIRLS STATE BOWLING FINALS RETURNS

The **2026 IHSA (Illinois High School Association) Girls State Bowling Finals** once again demonstrated Rockford's strength as a

premier host for long-standing championship events. With a history of over 30 years in the market, the event continues to bring athletes, families, and fans from across Illinois, generating an estimated **\$172,216** in economic impact.

ROCKIN' ROCKFORD SERVES

On **March 7-8**, Rockford welcomed **Rockin' Rockford**, the largest AAU youth volleyball tournament in the region. This marquee event brought hundreds of teams and more than **10,000 athletes and families** and **341 teams** to the area for a weekend of high-level club competition. The tournament generated over **3,000 hotel room nights** and a full weekend of activity at **Sports Factory** and **Mercyhealth Sportscore Two**. The large scale tournament brought an estimated economic impact of **\$911,347**.

ROCK RIVER BLAZE DEBUTS

Rock River Blaze hosted its inaugural home school basketball tournament at **Sports Factory**, **March 13-14**, attracting teams from across the Midwest. GoRockford helped elevate the event atmosphere by providing a s'mores station, which was a standout hit among participants. The tournament resulted in 1,200 room nights and an estimated economic impact of **\$1.3 million**.

BIG WIN THIS QUARTER

Rockford secured a major sports tourism win this quarter with the selection to host the **IHSA Boys Soccer State Finals** from **2026-2028**. This prestigious, multi-year championship will bring the state's top teams and their fans to Rockford each November, generating nearly **\$493,128** in total economic impact over three years.

BOOKING HIGHLIGHTS

ISHA Boys State Soccer Finals

November 2026, 2027 & 2028
1,150 Total Room nights
Estimated Economic Impact \$493,128

Phantom Regiment Show of Shows

July 3, 2026
2,000 Room nights
Estimated Economic Impact \$396,066

USACFC National Championships

May 2, 2026
600 room nights
Estimated Economic Impact \$333,42

Collegiate Club Bowling National Championship 2026

March 27, 2026
400 room nights
Estimated Economic Impact \$216,807

PWBA National Tour

April 29, 2026
240 Room nights
Estimated Economic Impact \$175,116

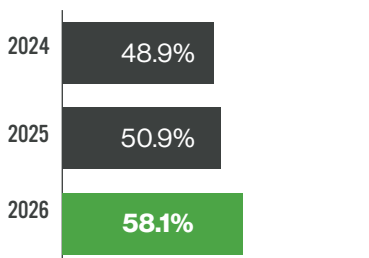
Future Hotel Room Nights Booked During the Quarter: 4,790 with an economic impact of \$2.9 Million
Number of Bookings: 16



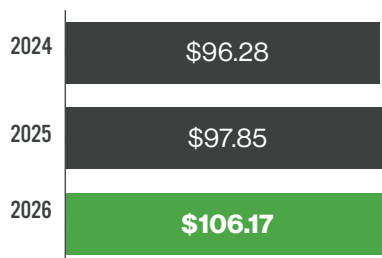
AHL Team Mascots pose during the AHL All-Star Classic in February 2026.

WINNEBAGO COUNTY HOTEL STATISTICS January - March, 2026

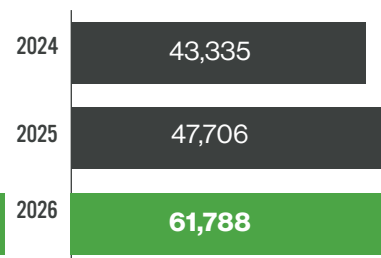
Year to Date Hotel Occupancy



Year to Date Average Room Rate



Year to Date Room Demand (rooms sold)



Year to Date Revenue (in millions)



MARKETING

MEDIA MENTIONS & PLACEMENTS

GoRockford garners media mentions and placements to draw visitors to the Rockford region. Collaborating with regional and national media outlets, our team diligently seeks and shares captivating stories and compelling content centered experiences in Rockford, visiting the region and destination development.

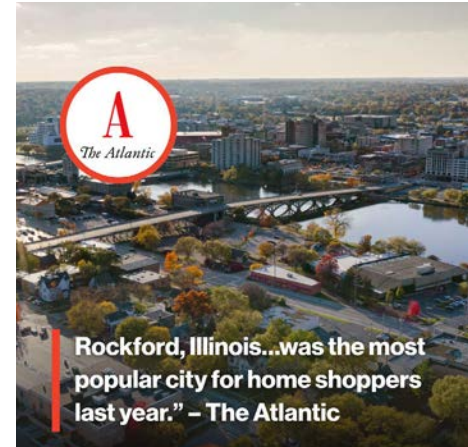
NATIONAL MEDIA MENTIONS

The Atlantic: *"How the Midwest Became the Place to Move"* (03/23/2026) 11,310,000 impressions and \$418,470 Earned Media

The Economist *"The Midwest's remarkable turnaround"* (02/21/2026) 8,240,000 Impressions and \$304,880 Earned Media

Realtor.com: *"These Metros Are Giving Out-of-State Movers a Leg Up Onto the Property Ladder—and Bucking the Affordability Crisis"* (01/29/2026) 38,300,000 Impressions and \$1,417,000 Earned Media

Morning Brew - The Playbook: *"Meet the Midwest's hottest affordable market"* (03/25/2026) 350,000 impressions and \$12,950 Earned Media



The Atlantic features Rockford as a place to move for its affordable housing and proximity to major markets.

SOCIAL MEDIA



FACEBOOK

5.2 Million Views
62,657 Followers



INSTAGRAM

1 Million Views
26,479 Followers



LINKEDIN

3,053 Followers

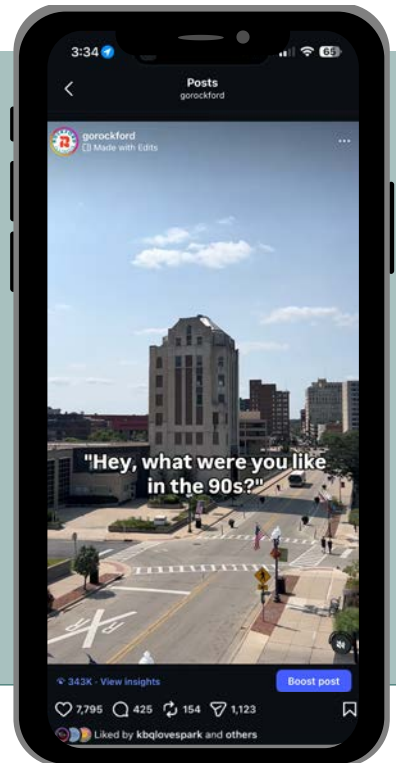


TikTok

457,000 Views
13,907 Followers

Top Facebook Post

February 4, 2026 | Impressions 305,517



EARNED MEDIA (January - March, 2026)

GoRockford works to attract visitors by directly pitching stories to media. Pitches are focused on economic development, tourism marketing and travel public relations.



\$9,830,000
Ad equivalency



1,057,000,000
Total impressions



1,680
Number of mentions

MARKETING

SOCIAL MEDIA PROMOTIONS

Each month of the quarter had a different focus, leading to impressive engagement.

JANUARY

January's promotions supported leading up to Rockford Restaurant Week and winter fun in Rockford, including cozy drink and attraction itineraries and where to enjoy snowy weather activities. January had an astounding **2.8 Million** views with **25K** in interactions for the month. This is an increase of **225%** from January 2025 at **859K views**.



FEBRUARY

February had several promotional focuses as most of Rockford Restaurant Week was in February this year. GoRockford also celebrated Black History Month by profiling local murals by black artists and local businesses. This month also celebrated local shopping with guides for Valentine's Day. February's efforts had **1.2 million views** with **25K interactions**. This year is up significantly from 2025, which had **369K views**.

MARCH

Spring Break travel and family itineraries was a large focus of March's efforts. Promotions also began for spring travel including where to see spring blooms. One of the more popular posts was about small towns in Winnebago County to visit. March's social media views were around **1.3 million** with **25K interactions**, up 46% from 2025.



ROCKFORD RESTAURANT WEEK MARKETING CAMPAIGN

Digital Ads and Billboards

GoRockford's three-month campaign with NextStar Media ended with Rockford Restaurant Week promotion. The media mix included out of home billboards in Milwaukee and Chicago suburbs, and Meta advertising. To date, the campaign has generated the following impressions: **1.2 million social media** and **254,095 out-of-home impressions**. There was also added-value coverage that included local media segments and advertising on news websites. Added value media generated an additional 1.2 million impressions.

Influencers

To promote Rockford Restaurant Week, GoRockford reached out to local and regional influencers to promote the local dining scene in Rockford. Five were selected and they posted about their experience. For an expanded winter and Rockford Restaurant Week itinerary, we worked with **Mapping Our Tracks** (43K followers) and they visited Nicholas Conservatory, Alpine Hills Adventure Park for tubing, DC Estate Winery and stayed at Embassy Suites. We also worked with **Illinois Foodies** (251K followers) on two posts to promote the event. Overall the posts from influencers had a total of over **81,000 views**.

Media Coverage

Local coverage on television, radio and in print was up to 473 media mentions in 2026 (up from 224 in 2025). GoRockford secured in studio segments for 2025 Rockford Restaurant Week winners.

MOST SEARCHED TERMS

Rockford Restaurant Week
Events in Rockford
Restaurants in Rockford, IL

MOST SEARCHED EVENTS

Restaurant Week
45th Annual Rockford Home Show
Illinois Snow Sculpting Competition

MOST SEARCHED LISTINGS

Anderson Japanese Gardens
Oak and Embers Bistro
Hidden Creek Estates

Website Traffic Sources



144,972 total website visitors

DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

GOROCKFORD SUPPORTS AMERICA 250 CELEBRATIONS



Revolutionary War reenactors attend the America 250 news conference at Midway Village Museum

GoRockford played a key role in supporting the **City of Rockford** and **Winnebago County** in planning and promoting the **America 250** kickoff press conference in February, helping to position the region as an active participant in this once in a lifetime national milestone.

The announcement introduced a coordinated, community wide approach to celebrating the **250th anniversary of the United States**, with GoRockford leading efforts to amplify the initiative through a dedicated campaign and regional storytelling platform.

A new America 250 landing page, **RockfordRegion250.com** was launched

to showcase events, share Rockford's history, and invite organizations to participate.

Program announcements highlighted a full year of experiences designed to honor the nation's past while engaging residents and visitors. Plans include community wide service initiatives, educational programming, arts and cultural events, and signature celebrations such as a citywide cleanup, youth concerts, immersive historical experiences, and Fourth of July festivities. Additional initiatives such as an art and essay competition for students and funding opportunities for local organizations will further expand participation. Together, these efforts position America 250 as both a commemorative moment and a strategic opportunity to tell Rockford's story, strengthen community pride, and drive visitation throughout 2026.

GOROCKFORD ANNOUNCES UMB PARTNERSHIP

GoRockford strengthened its partnership with **UMB Bank** through a new three-year presenting sponsorship of Stroll on State, ensuring the continued success and growth of one of Rockford's largest and most beloved community events. This commitment secures the future of the festival through **2026, 2027, and 2028** and reflects a shared investment in community connection, economic impact, and creating meaningful downtown experiences.

As a signature event funded entirely through sponsors, partners, and volunteers, Stroll on State continues to serve as a major driver of visitation and local engagement. The partnership with UMB Bank provides stability and opportunity for growth, allowing GoRockford to enhance the event experience while maintaining its strong community foundation.

Even in challenging winter conditions, the 2025 event demonstrated its resilience and value, drawing an estimated 15,000 attendees downtown. The continued support from UMB Bank reinforces the long term sustainability of Stroll on State and its role in bringing the community together while supporting local businesses and nonprofit organizations.



The GoRockford team poses with UMB bank to celebrate the new three-year presenting sponsorship.

2026 A LOOK AHEAD

Looking ahead to 2026, GoRockford will continue to prioritize destination development initiatives that enhance the overall visitor experience while strengthening community pride. These efforts are designed to create a more vibrant, welcoming, and memorable environment across the region.

FOREST CITY BEAUTIFUL

Forest City Beautiful will have newly installed signage with updated GoRockford branding. Spring and summer planting will kick off in May with over 130 downtown planters filled with beautiful flowers.

CRE8IV SCULPTURES

New sculptures will be introduced in 2026 as part of CRE8IV's biannual sculpture program. The program has brought over 30 art pieces to neighborhoods and streets throughout Rockford. These installations not only enhance public areas, but also provide photo-worthy spots for residents and visitors to enjoy.

NEW FESTIVAL

GoRockford is preparing to announce a new event in August to enhance the summer experience in Rockford and add to the offerings for America 250 Rockford to bring new visitors to Rockford for this dynamic festival.

STROLL ON STATE 2026

Planning is already underway for Stroll on State 2026 to expand the festival into Davis Park (currently undergoing a major renovations). The expanded footprint will create an even bigger event for year 14.

Overall, these destination development initiatives reflect a forward thinking strategy that prioritizes placemaking, community engagement, and long term growth. By investing in beautification, public art, and signature events, GoRockford is positioning the region to remain competitive, attract new visitors, and continue building a strong sense of place for years to come.

MADE FOR ROCKFORD

GOROCKFORD ATTENDS TRAVMEDIA SUMMIT



NBC Nightly News films the "Letters to Santa" segment with Mrs. Claus.

GoRockford represented the Rockford region at the **TravMedia Summit**, held in conjunction with **IMM North America**, a leading forum that connects travel and tourism public relations professionals with editors and writers to exchange ideas, discuss industry trends, and build media relationships. This event provided a valuable platform to elevate Rockford's visibility among top tier media and position the region within broader travel conversations.

GoRockford President/CEO John Groh and Whitney Martin, Program Director of Made For Rockford, conducted more than 50 one on one meetings with journalists from leading outlets, sharing story ideas and highlighting the region's momentum. Conversations focused on the stories behind Rockford's experiences, the people who bring them to life, and the unique reasons travelers should consider the destination, helping to build meaningful connections and generate future media opportunities.

ROCKFORD PROMISE GRADUATES



Members of the GoTeam meet with Rockford Promise graduates and speak on the benefits of living and working in Rockford.

Members of the Made for Rockford Go-Team met with Rockford Promise graduates, highlighting the benefits of living and working in the Rockford area. These conversations provided scholars with direct connections to local ambassadors and resources to support their transition into the community. The effort also helped strengthen retention by reinforcing a sense of belonging and opportunity in Rockford.

Made for Rockford provided dozens of community tours for job applicants, offering a firsthand look at the area as a place to live and work. These tours supported recruitment efforts by helping candidates better understand the community and envision themselves building a life in Rockford.

MADE FOR ROCKFORD TOURS

Made for Rockford provided dozens of community tours for job applicants, offering a first-hand look at the area as a place to live and work. These tours support recruitment efforts by helping candidates better understand the community and envision themselves building a life in Rockford.



Journalists and travel writers meet with prospective destinations at the TravMedia Summit in January 2026.



A giveaway item features a QR code to go to GoRockford's media coverage page for journalists to learn more about Rockford's key media highlights.

GoROCKFORD BOARD & STAFF

GoRockford Board of Directors

Geno Iafrate (Chair)
Hard Rock Rockford

Tiana McCall (Vice Chair)

Mick Gronewold (Treasurer)
Fehr Graham Engineering
& Environmental

Dana Martin (Secretary)
Rosecrance Behavioral Health

Carol Schuster
University of Illinois
College of Medicine - Rockford

Jennifer Furst
Furst Staffing

Shelton Kay
Rockford Regional Health Council

Richard Shuga
Painters District Council
No. 30 Local 607

Todd Cagnoni
City of Rockford

Gretchen Gilmore
Rockford Area Venues &
Entertainment Authority (R.A.V.E.)

Angela Larson
Greater Rockford Chamber of
Commerce

Chintan Thakkar
Decorum Management Group

Mark Henderson
Village of Rockton

Bobbie Holzwarth
HolmstromKennedy

Ricardo Montoya-Picazo
Office of State
Representative Dave Vella

Patrick Thompson
Winnebago County

Duncan Geddes
City of Loves Park

Sonya Hoppes
City of South Beloit

Jay Sandine
Rockford Park District

Kirk Weitzel
Rock Hospitality

Ald. Kevin Frost
City of Rockford

GoRockford Foundation Board of Directors

Carol Schuster (Foundation Chair)
University of Illinois College of Medicine
Rockford

Geno Iafrate (Vice Chair)
Hard Rock Rockford

Marco Lenis
(Foundation Treasurer)
Vocational Rehabilitation Management

Gina Caruana
(Foundation Secretary)
Foresight Financial Group

David Anderson
Anderson Japanese Gardens

Jennifer Furst
Furst Staffing

Jeff Marrs
Morgan Stanley

Leslie West
State Farm

Rebecca Francis
Ignite Change Solutions LLC

Theresa Kegley
Movement Fitness

Jim Pirages
AGHL Law

Alexis Wright-Conniff
Woodward

GoRockford Staff



John Groh
President, CEO



Kristen Paul
Executive Vice President



Lindsay Arellano
Vice President of Sales &
Service



Joanne Nold
Vice President of
Finance & Administration



Amanda August
Social Media and
Communications Specialist



Chenaire Barmore
Communications Manager



Miranda Brook
Customer Experience
Coordinator



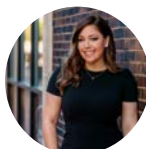
Kara Davis
Senior Sales Manager



Elizabeth Falls
Marketing Manager



Julie Huber
Destination Development
Operations Manager



Whitney Martin
Made for Rockford
Program Director



Emily Plumb
Sales & Servicing
Manager



Leah Ticknor
Office Manager &
Executive Assistant

**GoRockford Board of Directors
January 28, 2026
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
GoRockford Annex**

Board Members Present: Todd Cagnoni, Kevin Frost, John Groh, Mick Gronewold, Carol Schuster, Bobbie Holzwarth, Shelton Kay, Dana Martin, Gretchen Gilmore, Jennifer Furst, Angela Larsen, Richard Shuga, Patrick Thompson, Kirk Weitzel, Chintan Thakkar (via Zoom)

Board Members Absent: Geno lafrate, Tiana McCall, Ricardo Monoya-Picazo, Mark Henderson, Sonya Hoppes, Jay Sandine, Duncan Geddes

Staff Present: Kristen Paul, Leah Ticknor

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:32 a.m. by Treasurer Mick Gronewold.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

It was moved, seconded, and approved to accept the December 17, 2025 meeting minutes.

Internal Monitoring Reports

After discussion, it was moved, seconded, to accept the Internal Monitoring Reports, including the CEO interpretations provided by John Groh, for the following reports. The motion was then amended and approved to defer the Reports on 1.0 and 1.1 to March. Motion carried.

Reports reviewed:

- 1.3 Communicate with Constituents
- 2.3 Financial Planning/Budgeting
- 2.4 Financial Condition & Activities
- 2.8 Communication & Support to the Board

Governance Process

1.0 Global Ends Policy Revision

In 2025, Geno lafrate appointed a working group to review and suggest revisions to Policy 1.0 Global Ends. The committee met in November and worked together to develop revised policy language. The task force recommends adoption of the revisions as submitted in the board packet. After discussion, it was moved, seconded, and approved to adopt the revised 1.0 Global Ends policy.

Board Development Committee

The Board Development Committee will meet in February. Board members are encouraged to submit nomination recommendations to Geno lafrate.

Conflict of Interest Forms

Board members are requested to complete and return the annual Conflict of Interest form to Leah Ticknor.

2026 Audit & Budget Committee

Mick Gronewold recommended the following members to the 2026 Audit & Budget Committee: Mick Gronewold, Todd Cagnoni, Dana Martin, Darrell Snorek, Kyle Keith, Geno lafrate, and Carol Schuster.

It was moved, seconded, and approved to accept the committee slate as presented.

CEO Report

America250

Board members were invited to a press conference on February 6 at Midway Village. The GoRockford Foundation will serve as the fiscal agent. The Mayor and organizing committee are nearing their \$250,000 fundraising goal.

Tourism Improvement District (TID)

Progress continues, with two meetings held with hotel partners. Ongoing coordination with Tiffany Gallagher at Civitas is advancing the process.

Stroll Event Update

A news conference was held announcing the continued partnership with UMB. Attendance reached approximately 15,000 despite weather challenges.

Partner Updates

Gretchen Gilmore invited the Board to the Rinkside Block Party in advance of the AHL All-Star Classic: February 10–11

Kevin Frost expressed appreciation for the positive momentum and community efforts in Rockford.

Dana Martin announced Rosecrance is expanding access to care with two new intensive outpatient programs in Chicago. She also invited Board members to the *In Bloom* event benefiting Rockford Art Museum.

Angela Larsen shared updates from the Chamber, including two new hires:

- Everett Butzine, VP of Business Expansion & Attraction
- Mike Lacny, Director of Sales & Service

Todd Cagnoni shared that the City has retained Hunden Partners to conduct a hotel market needs analysis to better understand future lodging needs.

Patrick Thompson announced the appointment of Judge Brandon Maher and noted ongoing courthouse renovations, including updates to five courtrooms.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:30 a.m. by Treasurer Mick Gronewold.

Next Meeting

Wednesday, March 25, 2026

Respectfully submitted,

Dana Martin

Dana Martin, Board Secretary,
It

**GoRockford Board of Directors
March 25, 2026
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
GoRockford Annex**

Board Present: Todd Cagnoni, John Groh, Tiana McCall, Bobbie Holzwarth, Shelton Kay, Dana Martin, Geno Iafrate, Patrick Thompson, Kirk Weitzel, Angela Larson, Duncan Geddes, Jennifer Furst, Mark Henderson, Chintan Thakkar

Board Absent: Sonya Hoppes, Mick Gronewold, Kevin Frost, Richard Schuga, Carol Schuster, Gretchen Gilmore, Ricardo Montoya-Picazo, Jay Sandine

Staff Present: Kristen Paul, Joanne Nold, Whitney Martin, Leah Ticknor

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 7:31 a.m. by Chair Geno Iafrate.

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

It was moved, seconded and approved to approve the January 28, 2026, meeting minutes.

Internal Monitoring Reports:

After discussion, it was moved, seconded and approved to accept the Internal Monitoring Reports, including John Groh's CEO interpretations, for monitoring on:

- 1.0 Global Ends (deferred from January)
- 1.1 Create Economic Wealth (deferred from October 2025)
- 2.2 Treatment of Staff

Governance Process:

The Board Development Committee solicits nominations from the board.

CEO Update:

- **IHSA Boys State Soccer Finals** will take place in Rockford at Guilford High School for the next three years, 2026-2028.
- **Ironman 70.3** planning is underway. Eric Atnop, our race director, will be in town March 27-28, kicking off several planning meetings. The event is approximately 80 percent sold, which is great for the 2nd year. John asked the board to get involved in volunteering for the event.
- **Women's World Cup and Baseball For All:** (July 19–26) will bring a multi-day international girls' and women's baseball event to Rockford, featuring teams from around the world and positioning the community as a premier destination for women's sports.

- **American 250:** More than \$250,000 has been raised to support events across Winnebago County from now through the end of August. Grant applications will close at the end of the month to allow for the timely reinvestment of funds back into the community. RPS 205 and private schools are promoting a “250” Art and Essay Contest. A volunteer opportunity tied to the initiative will take place on April 22 as part of the Earth Day Clean-Up.
- **Made for Rockford:** A New Resident Mixer is scheduled at the Downtown Rockford Library, with over 130 RSVPs to date. Invitations were targeted to individuals who have recently relocated to the area. Whitney Martin encouraged board members to invite newcomers in their networks. In partnership with the Greater Rockford Chamber, MFR is developing an improved job board tool to highlight open positions and internships for individuals and families considering a move to the region. Angela Larson noted that 70% of interns remain with their employer long-term. Whitney also shared that two journalists will be visiting Rockford to help promote the community.
- **Forest City Beautiful:** A spring fundraising appeal letter requesting donations will be mailed soon. Five sculptures will be added this year.
- **Tourism Improvement District (TID) Update:** Tiffany Gallagher from Civitas will be in Rockford on April 7–8 to meet with the Steering Committee, hotel partners, city officials, and staff. John attended meetings in Chicago last week, where support for establishing a TID, the first in Illinois, was unanimous. Peoria is actively advancing its TID effort and has secured the required hotel support. The Quad Cities region is engaged in discussions but is not expected to move forward until a unified district can be established in Iowa and Illinois.
- **Restaurant Grant:** 34 grant awards were issued in February to local restaurants totaling over \$410k. Follow-up with restaurants to cash their award checks is still being done so that final grant reports can be filed.
- **LTCB Recertification:** Our annual recertification application has been filed with the Illinois Office of Tourism for eligibility in the FY27 LTCB grant program, including external letters from municipalities, internal control questionnaires, annual GATA registrations, and Greater Freeport CVB board authorization.
- **FY26 Financial Status:** After 8 months, the bureau is showing a \$154k loss, which is \$73k behind budget. A large share of the variance is due to city hotel taxes, which are \$50k behind budget, in part due to one larger hotel's delinquent filing status.

Partner Updates

Pat Thompson – The county is working on summer street repair projects and looking forward to partnering on TID meetings.

Angela Larson – A new employee will be starting at the chamber in May, relocating from Washington, DC. The Austan Goolsbee (Chicago Federal Reserve Chair) event is coming up as part of their outreach program, providing another positive opportunity to highlight Rockford.

Mark Henderson – Rockton is actively planning IRONMAN-related events during and after the race.

Shelton Key – Eliminate Racism 815 is hosting a community policing session on March 25–26 at the Nordlof Center. Former Madison Police Chief David Couper will serve as the guest speaker.

Duncan Geddes – The Parks Chamber is bringing back the Annual Chamber Awards on April 21 at Hard Rock, with Geno as the guest speaker.

Todd Cagnoni – Davis Park landscaping is scheduled for completion in early summer, while buildings are expected to be completed in fall 2026. A hotel market evaluation study is underway to assess demand for potential additional hotel development in the city.

Geno lafrate – On Wednesday, April 1, at 5 p.m., Hard Rock will celebrate Cheap Trick Day. The event will feature a documentary that has not been widely viewed, along with a dinner and Q&A with Rick and his family. Geno invited board members to attend.

Adjournment: At 8:24 a.m. Chair Geno lafrate adjourned the meeting.

The next meeting is Wednesday, April 22, 2026, at Hard Rock.

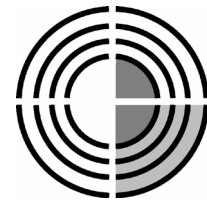
Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dana Martin".

Dana Martin, Board Secretary
It



Governing Policy of the GoRockford Board of Directors



Ends Policy Policy 1.0 Global Ends Statement

Management Limitations

To: GoRockford Board of Directors
From: John Groh, President/CEO
RE: Internal Monitoring Report – Ends Policies
Annual Monitoring on Policy 1.0 – Global Ends Statement

I hereby present my monitoring report on your Executive Limitations Policy 1.0, Global Ends Statement, in accordance with the monitoring schedule set forth in Board policy. I certify that the information contained in this report is true.

Signed,


John Groh
President/CEO

January 19, 2026

POLICY 1.0 – GLOBAL ENDS STATEMENT

BROADEST POLICY PROVISION: “GoRockford exists to drive quality of life and economic growth for our citizens through tourism marketing and destination development.

CEO INTERPRETATION: (no substantive change) I interpret this statement to mean the basic, fundamental mission of GoRockford is to utilize its funding, human resources, and all other available strengths and assets to improve the quality of life of area citizens, and that we do this by ensuring the continued growth of the visitor industry in the Rockford Region, defined as Winnebago County.

I interpret the inclusion of both marketing and destination development as the board’s directive to pursue a two-pronged strategy. This strategy should focus attention and resources on marketing/promoting and selling our region’s existing products while always keeping an eye toward the future and advocating for new development projects, priorities, and enhancements that will keep our region appealing to citizens (quality of life) and visitors.

Further, I believe that in restating its Global Ends Statement (first approved in April 2014 and reaffirmed in 2020), GoRockford’s board desires that we have a “citizens first” mentality. Said another way, our approach is guided by the underlying thought that “what is good for and appealing to a resident will likely be attractive and compelling to a visitor.”

GoRockford’s board and staff maintain Policy 1.0 as our primary goal and “bottom line”, which guides the allocation of resources, defines strategy, and directs implementation. Further, the board provides GoRockford with three directives for achieving Policy 1.0 and delineates those priorities in Policy 1.1 – Create Economic Wealth, Policy 1.2 – Enhance the Tourism Product, and Policy 1.3 – Engage Constituents on Behalf of Tourism, which we use in developing its strategy.

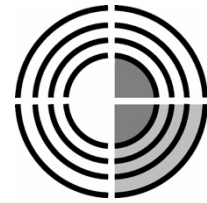
I believe these three priorities comprehensively define the impacts GoRockford can create for the Rockford Region, given available resources, and that when achieved, they collectively represent achievement of our mission.

REPORT: Monitoring reports presented on Policy 1.1 (January 28, 2026), Policy 1.2 (April 23, 2025), and Policy 1.3 (January 28, 2026), provide details about how effectively GoRockford is achieving its goals in each of these areas. All reports noted achievement.

As I have reported achievement in reports on 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3 within the past year, I am reporting achievement of your Global Ends Statement, Policy 1.0.



Governing Policy of the GoRockford Board of Directors



Ends Policy 1.3 Communicate with Constituents

Management Limitations

To: Board of Directors

From: John Groh, President/CEO

RE: Internal Monitoring Report – Ends Policies, Annual Monitoring on Policy 1.3

I hereby present my monitoring report on your Ends Policies Policy 1.3 - “Engage Constituents on Behalf of Tourism: GoRockford tourism marketing and destination development efforts have broad support among key stakeholders” in accordance with the monitoring schedule set forth in Board policy.

Signed,

John Groh, President/ CEO

January 19, 2026
Date

POLICY 1.3 – ENGAGE CONSTITUENTS ON BEHALF OF TOURISM: GoRockford tourism marketing and destination development efforts have broad support among key stakeholders.

1. The role of tourism is valued by residents of Winnebago County
2. Tourism initiatives and GoRockford are supported by government leaders and public policy
3. Business and community leaders invest time, energy and money in tourism initiatives
4. There is appropriate exposure of plans and activities in local and regional media

BROADEST POLICY PROVISION: “GoRockford tourism marketing and destination development efforts have broad support among key stakeholders.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: *(no changes since last report)* At the broadest level, I interpret this to mean that GoRockford’s success is reliant on demonstrable broad-based support for its work and role in the community.

Provisions 1, 2, 3 and 4 comprehensively identify the key segments of stakeholders (residents, government leaders, business and community leaders, and media) that cumulatively encompass “broad” support. Each of these is more fully interpreted and reported on below.

Of note, while not explicit in provision 3, I include industry partners (e.g., owners, managers and key staff of hotels, restaurants, sites, attractions, events and those businesses that are suppliers to the industry) in the broad category of “business and community leaders.”

Further, to ensure such support, I interpret this to mean GoRockford must have in place regular practices and programs that maintain a proactive, diversified effort to encourage dialogue with all the individuals and entities that comprise our stakeholders. To monitor perceptions and ensure support, the communication process should provide outlets and opportunities for GoRockford to hear and understand the needs, expectations and awareness of our stakeholders.

The objective is to ensure GoRockford has strong relationships with stakeholders and other community opinion leaders, and those individuals understand the bureau's mission, programs and positive impact on the region's economy and quality of life. As a result, these stakeholders are appropriately involved and support bureau initiatives, and GoRockford is ensured of ongoing resources/funding to fulfill its mission and purpose.

CEO REPORT: This report on Ends Policy 1.3 covers the period since the last report in January 2025.

GoRockford's Community Relations and Public Affairs efforts focus on achieving the board's priority outlined in Ends Policy 1.3. The primary objective of our efforts is to effectively communicate the message that

- 1) Tourism is important for economic development and growth,
- 2) GoRockford is an effective and innovative steward of public and private funds, and
- 3) that investing in tourism marketing and destination development projects will further the positive impact of tourism and benefit our residents' quality of life.

The primary strategies under the community relations and public affairs plan include government relations, media relations, stakeholder communication and engagement, and community and industry outreach.

1. The role of tourism is valued by residents of Winnebago County.

CEO INTERPRETATION: *(no changes since last report)* Adult residents of Winnebago County should be aware of and value the positive economic and quality of life impacts of tourism in Winnebago County, even if not a direct stakeholder in the tourism industry. Though economic impacts are primary, residents should also recognize that tourism product benefits and enhances their quality of life (e.g., job creation/support, availability of sports and recreation amenities, entertainment venues, restaurants, sites and attractions, etc.).

CEO REPORT:

Over the past twelve months, GoRockford's work has continued to reinforce residents' understanding of the value of tourism as an economic driver and a quality-of-life enhancer for Winnebago County.

While the COVID-19 pandemic initially heightened awareness of the hospitality and tourism sector's importance, the period since the last monitoring report reflects a meaningful transition from awareness to active community participation and pride. Tourism is increasingly experienced by residents not as an abstract economic concept, but as a visible contributor to downtown vitality, neighborhood activation, cultural expression, recreation, and community identity.

Throughout 2025, GoRockford-supported initiatives consistently brought residents into shared public spaces alongside visitors. Signature events such as Stroll on State, IRONMAN 70.3 Rockford, Restaurant Week, Beats & Bites, Rockford Day, and others attracted substantial local attendance and participation. These events reinforced the connection between tourism investment and amenities that residents themselves enjoy, such as restaurants, arts and culture, sports facilities, riverfront spaces, and walkable downtown experiences.

GoRockford's destination marketing and storytelling efforts increasingly emphasize this shared benefit. Messaging across earned media, social platforms, e-newsletters, and community presentations consistently links tourism to job creation, small business sustainability, downtown redevelopment, cultural vibrancy, and regional pride. This approach has helped socialize and normalize tourism as an essential part of the region's economic ecosystem rather than a niche industry serving only visitors.

Resident sentiment has also been influenced by sustained third-party validation of the Rockford region. National media coverage naming Rockford among the hottest housing markets in the country and highlighting the region's affordability, amenities, and momentum has reinforced local confidence and optimism. These

narratives, amplified locally by GoRockford, support the perception that tourism, talent attraction, and community development are interconnected.

Finally, GoRockford's ongoing engagement with residents through digital communications, public meetings, and event activations provides continual feedback loops that inform programming and messaging. This two-way communication ensures residents not only receive information about tourism's impact, but also see their community reflected in the region's destination narrative.

The most recent quantitative assessment of resident sentiment regarding tourism was conducted by MMGY NextFactor as part of the Destination Development Master Plan and remains the most current, comprehensive measure of awareness and perception available. Results demonstrate strong resident support for tourism and GoRockford's role in the community. 93.07% agreed tourism is "very important" or "important" to the Rockford Region, and 67.84% believe tourism's benefits outweigh any negative impacts. Nearly 98.5% of residents believe tourism has a positive or strong impact on the local economy, including 68.5% who believe visitors significantly improve economic outcomes, an increase from prior surveys.

Based on sustained resident participation in tourism-supported events, consistent community engagement with GoRockford programming, and the most recent resident sentiment data demonstrating strong awareness of GoRockford and broad recognition of tourism's economic and quality-of-life benefits, I conclude that the role of tourism is valued by residents of Winnebago County. Tourism investment is increasingly understood as integral to community vitality, downtown activation, and regional momentum.

I am reporting achievement.

2. Tourism initiatives & GoRockford are supported by government leaders and public policy.

CEO INTERPRETATION: *(no changes since last report)* With GoRockford funding so heavily reliant on governmental grants and contracts it is vital that government leaders and others who influence public policy recognize the economic and other tangible and intangible benefits the region derives from tourism and GoRockford's tourism marketing and development efforts, and that this recognition results in proactive support of tourism initiatives and GoRockford.

Additionally, support from government leaders is vital to advancing destination development strategies and projects. As policymakers and appropriators of public funds, it is vital that elected leaders are continually aware and supportive of the benefits of a comprehensive destination development strategy, as well as destination development projects and initiatives.

As outlined in prior CEO monitoring reports on 1.3, tourism priorities we committed to working toward include:

1. Support amenities and services related to Reclaiming First projects (i.e., signage, transportation).
2. Maintain or expand funding from the State of Illinois for statewide and local promotion efforts.
3. Maintain and expand support from the City of Rockford for Forest City Beautiful.
4. Secure new revenue from local municipal and government partners.
5. Continued momentum in Downtown Rockford redevelopment, i.e., approval to convert one-way streets to two-way, redevelopment agreement for a hotel/conference center.

CEO REPORT: *The following demonstrates achievement since the last report:*

Since the last monitoring report, GoRockford has continued to demonstrate strong and sustained support from government leaders and public policymakers through public investment, trusted administration of local and state-funded programs, and alignment with regional economic development priorities.

At the state level, GoRockford continues to be recognized as a reliable steward of public funds. The organization is administering a \$1.5 million State of Illinois restaurant recovery grant to support local restaurants still impacted by increased unemployment insurance costs resulting from the 2021 mandatory shutdown. Successful completion of multiple funding rounds and continued outreach efforts reflect the state's ongoing confidence in GoRockford's financial accountability and operational capacity.

GoRockford also maintains an active leadership role in statewide tourism advocacy through participation on the Illinois Destinations Association board of directors. This engagement has supported continued legislative recognition of tourism as an economic development tool, including sustained funding for the Local Tourism and Convention Bureau (LTCB) grant program and FY26 allocation to GoRockford.

Locally, GoRockford continues to work closely with the City of Rockford, Rockford Park District, and regional municipal partners to align tourism strategy with public investment in facilities and infrastructure. Regular coordination at the leadership and staff levels ensures that publicly funded assets are effectively leveraged to support overnight visitation, economic impact, and long-term destination competitiveness.

Public-sector support also extends to initiatives that connect tourism with broader workforce and population goals. Made for Rockford, supported in part through state funding and municipal collaboration, reflects growing policy alignment around talent attraction, workforce development, and community integration as shared regional priorities.

Collectively, continued public investment, policy advocacy, and institutional collaboration demonstrate that government leaders recognize the value of tourism and view GoRockford as a trusted partner in advancing shared economic and community development objectives.

I am reporting achievement.

3. Business and community leaders invest time, energy and money in tourism initiatives.

CEO INTERPRETATION: *(no changes since last report)* This End speaks to “broad support.” When combined with provision 1.3.2 (government leader support) and 1.3.4 (media exposure), virtually all “leaders” in the Rockford Region are included. I interpret that the highest priority should be given to business and government leaders, as if the most prominent and respected individuals in these sectors actively advocate for tourism, it is likely that the media and especially governmental bodies will join in support.

I interpret this to suggest that for GoRockford to advance its priorities and initiatives, it is important for GoRockford to generate support in a variety of forms, both monetary and non-monetary. Tourism initiatives are inclusive of GoRockford-supported projects and priorities and efforts by others that advance the tourism industry.

As outlined in prior CEO monitoring reports on 1.3, examples of engagement that we prioritized were:

1. Grow private sector and philanthropic support for initiatives such as Stroll on State, CRE8IV and Forest City Beautiful, as new sources of funds will help sustain and expand such programs.
2. Continued growth in support for and attendance at GoRockford's Annual Meeting.
3. Regular meetings with elected officials, i.e., mayors, aldermen, state representatives and senators
4. Involvement with community-wide movements and initiatives such as Transform Rockford, Alignment Rockford, Next Rockford, etc.
5. Regular outreach/public affairs efforts via media relations, partner meetings, feedback sessions, etc.

CEO REPORT: *The following demonstrates achievement toward those priorities listed above:*

- 2025 brought in the highest cash sponsor revenue to date for Stroll on State and Dasher Dash; however, due to an event-day blizzard, day-of revenue was down considerably. In addition, to support local businesses, all vendor fees were waived and returned post-event. In-kind sponsorships remained strong, including partnerships with RMTD, City of Rockford, Two Men & a Truck, SVL, Luxe Productions, Sunbelt Rentals, Prographics, Dreamers Like Me, Wonderland Dance Company, Rockford Dance Company, Urban Equities, RRDP, and more.
- As part of a partnership with the City of Rockford, the CRE8IV sculpture program installed 18 new sculptures throughout Rockford. The Rockford letters were also permanently placed along the riverbank. The program, started in 2018, now includes 34 pieces, 11 of which are on permanent display.
- Forest City Beautiful, a public/private partnership with the City of Rockford, continues to bring vibrancy throughout downtown and adjacent corridors. In the summer of 2025, the program added 36 hanging baskets and new city-owned lots. The program also includes 130 seasonal planters, 14 planted beds, over 800 street banners, and the I-90 gateway. The largest private donor renewed in 2025 with a 15% increase for an additional 3-years.
- As President/CEO, I hold regular meetings with elected officials and key personnel within the City of Rockford and community organizations. Staff hold quarterly group meetings with hoteliers and with marketing staff from partner organizations. New this year, Lindsay Arellano and our sales team formed a Sports Facilities advisory committee, and the group's second meeting will take place in February.
- Staff are actively involved in a variety of community and industry organizations, including
 - John Groh
 - River District Association, board president
 - Laurent House by Frank Lloyd Wright board
 - Rockford Area Arts Council board
 - Illinois Arts Council board
 - Illinois Destinations Association board
 - Destination International CDME board
 - Greater Rockford Chamber of Commerce board
 - Lindsay Arellano is on the Sports Huddle planning committee
 - Kristen Paul is on the board of the Parks Chamber of Commerce
 - Whitney Martin is on the Greg Lindmark Foundation board, the GRCC's talent committee, and the Family Counseling Services Fundraising committee.

- Additional staff members are involved with several local groups, including the Midway Village Marketing Committee, the RAVE Diversity and Inclusion Board, the Rockford Network of Professional Women, the Rockford Chamber Advantage Club, the Next Rockford Strategy Board, the Juneteenth Committee, the Rockford Chamber Ambassador, the Rockford Symphony Board, and the NNGO Alumni Ambassador for NIU.

I am reporting achievement.

4. There is appropriate exposure of plans and activities in local and regional media.

CEO INTERPRETATION: *(no changes since last report)* I interpret appropriate exposure to mean that local and regional media outlets provide regular coverage of news provided and created by the GoRockford. Local and regional media outlets include television stations WIFR, WTOV/WQRF, WREX; radio companies Townsquare Media and Mid-West Family Broadcasting; as well as the Rockford Register Star and The Rock River Times.

CEO REPORT: GoRockford's local public relations strategy resulted in a high profile for GoRockford in the community through media coverage of GoRockford and GoRockford-partner events/news.

As outlined in prior CEO monitoring reports on 1.3, short-term targeted metrics/success indicators were:

1. Not less than eight news conferences are held by GoRockford and covered by local/regional media.
2. A minimum of 500 stories run in print and online and on TV/radio about bookings secured by GoRockford that include the economic impact of tourism.
3. A minimum of 20 interviews are conducted by local and regional media that look to GoRockford as a leader and a reliable source to provide comments for pertinent stories.

The following demonstrates achievement this past year:

- GoRockford staff created and distributed 37 news releases on topics including GoRockford Branded Car at NASCAR Race, AHL All Star Classic, Chicago Bears NFL Flag Regional, IRONMAN 70.3 Rockford, Illinois, CRE8IV Sculpture Program, Stroll on State, Made for Rockford, Rockford Restaurant Week, and other sporting events. In 2025, staff hosted five in-person news conferences (Rockford Restaurant Week Awards, GoRockford Car at NASCAR Announcement, CRE8IV Sculpture Program, IRONMAN 70.3 Rockford Press Event, Stroll on State) and participated in additional news conferences hosted by partners including ground-breaking at Maybelle Blair Park at Beyer Stadium, AHL All Star Classic, WBSC Women's Baseball World Cup, Rockford 815 Day and others.
- Total number of media mentions of GoRockford-related news was tracked by Meltwater with total placement/mentions of 4.42K media mentions and 3.87 billion in potential reach.
- Regular local weekly interviews with GoRockford staff talking about "What's Happening in the Rockford region" continue to include WIFR's The Morning Blend, WROK's NewsTalk 1440 with Riley O'Neil, and 96.7 The Eagle with Double T. Since the last report, there have been 156 interviews.
- During the year, there were approximately 100 interviews, including Stroll on State's Letters to Santa program, which appeared on NBC Nightly News. Other interviews with GoRockford staff related to Stroll on State, GoRockford programs, client events, news conferences, and general economic impact stories, etc.

- Staff regularly monitor local and regional media for news items related to the visitor industry and, when appropriate, contact media outlets to offer staff members as subject-matter experts. This often results in GoRockford receiving exposure via media outlets.
- GoRockford created and distributed 126 e-newsletters, (releases, Go Guides, leisure emails, partner e-blasts) which helps to convey GoRockford information to local partners, including media outlets and leisure travelers.

I am reporting achievement.

Prepared by: John Groh 1/19/26



102 N. Main St.
Rockford, IL 61101
Ph 815.963.8111

Date: January 19, 2026
To: GoRockford Board of Directors
From: John Groh, President & CEO
Re: Summary of:

- Internal Monitoring Report on Management Limitations
 - Monitoring on Policy 2.3 – Financial Planning / Budget
- Internal Monitoring Report on Executive Limitations
 - Monitoring on Policy 2.4 – Financial Condition and Activities

Monitoring Report 2.3 refers to fiscal and financial planning and budget.

Monitoring Report 2.4 deals with RACVB's ongoing financial condition and has attached the preliminary Balance Sheet, preliminary Summary Income Statement, and Cash Flow Statement as of December 31, 2025.

We are reporting compliance in all matters contained in monitoring reports for the period ending December 31, 2025, except 2.4.2.

Please call me with any questions regarding these reports.



John Groh
President & CEO



Internal Monitoring Report - Management Limitations

December 31, 2025

Monitoring on Policy 2.3 – Financial Planning/Budget
Monitoring on Policy 2.4 – Financial Conditions and Activities

SUMMARY

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Compliance: | The President/CEO reports compliance on all 2.3 and 2.4 monitoring reports, except 2.4.2. |
| 2. Line of Credit: | GoRockford ended the month of December 2025 with a \$0 balance on its line of credit. |
| 3. Total Current Net Assets: | \$1,583,928 |
| 4. Total Current Liabilities: | \$1,181,067 |
| 5. Board Governance: | Budgeted \$19,000 – year-to-date expense is \$7,718 |
| 6. Total Operating Revenues: | \$2,084,974 year to date on December 31, 2025, for FY26 |
| 7. Total Operating Expenses: | \$2,040,979 year to date on December 31, 2025, for FY26 |
| 8. Trade Acts. Receivable: | \$103,372 (does not include hotel taxes or grants) |
| 9. Accounts Receivable Grants: | \$10,399 |
| 10. Accounts Payable: | \$150,329 |
| 11. Total Cash on Hand: | \$1,160,733, including \$85,557 Funds Held in Trust and \$922,364 Designated Funds |

SEE DECEMBER 2025 FINANCIALS



To: GoRockford Board of Directors
From: John Groh, President & CEO
RE: Internal Monitoring Report - Management Limitations
Monitoring on Policy 2.3 – Financial Planning/Budget

I hereby present my monitoring report on your Management Limitations Policy 2.3, "Financial Planning/Budget," in accordance with the monitoring schedule outlined in Board policy. I certify that the information contained in this report is accurate.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Groh", written over a horizontal line.

John Groh, President & CEO

January 19, 2026
Date

POLICY 2.3 – FINANCIAL PLANNING/BUDGETING

BROADEST POLICY PROVISION:

"Financial planning for any fiscal year or the remaining part of any fiscal year will not deviate materially from the Board's Ends Priority, risk fiscal jeopardy, or fail to address multi-year planning considerations."

CEO INTERPRETATION: (Same as the previous report.) Except for the multi-year planning component, I submit that the Board has comprehensively interpreted this broadest policy statement in its subsequent provisions.

Regarding multi-year planning, I interpret this policy to require that we sufficiently project all capital and depreciation needs and develop the necessary financial resources to achieve our Board's Priority End Results. I also interpret this policy to mean that, as the President & CEO, I have the flexibility to revise budgetary projections throughout the year. However, I am required to keep the Board apprised of any material changes, and these changes must meet all the criteria outlined in this policy.

My interpretations and data reporting are presented below. I will utilize the fiscal information provided in the preliminary financial statements as of December 31, 2025.

REPORT: On June 25, 2025, the board approved a twelve-month budget for the fiscal year (July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026), with a projected net profit of \$8,012 after depreciation of \$75,000.

Accordingly, the President & CEO shall not allow budgeting that:

2.3.1 "Risks incurring those situations or conditions described as unacceptable in the "Financial Conditions and Activities" Board policies 2.4.1 - 2.4.4."

CEO INTERPRETATION: (Same as the previous report.) I interpret this policy to require that I ensure that financial plans and budgets prepared do not involve liquidity risk situations and conditions described as unacceptable in Section 2.4 of the Financial Condition and Activities Board policies. These policies include items such as expending more funds than have been received during a fiscal

year relative to operating reserve guidelines, incurring debt for the organization, settling payroll and payables on time, and ensuring the timely filing of government payments and filings.

REPORT: On June 25, 2025, the board adopted a twelve-month FY25 budget for the period from July 2025 through June 2026. The annual budget was approved with a projected profit of \$8,012 after depreciation of \$75,000.

The bureau did not draw on the line of credit during the last fiscal year due to stable hotel tax revenue and conservative spending. All budgeted revenue for FY26 is consistent with our mission, and all revenue received during the quarter ended December 31, 2025, was from sources consistent with our mission.

I am reporting compliance.

2.3.2 “Omits credible projection of revenues and expenses, separation of capital and operational items, cash flow, and disclosure of planning assumptions.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: *(Same as the previous report.)* I interpret this policy to mean that the budget prepared, utilized, and available for presentation must have adequate data to support the credibility of projections. It must highlight the separation of capital items from operational expenses, include a presentation of cash flow expectations for the year, and convey the key assumptions used in creating the projections.

REPORT: The VP of Finance & Administration, along with the President/CEO and program directors, developed the annual budget based on sales and marketing plans, historical financial data, and projected revenue from hotel taxes, state grants, and other predictable sources. Capital expenditures were budgeted separately from expenses. A cash flow projection and a narrative budget summary of assumptions were prepared and shared with the Audit Committee and the GoRockford Board for budget approval.

Management receives monthly financial reports that compare actual results to the budget, and the GoRockford Board receives quarterly financial reports, which include a cash flow statement and a financial analysis of any unanticipated activity. We ended the quarter of December 2025 with a \$0 balance on our line of credit, demonstrating that our revenue, expenses, and cash flow projections were reliable.

I am reporting compliance.

2.3.3 “Plans the expenditure in any fiscal year of more funds than are conservatively projected to be received.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: *(Same as the previous report.)* This policy requires that a conservative projection of revenues must exceed our most realistic projection of expenses for any fiscal year.

REPORT: Only revenue that is contracted for, on hand from the retained earnings of prior years, or reasonably attainable (e.g., sponsorships) is budgeted.

The projected twelve-month FY26 budget shows a profit of \$8,012 after depreciation. Before the depreciation of \$75,000, the budget had projected a net income of \$83,012.

I am reporting compliance.

2.3.4 “Omits allocation for board prerogatives during the year than as set forth in the Cost of Governance Board policy 4.10.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: *(Same as the previous report.)* As the Board establishes its budget for what it believes is important to invest in its own governance, this policy requires that I ensure that the annual budget I prepare for the corporation as a whole allocates at least as much as is stated in the Cost of Governance policy for board prerogatives and functions.

REPORT: The amount outlined in our approved FY26 budget for the cost of Board prerogatives is \$19,000 and is budgeted for board consulting, retreats, and legal fees.

I am reporting compliance.

2.3.5 “Fails to maintain operating reserves equivalent to three months of basic operating expenses. Operating reserves are defined as available cash on hand in cash or highly liquid assets and do not include any line of credit or other form of cash flow debt instruments in the calculation thereof.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: *(Same as previous report)* I interpret this policy regarding liquidity to require that our financial planning must maintain cash or cash equivalents of at least three months of basic operational costs (estimated at approximately \$450,000 for FY26 under the approved budget). As outlined in the policy, this includes cash on hand and highly liquid assets, which I interpret to include the calculation of total short-term assets less short-term liabilities. Additionally, the calculation of operating reserves does not include access to any line of credit or other form of cash flow debt instruments.

NOTE: In June 2023, the board approved a new Reserve Fund Policy that calls for building a designated cash reserve fund over time up to 25% of the annual expense budget for personnel and operations, in combination with the \$250,000 line of credit already in place (thus, approximately \$200,000 for FY26, complemented by the existing \$250,000 line of credit). This will be funded from operating revenue, specifically hotel tax revenue, one of our few revenue streams that is not designated.

REPORT: As of December 31, 2025, the bureau's operating reserve bank account balance was approximately \$62,500, with monthly transfers of \$2,500 from the operating account to the reserve account. Thus, we are on track to implement the new policy's recommendations and requirements.

At the current transfer rate of \$2,500/month, the reserve fund will grow by \$30,000 annually. Assuming continued funding and no withdrawals, the balance is projected to reach the target by August 2030.

Revisions to Board Policies 2.3 and 2.4 are recommended to ensure consistency and clarity across governing documents. These revisions should explicitly acknowledge the Reserve Fund Policy and incorporate the designated reserve fund as a distinct component of the organization's overall liquidity and risk management strategy.

As we comply with the new Reserve Fund Policy, I am reporting compliance.

REFER TO DECEMBER 2025 FINANCIALS

Attachments: Income Statement, Balance Sheet, Cash Flow
Prepared by: John Groh and Joanne Nold 1/19/26



To: GoRockford Board of Directors
From: John Groh, President & CEO
RE: Internal Monitoring Report- Executive Limitations
Quarterly Monitoring on Policy 2.4 – Financial Condition and Activities

I hereby present my monitoring report on your Management Limitations Policy 2.4, "Financial Condition and Activities", in accordance with the monitoring schedule set forth in Board policy. I certify that the information contained in this report and the accompanying Income Statement and Balance Sheet are accurate in all material respects.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Groh", written over a horizontal line.

John Groh, President & CEO

January 19, 2026

Date

POLICY 2.4 – FINANCIAL CONDITION AND ACTIVITIES

BROADEST POLICY PROVISION:

"With respect to the financial condition and activities, the President & CEO will not cause or allow the development of fiscal jeopardy or a material deviation of actual expenditures from the board's Ends priorities."

CEO's INTERPRETATION: (*Same as the previous report.*) I submit that the board's concerns about avoidance of fiscal jeopardy are comprehensively interpreted in this policy's subsequent provisions. Regarding expenditures, I interpret "material deviation of actual expenditures from the Board's Ends priorities" to mean the avoidance of waste, such that all expenditures are to be viewed as investments towards achieving GoRockford's Ends.

REPORT: My interpretations and reporting data on the fiscal jeopardy provisions are presented with those provisions noted below. With respect to expenditures deviating from Ends policies, anticipated expenditures itemized in our FY26 budget are reviewed by the Board when monitoring to ensure adherence to our Financial Planning/Budgeting Policy (2.3). Material variances (none this reporting period) are noted in the monitoring of provision 2.4.5 below.

Accordingly, he/she may not:

2.4.1 "Expend more funds than have been received in the fiscal year to date unless the operating reserve guidelines are met according to 2.3.5."

CEO INTERPRETATION: (*Same as the previous report.*) This policy requires that year-to-date expenses be less than corresponding revenues. Any exceptions are subject to the operating reserve guidelines.

REPORT: As of December 31, 2025, we have recorded operating revenues of \$2,084,974 and incurred operating expenses (expenditures of funds) before depreciation of \$2,40,979, resulting in a profit from operations of \$43,995. After deducting depreciation expense, we report a net profit of \$6,495 for the fiscal year. The approved budget projected a net profit of \$60,247 after Q2. We are meeting our operating reserve requirements; therefore, we are reporting compliance.

I am reporting compliance.

2.4.2 “Indebt the organization, with the exception of: credit cards or credit accounts used for regular business purposes and paid in full each month; accessing a Board-approved Line of Credit in an amount not to exceed \$100,000, with notification to Board Governance Committee of any draws on the line within four business days of each draw. Draws of over \$100,000 require Board approval. Any draw on the line should be viewed as a short-term float and be accompanied by a plan for repayment, ideally within 90 days.

CEO INTERPRETATION: *(Same as the previous report.)* This policy gives the CEO the latitude to approve any draws against the line of credit (currently maintained at \$250,000) within the parameters explicitly stated in the policy provision.

Furthermore, I am responsible for ensuring that GoRockford credit cards are used solely for business purposes and that balances are paid in full each month. However, consistent with my interpretation of Policy 2.4.3, I interpret that other credit accounts can be settled by the due date if terms are explicitly agreed upon, and otherwise within 30 to 60 days.

REPORT: The Bureau entered the quarter with a balance of \$0 on the line of credit. As no draws were made during the quarter, the line of credit balance at the end of December 2025 was \$0.

In May 2022, the board approved the bureau borrowing up to \$100,000 for improvements to the building at 310 S. Winnebago St. On September 14, 2022, the bureau received a \$100,000 loan from IL Bank & Trust to cover the costs of major roof repairs and masonry work. The loan is amortized over a 30-year repayment schedule at 6.15% interest, with monthly payments of \$1,940 starting on October 14, 2022, to repay the loan in 5 years. The building secures the loan.

The board officers approved, and the board subsequently ratified, the Bureau's application for an Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL) in April 2020. The initial loan proceeds of \$10,000 were received on May 1, 2020, and were forgivable under the program. The final loan proceeds of \$75,400 were received on June 19, 2020, and carry a 30-year term at 2.75%. Monthly payments of \$322 began in December 2022 after multiple deferrals. As of October 2025, the Bureau is making payments that include both interest and principal.

On September 22, 2025, GoRockford entered into a three-year auto lease agreement for a new Ford Explorer with monthly payments of \$599. There was no money down, and the auto lease expense was included in the board-approved FY26 budget.

Finally, corporate credit cards and accounts were used solely for typical business purchases during the quarter ended September 30, 2025, with one exception. During the quarter, there were two violations related to non-business purchases made with a corporate credit card. The staff member unintentionally used a CVB-issued card for two personal purchases totaling \$166 and immediately reimbursed the bureau for the purchases upon self-identifying the error.

I am reporting non-compliance.

2.4.3 “Operate without settling payroll and payables in a timely manner.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (*Same as the previous report.*) Payroll must be paid as required every other Friday. For other payables, I interpret “timely” to mean by the due date if terms are specifically agreed upon and otherwise within thirty to sixty days.

REPORT: As of December 31, 2025, trade accounts payable totaled \$150,329. Payables continue to be settled within 30 to 45 days, unless they depend on grant funding that has been delayed. In those situations, we have received payment flexibility from the vendors. Payroll has been paid on time, bi-weekly.

I am reporting compliance.

2.4.4 “Allow tax or other government ordered payments or filings to be overdue or inaccurately filed. Requirements include but are not limited to annual independent audits, audit compliance, annual 990 statements, annual budgets, quarterly activity reports and financial statements, minutes, and agendas from Board meetings.

CEO INTERPRETATION: (*Same as the previous report.*) All tax and government-required payments or filings must be made promptly and accurately.

REPORT: All withholding taxes and other such payments or filings for the period have been made on time and accurately. Federal and state income tax withholdings have been submitted to the proper taxing authorities within 5 business days following the payroll dates. Federal and state unemployment taxes have been paid by the end of the month following the payroll quarter. There are no outstanding filings, and there have been no late penalties. The annual Form 990 for the year ended June 30, 2025, has been filed by the extended due date.

I am reporting compliance.

2.4.5 “Make a single purchase or commitment of greater than \$25,000 unless such purchase was explicitly itemized in monitoring reports previously disclosed to the board. Splitting orders and /or paying from two consecutive fiscal years to avoid this limit is not acceptable.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (*Same as the previous report.*) The Board must specifically approve all single expenditures of more than \$25,000 that were not previously disclosed as part of budget monitoring data.

Further, I interpret that individual expenditures paid to a single vendor and, in the aggregate, exceeding \$25,000 do not require board approval if they are within the overall projected expense for the fiscal year. As noted in the policy, splitting payments to avoid this limit is not acceptable.

REPORT: During the quarter, no purchase exceeding \$25,000 was made that was not specifically budgeted or subsequently approved by the board.

I am reporting compliance.

- 2.4.6 “Solely execute payments in an amount greater than \$5,000, or solely execute any payments to himself/herself. Signatures are to be in the priority order of signing as outlined in Policy 4.8.2.C where signatures on checks are required by Board members.”**

CEO INTERPRETATION: (*Same as the previous report.*) No checks or electronic fund transfers (EFTs) can be solely executed in an amount greater than \$5,000, nor solely executed as payments to the President/CEO.

REPORT: (*Same as the previous report.*) During this period, no checks for amounts greater than \$5,000 have been executed solely, and no payments have been made solely to the President/CEO. Other signatories were as specified in Policy 4.3.

I am reporting compliance.

- 2.4.7 “Acquire, encumber, lease or dispose of real property.”**

CEO INTERPRETATION: (*Same as the previous report.*) All decisions regarding the purchase or sale of land or buildings are considered to be at the discretion of the Board of Directors.

REPORT: (*Same as the previous report.*) No real property has been encumbered, acquired, or disposed of during this period.

I am reporting compliance.

- 2.4.8 “Operate without aggressively pursuing material receivables in accordance with commonly accepted practices.”**

CEO INTERPRETATION: (*Same as the previous report.*) I interpret a “reasonable grace period” to be sixty (60) days and “material” to be receivables that, when collected, are of greater value than the cost of collection (including staff time). I interpret “aggressively pursuing” to require regular follow-up in writing, over the phone when all other avenues have been exhausted, and when the cost would benefit the recovery utilizing a collection agency.

REPORT: At the end of this period, no material receivables were outstanding.

I am reporting compliance.

2.4.9 “Obtain revenues from sources that are not, in fact and appearance, legal and consistent with the ends policies, mission and values of the organization.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (*Same as the previous report.*) I interpret this policy as allowing staff to identify and generate new revenue streams and sources without requiring explicit board approval (as long as they meet the “prudence” test). However, “prudence” in this case is further defined to preclude any revenue sources that conflict with our mission and values and thus could provide embarrassment to the organization and its constituents.

REPORT: (*Same as the previous report.*) During this period, no revenues have been obtained from sources that are inconsistent with GoRockford’s mission and values or would provide embarrassment to GoRockford or its constituents.

I am reporting compliance.

2.4.10 “Use restricted funds for purposes other than stated by the contributor or use Board designated funds except as explicitly authorized by the Board.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (*Same as the previous report.*) This policy requires that we manage finances consistently with generally accepted accounting principles regarding the segregation and use of restricted funds. “Restricted” contributions are monies directed to GoRockford to be used for a specific purpose. Board-designated funds are those funds the board had pre-determined to hold in reserve for specific purposes.

REPORT: (*Same as the previous report.*) Finances have been managed in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, and any restricted funds will be reported separately in the balance sheet attached to this report. Funds have only been used for their intended purposes.

I am reporting compliance.

2.4.11 “Operate without adequate internal controls over receipts and disbursements to avoid unauthorized payments or material dissipation of assets. The organization shall not have secret funds, and it shall prohibit any unaudited transactions or loans.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (*Same as the previous report.*) Controls must be in place to ensure all receipts are properly recorded, and disbursements are appropriately authorized. Further, all payments (checks, EFTs, credit card purchases, petty cash, etc.) must have corresponding documentation sufficient to satisfy the auditor. Finally, we may not make unaudited loans of any type.

REPORT: (*Same as the previous report.*) Internal controls in place are consistent with Board policy and the generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) prescribed by the Board-appointed auditors. As part of the annual audit, the independent auditor reviews our internal control procedures in place during the year. The organization does not have secret funds and does not allow unaudited transactions or loans. The most recent FY25 audit reported a clean opinion.

I am reporting compliance.

2.4.12 “Pledge any of the assets of the corporation as security within any contracts.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: *(Same as the previous report.)* No assets can be pledged as security within any contracts without board approval.

REPORT: *(Same as the previous report.)* During the period, no corporation assets were pledged as security within any contracts.

In June 2020, the board approved the bureau's application for an Economic Injury Disaster Loan in the amount of \$75,400. The loan required the bureau to pledge personal property as collateral.

In May 2022, the board approved the bureau to obtain a loan secured by the newly acquired building at 310 S. Winnebago St. to finance major building improvements. A \$100,000 loan was obtained on September 15, 2022, from Illinois Bank & Trust. The loan is secured by the building.

I am reporting compliance.

2.4.13 “Allow the expenditure of organizational funds for travel purposes which are not specifically related to or consistent with the organization’s purpose and functions.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: *(Same as the previous report.)* Compliance with this policy is achieved when all travel expenses can be justified as reasonable investments toward achieving our Priority Results.

REPORT: *(Same as the previous report.)* All travel expenditures during the quarter have been consistent with the organization’s purpose and function.

I am reporting compliance.

REFER TO DECEMBER 2025 FINANCIALS

Attachments: Income Statement, Balance Sheet, Cash Flow. Prepared by: John Groh and Joanne Nold 1/19/26

Rockford Area ConventionisitorsBureau
Statement of Financial Position
December 31, 2025
January 15, 2026

ASSETS

Current Assets

Petty Cash	\$	132.00	
Cash - Operating IL B & T		46,182.69	
Cash - Designated Funds		922,364.44	
Cash - Capital Planning & Dev		33,055.95	
Cash - Private Sector Funds		13,266.82	
Cash - Operating Reserve		60,174.79	
Cash - Funds Held in Trust		85,556.75	
Accounts Receivable		10,399.50	
Other Grants Receivable		104,984.20	
City/County Gov't Receivable		140,906.86	
LTCB Grant Receivable		18,256.13	
Due from Foundation		2,658.72	
Other Receivables		59,697.76	
Inventory		7,050.79	
Prepaid Expenses		<u>79,240.42</u>	
Total Current Assets			1,583,927.82

Property and Equipment

Furniture & Equipment		577,917.08	
Leasehold Improvements		635,079.30	
Accumulated Depreciation		<u>(975,127.92)</u>	
Total Property and Equipment			237,868.46

Other Assets

ROU Asset - Operating Leases		59,402.03	
Acc. Amort - ROU Asset - Oper		(16,836.91)	
Long-Term Receivable		<u>718,010.20</u>	
Total Other Assets			<u>760,575.32</u>

Total Assets \$ 2,582,371.60

LIABILITIES AND CAPITAL

Current Liabilities

Funds Held in Trust	\$	84,486.28	
Accounts Payable-Operating		150,328.99	
Accrued Payroll		78,230.15	
Accrued Vacation Pay		46,064.29	
Payroll Taxes and Withholding		4,378.23	
Unearned Income		801,199.14	
SBA Loan Payable - Current		1,726.94	
Current Lease Liability - ROU		<u>14,653.18</u>	
Total Current Liabilities			1,181,067.20

Long-Term Liabilities

Unearned Income		1,013,548.20	
SBA Loan Payable - LT		73,196.39	
LT Lease Liability - ROU Asset		<u>14,734.88</u>	
Total Long-Term Liabilities			<u>1,101,479.47</u>

Total Liabilities 2,282,546.67

Capital

Net Assets		293,330.61	
Net Income		<u>6,494.32</u>	
Total Capital			<u>299,824.93</u>

Total Liabilities & Capital \$ 2,582,371.60

Income Statement
For the Six Months Ending December 31, 2025
January 15, 2026

	Current Month	Year to Date Actual	Year to Date Budget	Year to Date Variance	Annual Budget
OPERATING REVENUES					
City/County Gov't Agreements	\$ 141,391	971,024	\$ 1,015,160	(44,136)	\$ 1,804,600
County, other city contracts	1,362	9,536	11,797	(2,261)	18,232
Marketing Partnership Grant	0	0	0	0	100,000
LTCB Grant Revenue	47,476	284,857	284,857	0	569,714
Other Grant Revenue	0	251,445	251,859	(414)	924,359
Stroll on State	38,764	303,540	354,000	(50,460)	354,000
CRE8IV Revenue	3,341	90,525	91,062	(537)	103,062
Forest City Beautiful	14,200	95,875	96,000	(125)	201,704
Other Revenue	33,324	65,632	66,384	(752)	714,434
Advertising Revenue	884	7,657	9,625	(1,968)	19,250
Miscellaneous Income	393	2,478	2,750	(272)	5,500
Interest Revenue	438	2,405	2,000	405	4,000
TOTAL OPERATING REVENUES	281,573	2,084,974	2,185,494	(100,520)	4,818,855
OPERATING EXPENSES					
Total Personnel	114,212	777,831	776,519	1,312	1,553,560
Total Operations	28,255	133,331	131,505	1,826	246,636
Total Activities	158,325	1,129,817	1,179,723	(49,906)	2,935,647
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES	300,792	2,040,979	2,087,747	(46,768)	4,735,843
INCOME FROM OPERATIONS	(19,219)	43,995	97,747	(53,752)	83,012
NON OPERATING REVENUE FROM PARTNERS					
In-Kind Revenue	8,305	54,463	42,690	11,773	85,380
PARTNERSHIP REVENUE	(8,305)	(54,463)	(42,690)	(11,773)	(85,380)
NON OPERATING EXPENSES FROM PARTNERS					
Inkind Expenses	8,305	54,463	42,690	11,773	85,380
PARTNERSHIP EXPENSE	8,305	54,463	42,690	11,773	85,380
INCOME FROM PARTNERS	0	0	0	0	0
Depreciation Expense	6,250	37,500	37,500	0	75,000
NET INCOME	(\$ 25,469)	6,495	\$ 60,247	(53,752)	\$ 8,012

For Management Purposes Only

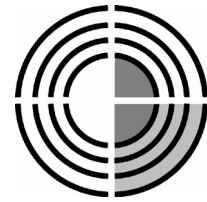
Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau
FY26 Cash Flow Schedule

	Actual July	Actual August	Actual September	Actual October	Actual November	Actual December	Projected January	Projected February	Projected March	Projected April	Projected May	Projected June
RECEIPTS												
Hotel taxes	\$142,101	\$241,031	\$148,319	\$152,744	\$173,633	\$147,010	\$95,634	\$114,508	\$106,950	\$152,171	\$154,398	\$172,215
Grant proceeds	\$0	\$403,500	\$386,042	\$51,145	\$197,304	\$0	\$110,284	\$69,034	\$169,034	\$215,061	\$69,034	\$110,284
Foundation transfers	\$0	\$9,040	\$108,770	\$0	\$100,000	\$109,038	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$102,509
Other	\$12,574	\$130,588	\$19,657	\$60,333	\$6,832	\$15,589	\$9,113	\$7,431	\$7,431	\$7,431	\$33,127	\$7,431
Total receipts	\$154,675	\$784,158	\$662,788	\$264,221	\$477,769	\$271,637	\$215,030	\$190,972	\$283,414	\$374,664	\$256,558	\$392,439
DISBURSEMENTS												
Personnel	\$124,279	\$167,463	\$131,285	\$127,279	\$113,304	\$114,212	\$175,367	\$120,540	\$120,540	\$120,540	\$120,540	\$120,540
Operating	\$12,370	\$15,291	\$27,542	\$32,072	\$17,462	\$28,255	\$18,362	\$18,362	\$18,362	\$18,362	\$18,362	\$18,362
Program activities	\$187,468	\$154,840	\$140,515	\$115,821	\$255,100	\$90,742	\$559,910	\$174,910	\$159,910	\$159,910	\$275,535	\$180,735
Total expenses	\$324,117	\$337,594	\$299,342	\$275,172	\$385,866	\$233,209	\$753,639	\$313,812	\$298,812	\$298,812	\$414,437	\$319,637
Capital purchases	\$0	\$20,704	\$17,515	\$31,520	\$1,380	\$5,398	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Debt payments -EIDL/leases	\$27,947	\$322	\$322	\$698	\$698	\$698	\$698	\$698	\$698	\$698	\$698	\$698
FY25 payroll/payables	\$0	\$156,252	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total disbursements	\$352,064	\$514,872	\$317,179	\$307,390	\$387,944	\$239,305	\$754,337	\$314,510	\$299,510	\$299,510	\$415,135	\$320,335
Increase (Decrease) in cash	(\$197,389)	\$269,286	\$345,609	(\$43,169)	\$89,825	\$32,332	(\$539,307)	(\$123,538)	(\$16,096)	\$75,153	(\$158,577)	\$72,104
Beginning cash balance	\$518,374	\$320,985	\$590,272	\$935,881	\$892,712	\$982,536	\$1,014,869	\$475,562	\$352,023	\$335,927	\$411,080	\$252,503
End of month cash balance	\$320,985	\$590,272	\$935,881	\$892,712	\$982,536	\$1,014,869	\$475,562	\$352,023	\$335,927	\$411,080	\$252,503	\$324,607

Cash Balance does not include Funds Held in Trust and Operating Reserve accounts



Governing Policy of the GoRockford Board of Directors



Executive Limitations Policy 2.8 – Communication & Support to the Board

Management Limitations

To: Board of Directors

From: John Groh, President/CEO

RE: Internal Monitoring Report – Management Limitations Policies
Monitoring on Policy 2.8 – Communication & Support to the Board

I hereby present my monitoring report on your Management Limitations Policy 2.8 – Communication & Support to the Board, in accordance with the monitoring schedule set forth in board policy. I certify that the information contained in this report is true for the six-month period ending January 2026.

Signed

John Groh/President/CEO

January 19, 2026

POLICY 2.8 – COMMUNICATION & SUPPORT TO THE BOARD

“The President/CEO will not permit the board to be uninformed or unsupported in its work.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (No changes since last report.) One of the primary obligations of the CEO is to ensure the board has all necessary facts, evidence, knowledge and resources for the fulfillment of its role, as the board has defined it in its governing policies. I submit that the subsequent provisions comprehensively define this policy. Interpretations and reporting data are presented below.

“Accordingly, he or she may not:”

- 2.8.1** “Neglect to submit monitoring reports (including the President/CEO’s policy interpretations, as well as compliance/achievement data) required by the board (see policy 3.4 on Monitoring President/CEO Performance in Board/Staff Linkage) in a timely, accurate and understandable fashion.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (*No changes since last report*) The CEO shall submit monitoring reports in the month designated in policy 3.4. Each report shall include an interpretation of each policy, indicating whether that interpretation is new (noting whether any material changes have been made since the last report), data that is factually accurate, and enough data for the board to make an informed judgment as to whether compliance/achievement is reasonably substantiated. I interpret “timely” to mean the board receives the report in advance of the scheduled board meeting, during which they will review the report. I interpret “understandable” to mean that the information provided,

and the logic outlined in the report, would make sense to most people.

REPORT: With one exception, all monitoring reports for the period were submitted within the specified month and distributed to the board prior to board meetings in compliance with policy 4.3.3.c.

- January 28, 2026
 - 1.0 Global Ends
 - 1.1 Create Economic Wealth
(deferred from October to December, submitted January)
 - 1.3 Communicate with Constituents
 - 2.3 Financial Planning/Budgeting
 - 2.4 Financial Condition & Activities
- December 17, 2025
 - 2.5 Asset Protection
- October 22, 2025
 - 2.3 Financial Planning/Budgeting
 - 2.4 Financial Condition & Activities
- September 24, 2025
 - 2.0 Executive Constraint
 - 2.6 Emergency CEO Succession
 - 2.7 Compensation and Benefits
- July 23, 2025
 - 2.3 Financial Planning/Budgeting
 - 2.4 Financial Condition & Activities

The board has not conveyed any concerns about accuracy or their ability to comprehend the information and data presented. All reports were approved, and in doing so, the board accepted the CEO's interpretations as reasonable and that the reports demonstrated compliance or achievement.

I am reporting non-compliance.

2.8.2 “Let the board be unaware of any actual or anticipated noncompliance with any Ends or Management Limitations policy, regardless of the monitoring schedule set forth by the board.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (No changes since last report.) The CEO shall notify the board whenever there is an incurred or anticipated violation of Board Ends or Executive Limitations policy. I interpret “in a timely manner” to vary depending on the perceived importance of the non-compliance issue. Where the importance is deemed by me to be serious or potentially damaging to the organization, actual or anticipated non-compliance issues should be reported as soon as they are known. When the importance is deemed to be minor and the period of non-compliance is expected to be brief or related to an ongoing circumstance previously brought to the board's attention, non-compliance should be at least reported in the regularly (or otherwise) scheduled monitoring report.

REPORT: There were no such issues during this reporting period.

I am reporting compliance.

2.8.3 “Let the board be without objective background/decision information it periodically requests, or unaware of relevant trends, anticipated adverse media coverage, or material external and internal/organizational changes. The Board should be notified in advance of material internal changes, when feasible.

CEO INTERPRETATION: (No changes since last report.) At its request or when the board is preparing to make policy decisions, I am to submit background information and/or provide opportunities for dialogue with and/or data from industry experts, as requested by the board, on the pros and cons of the options being considered, and/or those otherwise available and in my estimation viable for board consideration. While some bias as CEO is, in my estimation, inevitable, I am obligated to temper any such bias with the presentation of objective information.

Further, I am to keep the board aware of observed industry and/or community trends that may impact favorably or negatively on the organization. In addition to formal reporting on board policies, I am to keep the board apprised of material developments. Material external changes such as major developments in our industry sector, issues with major stakeholders, legal challenges, etc., are to be conveyed to the board no later than the next board meeting, but perhaps sooner than dictated by the situation. The criteria for timeliness of board awareness of issues such as negative media coverage or litigation are based on when the material will become public and/or otherwise impact the organization. I interpret material internal changes to be issues such as significant revisions to strategy, to revenues or expenditures (that are compliant with our financial policies) or personnel changes at or above mid-management.

REPORT: When apprised by the board chair of action items on upcoming agendas, staff and I regularly prepare background information for inclusion in board packets or other communications. We aim to present logical and reasonable options and recommendations, including the pros and cons of each, and to ensure that all new board members are equipped to govern in accordance with approved policies.

In all cases, care is taken to provide information that is as complete and unbiased as possible. The board has not conveyed any concerns about a lack of adequate or objective information being presented.

The board has been informed of any material external changes by the next board meeting, or sooner as the situation dictates. The following examples demonstrate compliance June 2025-December 2025):

- On June 18, the board was informed of the details for volunteering to serve at the IRONMAN 70.3 race on Sunday, June 22.
- On July 24, the board received an update on the progress of the Davis Park redevelopment and a request for concurrence on a strategic funding proposal to help ensure the full project moves forward.
- On July 25, the board received a guest editorial John authored, published in the *Rockford Register Star*. The piece publicly expressed GoRockford’s longstanding and strong support for the Davis Park redevelopment plan and urged the Rockford City Council to approve the project in its entirety.

- On August 28, the board was informed of the Rockford Park District announcing the availability of building naming rights at a news conference.
- On August 28, the board was provided highlights from the 2024 Illinois Tourism Economic Impact Report, prepared by Tourism Economics, a division of Oxford Economics, for the State of Illinois.
- On September 9, the board was informed that the International Women's Baseball Center (IWBC) received a \$2,000,000 grant from the Steven & Alexandra Cohen Foundation, led by philanthropist and Mets Owner Alex Cohen, and a \$350,000 grant from the Amazin' Mets Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the New York Mets.
- On September 26, I invited the board to the IWBC groundbreaking ceremony at Beyer Stadium on October 6.

The board has been notified in a timely manner of material **internal** changes. For example, the board is notified in advance of media coverage regarding the organization (positive or negative), as we are aware of the coverage. The following demonstrates compliance:

- On July 10, the board was informed that Kristen Paul had earned the Certified Destination Management Executive (CDME) designation from Destinations International.
- On September 26, the board was informed that we are \$52,000 short of our sponsorship goal for both Stroll and the Dasher Dash and asked for potential prospects.
- On November 12, the board received an email sharing the excitement that UMB Bank agreed to continue as the Presenting Sponsor for Stroll on State for an additional three years – 2026, 2027, and 2028.
- On November 26, the board received an update on the snowy forecast for Stroll on State and on contingency plans.

I am reporting compliance.

2.8.4 “Let the board be unaware of Board or Board member actions that, in the President/CEO's opinion, are not consistent with the board's own policies on Governance Process and Board/Staff Linkage, particularly in the case of Board or Board member behavior that is detrimental to the work relationship between the board and the President/CEO.

CEO INTERPRETATION: (No changes since last report.) I am to notify the board chair if I am aware of any board or board members' actions that are inconsistent with the board's own policies, especially if such actions undermine the board/CEO relationship. In the case of perceived non-compliance on behalf of the chair, I will report non-compliance issues directly to the board if the perceived non-compliance is not resolved after discussing the concern with the chair directly.

REPORT: There were no such issues during this reporting period for GoRockford's board.

I am reporting compliance.

2.8.5 “Present information in unnecessarily complex or lengthy form or without differentiating among three types of written communications:

- a. monitoring**
- b. decision preparation, and**
- c. incidental/ “FYI”**

CEO INTERPRETATION: (No changes since last report.) Correspondence to the board is to be concise and identified as one of the three types listed in the policy. I interpret “monitoring” to be those items connected with the designated monitoring reports. I interpret “decision preparation” to be background material necessary or helpful for decision-making and “incidental” to be information/FYI type material.

REPORT: Information in all correspondence with and materials provided to the board (especially board meeting packets) has been labeled as either monitoring report-related, informational/FYI, or for preparation to make decisions or act. If the communication is urgent or requires immediate action, the content is labeled accordingly. Board meeting agendas are clear and indicate where attachments are included or action is required.

I am reporting compliance.

2.8.6 “Allow the Board to be without logistical and administrative support for official board, officer or committee communications and activities.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (No changes since last report.) As CEO, I am to ensure adequate support for operations of the board, its officers and committees. I interpret “official” to mean those functions dealing with the carrying out of the board’s governing responsibilities, including those of its officers and committees. Examples of support include arranging meeting schedules, meeting space, fulfilling communication needs, copying and distributing correspondence and materials, recording minutes, providing refreshments, etc.

REPORT: Staff support for board functions, including production and distribution of board meeting packets, minutes, meeting logistics, and refreshments, and similar arrangements for the work of the board and official board committees, is regularly provided. No concerns to the contrary have been conveyed by the board to the CEO.

I am reporting compliance.

2.8.7 “Deal with the board in a way that favors or privileges certain board members over others, except when (a) fulfilling individual requests for information or (b) responding to officers or committees duly charged by the board.

CEO INTERPRETATION: (No changes since last report.) This is interpreted as meaning that I am to view the board, collectively, as my superior and am to provide communications about board issues and policy choices to all board members, rather than just to the chair and/or board members I may view as “sympathetic” to my concerns.

The exceptions are the two circumstances stated above as “a” and “b,” and I also interpret an

exception to be when working with individual board members in their occasional capacities as “volunteer staff members.” While I am to pass requests for agenda items to the chair, the background information supporting my request is to be distributed to all board members. I further interpret that this is pertinent only to business dealings, not to personal or social relationships.

REPORT: Monitoring reports, informational content, and background information on action items are distributed to all board members. Significant e-mail exchanges and other conversations have and do take place with individual board members, either as colleagues or pursuant to exceptions set forth in the policy, but this correspondence does not limit the board’s awareness or authority.

I am reporting compliance.

2.8.8 “Neglect to supply for the consent agenda those items delegated to the President/CEO yet required by law or contract to be Board approved, along with applicable monitoring information.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (No changes since last report.) The CEO will submit for the board’s agenda all items that require board approval when such is mandated by third-party business requirements, the law, or per board policy. When such items are submitted, the background information supporting the action item will include written substantiation of adherence to relevant board policies.

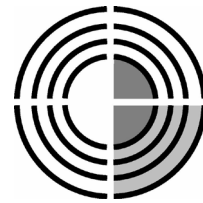
REPORT: Staff regularly executes agreements, contracts, and reports with government and private entities, all within the approved executive limitations policies. No such instances of required consent agenda items have been documented during the time frame of this report.

I am reporting compliance.

Prepared by: John Groh, Leah Ticknor 1/19/2026



Governing Policy of the GoRockford Board of Directors



Ends Policy 1.0 Global Ends Statement

Management Limitations

To: GoRockford Board of Directors
From: John Groh, President/CEO
RE: Internal Monitoring Report – Ends Policies
Annual Monitoring on Policy 1.0 – Global Ends Statement

I hereby present my monitoring report on your Executive Limitations Policy 1.0, Global Ends Statement, in accordance with the monitoring schedule set forth in Board policy. I certify that the information contained in this report is true.

Signed,


John Groh
President/CEO

March 19, 2026

POLICY 1.0 – GLOBAL ENDS STATEMENT

BROADEST POLICY PROVISION: “GoRockford exists to drive quality of life and economic growth for our residents through tourism marketing, sales and destination development.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (Updated to Reflect Jan. 2026 Revisions to Policy 1.0) I interpret this statement to mean the basic, fundamental mission of GoRockford is to utilize its funding, human resources, and all other available strengths and assets to improve the quality of life of area citizens, and that we do this by ensuring the continued growth of the visitor industry in the Rockford Region, defined as Winnebago County.

I interpret the inclusion of marketing, sales and destination development as the board’s directive to pursue a three-pronged strategy. This strategy should focus attention and resources on marketing/promoting and selling our region’s existing products while always keeping an eye toward the future and advocating for new development projects, priorities, and enhancements that will keep our region appealing to citizens (quality of life) and visitors.

Further, in restating its Global Ends Statement (first approved in April 2014 and reaffirmed in 2020 and 2026), GoRockford’s board desires that we have a “residents first” mentality. Said another way, our approach is guided by the underlying thought that “what is good for and appealing to a resident will likely be attractive and compelling to a visitor.”

GoRockford’s board and staff maintain Policy 1.0 as our primary goal and “bottom line”, which guides the allocation of resources, defines strategy, and directs implementation. Further, the board provides GoRockford with four directives for achieving Policy 1.0 and delineates those priorities in Policy 1.1 – Create Economic Growth, Policy 1.2 – Enhance Tourism Product, Policy 1.3 – Engage Constituents on Behalf of Tourism, and Policy 1.4 – Elevate the Brand, which we use in developing its strategy.

These four priorities comprehensively define the impacts GoRockford can create for the Rockford Region, given available resources, and when achieved, collectively represent achievement of our mission.

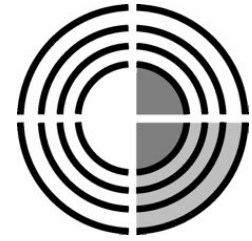
REPORT: Monitoring reports presented for Policy 1.1 (March 25, 2026), Policy 1.2 (April 23, 2025), and Policy 1.3 (January 28, 2026) detail how effectively GoRockford is achieving its goals in each area. All reports noted achievement. Policy 1.4 was adopted in January 2026; achievement will be reported in future monitoring reports.

As I have reported achievement in reports on 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3 within the past year, I am reporting achievement of your Global Ends Statement, Policy 1.0.

Internal Monitoring Report – Ends Policies
Annual Monitoring on Policy 1.0 – Global Ends Statement



Governing Policy of the
GoRockford Board of Directors



Ends Policy 1.1: Create Economic Wealth

**Management
Limitations**

To: GoRockford Board of Directors
From: John Groh, President/CEO
Date: March 19, 2026
RE: Internal Monitoring Report – Ends Policies
Monitoring on Policy 1.1 – Create Economic Wealth

I hereby present my monitoring report on your Executive Limitations Policy 1.1, Create Economic Wealth, in accordance with the monitoring schedule set forth in Board policy. I certify that the information contained in this report is true for the period from October 3, 2024, to the present.

Signed,



John Groh
President/CEO

POLICY 1.1 - CREATE ECONOMIC GROWTH: The Rockford Region experiences growth in tourism's leading indicators at a rate greater than our competitive set.

- Visitor spending grows
- Hotel performance metrics improve (demand, occupancy, ADR, RevPAR)
- Group business activity increases (leads, room nights, attendance)
- Hotel tax and food and beverage tax revenues grow
- Attractions and event attendance increase

CEO INTERPRETATION: For purposes of this policy, the “Rockford Region” is defined as Winnebago County. Success is defined as sustained, long-term growth in key tourism indicators relative to our competitive set.

Achievement will be evaluated based on overall trends and performance over time, rather than isolated year-to-year fluctuations. This is particularly important in group business, where results are cyclical and influenced by the timing and scale of major event bookings. In periods of variability, performance will be assessed based on the strength of the forward booking pipeline, the quality and scale of events secured, and the organization's ability to generate demand within existing infrastructure constraints.

Achievement across the Board-identified indicators will be measured as follows:

Hotel performance metrics improve (demand, occupancy, ADR, RevPAR):

Achievement in group business will be measured through long-term trends and overall performance relative to historical benchmarks and market conditions, rather than year-to-year fluctuations. Given the cyclical and event-driven nature of group sales, individual years may vary significantly based on the timing and scale of major bookings.

In periods where results fluctuate year-over-year, achievement will be determined by the strength of the forward booking pipeline, the quality and scale of events secured, and the organization's ability to generate demand within existing infrastructure constraints.

Visitor Spending Grows (Economic Impact of Total Travel):

Success is demonstrated through sustained growth in total visitor spending, with emphasis on year-over-year increases and performance relative to the competitive set.

Hotel Performance Metrics Improve (Demand, Occupancy, ADR, RevPAR):

Success is measured through improvement in key hotel performance indicators, with primary emphasis on demand, revenue, and RevPAR as the most comprehensive measures of market performance. Growth in these areas demonstrates increased visitation and economic impact, while recognizing that occupancy may be influenced by changes in room supply. Performance will be evaluated relative to historical benchmarks and competing markets.

Hotel Tax and Food & Beverage Tax Revenues Grow:

Success is demonstrated by increasing tax revenues generated from visitor activity, reflecting overall growth in economic impact. Evaluation will focus on sustained upward trends, while acknowledging that external factors such as inflation may influence results.

Attractions and Event Attendance Increase:

Success is measured by growth in attendance at attractions, events, and festivals, as well as the ability to attract both new and repeat visitors. Strong performance is reflected in increased participation and the continued expansion and diversification of the region's event portfolio, recognizing that individual events may fluctuate year-to-year.

Although macroeconomic factors influencing travel are outside of our control, GoRockford is responsible for effectively deploying resources to drive growth in targeted visitor segments and the overall tourism economy. Success, therefore, includes the ability to identify trends, adapt strategies, and outperform competing destinations.

During periods of industry-wide decline, success is defined as performance that exceeds or declines less than that of comparable markets, consistent with the Board's expectation that the Rockford Region remains competitive under varying economic conditions.

REPORT:**Tourism Expenditures in Winnebago County 2017-2024**

The numbers below are reported by the State of Illinois and Tourism Economics, released September 2025 by the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity, Office of Tourism. *This is the latest full-year date available.*

Visitor Spending in Winnebago County			
	Total Expenditures (Millions)	\$ Change	% Change
2024	\$523.4	+ 8 m	+1.5%
2023	\$515.4	+6.9 m	+1.3%
2022	\$508.5 m	+72.1 m	+16.5%
2021	\$436.4 m	+77.9 m	+21.7%
2020	\$358.5 m	-124.7 m	-25.81%
2019	\$483.2 m	+\$18.3 m	+3.94%
2018	\$464.9 m	+\$18.3 m	+4.05%
2017	\$452 m	+\$12.9 m	+3.08%

12 Large County Comparable Markets 2019 vs. 2024 Economic Impact					
County	2019 \$ millions	2023 \$ millions	2024 \$ millions	% change 24 to 23	% change 24 to 19
Champaign County, Illinois	\$513.9	\$583.9	\$554.7	-5.00%	7.90%
Cook County, Illinois	\$30,624.9	\$30,636.4	\$32,069.8	4.70%	4.70%
DuPage County, Illinois	\$3,260.6	\$3,181.4	\$3,203.2	0.7%	-1.76%
Kane County, Illinois	\$656.5	\$658.6	\$674.5	2.40%	2.70%
Lake County, Illinois	\$1,783.3	\$1,928.6	\$1,961.3	1.70%	10.00%
McLean County, Illinois	\$473.5	\$573.5	\$519.1	-9.50%	9.60%
Madison County, Illinois	\$475.4	\$515.9	\$510.3	-1.10%	7.30%
Peoria County, Illinois	\$411.4	\$401.4	\$397.4	-1.00%	-3.40%
Rock Island County, Illinois	\$294.8	\$326.9	\$323.2	-1.10%	9.60%
St. Clair County, Illinois	\$555.5	\$649.5	\$649.9	0.10%	17.00%
Sangamon County, Illinois	\$508.0	\$601.3	\$596.7	-0.80%	17.50%
Will County, Illinois	\$880.7	\$1,037.7	\$1,054.3	1.60%	19.70%
Winnebago County, Illinois	\$483.2	\$515.4	\$523.4	1.3%	8.3%
Set Averages	-	-	-	-0.44%	8.4%

Market Share in Illinois

After holding steady for more than a decade, Winnebago County's share of Illinois tourism spending shot up during 2020 (as our pandemic decline was not as severe as others and driven primarily by Cook County's massive decline), decreasing slightly in 2021 and normalizing since.

- 2019 – 1.03%
- 2020 – 1.49%
- 2021 – 1.35%
- 2022 – 1.15%
- 2023 – 1.1%
- 2024 – 1.1%

Industry Employment, Income and Local Tax Receipts					
	2019	2023	2024	% Change (23 vs. 2022)	% Change (24 vs. 2019)
# of Jobs	4,147	4,654	4,687	+ 0.7%	+13%
Labor Income	\$135.3 m	\$165.1 m	\$167.8 m	+ 1.6%	+24%
Local Tax Receipts	\$11.4 m	\$14.2 m	\$14.7 m	+3.5%	+28.9%

Economic Impact Analysis:

Prior to the pandemic, in 2019, travel generated \$483.2 million in economic impact for Rockford and Winnebago County and supported 4,147 jobs. At that time, visitor spending reached an all-time high, capping more than a decade of consecutive growth that outpaced nearly all comparable Illinois counties outside of Cook County.

As a result of the pandemic, total expenditures declined to \$358.5 million in 2020, a -25.8% decrease from 2019. However, recovery was swift. Visitor spending rebounded significantly in 2021 and exceeded pre-pandemic levels by 2022. This upward trajectory has continued, reaching \$523.4 million in 2024, representing: +1.5% growth over 2023, and +8.3% growth over 2019

While recent growth has moderated compared to the immediate post-pandemic rebound years, Winnebago County continues to demonstrate steady, positive momentum.

From a competitive standpoint, 2024 performance reinforces the region's relative strength. The 12-county comparison set experienced an average decline of -0.44% from 2023 to 2024, while Winnebago County grew +1.3%, outperforming most peer counties. A majority of comparable markets, including Champaign, McLean, Madison, Peoria, Rock Island, and Sangamon, experienced flat or negative growth in 2024. Only a handful of counties posted modest gains.

Tourism continues to be a major driver of local economic impact. In 2024:

- Employment reached **4,687 jobs (+13% vs. 2019)**
- Labor income grew to **\$167.8 million (+24% vs. 2019)**
- Local tax receipts increased to **\$14.7 million (+28.9% vs. 2019)**

Year-over-year growth in 2024 remained positive across all three categories, with increases of +0.7% in jobs, +1.6% in labor income, and +3.5% in local tax receipts, further reinforcing the continued expansion of the tourism economy.

Winnebago County's performance continues to be driven by a diversified tourism base, including sports tourism, leisure travel, and corporate visitation. This diversification allowed the region to recover more quickly than many urban markets during the pandemic and has continued to provide stability in the post-pandemic period.

However, the data also reinforces a structural limitation identified in prior reports: the lack of a large-scale convention and meeting facility. While the region performs well in sports and leisure segments, this limitation constrains the ability to drive higher occupancy levels and attract large-scale group business, particularly during non-peak periods.

Winnebago County/Rockford Hotel Performance 2025 vs. 2019

Demand, Occupancy, Average Daily Rate, Revenue Per Available Room

Source: Smith Travel Research

	2019	2023	2024	2025	% Change (24 vs. 25)	% Change (25 vs. 19)
Demand/Rooms Sold	600,268	601,483	619,694	645,563	+4.2%	+7.5%
Average Daily Rate	\$91.79	\$100.76	103.45	107.05	+3.5%	+16.6%
Revenue	\$55,100,068	\$60,604,977	64,110,060	69,108,611	+7.8%	+25.4%
Occupancy	65.3%	58.4%	59.9	60.3	+0.7	-7.7%
Supply/# of rooms	2,600	2,870	2,944	2,922	-0.7%	+12.4%
RevPar	\$58.06	\$58.82	\$62.01	\$64.50	+4%	+11.1

Hotel Tax Generation*

Source: Smith Travel Research

	2019	2023	2024	2025	% Change 24 vs. 25	% Change (25 vs. 19)
Tax	\$550,100	\$606,040	\$641,006	691,086	+7.8%	+25.6%

* For simplicity, calculated using a base rate of a 1% tax based on revenue reported to Smith Travel Research. Total tax rate for a guest room in Winnebago County ranges from 13% to 14%.

Hotel Performance Analysis: Hotel performance data indicates that the Rockford market has fully recovered and surpassed pre-pandemic levels in key revenue metrics, while occupancy continues to lag due to increased supply.

From 2019 to 2025, hotel demand (rooms sold) increased +7.5%, reflecting continued growth in visitation. However, during the same period, hotel room supply grew at a faster rate (+12.4%), resulting in occupancy levels that remain below pre-pandemic benchmarks (-7.7% vs. 2019), despite a modest year-over-year improvement in 2025 (+0.7 points).

Despite this imbalance between supply and demand, hotel financial performance has strengthened:

- **ADR** increased +16.6% vs. 2019
- **RevPAR** increased +11.1%
- **Total hotel revenue** increased +25.4%
- **Estimated hotel tax generation** increased +25.6%

Recent year-over-year performance (2025 vs. 2024) further demonstrates continued positive momentum:

- **Demand** increased +4.2%
- **ADR** increased +3.5%
- **RevPAR** increased +4.0%
- **Revenue** increased +7.8%
- **Hotel tax generation** increased +7.8%

These trends indicate that growth in the Rockford lodging market is being driven primarily by higher room rates and increased visitor spending, rather than occupancy gains. RevPAR, the industry's primary performance metric, shows that Rockford's lodging market has surpassed pre-pandemic performance, with both demand and revenue per room increasing, even as occupancy remains below 2019 due to expanded supply.

Group Sales Room Nights Booked, Attendee Count: FY19 – FY25

	FY19	FY20	FY24	FY25	% change 24 to 25	% change 19 to 25
Room Night Bookings	95,772	59,451	88,420	75,498	-14.6%	-21.2%
Attendee Count	314,330	205,821	225,682	230,770	+2.3%	-26.6%

Bookings Analysis:

While group business activity has not yet returned to FY19 levels, performance remains significantly improved over pandemic lows and continues to demonstrate underlying demand.

Following a strong rebound in FY24, driven by major event bookings, FY25 room night bookings declined by 14.6%, reflecting a normalization from an unusually high prior year. However, attendee counts increased by 2.3% in FY25, indicating continued strength in overall visitation and event participation.

Compared to FY19, room night bookings are down 21.2%, and attendee counts are down 26.6%, reinforcing that the group meetings and conventions segment has not fully recovered. Additionally, due to budgetary constraints, our sales team continues to operate with 2 FTE sales executives, down from 3 prior to the pandemic.

FY24 performance should be considered an outlier year, as it included several significant bookings, including multi-year agreements for events such as IRONMAN 70.3 Rockford and the Jehovah's Witness Convention, which together will generate substantial future room nights and attendance.

The data reflects steady recovery and strong demand for events, but also highlights the variability of group business and the region's continued limitation in attracting consistent, large-scale meetings and conventions. Sustained growth in this segment will depend on the ability to secure additional demand drivers and expand capacity for larger events.

Conclusions

Tourism in Winnebago County continues to demonstrate positive year-over-year growth and strong competitive performance, with the region outperforming its peer set even as many comparable markets are flat or declining.

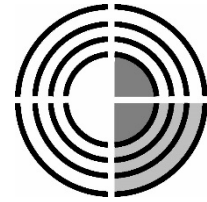
This momentum is reflected in both visitor spending and hotel performance, where growth in demand and revenue-based metrics, particularly RevPAR and total revenue, indicates increasing economic impact. While occupancy remains below prior peak levels due to increased supply, overall market performance remains strong.

The data also highlights a continued opportunity: demand growth has not yet kept pace with expanded hotel supply, reinforcing the importance of developing additional demand drivers, particularly in the meetings and conventions segment.

Consistent with the Board-approved CEO interpretation, and based on sustained growth and performance relative to the competitive set, **I am reporting achievement of Policy 1.1 – Create Economic Growth.**



Governing Policy of the GoRockford Board of Directors



Executive Limitations Policy 2.2 – Treatment of Staff

Management Limitations

To: GoRockford Board of Directors
From: John Groh, President/CEO
RE: Internal Monitoring Report – Ends Policies
Monitoring on Policy 2.2 – Treatment of Staff

I hereby present my monitoring report on your Executive Limitations Policy 2.2, Treatment of Staff, in accordance with the monitoring schedule set forth in board policy. I certify that the information contained in this report is true.

Signed,

John Groh, President/CEO

March 19, 2026

POLICY 2.2: With respect to the treatment of volunteers and employees, the President/CEO will not cause or allow conditions that are unfair, unsafe or undignified.

CEO INTERPRETATION: (No change since last report) I interpret this to mean each volunteer and employee has a right to a fair, safe, and dignified work environment, and the President/CEO must ensure the GoRockford has the policies and procedures in place to safeguard those rights.

I define fair as meaning that staff is treated equally, being held to the same codes of conduct and expectations. Further it means each job has a description fitting and appropriate to that position, each staff member knows the responsibilities of their job, what is expected of them and whether they are meeting those expectations. I believe “safe” to mean the building and environment is appropriately maintained, any safety concerns are immediately addressed, and each staff member and/or volunteer is able to effectively do their job without risking personal harm or injury. I define “dignified” as meaning each person’s innate right to respectful and ethical treatment.

REPORT: GoRockford operates within the boundaries dictated by our personnel policies; corporate priority expectations; corporate leadership and team performance expectations; building and equipment maintenance standards; organizational values and customer service standards. These key guidelines and documents provide a framework to ensure working conditions are fair, safe and dignified.

Evidence of the fairness and dignity expectations is outlined in my reporting on the subsequent provisions below.

I am reporting compliance.

Further, pertaining to employees, the President/CEO will not:

2.2.1 “Operate without ensuring employees are provided with written personnel policies, reviewed by legal counsel, which clarify personnel rules for staff, and provide for effective handling of complaints/grievances.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (No change since last report) I interpret this to mean GoRockford has an employee handbook, reviewed by legal counsel, that outlines the expectations for employees, sets the rules of conduct, and provides an avenue for dispute resolutions should an employee believe their rights or company policies have been violated, as well as bringing to the attention of management, or ultimately the Board of Directors, grievances or concerns about conduct observed that is in violation of any governing policy of the Board or the organization. Policies must guide actions in a way to preclude or address “wrongful conditions,” and would include those that are unlawful, unjust or unfair.

REPORT: GoRockford has a comprehensive set of personnel policies that outline employee expectations, defines the corporate culture, sets the rules of conduct, outlines standard office procedures and provides an avenue for addressing grievances. The policies (known internally as our employee handbook) underwent a comprehensive review in April 2023, led by the President/CEO, with our HR advisor, Furst Staffing, and employment attorney, Jim Pirages of AGHL Law, to update the handbook based on new state and federal laws and GoRockford practices. Additional updates were made in December 2025.

Further, all staff last received and acknowledged receipt of the handbook in January 2025, or upon their hire if more recent. A copy of the Employee Handbook is available for Board members’ review upon request. The handbook is currently under review for updates necessary since December 2024.

I am reporting compliance.

2.2.2 “Allow staff to be unaware of these governing policies.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (No change since last report) I am to ensure each employee is made aware of the governing policies and has access to them.

REPORT: All staff members receive a copy of the Board’s Governing Policies during their new-employee orientation. Policies are also available on GoRockford’s internal computer network. Each new employee participates in an orientation program that outlines the personnel handbook and board policies. At the time of hire and annually thereafter, staff members are required to sign an acknowledgment that they have received and read the Board Governing Policies.

All staff members were requested to review the Board Governing Policies in March 2026 and have completed the acknowledgement form; no staff members have been hired since that time.

I am reporting compliance.

2.2.3 “As it pertains to the composition of employees and volunteers, engage in hiring practices that neglect to consider the importance of reflecting the population we serve.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (No change since last report) When recruiting and hiring staff or recruiting volunteers, I am to consider the importance of reflecting the population of Winnebago County. As such, reflecting the diversity of our residents is an important consideration when developing our team. In this regard, I consider diversity to include gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, physical ability, age and educational background. Accordingly, to attain diversity in staffing and volunteers, our recruitment efforts should ensure we are reaching a broad and diverse potential pool of applicants.

REPORT: In the past year, we have hired one staff member. The importance of reflecting the community we serve has been, and will continue to be, considered when recruiting for open positions.

This is accomplished by sharing open position postings in the following ways, among others: on GoRockford social media channels including Facebook and LinkedIn, as needed based on the role on multiple job boards (including Indeed, Google Jobs, ZipRecruiter, Juju, Glassdoor, LinkedIn), on GoRockford.com, and by sharing the posting directly with GoRockford staff, board members, partners and community members who can help circulate the job opportunity within their networks.

I am reporting compliance.

2.2.4 Retaliate or allow retaliation against an employee for non-disruptive, internal expression of dissent, or for reporting to management or to the Board of Directors (per the process for handling of grievances in the personnel policies) acts or omissions by GoRockford personnel, management or the Board of Directors that the employee believes, in good faith and based on credible information, constitutes a violation of state or federal law or a governing policy of the Board.

CEO INTERPRETATION: (No change since last report) I interpret this to mean the President/CEO must *ensure* an atmosphere in which staff is permitted to disagree with prevailing opinions, decisions or policies, provided the disagreements are not aired publicly and do not interfere with their productivity or functional ability of other employees or the organization. Further, an employee must be free to utilize the grievance procedures in place without fear of retribution, provided they truly believe a violation of policy or law has occurred.

REPORT: No grievances have been filed with the CEO, management, or the Board of Directors since the last report on March 19, 2025.

I am reporting compliance.

- A. Employees may not be prevented from grieving to the board when (1) internal grievance procedures outlined in the personnel policies have been exhausted and (2) the employee alleges in good faith and based on credible information that a violation of state or federal law or a governing policy of the Board has been violated.**

CEO INTERPRETATION: The Employee Handbook must convey that no one may interfere with an employee's right to take their grievance to the Board if the employee has been unable to reach a resolution after properly utilizing the internal channels available and the complainant believes the violation is in direct conflict with board policy or a state or federal law.

While this policy provides employees the opportunity to elevate a grievance to the Board under those specific circumstances, I interpret it as also affirming that the Board will support my personnel-related decisions, as long as consistent with Board policy.

REPORT: The grievance process is outlined in the Employee Handbook, and employees are provided a copy of this Board Policy 2.2. These policies are explained during new hire orientation.

In addition to the grievance/complaint process in the Employee Handbook, which details the process by which an employee addresses a complaint involving the President/CEO, the Handbook also includes additional guidance under a section titled "Reporting Fraud, Waste, Theft or Misuse of Funds Policy". This policy details the process an employee should follow when/if they have a concern with the CEO, which was not resolved by the CEO. The policy language is as follows:

If an employee or board member encounters or becomes aware of any suspected financial misconduct or fraudulent financial activities, the first report should be to the President/CEO of the Bureau. If the report is about the President/CEO or the President/CEO is unavailable, the first report should be directed to the Chairman of the Board of Directors.

As there have been no grievances filed in this reporting period, no employee grievances rose to the level of requiring an employee to address the Board of Directors.

I am reporting compliance.

2.2.5 Allow staff to be unprepared to deal with reasonably foreseeable emergency situations.

CEO INTERPRETATION: (No change since last report) I interpret this to mean the President/CEO must ensure staff is properly trained and prepared to deal with potential emergency and life-threatening scenarios.

I interpret "reasonably foreseeable emergency situations" to include on-site injuries; weather events (e.g., fire, flood, tornado, etc.); intruders entering the office; and interruptions to power, telephone or computer access, and, of course, major disruptions at GoRockford-sponsored public events. Such plans also must include chain of authority and clarity as to who is authorized to speak on behalf of the organization.

REPORT: The employee handbook directly addresses workplace injuries, weather-related emergency procedures, sexual harassment, violence, and weapons in the workplace. Additionally, events such as Stroll on State and Dasher Dash, as well as large client events, have public safety/security plans developed with local public safety officials; these plans are shared with staff and volunteers.

In addition to this, employees receive a copy of the Crisis Communication and Business Continuity Plan upon hire and annually thereafter. The plan details topics including bomb threat/fire/explosion at GoRockford office, accident or death at GoRockford office, allegations of criminal or inappropriate action by

staff/board, accident at sports event or convention at a hotel, civil disorder at Stroll on State and hackers on website. The plan was last updated in October 2024 and distributed to all staff.

I am reporting compliance.

2.2.6 Allow staff to be uninformed about the importance of diversity and inclusion in the workplace and communities we serve.

CEO INTERPRETATION: (No change since last report) I am to ensure all staff are informed of the benefits of diversity and inclusion in the workplace and our communities. Such benefits include the presence of multiple perspectives, the possibility for increased innovation and a wider talent pool to draw from. For purposes of this policy, I define diversity to include the presence of people of different genders, races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, religions, ages, experiences, and educational backgrounds. Inclusion is defined, for these purposes, as meaning all people are welcomed and have the right to be respected and appreciated as a valuable member of our team and community. Further, informing the staff of the importance of diversity and inclusion might be accomplished in various ways, including but not limited to formal training sessions, staff discussions, distribution of relevant learning materials, etc.

REPORT: GoRockford ensures staff are informed about the importance of diversity and inclusion in the workplace and the communities we serve through ongoing staff development and team culture initiatives.

Our commitment is grounded in the GoRockford Commitments to Our Diverse Community, adopted by the Board in September 2020, which continue to guide our organizational values and approach to our work.

In practice, staff engagement around diversity and inclusion is incorporated into team culture training and workshops. In 2025, GoRockford staff participated in multiple facilitated sessions with Fired Up! Culture, including in January, April, and most recently December 2025. These sessions included discussions and exercises focused on:

- Understanding and valuing differences among team members
- How individuals contribute differently within a team environment
- Building a culture of respect, collaboration, and inclusion

These conversations are practical and directly tied to how staff work together as a team, reinforcing the importance of recognizing and valuing diverse perspectives and experiences.

Through these ongoing efforts, staff are informed about and expected to demonstrate the importance of diversity and inclusion in both internal culture and external engagement.

I am reporting compliance.

Prepared by: Leah Ticknor/John Groh 03/19/26



Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

Final Round of Restaurant Relief Grant Distributes \$427,000 to Local Restaurants

Total Program Investment Reaches \$1.4 Million

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 10, 2026

ROCKFORD, IL — GoRockford announced an additional \$427,631.17 in state funding awarded to area restaurants in the fifth and final round of its Restaurant Relief Grant Program, helping businesses continue to recover from elevated unemployment insurance taxes resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

A total of 34 businesses received grant funding in February, bringing the total to 53 restaurants that received a share of \$1.4 million across five grant cycles. The program was funded through an appropriation secured by Illinois State Representative Maurice West.

"Restaurants are foundational to Rockford's visitor economy and overall business climate," **said John Groh, President/CEO of GoRockford.** "When our hospitality sector is financially stable, it strengthens tourism, supports workforce retention, and reinforces our reputation as a welcoming destination. This final round helps ensure these establishments remain strong contributors to the region's economic momentum."

The Restaurant Relief Grant Program was created to address the lasting financial impact of COVID-19 on the local restaurant industry. Restaurants experienced significant increases in unemployment insurance costs that persisted well beyond state-mandated shutdowns. The program provided direct financial relief to stabilize operations, protect jobs, and preserve locally owned establishments that serve as economic and cultural anchors throughout Winnebago County.

"Rockford's restaurants, bars, and coffee shops are more than just businesses; they are at the core of what makes our community great," said **Illinois State Representative Maurice West.** "I am proud to have seen these grants go directly to our local establishments, where they have helped them recover and flourish. Investing in these small businesses means investing in jobs, in our community's culture, and in the future of Rockford."

Restaurant Owners Share the Program's Impact:

- "The Norwegian would not be open today without the Restaurant Grant. Words could never express the gratitude I have for the hard work of Maurice West and GoRockford," **Emily Hurd, owner, The Norwegian.**
- "We are incredibly grateful to Representative West and GoRockford for this Restaurant Relief Grant, funded by the State of Illinois. The support has made a meaningful impact on Franchesco's, allowing us to reinvest in our team, continue serving our guests at the highest level, and remain a strong part of the Rockford community. We are proud to call this city home and thankful for leaders who support local restaurants," said **Benny Salamone, owner, Franchesco's Restaurant.**

—MORE—



Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

GoRockford/Restaurant Grant/PAGE 2 OF 3

- "COVID was a hard time for all small business owners. Unfortunately, for many restaurants, putting it in the rear-view mirror was tough, since we had to pay for it through our payroll taxes for years after. This fund, fought for by Rep West and facilitated by GoRockford, has been very helpful as we've tried to close that chapter," **said Joshua Binning, owner, Lucha Cantina.**
- "The grant has been a huge lifeline for us, especially for the past two rough years. It definitely helped us get through tough times. We appreciate the hustle and the effort put forth by Rep. Maurice West and the GoRockford team. It's great to know that there are people who see the impact and importance of unique restaurants like ours and our peers," **said Patrick Alberto, owner/chef, 27 Aluna.**

Across the program's five rounds, beginning in 2024, the following restaurants received grants:

27 Aluna @ Octane	Murphy's Pub & Grill
Abreo Restaurant	Olivo Taco
Alchemy at Aldeen	Onyx Bar & Grill
Alpine View Restaurant	Oscar's Pub & Grill
Carlyle Brewing	Park Lanes
Casey's Pub	Pig Minds
Culver's of Winnebago	Pizza Ranch
District Bar & Grill	Prairie Street Brewhouse
Don Carter Lanes	Rookie's Pub & Grill
Dusty Boots Saloon	Rusty Nail Tavern
Famous Dave's Rockford	Scanlan's
Forest Hills Lanes	Spider Sushi
Franchesco's Ristorante	Stockholm Inn
Golden Corral	Stockyard Rock Burger Bar
Greenfire Restaurant	Tad's Bar & Grill
Hoffman House	Tavern on Clark
Hope & Anchor English Pub	Thai Hut Restaurant
J. W. Marc's Fusion Café	The Cherry Bowl
Joe's Casa Di Amici	The Filling Station
John's Restaurant	The Norwegian
Johnny Pamcakes	The Olympic Tavern
Johnny Pamcakes Too	The Pomodoro
LimaMar Restaurant	Thunderbay Grill
Lucha Cantina	Tower Kitchen & Bar
Machine Shed	Viking Lanes
Mary's Market	Vintage @501/Taco Libre
Mulligan's of Rockford	

Businesses received varying grant amounts depending on the impact of COVID-19 on their unemployment tax rates.

—MORE—



GoRockford/Restaurant Grant/PAGE 3 OF 3

Administered by GoRockford and secured by Illinois State Representative Maurice West, the grants were awarded to eligible businesses in Winnebago County through an application process and professional review panel. The program was designed to mitigate the financial strain on restaurants caused by required unemployment tax payments resulting from employee layoffs during state-mandated shutdowns. Recipients were selected based on demonstrated eligibility, and all eligible applicants that met the program's criteria received grants.

For additional information about the Restaurant Relief Grant Program, please visit GoRockford.com/Restaurant-Grant.

GoRockford is the official destination marketing and management organization for Rockford and Winnebago County, responsible for promoting the Rockford region as an attractive travel destination and enhancing its public image as a dynamic place to live and work. Through the impact of travel, GoRockford strengthens the region's economic position and provides opportunities for people in our communities. www.gorockford.com

State Representative Maurice West is serving his third term representing the 67th House District in the Rockford region. A Rockford native, Rep. West serves as Assistant Floor Whip in the 103rd General Assembly.

FOR MORE INFORMATION & MEDIA INQUIRIES:

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IHSA Selects Rockford to Host Boys Soccer State Finals

Guilford High School's Swanson Stadium to Host Tournament

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 19, 2026

ROCKFORD, IL — GoRockford and the Rockford Public Schools District 205 and Guilford High School are pleased to announce that Rockford has been selected to host the **Illinois High School Association (IHSA) Boys Soccer State Finals** for the next three years. The prestigious championship event will welcome the state's top 12 teams, their coaches, and their fans to Rockford each November for the next three years.

The championship tournament will be held at **Swanson Stadium at Guilford High School** (5620 Spring Creek Rd., Rockford) and will feature the top teams from across Illinois in three classifications, with four from each class (1A, 2A, and 3A) competing for state titles.

"Rockford Public Schools is excited about Guilford's partnership with GoRockford to host IHSA's Boys State Soccer Finals," **said Dawn Williamson, RPS 205 director of athletics, activities and program development.** "I look forward to seeing elementary, middle, and high school students able to watch some great soccer with their families at one of our awesome high schools. A big thank you to the IHSA for this opportunity. Rockford is ready to exceed expectations!"

"We are thrilled to bring another IHSA championship event to Rockford," **said Lindsay Arellano, GoRockford vice president of sales & service.** "Hosting the IHSA Boys Soccer State Finals strengthens Rockford's reputation as a premier sports tourism destination and reflects the continued confidence organizations have in our community's ability to deliver an outstanding championship experience. We're excited to welcome athletes and fans from across Illinois to experience Rockford's hospitality and energy."

"We are excited to partner with Guilford High School, Rockford Public Schools District 205, and GoRockford to bring the IHSA Boys Soccer State Finals to Rockford," **said IHSA Executive Director Craig Anderson.** "This tournament has a storied history and we are excited for its next chapter in Rockford, which has a proven track record of putting on first-class IHSA State Final events."

Impact: The three-year agreement is estimated to generate \$297,000 in annual visitor spending and economic impact, totaling nearly \$900,000 for the Rockford region over the term of the agreement. The selection further places Rockford in a select group of communities trusted to host IHSA championships.

Rockford also hosts the IHSA Girls Bowling State Finals, held each February, making the soccer finals the second IHSA state finals to call Rockford home. Rockford has long been a strong soccer community, with tournaments such as the Puri Cup, bringing thousands of players to the Rockford region each year. Together, these events highlight Rockford's growing momentum as a trusted host for championship events and reinforce the region's commitment to youth and amateur sports.

-MORE-

IHSA Soccer Tournament News Release | Page 2 of 2

"We are thrilled to be chosen to host the IHSA Boys Soccer State Finals for the next three years," **said City of Rockford Mayor Tom McNamara**. "This is an exciting moment for Rockford, as our city becomes the home for Illinois' top student-athletes to compete on the state's premier high school soccer stage. It's a tremendous opportunity to highlight our commitment to youth sports and to share the pride, energy and vibrancy of Rockford with the entire state."

GoRockford partnered with Rockford Public Schools and Guilford High School throughout the bid process, working together to bring the IHSA Boys Soccer State Finals to Rockford.

"Guilford is happy to partner with GoRockford on hosting the IHSA state series for boys' soccer," **said Gus Carter, Guilford High School principal**. "We are certain that we can provide a top-notch experience for the competing schools and are excited to bring this talent to Rockford for our community to enjoy."

The IHSA Boys Soccer State Finals schedule will include 14 games played over three days each year:

- Thursday: two games – Class 1A Semifinals
- Friday: seven games – Class 1A Third Place Game, Class 2A Semifinals, and Class 3A Semifinals
- Saturday: five games – Class 2A and 3A Third Place Games, plus the Class 1A, 2A, and 3A State Championship matches

The tournament dates for the three-year agreement are:

- November 5-7, 2026
- November 4-6, 2027
- November 2-4, 2028

Last year's IHSA Boys Soccer State Finals were held at Hoffman Estates High School. Additional details about the event, ticket information, and schedules will be announced closer to each finals weekend.

About: GoRockford is responsible for promoting the Rockford region as an attractive travel destination and enhancing its public image as a dynamic place to live and work. Through the impact of travel, GoRockford strengthens the region's economic position and provides opportunities for people in our communities. www.gorockford.com

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AAU Grand Prix Rockin' Rockford Returns

Volleyball Tournament Expected to Bring \$911,347 to the region

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: March 6, 2026

What: GoRockford and Rockford Park District are pleased to welcome back the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) Progressive Volleyball Events for **AAU Grand Prix Club Volleyball Rockin' Rockford** tournament. Over **341 teams** are competing in this event. Female teams range in age from 10 to 18 and male teams are ages 13 to 14. Teams, players, coaches and spectators will bring over **10,000 visitors** to the Rockford region. The tournament's estimated economic impact is **\$911,347**.

The tournament has reached its largest size to date, and will bring over **5,400 room nights**. Due to the increase in attendees, this will be held at both UW Health Sports Factory and Mercyhealth Sportscore Two.

"We are incredibly proud to see Rockin' Rockford continue to grow, attracting more top-tier volleyball teams each year," said **Lindsay Arellano, GoRockford Vice President of Sales & Service**. "This expansion is a testament to the tournament's success, and we're thrilled that it now requires two locations to accommodate the increasing competition. We look forward to welcoming athletes, coaches, and fans to Rockford for an exciting weekend of volleyball and appreciate the dedication of our tournament organizers, venues, and community partners who make this event possible."

When: Saturday, March 7 – Sunday, March 8

Where: **UW Health Sports Factory** (courts 1-16) 305 S Madison St, Rockford IL 61104
Mercyhealth Sportscore Two (courts 17-43), 8800 E Riverside Blvd, Loves Park, IL 61111

Why: This is the ninth time Rockford has hosted Rockin' Rockford, and it's growing to be one of the largest girls AAU Grand Prix events in the Midwest.

"This event is a great opportunity to highlight the strength of our Rockford Park District facilities while creating a memorable experience for every athlete and visitor," said **Milton Phillips**, UW Health Sports Factory Supervisor.

"We are excited to welcome these athletes to the facility and provide an outstanding experience," said **Louis Mateus**, General Manager of Mercyhealth Sportscore Complexes. "Hosting the largest volleyball tournament in our area's history not only elevates the level of competition but also generates significant economic and community impact."

-MORE-

Other: Spectator passes are \$15 per day or \$30 for both days

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About: GoRockford is responsible for promoting the Rockford region as an attractive travel destination and enhancing its public image as a dynamic place to live and work. Through the impact of travel, GoRockford strengthens the economic position of the region and provides opportunities for people in our communities. www.gorockford.com

About: The Rockford Park District manages over 170 parks and facilities across more than 4,900 acres and serves over 11.5 million user visits annually. The Rockford Park District improves the quality of life for citizens by providing a vibrant, inclusive, and relevant park system which increases property values, stimulates economic development, creates economic impact, increases positive outcomes for youth, and improves our community's health. A vibrant and relevant park system also protects the environment, employs hundreds of area teens, and brings our diverse community together in unity, through the common love of play. www.rockfordparkdistrict.org

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