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May 8, 2026

Mayor Tom McNamara and Members of the Rockford City Council
City of Rockford
425 E. State Street
Rockford, IL 61104

RE: Opposition to the Proposed South Rockford Industrial Redevelopment Project Area

Dear Mayor McNamara and Members of the City Council:

On behalf of the Winnebago-Boone Farm Bureau and our farmer members across the region, we write to express our opposition to the proposed South Rockford Industrial Redevelopment Project Area, which represents an expansion of a current Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district.

Illinois Farm Bureau (IFB) policy opposes the use of TIF in ways that negatively impact production agriculture, including the conversion of productive farmland for speculative development and the extension or restructuring of TIF districts in a manner that prolongs tax diversion from local taxing bodies. The proposal before you raises both concerns.

First, the proposed TIF encompasses predominantly agricultural land. TIF is intended as a tool to address blight or incentivize redevelopment where market conditions would not otherwise support investment. Farmland is not blighted, nor is it an underperforming asset requiring subsidy to generate value. Farmland is a proven economic asset to the region. It provides food, fuel, open space, and significant agricultural output while supporting local businesses through locally based purchasing decisions. These benefits occur every year without placing additional costs on taxpayers. (Please refer to attached Winnebago County Economic Contribution of Ag to the County).

Second, we are concerned with the proposed "de-TIF and re-TIF" approach, which would effectively extend the life of an existing TIF district beyond its original statutory timeline. This practice undermines the integrity of the TIF program by "resetting the clock" on tax increment capture, thereby prolonging the diversion of property tax revenues from schools, counties, and other local taxing districts. IFB policy specifically discourages the rolling of

Mission Statement

Be the voice, resource, and advocate for farm families and agriculture, while promoting stewardship for today and future generations.

existing TIF parcels into new districts or extending the lifespan of TIF districts, as it creates long-term fiscal uncertainty for local governments and taxpayers.

Additionally, the lack of transparency surrounding the intended use of the TIF is troubling. As noted during the Joint Review Board meeting, discussion of a potential data center was notably absent from formal presentations. While such a project may or may not ultimately proceed, the possibility underscores the importance of full disclosure and meaningful public engagement prior to the establishment of a financing mechanism that could subsidize such development.

For these reasons, the Winnebago-Boone Farm Bureau respectfully urges the City Council to reject the proposed South Rockford Industrial Redevelopment Project Area. We encourage the City to pursue economic development strategies that respect agricultural land, maintain transparency, and ensure fairness to all taxing bodies and taxpayers.

We appreciate your consideration of our perspective and would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Mitchell". The signature is stylized with a cursive-like flow.

John Mitchell, President
Winnebago-Boone Farm Bureau

cc: Joint Review Board Members

WINNEBAGO COUNTY

ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTION OF AG TO THE COUNTY



Total Population of County: **285,350**

Total Farmers: **1,174**

AG LAND BY USE (acres)

Cropland: **134,411**

Pastureland: **5,162**

Woodland: **12,251**

Other: **16,938**

Federal Conservation

Program enrollment: **7,227**

FARMING OPERATIONS

Family & Sole Proprietors: **580**

Partnerships: **33**

Family-Held Corporations: **50**

Other Corporations: **10**

Other: **18**

TOTAL: 691

AG JOBS AND ECONOMICS

Total Commodity Sales: **\$170.00M**

Taxes Paid*: **\$5.1M**

Total Jobs from Ag: **6,360**

Total Labor Income from Ag: **\$373.80M**

Total Value Added from Ag Industries: **\$646.76M**

TOP AG PRODUCTS (rank among IL counties):

2nd in Christmas trees

6th in fruits, tree nuts, berries

9th in milk from cows

(D): withheld to avoid disclosing data for individual operations.

* Total taxes paid includes property, real estate, and non-real estate taxes (excluding landlord paid).

Sources:

- US Census Bureau 2024 Quick Stats
- USDA 2022 Census of Agriculture

• 2024 Illinois Agriculture Economic Contribution Study