



**ROCKFORD  
SHAREFEST**

Forest City Beautiful

# NEWS RELEASE

Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

## RACVB's Forest City Beautiful and Rockford Sharefest Announce Collaborative Project Community Foundation of Northern Illinois awards \$45,000 grant to project aimed at beautifying downtown Rockford

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 4, 2015

**ROCKFORD, IL** — The Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau announced today a large-scale collaborative effort with **Rockford Sharefest** as the next step in the bureau's **Forest City Beautiful** initiative, which aims to beautify downtown Rockford.

After helping Forest City Beautiful launch in June 2014 by providing more than 700 volunteers who installed landscaping and streetscape enhancements, Sharefest – known for its extreme school makeovers of Rockford Public School buildings since 2007 – has announced that its major project in 2015 will be helping RACVB's Forest City Beautiful initiative reach its full potential.

This year, it is estimated that **more than 2,500 volunteers** will help beautify downtown Rockford. The estimated **volunteer equity donated to the community is \$192,640**. The overall project will focus on revitalizing the downtown including several parking lots throughout the downtown such as Lot SS near the Rockford Park District office, adding planters to the streetscape, painting of amenities along State Street and landscaping along the west bank of the Rock River between State Street and Jefferson Street Bridges.

"We knew the success of Forest City Beautiful was predicated on the community embracing the initiative, and we are enthused that Sharefest and its volunteers have fully embraced this initiative," John Groh, RACVB president/CEO said. "To have Sharefest choose Forest City Beautiful as its main focus for this year is huge and demonstrates an understanding that downtown and our riverfront are important to the entire region and every resident."

For Sharefest, making the downtown project this year's focus of "Bringing Help & Hope" provided a perfect transition from the efforts at local schools. Building on the momentum established last summer and through their help with decorating downtown Rockford for Stroll on State and the holidays, Sharefest is poised to make an even bigger impact with Forest City Beautiful this year.

"Sharefest got started because of the need in our local public schools. After 8 years and 13 school renovations, we can celebrate - that need has been met!" Creig Day, Rockford Sharefest executive director said. "This year we will focus all of our energies downtown. We want to bring help and hope to the center of our city and spur on the momentum that is building."

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The Forest City Beautiful and Sharefest Project Week will take place from Friday, May 29 – Saturday, June 6. Volunteers can sign up to help at [www.rockfordsharefest.com](http://www.rockfordsharefest.com) or [www.forestcitybeautiful.com](http://www.forestcitybeautiful.com).

"Forest City Beautiful is a solution that helps breathe life into the core of our city, while creating public spaces that are aesthetically pleasing and also environmentally friendly. This transformation process is a reflection of the incredible partnerships and strong community working together to continue beautifying Rockford's beloved downtown," said Tana Vettore, Director of Destination Development for the RACVB.

### **Community Foundation Awards Grant**

The **Community Foundation of Northern Illinois** also announced a **\$45,000 grant** awarded to Forest City Beautiful this year. This is the second year in a row that the Foundation has granted money to the initiative. In 2014, the Foundation granted \$25,000 for the beautification projects.

"We see the Forest City Beautiful project as a vital way to revitalize the community through enhancing the physical appearance of the downtown," Jon Bates, Executive Vice President for the Community Foundation of Northern Illinois, said. "We are encouraged by the success of the project so far and by the commitment made by the RACVB and Rockford Sharefest."

The grant will help to offset the costs of purchasing and installing 40 large planters that will be installed throughout downtown Rockford during the Sharefest project.

### **Donors Lead the Way**

Forest City Beautiful is supported by the generous donations of individuals and organizations in the community. In 2014, RACVB seeded the initiative with \$80,000 from its board-designated Wendy Perks Fisher Fund for Innovation and from an initial commitment of \$90,000 from the City of Rockford.

In addition to seed funding from the City and RACVB, more than \$120,000 has been raised to support the multi-year beautification effort. RACVB Board members David Anderson, of Anderson Japanese Gardens, and Bill LaFever of Bill Doran Company co-chair the initiative. ***Funders and sponsors to date include:***

#### ***Forest City Green Sponsor - \$10,000 and above***

- Community Foundation of Northern Illinois
- Holmstrom & Kennedy, PC
- David & Colleen Anderson Family

#### ***Blue Oat Grass Sponsor - \$2,500 - \$5,000***

- Illinois Bank & Trust
- Reno & Zahm
- LaMonica Beverages with Darrell & Bobbie Snorek

#### ***Red Maple Sponsor - \$500 - \$2,500***

- Coyle Varland
- B&B Properties
- Wipfli LLP

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***Purple Coneflower Sponsor - \$500 and under***

- Landscapes by Walter
- WilliamsMcCarthy
- Urban Equity Partners

***Paint the (Down)town Green*** - In March, a new event, paint the (Down)town Green presented by SwedishAmerican, raised more than \$12,000 to support the effort.

As a way to recognize donors and to help enhance the landscape beds in the downtown, decorative signs will be erected to raise awareness of the initiative. The signs, designed by GrahamSpencer and fabricated by ProGraphics are made to blend in with the natural landscaping.

Those interested in donating to the initiative can get more information at [www.forestcitybeautiful.com](http://www.forestcitybeautiful.com) or by calling Tana Vettore at 815.963.8111.

*The Community Foundation of Northern Illinois is the area's largest provider of grants and scholarships. Celebrating 60 years of philanthropy, the Foundation's mission is to attract, grow and preserve an endowment for the needs of the people of Northern Illinois. [www.cfnil.org](http://www.cfnil.org)*

***Rockford Sharefest*** exists to identify, develop and lead projects that empower and release volunteers and donors to use their God-given gifts, abilities and resources to make an impact for the common good.

***Forest City Beautiful*** is a multi-year initiative aimed at creating and maintaining beautiful landscapes in downtown Rockford. RACVB leads the effort in collaboration with the City of Rockford. As part of the initiative, RACVB has the responsibility to plan, install and maintain landscaping in public spaces.

*The mission of the RACVB is to drive quality of life and economic growth for our citizens through tourism marketing and destination development. [www.gorockford.com](http://www.gorockford.com)*

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**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

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