

NEWS RELEASE

Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau



Rockford Park District Prepares to Break Ground for Nicholas Conservatory & Gardens Project

Proposed groundbreaking July 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 6, 2009

ROCKFORD, IL — Garden lovers will soon have another reason to plan a trip to the Rockford, Illinois Region! The Rockford Park District has announced the Nicholas Conservatory & Gardens Public Campaign Project has met its \$9.1 million Phase I funding goal, allowing this exciting new “green” development project to move forward in the coming months. **The Park District has announced July of 2009 as the proposed groundbreaking date.**

Phase I of the project, which will be located at Sinnissippi Park, will involve construction of the Nicholas Conservatory and site development and improvement, including the addition of:

- trees
- shrubs
- flowers
- aquatic plants
- streams
- koi
- stone walls
- waterfall
- sculptures
- glass art totems
- parking lot & extra lighting
- various seating & benches
- children’s educational & play area
- educational exhibits
- infinity pool inside and outside the conservatory

Upon its projected completion in December of 2010, the Nicholas Conservatory & Gardens will be the third largest in Illinois and will be included in the ranks of the Mitchell Park Horticulture Conservatory in Milwaukee and the Garfield Park Conservatory in Chicago. The project will include a spacious lobby area, which will feature displays, exhibits and a historical mural. Adjacent to the lobby will be a catering kitchen, classroom and workroom space, and a sizeable meeting room with an outdoor courtyard. There will also be a growing greenhouse and maintenance area to support the exhibition conservatory. The entry circle to the Conservatory & Gardens and the path connections to the lagoon will feature plantings, waterfalls and a stream. The conservatory will feature changing floral exhibits and a year-round exhibit of tropical trees, plants and flowers. The entire building will be approximately 21,000 square feet, with the conservatory itself being 10,800 square feet and 52 feet tall.

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Summary of Amenities:

- Indoor and outdoor gardens open to the public year-round
- Growing greenhouse
- Meeting room and classroom space
- Venue for small weddings, receptions and catered events
- Children's educational and play area
- Gift shop
- Sculptures
- Catering kitchen
- Outdoor terrace

As funding becomes available, the Conservatory & Gardens will also include water gardens, additional landscaping and exterior amenities. The project will be pursuing Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) silver certification, which is the recognized standard for measuring building sustainability. Achieving LEED certification is the best way to demonstrate that the conservatory project is truly "green" and will save on future energy costs for the facility.

The vision for the Nicholas Conservatory & Gardens is for the completed project to become a destination that complements other Rockford Region gardens, such as Anderson Japanese Gardens (www.andersongardens.org) and Klehm Arboretum & Botanic Garden (www.klehm.org), enhancing Rockford's reputation as a "City of Gardens" and helping position Rockford as a major garden destination. Admission to the Nicholas Conservatory & Gardens will be \$5/person for residents, \$7/person for non-residents, and free for children 5 and younger. There will also be specific times when the facility will be open to the public free of charge. Membership packages will be announced at the groundbreaking ceremony scheduled for July 2009, and reservations for special events, small weddings and meetings can be made starting January 2010.

For more information on the Nicholas Conservatory & Gardens, including a video providing an overview of the project, call 815.987.1670 or visit rockfordparkdistrict.org/foundation and click on the Nicholas Conservatory & Gardens link in the blue sidebar.

Rockford, IL, is located approximately 60 minutes west of Chicago's O'Hare International Airport off Interstate 90. For information on accommodations and things to do, visit www.gorockford.com. RACVB is a private, non-profit organization established in 1984 to champion efforts to promote the Rockford Region as an overnight visitor destination. The RACVB adds wealth to the region's economy by investing in marketing programs that grow tourism.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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CONCEPT ARTWORK AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST