

ROCKFORD AREA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

SURVEY OF WINNEBAGO COUNTY RESIDENTS

July 2012

Prepared for



Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Seeking to understand public perceptions about local tourism, the Rockford Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (RACVB) contracted with Health Systems Research of the University of Illinois to conduct a survey of Winnebago County residents. Sent to a random sample of 5,000 households in March 2012, 686 surveys were returned, a 13.7% response. Survey respondents represent the county fairly well, however, are older, better educated and more likely to be white than the population as a whole, typical of most survey research.

Based on survey results, most county residents know that RACVB exists though awareness dips among blacks and adults under age 40. Far more respondents have encountered RACVB through the local media than any other means.

Almost all survey respondents feel that tourism exerts a positive effect. Tourism is important to the Rockford's regional economy say 94.4%, while 96.5% agree that drawing visitors improves the local economy. Asked to gauge the impact, two in three (63.7%) believe tourism's effect is strong, while one in three (35.4%) contend that limited spending by visitors contributes some positive benefit. Women value tourism's role in the economy more than men.

Three in four (77.5%) respondents feel that more money should be invested to bring more visitors to the Rockford area, a level that rises above 84% among residents living in 61103, 61101 and blacks. Asked about sources of funding for tourism activities, more than 90% say that businesses which benefit from tourism such as hotels and restaurants should be tapped, way ahead of a user tax (71.9%) and government (50.3%). Wider differences among groups occur for the user tax and government than funding from tourism-related businesses. The user tax draws more support from seniors than younger ages, while females and respondents under age 40 offer higher approval of government funding than males and older ages.

Of the six potential tourism projects posed for assessment, respondents give their highest endorsement to ecotourism and facilities for amateur sports tournaments. Ecotourism is particularly favored by families with children at home, persons under 40, and residents of 61102 and Roscoe. Groups most supportive of maintaining and improving amateur sports tournament facilities include households located in 61102, 61101, Rockton/South Beloit and Machesney Park as well as blacks.

Ranking third among tourism endeavors is connecting bike paths to rural and outlying areas of the county. Adding attractive gateways into Rockford and other towns and helping downtown Rockford revitalization receive similar scores and place fourth and fifth, respectively. Far lower than the other five, more respondents disagree than agree that a convention center with hotel be built in downtown Rockford. Respondents rank their recommendations for funding of the six tourism projects in the same pattern as they rate their value to the community.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION, METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

INTRODUCTION

In order to understand public perceptions about the Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (RACVB) and local tourism efforts, RACVB contracted with Health Systems Research to conduct a survey. The survey covered awareness, role and development of tourism, support of specific projects along with demographics of survey respondents. Health Systems Research (HSR), an applied social service research unit of the University of Illinois at Rockford, specializes in survey research for health, education and civic organizations. Based in Rockford, HSR has assisted organizations in north and central Illinois for more than 30 years.

METHODOLOGY

RACVB staff worked jointly with HSR to develop the three-page survey instrument. Once the questionnaire was finalized, the project was submitted to and approved by the University of Illinois College of Medicine's Institutional Review Board. The survey was anonymous with no identifiers on the instrument itself or return envelope to tie responses to an individual.

Drawn randomly by zip code, the survey sample was generated by a commercial mailing list firm to include household residences but no businesses in Winnebago County. In March 2012, surveys were sent to 5,000 addresses, one in 20 households. The survey packet included a cover letter explaining the survey's purpose, the three-page survey instrument, a postage-paid envelope to return the completed survey, and discount coupons for Rockford Park District activities. See Appendix A for cover letter and survey instrument. Much publicity conducted by the RACVB occurred about the survey including media releases, television interviews, and email blasts. Returned surveys were entered into an SPSS database for analysis.

RESPONSE

As of May 31, 2012, 686 completed surveys were returned for a response rate of 13.7%. Recent surveys conducted by HSR in Barrington, McHenry County and Rockford have produced similar response rates, ranging from 12-15%. Anticipating a response at this level, the survey sample size was increased in order to obtain enough responses to generate valid results.

Survey responses vary dramatically by zip code (Table 1.1). Among zip codes in which more than ten residences received surveys, five produced response rates above 15% led by Rockford's 61114 with an impressive 26.1% return. Also surpassing 15% response are Rockford 61107 at 19.3%, Pecatonica 17.1%, Rockford 61108 16.3%, and Cherry Valley 15.3% (Table 1.2). In Seward and Shirland, small towns with only post office box delivery, two residences per zip code received surveys. Both Seward recipients returned the survey while one in Shirland did. Low return rates falling in the single digits occur for Durand 61024 (8.0%), South Beloit (8.2%), Rockford 61105 (9.1%), Rockford 61104 (9.2%), Rockton 61072 (9.6%) and Rockford 61102 (9.9%).

Table 1.1
ZIP CODE RESPONSE AND PERCENT RESPONDENTS

Zip Code	City/Town	Number Sent	Number Received	Percent Returned	Percent Respondents
61016	Cherry Valley	85	13	15.3%	1.9%
61024	Durand	50	4	8.0%	0.6%
61063	Pecatonica	82	14	17.1%	2.0%
61072	Rockton	208	20	9.6%	2.9%
61073	Roscoe	377	47	12.5%	6.9%
61077	Seward	2	2	100.0%	0.3%
61079	Shirland	2	1	50.0%	0.1%
61080	South Beloit	183	15	8.2%	2.2%
61088	Winnebago	126	13	10.3%	1.9%
61101	Rockford	363	38	10.5%	5.6%
61102	Rockford	262	26	9.9%	3.8%
61103	Rockford	341	41	12.0%	6.0%
61104	Rockford	260	24	9.2%	3.5%
61107	Rockford	533	103	19.3%	14.9%
61108	Rockford	491	80	16.3%	11.7%
61109	Rockford	466	62	13.3%	9.1%
61111	Loves Park	418	53	12.7%	7.7%
61114	Rockford	276	72	26.1%	10.5%
61115	Machesney Park	440	48	10.9%	7.0%
61132	Loves Park	16	0	0.0%	0.0%
Total		4,981	676	---	98.6%
No answer		---	10	---	1.4%
Other*		19	0	0.0%	0.0%
Total		5,000	686	13.7%	100.0%

*Four zip codes as P.O. boxes only with fewer than 10 addresses sent and no returns

Table 1.2
ZIP CODES WITH HIGHEST RETURN RATES¹

Zip Code and Description	Percent Returned
61114 - Rockford Far Northeast	26.1%
61107 - Rockford Near Northeast	19.3%
61063 - Pecatonica	17.1%
61108 - Rockford Southeast	16.3%
61016 - Cherry Valley	15.3%

¹Zip codes with fewer than 10 surveys sent omitted

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

More females than males responded to the survey though the difference is not great. More than seven in ten (71.7%) survey respondents are 50 years and older, with the 50-64 age group representing the largest volume and proportion of respondents, while only one in nine (11.7%) is under age 40. Most respondents (91.2%) claim their race/ethnicity to be white, non-Hispanic. The most common educational attainment level is some college/no degree which accounts for almost one in four (23.4%) followed by high school graduates (21.1%) and four-year college degree holders (20.3%). One-quarter (23.3%) of respondent households include children.

Table 1.3
SURVEY RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS AND COMPARISON TO CENSUS 2010

Characteristic	Survey Respondents		2010 Census Percent ²
	Number	Percent ¹	
GENDER			
Female	379	55.7%	51.1%
Male	302	44.3%	48.9%
AGE GROUP			
18-29	22	3.2%	20.0%
30-39	58	8.5%	16.7%
40-49	113	16.5%	18.8%
50-64	257	37.6%	26.2%
65 and older	233	34.1%	18.3%
RACE/ETHNICITY			
White, non-Hispanic	611	91.2%	72.5%
Black, non-Hispanic	26	3.9%	12.0%
Hispanic	8	1.2%	10.9%
Asian	8	1.2%	2.3%
Multi-racial	9	1.3%	2.0%
Other	8	1.2%	0.3%
EDUCATION (Highest Level Completed)			
Less than high school	12	1.8%	15.6%
High school diploma	143	21.1%	33.2%
Some college, no degree	159	23.4%	22.3%
Associate's or technical degree	102	15.0%	7.7%
Bachelor's degree	138	20.3%	13.1%
Graduate/professional degree	125	18.4%	7.9%
PRESENCE OF CHILDREN <18 IN HOUSEHOLD			
Yes	159	23.3%	33.1%
No	523	76.7%	66.9%

¹Percents based on respondents who answered question. Frequencies including no answer responses shown in Appendix B.

²Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 decennial census for age, race and presence of children and 2010 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates for education

Another demographic characteristic asked of survey participants was their length of residence in Winnebago County. No adequate comparison is available through the U.S. Census because the American Community Survey only asks whether your residence has changed in the past year. Based on the Census 2010 estimates, 4.1% of county residents age one year and older live in a different county than they did one year ago, much higher than survey respondent households in which 0.1% were not county residents a year earlier (Table 1.4). This comparison suggests that survey respondents do not accurately represent relative newcomers to the area.

Table 1.4
SURVEY RESPONDENT LENGTH OF RESIDENCE

Length of Residence in Winnebago County	Survey Respondents		2010 Census Percent ²
	Number	Percent	
Total ¹	683	100.0%	---
Less than 1 year	1	0.1%	4.1%
1-4 years	15	2.2%	---
5-9 years	43	6.3%	---
10-19 years	72	10.5%	---
20 years or more	552	80.8%	---

¹Total of survey respondents who answered this question.

²Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

SURVEY ACCURACY

To what degree survey respondents represent all Winnebago County households is not known. While the sample mailing was purely random and therefore representative of the population as a whole, the sample of respondents may not be representative because those who return the survey may differ from those who do not. One way to ascertain how well the respondents represent the county is to compare their demographic characteristics (Table 1.3).

Typically, survey respondents tend to be older, more educated, female, and predominantly white compared to the actual population they represent. To a degree that is true for this survey though the gender mix is fairly close to the Winnebago County population. In terms of age, one-third (34.1%) of survey respondents are 65 years and older, far more than the 18.3% who comprise the county's senior population. On the other hand, the younger population is not as well represented with 11.7% of respondents under age 40 compared to 36.7% who actually reside in the county. Nine in ten (91.2%) respondents are white, non-Hispanic versus 72.5% actual, while the remainder (8.8%) are minority populations. Respondents possessing a four-year college or professional degree account for 38.7% of survey respondents, far more than the actual population at 21.0%, while those with a high school diploma or less comprise 22.9% of survey respondents, about half the level of the actual population (48.8%). One in four (23.3%) survey respondents live in a household with children at home, a smaller proportion than the population (33.1%).

In addition to representativeness, an important consideration in judging the accuracy of the survey is the margin of error for responses since a sample, not the entire population, was surveyed. Given the response rate and sample size, the margins of error for most survey questions for the sample as a whole are +/- 3.5% at a 95% confidence level and +/-2.9% at a 90% confidence level. When results are analyzed by demographic characteristics such as age, race/ethnicity, or education, margins of error may be considerably larger than the sample as a whole. For that reason, analysis of survey questions by characteristic requires collapsing some categories within groups to achieve an adequate cell size. Specific consolidations are length of residence (less than 10 years = under 1 + 1-4 + 5-9 years), age (18-39 = 18-29 + 30-39), race/ethnicity (other race/ethnic = Hispanic + Asian + multi-racial + other), and education (high school education or less = less than high school + high school diploma). Geographic areas are defined by zip codes. Thirteen zip code groupings are used, eleven individual zip codes as well as two zip code consolidations (Rockton/South Beloit = 61072-Rockton + 61080-South Beloit; far southwest Winnebago County = 61063-Pecatonica + 61088-Winnebago + 61077-Seward). Two zip codes, 61016-Cherry Valley with 13 responses and 61024-Durand with four responses are not combined into larger groupings because of their distinct geography, however, the small number is not enough for analysis by geographic area but those responses are included in the overall analysis per question.

In the following chapters, statistically significant differences of mean scores by characteristic are stated at the end of the detailed tables. Because geographic area has numerous zip code groups, and therefore a smaller number of survey responses per group, differences must be wider to achieve statistical significance. While definite patterns emerge by zip code areas, in many cases the gaps are not wide enough to be statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. For survey questions with a four point scale, such as 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree, geographic areas' mean scores need to exceed a 0.4 point margin to be statistically different.

Chapter 2

AWARENESS OF ROCKFORD AREA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

Two questions asked survey participants about their awareness of the Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (RACVB). If they knew that RACVB existed, a follow up question inquired about ways they had encountered RACVB.

KNOW EXISTENCE OF RACVB

Asked whether they knew that RACVB existed before receiving the survey itself, more than eight in ten (84.0%) respondents say that they did. One in ten (10.3%) do not know about RACVB and 5.5% are unsure. Females and males show a similar level of awareness, however, wide differences mark awareness based on age, race, length of residence and geography. Awareness also varies depending on level of education and presence of children at home though not to the same degree. Table 2.1 shows the responses by demographic group. In that table, the “no” and “not sure” responses are combined.

Groups with the greatest awareness of RACVB’s existence are residents living in zip code 61108-Rockford, residents in far southwest Winnebago County (Pecatonica, Winnebago and Seward), adults who have earned a graduate/professional degree, seniors ages 65 years and older, and residents of 61107-Rockford (Table 2.2).

In all groups, more than half of all respondents know that there is an organization known as RACVB and, in fact, except for adults under age 40, at least six in ten respondents indicate this awareness. Among 18-39 year olds, 57.5% know about RACVB, while the next four lowest groups are black/African Americans, residents who have lived in Winnebago County less than ten years, “other” race/ethnicity and Machesney Park residents.

Table 2.2
GROUPS WITH HIGHEST AND LOWEST AWARENESS OF RACVB EXISTENCE

Rank	Description	Variable	Percent Yes
TOP FIVE			
1	61108 – Rockford	Residence	93.8%
2	Far SW Winnebago County	Residence	93.1%
3	Graduate, professional degree	Education	91.2%
4	65 years or older	Age	89.7%
5	61107 – Rockford	Residence	89.3%
LOWEST FIVE			
1	18-39 years	Age	57.5%
2	Black, non-Hispanic	Race/Ethnicity	61.5%
3	Less than 10 years	Length of residence	64.4%
4	Other	Race/Ethnicity	66.7%
4	Machesney Park	Residence	66.7%

Table 2.1
AWARENESS OF RACVB

Group	Yes		No/Not sure	
	Number	Percent ¹	Number	Percent ¹
All	576	84.0%	109	15.8%
Gender				
Female	314	82.8%	64	16.8%
Male	257	85.1%	45	14.9%
Age (in years)				
18-39	46	57.5%	34	42.6%
40-49	90	79.6%	23	20.3%
50-64	228	88.7%	29	11.3%
65+	209	89.7%	23	9.9%
Race/Ethnicity ²				
White	523	85.6%	87	14.3%
Black	16	61.5%	10	38.4%
Other	22	66.7%	11	33.4%
Education				
High school or less	123	79.4%	31	20.0%
Some college, no degree	132	83.0%	27	17.0%
Associate, technical degree	83	81.4%	19	18.6%
Bachelor's degree	118	85.5%	20	14.5%
Graduate, professional degree	114	91.2%	11	8.8%
Length of Residence				
Less than 10 years	38	64.4%	21	35.6%
10-19 years	51	70.8%	21	29.2%
20 years or more	484	87.7%	67	12.1%
Children < 18 at Home				
Yes	119	74.8%	40	25.1%
No	453	86.6%	69	13.2%

Group	Yes		No/Not sure	
	Number	Percent ¹	Number	Percent ¹
Geographic Area³				
Far SW Winnebago County ⁴	27	93.1%	2	6.9%
61101 – Rockford	30	78.9%	8	21.1%
61102 – Rockford	23	88.5%	3	11.5%
61103 – Rockford	33	80.5%	8	19.5%
61104 – Rockford	17	70.8%	7	29.2%
61107 – Rockford	92	89.3%	11	10.7%
61108 – Rockford	75	93.8%	5	6.3%
61109 – Rockford	48	77.4%	14	22.6%
61114 – Rockford	64	88.9%	8	11.1%
Rockton and South Beloit	30	85.7%	5	14.3%
Roscoe	33	70.2%	13	27.7%
Machesney Park	32	66.7%	16	33.3%
Loves Park	46	86.8%	7	13.2%

¹Percents based on total sample including no answer replies, thus “yes” and “no/not sure” may add up to less than 100%.

²White and black groups are non-Hispanic, other includes Hispanic, Asian, multi-racial, other.

³Areas with 24 or more respondents.

⁴Pecatonica (61063), Winnebago (61088) and Seward (61077).

Statistically significant differences occur based on age group, race/ethnicity, length of residence and presence of children at home.

HOW DO THEY KNOW ABOUT RACVB

By far the leading means by which survey respondents have encountered RACVB is through the local media (79.6%). Less than half as high is next highest, an advertisement in a magazine (37.6%), followed closely by efforts to bring a casino to Rockford (36.0%), and calendar of events (32.7%). Amateur sports tournaments are the way in which one in five (21.7%) respondents know about RACVB. Much lower rates of encounters are by website/Facebook (5.5%) and working with RACVB on an event (2.9%).

Table 2.3
WAYS RESPONDENTS HAVE ENCOUNTERED RACVB

Rank	Description	Number	Percent ¹
1	Local media	489	79.6% (83.0%)
2	Advertisement in magazine	231	37.6% (39.8%)
3	Efforts to bring casino here	221	36.0% (36.1%)
4	Calendar of events	201	32.7% (34.0%)
5	Amateur sports tournaments	133	21.7% (22.3%)
6	Website, Facebook	34	5.5% (5.6%)
7	Worked with RACVB meeting, reunion, tournament	18	2.9% (3.1%)
---	Other	36	5.9% (6.3%)

¹Based on percent who say they know or are unsure about existence of RACVB (n = 614), followed by percent based only on respondents who know about RACVB (n = 576).

Note: Respondents could check more than one way they have encountered RACVB.

Respondents who wrote in another means said they have personal contacts or friends/relatives who work at RACVB (10), had visited the office (8), have work relationships that have brought them in contact with RACVB (7), word of mouth (2), maps (2) and assorted other means by individual respondents.

Figure 2.1: "Before receiving this survey, did you know that an organization named Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau exists?"

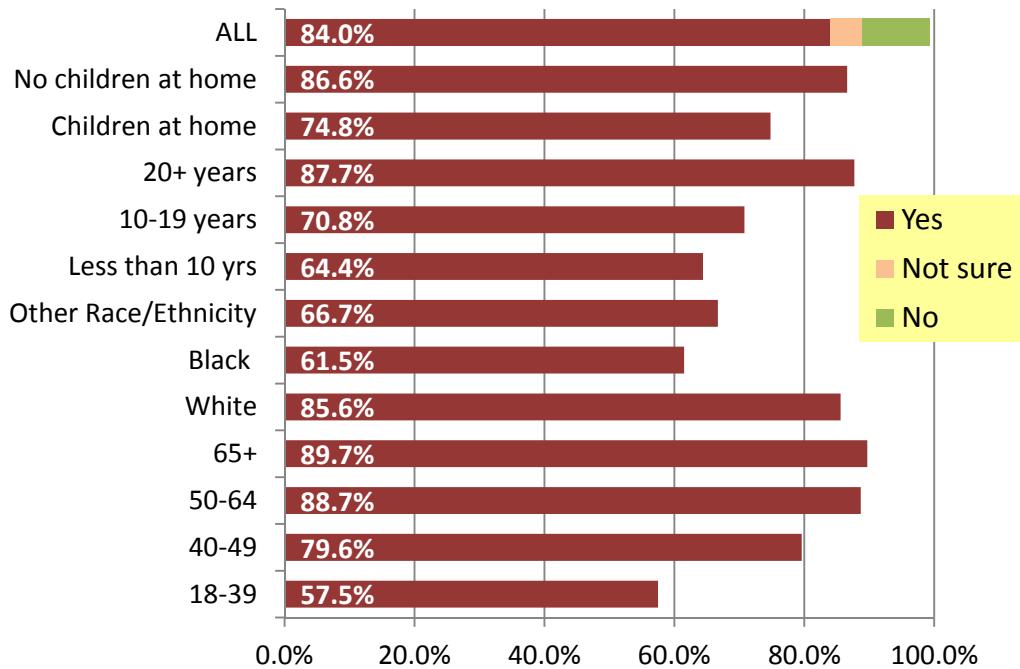
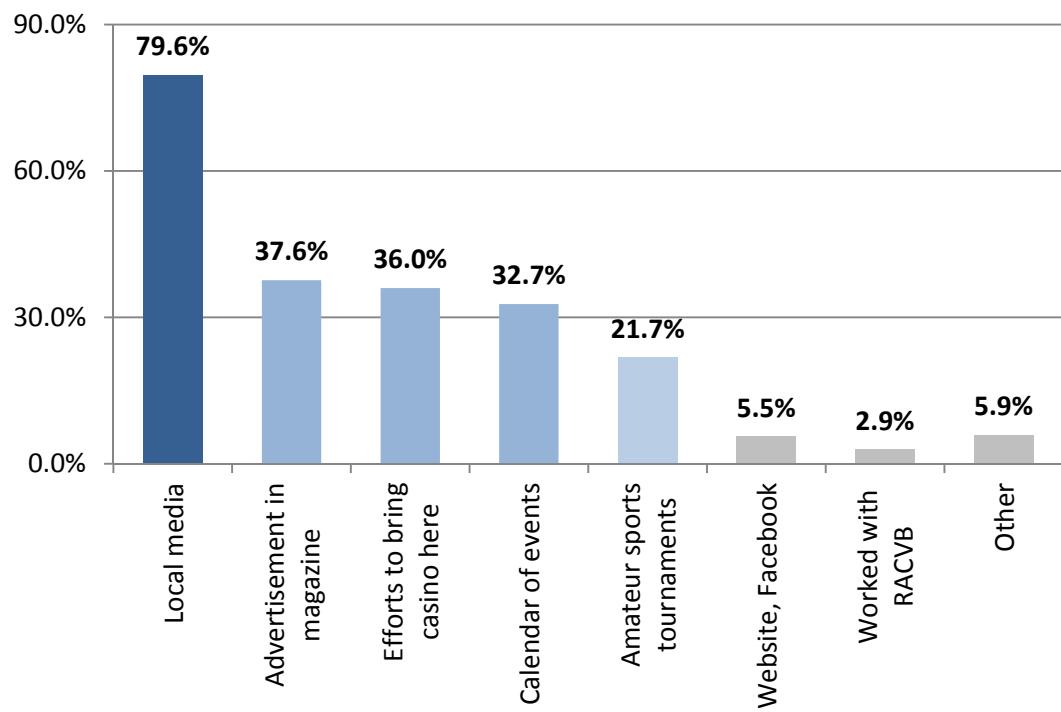


Figure 2.2: "I have encountered RACVB in the following ways..."



Chapter 3

IMPORTANCE AND EFFECT OF TOURISM ON LOCAL ECONOMY

Two survey questions asked respondents about the role of visitors and tourism in economic development of the Rockford region. The first question addresses the issue of visitors and tourism's importance to the local economy, while the second asks about the effects.

IMPORTANCE OF VISITORS TO ROCKFORD'S REGIONAL ECONOMY

At 94.4%, the overwhelming majority of survey respondents feel that visitors and tourism are important or very important to Rockford's regional economy (Table 3.1). About twice as many give their rating as "very important" (61.0%) as "important" (33.4%). Only a handful (2.3%) believes that visitors are not important, while 3.2% don't know.

Table 3.1
IMPORTANCE OF VISITORS TO LOCAL ECONOMY

Response	Number	Percent ¹
Very important	418	61.0%
Important	229	33.4%
Not important	16	2.3%
Don't know	22	3.2%

¹Percent based on respondents who answered question. No answer replies omitted from denominator.

Voicing the strongest support for visitors' contribution to the local economy are respondents with some college education/no degree; residents of 61104, 61108, 61107; blacks; and seniors age 65 years and older. For these groups, more than 65% indicate that tourism is very important (Table 3.2).

On the other hand, fewer than 55% claim visitors to be very important among ages 40-49; residents in 61114, 61102 and Loves Park; respondents with a bachelor's or associate/technical degree; and males. Even among the groups with the lowest ratings, however, more than half feel that tourism is very important to Rockford's economy.

Table 3.2
GROUPS WITH HIGHEST AND LOWEST PROPORTIONS ABOUT
IMPORTANCE OF VISITORS TO REGIONAL ECONOMY

Percent Indicating Visitors "Very Important" for Local Economy			
HIGHEST (>65%)		LOWEST (<55%)	
1	Some college, no degree	70.4%	1 Age 40-49 50.4% 2 61114 52.8% 3 Bachelor's degree 52.9% 4 61102 53.8% 5 Male 54.0% 6 Loves Park 54.7% 7 Associate, technical degree 54.9%
2	61104	66.7%	
2	Female	66.7%	
4	61108	66.3%	
5	61107	66.0%	
6	Black	65.4%	
7	Age 65+	65.1%	

Mean scores which take into account all three possible responses (very important, important, not important) show a fairly tight range (Table 3.5). On a three-point scale from 1 = not important to 3 = very important, the overall mean of 2.61 leans toward very important.

Some factors matter more than others in explaining differences in scores. Females rate tourism's importance higher than males as do respondents 50 years and older compared to 40-49 year olds. Blacks give higher ratings than whites, respondents with some college produce higher scores than associate/technical and bachelor's degree holders, and respondents living in 61104, 61108 and Rockton/South Beloit are more confident about visitors' importance to the local economy than persons in Loves Park though differences by race/ethnicity, education and geographic area are not statistically significant. Length of residence in the county and presence of children at home did not factor into scores of importance.

EFFECT OF VISITORS ON LOCAL ECONOMY

Almost two in three (63.7%) respondents believe that visitors positively affect enough to improve the local economy (Table 3.3). An additional 35.4% feel that tourism contributes positively to the economy through limited visitor spending. A combined total of less than 1% feel visitors have no or a negative effect on the economy.

Table 3.3
EFFECT OF VISITORS ON LOCAL ECONOMY

Response	Number	Percent ¹
Strong enough positive to improve economy	434	63.7%
Some positive through limited visitor spending	241	35.4%
No effect	4	0.6%
Negative effect	2	0.3%

¹Percent based on respondents who answered question. No answer replies omitted from denominator.

Similar to the previous question, responses vary by group (Table 3.4). With more than 69% reporting that tourism exerts a strong enough positive effect to improve the economy are respondents whose educational level is some college or graduate/professional degree; live in 61108 and 61102. Fewer than 56% feel tourism is an engine for local economic development among respondents with a four-year college degree, residents of 61101 and Loves Park.

Table 3.4
GROUPS WITH HIGHEST AND LOWEST PROPORTIONS
ABOUT EFFECT OF VISITORS ON LOCAL ECONOMY

Percent Indicating "Strong enough positive effect to improve local economy"		
HIGHEST (>69%)		LOWEST (<56%)
1	Some college, no degree	70.5%
2	61108	70.0%
3	61102	69.2%
		1 Loves Park 54.7%
		2 Bachelor's degree 55.1%
		3 61101 55.3%

Mean scores reflecting all possible question choices where 1 = negative effect, 2 = no effect, 3 = some positive effect and 4 = strong positive effect are shown on Table 3.5. These scores fall within an even narrower range than the previous question. Of the seven demographic factors, none show statistical differences though levels vary based on education and geographic area. Respondents with some college rate tourism's effect on the economy more positively than persons with four-year college degrees. Among areas, residents living in 61108 (3.70) feel the most sanguine about the tourism's positive economic effects while Loves Park (3.51) residents post the lowest mean score.

Table 3.5
MEAN SCORES OF IMPORTANCE AND EFFECT OF TOURISM ON LOCAL ECONOMY

Group	Mean Scores of Relationship Between Visitors and Local Economy	
	Importance (Scale 1-3) ¹	Effect (Scale 1-4) ²
All	2.61	3.63
Gender		
Female	2.66	3.64
Male	2.53	3.60
Age (in years)		
18-39	2.58	3.66
40-49	2.52	3.61
50-64	2.61	3.62
65+	2.65	3.63
Race/Ethnicity ³		
White	2.61	3.63
Black	2.71	3.65
Other	2.63	3.67
Education		
High school or less	2.63	3.60
Some college, no degree	2.68	3.71
Associate, technical degree	2.55	3.62
Bachelor's degree	2.54	3.55
Graduate, professional degree	2.61	3.66
Length of Residence		
Less than 10 years	2.65	3.64
10-19 years	2.63	3.59
20 years or more	2.60	3.63
Children < 18 at Home		
Yes	2.61	3.65
No	2.61	3.62

Group	Mean Scores of Relationship Between Visitors and Local Economy	
	Importance (Scale 1-3) ¹	Effect (Scale 1-4) ²
Geographic Area⁴		
Far SW Winnebago County ⁵	2.55	3.59
61101 – Rockford	2.64	3.55
61102 – Rockford	2.58	3.69
61103 – Rockford	2.65	3.61
61104 – Rockford	2.67	3.63
61107 – Rockford	2.65	3.62
61108 – Rockford	2.66	3.70
61109 – Rockford	2.63	3.62
61114 – Rockford	2.49	3.68
Rockton and South Beloit	2.67	3.67
Roscoe	2.60	3.59
Machesney Park	2.62	3.65
Loves Park	2.47	3.51

¹1 = not important, 2 = important, 3 = very important.

²1 = negative effect, 2 = no effect, 3 = some positive, 4 = strong positive.

³White and black groups are non-Hispanic; other includes Hispanic, Asian, multi-racial, other.

⁴Areas with 24 or more respondents.

⁵Pecatonica (61063), Winnebago (61088) and Seward (61077).

Mean score differences are statistically significant based on gender and age group for “How important are visitors and tourism to Rockford’s regional economy?” No statistically significant differences by characteristics for “How do you think visitors affect local economy?”

Figure 3.1: "How important are visitors and tourism to Rockford's regional economy?"

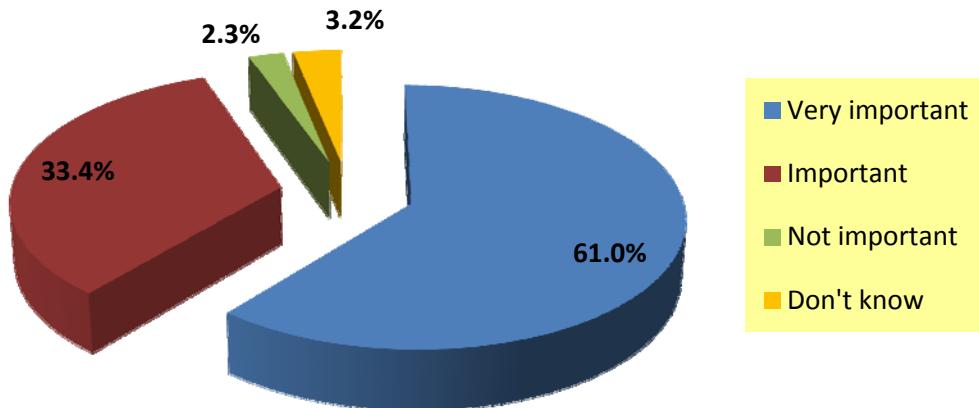
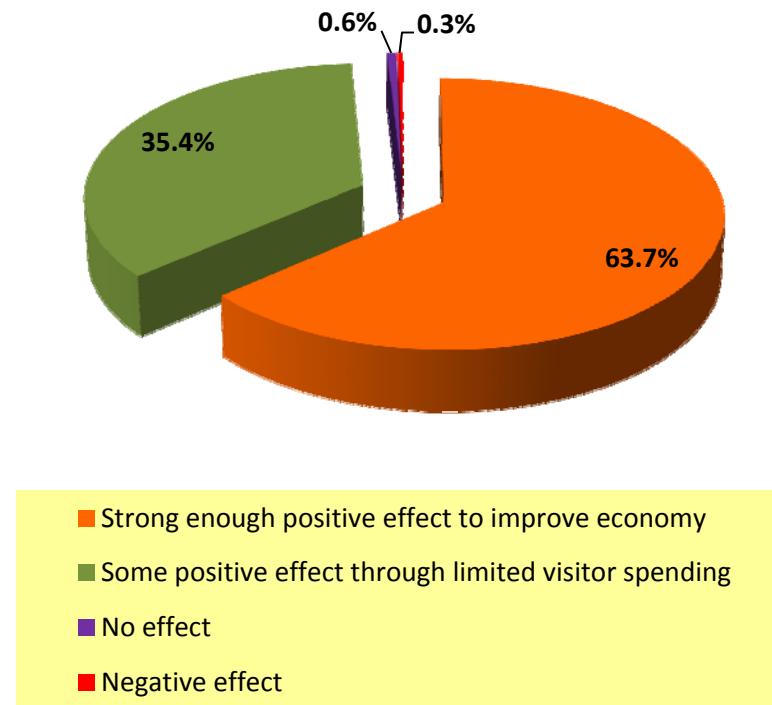


Figure 3.2: "How do you think visitors affect the local economy?"



Chapter 4

IMPACT OF TOURISM AND FUNDING SOURCES

Five survey questions dealt with tourism's relationship to the local economy and sources of funding for regional tourism efforts. Response options ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree as well as don't know.

IMPACT ON ECONOMY

The two questions about tourism's effect on the economy asked whether survey participant agree that

- Drawing visitors to the Rockford region improves the local economy
- More money should be invested to bring more visitors to the Rockford area.

The first question repeats the topic of tourism's relationship to the economy but asks in a slightly different way.

More than any other survey question, respondents agree that drawing visitors to the Rockford region improves the local economy. Almost all (96.5%) agree, more than half of whom (55.2%) strongly agree. Unanimity of agreement occurs across respondent groups, none of which show agreement lower than 93% (Table 4.1).

The high level of agreement that visitors improve the local economy is also reflected in the mean scores that incorporate the intensity of agreement/disagreement. On the four-point scale where 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree, the mean score for all respondents at 3.54 weighs more heavily toward strongly agree than agree. Mean scores for demographic categories vary from 3.40 to 3.65, a rather limited range. The only variable showing a statistical difference is gender with females (3.60) more likely to agree than males (3.47). Among geographic areas, Rockford-61104 and Rockford-61109, both 3.65, post high mean scores compared to low scores by Roscoe (3.40) and far southwest Winnebago County (3.41).

Responses to the subsequent statement about investing more money also draws strong support though not as high as tourism's ability to improve the local economy (Table 4.2). Among all respondents, three in four (77.3%) agree that more money should be invested, leaning more toward agree (51.9%) than strongly agree (25.4%), also reflected in the 3.15 mean score. Wider differences separate groups on this question. Higher agreement about investing money in tourism is reported by females over males, respondents under 40 compared to older age groups, blacks more than whites, shorter term residents, and households with families at home. Geographic areas' mean scores range from 3.43 for 61103-Rockford to 2.92 reported by far southwest Winnebago County.

Table 4.1
AGREEMENT LEVELS FOR REGIONAL TOURISM'S ABILITY TO IMPROVE LOCAL ECONOMY

Group	Percent ¹			Mean Score ² (Scale 1-4)
	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
All	96.5%	1.7%	1.6%	3.54
Gender				
Female	96.8%	1.1%	1.1%	3.60
Male	96.0%	2.6%	1.3%	3.47
Age (in years)				
18-39	98.8%	1.3%	0.0%	3.56
40-49	97.3%	0.9%	1.8%	3.55
50-64	96.1%	2.3%	1.6%	3.55
65+	95.7%	1.7%	2.1%	3.53
Race/Ethnicity ³				
White	97.2%	1.5%	1.1%	3.54
Black	96.2%	3.8%	0.0%	3.50
Other	93.9%	3.0%	3.0%	3.69
Education				
High school or less	95.5%	0.6%	3.2%	3.54
Some college, no degree	96.9%	1.9%	1.3%	3.64
Associate, technical degree	97.1%	2.0%	1.0%	3.49
Bachelor's degree	96.4%	2.9%	0.7%	3.42
Graduate, professional degree	96.8%	1.6%	1.6%	3.61
Length of Residence				
Less than 10 years	98.3%	1.7%	0.0%	3.54
10-19 years	97.2%	0.0%	2.8%	3.60
20 years or more	96.2%	2.0%	1.6%	3.54
Children < 18 at Home				
Yes	99.4%	0.6%	0.0%	3.61
No	95.6%	2.1%	2.1%	3.52

Group	Percent ¹			Mean Score ² (Scale 1-4)
	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
Geographic Area⁴				
Far SW Winnebago County ⁵	93.1%	6.9%	0.0%	3.41
61101 – Rockford	94.7%	0.0%	5.3%	3.47
61102 – Rockford	96.2%	3.8%	0.0%	3.62
61103 – Rockford	95.1%	0.0%	4.9%	3.51
61104 – Rockford	95.8%	0.0%	4.2%	3.65
61107 – Rockford	98.1%	1.0%	1.0%	3.54
61108 – Rockford	96.3%	3.8%	0.0%	3.59
61109 – Rockford	96.8%	0.0%	3.2%	3.65
61114 – Rockford	97.2%	2.8%	0.0%	3.58
Rockton and South Beloit	97.1%	0.0%	2.9%	3.59
Roscoe	93.6%	2.1%	2.1%	3.40
Machesney Park	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.56
Loves Park	94.3%	3.8%	1.9%	3.50

¹Percents based on total sample including no answer.

²Mean score from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. “Don’t know” responses omitted from mean score computations.

³White and black groups are non-Hispanic; other includes Hispanic, Asian, multi-racial, other.

⁴Areas with 24 or more respondents.

⁵Pecatonica (61063), Winnebago (61088) and Seward (61077).

Statistically significant mean score differences by gender.

Table 4.2
AGREEMENT LEVELS FOR MORE MONEY SHOULD BE INVESTED TO BRING VISITORS

Group	Percent ¹			Mean Score ² (Scale 1-4)
	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
All	77.3%	10.6%	11.1%	3.15
Gender				
Female	79.7%	8.2%	10.8%	3.19
Male	74.5%	13.9%	11.3%	3.10
Age (in years)				
18-39	83.8%	6.3%	10.0%	3.26
40-49	77.9%	14.2%	7.1%	3.12
50-64	76.7%	12.1%	10.5%	3.13
65+	76.0%	9.0%	13.7%	3.14
Race/Ethnicity ³				
White	77.6%	10.0%	11.6%	3.16
Black	92.3%	7.7%	0.0%	3.27
Other	69.7%	18.2%	9.1%	3.00
Education				
High school or less	77.4%	9.7%	10.3%	3.16
Some college, no degree	78.6%	10.1%	11.3%	3.22
Associate, technical degree	76.5%	8.8%	13.7%	3.16
Bachelor's degree	73.2%	13.0%	13.8%	3.09
Graduate, professional degree	81.6%	11.2%	6.4%	3.10
Length of Residence				
Less than 10 years	83.1%	8.5%	8.5%	3.26
10-19 years	81.9%	12.5%	5.6%	3.10
20 years or more	76.3%	10.7%	12.0%	3.14
Children < 18 at Home				
Yes	81.1%	9.4%	8.2%	3.24
No	76.3%	11.1%	11.9%	3.12

Group	Percent ¹			Mean Score ² (Scale 1-4)
	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
Geographic Area⁴				
Far SW Winnebago County ⁵	69.0%	17.2%	13.8%	2.92
61101 – Rockford	84.2%	5.3%	10.5%	3.24
61102 – Rockford	76.9%	15.4%	7.7%	3.21
61103 – Rockford	85.4%	0.0%	14.6%	3.43
61104 – Rockford	83.3%	0.0%	16.7%	3.35
61107 – Rockford	73.8%	13.6%	12.6%	3.06
61108 – Rockford	81.3%	7.5%	8.8%	3.21
61109 – Rockford	72.6%	14.5%	12.9%	3.17
61114 – Rockford	81.9%	11.1%	5.6%	3.19
Rockton and South Beloit	77.1%	8.6%	11.4%	3.17
Roscoe	76.6%	12.8%	8.5%	3.00
Machesney Park	79.2%	4.2%	16.7%	3.23
Loves Park	71.7%	18.9%	9.4%	2.96

¹Percents based on total sample including no answer.

²Mean score from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. “Don’t know” responses omitted from mean score computations.

³White and black groups are non-Hispanic; other includes Hispanic, Asian, multi-racial, other.

⁴Areas with 24 or more respondents.

⁵Pecatonica (61063), Winnebago (61088) and Seward (61077).

Mean score differences exceeding 0.5 for geographic areas are statistically significant.

Table 4.3
TOP AND BOTTOM THREE GROUPS FOR OVERALL SUPPORT¹

Statement (Overall Mean)	Top Groups (Mean)	Bottom Groups (Mean)
Drawing visitors improves local economy (3.54)	1. Other race/ethnic (3.69)	1. Roscoe (3.40)
	2. 61109 (3.65)	2. Far SW Winnebago Co. (3.41)
	2. 61104 (3.65)	3. Bachelor's degree (3.42)
More money should be invested to bring more visitors to Rockford area. (3.15)	1. 61103 (3.43)	1. Far SW Winnebago Co. (2.92)
	2. 61104 (3.35)	2. Loves Park (2.96)
	3. Black (3.27)	3. Roscoe (3.00)
		3. Other race/ethnic (3.00)

¹Based on mean scores (scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree).

SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR TOURISM

Survey respondents were asked about three sources of funds to increase tourism: government, businesses related to tourism (hotels and restaurants), and a user tax paid when visitors purchase food/beverages or stay in a hotel. Strongest support is expressed for funding by tourism-related businesses, followed by user tax and third, government (Table 4.4).

More than one-third (35.7%) strongly agree and an additional 54.4% agree that funding should come from businesses that benefit from tourism. Considerably lower, but still at a solid agreement level is user tax with 22.0% strongly agreeing and 49.9% more agreeing. Falling midway between agree and disagree is support for government funds to increase tourism efforts.

Table 4.4
SOURCES OF FUNDS TO INCREASE TOURISM

Rank	Source	Mean Score	Percent Respondents				
			Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
1	Business	3.32	35.7%	54.4%	2.0%	1.9%	2.8%
2	User tax	2.99	22.0%	49.9%	12.7%	5.2%	5.4%
3	Government	2.67	14.4%	35.9%	18.5%	11.1%	9.9%

The survey respondents' agreement/disagreement is presented both as mean scores that range from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree and as composite agreement (strongly agree and agree combined) and disagreement (disagree and strongly disagree combined) proportions. Table 4.5 summarizes the top and bottom demographic groups for each funding type based on mean score. Details for responses including agreement/disagreement composites and mean scores for every demographic group as well as statements of statistical significance are shown on Tables 4.6 to 4.8 (numbered in order in which they appear in survey).

Table 4.5
TOP AND BOTTOM GROUPS FOR TYPE OF FUNDING TO INCREASE TOURISM¹

Funding Source (Overall Mean)	Top Groups (Mean)	Bottom Groups (Mean)
Business related to tourism (3.32)	1. 61102 (3.50)	1. Far SW Winnebago Co. (3.11)
	2. 61109 (3.42)	2. Loves Park (3.13)
	3. 10-19 yr. residents (3.40)	3. 61104 (3.18)
	4. Black (3.39)	4. Bachelor's degree (3.27)
	4. Machesney Park (3.39)	4. Male (3.27)
User tax (2.99)	1. Black (3.25)	1. Loves Park (2.65)
	2. 61102 (3.21)	2. 10-19 yrs. In county (2.73)
	3. 61104 (3.20)	3. Machesney Park (2.82)
	4. 61114 (3.17)	4. Roscoe (2.83)
	5. Age 65+ (3.13)	5. Age 18-39 (2.89)
Government (2.67)	1. Age 18-39 (3.04)	1. Far SW Winnebago Co. (2.42)
	2. 61109 (3.02)	2. Loves Park (2.51)
	3. High school or less (2.89)	2. Male (2.51)
	4. 61104 (2.88)	4. Bachelor's degree (2.52)

¹Based on mean scores (scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree).

Use of Business Funds

Agreement about using business funds to increase tourism is similar based on gender, age, race/ethnicity, education, length of residence and presence of children at home (Table 4.7). Agreement levels range from 85.0% to 92.8% and mean scores 3.27 to 3.40, a narrow spread. Somewhat greater differences occur based on geographic area of household from low (79.3% agreement) by far southwest Winnebago County residents (3.11 mean) to high for Rockton/South Beloit at 100.0% agreement or 61102 using mean score, 3.50. This geography-

based range, while wider than other characteristics, is smaller than the zip code spread for the two other funding sources. Looking at disagreement, only one group displays a double-digit level (combined disagree and strongly disagree) – far southwest Winnebago County at 13.8%.

Use of User Tax

The user tax finds higher support among females, seniors ages 65 years and older, blacks, and residents who have lived in the county for less than a decade (Table 4.8). Mean scores by zip code of residence range from 61102 (3.21) followed closely by 61104 (3.20) down to Loves Park (2.65). More seniors ages 65+ like the user tax (3.13) than 18-39 (2.89) and 40-49 year olds (2.86). Differences are small for education and presence of children at home.

Using composite agreement levels, more than four in five residents of 61114 (86.1%), 61102 (84.6%) and blacks (80.8%) agree about imposing user taxes, while lowest agreement comes from 10-19 year county residents (56.9%) and Loves Park (58.5%). Disagreement tops one third (34.0%) among Loves Park residents.

Use of Government Funds

Not only is overall support lower for government funds to increase tourism efforts, more variation occurs among demographic groups than for the other two funding mechanisms. Females and 18-39 year olds are more likely to support the use of government funds as are blacks, respondents with a high school education, county residents of 10-19 years, and households with children at home. Support is high among households in 61109 and low among far southwest Winnebago County and Loves Park residents (Table 4.6).

Using composite agreement and disagreement levels, more than six in ten agree that government funds should be used for tourism among ages 18-39 (67.5%), 61109 (64.5%) and county residents of 10-19 years (61.1%). Fewer than four in ten feel that way among far southwest Winnebago County residents (37.9%) and seniors 65+ (38.2%). More far southwest Winnebago County residents disagree (44.8%) about using government funds than agree, the only group in which disagreement surpasses agreement.

Table 4.6
AGREEMENT LEVELS FOR USING GOVERNMENT FUNDS TO INCREASE TOURISM

Group	Percent ¹			Mean Score ² (Scale 1-4)
	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
All	50.3%	29.6%	9.9%	2.67
Gender				
Female	52.8%	24.0%	10.8%	2.81
Male	47.7%	36.4%	8.9%	2.51
Age (in years)				
18-39	67.5%	21.3%	10.0%	3.04
40-49	56.6%	31.9%	8.8%	2.67
50-64	53.3%	33.1%	7.0%	2.65
65+	38.2%	27.9%	13.7%	2.53
Race/Ethnicity ³				
White	50.9%	29.3%	10.5%	2.67
Black	57.7%	23.1%	3.8%	2.86
Other	45.5%	36.4%	6.1%	2.63
Education				
High school or less	49.0%	20.6%	14.8%	2.89
Some college, no degree	50.3%	27.0%	10.7%	2.68
Associate, technical degree	46.1%	41.2%	10.8%	2.60
Bachelor's degree	49.3%	35.5%	6.5%	2.52
Graduate, professional degree	56.8%	28.0%	6.4%	2.65
Length of Residence				
Less than 10 years	59.3%	32.2%	3.4%	2.67
10-19 years	61.1%	25.0%	11.1%	2.82
20 years or more	48.0%	30.1%	10.5%	2.65
Children < 18 at Home				
Yes	54.7%	33.3%	7.5%	2.75
No	48.9%	28.7%	10.7%	2.64

Group	Percent ¹			Mean Score ² (Scale 1-4)
	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
Geographic Area⁴				
Far SW Winnebago County ⁵	37.9%	44.8%	3.4%	2.42
61101 – Rockford	50.0%	23.7%	7.9%	2.86
61102 – Rockford	50.0%	23.1%	3.8%	2.79
61103 – Rockford	53.7%	24.4%	19.5%	2.84
61104 – Rockford	41.7%	29.2%	20.8%	2.88
61107 – Rockford	50.5%	28.2%	11.7%	2.60
61108 – Rockford	55.0%	27.5%	7.5%	2.61
61109 – Rockford	64.5%	19.4%	9.7%	3.02
61114 – Rockford	40.3%	36.1%	9.7%	2.53
Rockton and South Beloit	48.6%	31.4%	14.3%	2.68
Roscoe	48.9%	29.8%	10.6%	2.73
Machesney Park	52.1%	35.4%	6.3%	2.55
Loves Park	47.2%	41.5%	7.5%	2.51

¹Percents based on total sample including no answer.

²Mean score from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. “Don’t know” responses omitted from mean score computations.

³White and black groups are non-Hispanic; other includes Hispanic, Asian, multi-racial, other.

⁴Areas with 24 or more respondents.

⁵Pecatonica (61063), Winnebago (61088) and Seward (61077).

*Statistically significant mean score differences by age and gender,
also geographic areas where differences exceed 0.5.*

Table 4.7
AGREEMENT LEVELS FOR USING BUSINESS FUNDS TO INCREASE TOURISM

Group	Percent ¹			Mean Score ² (Scale 1-4)
	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
All	90.1%	3.9%	2.8%	3.32
Gender				
Female	90.2%	3.2%	3.2%	3.36
Male	90.1%	5.0%	2.3%	3.27
Age (in years)				
18-39	88.8%	7.5%	2.5%	3.30
40-49	85.0%	5.3%	6.2%	3.28
50-64	91.4%	3.1%	3.1%	3.31
65+	91.8%	3.0%	0.9%	3.35
Race/Ethnicity ³				
White	90.7%	3.8%	2.8%	3.32
Black	88.5%	0.0%	11.5%	3.39
Other	87.9%	6.1%	3.9%	3.29
Education				
High school or less	87.1%	2.6%	4.5%	3.37
Some college, no degree	90.6%	4.4%	4.4%	3.32
Associate, technical degree	91.2%	5.9%	2.0%	3.30
Bachelor's degree	90.6%	4.3%	0.7%	3.27
Graduate, professional degree	92.8%	2.4%	1.6%	3.34
Length of Residence				
Less than 10 years	88.1%	6.8%	3.4%	3.34
10-19 years	91.7%	2.8%	4.2%	3.40
20 years or more	90.2%	3.8%	2.5%	3.31
Children < 18 at Home				
Yes	89.3%	6.3%	2.5%	3.29
No	90.4%	3.3%	2.9%	3.33

Group	Percent ¹			Mean Score ² (Scale 1-4)
	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
Geographic Area⁴				
Far SW Winnebago County ⁵	79.3%	13.8%	3.4%	3.11
61101 – Rockford	84.2%	5.3%	2.6%	3.35
61102 – Rockford	92.3%	0.0%	0.0%	3.50
61103 – Rockford	87.8%	4.9%	4.9%	3.29
61104 – Rockford	83.3%	8.3%	4.2%	3.18
61107 – Rockford	90.3%	4.9%	2.9%	3.29
61108 – Rockford	93.8%	2.5%	3.8%	3.38
61109 – Rockford	88.7%	0.0%	6.5%	3.42
61114 – Rockford	88.9%	4.2%	1.4%	3.34
Rockton and South Beloit	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	3.37
Roscoe	95.7%	2.1%	2.1%	3.30
Machesney Park	93.8%	2.1%	0.0%	3.39
Loves Park	90.6%	7.5%	1.9%	3.13

¹Percents based on total sample including no answer.

²Mean score from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. “Don’t know” responses omitted from mean score computations.

³White and black groups are non-Hispanic; other includes Hispanic, Asian, multi-racial, other.

⁴Areas with 24 or more respondents.

⁵Pecatonica (61063), Winnebago (61088) and Seward (61077).

No statistically significant mean score differences by characteristic.

Table 4.8
AGREEMENT LEVELS FOR USING USER TAX TO INCREASE TOURISM

Group	Percent ¹			Mean Score ² (Scale 1-4)
	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
All	71.9%	17.9%	5.4%	2.99
Gender				
Female	72.3%	15.6%	5.0%	3.04
Male	71.5%	21.2%	6.0%	2.93
Age (in years)				
18-39	68.8%	25.0%	6.3%	2.89
40-49	67.3%	20.4%	8.8%	2.86
50-64	71.6%	21.0%	4.7%	2.95
65+	76.0%	11.2%	4.3%	3.13
Race/Ethnicity ³				
White	72.2%	17.8%	5.7%	2.98
Black	80.8%	11.5%	0.0%	3.25
Other	75.8%	18.2%	6.1%	3.06
Education				
High school or less	67.1%	19.4%	7.1%	3.00
Some college, no degree	67.9%	19.5%	5.7%	2.96
Associate, technical degree	73.5%	17.6%	5.9%	2.98
Bachelor's degree	74.6%	19.6%	2.9%	2.97
Graduate, professional degree	78.4%	13.6%	5.6%	3.01
Length of Residence				
Less than 10 years	74.6%	15.3%	5.1%	3.09
10-19 years	56.9%	29.2%	11.1%	2.73
20 years or more	73.7%	16.8%	4.7%	3.01
Children < 18 at Home				
Yes	71.1%	21.4%	6.3%	2.93
No	72.3%	17.0%	5.2%	3.00

Group	Percent ¹			Mean Score ² (Scale 1-4)
	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
Geographic Area⁴				
Far SW Winnebago County ⁵	65.5%	17.2%	6.9%	2.92
61101 – Rockford	73.7%	15.8%	0.0%	3.12
61102 – Rockford	84.6%	7.7%	3.8%	3.21
61103 – Rockford	68.3%	17.1%	9.8%	3.03
61104 – Rockford	70.8%	12.5%	8.3%	3.20
61107 – Rockford	76.7%	12.6%	5.8%	3.09
61108 – Rockford	70.0%	22.5%	5.0%	2.92
61109 – Rockford	71.0%	17.7%	8.1%	3.02
61114 – Rockford	86.1%	9.7%	2.8%	3.17
Rockton and South Beloit	68.6%	22.9%	5.7%	2.91
Roscoe	68.1%	21.3%	2.1%	2.83
Machesney Park	68.8%	22.9%	4.2%	2.82
Loves Park	58.5%	34.0%	5.7%	2.65

¹Percents based on total sample including no answer.

²Mean score from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. “Don’t know” responses omitted from mean score computations.

³White and black groups are non-Hispanic; other includes Hispanic, Asian, multi-racial, other.

⁴Areas with 24 or more respondents.

⁵Pecatonica (61063), Winnebago (61088) and Seward (61077).

Statistically significant mean score differences by age group.

Figure 4.1: "More money should be invested to bring more visitors to the Rockford area."

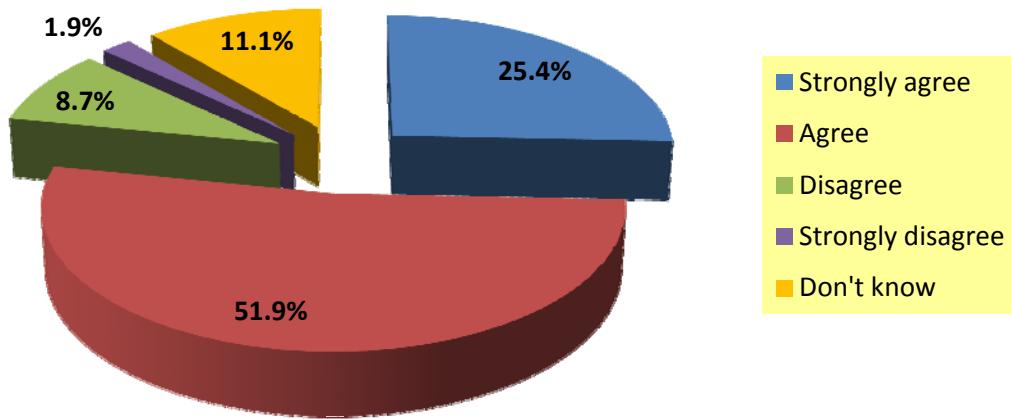
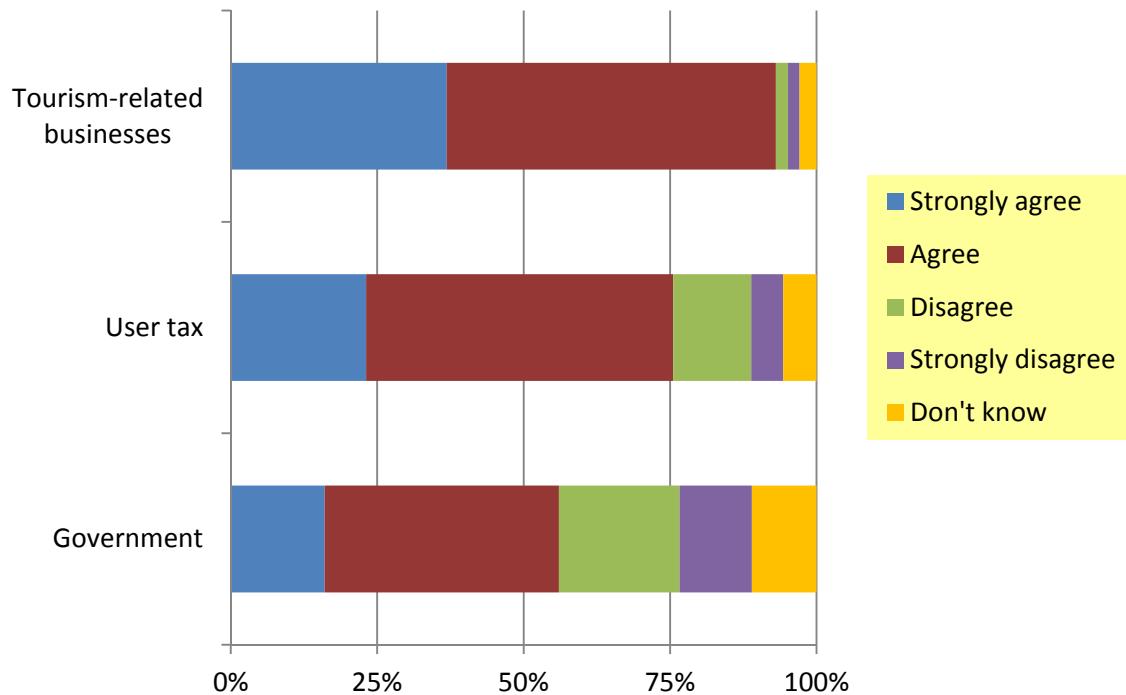


Figure 4.2: "Funds to increase tourism in Winnebago County should come from ..."



Chapter 5

SUPPORT FOR SPECIFIC TOURISM PROJECTS

Six tourism projects were posed to survey respondents as to their importance to the community: build a convention center with hotel in downtown Rockford; add attractive gateways into the city of Rockford and other towns; maintain and improve facilities for amateur sports tournaments; help downtown Rockford revitalization; connect bike paths to rural and outlying areas of county; promote ecotourism such as nature/forest preserves, conservation, hiking and canoeing. After assessing the importance of the projects, survey respondents were asked which they would support for more funding.

RANKING OF TOURISM PROJECTS

Shown in order of support on Table 5.1, two projects emerge clearly on top as to their importance to the community: ecotourism and facilities for amateur sports tournaments.

Table 5.1
SUPPORT FOR SPECIFIC TOURISM PROJECTS

Rank	Initiative	Mean Score	Percent Respondents ¹			
			Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	Promoting ecotourism	3.29	33.2%	58.3%	2.6%	1.6%
2	Facilities for amateur sports tournaments	3.27	32.2%	57.0%	2.8%	1.9%
3	Connecting bike paths	3.04	25.8%	44.0%	14.6%	3.6%
4	Adding attractive gateways	2.93	20.4%	45.9%	18.8%	4.1%
5	Downtown Rockford revitalization	2.92	26.1%	41.7%	16.2%	8.5%
6	Build convention center with hotel in downtown Rockford	2.42	14.3%	23.6%	29.9%	16.5%

¹Don't know not shown. See tables 5.9-5.14.

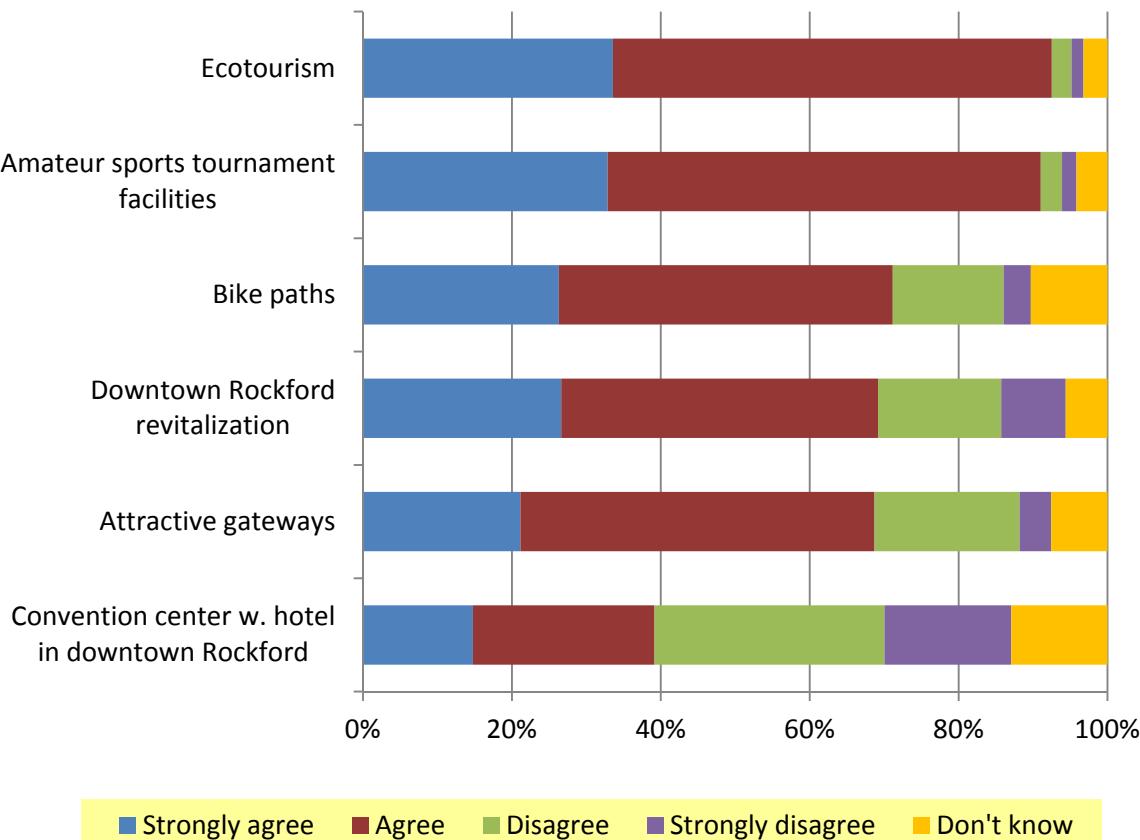
With practically identical levels of support, nine in ten respondents feel ecotourism and amateur sports tournaments are important. In both cases, one-third indicate strong agreement and an additional three in five agreement. Very low levels of disagreement (less than 5% for disagree plus strongly disagree) are expressed for these two projects. Their mean scores of 3.29 ecotourism and 3.27 amateur sports tournament facilities also reflect the favorable attitude survey respondents hold about these endeavors.

Placing third is connecting bike paths, rated favorably with almost seven in ten stating that they strong agree (25.8%) or agree (44.0%). The mean score of 3.04 indicates solid agreement with this project, though quite a bit lower than the top two.

Ranked as fourth and fifth are attractive gateways and downtown Rockford revitalization, two projects with similar support. In both cases, two in three respondents strongly agree or agree that these are important. For attractive gateways, one in five (20.4%) strongly agree and 45.9% agree, though 18.8% disagree and 4.1% strongly disagree. For downtown Rockford revitalization, one quarter (26.1%) strongly agree but 8.5% strongly disagree, more intense feelings about this project than the others.

With a mean score below 2.5 (midway between disagree and agree), building a convention center with hotel in downtown Rockford receives the lowest level of support of the six projects. Composite disagreement (46.4%) exceeds agreement (37.9%).

Figure 5.1: "The following projects are important to the community ..."



SUPPORT FOR EACH PROJECT

For discussion of the projects, respondents' agreement/disagreement is presented as mean scores ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree as well as composite agreement (strongly agree and agree combined) and disagreement (disagree and strongly disagree combined) proportions. Each section includes a summary table listing groups with the greatest and least support based on mean score. Details for responses including composite agreement/disagreement, mean scores for every demographic group and statements of statistical significance are shown on Tables 5.9 to 5.14 (numbered in order in which they appear in survey).

Promoting Ecotourism (Tables 5.2 and 5.14)

While survey respondents give their strongest endorsement to ecotourism as a strategy to pursue, differences are evident by gender, age group, length of residence and presence of children at home. Females post higher scores than males, young respondents (ages 18-39) over seniors, and households with children at home are statistically more supportive than their counterparts. Moreover, residents of 61102 or Roscoe favor ecotourism more than far southwest Winnebago County and Loves Park residents.

Table 5.2
TOP AND BOTTOM GROUPS FOR PROMOTING ECOTOURISM¹

Top Groups (Mean)	Bottom Groups (Mean)
1. 61102 (3.58)	1. Far SW Winnebago Co. (3.14)
2. Children at Home (3.42)	2. Age 65+ (3.19)
2. Ages 18-39 (3.42)	3. Bachelor's degree (3.20)
4. Roscoe (3.41)	4. Loves Park (3.22)
4. Other race/ethnic (3.41)	

¹Based on mean score where 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. Overall mean = 3.29.

When analyzing survey responses by composite agreement and disagreement, Rockton/South Beloit (97.1%) and 61102 (96.2%) show highest agreement while two groups display double-digit disagreement, Roscoe (12.8%) and far southwest Winnebago County (10.3%).

Facilities for Amateur Sports Tournaments (Tables 5.3 and 5.11)

Attitudes about maintaining and improving facilities for amateur sports tournaments exhibit the widest divergence based on geography, education, and race/ethnicity.

Most supportive of this project are residents of 61102, 61101, Rockton/South Beloit, Machesney Park and black respondents. Least supportive are residents of far southwest Winnebago County, Loves Park and 61103 along with four-year college degree holders and persons of other race/ethnicity.

Table 5.3
TOP AND BOTTOM GROUPS FOR MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING FACILITIES
FOR AMATEUR SPORTS TOURNAMENTS¹

Top Groups (Mean)	Bottom Groups (Mean)
1. 61102 (3.48)	1. Far SW Winnebago Co. (2.93)
2. 61101 (3.42)	2. Loves Park (3.06)
3. Rockton/S. Beloit (3.39)	3. Bachelor's degree (3.22)
4. Black (3.38)	4. 61103 (3.23)
5. Machesney Park (3.37)	4. Other race/ethnic (3.23)

¹Based on mean score where 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree.
Overall mean = 3.27.

Highest composite agreement for amateur sports tournament facilities comes from residents of 61101 (94.7%), Rockton/South Beloit (94.3%) and 61107 (94.2%), while far southwest Winnebago County (13.8%) and Loves Park (11.3%) express highest disagreement.

Connecting Bike Paths (Tables 5.4 and 5.13)

Connecting bike paths to the rural and outlying areas of the county is desired most by persons who have lived in the county for less than ten years, ages 18-39, and residents of Roscoe and Rockton/South Beloit. Least enthused about this project include seniors 65+ and residents of Loves Park, 61109 and 61104.

Table 5.4
TOP AND BOTTOM GROUPS FOR CONNECTING BIKE PATHS
TO RURAL AND OUTLYING AREAS OF COUNTY¹

Top Groups (Mean)	Bottom Groups (Mean)
1. Residence < 10 yrs. (3.33)	1. Age 65+ (2.78)
2. Age 18-39 (3.30)	2. Loves Park (2.82)
3. Roscoe (3.27)	2. 61109 (2.82)
4. Rockton/S. Beloit (3.24)	4. 61104 (2.86)

¹Based on mean score where 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. Overall mean = 3.04.

Composite agreement about bike paths indicate that Roscoe residents (85.1%), county residents of less than 10 years (84.7%), 18-39 year olds (82.5%) and those with children at home (82.4%) are most supportive, while disagreement accounts for one-quarter of respondents in 61109 (27.4%), 61104 (25.0%) and ages 65+ (24.9%).

Using a statistical technique called inter-item correlation, respondents' opinions about bike paths resemble responses about ecotourism more than any of the other four projects.

Adding Attractive Gateways (Tables 5.5 and 5.10)

Geographic area most affected the opinion about adding attractive gateways into Rockford and other towns. Residents living in 61104, 61102, and 61103 are most inclined to support this project, while Loves Park, far southwest Winnebago County, Roscoe and Machesney Park residents least likely. Blacks also favor the addition of attractive gateways.

Table 5.5
TOP AND BOTTOM GROUPS FOR
ADDING ATTRACTIVE GATEWAYS INTO ROCKFORD AND OTHER TOWNS¹

Top Groups (Mean)	Bottom Groups (Mean)
1. 61104 (3.24)	1. Loves Park (2.46)
1. 61102 (3.24)	2. Far SW Winnebago Co. (2.73)
3. Black (3.17)	2. Roscoe (2.73)
4. 61103 (3.11)	4. Machesney Park (2.76)

¹Based on mean score where 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. Overall mean = 2.93.

With at least three-quarters agreeing or strongly agreeing, 61102 (84.6%), 61104 (83.3%) and blacks (76.9%) display the highest composite agreement levels. Composite disagreement tops 30% among respondents in Loves Park (39.6%) and far southwest Winnebago County (31.0%). Length of residence in the county also matters with higher disagreement about the addition of attractive gateways by residents less than 10 years (32.2%) than 20+ year residents (20.8%). In no group, however, does composite disagreement surpass agreement.

Downtown Rockford Revitalization (Tables 5.6 and 5.12)

Helping to revitalize downtown Rockford finds greatest support among blacks, residents of 61103 and 61101, ages 18-39 and persons who have resided in the county for less than ten years. Expressing the least support are residents of Loves Park and 61114, males, associate/technical degree holders and seniors 65+.

Table 5.6
TOP AND BOTTOM GROUPS FOR HELPING
DOWNTOWN ROCKFORD REVITALIZATION¹

Top Groups (Mean)	Bottom Groups (Mean)
1. Black (3.46)	1. Loves Park (2.54)
2. 61103 (3.37)	2. 61114 (2.72)
3. Age 18-39 (3.31)	3. Male (2.80)
4. Residence < 10 yrs. (3.25)	3. Associate degree (2.80)
5. 61101 (3.23)	5. Age 65+ (2.83)

¹Based on mean score, where 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. Overall mean = 2.92.

Composite agreement levels are highest among blacks (92.3%) and residents of 61103 (90.2%), lowest among Loves Park (56.6%) and associate/technical degree holders (58.8%), both groups also with the highest disagreement at 37.7% and 30.4%, respectively. Statistical mean score differences occur based on gender, age, length of residence, presence of children at home and some geographical areas.

Building Convention Center with Hotel in Downtown Rockford (Tables 5.7 and 5.9)

Besides obtaining the lowest overall support, building a convention center with hotel in downtown Rockford also produces the widest differences among demographic groups. Showing a mean of about 3.0 which equates to agree on the four-point scale, blacks and residents of 61103 most favor this project. Also leaning towards a favorable assessment are 10-19 year residents and 61102. Conversely two groups post mean scores that represent disagree: Loves Park and Rockton/South Beloit.

Table 5.7
TOP AND BOTTOM GROUPS FOR
BUILDING CONVENTION CENTER WITH HOTEL IN DOWNTOWN ROCKFORD¹

Top Groups (Mean)	Bottom Groups (Mean)
1. Black (3.04)	1. Loves Park (2.00)
2. 61103 (2.94)	2. Rockton/S. Beloit (2.04)
3. Residence 10-19 yrs. (2.82)	3. Male (2.29)
4. 61102 (2.78)	4. Associate degree (2.30)

¹Based on mean score where 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. Overall mean = 2.42.

Five groups show wide gaps between composite agreement and disagreement. Agreement surpasses disagreement by more than 25 percentage points among blacks, 61103 and 61102 residents, while disagreement surpasses agreement to the same degree for residents of Loves Park, Rockton/South Beloit. Mean score differences are statistically significant based on gender, age, length of residence, presence of children at home and some geographical areas.

Using inter-item correlation, respondents' opinions about building a convention center are most similar to their responses about helping downtown Rockford revitalization.

FUNDING FOR PROJECTS

After assessment of importance, survey respondents indicated which of the six tourism projects they would support for more funding. They could select as many as they wished.

Not surprisingly, respondent support for additional funding closely resembles the projects' assessment of importance. Easily on top, with more than six in ten survey respondents supporting more funding, are promoting ecotourism (65.2%) and maintaining and improving facilities for amateur sports tournaments (62.7%). Half (49.4%) want more funding for connecting bike paths to the rural and outlying areas of Winnebago County. Fewer than half support funding for revitalizing downtown Rockford (44.6%) and adding attractive gateways into Rockford and other towns (42.7%). Only one-quarter (25.2%) believe that the construction of a convention center with hotel in downtown Rockford merits more funding.

Table 5.8
SUPPORT MORE FUNDING FOR PROJECTS

Rank	Initiative	Percent
1	Promoting ecotourism	65.2%
2	Facilities for amateur sports tournaments	62.7%
3	Connecting bike paths	49.4%
4	Revitalizing downtown Rockford	44.6%
5	Adding attractive gateways	42.7%
6	Building a convention center with hotel in downtown Rockford	25.2%

Table 5.9
AGREEMENT LEVELS FOR
BUILD CONVENTION CENTER WITH HOTEL IN DOWNTOWN ROCKFORD

Group	Percent ¹			Mean Score ² (Scale 1-4)
	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
All	37.9%	46.4%	12.5%	2.42
Gender				
Female	40.6%	40.6%	15.0%	2.55
Male	35.1%	52.6%	9.6%	2.29
Age (in years)				
18-39	52.5%	37.5%	10.0%	2.72
40-49	48.7%	39.8%	9.7%	2.52
50-64	36.2%	51.4%	10.5%	2.37
65+	30.0%	46.4%	17.2%	2.33
Race/Ethnicity³				
White	36.5%	47.6%	12.8%	2.39
Black	61.5%	26.9%	7.7%	3.04
Other	51.5%	36.4%	9.1%	2.59
Education				
High school or less	35.5%	43.2%	16.1%	2.50
Some college, no degree	40.9%	44.0%	10.7%	2.45
Associate, technical degree	30.4%	54.9%	11.8%	2.30
Bachelor's degree	39.9%	45.7%	13.0%	2.42
Graduate, professional degree	41.6%	45.6%	11.2%	2.42
Length of Residence				
Less than 10 years	45.8%	37.3%	15.3%	2.61
10-19 years	50.0%	33.3%	15.3%	2.82
20 years or more	35.7%	48.7%	12.0%	2.36
Children < 18 at Home				
Yes	52.2%	35.8%	10.1%	2.71
No	33.7%	49.3%	13.4%	2.34

Group	Percent ¹			Mean Score ² (Scale 1-4)
	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
Geographic Area⁴				
Far SW Winnebago County ⁵	31.0%	51.7%	3.4%	2.33
61101 – Rockford	44.7%	36.8%	10.5%	2.71
61102 – Rockford	57.7%	30.8%	7.7%	2.78
61103 – Rockford	61.0%	24.4%	12.2%	2.94
61104 – Rockford	45.8%	45.8%	4.2%	2.45
61107 – Rockford	34.0%	48.5%	15.5%	2.41
61108 – Rockford	40.0%	46.3%	7.5%	2.38
61109 – Rockford	45.2%	38.7%	14.5%	2.60
61114 – Rockford	38.9%	48.6%	11.1%	2.33
Rockton and South Beloit	25.7%	54.3%	17.1%	2.04
Roscoe	31.9%	51.1%	17.0%	2.46
Machesney Park	35.4%	50.0%	12.5%	2.39
Loves Park	22.6%	54.7%	22.6%	2.00

¹Percents based on total sample including no answer.

²Mean score from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. “Don’t know” responses omitted from mean score computations.

³White and black groups are non-Hispanic; other includes Hispanic, Asian, multi-racial, other.

⁴Areas with 24 or more respondents.

⁵Pecatonica (61063), Winnebago (61088) and Seward (61077).

*Statistically significant mean score differences by gender, age group, race/ethnicity, length of residence, and presence of children at home.
Also geographic areas in which scores differ by more than 0.5.*

Table 5.10
AGREEMENT LEVELS FOR ADDING ATTRACTIVE GATEWAYS INTO ROCKFORD
AND OTHER TOWNS

Group	Percent ¹			Mean Score ² (Scale 1-4)
	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
All	66.3%	22.9%	7.3%	2.93
Gender				
Female	64.9%	23.2%	6.3%	2.92
Male	67.9%	22.5%	8.6%	2.94
Age (in years)				
18-39	65.0%	31.3%	3.8%	2.95
40-49	65.5%	22.1%	8.0%	2.89
50-64	68.5%	24.9%	5.1%	2.92
65+	64.8%	18.0%	10.7%	2.95
Race/Ethnicity ³				
White	66.4%	22.6%	7.2%	2.93
Black	76.9%	11.5%	7.7%	3.17
Other	60.6%	27.3%	12.1%	2.90
Education				
High school or less	68.4%	17.4%	7.7%	2.99
Some college, no degree	71.7%	17.6%	6.9%	2.98
Associate, technical degree	63.7%	26.5%	7.8%	2.84
Bachelor's degree	63.8%	26.8%	7.2%	2.92
Graduate, professional degree	62.4%	28.8%	6.4%	2.89
Length of Residence				
Less than 10 years	64.4%	32.2%	1.7%	2.82
10-19 years	62.5%	30.6%	4.2%	2.90
20 years or more	67.0%	20.8%	8.3%	2.95
Children < 18 at Home				
Yes	67.3%	27.7%	3.1%	2.93
No	66.0%	21.4%	8.6%	2.93

Group	Percent ¹			Mean Score ² (Scale 1-4)
	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
Geographic Area⁴				
Far SW Winnebago County ⁵	44.8%	31.0%	3.4%	2.73
61101 – Rockford	71.1%	13.2%	7.9%	3.09
61102 – Rockford	84.6%	11.5%	3.8%	3.24
61103 – Rockford	73.2%	19.5%	2.4%	3.11
61104 – Rockford	83.3%	4.2%	8.3%	3.24
61107 – Rockford	65.0%	26.2%	7.8%	2.90
61108 – Rockford	68.8%	18.8%	7.5%	3.01
61109 – Rockford	69.4%	21.0%	9.7%	3.00
61114 – Rockford	68.1%	20.8%	8.3%	3.00
Rockton and South Beloit	68.6%	25.7%	2.9%	2.94
Roscoe	66.0%	29.8%	2.1%	2.73
Machesney Park	58.3%	27.1%	10.4%	2.76
Loves Park	50.9%	39.6%	9.4%	2.46

¹Percents based on total sample including no answer.

²Mean score from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. “Don’t know” responses omitted from mean score computations.

³White and black groups are non-Hispanic; other includes Hispanic, Asian, multi-racial, other.

⁴Areas with 24 or more respondents.

⁵Pecatonica (61063), Winnebago (61088) and Seward (61077).

Mean score differences exceeding 0.5 for geographic areas are statistically significant.

Table 5.11
AGREEMENT LEVELS FOR MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING FACILITIES FOR
AMATEUR SPORTS TOURNAMENTS

Group	Percent ¹			Mean Score ² (Scale 1-4)
	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
All	89.2%	4.7%	4.1%	3.27
Gender				
Female	88.7%	4.7%	3.4%	3.28
Male	89.7%	4.6%	5.0%	3.27
Age (in years)				
18-39	88.8%	6.3%	5.0%	3.33
40-49	87.6%	3.5%	6.2%	3.29
50-64	90.3%	5.4%	2.7%	3.24
65+	88.8%	3.9%	4.3%	3.29
Race/Ethnicity ³				
White	89.9%	4.3%	4.3%	3.29
Black	92.3%	0.0%	0.0%	3.38
Other	84.8%	6.1%	6.1%	3.23
Education				
High school or less	87.7%	3.9%	5.2%	3.25
Some college, no degree	88.7%	4.4%	5.0%	3.28
Associate, technical degree	88.2%	2.9%	6.9%	3.29
Bachelor's degree	92.0%	5.8%	0.7%	3.22
Graduate, professional degree	89.6%	5.6%	3.2%	3.35
Length of Residence				
Less than 10 years	83.1%	5.1%	8.5%	3.29
10-19 years	86.1%	4.2%	5.6%	3.26
20 years or more	90.2%	4.7%	3.4%	3.27
Children < 18 at Home				
Yes	89.3%	4.4%	4.4%	3.33
No	89.1%	4.8%	4.0%	3.26

Group	Percent ¹			Mean Score ² (Scale 1-4)
	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
Geographic Area⁴				
Far SW Winnebago County ⁵	79.3%	13.8%	0.0%	2.93
61101 – Rockford	94.7%	0.0%	2.6%	3.42
61102 – Rockford	92.3%	3.8%	0.0%	3.48
61103 – Rockford	90.2%	7.3%	0.0%	3.23
61104 – Rockford	79.2%	0.0%	16.7%	3.32
61107 – Rockford	94.2%	2.9%	2.9%	3.33
61108 – Rockford	90.0%	6.3%	0.0%	3.32
61109 – Rockford	87.1%	4.8%	8.1%	3.25
61114 – Rockford	90.3%	4.2%	5.6%	3.25
Rockton and South Beloit	94.3%	0.0%	2.9%	3.39
Roscoe	85.1%	4.3%	6.4%	3.26
Machesney Park	91.7%	4.2%	4.2%	3.37
Loves Park	81.1%	11.3%	5.7%	3.06

¹Percents based on total sample including no answer.

²Mean score from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. “Don’t know” responses omitted from mean score computations.

³White and black groups are non-Hispanic; other includes Hispanic, Asian, multi-racial, other.

⁴Areas with 24 or more respondents.

⁵Pecatonica (61063), Winnebago (61088) and Seward (61077).

Mean score differences exceeding 0.5 for geographic areas are statistically significant.

Table 5.12
AGREEMENT LEVELS FOR DOWNTOWN ROCKFORD REVITALIZATION

Group	Percent ¹			Mean Score ² (Scale 1-4)
	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
All	67.8%	24.6%	5.5%	2.92
Gender				
Female	71.5%	20.8%	5.0%	3.03
Male	63.2%	29.1%	6.3%	2.80
Age (in years)				
18-39	85.0%	12.5%	2.5%	3.31
40-49	69.9%	23.9%	5.3%	2.91
50-64	65.8%	28.8%	3.5%	2.89
65+	63.1%	24.5%	9.0%	2.83
Race/Ethnicity ³				
White	66.6%	25.5%	5.7%	2.90
Black	92.3%	7.7%	0.0%	3.46
Other	75.8%	18.2%	6.1%	3.00
Education				
High school or less	59.4%	28.4%	10.3%	2.85
Some college, no degree	71.1%	22.6%	2.5%	2.95
Associate, technical degree	58.8%	30.4%	9.8%	2.80
Bachelor's degree	72.5%	21.7%	3.6%	2.98
Graduate, professional degree	75.2%	21.6%	2.4%	2.99
Length of Residence				
Less than 10 years	84.7%	11.9%	1.7%	3.25
10-19 years	79.2%	15.3%	4.2%	3.15
20 years or more	64.5%	27.2%	6.2%	2.86
Children < 18 at Home				
Yes	79.2%	18.2%	1.9%	3.13
No	64.2%	26.6%	6.7%	2.86

Group	Percent ¹			Mean Score ² (Scale 1-4)
	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
Geographic Area⁴				
Far SW Winnebago County ⁵	62.1%	31.0%	0.0%	2.87
61101 – Rockford	63.2%	15.8%	10.5%	3.23
61102 – Rockford	76.9%	23.1%	0.0%	3.08
61103 – Rockford	90.2%	9.8%	0.0%	3.37
61104 – Rockford	79.2%	16.7%	4.2%	3.09
61107 – Rockford	73.8%	20.4%	5.8%	3.02
61108 – Rockford	66.3%	22.5%	6.3%	2.94
61109 – Rockford	62.9%	25.8%	11.3%	2.87
61114 – Rockford	63.9%	31.9%	2.8%	2.72
Rockton and South Beloit	68.6%	25.7%	2.9%	2.88
Roscoe	66.0%	27.7%	6.4%	2.95
Machesney Park	64.6%	27.1%	4.2%	2.84
Loves Park	56.6%	37.7%	5.7%	2.54

¹Percents based on total sample including no answer.

²Mean score from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. “Don’t know” responses omitted from mean score computations.

³White and black groups are non-Hispanic; other includes Hispanic, Asian, multi-racial, other.

⁴Areas with 24 or more respondents.

⁵Pecatonica (61063), Winnebago (61088) and Seward (61077).

*Statistically significant mean score differences by gender, age group, race/ethnicity, length of residence, and presence of children at home.
Also geographic areas in which scores differ by more than 0.5.*

Table 5.13
AGREEMENT LEVELS FOR CONNECTING BIKE PATHS

Group	Percent ¹			Mean Score ² (Scale 1-4)
	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
All	69.8%	18.2%	10.1%	3.04
Gender				
Female	71.2%	16.4%	9.5%	3.07
Male	68.2%	20.2%	10.9%	3.02
Age (in years)				
18-39	82.5%	12.5%	5.0%	3.30
40-49	81.4%	9.7%	6.2%	3.18
50-64	75.1%	17.1%	6.6%	3.12
65+	54.5%	24.9%	17.6%	2.78
Race/Ethnicity ³				
White	69.7%	17.7%	10.6%	3.05
Black	73.1%	15.4%	7.7%	3.22
Other	75.8%	21.2%	3.0%	2.94
Education				
High school or less	59.4%	21.9%	14.8%	2.95
Some college, no degree	74.2%	16.4%	8.2%	3.08
Associate, technical degree	70.6%	17.6%	9.8%	3.04
Bachelor's degree	71.0%	18.1%	9.4%	3.04
Graduate, professional degree	76.8%	15.2%	7.2%	3.13
Length of Residence				
Less than 10 years	84.7%	6.8%	8.5%	3.33
10-19 years	70.8%	13.9%	12.5%	3.15
20 years or more	68.3%	19.7%	10.0%	3.00
Children < 18 at Home				
Yes	82.4%	11.9%	4.4%	3.21
No	66.2%	19.9%	11.9%	2.99

Group	Percent ¹			Mean Score ² (Scale 1-4)
	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
Geographic Area⁴				
Far SW Winnebago County ⁵	65.5%	24.1%	3.4%	3.08
61101 – Rockford	71.1%	10.5%	13.2%	3.19
61102 – Rockford	80.8%	15.4%	3.8%	3.16
61103 – Rockford	70.7%	17.1%	9.8%	3.08
61104 – Rockford	66.7%	25.0%	4.2%	2.86
61107 – Rockford	64.1%	17.5%	18.4%	3.08
61108 – Rockford	65.0%	20.0%	13.8%	3.00
61109 – Rockford	53.2%	27.4%	17.7%	2.82
61114 – Rockford	76.4%	18.1%	2.8%	3.06
Rockton and South Beloit	80.0%	14.3%	5.7%	3.24
Roscoe	85.1%	10.6%	4.3%	3.27
Machesney Park	75.0%	14.6%	6.3%	3.05
Loves Park	71.7%	20.8%	7.5%	2.82

¹Percents based on total sample including no answer.

²Mean score from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. “Don’t know” responses omitted from mean score computations.

³White and black groups are non-Hispanic; other includes Hispanic, Asian, multi-racial, other.

⁴Areas with 24 or more respondents.

⁵Pecatonica (61063), Winnebago (61088) and Seward (61077).

Statistically significant mean score differences by age group, length of residence, and presence of children at home. Also geographic areas in which scores differ by more than 0.5.

Table 5.14
AGREEMENT LEVELS FOR PROMOTING ECOTOURISM

Group	Percent ¹			Mean Score ² (Scale 1-4)
	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
All	91.5%	4.2%	3.2%	3.29
Gender				
Female	92.9%	3.7%	1.8%	3.33
Male	89.7%	5.0%	5.0%	3.23
Age (in years)				
18-39	91.3%	7.5%	1.3%	3.42
40-49	90.3%	3.5%	5.3%	3.36
50-64	92.2%	4.3%	2.7%	3.31
65+	91.4%	3.4%	3.4%	3.19
Race/Ethnicity ³				
White	92.1%	3.6%	3.4%	3.29
Black	88.5%	7.7%	0.0%	3.36
Other	93.9%	3.0%	3.0%	3.41
Education				
High school or less	89.0%	3.2%	5.2%	3.31
Some college, no degree	91.8%	3.8%	3.8%	3.27
Associate, technical degree	94.1%	2.9%	2.0%	3.32
Bachelor's degree	90.6%	5.8%	2.9%	3.20
Graduate, professional degree	92.8%	5.6%	1.6%	3.35
Length of Residence				
Less than 10 years	88.1%	3.4%	8.5%	3.39
10-19 years	91.7%	5.6%	2.8%	3.40
20 years or more	91.8%	4.2%	2.7%	3.26
Children < 18 at Home				
Yes	93.1%	3.8%	3.1%	3.42
No	91.0%	4.4%	3.3%	3.25

Group	Percent ¹			Mean Score ² (Scale 1-4)
	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
Geographic Area⁴				
Far SW Winnebago County ⁵	86.2%	10.3%	3.4%	3.14
61101 – Rockford	89.5%	5.3%	2.6%	3.25
61102 – Rockford	96.2%	3.8%	0.0%	3.58
61103 – Rockford	95.1%	2.4%	0.0%	3.40
61104 – Rockford	83.3%	8.3%	4.2%	3.23
61107 – Rockford	93.2%	4.9%	1.9%	3.25
61108 – Rockford	93.8%	2.5%	3.8%	3.34
61109 – Rockford	90.3%	6.5%	3.2%	3.23
61114 – Rockford	94.4%	5.6%	0.0%	3.24
Rockton and South Beloit	97.1%	0.0%	0.0%	3.29
Roscoe	87.2%	12.8%	0.0%	3.41
Machesney Park	87.5%	4.2%	4.2%	3.30
Loves Park	92.5%	3.8%	3.8%	3.22

¹Percents based on total sample including no answer.

²Mean score from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. “Don’t know” responses omitted from mean score computations.

³White and black groups are non-Hispanic; other includes Hispanic, Asian, multi-racial, other.

⁴Areas with 24 or more respondents.

⁵Pecatonica (61063), Winnebago (61088) and Seward (61077).

Statistically significant mean score differences by gender, age group, length of residence, and presence of children at home.

Chapter 6

OPEN-ENDED COMMENTS

At the survey's end, respondents were asked to reply to two open-ended questions. Unlike questions with prescribed choices that enable a quantified look at significant issues, the open-ended questions ask survey respondents to express impressions, opinions and ideas in their own words. These comments give additional depth to topics covered in the survey. They offer valuable suggestions and anecdotes about personal experiences both here and in other locales.

The following sections summarize comments in terms of frequency. When a comment addressed several topics, each topic was tabulated separately. The reader is urged to read verbatim comments as presented in Appendix C to gain a fuller understanding of the scope and flavor of respondents' sentiments.

MAKING ROCKFORD AND WINNEBAGO COUNTY MORE WELCOMING

More than six in ten (62.4%) respondents made suggestions for ways to make Rockford and Winnebago County more welcoming to visitors. Receiving more than 80 mentions each are four areas: clean-up, appearance; amusements, activities, entertainment; lower crime, safety; and roads, transportation.

More than any other topic, survey respondents suggest that the city of Rockford and surrounding areas be cleaned up. A more attractive appearance would draw more tourists. Areas like parts of downtown Rockford, west Rockford, and gateway roads into the city look cluttered, unkempt and dirty, respondents stated. Described repeatedly as eyesores, some homes and buildings are dilapidated, unoccupied, or strewn with garbage. Litter and trash are unsightly. Trees and flowers beautify an area and should be abundant.

Additional activities would bring more visitors to the greater Rockford area say survey respondents. More events designed to appeal to families, children, adults and seniors are named as well as specific activities such as concerts, hiking, canoeing, skating, cross-country skiing, water rafting, dirt track, carnivals and sporting events like softball and soccer games. Amusement parks, playgrounds, and hosting more attractions and tournaments (fishing, golf) would encourage visitors to come to the region.

Numerous respondents say that safety plays a major role in efforts to increase local tourism. The sentiment of "less crime" is stated by 67 respondents as the foremost way to make Rockford and Winnebago County more welcoming. Several respondents remark on the city's high crime rate relative to other cities and several others point out the frequency of violent crime, factors that deter people from visiting. Many do not feel safe in downtown Rockford, especially walking there at night. Some suggest that more police be hired.

Table 6.1
COMMENTS ABOUT MAKING ROCKFORD AND
WINNEBAGO COUNTY MORE WELCOMING TO VISITORS

Rank	Topic	Number of Mentions
1	Clean-up, appearance	96
2	Amusements, activities, entertainment	92
3	Less crime, safer place, more police	91
4	Roads, ease of access, public transportation	85
5	Casino	51
6	Advertising, signage	39
7	Downtown, revitalization	35
8	Costs	27
9	Attitudes, image	26
10	More jobs and businesses	23
11	Rock River	21
12	Hotels, restaurants	18
13	Convention center	15
13	Park District, bike paths	15
15	Promote downtown events/shops	13
16	Improve schools	12
17	Lower taxes	10
18	Parking	9
19	Shops, outlet mall	8
20	Sidewalks	5
21	Not visitors' destination	4
---	Mixed	20

The fourth leading factor to enhance tourism involves transportation. Better roads are proposed by more than 50 respondents. While city streets need repair, particular attention should be paid to gateway roads into Rockford and those going into and out of the airport. Their poor condition creates a negative first impression. Two other dimensions of the transportation issue are the ease of access as well as traffic flows, both believed to be inadequate according to some survey respondents. Public transportation also affects the draw of visitors. Adding passenger train service between Rockford and Chicago and Wisconsin would boost tourism, some claim.

Placing fifth among ways to make the area more welcoming is the addition of a local casino. Most who specify a preferred location indicate that the casino should not be placed in downtown Rockford. While mentioned by 51 respondents, the frequency of the casino suggestion is notably lower than the top four topics.

Advertising and signage would help tourism efforts say 39 respondents. Advertisements could be general in nature as well as promoting one-time events and current attractions. Brochures, billboards, advertisements in Chicago magazines, television ("Discover Rockford" modeled after the Wisconsin version) and internet could all be used to convey better knowledge about the area. Signage should be upgraded, attractive, easy to read, and installed at frequently trafficked areas and gateway roads.

Downtown and related revitalization efforts were named by 35 respondents, most of whom strongly favor improving downtown Rockford.

The four next most commonly mentioned topics to boost tourism include costs, attitudes and image, more jobs and businesses, and the river. The factor of costs reinforces the importance of keeping the price of events and attractions affordable. Families are seeking worthwhile entertainment but will not participate if costs are too high. Comments about attitudes and image emphasize the need for local residents to feel positive about the area and convey those positive feelings to others. The preponderance of negative attitudes and publicity often puts Rockford in a bad light. Attracting businesses and adding jobs will stimulate tourism say 24 respondents, some of whom are dismayed by the loss of decent-paying local jobs.

The Rock River has untapped potential for events, shopping, entertainment and boating, according to 21 respondents. This natural asset could be enhanced, beautified and used as a pivotal waterfront attraction.

Receiving fewer than 20 mentions but worthy of discussion are the following means to make the region more welcoming to visitors: hotels, restaurants (specific suggestions for types and locations); promoting, preserving and maintaining the area's parks and bike paths; adding a convention/visitors' center located near the toll way or at the edge of Rockford; improving public schools and lower taxes.

ANYTHING ELSE

The final survey question gave respondents the opportunity to comment on other matters related to tourism in the Rockford region. In many cases, comments mirror suggestions and perceptions offered in the previous question. Numerous comments address activities/amusements/entertainment/shops which as a group is the most frequent category of mention. Many of these comments talk about cultivating the market for amateur sports, outdoor activities, and musical events. Downtown Rockford is the second most common category of mention with some viewing revitalization as a key development strategy, while others believing those efforts are wasted.

Table 6.2
COMMENTS ABOUT “ANYTHING ELSE”

Rank	Topic	Number of Mentions
1	Activities, amusements, entertainment	58
2	Downtown, revitalization	46
3	Advertising, signage	32
4	Roads, ease of access, public transportation, parking	26
5	Attitudes, publicity	23
5	Clean-up, appearance	23
7	Not a visitors' destination	15
7	Safety, lower crime	15
9	Casino	14
10	Convention center	12
10	Lower taxes	12
10	Park District	12
13	Hotels, restaurants	9
13	Lower costs	9
15	Business, jobs	8
16	Rock River	6
---	Mixed	42

Also in the top three topics about which respondents made comments is advertising/signage. Most urge more promotion of existing attractions. Touted are area's parks, gardens, golf courses, Klehm Arboretum, Nicholas Conservatory, Midway Village and Tinker Cottage, all of which could attract more visitors given their caliber and value. Advertising efforts should be directed toward Chicago, Wisconsin as well as local residents. Billboards, television and magazine advertisements are the primary vehicles mentioned for promotional efforts.

Similar to the previous section, local roads are not believed to be in good condition and this hurts tourism. Downtown traffic patterns are confusing to first time visitors. Rail service would benefit the area and the airport is appreciated.

Comments about appearance and clean up focus on specific areas of Rockford (west Rockford, Blackhawk Island, Ace of Diamonds, unused buildings along the river, downtown) as well as overall needs such as litter, sidewalk repair and the need to curtail expansion of the dump.

Despite the favorable aspects of living in the Rockford region, too many local attitudes are negative, some respondents say. That coupled with the high crime rate has given Rockford a poor reputation. More emphasis should be devoted to accentuating the positive. Numerous respondents believe Rockford and environs have much to be proud of. Some propose that more local involvement would build greater community pride.

Safety/crime, as mentioned by 15 respondents, addresses the importance of reducing crime in Rockford. The perception of violence and knowledge of the high crime rate make people uncomfortable. People do not want to visit places where they do not feel safe.

On equal footing with crime/safety in terms of frequency of comment is the perception that Rockford is not a visitors' destination. Rockford does not have enough attractions to attract a significant number of people to spend a vacation or extended weekend in the region. The parks, Conservatory and Coronado are draws but not enough for a sustained visit. Sporting events offer the greatest promise according to one commentator.

Of the 14 comments about a possible casino in the area, 11 favor such a development, while three are opposed. A dozen respondents comment about a convention center and related tourism efforts, most supportive but not all. Six express appreciation for RACVB. Rockford parks are mentioned by 12 respondents, eight of whom praise them highly and feel that the parks and Rockford Park District sponsored activities are one of the best features of the local area. Also mentioned by 12 respondents, taxes are felt to be too high.

Four other topics mentioned by fewer than ten respondents are hotels/restaurants, lower costs (of events, attractions), business/jobs and Rock River.

Appendix A

COVER LETTER AND SURVEY INSTRUMENT



March 2012

Dear Rockford area resident,

The Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (RACVB) wants to know what YOU think about bringing more visitors to the Rockford area. We have talked to businesses, but need your opinion because our activities affect you too.

Why is it important that YOU complete this survey?

- RACVB seeks community guidance as we pursue major tourism-related projects to draw more leisure visitors and conferences/tournaments to the Rockford region.
- Your home is among the one in twenty Winnebago County households to receive this survey. We cannot ask everyone, so 5,000 households have been randomly selected to represent the entire county. That means YOUR REPLY stands for 20 homes.

Health Systems Research (HSR) of the University of Illinois at Rockford is helping us with this survey. Your completed survey should be sent to them by **April 30, 2012** in the enclosed postage-paid envelope. HSR will collect the surveys and prepare a report of findings. We will use these findings to decide how to move forward.

You are not asked for your name on this survey. This survey is anonymous so none of your responses or comments can be tied to you. Those who answer this survey must be 18 years or older. If you have any questions, please contact HSR at 1.815.395.5639 or toll-free 1.800.854.4461.

Because we know your time is valuable, please know how much we appreciate your efforts to fill out and return the survey. As a token of our thanks, we are enclosing coupons for Rockford Park District activities.

THANK YOU.

Linda Heckert
Chair, RACVB Board of Directors

John Groh
President/CEO, RACVB

ROCKFORD AREA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

SURVEY OF WINNEBAGO COUNTY RESIDENTS

AWARENESS

1. *Before receiving this survey, did you know that an organization named Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (RACVB) exists?*

(1) Yes (2) Not sure (3) No (Go to Q. 10)

2-9. *I have encountered RACVB in the following ways: Check all that apply*

2. <input type="checkbox"/> Advertisement in magazine	7. <input type="checkbox"/> Website, Facebook
3. <input type="checkbox"/> Amateur sports tournaments	8. <input type="checkbox"/> Worked with RACVB on meeting, reunion, tournament, etc.
4. <input type="checkbox"/> Calendar of events	9. <input type="checkbox"/> Other - what? _____
5. <input type="checkbox"/> Efforts to bring casino here	
6. <input type="checkbox"/> Local media	

ROLE AND DEVELOPMENT

10. *How important are visitors and tourism to Rockford's regional economy? Check one*

<input type="checkbox"/> (1) Very important	<input type="checkbox"/> (3) Not important
<input type="checkbox"/> (2) Important	<input type="checkbox"/> (4) Don't know

11. *How do you think visitors affect the local economy? Check one*

<input type="checkbox"/> (1) No effect	
<input type="checkbox"/> (2) Some positive effect by bringing in limited visitor spending	
<input type="checkbox"/> (3) Strong enough positive effect to improve local economy	
<input type="checkbox"/> (4) Negative effect - why? _____	

SUPPORT

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree. *Check one response per statement*

	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
12. <i>Drawing visitors to the Rockford region improves the local economy</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
13. <i>More money should be invested to bring more visitors to the Rockford area</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

ROCKFORD AREA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

SURVEY OF WINNEBAGO COUNTY RESIDENTS

Funds to increase tourism in

*Winnebago County should come
from one or more of the following:*

	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
14. <i>Government</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. <i>Businesses related to tourism (hotels, restaurants)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. <i>User tax (paid when visitors buy food and beverages, stay in hotels)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*The following projects are important
to the community:*

	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
17. <i>Build a convention center with hotel in downtown Rockford</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. <i>Add attractive gateways into the city of Rockford and other towns</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. <i>Maintain and improve facilities for amateur sports tournaments</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. <i>Help downtown Rockford revitalization</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. <i>Connect existing bike paths to rural and outlying areas of county</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. <i>Promote ecotourism such as nature/forest preserves, conservation, hiking, canoeing</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I would support more funding for: Check all that apply

- 23. Building a convention center with hotel in downtown Rockford
- 24. Adding attractive gateways into Rockford and surrounding towns
- 25. Maintaining and improving facilities for amateur sports tournaments
- 26. Revitalizing downtown Rockford
- 27. Connecting bike paths to other areas of county
- 28. Promoting ecotourism such as nature/forest preserves, conservation, hiking, canoeing

ROCKFORD AREA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

SURVEY OF WINNEBAGO COUNTY RESIDENTS

ABOUT YOU

29. Your zip code _____

30. Your age group (1) 18-29 (4) 50-64
 (2) 30-39 (5) 65 and older
 (3) 40-49

31. Your gender (1) Male (2) Female

32. Your race/ethnicity (1) White, non-Hispanic (4) Asian
 (2) Black, non-Hispanic (5) Multi-racial
 (3) Hispanic (6) Other

33. What is the highest grade in school you completed? (1) Less than high school (4) Associate's or technical degree
 (2) High school diploma (5) Bachelor's degree
 (3) Some college, no degree (6) Graduate/professional degree

34. Length of residence in Winnebago County (1) Less than one year (4) 10-19 years
 (2) 1-4 years (5) 20 years or more
 (3) 5-9 years

35. Does your household include children under age 18 living at home? (1) Yes (2) No

YOUR COMMENTS

36. What would make Rockford and Winnebago County more welcoming to visitors?

37. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about tourism in the Rockford area?

THANK YOU

Appendix B

SURVEY FREQUENCIES

ROCKFORD AREA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU
SURVEY OF WINNEBAGO COUNTY RESIDENTS

Survey Frequencies

1. Before receiving this survey, did you know that an organization named Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (RACVB) exists?

Response	Number	Percent
Yes	576	84.0%
Not sure	38	5.5%
No	71	10.3%
No answer	1	0.1%
Total	686	100.0%

2-9. I have encountered RACVB in the following ways: *Check all that apply*

Response	Number	Percent
Advertisement in magazine	231	33.7%
Amateur sports tournaments	133	19.4%
Calendar of events	201	29.3%
Efforts to bring casino here	221	32.2%
Local media	489	71.3%
Website, Facebook	34	5.0%
Worked with RACVB on meeting, reunion, tournament, etc.	18	2.6%
Other – what? (See Comments in Appendix C.)	36	5.2%

10. How important are visitors and tourism to Rockford's regional economy? *Check one*

Response	Number	Percent
Very important	418	60.9%
Important	229	33.4%
Not important	16	2.3%
Don't know	22	3.2%
No answer	1	0.1%
Total	686	100.0%

11. How do you think visitors affect the local economy? *Check one*

Response	Number	Percent
No effect	4	0.6%
Some positive effect by bringing in limited visitor spending	241	35.1%
Strong enough positive effect to improve local economy	434	63.3%
Negative effect – why? (See comments in Appendix C.)	2	0.3%
No answer	5	0.7%
Total	686	100.0%

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree. *Check one response per statement*

12. Drawing visitors to the Rockford region improves the local economy

Response	Number	Percent
Strongly agree	379	55.2%
Agree	283	41.3%
Disagree	11	1.6%
Strongly disagree	1	0.1%
Don't know	11	1.6%
No answer	1	0.1%
Total	686	100.0%

13. More money should be invested to bring more visitors to the Rockford area

Response	Number	Percent
Strongly agree	174	25.4%
Agree	356	51.9%
Disagree	60	8.7%
Strongly disagree	13	1.9%
Don't know	76	11.1%
No answer	7	1.0%
Total	686	100.0%

Funds to increase tourism in Winnebago County should come from one or more of the following:

14. Government

Response	Number	Percent
Strongly agree	99	14.4%
Agree	246	35.9%
Disagree	127	18.5%
Strongly disagree	76	11.1%
Don't know	68	9.9%
No answer	70	10.2%
Total	686	100.0%

15. Businesses related to tourism (hotels, restaurants)

Response	Number	Percent
Strongly agree	245	35.7%
Agree	373	54.4%
Disagree	14	2.0%
Strongly disagree	13	1.9%
Don't know	19	2.8%
No answer	22	3.2%
Total	686	100.0%

16. User tax (paid when visitors buy food and beverages, stay in hotels)

Response	Number	Percent
Strongly agree	151	22.0%
Agree	342	49.9%
Disagree	87	12.7%
Strongly disagree	36	5.2%
Don't know	37	5.4%
No answer	33	4.8%
Total	686	100.0%

The following projects are important to the community:

17. Build a convention center with hotel in downtown Rockford

Response	Number	Percent
Strongly agree	98	14.3%
Agree	162	23.6%
Disagree	205	29.9%
Strongly disagree	113	16.5%
Don't know	86	12.5%
No answer	22	3.2%
Total	686	100.0%

18. Add attractive gateways into the city of Rockford and other towns

Response	Number	Percent
Strongly agree	140	20.4%
Agree	315	45.9%
Disagree	129	18.8%
Strongly disagree	28	4.1%
Don't know	50	7.3%
No answer	24	3.5%
Total	686	100.0%

19. Maintain and improve facilities for amateur sports tournaments

Response	Number	Percent
Strongly agree	221	32.2%
Agree	391	57.0%
Disagree	19	2.8%
Strongly disagree	13	1.9%
Don't know	28	4.1%
No answer	14	2.0%
Total	686	100.0%

20. Help downtown Rockford revitalization

Response	Number	Percent
Strongly agree	179	26.1%
Agree	286	41.7%
Disagree	111	16.2%
Strongly disagree	58	8.5%
Don't know	38	5.5%
No answer	14	2.0%
Total	686	100.0%

21. Connect existing bike paths to rural and outlying areas of county

Response	Number	Percent
Strongly agree	177	25.8%
Agree	302	44.0%
Disagree	100	14.6%
Strongly disagree	25	3.6%
Don't know	69	10.1%
No answer	13	1.9%
Total	696	100.0%

22. Promote ecotourism such as nature/forest preserves, conservation, hiking, canoeing

Response	Number	Percent
Strongly agree	228	33.2%
Agree	400	58.3%
Disagree	18	2.6%
Strongly disagree	11	1.6%
Don't know	22	3.2%
No answer	7	1.0%
Total	686	100.0%

23-28. I would support more funding for: *Check all that apply*

Response	Number	Percent
Building a convention center with hotel in downtown Rockford	173	25.2%
Adding attractive gateways into Rockford and surrounding towns	293	42.7%
Maintaining and improving facilities for amateur sports tournaments	430	62.7%
Revitalizing downtown Rockford	306	44.6%
Connecting bike paths to other areas of county	339	49.4%
Promoting ecotourism such as nature/forest preserves, conservation, hiking, canoeing	447	65.2%

29. Your zip code

Response	Number	Percent
61016 – Cherry Valley	13	1.9%
61024 – Durand	4	0.6%
61063 – Pecatonica	14	2.0%
61072 – Rockton	20	2.9%
61073 – Roscoe	47	6.9%
61077 – Seward	2	0.3%
61079 – Shirland	1	0.1%
61080 – South Beloit	15	2.2%
61088 – Winnebago	13	1.9%
61101 – Rockford Northwest	38	5.5%
61102 – Rockford Southwest	26	3.8%
61103 – Rockford North End	41	6.0%
61104 – Rockford Midtown	24	3.5%
61107 – Rockford Northeast	103	15.0%
61108 – Rockford Southeast	80	11.7%
61109 – Rockford Bypass	62	9.0%
61111 – Loves Park	53	7.7%
61114 – Rockford Far Northeast	72	10.5%
61115 – Machesney Park	48	7.0%
No answer	10	1.5%
Total	686	100.0%

30. Your age group

Response	Number	Percent
18-29	22	3.2%
30-39	58	8.5%
40-49	113	16.5%
50-64	257	37.5%
65 and older	233	34.0%
No answer	3	0.4%
Total	686	100.0%

31. Your gender

Response	Number	Percent
Male	302	44.0%
Female	379	55.2%
No answer	5	0.7%
Total	686	100.0%

32. Your race/ethnicity

Response	Number	Percent
White, non-Hispanic	611	89.1%
Black, non-Hispanic	26	3.8%
Hispanic	8	1.2%
Asian	8	1.2%
Multi-racial	9	1.3%
Other	8	1.2%
No answer	16	2.3%
Total	686	100.0%

33. What is the highest grade in school you completed?

Response	Number	Percent
Less than high school	12	1.7%
High school diploma	143	20.8%
Some college, no degree	159	23.2%
Associate's or technical degree	102	14.9%
Bachelor's degree	138	20.1%
Graduate/professional degree	125	18.2%
No answer	7	1.0%
Total	686	100.0%

34. Length of residence in Winnebago County

Response	Number	Percent
Less than one year	1	0.1%
1-4 years	15	2.2%
5-9 years	43	6.3%
10-19 years	72	10.5%
20 years or more	552	80.5%
No answer	3	0.4%
Total	686	100.0%

35. Does your household include children under age 18 living at home?

Response	Number	Percent
Yes	159	23.2%
No	523	76.2%
No answer	4	0.6%
Total	686	100.0%

36. What would make Rockford and Winnebago County more welcoming to visitors?

	Number	Percent
Comments	428	62.4%

See comments in Appendix C.

37. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about tourism in the Rockford area?

	Number	Percent
Comments	265	38.6%

See comments in Appendix C.

Appendix C

SURVEY COMMENTS

VISITORS BUREAU SURVEY 2012
COMMENTS

2-9. I have encountered RACVB in the following ways: 9. Other - what?

- Visited, asked questions about organization
- Personal friend
- Visited the office for info
- People who work for RACVB
- Friend works for Chamber and talks about RACVB
- Tourism and national conventions, worked for RACVB years ago
- Visited the Bureau on State Street
- Word of mouth
- Check local events
- Subcontract for promo photos
- I worked for city when formed
- As a church volunteer, I contacted groups like Rockford Ice Hogs, Rockford Riverhawks, received free promotional tickets like Riverhawks for Faith Night.
- Office Main & State travel info
- Visited office
- Friend works there - gather materials for new homeowners coming to Rockford
- Through work at Not-for-Profit
- Friend works for RACVB
- Chicago ad
- Billboard
- Stopped by and looked around in there
- Handout map at CherryVale
- I was the financial consultant who audited the organization a number of years ago brought in by the BOD.
- Work
- Visit office
- Friend works for RACVB
- Chamber
- I work at BMO Harris Center. They had a party there.
- Maps
- Friend worked there
- Ski Broncs overinflated visitor estimates

- Visited
- Personal contact
- Word of mouth
- The restaurant I work for has advertised and participated with RACVB in the past.
- Relative worked there

11. How do you think visitors affect the local economy? (4) Negative effect - why?

- Rockford and surrounding areas are busy and hectic enough.
- Not doing your job to promote tourism. All should be fired and replaced with others who will.

36. What would make Rockford and Winnebago County more welcoming to visitors?

- Even I think Rockford community is “overly conservative.”
- Reduce criminal rate, open university extension.
- Getting and having Amtrak to be a staple in Rockford instead of paying millions for research we (Rockford) could have been reaping the rewards from visitors!
- A casino, carnivals, jobs.
- Rockford to get casino instead of Beloit. It makes no sense not to have casino here. If it goes to Beloit, that's where Rockford people will be going and tourists, plus the money.
- More river events, July 4th Raft Race back again.
- Massive general clean up - better street repair, positive attitude of locals, pride in city, more flowers and flora, outdoor cafes, more health conscious, and active population.
- Make the city a safer place. More police officers to clean up the crime in the city and county so people feel safe when they come to our city.
- A hotel/restaurant out by Sportscore fields (like cheap, had planned).
- Ease of access to downtown and to obtain parking.
- A casino.
- Less expensive things to do.
- Nicer downtown, nicer river front.
- Lower crime.
- Less crime, good infrastructure (roads), good public school system.
- How large would you like RACVB to become?
- Less crime.
- A casino.
- Lower taxes, reduce crime, get a casino.

- Rockford is already starting to do a good job downtown during the summer of the Davis Park and markets, why not expand that to take down those old buildings, vacant buildings, and add parks and maybe an RV park, hotels. Also the shops should be more tourist type, it is along the river for a visual. Check out some northern Wisconsin or northern Michigan towns. You know fishing for the guys, shopping for the ladies. Or historic sites already there and build upon them, like Tinker Swiss Cottage and look at Rockford history for more.
- Give more support to professional sports teams.
- Less crime!
- More pedestrian- and bike-friendly streets. Stop listening to the few NIMBY's (not in my backyard) idiots.
- Individual responsibility for keeping area clean and attractive.
- More advertising outside about Rockford sites.
- Improve access to downtown (roadways). Possibly a casino. Put a high quality outlet mall by I-90.
- Improvements to buildings and streets in gateway areas.
- A friendlier atmosphere, starting with all the fast food restaurants and ending with the community as a whole.
- Casino, better concerts, hotel downtown.
- Lower taxes (property).
- Streets need to be fixed. Everyone who visits us always comments on how bad our streets are.
- Riverfront activities.
- More arts and cultural events not found in Chicago's outlying suburbs.
- Well kept homes and streets. More activities for older people.
- Use the Rock River more.
- Have a tourist attraction in each of the 4 quadrants of Rockford as well as downtown along the river.
- Good roads, well kept flowers and trees, easy to read signs with directions to attractions.
- Lower crime rate.
- Making this city a cleaner, modern, safer environment.
- Visitor's Hot Line visible as you enter the area.
- Lower gas prices. Less crime. Better travel to downtown Rockford, I-90 by passes city.
- A casino.
- Jobs
- Continued use of park district facilities to making Rockford more beautiful. The use of flowering baskets downtown and on bridges, etc., is great.
- The Nascar track you guys dropped the ball on years ago and what about a gambling boat? Show me the money, step-up, make it happen.

- We need to clean the city up. The litter issue is horrible. We need to enforce a clean city. Get really different shops like the ones in Martha's Vineyard.
- Improving condition of neighborhoods on gateway roads into Rockford - West State, Hwy 251 South.
- More activities to do, less crime.
- Clean streets, well-maintained roadway, removal of "eyesores" - give them a reason to want to come back.
- A casino out by interstate I-90 (East).
- I'd like to see downtown as it was many years ago, with butcher shops, bakeries, open-air markets, etc. Attractions that would entice people to go downtown on Saturday mornings like I did all my growing up life.
- Chicago train system. Promote music on downtown streets. Hotel near the metro center. Venders along the bike path, clothes, food, sport stuff, etc. Continue downtown market on Fridays, but consider extending to Saturdays, too. Casino would be a good source of \$, could have a convention center and hotel built off of it.
- Affordable entertainment for the current residents as well as visitors to downtown Rockford. Cleaning up areas that look very run down so they appear/are safer.
- Having school district get their "act" together, visitors who like a community may even consider moving to the community. Having law authorities get their "act" together to get all this crime, etc. under control.
- Printed promotional material.
- Put a convention center by the tollway/State Street corridor.
- Clean it!
- More up kept homes and grassland.
- A casino! It would create tax money to city and county and help employment.
- Less crime!
- Having a variety of activities for people to do when they come to town. Things that will bring them back again and again, all the while enjoying these activities in an eco-friendly GREEN environment. Planting lots of flowers.
- More stuff to do. People should be outside doing things.
- Place for older people to enjoy music and dance. More jobs.
- Reduce gang activity and crime. Task force like in the 90's to eradicate gang activity.
- I have a friend who is a newcomer to Rockford and she said she loves it here. It has so much to offer. She already purchased season tickets to the symphony. A casino, Amtrak, more attractions, a great downtown hotel, and things to do within walking distance. Something unique. Offer a free tour to a select group of out of town people or newcomers. We need good schools, educational institutions, arts, good hospitals, etc., to meet people's needs.
- Private business including entertainment.
- Reduction in crime and some degree of public transportation.

- Have a railway station on the east side!
- Tell the positives, not the negatives (high unemployment, high crime, too overweight). Poor publicity about the Rockford area.
- Parking, not reserved for the cops.
- Revitalization to downtown Rockford and rail transportation availability to Rockford very important!
- Clean up Rockford and bringing more attractions here!
- Some of the ideas mentioned above in the survey.
- An exclusive amusement park for families on the river, Sinnissippi Park/bike path area!
- Some city pride from its residents. Another big attraction like Anderson Gardens.
- A casino.
- Get rid of unsightly homes and buildings, make more parks and such for families with small children. Make events in Rockford more affordable for families.
- Lower crime rate, people are afraid to come.
- What is here that we can count on to grow with the area and bring people and monies to stay and help us grow? Not much. Lower taxes, use money wisely.
- Increased safety/less crime in Rockford.
- Hire police being the 9th most dangerous city in the U.S. Does not create tourism (city-data.com).
- Bringing back high tech manufacturing jobs. Quit focusing on how many restaurants we can open. They come and go. Make it a city that actually amounts to something besides soccer tournaments. Let's put substance first, the rest will follow, festivals and parades are all fluff.
- Clean up the streets of crime and drugs. Downtown is not safe to be walking in at night, visitors or local people.
- We are not and never will be a strong visitors destination, put the money elsewhere.
- Restaurants and more small shops for downtown.
- A casino.
- Lower taxes, revitalize downtown Rockford, better roads.
- Better entrance gateways, more promotion.
- More sports competition and tournaments.
- Better infrastructure like roads, easier transportation methods, better roads. Being able to go through town without having 100 stop lights. Less blight.
- Clean up downtown, more places to eat.
- Clean up downtown. We really enjoy being downtown when there are fun events. We always attend Waterfront. We also enjoy the BMO Center but would like to see more eating places which would be great on event nights. I also like the idea of more weekend events at Davis Park. We will attend the country program in June.
- Roadways and streets.

- More family-oriented events/better targeted advertising to Chicago, Milwaukee, etc., softball, soccer, BMX biking, bike path, fishing tournament. Winter activities - Rock Cut, snow sculpture, outdoor skating, x-country skiing.
- Making existing attractions (Midway Village, Tinker Cottage, Anderson Gardens, etc.) better known to the public/tourists. More advertising about Rockford's wonderful/convenient airport (hopefully expanding service to more locations than just Orlando and Las Vegas).
- Improve the roads and meridian strips. Eyesore - Mulford and Spring Creek. Fill our empty businesses in downtown area, E. State. Keep our parks up, they are one of our assets in the area.
- More events, activities, and entertainment.
- To be nice to them.
- Quality events and shows at competitive prices. I can get a ticket to an Ice Hog game cheap but if I get a beer and a dog it's \$15, why?
- Clean the areas of garbage and plant. Kind of like the area of Niagara Falls, the flowers are inviting and attractive.
- Perhaps less chain/big box stores and more local businesses. There are some really good things here, but how to spread the word/market is the challenge.
- Exploit the river for events.
- Good city schools (Rockford), higher employment.
- Street lights, paint on street lanes, street signs with directions to points of interest. A casino in the area, outlet mall. Try to improve vacant store occupancy and repair streets.
- Casino away from downtown.
- From the perspective of a resident, there just doesn't seem like there is much to do here beyond shop. More interesting small businesses and family activities would be an improvement.
- Better reputation. Less crime. Better downtown and a casino, but I guess that is not going to happen. More surveys like this one to get people's ideas/opinions. Thank you for it.
- Always talk about free parking.
- Lower crime rate. Remove obsolete factories in downtown and promote parks and parking areas.
- First class (top) entertainers coming to BMO Harris Center.
- Sidewalks. Downtown riverfront destination like in Peoria.
- Getting rid of the high crime rate.
- Casino, we need more entertainment and attractions. There are not many big things to do here.
- Letting more businesses come here.
- Have city/state workers that don't really work at their jobs pick up litter and plant more trees and flowers.
- Casino

- A better overall image of our community.
- Utilizing the natural asset of the Rock River.
- Each main roadway that enters Rockford should have outstanding roads, attractive signage, and foliage/flowers. Visual, sense of smell, and a smooth ride.
- Clean, renewed entries from all directions, with new roads or resurfacing. More outdoor dining and urban renewal for eye appeal and safety. Better signage to direct visitors to attractions.
- Improving gateways into Rockford and other towns. Tear down old buildings downtown that are owned by slum landlords.
- Convenience - when families travel to athletic events at Sportscore I & II, it is difficult to find your way to Tinker, Discovery Center, etc.
- Casino, popular fast food places, more reasonable family activities.
- Clean up the trash and tear down vacant buildings. More flowers and trees planted would be more inviting too!
- Bring back our lost jobs from China, corporate taxation on overseas production!
- Stop crime, shootings, gangs, etc. Would be nice to wake up and not hear how many people were shot the night before, etc.
- We don't even want to be here. Roads, schools, crime, big negatives!
- Train access directly into Rockford at outlying areas. Direct efforts of the innumerable "committees" that form to figure out how to revitalize downtown to meaningful tourism efforts that will work!
- More entertainment options for younger visitors.
- Continuing walking and bike paths.
- Keep the good work of legal work.
- Less taxes! Less violent crime!
- Don't allow cheap and inexpensive development, look at the suburbs for raising the bar. Developers should and must pay for road improvements. Why are we paying for the road improvements at 251 and 173? Why the developers of those strip malls were not required to do this when these malls were built? Taxpayers shouldn't have to pay for this!
- Better roads!
- Use what we have to our advantage, but in a economy-friendly way. The cost of taking my grandchildren to a museum or event is too much for my budget. When they were here at Christmas it cost me over \$500 in entertainment to take them to events and museums. I used coupons when I could, but for the most part, the costs were crazy. Advertising coupons (events) in the newspaper is not effective. No one reads it!
- A downtown river walk area similar to other cities with shops, restaurants, and bars to attract more visitors.
- Accommodations, activities, shopping all within close proximity.
- Enforce homeowners to keep their yards free of clutter and too many cars.

- Reduce crime and drugs.
- Less crime. People are afraid to come here. Upgrade what we have, too many eyesore buildings. Repurpose them so the city looks better. Keep events fresh (new events) or change existing to be with current trend. Link events together instead of having events spread out all over in one weekend, bring them all together in one place. People love music events. On the Waterfront used to be nice and the place to be. Now it is sad and overpriced. Add craft fair with trade show the same time. Spotlight local businesses. Keep costs down to be affordable, a family of 4 can't afford \$25 to get into an event then buy treats/wares also.
- Cleanliness, less crime, and boarded-up houses.
- Casino, develop shops and restaurants along river downtown.
- Better venue at Metro Center/Coronado.
- Cheap hotels, more music concerts.
- Bring in a river boat for gambling.
- Cleaner downtown area.
- A casino.
- Cleaner/roads in better shape.
- River, events, sporting events, soccer, softball.
- If we had a bit more variety and in good neighborhoods.
- Level the ugly Tapco/Amerock building, the metal blue building across from it on east side of river. Also level old factories and abandoned houses and businesses elsewhere. Midway Theater also. Doing a great job along Rock River across from Sinnissippi Park. Do similar upgrades along the east bank to the dam to begin with, then keep going down river.
- Tearing down of eyesore properties, particularly buildings that have been empty for years.
- More affordable or free activities, not so much crime.
- Less crime, more affordable prices.
- Sidewalks on State Street.
- Safety. Easy access to available opportunities.
- Less crime.
- Accessible transportation to events make it affordable for low-income families.
- Continue W. State Street improvements, continue to dream big and ask the good Lord for guidance.
- More things for families to do.
- A new Welcome Center near the bypass/interstate. Beautify and clean up all streets and roadsides from litter on a continuing basis, add flowering trees and bushes and maintain them. Do something with all unoccupied buildings, they are eyesores!
- Keeping parks and forest preserves in good condition. Focusing on major repair of east side main streets, some are terrible.
- Promoting activities and specialty stores and the things we already have here.

- Sidewalks on State Street. Sidewalks/overhead pedestrian walkways on E. State Street to connect hotels and restaurants.
- We need to provide safe, affordable, and reliable public transportation from the edge of town to the downtown. Provide train service to/from Rockford to Chicago and Wisconsin. We need sidewalks and bike paths that connect to each other and take visitors from their hotel to the highlights of Rockford if promoting. I live near the corner of Bell School and State Street it is sad to see how ugly and unsafe that intersection is. This is one of the only things business visitors see of our town. There's nothing interesting about the "business corridor." No one will care about Rockford if this is all they see.
- Promoting sport facilities, the arts, Coronado.
- Reduce crime rate.
- Tear down all vacant factories. They are such a terrible eyesore. If someone was going to buy them they would have done it years ago. I was born in Rockford and raised here, and left in 1973. Came back to care for my mother. I was appalled at all the ugly abandoned buildings! Disgraceful.
- Clean up downtown and outlying areas. More events at Metro Centre for all people.
- Lower tax rate, shopping, hotels, food. Lower priced venues, more events to choose from.
- Slow and fast pitch softball, games competition. Amusement park.
- Clean up the west side, better roads.
- Family attraction like the Water Park and teen sport events like national skateboard competitions and cookoffs televised.
- Clean up the Rock River for boating and recreation.
- When people come up Alpine from Rt 20 or bypass 39 it's slum looking, need some revitalization.
- Maybe some chain dining spots downtown, more outdoor events.
- Better shopping, hotel, restaurant, entertainment.
- Having a convention center off the bypass and enough parking and easy access.
- Less government (tax payer) subsidized housing, raze all of it and send all the inhabitants to Belvidere (South Dakota). They need more population there.
- Promoting family activities, Labor Day Weekend Festival, activities for those 50 & older.
- Easier access to downtown.
- Not seeing litter on highways and streets.
- Casino but not downtown, out by tollway.
- Repairing roads and cleaning up garbage everywhere you look.
- A good lite rail system on the rail line that goes through Rockton (South to Rockford - North to Wisconsin). All of the main highways from Rockford north should go to and through the Beloit, WI area instead of stopping nowhere. We need a good passenger rail system, a fast moving system.
- Casino

- Improvements of gateways into city and to attractions they visit so it creates a positive image of what they see. Welcome packets available at hotels/visitor centers on interstates that include maps and pamphlets to sites along with savings coupons. This could be a small bag that could be handed out easily by hotel staff or at events.
- Better hotels and attractions near airport.
- More attractions, coupon savings, family package deals.
- Jobs, less crime.
- Stop spending tax dollars on special interest groups and projects, and use it for infrastructure. Roads are bad, alleys worse, tear down dilapidated/abandoned housing and structures. Free and easy to find maps showing bike paths, parks, other tourist destinations.
- Specialty shops like antiques downtown. More concerts and shops downtown with parking.
- Clean streets, add attractive spots - flowers, etc. Clean up area to Tinker Cottage.
- Get rid of landfill smell.
- Clean up our town, more flowers, sweep the street, and just take pride in our town.
- Lower the crime rate and the unemployment rate. Fix roads, get rid of the projects, and clean up the west side and downtown.
- Improve the crime rate, bad reputation!
- Promote downtown.
- Attractive ways to get to the BMO Harris Center. West State is sad, but there is hope for that road in.
- Improving our schools.
- Less “for sale” signs on houses. Fewer abandoned houses or foreclosed in neighborhood. These all indicate to visitors that local citizens are overpaying for property taxes.
- Knock down old buildings, eliminate crime, find ways to balance our local demographics to raise average income level.
- Business headquarters in downtown Rockford. I feel once people work downtown, people will live downtown. Other business will develop downtown!
- A casino.
- A casino not downtown. A tourist-friendly waterfront like Chattanooga, TN has.
- More and better fine dining restaurants.
- Bring a casino. Downtown area is a good location for casino.
- Better roads, less crime so that visitors would, do feel safer. Sidewalks especially on the east side of Rockford where there are a number of hotels with none! People are out in traffic (very busy).
- Cleaner, greener entries to the area. Remove blighted areas so that the area doesn't look run down.
- Casino. Lower golf rates for seniors.
- Amusement park (Six Flags, etc.).

- Casino. Clean up the south side.
- Amusement park like Six Flags.
- Advertising in Chicago magazine, i.e., and other specific venues, i.e., kayakers, cross country skiers, boaters, snow sculptors, bikers, runners, skaters, hockey, gardeners.
- Have more historical events around the county like WW II Days at MWV, the Gathering at Mactown, etc.
- Lower crime rate (more officers), better paying jobs. Better schooling for younger children. Affordable housing, more job opportunities for seniors. More activities for seniors and children.
- A casino, not downtown.
- That I do not know, in concern for families that move to Rockford, improvement with schools.
- Safety
- I noticed that the company who has the landfill off 251 and employees out on a regular basis picking up the road side. This service is sadly lacking along I-39. The I-39 corridor would present a much more attractive approach to Rockford if it was neat and tidy.
- Things to do: fix up parts of city that have been neglected, tear down drug houses or repair houses to spark pride in neighborhoods and give incentives to landlords and homeowners to help.
- A casino.
- Access to more places at lower cost. For instance, Conservatory and Discovery Center are too costly for a whole family.
- An outlet mall.
- Lower taxes. Less housing blight - tear down wrecks!
- Tear out railroad tracks from Cherry Valley to downtown Rockford and put in four lane highway!
- Safer feeling when traveling the streets of Rockford.
- Give up on drawing visitors to downtown. I've lived here all my life and not many want to go downtown.
- Clean city, open arms of kindness.
- Better parking in downtown Rockford. My family has had more than one bad experience with this in downtown area. I think more advertising on the interstate would help.
- I'm not sure. Pick a really successful town in Wisconsin and draw your plans from that.
- Better roads/improve traffic.
- More things to do that are affordable.
- More police. More advertising of current attractions.
- Visitor's Center located near I-90 and East State Street with literature and maps for local attractions.
- Revitalization of downtown without improving safety would be a waste of money.

- Promotion of the museums.
- Less litter along roadways. Less potholes (well-maintained roads). Affordable family entertainment.
- Better roads.
- Large convention and hotel, but not in downtown Rockford.
- Have a casino in town or have a dirt track.
- Brighter more lights, better teachers, no unions for public workers, better roads, less taxes, less federal government intervention, more police less crime, less public housing for Chicago people. Get rid of all homeless.
- Less crime.
- Fix the roadways and clean up the slum look coming from the airport.
- I've only lived here for ten years. I'm from central Illinois. Clean our town up! Rockford has the worst reputation. It's always been known as black, drugs, gangs, and violence. Anyone who watches TV knows of all the negative lists. We're on nationwide! Who wants to come here knowing that info? Put the convention center and hotel out on the bypass 20 or I-90. It's just too damn hard to get downtown and just look at what you see on S. Main in order to get there!
- Major thoroughfares which visitors use to enter/exit and navigate through town need to be maintained better.
- Something that the big, big cities have.
- Clean up downtown and Rockford in general. Get rid of criminals and degenerates. The downtown area is a disgrace.
- Parking
- Less concentration on negative issues (crime, obesity, poor ratings on lists), more positives - helping homeowners improve properties. Unity of citizens.
- Less crime.
- Less crime! More positive PR and marketing toward what we offer visitors and tourists. Unique features to draw more people in and come back every year is what we need.
- Easier downtown to navigate. Get rid of one way streets (Main & Church). More convenient access to restaurants for Sportscore events, visitors to downtown.
- Build the convention center on the east side near the hotels away from the prisons.
- Have kid-friendly places to stay and places for kids to play and affordable. Fix roads and homes so they look nice and kid-friendly and also put pretty pictures up. Fix and upgrade the parks and facilities.
- A downtown like Hayward, WI main street, with attractive small products for the masses, in other words, things most people would like. Shops such as candy shops, chocolate shop, tourism knick-knacks, cheese shop, ice cream shop, coffee shop, restaurants, café, sweatshirt shop, Victoria shop, Christian book stores, and other things.
- Less crime.

- Parks and recreation.
- More events at Coronado and advertising to let even locals know what is going on.
- Improve the gateway areas to the city, especially South Main Street. The trailer park at Main and Clifton is an eyesore.
- Signage at Mulford and Baxter and I-39 and Baxter. Mapquest & Garmin say this is fastest and best route to east Rockford. Mulford and Baxter especially bad coming and going.
- Less crime. Make Rockford Housing go by the rules! RHA let drug dealers and all people don't work! Make them work, most of the crime comes from RHA homes where they don't pay rent!
- Keeping downtown Rockford safe.
- More children and teen activities.
- Lower crime rate, more control over youth and vandalism.
- People should smile and be friendly. Good roads, positive press. Internet presence, promote parks.
- An inviting downtown, focus on the river. How can we make it a "little" Lake Geneva?
- We need overall improvement in the mindset regarding Rockford by its citizens. Dwell on the positive as the latest effort is attempting to do. Positive comments about the city by its people who feel positive could only help spread the word.
- Utilize the I-90 area more with coupons for area businesses in all hotels, motels, etc.
- Take a look at what you see when you leave Rockford Airport. You see the 11th Street/ Kishwaukee smoke shops, tatoo parlors, \$ stores, ghetto area. Scary enough to make tourists never come back. Revitalize this area to make it inviting and might cut crime too.
- Lower the city tax rate. Lower the gas prices. Lower property taxes.
- If we want more people to go downtown, parking needs to be improved. I love going to the restaurants like Irish Rose and Kuma's, but parking discourages me at times.
- Clean up Business 20 through town. Update signage on State Street. Clearer signs and store locations on State St.
- In light of all the negative publicity Rockford has received via media, locally and nationally, we need to start more visitor-friendly media messages. With that said, bring the downtown area back to life, advertise why it's a great city and work on beautifying the city - plant some flowers.
- Fix the roads, we're known as Rutherford, which detracts from all that we have to offer.
- There is far too much effort to force growth/revitalization of downtown Rockford. This effort works against the natural flow of commerce which is towards I-90. We need to embrace that growth and not fight it. A convention center and hotel downtown is not a smart idea. Downtown is not easily accessed by visitors.
- Easy access, well-lighted, and secure parking areas.
- Although there is easy walking to shops downtown, as soon as you go east walking to businesses becomes much more difficult. Increasing foot traffic is a benefit to small businesses and large businesses.

- Having more things to do for younger kids.
- Get our government to sign for a casino before the Ho Chunk Nation puts one on Indian land in Rockford. He will have no control then, it will be on Indian land. Do a survey on this. You're doing a very good job. It's always been hard to get things going in this town. Don't give up, it's better now than ever.
- Cost considerations at this time especially traveling with babies, young children, handicapped children or elder parents. Facilities with roomier, more private, accommodations possible feasibility if need for safe, secure on-site babysitting or elder care services. Maintaining and improving existing facilities, ensuring clean, safe environment by providing adequate staffing - police, fire, security, medical, life guards, etc.
- Casino
- Information about attractions in hotel rooms, attractions, museums, gardens, farmer's markets, athletic events. How about in-room video? Are we connected to state tourism efforts?
- Combat crime. Clean up existing downtown and surrounding areas. Make our community safe to visit.
- A welcome center like when you cross a state line such as Florida and Wisconsin. They give out info about places to see, etc.
- Attractions
- Casino and roads/traffic.
- Security-friendly
- Fix the city streets especially downtown.
- Ease and interest. Parking, directions, promotion.
- Having attractions close to main routes like I-90 and bypass 20.
- Making the Rock River more useful by adding more to it such as the water rafting. Having golf tournaments at all golf courses other than Forest Hills.
- Show on TV- as the Wisconsin one - Discover Rockford, IL and why to visit - what to do and great places to stay at. Great activities and restaurants to visit or have a free DVD someone from another state could view in their own home. Letting them know all the fun events that happen in Rockford, IL. Events - games, sports, Anderson Japanese Gardens, etc.
- Bike paths - industry! Industry! Manufacturing is the life blood of any community.
- Having competent staff and staff who doesn't sit on their butt. Don't need more funding, replace staff!
- Better boat ramp areas with picnic area on the river. Mail out booklets of what Rockford has to offer. Mail to cities, sport teams, etc.
- Fix up our downtown. Less tolls. Less crime.
- More entertainment and festivities.
- Create more activities, attract more companies to come here.
- Less crime.

- Having an interpreter (sign) - ASL to provide us (hearing impaired and hard of hearing) to attend this events such as Labor Day Weekend Airfest, Coronado (theatre), BMO Metro Centre events, for a specific time and date for an interpreter available.
- Possibly promoting downtown revitalization in conjunction with a bike path that leads to the area with places to park and lock bikes.
- Knowing that it is safe.
- Less crime, everyone helping to pick up litter in their neighborhoods. Plant flowers.
- Less crime.
- Let's develop Rockford as a destination for something specific, mountain biking, BMX, canoeing, ice climbings, or ATV/Snowmobile, give people a reason to come.
- Getting off the most dangerous city and worst places to live lists.
- Yes, Italian, Polish, Swedish, Mexican, Irish, Scottish, American, German.
- Downtown hotel & convention center with casino and whitewater park.
- Look cleaner. Less trash and clutter. More greenery, trees and flowers. Clean up of properties in neighborhood so visitors in and through them would feel welcome to a nice looking area.
- Flowers everywhere, no trash around, and activities to draw people here like Midway Village, Tinker, Sportscore.
- Gambling casino.
- Tie a casino into the downtown conference center with affordable meeting space. Could increase downtown businesses.
- Better in-town roads.
- Less crime.
- Better roads and streets.
- Maintaining downtown. Stop building projects - stop aiding the bad! People are turned off by the fact that Rockford is on the list of worst/dangerous cities.
- Sports events.
- Improve roads.
- Better entertainment for all, as well as a casino. Improve senior access to improve exercise for better health.
- Have something to actually attract visitors.
- A casino would bring in people and also jobs and more money instead of the increased taxation of the residents.
- Do more to enhance the river along with beautification.
- A visitor's hotline, visible as you enter the area.
- Casino
- Lower crime rate. Improve roads!
- Improve streets.

- Reduce crime rate. Put vacant buildings to use or raze. Keep the city, downtown especially, neat and clean.
- Good luck to all, but please keep S Puri out of things. Us common folk are fed up with him. Just ask. Coming in off of I-90 and entering E. State, what a terrible sight it is - cement everywhere! Make the median have plants, grasses. Drive into St Charles, IL using 59S. It is beautiful! The median is plants. Take out the cement median on Perryville north of State. If Rockford is the Forest City-Garden City make it look the name. Also, I think a cool looking visitor's center should be built somewhere on East State going west not too far from I-90. It has to be visible to visitors. The Clock Tower isn't quite the ideal location. The East State - now West State - that is totally terrible. Should have a visitor's center there.
- To have more facilities near tollways, highways for easy access for visitors. I live here and I don't go downtown.
- Jobs, quit importing from foreign countries.
- A listing of local clubs in the area like dancing, biking, running, etc.
- An attractive draw, the water park, winter skiing, and fall biking. Sell 3 day passes good for all parks and museums to encourage short stays.
- Casino
- Improving the west side entrance from 20.
- The level of violent crime in Rockford needs to be addressed. People want to visit an area that is safe.
- A downtown area that is developed with shops, food, etc. Possible, a train station (Amtrak) at some point would help also.
- The appearance of Rockford and the county has a poor overall condition. Something has to be done to change the mindset of pride of ownership. The road system needs improvement.
- Seriously reducing violent crime. Our reputation precedes us negatively.
- Build up west side.
- Better roads. The inner city has many old rough roads like 20th St., 11th St., Harrison (20th to So. Main), Sandy Hollow (11th St. to Kishwaukee). This is my area, but in general all of our roads are not very good. Also railroad tracks are very rough.
- Forget revitalizing downtown. Build a world class arena on the east side of town with easy access and lots of parking.
- Easier access. Better parking.
- I love it the way it is.
- Taking out negativity about Rockford.
- It seems that many buildings surrounding downtown are abandoned and dilapidated. It looks unpleasant and does not reflect well on the city. Revitalize these buildings or at least update the very old worn brick façade on some buildings within downtown district.
- Nothing
- Gambling house.

- Casino built outside of downtown close to the toll road so people wouldn't have to go down-town with all the one-way streets.
- Improve gateways into the city. Bring Macaroni Grill, Fazoli's, and Portillo's to Rockford.
- New restaurants like Macaroni Grill, Portillo's. We miss not having a Fazoli's - Janesville is the closest.
- Good apps and web site and keeping current. Helpful people manning the museums. If you visit one, encouraging them to visit other area sites.
- Lower taxes.
- Better roads.
- Nice roads, interesting attractions. Safety.
- A lower crime rate.
- A positive attitude.
- Make it safe, west and downtown is unsafe, it is spreading east. Most people know what the problem is.
- A good web site. Web Apps. Link museums on the web. Excellent broadband.
- Use the river! Transform the shores south of State Street. Make it a destination, additional parking. Tear down old structures or ones not being fully utilized. Keep fixing up streets.
- Less crime, more festivals that are safe.
- Clean up crime. Clean up downtown and surrounding area of garbage.
- Better parking for the BMO Harris Center.
- Lower crime rate. Shopping. More local restaurants.
- If you would put a like Disney World amusement park in Rockford, Loves Park, or Machesney Park Mall.
- Attitudes need to change too. More people need to talk about what a nice city we have! All the wonderful tourist attractions we have, maybe commercials in WI or northern IL offerings, we see theirs here.
- More opportunities for live music other than in bars, like look at Elgin Community College website - phenomenal concert series. More concerts other than at Metro Centre.
- Better roads, demolish old abandon buildings, less crime.
- Convention center near I-90 - concerts, events.
- Fix up West State and South Main.
- Something spectacular in downtown Rockford. Maybe build it over the river by Davis Park, like the Arch in St. Louis.
- More variety of food/fresh veggies and fruit - farmer's market.
- What they see is very important. We are so in need of some prettying up, we are run down.
- Support the park district more. Let this downtown idea go.
- A more positive attitude of its residents. We are a great city but don't reflect that in our own comments about our city.

- Less crime.
- Affordable events (attractions) for families.
- We moved here from Dubuque, IA more than 10 years ago. Dubuque is a “river city.” They have done an amazing job revitalizing the river area and downtown thanks to the money the casino has brought in. Everyone has benefitted in Dubuque from the casino: more jobs, better roads, new schools. Rockford can really learn from Dubuque, Iowa. Also Rockford needs to clean up rundown buildings that surround W. State and S. Main Streets. It looks bad when people come into Rockford.
- Variety of restaurants and attractions.
- Lowering the crime rate, nobody would want to come here as long as crime is on the rise.
- Cleaner, less crime, boarded up houses. Would like the water rafting the city has been talking about bringing in for years.
- More playgrounds similar to Alpine Park. More promotion of public events.
- More shopping plazas/outlet mall, family activities, more children’s activities, cleaner environment, and outdoor activities.
- Less crime in Rockford. A public school system that actually works well. Balanced budget.
- Better roads.
- Promote as much as possible all available. Better roads and access to locations.
- Having more family-oriented activities for a reasonable price may entice more visitors to our area. Financially, times are hard especially for young families. It would be nice to have inexpensive things (events to go to) to do as a family.
- A regional approach supported by all communities in the area.
- Casino, bigger arena that would attract bigger attractions. Bring all stages back to OTW Festival.
- Need to have a more balance of entertainment for all races. More school pageants for kids to try and cut down on crime rates.
- A safe place to be and a clean place to visit.
- A better downtown, although it gets better all the time.
- More activities for families. More adult activities.
- Better roads, less crime.
- Closing welcome center desk entering into IL from WI not a good move.
- Signage, media, and a casino!
- Better schools, safer streets and neighborhoods.
- More activities for families. Things that don’t cost a lot for families.
- Rockford needs to look more like the area surrounding city hall and less like a 3rd world country which is what I see when I open my front door. Streets in disrepair, home values plummeting, high crime, an out of control school system, and no jobs. Surveys are not going to help Rockford, jobs are! Rockford is fast becoming the Detroit, Michigan of Illinois. Fix the economy 1st and the corruption 2nd, all else will fall in place.

- More events such as shows, entertainment, sporting events, hiking, canoeing, or/and a casino.
- Instead of designing busloads of Rockford residents to go to Chicago attractions - get busloads of people FROM Chicago to come see Anderson Gardens, Magic Waters, Burpee Museum, park district, state parks, etc. Arrange day trips to these locations, include a lunch and you make money, advertise our assets and generate positive attitudes about our wonderful region.
- Activities along the river from downtown to Whitman St., both sides. A rec path with restaurants, stores, vendors, indoor sports, outdoor activities like at Davis Park and the farmer's market.
- I believe as long as it's affordable visitors will come.
- Casino, more water parks, adding bike trails with unique features (lots of marketing and drop off/pick up service), amateur sports and youth sports arenas, and then add activities that would appeal to children and teens.
- A wider array of diverse activities for all people, focusing on teens to keep them out of trouble.
- Overall concentration of the river front is where time and effort need to be spent. Create boardwalks, shopping, restaurants, and anything else where people won't have to leave downtown. Not every city has a river that runs through it. Should take advantage of it.
- A better downtown, more use of water front, more festivals like on the Waterfront.
- Clean up South Main - bypass 20 to downtown. Rebuild South Main Streets, stop patching - rebuild.
- Park district enhancement because they already do much. Better hospitals would have/increase traffic.
- More family events to go to. Use the river more wisely for events.
- Clean up the streets and a more positive attitude.
- Regular entertainment-centered events.
- Utilizing the river front - boutique hotel on river, shops, restaurants.
- Make the downtown Rockford safe to come to. Clean up the trash that lines the streets? Get the pan-handlers and winos out of the doorway.
- More kid-friendly places and activities.
- Eliminate some traffic lights around town, especially those left turn lights. They add to congestion on the streets.
- More signage telling where attractions are. Place signage near I-90, I-39, and other bigger entrances to Rockford.
- A clean & fresh appearing city with a positive outlook. Low crime rate.
- Attitude adjustment among many residents, more positive.
- I-39 rerouted through town, baseball stadium downtown, improve traffic flow to/from/through downtown, parking deck east side of downtown, green space on Madison Street.

- Improve streets coming out and into the airport. The roads are the 1st impression when leaving the airport.
- Getting more air flights to Rockford. Clean up blighted areas. Make the things already here more widely known like gardens, museums, etc.
- Get the crime numbers down and fix up the vacant properties.
- More things to do for young couples age 18-35 besides stinky bars and movie theaters or fast-food restaurants! Too many places here close at 5 pm or no later than 9 pm and there isn't entertainment to attract young/new residents and income.
- Reduce crime, develop downtown area.
- I believe in downtown Rockford. I am actively involved, through the downtown restaurant where I work, in revitalization and I am constantly creating, initializing, and activating ways to bring visitors downtown. I believe adding a hotel downtown would not only bring visits, but it would also benefit locals. I played a small part in actively pursuing a hotel in downtown that failed only due to the unavailability of loans (denial from banks). I am very eager to pursue a hotel in historic downtown, again.
- A safer, cleaner, more vibrant downtown with restaurants, shopping, night clubs - a casino on the edge of town.
- We need to maintain our parks, and people will come.

37. Is there anything else you would like to tell us about tourism in the Rockford area?

- A casino should help.
- Explore our river sides.
- Support Amtrak in Rockford.
- Need more advertisement. Need transportation for people like myself that can no longer drive. Buses to parks, etc.
- We need to reduce crime rate. I don't believe housing a casino in Rockford would increase the crime rate. Beloit is not worried about increase in crime rate. Their interest is in revenue. Wisconsin is full of casinos and if there was so much crime in other places, Beloit wouldn't want one in their town.
- Rock River is an asset to Rockford. Forest City Queen is great!
- Rockford has a ton of potential. Media labeling - negativity of residents, cultural divides, lack of education continues to stymie Rockford's image. It's a good place to live - RACVB is on the right track!
- Good luck.
- We need to keep it going and adding to it!
- Need more venues for amateur sporting events. Need hotel on Rt. 173.
- Forget about redeveloping downtown, put your money into the outlying areas for complexes for sports and accommodations.

- Try to keep events affordable. Try to appeal to greatest number of people.
- We don't need to waste money downtown to increase tourism. We have many things that people can visit that are not located downtown. Spending more taxpayer money downtown only makes the mayor's family and supporters rich. Case in point, all the money wasted on the river walk.
- Rockford already prides itself with our park district and all of the forests, parks, camping, etc. Rockford should expand these qualities. We would see more tourism with more camping/ RV/recreational areas. This could include all seasons.

Comments to other questions.

Q. 10., Why would anyone want to visit Rockford except for the parks? Visitors would only be here for that or to use the airport to go somewhere else. Need better looking hotels by the airport, that would be more efficient for passengers using that service instead of traveling across town to the new train station or E. State St. Need better restaurants, cleanout Blackhawk Island and the Ace of Diamond's.

Q. 12 & 13., Only if done right, don't create some new thing. Reference what Flint, Michigan tried to do. Build upon what we already have. We do have a lot, we are the forest city and we have the Rock River, Kishwaukee River, etc.

Q. 20., Only agree if the train station is used in a okay part of the downtown. Why are train stations put in the worst areas of town and now we try to revitalize? OK, Rockford is doing better downtown but it is still not an attraction all year round unless there are events.

- Don't tax business. Abolish RACVB, save taxpayer \$ on payroll and retirement benefits.
- Need more promotion.
- We need better mental health and places to help the homeless to get them off streets.
- We must improve our road surfaces! How can a visitor be impressed with the current conditions?
- Good job so far.
- Bring United Airlines to the Rockford Airport.
- Right now as things stand, I do not believe we are ready, although I strongly agree we can use tourism.
- Help lower our property taxes!
- We need all the good press and improved reputation for our city that we can get. We need to be proud of our park district, it's one of our better features!
- I resent having my taxes raised for the park district's Nicholas Conservatory project. All of the charm that Sinnissippi Gardens/Lagoon once had is gone.
- Taxing residents will make the economy of Rockford just worse.
- The high crime rate in Rockford scares people off. I think better advertisement at the tourist center. A casino would bring in a lot of people.
- Brochure about Rockford sent to whole state.
- I think the water facility idea downtown (water rapids) is a great idea to bring people to Rockford. That could be bigger than BMX, amateur golf.

- How about really pushing for water rafting? How about filling the empty buildings on the river with restaurants and shops?
- Would be interested in knowing if the return on investing more money (tax dollars or otherwise) on tourism has a measurable payback to our community.
- We feel there isn't a lot to do in Rockford.
- Restaurant tax hurts locals.
- Let's put the convention center and hotels out near the tollway so the surrounding cities have quick access and retro the downtown as mentioned above.
- There are plenty of small towns around Rockford that could easily depend on Rockford for entertainment and shopping if we made it more appealing.
- Not a fan of gambling to draw visitors. There are so many other options that don't have other effects on the community.
- Continue to highlight areas of interest unique to Rockford.
- Most of this survey is/has, self serving answers to glorify RACVB. Rockford doesn't need RACVB designing flashy brochures and stuffing envelopes. It appears that RACVB is taking credit for Rockford Park District and forest preserve advancements.
- Promote Rock Cut more.
- No Casino! We need family-friendly events and activities.
- From what I see, soccer tournaments are the only thing coming here. I feel like people go out of town to do anything fun, away from Rockford.
- "Try it, you'll like it!" Many people here seem to think they have to go elsewhere to find something interesting to do. Maybe our location being so close to Chicago and Milwaukee is part of it. Rockford has a lot to offer! We just have to keep trying to convince them how fortunate they are to be here.
- Public money investment in tourism/entertainment never rewards the area, usually it is aimed at minute places that do not widely promote the area.
- Stupid to park on the top deck when cops are on the first two levels.
- If the afore mentioned is fulfilled, tourism will improve in Winnebago County!
- Not much tourism because Rockford needs improvement!
- Dinner/theater - Riverside/Perryville Road area. Enlarge the band shell in Sinnissippi Park. Review and acquire rights for a casino in Rockford!
- In a time of fiscal disaster, raising taxes, as the park district does, is unconceivable. It's a time to maintain, but not expand.
- I think the Rockford Park District is an excellent draw to the community.
- Rockford needs to build up the west side of Rockford. There is plenty of land on the west side like out on Meridian and West State that could be built up into a convention center or some sports arena. There is a lot that could be done on the west side that isn't being done. Only the east side seems to benefit.
- Leaves more to be desired.

- If we cannot draw our own area people into interesting and up-to-date places, how can you draw visitors to the area. We need jobs that will help draw all people, not voting down casinos and other interest.
- Yeah, fix the roads. Potholes create a bad impression.
- Quit spending so much money on park district, perhaps get local clubs to work as volunteers to do things.
- Keep up the good work!
- We have very good parks and forest preserves, but let other people know this.
- Downtown Rockford is dead, has been and always will be unless a casino is put there. That is the only thing that will bring people in town and from out of town there.
- A lot of local people like myself have not visited many of the great attractions in the Rockford area. Somehow you need to pull more of us in to see how wonderful the Rockford area really is.
- Our tourism is very low.
- Make everyone keep it clean.
- My hometown, Dubuque, IA turned itself around by remaking itself including tourism. Thank you for the coupons.
- Get a look to attract adults, every town has youth programs. This is all I think about when describing Rockford - family activities and amateur sports.
- I don't see much of it in general. Rockford doesn't have a great reputation and I doubt it is seen as a tourist destination.
- Keep up the good work.
- Improve all athletic facilities to draw in people. Let's do it right and never lose an event to another city. This is a win win for all of us.
- We need to bring big acts to town.
- Be open-minded.
- Rockford government chases business away.
- Don't forget the airport, a big plus! Find ways to implement more attractive features along the Rock River (eateries, points of interest) to stop and visit either from your boat or land.
- The roads in and around Rockford are dismal and do not encourage visitors to stay. They are perceived as unkept and give an impression of unsafe surroundings. We should not continue efforts to build a casino. We should concentrate on urban activities that will draw young professionals to our city, not lower class gamblers. We must be the city we want to become. Progressive action will draw progressive people.
- The area needs to be less violent and make the community safe. Would make people want to travel here, even possibly live here.
- Improve relationship and coordination for promoting ecotourism with neighboring counties/ areas.
- Rockford could be a great place to live.

- Taxed to death. Fearful of safety in Rockford. Our children moved away. Thinking of moving when we retire.
- Decent bike paths that actually go somewhere and are connected would draw cyclists. Incorporating bike lanes into all new roadways and any road reconstruction and have/ employ a dedicated cyclist on the County Board and in city government.
- We have enjoyed hooking up with a tour at the Coronado if out of town family and friends happened to be in town.
- Recreation has improved over the past 30 years. Yet violent crime has risen.
- Need a small zoo in town to attract visitors.
- I do not feel revitalizing downtown is the answer unless there is easier access to hotels, shopping, etc. that can be geared toward all age groups (families, etc.).
- Please worry much less about tourism and just improve Rockford in present time and condition. Thanks.
- I travel throughout IL, IN., WI., MN., IA., MO., people who know Rockford often say what brought them here was sport tournaments.
- Open hunting in state parks. Stop letting sharpshooters kill deer. Let hunters pay to shoot deer.
- When we have attended events at the BMO or Coronado, we can find nothing to do as a family, before or after, in downtown Rockford. Nothing is open or not available for families.
- Demolish the old buildings along the downtown river that have not been refurbished and utilized. There has been enough talk about the “historic value” with those old industrial buildings. Demolish them! Get rid of the old ugly Ingersoll building the city owns! This is the wrong location for an indoor sports complex. Make it a green area. A white water raceway would be a plus after the buildings are gone. Fort Wayne, IN has done a wonderful job with that.

Downtown Rockford will remain the way it is until we cut our ties with the past. It needs a totally new modern appearance. There has been considerable improvement in that direction. After that is accomplished, business will want to build hotels, convention centers, etc., not the other way around. People will then come downtown.

Rockford is becoming an embarrassment with all of the abandoned buildings, that would include factories, businesses, and homes. If nobody is paying the taxes, demolish them and plant grass. Our Rockford streets especially 35th and 20th Streets on the south side of town, to name a few, are in terrible condition. A fresh clean city is one people will want to visit. The rivers and streams are natural draws for people. They should be as clean and pristine as possible. Have yearly and ongoing cleanup projects in the parks, forest preserves, and along the waterways. Use the low risk inmates and those living off the system (taxpayer's money). Post access points and other strategic locations to waterways with signs and slogans to keep it cleaner than you found it like a “Smokey Bear” campaign or whatever. Possibly offer some county campgrounds in conjunction with forest preserves. Rock Cut State Park does quite well that way.

- We need casino that brings people to come and jobs for our people.

- Crime rate scary.
- Promote the wonderful gardens of Rockford area.
- Start building more on W. State and Springfield area.
- Rockford is a great city and has a wonderful variety of activities for all ages. How about an antique car show held on downtown street - Roaring 1920's theme weekend. Increase advertising like Midwest Living magazine, more TV exposure on WI and Chicago stations.
- Amateur sports is huge. Also, we really need hi-speed rail to O'Hare. Need complete remodel of Midway theater like we did Coronado.
- Start promoting Rockford as a City of Gardens. Rockford has Klehm, Nicholas, Sinnissippi, and Anderson Gardens, and Severson Dells.
- This topic is of great interest to me. Feel free to contact me if you wish.
- Stop trying to revitalize downtown Rockford. They have been trying to do it for decades. No one outside of Rockford can navigate down there. Bill other parts of Rockford/Winn Co: parks, river, bike paths, tournaments, stores, malls, etc. Stop wasting your time and money "downtown."
- Putting money to revitalize S. Main Street is a total waste of money. With the economy the way it is, let's be practical and frugal with the County/Township funds.
- Bring the cost for visitors.
- Rockford has affordable golf courses that are in good condition. More advertising and promotion may bring in more business from Chicago area.
- Rockford is a great place to visit. Revitalizing downtown area is key. Aurora, great example with paramount theatre, hotels, and local restaurants. Free movie nights and downtown market, great additions!
- Need an outdoor theater, sailing and boat races, dirt track racing, dirt bike competitions, mud bogs, skateboard competitions. More advertisement of events. The kids don't have much to do around here anymore.
- One event with limited age spread interest isn't good enough. Pro Ams are okay but how many Rockfordians play golf.
- I do not want to pay more real estate taxes to improve anything! We are way overtaxed now and parks are part of the cause for that.
- Promote already existing attractions, Klehm, Anderson Gardens, park district especially Nicholas Conservatory.
- Facilities for family retreat or reunions.
- Rockford needs a casino fast before Beloit. Put it at I-90 & Riverside so it will be just a 10 minute drive from where Beloit's will be.
- Better traffic patterns downtown to ease travel by first-time visitors. This eases frustration and creates better image, visitors don't go home thinking Rockford is hard to travel through. I have stopped many visitors lost/traveling wrong way on streets as a police officer for this city. Had to guide them to their destination or way out.
- Rockford needs to accentuate the positives and advertise its assets.

- Keep prices low and attract more people.
- Have more knowledgeable seasonal employees at park district venues.
- Don't just help the tourists, but the citizens too. Where are the bike paths? Where are concerts in Sinnissippi Park, concerts and hours posted? Where is downtown free movie listing posted, etc.?
- Possibly more signs directing to interesting areas.
- I'm on a severely limited SS budget. It is not my fault that this conservatory cost way more than planned. How about giving us a free day like the museums do? Put out a donation box so I can give what I can afford, otherwise, I won't ever be able to see this place. Thank you!
- I don't believe many people consider Rockford to be a tourist attraction. I think people visit because they have to, not because they want to see Rockford.
- Rockford turned down one of the biggest tourism builders it could have ever had. The NASCAR track(s) that are now in Joliet. HUGE tourism money lost!
- Need to promote and use facilities we already have, mere spending is a waste and should only be done when proven record of income is achieved first.
- Anderson Garden is so wonderful. Need to get more people to visit. Also, Tinker Cottage, Midway Village, Klehm, and now the Nicholas Conservatory.
- We need to take better advantage of our downtown and river front district. More restaurants and entertainment.
- All the tourism efforts could be a good thing if they don't add to the tax burden of our citizens. Does RACVB receive tax dollars? That should be stated in all printed material. Is there any current tourist attraction that completely pays its own way and has added jobs to this community? This is the information citizens need before completing surveys for future planning.
- Any funding to attract tourism to the Rockford area SHOULD NOT come from local government!
- Have the Metro Center on the east side of town, maybe around Perryville or on the far East State or Riverside, with easy access to I-90 and I-39.
- We need to promote more locally owned restaurants. We need more than chains for tourists to visit.
- Rockford events are never advertised in the Chicago or other areas. No parking lots on State Street are bad for tourists.
- Let downtown die, we've wasted enough time and money. The Metro Centre would have been better off by I-90 where the voters wanted it 40 years ago.
- Do not put convention center downtown. Needs to be put in an area off the bypass.
- Build pride in the city and residents will advertise for you as well, via word of mouth.
- The water park that has been suggested is a very good idea. Something new to the area that surrounding towns do not have. Waterfront should not have downsized so much. Really enjoy the city market/movie night downtown Fridays.
- More shopping downtown.

- We have beautiful churches, synagogues, a mosque, and temples of various faiths. Bus tours of these places of worship should be advertised out of town in newspapers and on radio.
- I think targeting certain groups and conventions would be a good idea and get Rockford as a whole to buy into really supporting them while in town.
- It needs improvement.
- We need more volunteers that can participate in events. More intercity bike paths where automobiles cannot travel connecting other trails.
- Where is the money being spent that you, Rockford Area Convention and Visitors Bureau are getting from the city. Please send a financial statement and more info about RACVB. Thank you, God Bless.
- We are not a great tourism city, very accessible to Chicago.
- Q. 16., Many seniors dine out on a regular basis, they are not visitors using the sport facilities. It would be an additional burden on them to pay an extra tax on food. The statement says “buy food” groceries are food and I would hate to add any additional tax on food. The cost of everything is going to increase in proportion to the price of oil.

Beverages?

Q. 17., I question if the downtown is the proper place for a facility of this nature? I sincerely doubt that a hotel would be supported. Parking downtown is a joke! This past week I had to report to the court house for possible jury duty. Try to find parking on the street for all day, plenty of 2 hour, 3 hour, and tenant only, cost \$6.50 to park on the parking deck.

Q. 18., Attractive gateways are needed! I had a part-time job of 8 years which required my driving down 251 or I-39 depending on the choice I made. There was refuse along both of the corridors, lots of it! Most of it, other than incidental from vehicles comes from the garbage trucks that make their way to the landfill.

- Promote things in Rockford that a tourist couldn't find anywhere else within a specified radius of downtown.
- Rockford is not a vacation destination.
- Tourism, like many industries, is cyclical, dependent for growth on the rise of discretionary income. Only modest amounts of municipal funds should be spent to promote tourism as part of the economic mix.
- Improve and enhance the riverfront. This is what Rockford “The Riverfront” could really use to improve on appearance and desire to visit the area. Look at how Dubuque, IA has improved the appearance of their waterfront?
- Build a Metro Center/BMO type facility near I-90. Surrounding communities would support it for the easy in, easy out. Downtown is too hard for visitors to get to. Even locals don't want to go there, give it up!
- Don't spend more than is necessary to attract tourism. Try to have some “common sense” as it concerns this.
- We have wonderful parks and the Discovery Center and Midway Village fare a good draw. I'd like to see more affordable concerts at BMO Harris. The Air Fest is a great show.

- What happened to the development Rick Nielsen was going to build? Do we always have to vote “No” for every good idea? Wasn’t there supposed to be a zoo built down by Cherry Valley?
- We need to continue in efforts to increase tourism.
- Ecotourism is a nice idea but that type of person doesn’t spend much money. Usually they are very economical.
- Use your Winnebago County Fairgrounds more for things like races - car, bike, and etc.
- Change the name of the airport, be proud of Rockford, not Chicago. Sounds very stupid Chicago Rockford Airport. Airport will sell itself, shouldn’t even have to advertise. Sounds stupid didn’t keep factories that were here for years, then mayor or governor goes overseas for work to bring home, never really brought much, but makes them look crooked. There should be no one without an address in Rockford, IL. Homeless cause much crime and bother people trying to go places with family or friends, even on Perryville and E. State Street in middle of road with signs.
- Park district has lost sport events to other cities because facilities haven’t kept pace!
- Why would anyone put anything downtown? Back in the late 60’s downtown had it all, now it’s in need of a face lift.
- Taxes are outrageously high.
- More promotion, more local involvement.
- I like the city market and the screw city beer fest. I think the gardens and the sports tournaments actually bring people into Rockford.
- Needs more media adds for parks and park district.
- The conservatory will help bring people in, Anderson Japanese Garden also, ballet, plays, concert venues, the new ice skating rink helps, sporting events. Keep up the great work, but let’s rid the negatives (crime, vacancies, business, jobs, and homes).
- I love it! I would love for other Rockfordians to love it and would like to share it with others outside Rockford.
- If you offer incentives and positive rewards without impeding laws to encourage businesses to come to the area, they will come. Also Rockford needs more fun activities for kids and teenagers! Go-karts, bumper cars, bumper boats, pool tables, darts, arcades, and more.
- Buy and upgrade the Times Theater. Promote and book all types of music. The city needs to do this. The Coronado isn’t getting it done.
- Keep on working, you do good.
- The Metro Centre can’t even make a profit. Sinnissippi Gardens has always been free and now you’re charging for it. We’ll never go there again! Kid’s played hockey there forever but the new design won’t allow it, bad design!
- Actually, I’ve lived here 50 years and there isn’t much that gets my attention let alone visitors!
- There is no place to stay in downtown Rockford for overnight tourists.
- Really enjoy the city summer markets and outdoor movies at Davis Park.

- Summer garden shuttle bus tour to include Anderson Japanese Gardens, Sinnissippi roses, Nicholas Conservatory, Klehm's Botany.
- You should check-out why RHA lets all their houses and apartments go to hell!
- It's too bad Rockford lost out on the (Nascar) Chicagoland Speedway. That would have brought in many visitors.
- It's getting better here in Rockford, but all cities are stepping it up a notch or two. We need to step it up even more!
- Tourism is the future of downtown Rockford. Essential to the future growth of our community and job growth and sustaining job growth. The river, incorporate the trolley to Klehm and North. Get rid of the one way streets, more accessible parking. We need a downtown image change. No more talk or studies, let's start doing something.
- I grew up in Rockford and I love the Winnebago County area. We have so much to offer visitors. However, downtown is not an area I like to bring visitors. We still travel into Rockford every week to St. Anthony's for church in South Rockford. We have seen many changes that the money spent in that area just does not seem to help.
- Rockford has some great things to offer, but the negative publicity due to high crime may keep people away. Let's clean up the city, take it back from the criminals and do away with the problem areas - the businesses that encourage crime.
- Lower prices and the people will come. It's too expensive to visit and/or live in Rockford right now.
- My family enjoyed the movies in the park last summer and the 4th of July celebration downtown. We should take advantage of our beautiful river by promoting it to out of towners. I'm happy the riverwalk is being expanded.
- Restaurants and stores on northwest side are well worth visits, i.e., Olympic Restaurant, Pino's on Main, the meat market at Pinnon's for grilling out, Cliffbreakers, Owen Center Walmart, Farm & Fleet on W. State St.
- Stop expanding the dump, that detracts from our beautiful forest preserves.
- Rockford does not have enough attractions to be considered a destination city. Rockford must focus on its strength which is sports facilities. Rockford has the capacity to be considered a sports destination. Other Rockford attractions can be promoted as side destinations for sports visitors. Side note while it is hearsay to many, Rockford should be promoted as a place to live due to its equal proximity to 3 great cities: Chicago, Madison, and Milwaukee.
- Reasonable cost for attending events, family discounts. Downtown Rockford is too congested and is not safe at night events.
- While I would support more funding item #'s 23, 24, 27, I do not think this should come through taxing. Rockford is already higher in taxes than the benefits given. This should be done through private funding and donations as well as partnering with businesses.
- There needs to be more things for 17-25 year olds other than the Ice Hogs and bars.
- Seems like a casino would help to increase our exposure. They do a lot of advertising.

- Providing staff who are qualified, knowledgeable, friendly, courteous, and helpful in tourism- related businesses, reduction in staffing most places can be an issue, most hotels now- a-days do not have lifeguards on duty anymore. It would be nice to see a person in pool areas to maintain safety such as open doors leading to outside areas, adults allowing small children in hot tubs, etc.
- Market yourself more. Sports functions are good but need more family-friendly activities.
- I know you won't do it but you should warn people about where they are staying. I've had unhappy sales reps who stayed in Howard Johnson Motel! Too many hookers! You need a nice motel closer to the airport! Good security and a good concierge to help the people. Downtown Rockford is bad. They have bums even outside the court house.
- Take care more of the places like parks, the beautiful river side by downtown. We need more security around the river areas and keeping clean.
- Sports facilities all great ideas. City needs home rule to tear down old buildings (Amerock/ Tapco, School Board-Barnes).
- Positives with city market, use of Davis Park.
- There seems to be an East West mentality here. Rockford needs one voice. My idea, in connection with building the Morgan Street Bridge is a promotion: BRIDGE THE ROCK. We need to demolish a very large area in the Colman Campers next to the river to provide lots of free parking. Then every month have a "FEST" to highlight our diverse origins. As of now, local churches, etc. have Irish, Polish, Swedish, German, Black, etc. functions. They could hold them in the new river side area. Plus on the weeks in-between, the farmers/local hobbyists, etc. market could be held there. Downtown isn't handy unless they took down the Tapco/Amerock buildings and made Davis Park the area to use in the same way. This way downtown would be a continuous destination for all of Rockford to come together to enjoy. Until we all come together to appreciate each other, we'll remain East/West. We've already got the wonderful folks from across the globe. All we need is a large enough, easy to access place to promote their assets. Don't need a bike path or bridge to nowhere, just a plot of land. Check out Milwaukee and Chicago. They've done it. We could do it, too.
- I think it is improving and what we have right now is working to bring in people such as the two water parks, but I think as a large city such as this, we could do more.
- We don't need Rockford as a bedroom community but rather more manufacturing. Manufacturing has made Rockford what it was and still should be, not strip malls and downtown weekend events.
- No casino = More crime encourages organized crime, fleecing of low-income folks, more thefts, more prostitution (AIDS will go up, cases of HIV, more healthcare costs borne by taxpayers), more home break-ins. Change Rockford into sleazy town.
- What happened to Rockford's basketball and football team?
- I would like easier ways to find out about things going on in the area.
- Go to the famous cities to see how they make the city more attractive. Transportation is very important, too.
- More sings.

- We would support a convention center with hotel if it were closer to the interstate.
- Promote special events. Davis Park is great. Music. Friday night flicks. Farmer's Market. Skating in the winter.
- Utilize our abundance of hotels with their tourism facilities.
- What tourism? There are a handful of good restaurants, Anderson Gardens, Klehm, and the Coronado. What's to see downtown, the courthouse? We have a river that's not utilized. High crime and we turn off the street lights. Why would anyone want to tour Rockford?
- Other communities outside Rockford that benefit from regional venues like the BMO Harris Center and Coronado Theatre should financially support these facilities as well as funding for RACVB.
- Cleaning up by removing empty condemned houses, clean up west side - provide activities downtown. Bring back live theater like New American.
- Feel events related to sports will bring in more dollars like Chicago suburbs. How to be easily accessible from toll roads.
- Shootings, crime, and teachers striking (both RVC & RPS) do not help us sound like the place to be visiting.
- The improved airport is helpful and train service might help also.
- Assist on Waterfront in putting on better public visions and food. Maybe more of a county fair atmosphere, better entertainment, like the good old days were.
- I don't use any of the facilities here. There's nothing here to interest me.
- People from other areas think there is nothing worthwhile to do in Rockford. They also believe that it isn't a safe place to visit.
- Billboards strategically located to promote Rockford's tourist attractions.
- We have come a long way, keep it up.
- We need tourism but it must be accessible for them and safe for all of us.
- Better deals on prices for families. It's too expensive. Bring casino/river boat gambling to downtown.
- A Sunday hotline for out of towners.
- Have area attractions and special event section for our website.
- Needs more of it.
- Promote, promote, promote! Rockford has great venues, festivals, parks, forest preserves. More packaging of weekend getaways to Rockford with passes to various events, etc. Hotel, restaurant, symphony, and a show or game, etc.
- General appearance of city (sidewalk repair and litter). We leave our tourists with a bad impression of our city since we removed such a large percentage of street lights. I think one of the most important things this city could do is put back at least half of the lights that were removed.
- No one wants to go downtown and deal with lack of parking and crime. The experiment has failed.

- Went to an event at the (then) Metro Center. Everyone was nasty. Police, hosts at MC, just about everyone had a negative attitude. My friends swore they would never return. They were still trying to find parking two hours after the event began. Rockford is not tourist-friendly.
- Leave as is. Home!
- Need to advertise more.
- There is really nothing to do in Rockford.
- Do not keep using downtown for tourism.
- I have lived here over 50 years. I hate to go downtown with no parking and all the one-way streets.
- Event parking available at reasonable price or free. Bus service like Washington D.C., you buy one ticket and see the sites getting off and on without additional expense.
- Better roads, all of Winnebago County. Tell Chicago to mind their own business, leave the rest of Illinois alone!
- Need good parking without so many parking ticket traps.
- If downtown is to be revitalized, the old has to go and the new has to be constructed like Grand Rapids, MI, Portland Oregon.
- Parks and rec.
- Some free things to do.
- We have a hard time believing that our local government can appropriately handle increasing tourism in the area based on their inept handling of day to day long-term civil planning. We believe that if our local government removed some of "input" restrictions, regulations, and fees, the market will adjust itself and festivals will come back.
- I think that they should have places that visitors can visit. You should make sure that it is on the bus route. You need to improve the Waterfront Festival that is in September on Labor Day weekend. You need to have the Waterfront Festival the way it was back in 2009 where we had the festival part on the east side of the bridge and the rest on the west side. You need to supply wheelchairs for either disabled people or the seniors, but make sure that they have an ID proving that they are handicapped or are seniors. Also need to improve on the music. You need to have more Christian music. I am bragging about Silver, it is a Christian band, they are really good. You need to have more people give out freebies. Have the new restaurant show their new food and you need to have a special bus to take people to the Winnebago Fair.
- Forget revitalizing downtown, never really going to take off. Stupid old school people way back when they voted not to have I-90 run by downtown, only thing new would be to go big like convention center, etc., to bring them in.
- Coffee shops, movie theaters, unique shopping opportunities other than at CherryVale Mall, outlet center draws many people from other communities. Trader Joe's, Whole Foods are stores and reasons people spend money in other cities.
- Don't waste your time going downtown.

- I can see in the survey that downtown is a focus point. To make downtown work, better parking, demolish old buildings. Roads system poor, do something with the homeless people. Need feeling of being safe.
- Revitalizing downtown will never be successful while so many transients are roaming the streets, people don't feel safe.
- Need more to do in the downtown area. We are under utilizing the river and downtown area.
- Expand what is working now. Sports tournaments of all kinds. Also build the whitewater rafting park.
- I think info on tourist attractions should be made available to local organizations, too.
- Anything would be nice to keep us here instead of us traveling to find fun and excitement! I would rather we also spend our money here.
- Stop trying to revitalize the downtown, hasn't worked for over 30 years. Put your money and efforts elsewhere.
- Bring more attractions and events.
- To get people here we have to clean up crime, we can't keep getting put on "miserable" list.
- If you want to make this an attractive place for tourism, drive through downtown and ask yourself what would an average family do while they were there.
- Would love to see Rockford cleaned up and have people/visitors want to visit.
- RACVB is doing a terrific job.
- My personal view on the Rockford area is too much crime, ridden areas, lots of gangs that make people uncomfortable. We need laws that would provide penalties to those who don't take care of properties. We need standards and implement them.
- Downtown should be more attractive, because it is the "heartbeat" of Rockford. Thank you.
- Make Nicholas Conservatory and Gardens a reciprocal garden of the American Horticultural society (www.ahs.org).
- The sports like baseball, soccer, etc. tournaments are what brings in money along with hotel, food, gas, entertainment. People I've met out of town say what great sports facilities Rockford has.
- Trader Joe's, Pottery Barn, better shopping.
- Integrate E. State hotel complex with the commercial and rec opportunities - map and sidewalks.
- Travel time in Rockford as far as tourism too long. Need to have a loop for people. Very confusing for somebody to get to downtown for a show, then back to I-90 where all the hotels are. Make Rockford a metro area that it's been trying to be for years. Also a website that breaks down Rockford - restaurants, bars, retail, etc.
- Many out of town people visit the BMO Harris Bank Center during the hockey season. Access to downtown is difficult and an eyesore, then trying to find a hotel and food downtown is a challenge.
- Let people know - Spread the Word!

- The area has turned into a “service” community because much industry has departed. Continue to increase “service” attractions to survive.
- Need to work on better schools and reduce crime. Continue to work to bring attractive entertainment to Coronado and Metro Centre. Are our hotels and facilities attractive and do we have a positive attitude? Work on getting casino here.
- An outlet mall at Riverside and I-90 would be very successful. It would draw the many travelers passing in to restaurants and gas stations.
- I think there should be a Rockford/Winnebago County NATIVE (20+ years living here) in charge at RACVB - someone with vision and perspective?
- Not sure there is much tourism except for sporting events?
- I have experienced an attempted carjacking by a young black male at the intersection of West State and Church Street at 9 a.m. Saturday morning. Talk about safety? I go fishing and have for years with several Rockford and county police officers (retired & active) and have been warned of the (unsafe) downtown Rockford.
- I am against a railway to Chicago.
- Rockford is conservative but we have beautiful parks and I think promoting our parks and museums, flowering gardens will be helpful.
- Downtown Rockford is old, ugly, and unappealing. As with anything that old, it will take much time, \$, and effort to improve it. Most people, myself included, prefer up-to-date, well kept, and attractive sites. I don't understand why we continue to provide downtown with funds for improvements and appeal. As far as I can recall, nothing has been gained. There is little available parking, crazy 1-way streets, and old run-down buildings. Did the Metro Center “enhance” downtown - no? The Metro Center continues to lose \$!
- We're on the right track - keep going!
- Give away a magazine “Where to go in Rockford.” All the places we know now and hardly know and write as they used to be, like the monkey sock dolls. Use some old pictures.
- I hear about a convention center/hotel in downtown Rockford and have no idea if it would be helpful or not. I support revitalization of downtown. I work downtown. I like to think I keep reasonable informed. Yet I have no information upon which to decide if a convention center and hotel in downtown Rockford (as opposed to near the tollway or US 20) would be helpful or a waste of money.
- Rockford area has some great area for outdoors, increase advertising for these areas and ecotourism.
- Very positive feedback from the women bowlers for the state tournament at Don Carters.
- It's only present during the summer so we need something large that will attract \$\$\$ and people year round and provide jobs for our local people!
- Thank you.
- Rockford needs representatives who plan for the future. They passed up NIU which would have been great for tourism and the economy.