

ROCKFORD AREA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

SURVEY OF WINNEBAGO COUNTY RESIDENTS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter 1	INTRODUCTION, METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS	
	INTRODUCTION	1
	METHODOLOGY.....	1
	RESPONSE.....	1
	<i>Mail Response by Geography</i>	2
	<i>Online Response by Geography</i>	2
	RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS	5
	SURVEY ACCURACY.....	5
Chapter 2	AWARENESS OF ROCKFORD AREA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU	
	KNOW EXISTENCE OF RACVB	7
	HOW DO THEY KNOW ABOUT RACVB.....	10
Chapter 3	IMPORTANCE AND EFFECT OF TOURISM ON LOCAL ECONOMY	
	IMPORTANCE OF VISITORS TO ROCKFORD'S REGIONAL ECONOMY	14
	EFFECT OF VISITORS ON LOCAL ECONOMY.....	15
	SCALE FOR RECOMMENDING ROCKFORD.....	19
Chapter 4	SUPPORT AND FUNDING FOR SPECIFIC TOURISM INITIATIVES	
	RANKING OF POTENTIAL TOURISM INITIATIVES.....	23
	SUPPORT FOR EACH PROJECT	24
	<i>Promoting Ecotourism</i>	24
	<i>Facilities for Amateur Sports Tournaments</i>	25
	<i>Downtown Rockford Revitalization</i>	25
	<i>Connecting Bike Paths to Other Areas in County</i>	26
	<i>Adding Attractive Gateways</i>	27
	<i>Building a Whitewater Rapids Course on Rock River</i>	27
	FUNDING FOR PROJECTS.....	28
Chapter 5	QUALITY OF LIFE	
	QUALITY OF LIFE MEASURES	42
	PLACE TO LIVE AND DIRECTION	42
	APPEARANCE AND PHYSICAL UPKEEP.....	43
	SAFETY	44
Chapter 6	COMMENTS ABOUT MAKING ROCKFORD AND WINNEBAGO COUNTY MORE WELCOMING TO VISITORS	
	ACTIVITIES, FESTIVALS, ATTRACTIONS, ENTERTAINMENT	47
	ROADS, LIGHTING, SIDEWALKS, LANDSCAPE.....	48
	CRIME, VIOLENCE, SAFETY AND POLICE.....	49
	CITY UPKEEP, NEIGHBORHOODS, ABANDONED BUILDINGS.....	49
	DOWNTOWN ROCKFORD AND ROCK RIVER	49
	OTHER ISSUES.....	49
	POSITIVES	50

TABLES

Table

1.1	ZIP CODES WITH HIGHEST RESPONSE RATES	2
1.2	MAIL ZIP CODE RESPONSE AND PERCENT RESPONDENTS	2
1.3	ONLINE ZIP CODE RESPONSE AND PERCENT RESPONDENTS	4
1.4	SURVEY RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS AND COMPARISON TO CENSUS	6
2.1	AWARENESS OF RACVB.....	8
2.2	GROUPS WITH HIGHEST AND LOWEST AWARENESS OF RACVB EXISTENCE.....	10
2.3	WAYS RESPONDENTS HAVE ENCOUNTERED RACVB	11
3.1	IMPORTANCE OF VISITORS TO REGIONAL ECONOMY.....	14
3.2	GROUPS WITH HIGHEST AND LOWEST PROPORTIONS ABOUT IMPORTANCE OF VISITORS TO REGIONAL ECONOMY.....	15
3.3	EFFECT OF VISITORS ON LOCAL ECONOMY	16
3.4	GROUPS WITH HIGHEST AND LOWEST PROPORTIONS ABOUT EFFECT OF VISITORS ON LOCAL ECONOMY	16
3.5	MEAN SCORES OF IMPORTANCE AND EFFECT OF TOURISM ON LOCAL/REGIONAL ECONOMY	17
3.6	LIKELIHOOD OF RECOMMENDING VISIT TO ROCKFORD	19
3.7	LIKELIHOOD OF RECOMMENDATIONS VISIT TO ROCKFORD BY MEAN SCORES	20
4.1	SUPPORT FOR SPECIFIC TOURISM PROJECTS	23
4.2	TOP AND BOTTOM GROUPS FOR PROMOTING ECOTOURISM	25
4.3	TOP AND BOTTOM GROUPS FOR MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING FACILITIES FOR AMATEUR SPORTS TOURNAMENTS.....	25
4.4	TOP AND BOTTOM GROUPS FOR HELPING DOWNTOWN ROCKFORD REVITALIZATION.....	26
4.5	TOP AND BOTTOM GROUPS FOR CONNECTING BIKE PATHS TO RURAL AND OUTLYING AREAS OF COUNTY	26
4.6	ADDING ATTRACTIVE GATEWAYS INTO ROCKFORD AND OTHER TOWNS.....	27
4.7	TOP AND BOTTOM GROUPS FOR BUILDING A WHITEWATER RAPIDS COURSE ON ROCK RIVER.....	27
4.8	SUPPORT MORE FUNDING FOR PROJECTS	28
4.9	AGREEMENT LEVELS FOR PROMOTING ECETOURISM BY POPULATION SUBGROUP	29
4.10	AGREEMENT LEVELS FOR MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING FACILITIES FOR AMATEUR SPORTS TOURNAMENTS BY POPULATION GROUP	31
4.11	AGREEMENT LEVELS FOR DOWNTOWN ROCKFORD REVITALIZATION BY POPULATION SUBGROUP	33
4.12	AGREEMENT LEVELS FOR CONNECTING BIKE PATHS BY POPULATION SUBGROUP	35
4.13	AGREEMENT LEVELS FOR ADDING ATTRACTIVE GATEWAYS INTO THE CITY OF ROCKFORD AND OTHER TOWNS BY POPULATION SUBGROUP	37

4.14	AGREEMENT LEVELS FOR BUILDING A WHITEWATER RAPIDS COURSE ON THE ROCK RIVER BY POPULATION GROUP	39
5.1	QUALITY OF LIFE MEASURES.....	42
5.2	TOP AND BOTTOM GROUPS FOR PLEASED WITH ROCKFORD/ WINNEBAGO COUNTY AS PLACE TO LIVE	43
5.3	TOP AND BOTTOM GROUPS FOR ROCKFORD/WINNEBAGO COUNTY HEADED IN RIGHT DIRECTION	43
5.4	TOP AND BOTTOM GROUPS FOR APPEARANCE AND UPKEEP SHOULD BE A HIGH COMMUNITY PRIORITY.....	44
5.5	TOP AND BOTTOM GROUPS FOR FEELING OF PERSONAL SAFETY IN ROCKFORD	44
5.6	QUALITY OF LIFE MEASURES MEAN SCORES BY POPULATION SUBGROUP	45
6.1	COMMENTS ABOUT MAKING ROCKFORD AND WINNEBAGO COUNTY MORE WELCOMING TO VISITORS.....	48

GRAPHS

Figure

2.1	“Before receiving this survey, did you know that an organization named Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau exists?”	12
2.2	“Before receiving this survey, did you know that an organization named Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau exists?”	12
2.2	“I have encountered RACVB in the following ways”	13
3.1	“How important are visitors and tourism to Rockford’s regional economy?”	22
3.2	“How do you think visitors affect the local economy?”	22
4.1	“The following projects are important to the community”	41
4.2	“I would support more funding”	41

APPENDICES

Appendix A	COVER LETTER AND SURVEY INSTRUMENT	51
Appendix B	2015 PAPER SURVEY AND ONLINE SURVEY COMPARISON FREQUENCIES	56
Appendix C	2015 AND 2012 PAPER SURVEY COMPARISON FREQUENCIES	68
Appendix D	PAPER SURVEY VERBATIM COMMENTS.....	76
Appendix E	ONLINE SURVEY VERBATIM COMMENTS.....	120
Appendix F	DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF ENTIRE SAMPLE BY SURVEY TYPE.....	166
Appendix G	CITIZEN SURVEY 2015.....	170

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION, METHODOLOGY, AND SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

INTRODUCTION

To gauge public opinion about local tourism efforts, Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (RACVB) contracted with Health Systems Research to conduct a survey of local residents, repeating an effort that took place three years ago. The survey covered topics about the organization's visibility, role and development, a recommendation score, support of various tourism-related projects, and quality of life measures. Questions about survey respondents' demographics were also included. 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.

METHODOLOGY

RACVB and HSR staff worked jointly to develop the survey instrument which included many of the 2012 questions in order to draw comparisons. 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 is anonymous with no identifiers to tie responses to an individual. See Appendix A for survey instrument.

The 2015 RACVB survey was administered two ways:

- 1) Surveys were mailed to a random sample of residential addresses of zip codes in Winnebago County, equivalent to one in 18 households. Four Rockford zip codes (61101, 61102, 61103, 61104) were double-sampled because these areas exhibited relatively low response rates in 2012. Postage-paid envelopes were enclosed for respondents to return their completed survey to HSR.
- 2) An electronic survey was set up using Qualtrics software. The online survey link was available to anyone who chose to access the link.

The mailed surveys were delivered to local households on January 23 and 24, 2015, while the survey link was accessible as of January 22, 2015. Returned mail surveys were accepted through the end of February and the survey link was active until February 23, 2015.

RACVB staff promoted the survey using a variety of ways to encourage response including media releases, radio and television interviews, email blasts, and posts on social media sites.

RESPONSE

A total of 948 surveys were returned by mail and electronic submissions numbered 728. More online surveys were started but only those which responded to at least two questions were included in the online count. Combining mail and electronic returns yields a total response of 1,676 surveys. For survey analysis in subsequent chapters, the sample includes all surveys

returned by mail and online surveys in which respondents' zip codes were located in Winnebago County, a total of 1,517 surveys.

Mail Response by Geography (Tables 1.1 and 1.2)

At the end of February, 948 useable surveys were returned (from a total of 977 of which 29 were blank). These 948 surveys equate to a response rate of 15.8% surpassing 2012 at 13.7% by more than two percentage points. This impressive response exceeds rates typically associated with recent local surveys in urban areas which have ranged from 12-14%.

Four zip code areas exhibit response rates surpassing 20%. These exceptionally strong returns occurred for 61107 Rockford Near Northeast, 61108 Rockford Southeast, 61103 Rockford Central, which was double sampled, and 61111 Loves Park. Also high with rates above 18% are 61109 Rockford, 61011 Caledonia, 61115 Machesney Park, and 61024 Durand. Low returns rates falling in the single digits characterized 61080 South Beloit (9.4%) and zip codes which are post office boxes only, including 61125, 61126 Rockford and 61131, 61132 Loves Park.

The mailing list for the survey was generated by zip code and zip codes cross county lines, so a minimal number of addresses fell outside the county. They are still considered part of the mail sample since the zip code is located at least in part within the county's boundaries.

Online Response by Geography (Tables 1.1 and 1.3)

Unlike the mailed survey, online respondents were not limited to Winnebago County, though messages about the survey link were disseminated through the Rockford-based RACVB. The largest single zip code represented is 61107, accounting for 16.3% of total replies (18.1% if no answer omitted), followed by 61108 and 61103. These three areas accounted for more than one in three (36.4%) of online respondents or four in ten (40.6%) online respondents who indicated their zip code.

Table 1.1
ZIP CODES WITH HIGHEST RESPONSE RATES

Zip Code and Description	Response	
	Percent	(No.)
Mail ¹		
61107 - Rockford Near Northeast	30.3%	(64)
61108 - Rockford Southeast	29.8%	(63)
61103 - Rockford Central	21.9%	(91) ²
61111 - Loves Park	21.5%	(45)
Online	Number	
61107 - Rockford Near Northeast	118	
61108 - Rockford Southeast	77	

¹Zip codes with fewer than 10 surveys received omitted.

²Double sampled.

Table 1.2
MAIL ZIP CODE RESPONSE AND PERCENT RESPONDENTS

Zip Code	City/Town	Number Sent	Number Received	Percent Returned	Percent Respondents
Total		6,000	948	15.8%	100.0%
61011	Caledonia	212	41	19.3%	4.3%
61016	Cherry Valley	212	38	17.9%	4.0%
61019	Davis	212	27	12.7%	2.8%
61020	Davis Junction	24	3	12.5%	0.3%
61024	Durand	212	39	18.4%	4.1%
61063	Pecatonica	212	37	17.4%	3.9%
61072	Rockton	212	36	17.0%	3.8%
61073	Roscoe	212	37	17.5%	3.9%
61077	Seward	28	8	28.6%	0.8%
61079	Shirland	40	5	12.5%	0.5%
61080	South Beloit	212	20	9.4%	2.1%
61088	Winnebago	212	38	17.9%	4.0%
61101	Rockford	422*	61	14.5%	6.4%
61102	Rockford	422*	54	12.8%	5.7%
61103	Rockford	415*	91	21.9%	9.6%
61104	Rockford	423*	54	12.8%	5.7%
61107	Rockford	211	64	30.3%	6.8%
61108	Rockford	211	63	29.8%	6.6%
61109	Rockford	211	41	19.4%	4.3%
61111	Loves Park	209	45	21.5%	4.7%
61112	Rockford	35	5	14.3%	0.5%
61114	Rockford	211	62	10.1%	6.5%
61115	Machesney Park	207	39	18.8%	4.1%
61125	Rockford***	148	5	3.4%	0.5%
61126	Rockford***	211	4	1.9%	0.4%
61131	Loves Park***	70	2	2.9%	0.2%
61132	Loves Park***	201	2	1.0%	0.2%
No answer		---	18	---	1.9%
Other**		393	9	2.3%	0.9%

*Double sampled.

**Includes zips with fewer than 2 returns or outside county.

***Zip code for P.O. Box.

Table 1.3
ONLINE ZIP CODE RESPONSE AND PERCENT RESPONDENTS

Zip Code	City/Town	Number Received	Percent Respondents
Total	---	728	100.0%
Winnebago County			
61011	Caledonia	2	0.3%
61016	Cherry Valley	9	1.2%
61019	Davis	2	0.3%
61024	Durand	2	0.3%
61063	Pecatonica	4	0.6%
61072	Rockton	19	2.6%
61073	Roscoe	26	3.6%
61080	South Beloit	6	0.8%
61088	Winnebago	5	0.7%
61101	Rockford	36	4.8%
61102	Rockford	21	2.9%
61103	Rockford	69	9.5%
61104	Rockford	28	3.9%
61107	Rockford	118	16.3%
61108	Rockford	77	10.6%
61109	Rockford	28	3.9%
61111	Loves Park	44	6.1%
61114	Rockford	46	6.4%
61115	Machesney Park	27	3.7%
Other (in Winnebago County)		4	0.3%
Outside Winnebago			
61008	Belvidere	13	1.8%
Other (Outside Winnebago)*		67	9.3%
No answer		78	10.7%

*No zip code besides 61008 had > 3 respondents.

RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Because RACVB intended this survey to be a “citizen survey” of local opinion, the survey sample used for analysis includes all surveys returned by mail since they were sent to a random sample of households in Winnebago County zip codes as well as online replies in which respondents designated their home to be in a zip code located in the county. Thus, of the 1,676 total surveys recorded, 1,517 are used for survey analysis. Their description is shown below.

The survey sample (Table 1.4) is almost two-thirds (64.6%) female; 50-64 year olds comprise the largest age group (39.2%) followed by 65 and older (28.1%). Nine in ten (89.8%) are non-Hispanic whites and 46.1% possess a four-year college degree or more. The homes of one in four (25.9%) respondents contain children under the age of 18.

Another question asked respondents how long they had resided in the county. Very few (11, 0.7%) were newcomers having moved to the county within the past year, much smaller than the 3.1% as indicated by the Census.

A description of all 1,676 survey respondent characteristics including all online responses regardless of where respondents lived is shown in Appendix F including a Census comparison.

SURVEY ACCURACY

Surveys which gather public opinion such as this one are intended to represent the views of the population as a whole. While the degree to which the survey sample reflects that population is not known, the mailed-out version was purely random, sent to one in 18 households and therefore representative, although people who complete and return surveys may differ from those who do not, thereby affecting the overall representativeness. The online survey was not random but produced a high volume of replies generating much useful information. Examining the demographic characteristics of 2015 survey respondents to the Winnebago County population provides a base for understanding how well the sample reflects the population as a whole (Table 1.4). As typifies many community surveys, RACVB survey respondents were more likely to be female, older, white, and with higher education than the population as a whole. The mailed-in responses were a closer match than online to Winnebago County’s population for gender, race/ethnicity, and education, while online was a better match for age and presence of children at home (See Appendix F).

In addition to representativeness, an important consideration in judging the survey’s accuracy is the margin of error since a sample, not the entire population, was surveyed. Given the response rate and sample size for the mail survey, the margins of error for most survey questions are +/- 3.0% at a 95% confidence level and +/-2.5% at a 90% confidence level. When results are analyzed by demographic characteristics, margins of error are larger than the sample as a whole. Therefore, categories within two groups were collapsed to achieve an adequate cell size for survey analysis: length of residence (less than 5 years = under 1 + 1-4), race/ethnicity (minority race/ethnic = black + Hispanic + Asian + multi-racial + other).

Table 1.4
SURVEY RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS AND COMPARISON TO CENSUS

Characteristic	All Respondents		2013 Census Percent ²
	Number	Percent ¹	
All Winnebago County Sample	1,517	100.0%	---
Gender			
Male	529	35.4%	51.7%
Female	964	64.6%	48.3%
Age (years)			
18-29	67	4.4%	19.3%
30-39	172	11.4%	15.4%
40-49	256	16.9%	18.5%
50-64	593	39.2%	26.8%
65 and older	426	28.1%	20.1%
Race/Ethnicity			
White, non-Hispanic	1,340	89.8%	71.2%
Black, non-Hispanic	65	4.4%	11.9%
Hispanic	31	2.1%	11.7%
Asian	16	1.1%	2.4%
Multi-racial	21	1.4%	2.5%
Other	19	1.3%	0.3%
Education			
Less than high school	24	1.6%	12.9%
High school diploma	208	13.8%	33.3%
Some college, no degree	346	23.0%	23.8%
Associate's or technical degree	234	15.5%	8.6%
Bachelor's degree	415	27.6%	13.8%
Graduate/professional degree	279	18.5%	7.5%
Presence of Children < 18 in Household			
Yes	391	25.9%	33.6%
No	1,120	74.1%	66.4%

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

²Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates.
Gender percent based on ages 18+ and education on ages 25+

Chapter 2 AWARENESS OF ROCKFORD AREA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

A two-part question 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 the organization.

Analysis of these survey questions includes all paper returns since they were mailed to households in Winnebago County zip codes only and online returns in which respondents indicated their zip code to be within the county's boundaries.

Where comparisons to 2012 are drawn, 2015 survey responses are shown for this sample, as well as 2015 paper returns only since the 2012 survey was paper response only.

KNOW EXISTENCE OF RACVB

Almost nine in ten (87.1%) survey respondents said they were aware of RACVB before receiving the survey, surpassing the 2012 level of 84.0%. Among 2015 respondents, 9.7% did not know about RACVB, while 3.0% were unsure.

While gender did not make a big difference in awareness, age, race/ethnicity, and length of residence did. In addition, more online (93.8%) than paper (83.4%) respondents knew about RACVB. Based on both paper and online returns, groups surpassing 90% awareness were respondents ages 50-64 (91.6%) and 65+ (90.4%), much higher than ages 18-29 (61.2%) and 30-39 (73.3%). The same is true for whites (89.3%) compared to non-white groups; (54.8% Hispanic, 71.4% other, 72.3% black).

While lower awareness characterized those with no more than a high school diploma (75.4%), the other educational levels were quite similar at 85% and above. Awareness fell below 70% for respondents who have lived in the county for less than 10 years, more than 20 percentage points below 20+ year residents (91.6%).

Awareness also varied by presence of children at home and zip code of residence, though not to the same degree. Eight in ten (81.3%) households with children at home knew about RACVB versus nine in ten (89.1%) households without children. The spread by zip code ranged from 79.1% among Caledonia respondents to 94.4% for Rockford 61114. Table 2.1 shows responses by demographic group. In that table, "no" and "not sure" responses are combined.

Table 2.1
AWARENESS OF RACVB

Group	Yes		No/Not Sure	
	Number	Percent ¹	Number	Percent ¹
All	1,322	87.1%	192	12.7%
Survey Type				
Paper	788	83.4%	157	16.6%
Online	534	93.8%	35	6.2%
Gender				
Female	835	86.6%	126	13.1%
Male	468	88.5%	61	11.5%
Age (years)				
18-29	41	61.2%	26	38.8%
30-39	126	73.3%	46	26.7%
40-49	224	87.5%	31	12.1%
50-64	543	91.6%	49	8.3%
65 and older	385	90.4%	40	9.4%
Race/Ethnicity ²				
White	1,197	89.3%	140	10.4%
Black	47	72.3%	18	27.7%
Hispanic	17	54.8%	14	45.2%
Other	40	71.4%	16	28.6%
Education				
High school or less	175	75.4%	56	24.1%
Some college, no degree	308	89.0%	37	10.7%
Associate, technical degree	199	85.0%	35	15.0%
Bachelor's degree	380	91.6%	34	8.2%
Graduate, professional degree	250	89.6%	29	10.4%
Length of Residence				
Less than 5 years	53	67.9%	25	32.1%
5-9 years	44	62.0%	27	38.0%
10-19 years	141	79.7%	34	19.2%
20 years or more	1,044	91.6%	95	8.3%
Children < 18 at Home				
Yes	318	81.3%	72	18.4%
No	998	89.1%	120	10.7%

Group	Yes		No/Not Sure	
	Number	Percent ¹	Number	Percent ¹
Geographic Area³				
61101 - Rockford	83	86.5%	13	13.5%
61102 - Rockford	61	81.3%	14	18.7%
61103 - Rockford	147	91.9%	13	8.1%
61104 - Rockford	69	84.1%	13	15.9%
61107 - Rockford	164	90.1%	18	9.9%
61108 - Rockford	128	91.4%	12	8.6%
61109 - Rockford	57	82.6%	12	17.4%
61114 - Rockford	102	94.4%	6	5.6%
Other Winnebago County				
61115 - Machesney Park	57	86.4%	8	12.1%
61111 - Loves Park	79	88.8%	10	11.2%
61011 - Caledonia	34	79.1%	9	20.9%
61016 - Cherry Valley	42	89.4%	5	10.6%
61024 - Durand	33	80.5%	8	19.5%
61063 - Pecatonica	35	85.4%	8	14.5%
61072 - Rockton	47	85.5%	8	14.5%
61073 - Roscoe	53	84.1%	10	15.9%
61088 - Winnebago	38	88.4%	5	11.6%

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 Asian, multi-racial, other.

³Areas with 40 or more respondents.

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

Groups with the greatest awareness of RACVB’s existence (Table 2.2) are residents living in Rockford zip codes 61114, 61103 and 61108, ages 50-64 and 65+, adults who have earned a four-year college degree, and long-time residents. On the other hand, the lowest awareness occurred among respondents of Hispanic ethnicity, ages 18-29, and those living in the county less than 10 years.

Table 2.2
GROUPS WITH HIGHEST AND LOWEST AWARENESS OF RACVB EXISTENCE

Rank	Description	Variable	Percent Yes
Top (> 90%)			
1	61114 - Rockford	Residence	94.4%
2	61103 - Rockford	Residence	91.9%
3	50-64	Age	91.6%
3	Four-year college degree	Education	91.6%
3	Live in county 20+ years	Length of residence	91.6%
6	61108 - Rockford	Residence	91.4%
7	65 years and older	Age	90.4%
Lowest (< 70%)			
1	Hispanic	Race/ethnicity	54.8%
2	18-29	Age	61.2%
3	Live in county 5-9 years	Length of residence	62.0%
4	Live in county < 5 years	Length of residence	67.9%

HOW DO THEY KNOW ABOUT RACVB

Most commonly, respondents who knew about RACVB encountered this organization through the local media (76.0%). Next highest, though considerably lower, is the calendar of events (43.2%) followed by advertisement in a magazine (36.7%) and Stroll on State (34.8%). Forest City Beautiful/downtown beautification (28.1%) and website/Facebook (23.9%) were each mentioned by about one-quarter of respondents, while amateur sports tournaments were how 17.2% of respondents knew about RACVB and working with RACVB on an event was noted by 11.6% (Table 2.3).

Compared to survey results of three years ago, respondents who were familiar with RACVB through the website/Facebook quadrupled from 5.6% to 23.9%, explained in part by the addition of the online survey option in 2015. Also witnessing a dramatic rise in the past three years was the proportion of respondents who had worked with RACVB on an event (3.1% 2012, 11.6% 2015). Two means of RACVB exposure, Stroll on State and Forest City Beautiful/ downtown beautification were not survey options in 2012 so no comparisons can be made.

Using 2015 paper returns alone, four ways held similar influence as was true in 2012 survey results: local media 81.5% versus 83.0%, 2012; advertisement 37.3% (39.8%, 2012) and website/Facebook 6.0% (5.6%, 2012); worked with RACVB on meeting, reunion, tournament 3.8% (3.1%, 2012). The other two, calendar of events (30.2%) and amateur sports tournaments (14.6%), show drops in 2015 over 2012 at 34.0% and 22.3%, respectively.

Table 2.3
WAYS RESPONDENTS HAVE ENCOUNTERED RACVB

Rank	Description	Percent ¹		
		2015		2012 Paper Only
		Paper & Online	Paper Only	
1	Local media	76.0%	81.5%	83.0%
2	Calendar of events	43.2%	30.2%	34.0%
3	Advertisement in magazine	36.7%	37.3%	39.8%
4	Stroll on State	34.8%	20.6%	---
5	Forest City Beautiful/downtown beautification	28.1%	24.1%	---
6	Website, Facebook	23.9%	6.0%	5.6%
7	Amateur sports tournaments	17.2%	14.6%	22.3%
8	Worked with RACVB on meeting, reunion, tournament, etc.	11.6%	3.8%	3.1%
---	Other	12.6%	10.3%	6.3%

¹Based on percent of respondents who know about RACVB (n = 1,322 in 2015, 788 paper only in 2015, and 576 in 2012).

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

Respondents who wrote in an open-ended reply for how they have encountered RAVCB mentioned

- another local organization (27),
- an organizational affiliation (27),
- personal contacts or friends/relatives who work at RACVB (20),
- flyers/signs/mail/TV/newspaper (19) (17 were paper survey respondents),
- local events (14),
- emails/newsletter/Internet (12) (all from online surveys),
- live/work near/walked/saw downtown (10).

All other open-ended categories received a single-digit number of replies. A complete list of "Other" is shown in Appendices D and E.

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

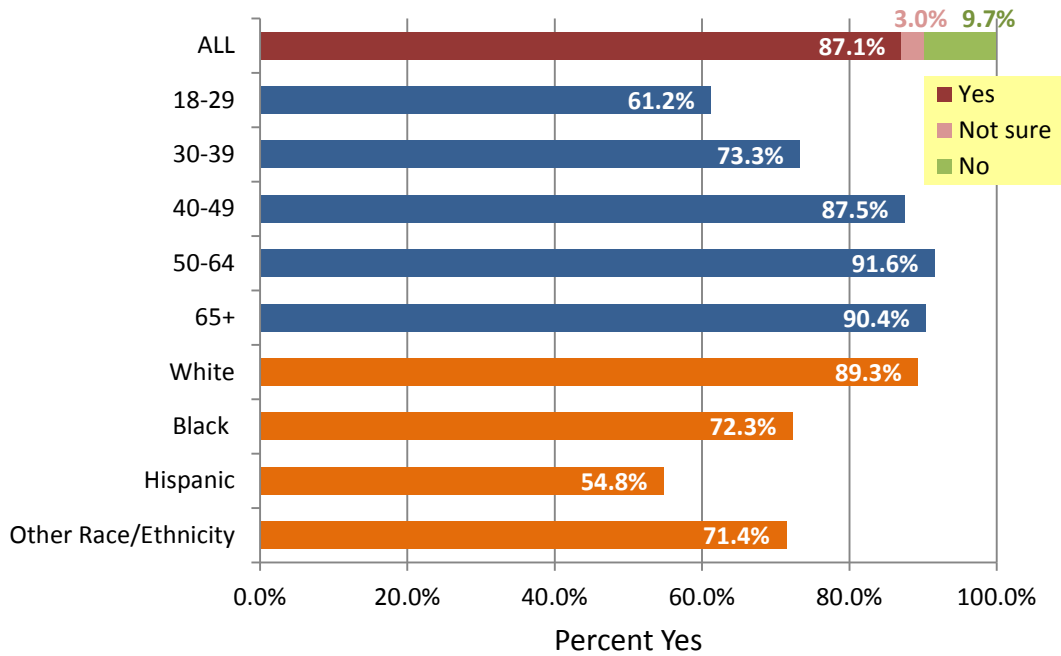


Figure 2.2
 "Before receiving this survey, did you know that an organization named
 Rockford Area Convention and Visitors Bureau exists?"

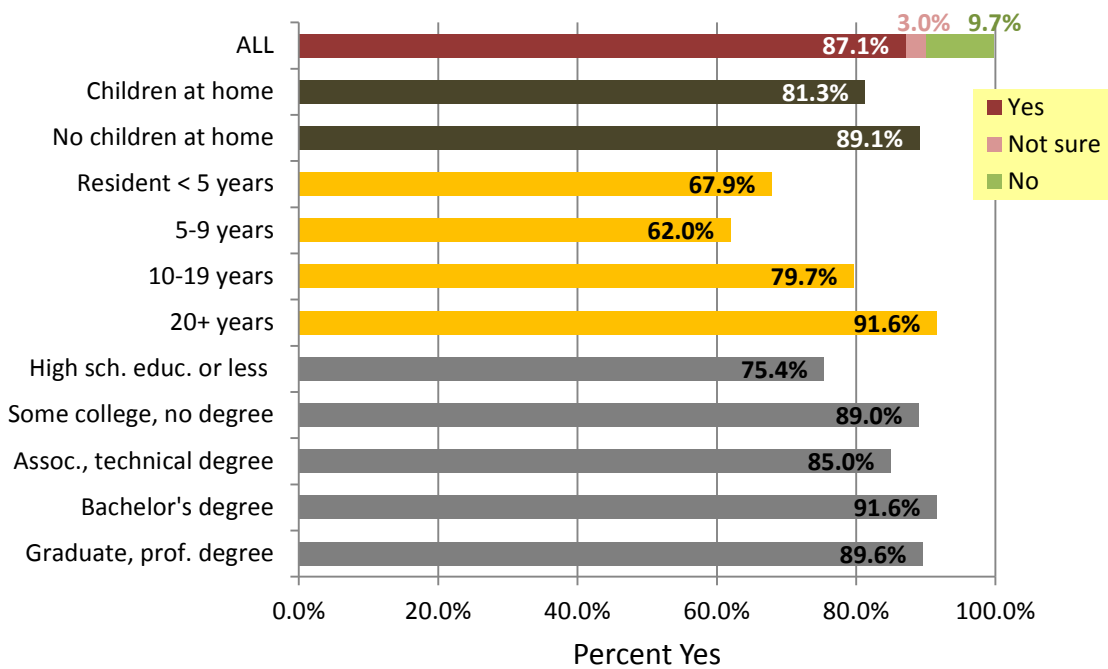
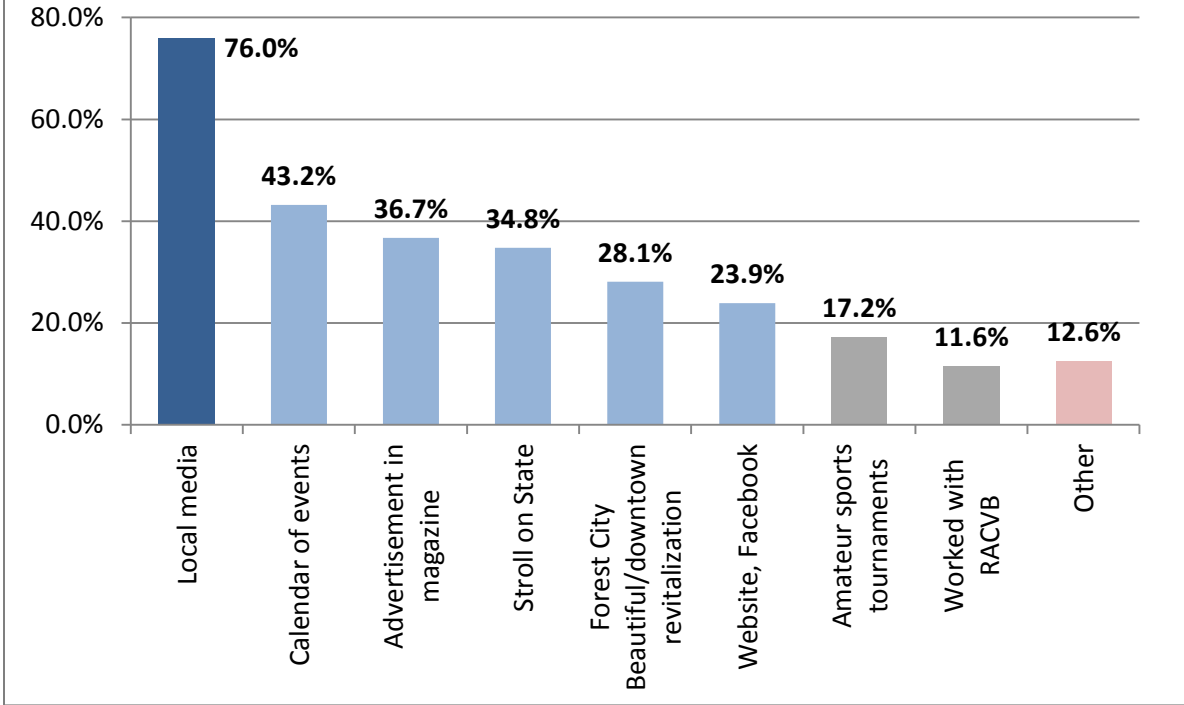


Figure 2.3
"I have encountered RACVB in the following ways"



Chapter 3
IMPORTANCE AND EFFECT OF TOURISM ON LOCAL ECONOMY

Three survey questions addressed the role of visitors and tourism in economic development of the Rockford region. The first question asked about tourism’s importance to the regional economy, the second asked about the effects, and the third wanted respondents to rate their likelihood of recommending a visit to Rockford.

Survey analysis is based on all paper survey returns along with online respondents who said they resided in a Winnebago County zip code. Where comparisons to 2012 are made, 2015 survey responses are shown for this sample as well as 2015 paper returns only.

IMPORTANCE OF VISITORS TO ROCKFORD’S REGIONAL ECONOMY

Practically all (96%) 2015 survey respondents feel that visitors and tourism are important or very important to Rockford’s regional economy (Table 3.1). Claiming visitors are “very important” are 69.2% (all) or 65.4% (paper only) surpassing 2012 at 61.0%. Very few (under 1.5%) believe that visitors are not important, while don’t know proportions resemble 2012 levels.

Table 3.1
IMPORTANCE OF VISITORS TO REGIONAL ECONOMY

Response	Percent ¹		
	2015		2012
	Paper & Online	Paper Only	Paper Only
Very important	69.2%	65.4%	61.0%
Important	26.7%	29.9%	33.4%
Not important	1.2%	1.3%	2.3%
Don’t know	2.9%	3.4%	3.2%

¹Percent based on respondents who answered question (n=1,511 in 2015, 942 paper only in 2015, and 685 in 2012).

Using 2015 survey results (paper and online in Winnebago County only), the highest levels of respondents saying that visitors are very important to the regional economy (> 72%) are those living in Rockford zip codes 61101, 61103, 61108, 61109; Winnebago and Caledonia; and educated to the level of associate’s or technical degree (Table 3.2). At the other end of the spectrum, with fewer than 64% saying that visitors are very important to the economy are residents of 61104-Rockford, Pecatonica and Durand, Hispanics, under 40 (18-29 and 30-39 year olds), and movers to the county during the past five years.

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 (> 72%)			LOWEST (< 64%)		
1	61101 - Rockford	75.8%	1	61063 - Pecatonica	53.7%
2	61088 - Winnebago	74.4%	2	61104 - Rockford	54.3%
3	61108 - Rockford	74.3%	3	Hispanic ethnicity	58.1%
4	61011 - Caledonia	74.2%	4	Ages 18-29	58.2%
5	61109 - Rockford	73.5%	5	61024 - Durand	61.0%
6	Associates; technical degree	73.3%	6	Lived in county < 5 years	61.5%
7	61103 - Rockford	73.1%	7	Ages 30-39	62.2%

Note: Includes groups of 40 or more respondents only.

A summary score which take into account all three possible responses (very important=3, important=2, not important=1) shows an overall mean of 2.70 (Table 3.5). This score tops the 2012 mean of 2.61.

Differences emerge when comparing mean scores by characteristic. Females rate tourism’s importance higher than males and so do respondents 40 years and older versus younger ones. Also giving higher ratings to tourism’s importance are whites compared to other race/ethnic groups, respondents with associate/technical degrees, residents living in the county for at least five years, households without children at home, and respondents whose workplace is located in the county. Except for respondents from 61104 and 61102, all other Rockford zip codes, Caledonia, Cherry Valley, Winnebago, and Loves Park yield mean scores above the overall mean of 2.70. Online respondents’ mean score of 2.76 was significantly higher than paper survey respondents.

EFFECT OF VISITORS ON LOCAL ECONOMY

More than two in three (68.5%) 2015 survey respondents believe that visitors to Rockford produce a strong enough positive influence to improve the local economy. Using 2015 paper returns only, 64.4% feel this way. These levels are higher than 2012 (Table 3.3). Also saying the effect is positive are three in ten (30.0%, 33.5% paper only) who indicate that tourism contributes to the economy through limited visitor spending. Only a handful feels that visitors have no or a negative effect on the economy. The few who said why the effect is negative claim the hospitality industry is low-paying, and visitors cost more than they spend and contribute to traffic problems.

Table 3.3
EFFECT OF VISITORS ON LOCAL ECONOMY

Response	Percent ¹		
	2015		2012
	Paper & Online	Paper Only	Paper Only
Strong enough positive effect to improve local economy	68.5%	64.4%	63.7%
Some positive by bringing in limited visitor spending	30.0%	33.5%	35.4%
No effect	1.1%	1.6%	0.6%
Negative effect	0.4%	0.5%	0.3%

¹Percent based on respondents who answered question (n=1,506 in 2015, 938 paper only in 2015, and 681 in 2012).

While responses vary by group (Table 3.4), differences are not great. The widest gaps occur by zip code of residence. With more than 72% saying that tourism’s effect is strong enough to bolster the economy are respondents living in Rockford zips 61108, 61103, 61101, Cherry Valley, and Roscoe. Fewer than 64% feel that way among residents of Pecatonica, Durand, 61109-Rockford, as well as Hispanics.

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 (> 72%)			LOWEST (< 64%)		
1	61108 - Rockford	76.4%	1	61063 - Pecatonica	56.1%
2	61103 - Rockford	73.9%	2	Hispanic	60.0%
3	61101 - Rockford	73.4%	3	Not currently employed	63.3%
4	61016 - Cherry Valley	73.3%	4	61024 - Durand	63.4%
5	61073 - Roscoe	73.0%	5	61109 - Rockford	63.8%

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. Highest mean scores (3.70 and higher) are reported by females, respondents ages 50-64, those with a four-year college degree, resident 10-19 years, and whose employment is located in Winnebago County. Highest scores among zip codes are 61108-Rockford, 61103-Rockford, 61102-Rockford and 61016- Cherry Valley. Also of note is online respondents’ higher score (3.75) compared to paper survey respondents (3.62).

Table 3.5

MEAN SCORES OF IMPORTANCE AND EFFECT OF TOURISM ON LOCAL/REGIONAL ECONOMY

Group	Mean Scores of Relationship Between Visitors and Local/Regional Economy	
	Importance (Scale 1-3) ¹	Effect (Scale 1-4) ²
All	2.70	3.67
Gender		
Female	2.71	3.70
Male	2.67	3.62
Age (years)		
18-29	2.63	3.67
30-39	2.63	3.67
40-49	2.71	3.64
50-64	2.71	3.70
65 and older	2.71	3.64
Race/Ethnicity ³		
White	2.71	3.68
Black	2.68	3.61
Hispanic	2.60	3.53
Other	2.68	3.56
Education		
High school or less	2.67	3.61
Some college, no degree	2.69	3.64
Associate, technical degree	2.75	3.67
Bachelor's degree	2.70	3.70
Graduate, professional degree	2.70	3.69
Length of Residence		
Less than 5 years	2.64	3.66
5-9 years	2.71	3.68
10-19 years	2.70	3.70
20 years or more	2.71	3.66
Children < 18 at Home		
Yes	2.66	3.65
No	2.72	3.67

Group	Mean Scores of Relationship Between Visitors and Local/Regional Economy	
	Importance (Scale 1-3) ¹	Effect (Scale 1-4) ²
Geographic Area ⁴		
61101 - Rockford	2.77	3.69
61102 - Rockford	2.67	3.72
61103 - Rockford	2.75	3.73
61104 - Rockford	2.57	3.68
61107 - Rockford	2.72	3.65
61108 - Rockford	2.75	3.75
61109 - Rockford	2.74	3.59
61114 - Rockford	2.71	3.69
61011 - Caledonia	2.75	3.67
61016 - Cherry Valley	2.71	3.73
61024 - Durand	2.63	3.63
61063 - Pecatonica	2.54	3.51
61072 - Rockton	2.69	3.65
61073 - Roscoe	2.65	3.68
61088 - Winnebago	2.71	3.65
61114 - Loves Park	2.76	3.67
61115 - Machesney Park	2.64	3.62
Location of Employment		
Winnebago County	2.72	3.70
Outside Winnebago County	2.67	3.66
Not currently employed	2.67	3.61
Survey Type		
Paper	2.66	3.62
Online	2.76	3.75

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 Asian, multi-racial, other.

⁴Areas with 40 or more respondents.

Mean score differences are statistically significant based on race/ethnicity and zip code of residence for both questions as well as gender for effect question.

SCALE FOR RECOMMENDING ROCKFORD

Respondents were asked on a scale from 1 to 10 with 1 meaning “absolutely, not under any circumstances” and 10 meaning “absolutely, enthusiastically yes,” considering its attractions, parks, entertainment, restaurants, and other things to see and do, how likely are you to recommend a visit to Rockford to your friends, family, or colleagues?” Responses to this question produced a mean score of 6.64, a median (half above and half below) at 7 and mode (most common reply) at 8.

Table 3.6
LIKELIHOOD OF RECOMMENDING VISIT TO ROCKFORD

Scale ¹	Number	Percent ²
10	221	14.7%
9	98	6.5%
8	292	19.4%
7	236	15.6%
6	197	13.1%
5	194	12.9%
4	93	6.2%
3	100	6.6%
2	34	2.3%
1	43	2.9%
Mean score	6.64	
Median	7.0	
Mode	8	

¹Scale from 1=“absolutely, not under any circumstance” to 10=“absolutely, enthusiastically yes.”

²Based on percent who answered this question (n=1,508).

Not surprisingly, mean scores (Table 3.7) varied widely depending on some demographic characteristics such as age, race/ethnic group, and zip code of residence. Differences also occurred by education though the spread was not as great.

Among age groups, the oldest respondents who are ages 65 years and older give the highest recommendation score at 7.12, while the youngest the lowest (5.75). As age group increased so did the score. Whites generated the highest score (6.72) among race/ethnic groups, with blacks (6.20) and Hispanics (6.32) fairly close together. By geography, Loves Park residents give the highest score (7.19), followed closely by 61103-Rockford (7.16). At the low end were 61104-Rockford (6.06) and Rockton (6.09).

Online survey respondents produced a higher mean score (7.02) than paper (6.41), as did females (6.70) compared to males (6.55). Respondents with the most education rated their likelihood recommendation highest at 6.93, and associate/technical degree holders the lowest (6.28). Residents who have lived in the county the longest (6.69) rate highest among length of residency groups, though 10-19 year residents are not far behind (6.66). Households without children at home produce a better score (6.77) than households with children (6.27).

Table 3.7
 LIKELIHOOD OF RECOMMENDATIONS VISIT TO ROCKFORD BY MEAN SCORES

Group	Mean Score ¹
All	6.64
Survey Type	
Paper	6.41
Online	7.02
Gender	
Female	6.70
Male	6.55
Age (years)	
18-29	5.75
30-39	5.87
40-49	6.61
50-64	6.64
65 and older	7.12
Race/Ethnicity ²	
White	6.72
Black	6.20
Hispanic	6.32
Other	5.73
Education	
High school or less	6.66
Some college, no degree	6.62
Associate, technical degree	6.28
Bachelor's degree	6.65
Graduate, professional degree	6.93
Length of Residence	
Less than 5 years	6.44
5-9 years	6.31
10-19 years	6.66
20 years or more	6.69

Group	Mean Score ¹
Children < 18 at Home	
Yes	6.27
No	6.77
Geographic Area ³	
61101 - Rockford	6.53
61102 - Rockford	6.38
61103 - Rockford	7.16
61104 - Rockford	6.06
61107 - Rockford	7.03
61108 - Rockford	6.81
61109 - Rockford	6.23
61114 - Rockford	6.93
Other Winnebago County	
61115 - Machesney Park	6.36
61111 - Loves Park	7.19
61011 - Caledonia	6.40
61016 - Cherry Valley	6.43
61024 - Durand	6.59
61063 - Pecatonica	6.17
61072 - Rockton	6.09
61073 - Roscoe	6.34
61088 - Winnebago	6.12
Location of Employment	
Winnebago County	6.60
Outside Winnebago County	6.30
Not currently employed	6.81

¹Scale from 1=“absolutely, not under any circumstance” to 10=“absolutely, enthusiastically yes.”

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

³Areas with 40 or more respondents.

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

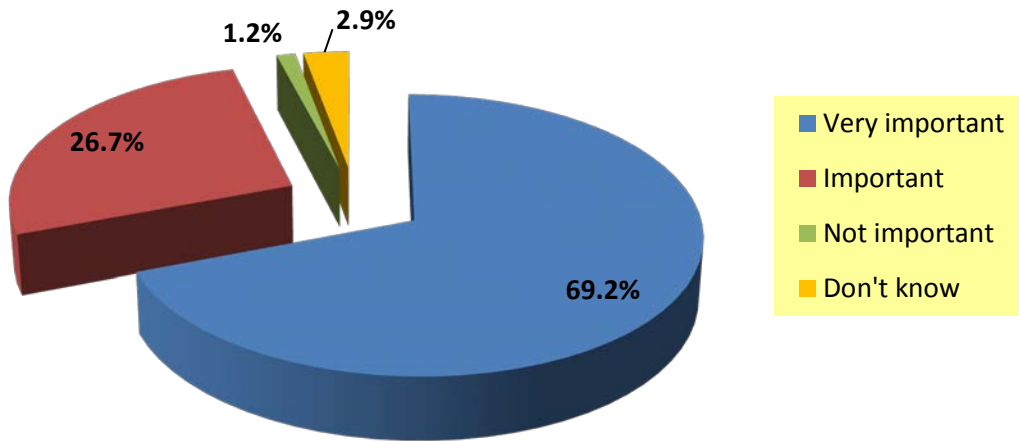
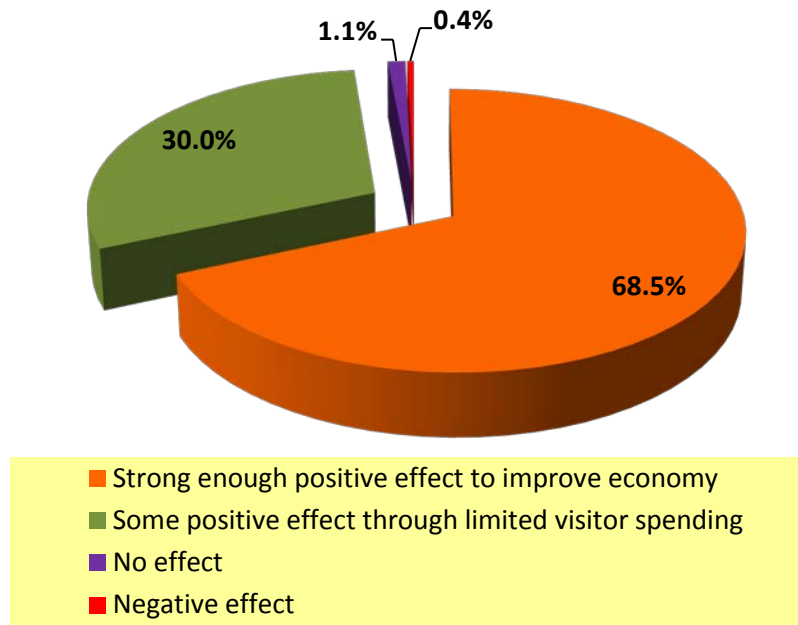


Figure 3.2
"How do you think visitors affect the local economy?"



Chapter 4
SUPPORT AND FUNDING FOR SPECIFIC TOURISM INITIATIVES

Survey respondents were asked about their support for six tourism initiatives: a whitewater rapids course on the Rock River, the addition of attractive gateways into the city of Rockford and other towns, maintain/improve facilities for amateur sports tournaments, downtown Rockford revitalization, connecting bike paths to rural and outlying areas of county, and promoting ecotourism. Questions were posed about these potential projects' importance to the community and respondents' support for more funding. Survey analysis is based on all paper returns and online respondents who reside in a Winnebago County zip code.

RANKING OF POTENTIAL TOURISM INITIATIVES

Based on mean score which is a summary measure of the agree-disagree continuum, three initiatives emerge as clear favorites for their importance to the community: ecotourism, maintaining facilities for amateur sports tournaments, and downtown Rockford revitalization. Close behind is connecting bike paths. Much lower are adding attractive gateways and building a whitewater rapids course on the Rock River (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1
SUPPORT FOR SPECIFIC TOURISM PROJECTS

Rank	Initiative	2015 Percent Respondents ¹				Mean Score ²	
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	2015	2012
1	Promote ecotourism	50.3%	40.3%	3.0%	1.9%	3.46	3.29
2	Maintain/improve facilities for amateur sports tournaments	49.7%	40.8%	2.6%	2.6%	3.44	3.27
3	Downtown Rockford revitalization	52.5%	31.7%	6.5%	4.6%	3.39	2.92
4	Connect bike paths	41.4%	39.5%	8.5%	3.4%	3.28	3.04
5	Attractive gateways	31.5%	39.4%	15.8%	4.9%	3.06	2.93
6	Build a whitewater rapids on Rock River	21.6%	35.2%	18.5%	9.7%	2.81	---

¹Don't know not shown so frequencies do not add up to 100%. See tables 4.9 - 4.14.

²Based on four point scale from 1=strongly disagree to 4=strongly agree. 2015 results based on all paper returns and online in which respondents indicated their zip code to be within Winnebago County.

The three highest-scoring tourism projects received strong support from about half of all respondents, with additional agreement about their importance ranging from 30-40%.

Ecotourism and amateur sports facilities exhibit extremely low disagree/strongly disagree levels (no higher than 5.2%). Downtown Rockford revitalization reports the highest degree of strong support at 52.5%, though composite disagreement (disagree and strongly disagree) reaches 11.1% indicating somewhat more divergence of opinion on this initiative versus ecotourism and amateur sports facilities.

Placing fourth is connecting bike paths, rated favorably with eight in ten stating that they strongly agree (41.4%) or agree (39.5%), while 11.9% disagree or strongly disagree. At fifth place, though quite a bit lower is adding attractive gateways with 31.5%. Offering strong agreement while 39.4% agree and 20.7% disagree/strongly disagree. Receiving the least support among the six initiatives is building a whitewater rapids course. One in five (21.6%) respondents strongly agree but a larger proportion (28.2%) disagree/strongly disagree that this project is important.

SUPPORT FOR EACH PROJECT

Differences separate the perceived importance of the six projects depending on respondents' characteristics. Overall, females are more favorable than males, though not for amateur sports facilities and connecting bike paths where men show a slight edge. For all projects except ecotourism, online respondents show higher support than paper respondents, sometimes with a sizeable gap.

In this section, respondents' replies are 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. While mean scores take out the "don't know" proportion in their computations, the detailed tables show the composite agreement and disagreement levels as well as "don't know" which has implications for targeting audiences about the specific initiatives.

Promoting Ecotourism (Tables 4.2 and 4.9)

Widespread support marks this project with 90.6% overall agreement that promoting ecotourism is important to the community. Based on mean scores, that support is quite consistent among groups. The youngest respondents ages 18-29 show the highest support, followed by Hispanics and residents who have lived in the county 10-19 years or under five years.

Lowest mean scores are reported by blacks (the only group with a composite agreement level below 80%), other race/ethnicity, 5-9 year residents, and respondents with no more than a high school education. Blacks are the only group to exhibit a double-digit level of "don't know" (10.8%).

Table 4.2
TOP AND BOTTOM GROUPS FOR PROMOTING ECOTOURISM¹

Top Groups (Mean)	Bottom Groups (Mean)
1. Age 18-29 (3.58)	1. Black (3.26)
2. Hispanic (3.57)	2. Other race/ethnicity (3.29)
3. 10-19 year resident (3.53)	3. 5-9 year resident (3.30)
4. Resident less than 5 years (3.52)	4. High school education or less (3.36)

¹Based on mean score where 1=strongly disagree to 4=strongly agree. Overall mean=3.46.

Facilities for Amateur Sports Tournaments (Tables 4.3 and 4.10)

This project also received widespread support at a 90.5% overall agreement that maintaining and improving amateur sports facilities are important to the community. Hispanics, adults ages 30-39, and blacks especially feel this way as do households with children at home and persons with a graduate/professional degree. Lowest mean scores occur among persons of other race/ethnicity, high school education or less, residents living in the county under 10 years, and respondents whose employment is located outside the county.

Table 4.3
TOP AND BOTTOM GROUPS FOR MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING FACILITIES
FOR AMATEUR SPORTS TOURNAMENTS¹

Top Groups (Mean)	Bottom Groups (Mean)
1. Hispanic (3.53)	1. Other race/ethnicity (3.29)
2. Age 30-39 (3.52)	2. High school or less education (3.33)
2. Black (3.52)	2. 5-9 year resident (3.33)
4. Children at home (3.51)	4. Less than 5 year resident (3.38)
5. Graduate, professional degree (3.50)	4. Employment outside Winnebago Co. (3.38)

¹Based on mean score where 1=strongly disagree to 4=strongly agree. Overall mean=3.44.

Downtown Rockford Revitalization (Tables 4.4 and 4.11)

Overall survey respondents favor helping to revitalize downtown Rockford, with 84.2% agreeing that this is important. Age and education of respondents are strongly correlated with that sentiment. As age increases, support declines, while as educational attainment rises, support goes up.

By subgroup, downtown revitalization finds greatest support among ages 18-29 year olds, Hispanics, blacks, persons who have resided in the county for less than five years, and adults ages 30-39. Expressing the least support are respondents with a high school education or less, age 65+, persons not currently employed (per location of employment question), males, and respondents who received and returned paper surveys.

This project has a wider range of support from high to low than ecotourism and amateur sports facilities.

Table 4.4
TOP AND BOTTOM GROUPS FOR HELPING DOWNTOWN ROCKFORD REVITALIZATION¹

Top Groups (Mean)	Bottom Groups (Mean)
1. Age 18-29 (3.74)	1. High school or less education (3.21)
2. Hispanic (3.66)	2. Age 65 and older (3.29)
3. Black (3.64)	2. Not currently employed (3.29)
4. Resident less than 5 years (3.61)	4. Male (3.30)
5. Age 30-39 (3.59)	4. Paper survey respondents (3.30)

¹Based on mean score, where 1=strongly disagree to 4=strongly agree. Overall mean=3.39.

Connecting Bike Paths to Other Areas in County (Tables 4.5 and 4.12)

Altogether, 80.9% of respondents agree that connecting bike paths to rural and outlying areas of the county is important. Higher agreement occurs among age groups under 50 than those 50 and older, while whites are more supportive than the other race/ethnic groups. Persons with a four-year college degree or more are more enthused than those with less education.

Using mean scores, connecting bike paths is desired most by persons with graduate/professional degrees, have lived in the county for less than five years, are ages 30-39, responded online, and are from households with children at home. Lowest support for this project comes from persons of other race/ethnicity, having no more than a high school education or an associate/technical degree, age 65+, and are not currently employed.

Table 4.5
TOP AND BOTTOM GROUPS FOR CONNECTING BIKE PATHS
TO RURAL AND OUTLYING AREAS OF COUNTY¹

Top Groups (Mean)	Bottom Groups (Mean)
1. Graduate, professional degree (3.46)	1. Other race/ethnicity (2.94)
2. Resident less than 5 years (3.42)	2. High school or less education (3.13)
3. Age 30-39 (3.39)	3. Age 65 and older (3.18)
4. Online survey respondents (3.38)	4. Associate, technical degree (3.19)
5. Children at home (3.37)	4. Not currently employed (3.19)

¹Based on mean score where 1=strongly disagree to 4=strongly agree. Overall mean=3.28.

Adding Attractive Gateways (Tables 4.6 and 4.13)

Seven in ten (70.9%) survey respondents agree that adding attractive gateways into the city of Rockford and other local towns is important. Curiously, a wide gap between online and paper respondents exists with far stronger support among online respondents. In addition, Hispanic and blacks are more supportive than whites as are ages 18-29 and 65+ compared to other age groups.

Table 4.6
TOP AND BOTTOM GROUPS FOR
ADDING ATTRACTIVE GATEWAYS INTO ROCKFORD AND OTHER TOWNS¹

Top Groups (Mean)	Bottom Groups (Mean)
1. Online respondents (3.23)	1. Employment outside county (2.91)
1. Hispanic (3.23)	2. Paper survey respondents (2.96)
3. Black (3.16)	3. Less than 5 year resident (2.97)
4. Age 65 and older (3.15)	4. Associate, technical degree (2.99)
4. 10-19 year residents (3.15)	

¹Based on mean score where 1=strongly disagree to 4=strongly agree. Overall mean=3.06.

Building a Whitewater Rapids Course on Rock River (Tables 4.7 and 4.14)

Receiving the least support of all six projects, building a whitewater rapids course obtained just over half (56.8%) of respondents agreeing that this was a good idea. Based on mean scores, Hispanic respondents are the most supportive as are residents under 5 years, the only groups producing a rating exceeding 3.0 which equates to “agree.” Near that level are persons living in the county 10-19 years, ages 40-49, and online survey respondents. Showing the least agreement about the worthiness of this project are other race/ethnic persons, 5-9 year residents, paper respondents, males, ages 65+, and those whose employment location is outside Winnebago County.

Table 4.7
TOP AND BOTTOM GROUPS FOR BUILDING A WHITEWATER RAPIDS COURSE ON ROCK RIVER¹

Top Groups (Mean)	Bottom Groups (Mean)
1. Hispanic (3.19)	1. Other race/ethnicity (2.52)
2. Less than 5 year resident (3.02)	2. 5-9 year resident (2.70)
3. 10-19 year resident (2.93)	3. Paper respondents (2.74)
4. Age 40-49 (2.91)	4. Male (2.75)
4. Online respondents (2.91)	4. Age 65 and older (2.75)
	4. Employment outside county (2.75)

¹Based on mean score where 1=strongly disagree to 4=strongly agree. Overall mean=2.81.

FUNDING FOR PROJECTS

After assessing projects' importance, survey respondents were asked which of them they would support for more funding. They could select multiple projects.

Downtown Rockford revitalization ranked first in terms of funding support, despite its third-place mean score ranking based on community importance. Six in ten (59.8%) respondents felt that the downtown revitalization efforts merited more funding. Ecotourism ranked second for more funding with 55.6% support. The next two, both close together, are amateur sports facilities (52.1%) and connecting bike paths (51.2%). Considerably lower is adding attractive gateways to Rockford and other local towns (39.7%). Support for funding the construction of a whitewater rapids course on the Rock River received little agreement, barely over one in four (28.9%) respondents.

Table 4.8
SUPPORT MORE FUNDING FOR PROJECTS

Rank	Initiative	Percent
1	Revitalize downtown Rockford	59.8%
2	Promote ecotourism	55.6%
3	Maintain and improve facilities for amateur sports tournaments	52.1%
4	Connect bike paths to other areas of the county	51.2%
5	Add attractive gateways to Rockford and other towns	39.7%
6	Build a whitewater rapids course on the Rock River	28.9%

Tables 4.9
 AGREEMENT LEVELS FOR PROMOTING ECOTOURISM BY POPULATION SUBGROUP

Group	Percent ¹			Mean Score ² (Scale 1-4)
	Strongly Agree/Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
All	90.6%	4.9%	3.5%	3.46
Survey Type				
Paper	90.7%	4.7%	3.2%	3.43
Online	90.3%	5.1%	4.0%	3.50
Gender				
Female	91.0%	4.3%	3.6%	3.49
Male	89.8%	6.0%	3.4%	3.39
Age (years)				
18-29	89.6%	6.0%	4.5%	3.58
30-39	89.0%	5.8%	4.1%	3.47
40-49	90.2%	5.1%	3.9%	3.48
50-64	91.6%	4.7%	2.7%	3.45
65 and older	90.4%	4.2%	4.0%	3.43
Race/Ethnicity ³				
White	91.4%	4.5%	3.1%	3.47
Black	78.5%	9.2%	10.8%	3.26
Hispanic	90.3%	6.5%	3.2%	3.57
Other	82.1%	10.7%	3.6%	3.29
Education				
High school or less	87.9%	6.0%	4.3%	3.36
Some college, no degree	92.2%	4.9%	2.3%	3.47
Associate, technical degree	90.2%	5.1%	2.6%	3.43
Bachelor's degree	89.6%	5.1%	4.6%	3.48
Graduate, professional degree	92.5%	3.6%	3.6%	3.50
Length of Residence				
Less than 5 years	89.7%	3.8%	5.1%	3.52
5-9 years	90.1%	7.0%	2.8%	3.30
10-19 years	92.1%	3.4%	3.4%	3.53
20 years or more	90.4%	5.1%	3.5%	3.45

Group	Percent ¹			Mean Score ² (Scale 1-4)
	Strongly Agree/Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
Children < 18 at Home				
Yes	89.8%	4.9%	3.8%	3.48
No	90.9%	4.8%	3.4%	3.45
Location of Employment				
Winnebago County	90.8%	5.1%	3.2%	3.47
Outside Winnebago County	87.5%	6.6%	4.6%	3.44
Not currently employed	91.3%	3.7%	3.7%	3.44

¹Percents based on total sample including no answer so may not add up to 100%.

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 Asian, multi-racial, other.

Table 4.10
 AGREEMENT LEVELS FOR MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING FACILITIES FOR
 AMATEUR SPORTS TOURNAMENTS BY POPULATION SUBGROUP

Group	Percent ¹			Mean Score ² (Scale 1-4)
	Strongly Agree/Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
All	90.5%	5.1%	3.0%	3.44
Survey Type				
Paper	89.7%	5.1%	3.5%	3.41
Online	91.9%	5.3%	2.3%	3.49
Gender				
Female	90.5%	5.2%	3.1%	3.44
Male	91.5%	4.7%	2.6%	3.46
Age (years)				
18-29	88.1%	6.0%	4.5%	3.44
30-39	91.3%	4.1%	4.1%	3.52
40-49	90.2%	5.9%	2.0%	3.41
50-64	90.9%	5.9%	2.5%	3.42
65 and older	90.4%	4.0%	3.8%	3.44
Race/Ethnicity ³				
White	91.5%	4.7%	2.8%	3.44
Black	87.7%	6.2%	4.6%	3.52
Hispanic	93.5%	3.2%	3.2%	3.53
Other	73.2%	14.3%	5.4%	3.29
Education				
High school or less	87.9%	7.3%	3.0%	3.33
Some college, no degree	92.5%	4.9%	2.0%	3.43
Associate, technical degree	92.3%	4.3%	1.7%	3.44
Bachelor's degree	89.9%	5.3%	3.4%	3.47
Graduate, professional degree	90.3%	4.3%	4.7%	3.50
Length of Residence				
Less than 5 years	87.2%	5.1%	5.1%	3.38
5-9 years	85.9%	4.2%	7.0%	3.33
10-19 years	94.4%	1.7%	3.4%	3.49
20 years or more	90.5%	5.7%	2.5%	3.44

Group	Percent ¹			Mean Score ² (Scale 1-4)
	Strongly Agree/Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
Children < 18 at Home				
Yes	91.3%	4.9%	2.3%	3.51
No	90.4%	5.2%	3.2%	3.41
Location of Employment				
Winnebago County	91.2%	5.0%	2.7%	3.47
Outside Winnebago County	88.8%	5.3%	3.9%	3.38
Not currently employed	90.2%	5.2%	3.5%	3.40

¹Percents based on total sample including no answer so may not add up to 100%.

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 Asian, multi-racial, other.

Table 4.11
 AGREEMENT LEVELS FOR DOWNTOWN ROCKFORD REVITALIZATION
 BY POPULATION SUBGROUP

Group	Percent ¹			Mean Score ² (Scale 1-4)
	Strongly Agree/Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
All	84.2%	11.1%	3.5%	3.39
Survey Type				
Paper	82.4%	12.9%	3.2%	3.30
Online	87.3%	8.1%	4.0%	3.53
Gender				
Female	86.0%	9.2%	3.7%	3.44
Male	81.7%	14.6%	2.8%	3.30
Age (years)				
18-29	91.0%	1.5%	6.0%	3.74
30-39	93.0%	5.2%	0.6%	3.59
40-49	81.6%	12.9%	5.1%	3.37
50-64	84.0%	12.0%	3.2%	3.36
65 and older	81.5%	12.7%	3.8%	3.29
Race/Ethnicity ³				
White	83.8%	11.6%	3.5%	3.38
Black	95.4%	3.1%	1.5%	3.64
Hispanic	93.5%	0.0%	6.5%	3.66
Other	82.1%	10.7%	1.8%	3.31
Education				
High school or less	79.3%	14.2%	5.2%	3.21
Some college, no degree	82.7%	12.1%	4.0%	3.31
Associate, technical degree	81.6%	15.0%	3.0%	3.36
Bachelor's degree	86.0%	9.6%	3.1%	3.48
Graduate, professional degree	90.0%	6.5%	2.5%	3.52
Length of Residence				
Less than 5 years	87.2%	6.4%	3.8%	3.61
5-9 years	88.7%	9.9%	1.4%	3.46
10-19 years	89.8%	6.2%	3.4%	3.49
20 years or more	82.6%	12.5%	3.5%	3.36

Group	Percent ¹			Mean Score ² (Scale 1-4)
	Strongly Agree/Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
Children < 18 at Home				
Yes	85.9%	10.0%	3.3%	3.43
No	83.8%	11.4%	3.6%	3.37
Location of Employment				
Winnebago County	84.6%	11.1%	3.6%	3.43
Outside Winnebago County	86.2%	9.2%	2.6%	3.44
Not currently employed	83.2%	11.6%	3.7%	3.29

¹Percents based on total sample including no answer so may not add up to 100%.

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 Asian, multi-racial, other.

Table 4.12
 AGREEMENT LEVELS FOR CONNECTING BIKE PATHS BY POPULATION SUBGROUP

Group	Percent ¹			Mean Score ² (Scale 1-4)
	Strongly Agree/Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
All	80.9%	11.9%	5.9%	3.28
Survey Type				
Paper	78.3%	13.4%	6.5%	3.22
Online	85.2%	9.3%	4.9%	3.38
Gender				
Female	80.7%	11.3%	6.7%	3.30
Male	81.9%	12.3%	4.5%	3.26
Age (years)				
18-29	85.1%	10.4%	4.5%	3.36
30-39	86.6%	9.9%	3.5%	3.39
40-49	83.6%	11.3%	4.7%	3.35
50-64	80.1%	13.5%	5.2%	3.28
65 and older	77.5%	11.0%	8.7%	3.18
Race/Ethnicity ³				
White	82.3%	10.9%	5.6%	3.30
Black	70.8%	15.4%	12.3%	3.21
Hispanic	80.6%	12.9%	6.5%	3.21
Other	60.7%	28.6%	7.1%	2.94
Education				
High school or less	75.9%	15.1%	6.9%	3.13
Some college, no degree	79.8%	13.0%	5.8%	3.22
Associate, technical degree	76.5%	15.8%	6.4%	3.19
Bachelor's degree	83.9%	10.4%	4.6%	3.35
Graduate, professional degree	85.7%	6.8%	7.2%	3.46
Length of Residence				
Less than 5 years	82.1%	9.0%	6.4%	3.42
5-9 years	78.9%	14.1%	7.0%	3.27
10-19 years	84.2%	8.5%	5.6%	3.32
20 years or more	80.7%	11.9%	6.1%	3.28

Group	Percent ¹			Mean Score ² (Scale 1-4)
	Strongly Agree/Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
Children < 18 at Home				
Yes	84.7%	9.2%	5.1%	3.37
No	79.6%	12.8%	6.3%	3.25
Location of Employment				
Winnebago County	83.4%	11.1%	4.6%	3.33
Outside Winnebago County	76.3%	14.5%	8.6%	3.30
Not currently employed	77.9%	12.2%	7.9%	3.19

¹Percents based on total sample including no answer so may not add up to 100%.

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 Asian, multi-racial, other.

Table 4.13
 AGREEMENT LEVELS FOR ADDING ATTRACTIVE GATEWAYS INTO THE CITY OF ROCKFORD
 AND OTHER TOWNS BY POPULATION SUBGROUP

Group	Percent ¹			Mean Score ² (Scale 1-4)
	Strongly Agree/Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
All	70.9%	20.8%	6.8%	3.06
Survey Type				
Paper	66.5%	23.1%	8.0%	2.96
Online	78.2%	16.9%	4.7%	3.23
Gender				
Female	71.6%	19.5%	7.5%	3.08
Male	69.4%	23.4%	5.7%	3.02
Age (years)				
18-29	71.6%	26.9%	1.5%	3.08
30-39	73.3%	22.7%	4.1%	3.00
40-49	70.3%	23.0%	5.9%	3.03
50-64	70.2%	22.9%	5.7%	3.04
65 and older	71.1%	14.8%	10.6%	3.15
Race/Ethnicity ³				
White	70.5%	21.2%	6.8%	3.06
Black	80.0%	15.4%	4.6%	3.16
Hispanic	77.4%	6.5%	16.1%	3.23
Other	69.6%	17.9%	7.1%	3.08
Education				
High school or less	71.1%	19.0%	7.8%	3.00
Some college, no degree	71.7%	18.5%	8.4%	3.10
Associate, technical degree	63.7%	25.6%	8.5%	2.99
Bachelor's degree	72.8%	20.2%	6.0%	3.07
Graduate, professional degree	73.1%	22.2%	3.6%	3.12
Length of Residence				
Less than 5 years	70.5%	21.8%	6.4%	2.97
5-9 years	74.6%	22.5%	2.8%	3.03
10-19 years	70.6%	20.3%	7.9%	3.15
20 years or more	71.4%	20.1%	6.9%	3.07

Group	Percent ¹			Mean Score ² (Scale 1-4)
	Strongly Agree/Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
Children < 18 at Home				
Yes	71.6%	22.5%	4.9%	3.02
No	70.5%	20.2%	7.5%	3.08
Location of Employment				
Winnebago County	72.1%	21.0%	5.9%	3.08
Outside Winnebago County	59.2%	30.9%	8.6%	2.91
Not currently employed	72.3%	17.0%	8.1%	3.09

¹Percents based on total sample including no answer so may not add up to 100%.

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 Asian, multi-racial, other.

Table 4.14
 AGREEMENT LEVELS FOR BUILDING A WHITEWATER RAPIDS COURSE ON THE ROCK RIVER
 BY POPULATION SUBGROUP

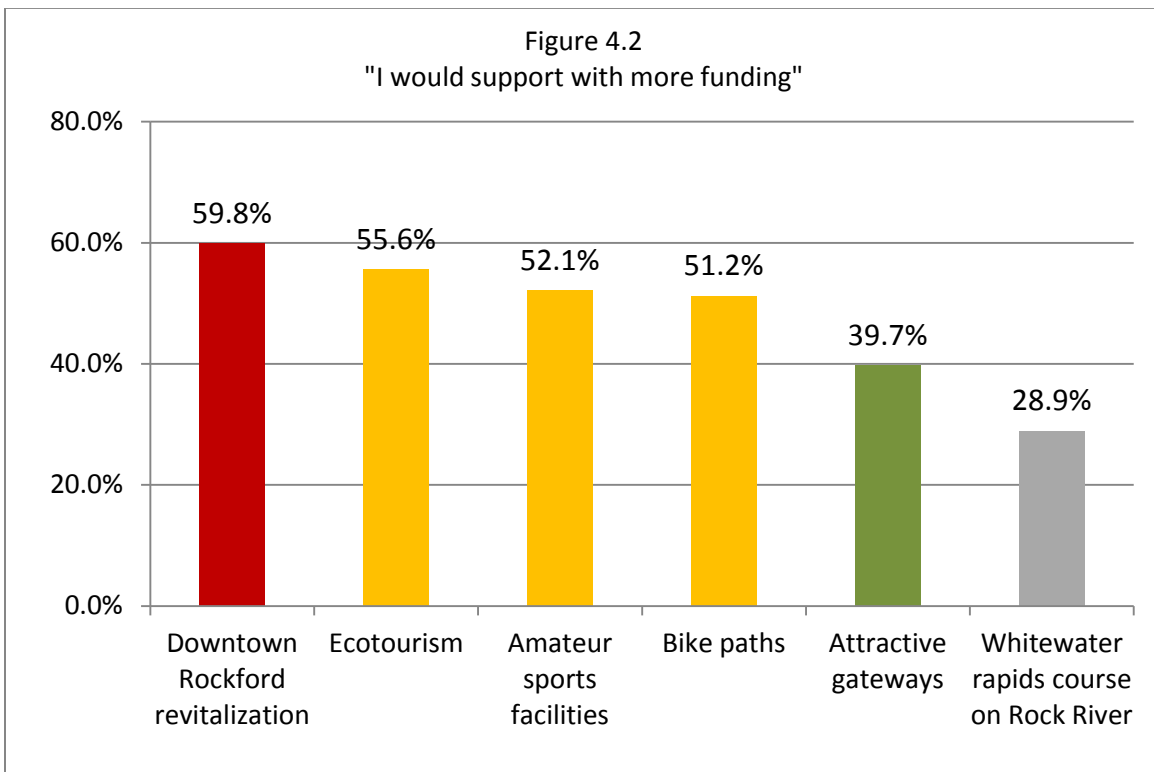
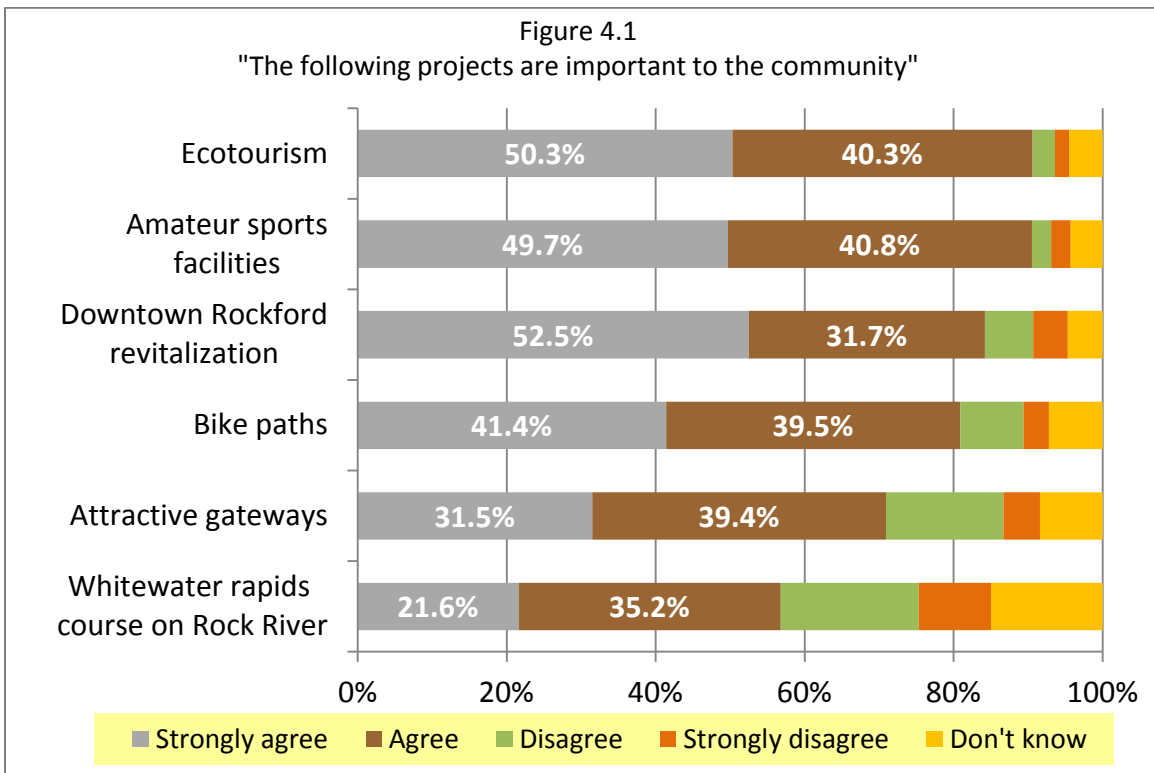
Group	Percent ¹			Mean Score ² (Scale 1-4)
	Strongly Agree/Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
All	56.8%	28.1%	13.2%	2.81
Survey Type				
Paper	52.7%	30.2%	14.5%	2.74
Online	63.6%	24.8%	11.2%	2.91
Gender				
Female	57.7%	26.3%	14.2%	2.85
Male	56.0%	31.4%	11.2%	2.75
Age (years)				
18-29	62.7%	29.9%	7.5%	2.84
30-39	59.3%	29.1%	11.6%	2.86
40-49	62.1%	25.0%	11.3%	2.91
50-64	56.7%	30.0%	11.6%	2.78
65 and older	52.1%	26.8%	18.1%	2.75
Race/Ethnicity ³				
White	57.1%	27.8%	13.5%	2.82
Black	56.9%	30.8%	10.8%	2.84
Hispanic	77.4%	9.7%	12.9%	3.19
Other	44.6%	41.1%	8.9%	2.52
Education				
High school or less	55.2%	25.0%	18.1%	2.80
Some college, no degree	56.6%	26.9%	13.9%	2.85
Associate, technical degree	57.7%	31.2%	9.4%	2.79
Bachelor's degree	56.4%	30.4%	12.3%	2.79
Graduate, professional degree	59.1%	26.9%	12.5%	2.81
Length of Residence				
Less than 5 years	59.0%	20.5%	19.2%	3.02
5-9 years	54.9%	33.8%	11.3%	2.70
10-19 years	61.0%	27.1%	10.7%	2.93
20 years or more	56.4%	28.0%	13.6%	2.79

Group	Percent ¹			Mean Score ² (Scale 1-4)
	Strongly Agree/Agree	Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	Don't Know	
Children < 18 at Home				
Yes	59.8%	27.9%	10.5%	2.85
No	55.8%	28.1%	14.3%	2.80
Location of Employment				
Winnebago County	59.1%	27.9%	11.9%	2.82
Outside Winnebago County	54.6%	31.6%	12.5%	2.75
Not currently employed	53.5%	27.5%	16.4%	2.80

¹Percents based on total sample including no answer so may not add up to 100%.

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 Asian, multi-racial, other.



Chapter 5
QUALITY OF LIFE

QUALITY OF LIFE MEASURES

New to the 2015 survey were four questions about quality of life in Rockford along with a question about what respondents’ perception of safety is based on. The quality of life statements asked whether survey respondents agreed or disagreed with the following:

- “I am pleased with Rockford/Winnebago County as a place to live,”
- “Overall, I think Rockford/Winnebago County is headed in the right direction,”
- “Rockford/Winnebago County’s appearance and physical upkeep should be a high community priority,”
- “I feel personally safe in Rockford.”

The distribution of replies is shown on the table below. Survey analysis is based on all paper survey returns along with online respondents who said they resided in a Winnebago County zip code. In addition, the safety question compares respondents who live in the county with those who do not (online respondents who indicate zip code that is not located in Winnebago County).

Table 5.1
QUALITY OF LIFE MEASURES

Measure	Percent Respondents					Mean Score ¹
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don’t Know	
I am pleased with Rockford/Winnebago County as a place to live	16.5%	56.2%	18.3%	5.8%	3.2%	2.86
Overall, I think Rockford/Winnebago County is headed in the right direction	14.9%	50.1%	18.3%	5.4%	11.3%	2.84
Rockford/Winnebago County’s appearance and physical upkeep should be a high community priority	63.4%	31.6%	1.8%	2.1%	1.1%	3.58
I feel personally safe in Rockford	4.8%	39.3%	35.8%	15.5%	4.6%	2.35

¹Based on four-point scale from 1=strongly disagree to 4=strongly agree.

PLACE TO LIVE AND DIRECTION (Tables 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.6)

Most commonly, respondents are pleased with Rockford/Winnebago County as a place to live, with more than half (56.2%) agreeing and 16.5% more stating strong agreement (Table 5.1). Similar proportions characterize response to Rockford/Winnebago County being headed in the right direction (50.1% agree and 14.9% strongly agree). Disagree/strongly disagree levels just under one-quarter of respondents for both measures (24.1% place to live, 23.7% direction).

One in nine (11.3%) say they don't know whether Rockford/Winnebago County is headed in the right direction or not. Mean scores for these two measures fall just below 3.0, which equates to "agree" on the four-point scale.

For both statements, differences emerge by demographic group with online respondents more positive than paper, whites showing higher agreement than non-whites, and households without children at home more favorable than households with children. Looking at the top and bottom scoring groups, older and better educated respondents produce high mean scores, while persons of other race/ethnicity and 61104 residents show the lowest scores.

Table 5.2
TOP AND BOTTOM GROUPS FOR PLEASED WITH ROCKFORD/WINNEBAGO COUNTY
AS PLACE TO LIVE

Top Groups (Mean)	Bottom Groups (Mean)
1. Pecatonica (3.03)	1. Other race/ethnicity (2.41)
2. Age 65 and older (3.02)	2. 61104 - Rockford (2.56)
3. Graduate, professional degree (2.99)	3. Age 30-39 (2.62)

¹Based on mean score where 1=strongly disagree to 4=strongly agree. Overall mean=2.86.

Table 5.3
TOP AND BOTTOM GROUPS FOR ROCKFORD/WINNEBAGO COUNTY
HEADED IN RIGHT DIRECTION

Top Groups (Mean)	Bottom Groups (Mean)
1. Resident less than 5 years (3.04)	1. Other race/ethnicity (2.45)
2. Age 65 and older (2.99)	2. 61104 - Rockford (2.58)
3. Graduate, professional degree (2.96)	3. Winnebago (2.61)

¹Based on mean score where 1=strongly disagree to 4=strongly agree. Overall mean=2.84.

APPEARANCE AND PHYSICAL UPKEEP (Tables 5.1, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6)

Widespread agreement is evident for Rockford/Winnebago County's appearance and physical upkeep deserving high community priority. Almost two in three (63.4%) say they strongly agree and the mean of 3.58 also leans heavily toward "strongly agree." There is a much narrower spread between the highest and lowest scores for this statement than the previous two questions. Relationships appear to exist between the importance of appearance/physical upkeep and education or length of residence. Specifically, as education increases, so does agreement that the local area's appearance and physical upkeep should be priority and shorter term residents feel this is more important than those living here ten or more years.

Among all groups, the strongest supporters of appearance and upkeep are young respondents ages 18-29, 61102 households, and recent movers to the county. Residents of Pecatonica and Roscoe express lower agreement, though still high, as do persons of other race/ethnicity and lower educational attainment.

Table 5.4
TOP AND BOTTOM GROUPS FOR APPEARANCE AND UPKEEP
SHOULD BE A HIGH COMMUNITY PRIORITY

Top Groups (Mean)	Bottom Groups (Mean)
1. Age 18-29 (3.70)	1. Pecatonica (3.47)
2. 61102 - Rockford (3.67)	2. Other race/ethnicity (3.48)
2. Less than 5 year resident (3.67)	3. High school or less education (3.49)
	3. Roscoe (3.49)

¹Based on mean score where 1=strongly disagree to 4=strongly agree. Overall mean=3.58.

SAFETY (Tables 5.1, 5.5, 5.6)

Of the four questions, the feeling of personal safety received the lowest overall agreement and mean score. Only 4.8% strongly agree that they feel safe in Rockford and 39.3% agree. With a mean of 2.35, a higher level of disagreement is expressed than agreement. More online survey respondents feel safe than paper respondents, men feel safer than females, and persons with a four-year college degree or more feel safer than those with less education. Zip code of residence matters with respondents living in 61103, 61114, and Cherry Valley feeling a higher degree of personal safety in Rockford than residents of Winnebago, 61104, and Roscoe (Table 5.5).

Table 5.5
TOP AND BOTTOM GROUPS FOR FEELING OF PERSONAL SAFETY IN ROCKFORD

Top Groups (Mean)	Bottom Groups (Mean)
1. Graduate, professional degree (2.54)	1. Other race/ethnicity (2.06)
1. 61103 - Rockford (2.54)	2. Winnebago (2.07)
1. 61114 - Rockford (2.54)	3. 61104 - Rockford (2.11)
4. Cherry Valley (2.50)	4. Roscoe (2.17)

¹Based on mean score where 1=strongly disagree to 4=strongly agree. Overall mean=2.35.

For this question, an additional personal safety perception analysis was made of online respondents comparing those (n=557) who live in Winnebago County and outside (n=99). The mean score of county residents at 2.45 falls substantially below the score of outsiders at 2.77 meaning those inside the county feel less safe in Rockford than those living outside.

A second safety question asked upon what the respondents' perception of safety was primarily based, with three choices being personal experience, word of mouth, or media reports. Personal experience was mentioned the most frequently (57.8%) followed by media reports (36.4%), and far lower, word of mouth (5.8%). Those who selected media reports were asked whether the medium was social media or other factors. One in three (33.0%) indicated social media and 15.4% other factors, though more than half (51.6%) did not answer at all.

Table 5.6
QUALITY OF LIFE MEASURES MEAN SCORES BY POPULATION SUBGROUP

Group	Mean Score ¹			
	I am pleased with Rockford/ Winn. County as a place to live	Overall, I think Rockford/ Winn. County is headed in the right direction	Rockford's/ Winn. County's appearance & physical upkeep should be a high community priority	I feel personally safe in Rockford
All	2.86	2.84	3.58	2.35
Survey Type				
Paper	2.81	2.77	3.56	2.29
Online	2.94	2.95	3.61	2.45
Gender				
Female	2.84	2.87	3.59	2.30
Male	2.90	2.81	3.56	2.46
Age (years)				
18-29	2.79	2.90	3.70	2.30
30-39	2.62	2.67	3.52	2.18
40-49	2.86	2.79	3.61	2.40
50-64	2.83	2.80	3.60	2.30
65 and older	3.02	2.99	3.54	2.47
Race/Ethnicity ²				
White	2.90	2.87	3.59	2.36
Black	2.65	2.83	3.50	2.44
Hispanic	2.68	2.69	3.52	2.26
Other	2.41	2.45	3.48	2.06
Education				
High school or less	2.86	2.80	3.49	2.27
Some college, no degree	2.79	2.82	3.56	2.27
Assoc., technical degree	2.75	2.70	3.61	2.20
Bachelor's degree	2.89	2.88	3.61	2.41
Grad., professional degree	2.99	2.96	3.62	2.54
Length of Residence				
Less than 5 years	2.97	3.04	3.67	2.49
5-9 years	2.89	2.89	3.62	2.19
10-19 years	2.77	2.75	3.58	2.33
20 years or more	2.88	2.85	3.58	2.36

Group	Mean Score ¹			
	I am pleased with Rockford/ Winn. County as a place to live	Overall, I think Rockford/ Winn. County is headed in the right direction	Rockford's/ Winn. County's appearance & physical upkeep should be a high community priority	I feel personally safe in Rockford
Children < 18 at Home				
Yes	2.77	2.73	3.58	2.27
No	2.89	2.88	3.58	2.38
Location of Employment				
Winnebago County	2.83	2.85	3.59	2.34
Outside Winnebago County	2.73	2.62	3.56	2.25
Not currently employed	2.94	2.90	3.56	2.40
Geographic Area ²				
61101 - Rockford	2.85	2.87	3.54	2.34
61102 - Rockford	2.86	2.82	3.67	2.46
61103 - Rockford	2.95	2.90	3.65	2.54
61104 - Rockford	2.56	2.58	3.54	2.11
61107 - Rockford	2.90	2.95	3.65	2.44
61108 - Rockford	2.83	2.84	3.53	2.28
61109 - Rockford	2.63	2.70	3.55	2.24
61114 - Rockford	2.91	2.94	3.59	2.54
Other Winnebago County				
61011 - Caledonia	2.71	2.65	3.50	2.35
61016 - Cherry Valley	2.89	2.91	3.65	2.50
61063 - Pecatonica	3.03	2.84	3.47	2.18
61072 - Rockton	2.89	2.72	3.62	2.23
61073 - Roscoe	2.97	2.90	3.49	2.17
61088 - Winnebago	2.77	2.61	3.64	2.07
61111 - Loves Park	2.87	2.88	3.55	2.31
61115 - Machesney Park	2.95	2.91	3.61	2.32

¹Based on four-point scale from 1=strongly disagree to 4=strongly agree.

²Areas with 40 or more respondents.

Chapter 6
COMMENTS ABOUT MAKING ROCKFORD AND WINNEBAGO COUNTY
MORE WELCOMING TO VISITORS

As a final survey question, respondents were asked “What would make Rockford and Winnebago County more welcoming to visitors?” Seeking respondents’ opinions and ideas, response to this question offers observations, anecdotes about personal experiences, and suggestions to enhance life and tourism in the greater Rockford region. Numerous specific ideas are proposed, either drawing on past successes in the region or events held in other parts of the country. These verbatim comments are extremely valuable input for building tourism efforts and deserve careful reading. See Appendices D and E.

More than six in ten (62.9%) survey respondents responded to the final question, generating more than 2,000 remarks because most comments addressed several topics. Topics are tabulated separately.

Given the open-ended nature of the survey question, responses cover a wide range of areas, both positive and negative. In many cases, respondents wrote about the area’s attributes and praised efforts, both current and past, to cultivate the strengths of the Rockford region. More often, however, respondents mentioned items that are working against the region’s prosperity and tourism, not surprising because of the question’s wording.

Receiving more than 200 mentions each are four areas:

- Activities/festivals/attractions/entertainment
- Better and cleaner roads/lighting/sidewalks/landscape
- Crime/violence
- City upkeep/neighborhoods/demolish buildings

ACTIVITIES, FESTIVALS, ATTRACTIONS, ENTERTAINMENT

More than 400 comments mentioned the addition of more to do in the Rockford area because in their view, current entertainment options are limited. To remedy this, they mentioned specific events that would draw visitors such as musical events, outdoor concerts, large-scale festivals, sporting events, arts-related activities, an aquarium, and casino. At least two dozen people regret the loss the “On the Waterfront,” while others remarked on the popularity of existing attractions such as the RFD air show, Stroll on State, City Market, and Anderson Gardens. Activities for certain ages were suggested, especially adults 30-50 year olds due to the perceived shortage of options for this age group. Also important are events that are family-friendly and affordable.

Rockford should try to dominate more in amateur sport tournaments because of the perceived economic impact of these events.

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

Response	Number of Comments		
	Paper	Online	Total
Activities/Festivals/Attractions/Entertainment	217	186	403
Advertise/Marketing//Promoting/Signage	79	51	130
Better/Cleaner roads/Lighting/Sidewalks/Landscape	158	117	275
Crime/Violence	170	92	262
Downtown			
Better access/Improve entry points/Parking	45	68	113
Revitalize/Make attractive	43	57	100
More hotels/Restaurants/Stores/Activities	56	85	141
Make safer/homeless	24	26	50
Utilize Rock River	19	36	55
Government/Agencies/Politics	75	63	138
Hotels/Shopping/Restaurants/Businesses	66	53	119
Jobs/Good paying	44	15	59
Public transportation/Train/Airport	41	33	74
Quality of education/Better schools/More colleges	28	22	50
Reputation/Pride/Image	39	72	111
Safety	68	51	119
Stronger/Better police force	33	16	49
Taxes/Real estate values	29	10	39
Upkeep city/Neighborhoods/Demolish buildings	176	81	257
Other	32	29	61

Note: This tabulation includes all paper and all online surveys including online respondents who live outside the county.

ROADS, LIGHTING, SIDEWALKS, LANDSCAPE

Infrastructure problems were on the minds of many respondents. The conditions of certain roads are horrible, some said (survey was administered in January which may explain some of the complaints). Potholes, dirt, litter, and faded lane markers characterize numerous local roadways. They leave a very poor impression on visitors and are hard on local residents too. Specific roads mentioned were Alpine, Rockton Avenue, Morgan Street, 11th Street/Sandy Hollow to Charles Street.

Sidewalks are sorely lacking in some parts of town, negating the “walkability” of these areas. Others were upset about the inadequate outdoor lighting. Put the street lights back on, said a couple of respondents, adding that better lighting deters crime. Better and more attractive signage should also be incorporated.

CRIME, VIOLENCE, SAFETY AND POLICE

Rockford's reputation for high crime is a major drawback to tourism efforts, respondents say, as well as eroding many local residents' feeling of personal safety. Until crime is curbed, many are reluctant to pursue or recommend activities in areas in which they do not feel safe, especially after dark. Several respondents who live in the county but outside the city say that they would not live in Rockford due to the frequency of crimes.

Some propose more police protection and a stronger police presence. If the comments for these topics (crime and violence, safety, police) were tallied together, this area would produce the greatest volume of comments.

CITY UPKEEP, NEIGHBORHOODS, ABANDONED BUILDINGS

Many voiced the sentiment that parts of the city are unkempt, dirty and dingy. Some entrances into the city are also uninviting. Abandoned, dilapidated homes and buildings are an eyesore and a danger; they should be demolished. Clean-up efforts need to be intensified. The abundance of litter is unsightly. Current beautification activities such as the flowering plants and hanging baskets that adorn streets in summer are widely appreciated.

DOWNTOWN ROCKFORD AND ROCK RIVER

Numerous aspects of downtown Rockford were addressed in the comments. Lack of ready access from the interstate or Route 20 bypass into downtown Rockford is an issue because travelers simply go around the city instead of stopping for food or entertainment. Parking was also mentioned repeatedly as a problem.

Most respondents who commented on revitalization are eager that such efforts continue. Improving the appearance of downtown, the addition of a decent hotel, more and better shopping options would help boost tourism. Safety is a concern of some who do not feel safe in downtown. Bicyclists want bike lanes and easier routes into the city by bike.

More than 50 comments were directed toward cultivating the use of the Rock River. This natural asset could be enhanced with riverfront attractions, cafes/restaurants, walkways, water taxis and other eco-friendly recreation options. Several mentioned the potential whitewater rafting course with a 50-50 split between those who favored and opposed it.

OTHER ISSUES

The limited train and air transportation in Rockford hampers tourism. Many advocated for train service between Chicago and Rockford. The airport is a big plus, and could be used for more passenger flights. Comments were made about improving schools, government policies, high property taxes, and the importance of a stronger economy with better jobs which will strengthen the region which in turn draws visitors. Respondents suggested specific restaurants and stores that they wish would come to Rockford.

Some remarks were directed toward heavier promotion of attractions we currently do have, including the parks, forest preserves, gardens, bike paths, sports centers, museums, theaters, and riverfront. More advertising could be incorporated into regional publications and on billboards located in Rockford and on the outskirts of Winnebago County. Even local people are not aware of some of the area's best features and attractions, according to respondents. They also propose more use of the Coronado, BMO Harris Center and Davis Park for quality music events.

POSTIVES

Numerous respondents commented that Rockford is headed in the right direction, even saying that Rockford has "turned the corner" on some ills that have plagued the area in recent years like the economy. Rockford has a lot of heart and soul, said one respondent. Keep moving forward urged several people. There is positive momentum going on right now and they want to build on that.

Appendix A

COVER LETTER AND SURVEY INSTRUMENT

January 2015

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.

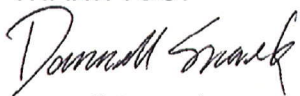
Your home is one in eighteen Winnebago County households to receive this survey. We cannot ask everyone, so 6,000 households have been randomly selected to represent the entire county. That means YOUR REPLY stands for 18 homes.

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 **February 12, 2015** in the enclosed postage-paid envelope. HSR will collect the surveys and prepare a report of findings.

You are not asked for your name on this survey. 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 questions, please contact HSR at 1.815.395.5639 or toll-free 1.800.854.4461.

Three years ago, we conducted a similar survey. Those results guided our decisions. Please take a few moments now to answer these questions so you have a voice in our future.

THANK YOU.



Darrell Snorek
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. 11)

- 2-10. I have encountered RACVB in the following ways: *Check all that apply*

- | | |
|---|---|
| 2. <input type="checkbox"/> Advertisement in magazine | 7. <input type="checkbox"/> Stroll on State |
| 3. <input type="checkbox"/> Amateur sports tournaments | 8. <input type="checkbox"/> Website, Facebook |
| 4. <input type="checkbox"/> Calendar of events | 9. <input type="checkbox"/> Worked with RACVB on meeting, reunion, tournament, etc. |
| 5. <input type="checkbox"/> Forest City Beautiful/
downtown beautification | 10. <input type="checkbox"/> Other - what? _____ |
| 6. <input type="checkbox"/> Local media | |

ROLE AND DEVELOPMENT

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

(1) Very important (3) Not important
 (2) Important (4) Don't know

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

(1) No effect
 (2) Some positive effect by bringing in limited visitor spending
 (3) Strong enough positive effect to improve local economy
 (4) Negative effect - why? _____

13. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 meaning "absolutely, not under any circumstances" and 10 meaning "absolutely, enthusiastically yes," considering its attractions, parks, entertainment, restaurants and other things to see and do, how likely are you to recommend a visit to Rockford to your friends, family or colleagues?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

ROCKFORD AREA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

SURVEY OF WINNEBAGO COUNTY RESIDENTS

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

The following projects are important to the community and would improve the <u>region's quality of life:</u>		<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
14.	Build a whitewater rapids course on the Rock River	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15.	Add attractive gateways into the city of Rockford and other towns	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16.	Maintain and improve facilities for amateur sports tournaments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17.	Help downtown Rockford revitalization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18.	Connect existing bike paths to rural and outlying areas of county	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19.	Promote ecotourism such as nature/forest preserves, conservation, hiking, canoeing	<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*

- 20. Building a whitewater rapids course on the Rock River
- 21. Adding attractive gateways into Rockford and surrounding towns
- 22. Maintaining and improving facilities for amateur sports tournaments
- 23. Revitalizing downtown Rockford
- 24. Connecting bike paths to other areas of county
- 25. Promoting ecotourism such as nature/forest preserves, conservation, hiking, canoeing

		<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
26.	I am pleased with Rockford/Winnebago County as a place to live	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27.	Overall, I think Rockford/Winnebago County is headed in the right direction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
28.	Rockford and Winnebago County's appearance and physical upkeep should be a high community priority	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29.	I feel personally safe in Rockford	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

30-31. My perception of safety is based primarily on (check one)

- (1) Personal Experience
 (2) Word of Mouth
 (3) Media Reports → (1) Social Media (2) Other factors

ABOUT YOU

32. Your zip code _____

33. Your age group (1) 18-29 (4) 50-64
 (2) 30-39 (5) 65 and older
 (3) 40-49
34. Your gender (1) Male (2) Female
35. Your race/ethnicity (1) White, non-Hispanic (4) Asian
 (2) Black, non-Hispanic (5) Multi-racial
 (3) Hispanic (6) Other
36. What is the highest level of schooling 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
37. 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 (6) I do not live in Winnebago County
38. Location of employment (1) Winnebago County (3) Not currently employed
 (2) Outside of Winnebago County
39. Does your household include children under age 18 living at home? (1) Yes (2) No

YOUR COMMENTS

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

THANK YOU

Appendix B

2015 PAPER SURVEY AND ONLINE SURVEY COMPARISON FREQUENCIES

ROCKFORD AREA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU
SURVEY OF WINNEBAGO COUNTY RESIDENTS

2015 Mail Survey and Online Survey Comparison Frequencies

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

Response	Mail Survey		Online Survey		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	788	83.1%	659	90.5%	1,447	86.3%
Not sure	35	3.7%	22	3.0%	57	3.4%
No	122	12.9%	47	6.5%	169	10.1%
No answer	3	0.3%	0	0.0%	3	0.2%
Total	948	100.0%	728	100.0%	1,676	100.0%

- 2-10. I have encountered RACVB in the following ways: *Check all that apply*

Response	Mail Survey		Online Survey		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Advertisement in magazine	304	32.1%	227	31.2%	531	31.7%
Amateur sports tournaments	118	12.4%	135	18.5%	253	15.1%
Calendar of events	245	25.8%	398	54.7%	643	38.4%
Forest City Beautiful/ downtown beautification	193	20.4%	206	28.3%	399	23.8%
Local media	658	69.4%	422	58.0%	1,080	64.4%
Stroll on State	171	18.0%	347	47.7%	518	30.9%
Website, Facebook	50	5.3%	321	44.1%	371	22.1%
Worked with RACVB on meeting, reunion, tournament, etc.	32	3.4%	139	19.1%	171	10.2%
Other - what?	83	8.8%	119	16.3%	202	12.1%

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

Response	Mail Survey		Online Survey		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Very important	616	65.0%	529	72.7%	1,145	68.3%
Important	282	29.7%	159	21.8%	441	26.3%
Not important	12	1.3%	10	1.4%	22	1.3%
Don’t know	32	3.4%	26	3.6%	58	3.5%
No answer	6	0.6%	4	0.5%	10	0.6%
Total	948	100.0%	728	100.0%	1,676	100.0%

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

Response	Mail Survey		Online Survey		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
No effect	15	1.6%	6	0.8%	21	1.3%
Some positive effect by bringing in limited visitor spending	314	33.1%	187	25.7%	501	29.9%
Strong enough positive effect to improve local economy	604	63.7%	526	72.3%	1,130	67.4%
Negative effect - why?	5	0.5%	3	0.4%	8	0.5%
No answer	10	1.1%	6	0.8%	16	1.0%
Total	948	100.0%	728	100.0%	1,676	100.0%

13. On a scale of 1 to 10 with 1 meaning “absolutely, not under any circumstances” and 10 meaning “absolutely, enthusiastically yes,” considering its attractions, parks, entertainment, restaurants and other things to see and do, how likely are you to recommend a visit to Rockford to your friends, family or colleagues?

Response	Mail Survey		Online Survey		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1 (absolutely, not under any circumstances)	33	3.5%	15	2.1%	48	2.9%
2	19	2.0%	17	2.3%	36	2.1%
3	66	7.0%	39	5.4%	105	6.3%
4	66	7.0%	36	4.9%	102	6.1%
5	137	14.5%	69	9.5%	206	12.3%
6	127	13.4%	91	12.5%	218	13.0%
7	148	15.6%	113	15.5%	261	15.6%
8	187	19.7%	130	17.9%	317	18.9%
9	60	6.3%	49	6.7%	109	6.5%
10 (absolutely, enthusiastically yes)	98	10.3%	151	20.7%	249	14.9%
No answer	7	0.7%	18	2.5%	25	1.5%
Total	948	100.0%	728	100.0%	1,676	100.0%

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

The following projects are important to the community and would improve the region’s quality of life:

14. Build a whitewater rapids course on the Rock River

Response	Mail Survey		Online Survey		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Strongly disagree	90	9.5%	64	8.8%	154	9.2%
Disagree	196	20.7%	101	13.9%	297	17.7%
Agree	327	34.5%	246	33.8%	573	34.2%
Strongly agree	173	18.2%	185	25.4%	358	21.4%
Don't know	137	14.5%	92	12.6%	229	13.7%
No answer	25	2.6%	40	5.5%	65	3.9%
Total	948	100.0%	728	100.0%	1,676	100.0%

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

Response	Mail Survey		Online Survey		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Strongly disagree	51	5.4%	26	3.6%	77	4.6%
Disagree	168	17.7%	81	11.1%	249	14.9%
Agree	395	41.7%	262	36.0%	657	39.2%
Strongly agree	235	24.8%	282	38.7%	517	30.8%
Don't know	76	8.0%	38	5.2%	114	6.8%
No answer	23	2.4%	39	5.4%	62	3.7%
Total	948	100.0%	728	100.0%	1,676	100.0%

16. Maintain and improve facilities for amateur sports tournaments

Response	Mail Survey		Online Survey		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Strongly disagree	23	2.4%	20	2.7%	43	2.6%
Disagree	25	2.6%	16	2.2%	41	2.4%
Agree	412	43.5%	263	36.1%	675	40.3%
Strongly agree	438	46.2%	362	49.7%	800	47.7%
Don't know	33	3.5%	26	3.6%	59	3.5%
No answer	17	1.8%	41	5.6%	58	3.5%
Total	948	100.0%	728	100.0%	1,676	100.0%

17. Help downtown Rockford revitalization

Response	Mail Survey		Online Survey		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Strongly disagree	45	4.7%	28	3.8%	73	4.4%
Disagree	77	8.1%	23	3.2%	100	6.0%
Agree	345	36.4%	180	24.7%	525	31.3%
Strongly agree	436	46.0%	429	58.9%	865	51.6%
Don't know	30	3.2%	28	3.8%	58	3.5%
No answer	15	1.6%	40	5.5%	55	3.3%
Total	948	100.0%	728	100.0%	1,676	100.0%

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

Response	Mail Survey		Online Survey		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Strongly disagree	40	4.2%	15	2.1%	55	3.3%
Disagree	87	9.2%	45	6.2%	132	7.9%
Agree	385	40.6%	266	36.5%	651	38.8%
Strongly agree	357	37.7%	318	43.7%	675	40.3%
Don't know	62	6.5%	43	5.9%	105	6.3%
No answer	17	1.8%	41	5.6%	58	3.5%
Total	948	100.0%	728	100.0%	1,676	100.0%

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

Response	Mail Survey		Online Survey		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Strongly disagree	16	1.7%	15	2.1%	31	1.8%
Disagree	29	3.1%	20	2.7%	49	2.9%
Agree	410	43.2%	259	35.6%	669	39.9%
Strongly agree	450	47.5%	364	50.0%	814	48.6%
Don't know	30	3.2%	29	4.0%	59	3.5%
No answer	13	1.4%	41	5.6%	54	3.2%
Total	948	100.0%	728	100.0%	1,676	100.0%

20-25. I would support more funding for: *Check all that apply*

Response	Mail Survey		Online Survey		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Building a whitewater rapids course on the Rock River	250	26.4%	225	30.9%	475	28.3%
Adding attractive gateways into Rockford and surrounding towns	351	37.0%	297	40.8%	648	38.7%
Maintaining and improving facilities for amateur sports tournaments	495	52.2%	348	47.8%	843	50.3%
Revitalizing downtown Rockford	521	55.0%	464	63.7%	985	58.8%
Connecting bike paths to other areas of county	473	49.9%	362	49.7%	835	49.8%
Promoting ecotourism such as nature/forest preserves, conservation, hiking, canoeing	557	58.8%	347	47.7%	904	53.9%

26. I am pleased with Rockford/Winnebago County as a place to live

Response	Mail Survey		Online Survey		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Strongly disagree	63	6.6%	32	4.4%	95	5.7%
Disagree	182	19.2%	105	14.4%	287	17.1%
Agree	529	55.8%	371	51.0%	900	53.7%
Strongly agree	137	14.5%	131	18.0%	268	16.0%
Don't know	26	2.7%	46	6.3%	72	4.3%
No answer	11	1.2%	43	5.9%	54	3.2%
Total	948	100.0%	728	100.0%	1,676	100.0%

27. Overall, I think Rockford/Winnebago County is headed in the right direction

Response	Mail Survey		Online Survey		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Strongly disagree	54	5.7%	34	4.7%	88	5.3%
Disagree	188	19.8%	93	12.8%	281	16.8%
Agree	469	49.5%	343	47.1%	812	48.4%
Strongly agree	108	11.4%	134	18.4%	242	14.4%
Don't know	118	12.4%	81	11.1%	199	11.9%
No answer	11	1.2%	43	5.9%	54	3.2%
Total	948	100.0%	728	100.0%	1,676	100.0%

28. Rockford and Winnebago County's appearance and physical upkeep should be a high community priority.

Response	Mail Survey		Online Survey		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Strongly disagree	13	1.4%	21	2.9%	34	2.0%
Disagree	21	2.2%	7	1.0%	28	1.7%
Agree	328	34.6%	198	27.2%	526	31.4%
Strongly agree	566	59.7%	446	61.3%	1,012	60.4%
Don't know	13	1.4%	9	1.2%	22	1.3%
No answer	7	0.7%	47	6.5%	54	3.2%
Total	948	100.0%	728	100.0%	1,676	100.0%

29. I feel personally safe in Rockford

Response	Mail Survey		Online Survey		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Strongly disagree	165	17.4%	75	10.3%	240	14.3%
Disagree	342	36.1%	222	30.5%	564	33.7%
Agree	332	35.0%	317	43.5%	649	38.7%
Strongly agree	43	4.5%	42	5.8%	85	5.1%
Don't know	57	6.0%	27	3.7%	84	5.0%
No answer	9	0.9%	45	6.2%	54	3.2%
Total	948	100.0%	728	100.0%	1,676	100.0%

30. My perception of safety is based primarily on (check one)

Response	Mail Survey		Online Survey		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Personal Experience	489	51.6%	445	61.1%	934	55.7%
Word of mouth	61	6.4%	43	5.9%	104	6.2%
Media Reports	382	40.3%	194	26.6%	576	34.4%
No answer	16	1.7%	46	6.3%	62	3.7%
Total	948	100.0%	728	100.0%	1,676	100.0%

31. Types of media reports

Response	Mail Survey		Online Survey		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Social media	105	27.5%	93	47.9%	198	34.3%
Other factors	91	23.9%	149*	76.8%	---	---
No answer	185	48.4%	---	---	---	---
Total	382	100.0%	194	100.0%	576	100.0%

*Some respondents choose both social and other factors.

32. Your zip code

Response	Paper Survey		Online Survey		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
61008 - Belvidere	2	0.2%	13	1.8%	15	0.9%
61011 - Caledonia	41	4.3%	2	0.3%	43	2.6%
61016 - Cherry Valley	38	4.0%	9	1.2%	47	2.8%
61024 - Durand	39	4.1%	2	0.3%	41	2.4%
61019 - Davis	27	2.8%	2	0.3%	29	1.7%
61020 - Davis Junction	3	0.3%	0	0.0%	3	0.2%
61032 - Freeport	1	0.1%	0	0.0%	1	0.1%
61047 - Leaf River	1	0.1%	0	0.0%	1	0.1%
61063 - Pecatonica	37	3.9%	4	0.5%	41	2.4%
61072 - Rockton	36	3.8%	19	2.6%	55	3.3%
61073 - Roscoe	37	3.9%	26	3.6%	63	3.8%
61077 - Seward	8	0.8%	0	0.0%	8	0.5%
61079 - Shirland	5	0.5%	0	0.0%	5	0.3%
61080 - South Beloit	20	2.1%	6	0.8%	26	1.6%
61084 - Stillman Valley	1	0.1%	0	0.0%	1	0.1%

Response	Paper Survey		Online Survey		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
61088 - Winnebago	38	4.0%	5	0.7%	43	2.6%
61101 - Rockford NW	61	6.4%	35	4.8%	96	5.7%
61102 - Rockford SW	54	5.7%	21	2.9%	75	4.5%
61103 - Rockford N End	91	9.6%	69	9.5%	160	9.5%
61104 - Rockford Midtown	54	5.7%	28	3.8%	82	4.9%
61105 - Machesney Park	1	0.1%	0	0.0%	1	0.1%
61107 - Rockford NE	64	6.8%	118	16.2%	182	10.9%
61108 - Rockford SE	63	6.6%	77	10.6%	140	8.4%
61109 - Rockford Bypass	41	4.3%	28	3.8%	69	4.1%
61111 - Loves Park	45	4.7%	44	6.0%	89	5.3%
61112 - Rockford	5	0.5%	0	0.0%	5	0.3%
61114 - Rockford Far NE	62	6.5%	46	6.3%	108	6.4%
61115 - Machesney Park	39	4.1%	27	3.7%	66	3.9%
61131 - Loves Park	2	0.2%	0	0.0%	2	0.1%
61132 - Loves Park	2	0.2%	0	0.0%	2	0.1%
Other (Includes P.O. Boxes)	12	1.3%	69	9.5%	81	4.8%
No answer	18	1.9%	78	10.7%	96	5.7%
Total	948	100.0%	728	100.0%	1,676	100.0%

33. Your age group

Response	Mail Survey		Online Survey		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
18-29	26	2.7%	44	6.0%	70	4.2%
30-39	81	8.5%	98	13.5%	179	10.7%
40-49	126	13.3%	147	20.2%	273	16.3%
50-64	371	39.1%	278	38.2%	649	38.7%
65 and older	342	36.1%	101	13.9%	443	26.4%
No answer	2	0.2%	60	8.2%	62	3.7%
Total	948	100.0%	728	100.0%	1,676	100.0%

34. Your gender

Response	Mail Survey		Online Survey		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Male	355	37.4%	209	28.7%	564	33.7%
Female	577	60.9%	451	62.0%	1,028	61.3%
No answer	16	1.7%	68	9.3%	84	5.0%
Total	948	100.0%	728	100.0%	1,676	100.0%

35. Your race/ethnicity

Response	Mail Survey		Online Survey		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
White, non-Hispanic	820	86.5%	611	83.9%	1,431	85.4%
Black, non-Hispanic	55	5.8%	12	1.6%	67	4.0%
Hispanic	21	2.2%	14	1.9%	35	2.1%
Asian	10	1.1%	6	0.8%	16	1.0%
Multi-racial	12	1.3%	9	1.2%	21	1.3%
Other	13	1.4%	9	1.2%	22	1.3%
No answer	17	1.8%	67	9.2%	84	5.0%
Total	948	100.0%	728	100.0%	1,676	100.0%

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

Response	Mail Survey		Online Survey		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Less than high school	22	2.3%	3	0.4%	25	1.5%
High school diploma	171	18.0%	50	6.9%	221	13.2%
Some college, no degree	221	23.3%	147	20.2%	368	22.0%
Associate's or technical degree	160	16.9%	90	12.4%	250	14.9%
Bachelor's degree	203	21.4%	239	32.8%	442	26.4%
Graduate/professional degree	162	17.1%	140	19.2%	302	18.0%
No answer	9	0.9%	59	8.1%	68	4.1%
Total	948	100.0%	728	100.0%	1,676	100.0%

37. Length of residence in Winnebago County

Response	Mail Survey		Online Survey		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Less than one year	6	0.6%	6	0.8%	12	0.7%
1-4 years	39	4.1%	30	4.1%	69	4.1%
5-9 years	47	5.0%	28	3.8%	75	4.5%
10-19 years	111	11.7%	69	9.5%	180	10.7%
20 years or more	701	73.9%	459	63.0%	1,160	69.2%
I do not live in Winnebago County	37	3.9%	77	10.6%	114	6.8%
No answer	7	0.7%	59	8.1%	66	3.9%
Total	948	100.0%	728	100.0%	1,676	100.0%

38. Location of employment

Response	Mail Survey		Online Survey		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Winnebago County	467	49.3%	445	61.1%	912	54.4%
Outside Winnebago County	102	10.8%	105	14.4%	207	12.4%
Not currently employed	367	38.7%	117	16.1%	484	28.9%
No answer	12	1.3%	61	8.4%	73	4.4%
Total	948	100.0%	728	100.0%	1,676	100.0%

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

Response	Mail Survey		Online Survey		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	204	21.5%	213	29.3%	417	24.9%
No	740	78.1%	454	62.4%	1,194	71.2%
No answer	4	0.4%	61	8.4%	65	3.9%
Total	948	100.0%	728	100.0%	1,676	100.0%

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

Comments	Mail Survey		Online Survey		Total	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
	630	59.8%	424	40.2%	1,054	100.0%

Appendix C

2015 AND 2012 PAPER SURVEY COMPARISON FREQUENCIES

ROCKFORD AREA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU
SURVEY OF WINNEBAGO COUNTY RESIDENTS

2015 and 2012 Mail Comparison Frequencies

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

Response	2015		2012	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	788	83.1%	576	84.0%
Not sure	35	3.7%	38	5.5%
No	122	12.9%	71	10.3%
No answer	3	0.3%	1	0.1%
Total	948	100.0%	686	100.0%

- 2-10. I have encountered RACVB in the following ways: *Check all that apply*

Response	2015		2012	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Advertisement in magazine	304	32.1%	231	33.7%
Amateur sports tournaments	118	12.4%	133	19.4%
Calendar of events	245	25.8%	201	29.3%
Forest City Beautiful/downtown beautification	193	20.4%	Not asked in 2012.	
Local media	658	69.4%	489	71.3%
Stroll on State	171	18.0%	Not asked in 2012.	
Website, Facebook	50	5.3%	34	5.0%
Worked with RACVB on meeting, reunion, tournament, etc.	32	3.4%	18	2.6%
Other – what?	83	8.8%	36	5.2%

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

Response	2015		2012	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Very important	616	65.0%	418	60.9%
Important	282	29.7%	229	33.4%
Not important	12	1.3%	16	2.3%
Don't know	32	3.4%	22	3.2%
No answer	6	0.6%	1	0.1%
Total	948	100.0%	686	100.0%

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

Response	2015		2012	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
No effect	15	1.6%	4	0.6%
Some positive effect by bringing in limited visitor spending	314	33.1%	241	35.1%
Strong enough positive effect to improve local economy	604	63.7%	434	63.3%
Negative effect - why?	5	0.5%	2	0.3%
No answer	10	1.1%	5	0.7%
Total	948	100.0%	686	100.0%

Questions 13-14 not asked in 2012.

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

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

Response	2015		2012	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Strongly disagree	51	5.4%	28	4.1%
Disagree	168	17.7%	129	18.8%
Agree	395	41.7%	315	45.9%
Strongly agree	235	24.8%	140	20.4%
Don't know	76	8.0%	50	7.3%
No answer	23	2.4%	24	3.5%
Total	948	100.0%	686	100.0%

16. Maintain and improve facilities for amateur sports tournaments

Response	2015		2012	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Strongly disagree	23	2.4%	13	1.9%
Disagree	25	2.6%	19	2.8%
Agree	412	43.5%	391	57.0%
Strongly agree	438	46.2%	221	32.2%
Don't know	33	3.5%	28	4.1%
No answer	17	1.8%	14	2.0%
Total	948	100.0%	686	100.0%

17. Help downtown Rockford revitalization

Response	2015		2012	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Strongly disagree	45	4.7%	58	8.5%
Disagree	77	8.1%	111	16.2%
Agree	345	36.4%	286	41.7%
Strongly agree	436	46.0%	179	26.1%
Don't know	30	3.2%	38	5.5%
No answer	15	1.6%	14	2.0%
Total	948	100.0%	686	100.0%

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

Response	2015		2012	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Strongly disagree	40	4.2%	25	3.6%
Disagree	87	9.2%	100	14.6%
Agree	385	40.6%	302	44.0%
Strongly agree	357	37.7%	177	25.8%
Don't know	62	6.5%	69	10.1%
No answer	17	1.8%	13	1.9%
Total	948	100.0%	696	100.0%

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

Response	2015		2012	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Strongly disagree	16	1.7%	11	1.6%
Disagree	29	3.1%	18	2.6%
Agree	410	43.2%	400	58.3%
Strongly agree	450	47.5%	228	33.2%
Don't know	30	3.2%	22	3.2%
No answer	13	1.4%	7	1.0%
Total	948	100.0%	686	100.0%

20-25. I would support more funding for:

Response	2015		2012	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Building a whitewater rapids course on the Rock River	250	26.4%	Not asked in 2012	
Adding attractive gateways into Rockford and surrounding towns	351	37.0%	293	42.7%
Maintaining and improving facilities for amateur sports tournaments	495	52.2%	430	62.7%
Revitalizing downtown Rockford	521	55.0%	306	44.6%
Connecting bike paths to other areas of county	473	49.9%	339	49.4%
Promoting ecotourism such as nature/forest preserves, conservation, hiking, canoeing	557	58.8%	447	65.2%

Questions 26-31 not asked in 2012.

32. Your zip code

Response	2015		2012	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
61008 - Belvidere	2	0.2%	0	0.0%
61011 - Caledonia	41	4.3%	0	0.0%
61016 - Cherry Valley	38	4.0%	13	1.9%
61024 - Durand	39	4.1%	4	0.6%
61019 - Davis	27	2.8%	0	0.0%
61020 - Davis Junction	3	0.3%	0	0.0%
61032 - Freeport	1	0.1%	0	0.0%
61047 - Leaf River	1	0.1%	0	0.0%
61063 - Pecatonica	37	3.9%	14	2.0%
61072 - Rockton	36	3.8%	20	2.9%
61073 - Roscoe	37	3.9%	47	6.9%
61077 - Seward	8	0.8%	2	0.3%
61079 - Shirland	5	0.5%	1	0.1%
61080 - South Beloit	20	2.1%	15	2.2%
61084 - Stillman Valley	1	0.1%	0	0.0%
61088 - Winnebago	38	4.0%	13	1.9%
61101 - Rockford Northwest	61	6.4%	38	5.5%
61102 - Rockford Southwest	54	5.7%	26	3.8%
61103 - Rockford North End	91	9.6%	41	6.0%
61104 - Rockford Midtown	54	5.7%	24	3.5%
61105 - Machesney Park	1	0.1%	0	0.0%
61107 - Rockford Northeast	64	6.8%	103	15.0%
61108 - Rockford Southeast	63	6.6%	80	11.7%
61109 - Rockford Bypass	41	4.3%	62	9.0%
61111 - Loves Park	45	4.7%	53	7.7%
61112 - Rockford	5	0.5%	0	0.0%
61114 - Rockford Far Northeast	62	6.5%	72	10.5%
61115 - Machesney Park	39	4.1%	48	7.0%
61131 - Loves Park	2	0.2%	0	0.0%
61132 - Loves Park	2	0.2%	0	0.0%
Other (Includes P.O. Boxes)	12	1.3%	0	0.0%
No answer	18	1.9%	10	1.5%
Total	948	100.0%	686	100.0%

33. Your age group

Response	2015		2012	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
18-29	26	2.7%	22	3.2%
30-39	81	8.5%	58	8.5%
40-49	126	13.3%	113	16.5%
50-64	371	39.1%	257	37.5%
65 and older	342	36.1%	233	34.0%
No answer	2	0.2%	3	0.4%
Total	948	100.0%	686	100.0%

34. Your gender

Response	2015		2012	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Male	355	37.4%	302	44.0%
Female	577	60.9%	379	55.2%
No answer	16	1.7%	5	0.7%
Total	948	100.0%	686	100.0%

35. Your race/ethnicity

Response	2015		2012	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
White, non-Hispanic	820	86.5%	611	89.1%
Black, non-Hispanic	55	5.8%	26	3.8%
Hispanic	21	2.2%	8	1.2%
Asian	10	1.1%	8	1.2%
Multi-racial	12	1.3%	9	1.3%
Other	13	1.4%	8	1.2%
No answer	17	1.8%	16	2.3%
Total	948	100.0%	686	100.0%

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

Response	2015		2012	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Less than high school	22	2.3%	12	1.7%
High school diploma	171	18.0%	143	20.8%
Some college, no degree	221	23.3%	159	23.2%
Associate's or technical degree	160	16.9%	102	14.9%
Bachelor's degree	203	21.4%	138	20.1%
Graduate/professional degree	162	17.1%	125	18.2%
No answer	9	0.9%	7	1.0%
Total	948	100.0%	686	100.0%

37. Length of residence in Winnebago County

Response	2015		2012	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Less than one year	6	0.6%	1	0.1%
1-4 years	39	4.1%	15	2.2%
5-9 years	47	5.0%	43	6.3%
10-19 years	111	11.7%	72	10.5%
20 years or more	701	73.9%	552	80.5%
I do not live in Winnebago County	37	3.9%	Not asked in 2012.	
No answer	7	0.7%	3	0.4%
Total	948	100.0%	686	100.0%

Question 38 not asked in 2012.

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

Response	2015		2012	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Yes	204	21.5%	159	23.2%
No	740	78.1%	523	76.2%
No answer	4	0.4%	4	0.6%
Total	948	100.0%	686	100.0%

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

Comments	2015		2012	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
	630	66.5%	428	62.4%

Appendix D

PAPER SURVEY VERBATIM COMMENTS

These are respondents' views expressed in their own words. Some clean-up for spelling, capitalization, and punctuation has been made but otherwise, comments are presented as written.

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Work where some materials are printed for RACVB
- Park District
- Klehm Arboretum
- Work with Sister Cities
- Know someone that works at RACVB
- Former employee of the Rockford Park District, many partnering opportunities
- Memorial Hall/Wendy Perks Fisher
- On the Waterfront
- Laurent House
- Chamber Board and meetings
- Flyers at my store
- Seen vehicles with the name
- Ride on River Queen
- Organizational affiliation
- Worked downtown near RACVB offices
- Past employment - worked with RACVB
- Through the Arts Council
- In newspaper
- Council meetings
- A friend may have mentioned it
- Seeing in media
- The news
- Rockford Register Star
- WIFR Andy and Aaron
- Kiwanis Convention
- Word of mouth
- Awareness of organizations in Rockford
- Just know it's there
- Know leadership

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Brochure
- Airport information
- Dealt with them when I worked for Winnebago County treasure's office - hotel/motel tax
- Stopped in for literature
- Worked with RACVB when I worked in Rockford hotels and at the Welcome Center
- Past experiences
- Co-sponsored events at Rockford University
- Bowling tournament
- The lady that stole all the money with the credit card
- Friend used to work for RACVB
- Through work
- Applied for a job at RACVB - knew someone who worked there
- Knew previous employee
- Work close to RACVB office downtown
- Register Star
- A friend said he had something to do with it (Shumway Market)
- Used to work for RPD
- Downtown location
- Community workshops
- Too many to list
- TV news
- Your location
- Worked with staff at community meetings
- Attended meeting
- Library
- Used to work with an agency (state rehab) and we had board meetings
- Worked at local motel
- Worked at post office, handled their mail
- Rock River Times
- Called a couple of years ago when we lived near Springfield, IL

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Verbal
- Newspaper stories
- Sister worked there
- Word of mouth
- Saw a sign for them on the wall
- Library
- Word of mouth
- Newspaper
- Starlight Theater, the ARC
- Heard presentation while member of Leadership Rockford group
- Mail
- Personal contact
- Knew people who worked for RACVB
- Walked past
- Through my neice
- TV
- Knew an employee there at one time
- March of Dimes
- On the Waterfront, City Market
- Received promotional material at a meeting
- Employee is personal friend
- Loves Park Rotary Club
- Worked downtown
- RAHMA

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

- Low-paying hospitality industry
- Cost more than they spend
- Taxes too high
- Too much traffic!
- Too expensive

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Rockford needs to make all areas of the community safe for all of its citizens.
- More good jobs!!!
- Advertising our strong points: parks, air show, RVC (aviation), Rock River, Sports Core I & II, ease of access, cost comparisons vs. larger cities, atmosphere (people).
- Sidewalks, safety, getting rid of the bad wrap, family-friendly events, getting rid of abandoned buildings, street lights, and sidewalks.
- Clean up abandoned buildings (no broken glass) and housing. Beautify vacant lots - keep tended.
- Less crime. Less empty and discarded buildings. Better streets.
- Improve downtown, need hotels also.
- Better traffic control. I hear many complaints from visitors about the number of people who run lights. Yellow lights are for those already in the intersection to complete their turn and those too close to stop. Hate when the light turns yellow and the car in the intersection turns left and the five cars behind goes as well, even after the light has turned red. Cleaning up the areas dilapidated housing and businesses. East State between Fairview and Alpine has so many signs it is distracting and hard to actually find the business you are looking for. We need directions to event venues to be more visible. They are small and lack directions. (Such as Sports Score II is the next right, etc.)
- Downtown Rockford needs a number of businesses to make the downtown more welcoming. It is lacking a place to get a cup of coffee and a newspaper, before 8 am. I have been at Firestone at 7 am and walked from the Restoration Cafe to Stewart Square and nowhere could I find a cup of coffee or newspaper before 8 am. That is ridiculous for a city the size of Rockford. Also, the downtown needs a nice hotel. One that is clean, has reasonable rates, and is in a location that does not have vacant buildings. When I visit other cities, it is nice to have a fast food restaurant near the hotel, especially if you have children or young adults that just want a 'bite to eat' at odd hours. If no other businesses are going to be open in the late evening/early morning, I think a McDonalds would be a great addition.

I would like to see the RACVB promote some of the surrounding venues more. Severson Dells is a gem and the new area for children is wonderful. They should also promote the campgrounds in Winnebago County. I am on the western edge of the county and the Seward Forest Preserve is a beautiful park with campgrounds available. Also in Seward, we have a Doctors House Museum, owned by the Seward Historical Society, which is an interesting place to visit.

Finally, I would like to see more info provided about musical attractions. I know that there are many available, however, there is not much publicity for these. In our area, we get a weekly free publication which would be a great spot to publicize these events.

- I am retired having worked for municipal government for nearly 25 years.

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Create Metro Police to make the County and Rockford safer!
- Taking care of crime and bring jobs to the community.
- Safety, jobs, more things for families.
- Less violence and crime (we are among highest in worst categories). Musical events - bring back On The Waterfront!
- Having a plane fly between Chicago and Rockford for easy access to Rockford for those coming from out of state.
- Let's hear some new ideas from RACVB - it's your job!
- Removal of blighted areas.
- Public safety, clean, eliminate/mask eye sores, improve entries to city.
- Better roads, attractions near interstate highways.
- I think safety right now is an issue.
- A casino!
- Less police vehicle harassment which has been done due to so much drug trafficking in Chicago-Rockford area. But don't stop someone for seatbelts, unless they look suspicious. Snow plow regulations are too strict on residential streets. Eliminate even/odd parking - plow middle only.
- I think using the river to attract more visitors. Peoria is one city that has done a tremendous job using the river.
- Less crime, fix the streets, clean up litter.
- Get crime under control - current status would be laughable if not so serious.
- Develop West side shops, events, etc.
- More events that look, act, and feel like class acts - think bigger.
- More boutiques in one area - like downtown - river walk - small shops like downtown area. Knowing streets are safe - without crime.
- Continue downtown revitalization. More bike lanes in city - connect bike path.
- Lower crime rate.
- Infrastructure. Our roads are horrible. If you want businesses to come here, we need to show we care about ourselves. Studies show road condition play a huge factor in first impressions.
- Low cost and no cost activity areas for families.
- All you've listed and keep our city clean (streets, vacant homes, etc.). More people need to get involved in stopping crime.

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- (1) Combination of both active and passive recreational opportunities. (2) Riverfront activities and supporting retail outlets. (3) Better and more bike paths. (4) Family-oriented activities that are affordable for middle-class families. (5) Promotion of a clean, healthy, safe environment.
- With the loss of On the Waterfront and the concentration on sports, other than Anderson Gardens, Rockford/Winnebago County does not strongly appeal to my circle of family/friends as a place to visit. The “gunshot” method of attractions in Rockford lessens the impact of one concentrated area. Perhaps concentrate restaurants, hotels in the area around downtown museums. I feel traditional downtown can never come back where it is safe, fun, affordable, and a place to live.
- Lower crime rate! There are many areas that you cannot even drive through at night. We do not monitor criminals that are released and we do not take care of our homeless. Too many people slip through the cracks. We should be ashamed.
- Be friendly.
- Better restaurants and shopping (mall), more bike lanes/paths, easy access to downtown.
- Better signage and directions to points of interest and facilities. Maybe expansion of a trolley system (from a central point) to events and/or facilities. It’s not very easy for visitors to find their way in Rockford.
- Other than parks, museum, and water park, there is not much! More for seniors - maybe bigger entertainment at Coronado (since BMO brings in younger groups). More on the East side!
- Getting people of all ages outside, using our bike path is a must to encourage. (Even if it is fund raising, for a cause). Continue bringing community events such as Christmas/Winter parades, Stroll on State. Sledding is a must for families in our area. Get kids and parents outside!! Shopping in our small towns is needed. More advertisement. Walt Williamson Pool has a community dog swim at the end of summer and it is a big hit - all public pools should offer this, if possible. How about more community cleanup days? Where people could really clean out and clean up their towns. We had days like this many years ago and it was great. Before garbage pickup people would drive around and be picking through their neighbor’s trash and some valuable/repurpose in thrown out items. Win, win, and it’s fun!!
- More ads for local attractions.
- We have to get a handle on the destruction of the family unit and all family impacts - health, education, crime, drug and alcohol dependency, poverty, jobs.
- Sports, shops downtown, welcome centers coming into town, police presence downtown and mall areas.
- To help build bike paths - why is no license required for the bikes? They always had license on our bikes 65-70 years ago.

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Train from Rockford to Chicago. Get more passenger airlines to our airport.
- Less crime, more attractive entrances to city, more advertising re: parks, Anderson Gardens, Burpee Museum.
- Somehow turning half of the city into something other than a ghetto, better jobs and less handout services.
- No one wants to go downtown. It's not safe, nowhere to park. It's not easy to get downtown. People are afraid.
- Personal safety, improve economy.
- (1) Amtrak Station. (2) Less gun violence. (3) More family-friendly attractions.
- Increase all aspects of travel, i.e., train and plane. Add more adventurer sports.
- Easier way to find information. Better roads - at least around restaurants and other well-attended attractions.
- Offering what the public needs and it will attract more. Keep crime rates under control.
- More fair and balanced media reporting.
- More entertainment, a major casino, better use of the BMO Harris Center, clean up some of the neighborhoods.
- The West side of Rockford is a scary place.
- More positive PR. Increased safety.
- Family-friendly activities at a reasonable price.
- Less crime; better, low cost transportation for elderly, grocery availability in SW Rockford, entertainment at a cost elderly could support (symphony, plays, etc.); pull the street hoodlums off the street, better roads.
- Clean access and decent roads leading in and out of city. Downtown parking without meters. Easy access from north and south perhaps a limited access street in the center of the city.
- Cleaning up the entrances to Rockford, especially from Business 20.
- People need to feel safe when they visit here. Police do a great job but I think they are not as visible as they could be.
- Lower prices to events and businesses. Bring more variety of concerts/shows to Rockford.
- Less crime, why I live in Rockton, not Rockford.
- Better perception of Rockford - it's not that bad. More restaurants/shopping downtown or walkable area. Loved the summer market on Fridays!
- Lowering the crime rate.

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Less shooting, gangs, drugs. Better schools, employment opportunities.
- Better roads.
- Headed in right direction. Keep it up! Thanks.
- Jobs, less blighted areas, schools not producing at a high level, vocational schooling by federal funds, more police protection.
- Beautiful - all of city! Beautiful entrances of the city. Expanding the downtown business area. I have had a good life in Rockford!! Ex U.S. Air Force Bombardier 2nd Lt.
- Bring back On the Waterfront. We need outdoor concerts!
- A Rush Street like Chicago.
- Speaking to Rockford, rather than eliminating one-way streets I would recommend finding ways to expand one-way routes, with necessary signage to allow quicker/easier movement of visitor traffic into/out of the central city. In this age of computerization, most out of towners rely on GPS devices to get around. Going back to two-way streets makes no sense to my way of thinking.
- Not having a dumpsite entering South Rockford.
- Hotels in other locations besides East State Street near I-90 - downtown hotel.
- If the lights on State Street are sync'd up and traffic flowed nicely, downtown would feel more accessible to the rest of Winnebago County. Also, there are no buildings that are nicer than the new jail. It's not the best feeling explaining that the jail is the newest and nicest part of downtown.
- Get the crime down.
- Rockford/Winnebago County ran off a large BBQ contest at Sam's Club last August that would have brought in tens of thousands of dollars and they are not coming back this year. They have moved to Madison, Wisconsin.
- Metra railroad trains to and from Chicago.
- We enjoy bicycling and connecting the trails with a good place to park your car and facilities (restrooms) are important to us. Typically, we head out of the area to enjoy these things. And bicycling to us does not mean bicycling on paths in the busy communities; it means an old railroad bed out in the country.
- Cleaner and safer downtown area plus a casino.
- Clean up West State, Auburn Street, and South Main Street.
- Diversity in all areas (government, entertainment, and education).
- Events downtown are nice to some but I do not like trying to park or walk around that area! Rockford needs to focus on improving schools, homeless, and violence!! I live in rural Winnebago County; I would never want to live in Rockford.

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- If citizens could help fight the crime, we'd stop the gang war that appears to be raging!
- No vacant homes. Good roads. Crime down (shootings). Home break-ins. Drug issues down. All connected.
- A train!! Keep improving/investing in downtown. Downtown hotel/convention center. A walking and bike overpass to connect Sinnissippi Park over Rt. 251 around Nicholas Conservatory.
- More hotels downtown and West.
- Less crime.
- Destruction of old unused buildings. Clean up of trashy areas. Clean up of Rock River.
- More attractions, city upkeep, more inviting environment for families, more diversity, and less division among the communities. I personally have experienced way too much discrimination in this city making it a terrible place to live especially for a multi-racial family.
- More jobs and lower taxes on houses for first-time buyers. Good schools and less crime rate. Stronger laws on the people who are repeat offenders. Registered sex offenders as well.
- One interesting challenge might be for Rockford, Winnebago, and Boone County to consolidate government agencies similarly to Indianapolis? Continue exploring arterial streets to downtown from I-90. Similar to north/south Perryville corridor.
- More events like Stroll on State. A decrease in crime. We lived in Rockford for 6½ years, and there were many break-ins near us. I feel like crime scares visitors (and residents) away.
- Fixing the roads - especially around the post office in Loves Park.
- Improve access route to and through downtown. Start with best route. Improve appearance. Make downtown inviting and charming. Entice people to come downtown.
- (1) Less crime. More community cooperation. (2) Less focus on racial issues. (3) Stop over coverage of negative events by local media. (4) More focus on positive.
- Fix the awful crime rate. The shootings are out of control.
- Less money spent for lights and roundabouts. Fix bumps and holes - Riverside and Perryville.
- A true focal point (location).
- Not charging any non-resident fees at places such as park district events and Magic Waters.
- Forward, progressive thinking. Moving faster on projects including retail development and the Ingersoll project.
- Better parking. Less one-way streets.

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Rockford has missed out on numerous opportunities (racetrack). Allowing them to go elsewhere. This cannot continue!
- Beautification and better roads.
- Hotels and casino - downtown. Fix streets. Must have Amtrak downtown - running, not just in planning. More jobs = more money to spend. Visible patrolmen. Big acts at BMO Center. Downtown U of I extension.
- Yes, sports are important, but we need areas for all ages to enjoy.
- Clean up, more flowers, community parades are nice. Enforce ordinances, mowing, dilapidated buildings, etc. Promote tourism. There's stuff to do here that I am still finding out about.
- Continue working and supporting all areas of Rockford!
- Pleasant, clean, fun, safe environment!
- Less crime, more attractions.
- Better roads, lower crime.
- Rockford is so far behind the times! Need to be more like the Wisconsin Dells area - zoo, Go-Kart tracks, and a place like Ho-Chunk resort by the highway, outlet malls, and more. That's why we travel out of Rockford. Enough of downtown and amateur sporting events! Get events like Taste of Chicago and vendor shows - (candy, invention, and a big farmer/antique show like in Milwaukee!) Need to get Amtrak Train - it's all talk, but no show. We need it here!!
- A safe, revitalization, and attractive downtown with some activities and festivities.
- Quit focusing so much on Rockford and include the entire county in your improvements.
- The crime rate HAS to come down or no one will want to come here. The violent crime in this city is out of control.
- I feel Rockford and Winnebago County do a good job in welcoming visitors.
- Less crime/shootings.
- More activities in downtown area which reach a wide range of ethnicities; hotels/motels in the downtown area, along with retail stores.
- (1) Safety (2) Schools (3) Economy and jobs.
- Decent hotel by airport.
- Less crime, fix Southeast (new stores, restaurants, and hotel/motel to Southeast needed around airport!).
- Sports in parks, we have no money for rafting and Ingersoll building.
- Less crime and cleanliness of city.

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Lower taxes.
- Less crime.
- Upkeep of roads and areas surrounding (nice trees to line roadways, nice curbing, and sidewalks). Destroy old empty buildings. Continue adding and improving police force (more funding).
- Having a casino!
- Advertise local activities more (i.e., street fairs, City Market, riverfront, and Burpee).
- It appears that local bureaucracy gets in the way of most entrepreneur or developer with new or innovative ideas. We must improve our streets and roads!! We do a lot of traveling throughout the U.S. - mostly road trips. Nowhere have we encountered streets and roads as poorly maintained as Rockford/Winnebago County. They are an embarrassment when we have out of town visitors.
- Attractive activities, superb schools, brilliant art scenes.
- Train service, bike lanes/rental bikes, downtown square, ability to walk (or use train/bus) to hotel/restaurants events.
- Curbing crime, revitalize rundown neighborhoods, safer city.
- Improve interstate accessibility.
- Better streets (pavement), better/more parking, clean up rundown buildings downtown.
- If the people who run Rockford's politics don't change their ways and continue to spend money the way they spend money, Rockford will never be an ideal place to live. For this reason, I'm moving out of Rockford soon.
- Making Rockford more accessible by train would be a great way for people to visit or live and commute into Chicago. My family would like to see Amtrak go through Rockford.
- Fix the roads instead of patching. Especially 11th Street. We desperately need to get violence and crime off the streets. Make more handicapped assessable attractions.
- Make it safer!! More jobs are needed. Less sales tax. Better schools - too many wasted tax dollars. Lower motel/hotel taxes.
- Clean it up. Fix roads.
- More things to do. Better schools for long term.
- Improve the city streets - put up the street lights that were taken down by Tim Hanson (street director). He's recently said, "Public safety was his #1 priority." Please put the lights back on. Thanks.
- To get the crime down and to have more jobs to offer.
- Unique attractions and better perceptions of personal safety within City of Rockford.

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Cut sales tax, and more bed and breakfasts with cute seasonal things/tours, like Galena has.
- One big problem I see is building a jail and having all of the homeless shelters downtown, this providing a haven for riff-raff downtown. If you want people to feel safe and visit downtown, these are in the wrong place.
- I am a strong believer in supporting my community. I feel downtown is vital with the BMO Harris Center and our Crown Jewel - the Coronado Theater. Rockford has a great park district with many free events which should be an enticement for families. I am a proud volunteer for numerous cultural organizations. I feel a community will thrive and give back if it is supported by its citizens. I am a proud supporter of my downtown and believe in supporting small local business. Thank you.
- Promote the existing wonders of Rockford such as Anderson Gardens, Nicholas Conservatory, and existing bike paths. Improve and add sidewalks to the East side corridor on East State Street to allow visitors to move safely to stores and restaurants. Improve the area around the airport (11th Street).
- Don't screw the visitors with extra taxes (hotel/motel tax) and fees while they bolster the local economy.
- Ongoing improvements on West State and South Main are terrific. Signs to visitor's center at main entry point to city.
- More attractions for things to do with kids.
- Significant improvements to downtown waterfront. Community policing, manage the homeless downtown, bring more national sports competitions to area.
- To make the downtown more nice and around the West side of Rockford. Safety, patrol the streets.
- Too much bad publicity ranking in national polls. Recent spike in crime in certain parts of the city.
- Safety
- Lower taxes, better roads, less government regulation.

To Whom it may Concern:

I have enclosed the questionnaire recently sent to me, which I have filled out as presented, however, I feel compelled to expound on its contents to a further extent.

I am still trying to rectify in my mind the suggestions contained therein as being conducive to attracting visitors and/or businesses to the Winnebago County area. Without being too negative, have you people lost your minds? A whitewater rafting facility on the Rock River? The suggestion is absurd in its nature. Whitewater rafting is a sport that is limited in its participants, and its location in areas of great natural beauty. These two limitations alone preclude the concept in this area. In addition, it is also a sport that is inherently dangerous in its nature. The liability questions alone are open ended. To think that this is a concept

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

your group would even consider makes me wonder exactly how qualified and logical the Bureau's participants are. Were you people drinking at the time?

If you want to attract business and visitors, you should consider the following:

1. What has worked in the past, i.e., The Waterfront.
2. What attracts businesses, i.e., lower taxes and a business-friendly environment? Perhaps you should take note of Machesney Park's example of how to implement growth.
3. Maintain properly and efficiently the current sites and the general condition of existing roadways and attractions. Magic Waters is comparable to a toilet bowl because of lack of maintenance, and if you think word of mouth doesn't affect its patrons, think again, or just think period. Our roads are disgraceful. Many areas in this area reflect the downtrodden economy quite well.

Funding should be readily available once you start to grasp the concept that wasting time and money on endeavors that have not been thoroughly and logically considered is irresponsible. If I ran my household the way you people run this community, I would be bankrupt. Someone needs to be logical and realize that the unintended consequences will come to fruition and become facts. It might be nice to visit "Wonderland," but then you wake up and just have a hangover.

It's time for someone to stand up and get real.

- Safe environment to enjoy.

Gentlemen of the RACVB Board of Directors:

You may be sorry you picked our address to send your questionnaire to. YES! We would love to see a white rapids course on the Rock River which is just 2 blocks from our home and the same for revitalization of the downtown area along with beautiful gateways to our fair city. But, what will we gain by all this beautification if just a few blocks away we have rampant crime, gunshots almost daily, gangs, drugs, and prostitution galore, along with the falling down and ill kept homes.

Two years ago we took a chance and bought a beautiful home on the edge of downtown Rockford. We hesitated at first because of the way the surrounding area looked but we figured if this home had been rehabbed and it looked like there were more in the process, we would be okay down the line. We knew it would just take time. Now, I am not so sure. All the groups getting together for a better Rockford want to make improvements that will appeal to tourists. How many tourists do you think are going to come when they find out they could be the victim of a stray bullet or have their vehicle broken into or stolen while they are enjoying an outing on the river?

I would love to see the downtown businesses looking more inviting. In the 2 years we have been here, we have not patronized one of the businesses on State St. as they all look like dumps from the outside. I do hear from younger members of our family that once you get inside, they are fine. I just hate the thought of walking into one of them and then having to walk out. When we eat out or shop, we head to East State. When friends come in from

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

Chicago we entertain in our home, head to East State St. or as far as Huntley just to dine where we don't have to worry about walking on the street to our cars.

The previous owner of our current home spent over 120K rehabbing it and then taking perfect care of it. Next door is a home that was rehabbed on the inside but the owners never got around to the outside before they went into foreclosure. A family purchased it over a year ago and have not touched the hanging siding or the insulation that is exposed along with sections of the house that were never painted. The house across the street is owned by a slumlord and has been condemned. Last winter the water pipes burst, water was pouring out of the basement windows. The result was mold and mushrooms growing all over the interior while the renters lived there. If we get a heavy snow the roof will probably fall in due to the severe moisture that has weakened the ceilings and floors. Across from that house is a lot attached to the home where the weeds were so tall last summer that the view of traffic was hindered. I guess someone made the owner finally cut down the weeds which now have been sitting under blue tarps since then.

If there is going to be any beautification in Rockford, it needs to start with the people who live here. There has to be a way to force people to be responsible for their surroundings or develop groups who will help them. I realize a lot of the folks that live on the West Side don't have the funds, so instead of worrying about bringing tourists to town, let's worry about the people who live in the town. And, again, the bad element has to be forced to just go away. I know they will just take over some other area but at least they won't be Rockford's problem anymore.

It is very frustrating as we take care of our home as if it were next door to one of those estates out on Spring Creek Road. And, we are still hoping for a miracle that will make our neighborhood presentable to us and outsiders. We already have family who refuses to come to visit as they deem our home unsafe. Well, could be. We actually feel pretty safe here, maybe we are in denial. We are 3 generations living in the home. One has been robbed, one has been propositioned 50 ft. from the driveway, and 2 weeks ago the Police captured 3 teens hiding between our cars out back. They had stolen a car and crashed it into another car a block away and were on the run. So maybe we are going to have to finally face the reality that we are not as safe as we think we are and definitely not as safe as we want to be.

When the talk started about building a luxury hotel for tourists out of an old building downtown I thought someone had lost their marbles. Who the heck would spend money on a luxury destination in downtown Rockford. The Rockford Airport is the best thing Rockford has going for it. It is no hassle travel if you are going to a destination the airlines serve. It would be great for folks to travel to our area, but we have to give them something to come to and not just a nice hotel and sports venues. They need to not fear for their life when they get here or have a view of the poor and downtrodden who roam our streets or the thugs that also roam our streets. On the way in from the airport they need to see a well-maintained environment surrounding their final destination.

I am in my mid 70's and am sure I will never get to see the Rockford I am hoping for.

Sincerely, A Rockford Resident

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Fixing potholes (streets). Arrest all prostitutes, drug dealers on Bremer Street, Rockford, IL 61104. Have the sweepers sweep streets more than twice a year, etc.
- More variety of community/business activities not necessarily in downtown area.
- We need good jobs - not low paying tourist attraction jobs. Less crime!
- We need the train. It would be easy for us to go and other to come. With the new company expansion (Woodward) will bring more people that may possibly want to commute.
- Safety and beauty. People are visual, so keep up the landmarks, etc.
- Less crime, get rid of rundown homes. More activities and shopping on West side of Rockford.
- (1) Reduce panhandling around East State Street shopping area. (2) Crime is a big problem/safety. (3) Encourage communities to help improve residential areas.
- Re: Open the Singer Mental Health to place people in need - not having the homeless people wandering all over - either walking or in power chairs or wheel chairs. Take down drug houses. Give new life to old buildings. Hope this was helpful to you!
- Improvement in roads, safety.
- Clean up and revitalize Rockford's West side, South side.
- More shopping in the downtown district.
- No more tax raises!! Taxes are killing the housing market!
- To tear down all the old homes that are in disrepair.
- I recently had visitors from another state that asked me about the big glass building they passed on the way into Rockford. I told them about the Nicholas Conservatory and later that day they went to visit. They had many positive comments about their visit but one very interesting negative remark. They thought that the higher admission fee for non-Winnebago County residents did not put forward a welcome to tourists.
- (1) Reduce gang influences and crime. (2) Stop wasting resources on pet projects (synchronizing stop lights) and improve roads and services instead.
- Make Southeast Rockford gateway attractive (i.e., 11th Street/Sandy Hollow to Charles needs repaving, demolition, etc.). Quit building attractions downtown - no parking and hard to get to. Improve public safety.
- Less crime, revitalize downtown.
- Bring back the downtown area. Improve the West State area and do more all the way to Meridian Road.
- Original ideas for activities - we seem to copy other cities a lot. Capitalize on what we have - symphony, sports facilities, and fabulous parks and preserves.

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Get rid of the “cheap” gambling places and go with a river boat or regular casino. Access to more restaurants/entertainment stops via bike paths. Create larger river walk area with restaurants/shops. Expand City Market days.
- Utilizing Davis Park or other parks for quality live music for educated people (i.e., not country music). Utilize the BMO Harris Center for something other than redneck events. Develop outdoor shops like Madison’s State Street downtown. City market is a good start.
- Less crime. Billboards with things to do in Rockford.
- I feel we really messed up by not continuing On the Waterfront. But since we have - continue increasing outdoor venues as much as you can!
- Getting the crime under control. Rockford has many great attractions but people I’ve talked to are worried about crime and safety.
- Reducing gang related crimes and minimizing blighted areas.
- Clean up crime, West Side. All that’s wanting to be done with sports complex seems wonderful but as someone who has traveled to many cities for sports, where are they going to stay? Where to eat? You walk to these places of the time and I wouldn’t walk in that area! At night?
- Continue adding activities like City Market, the wake board park, snow board hill, and zip lines are also great. People need constructive things to do.
- Better roads, lower taxes, less crime.
- Too many minimum wage jobs under \$15 an hour - need more decent livable wage paying jobs over \$25 an hour. Too much blight/poverty. Demolish all empty homes that have stood empty two years or more. Fix roads correctly, streets are a horrible mess. Keep giving contracts to Williams Charles, Ltd. = poor quality materials. Get rid of crime, prosecute criminals. The citizens of Rockford do not feel safe at all. Worst crime in the entire U.S.A. Most on welfare/handouts in a five-state area. Worst school system (RPS 205) in the entire state. And then there is mayor “more for me” Morrissey (all money in his pockets) forgivable family debts. And the worst Chief of Police Epperson “the attitude” in the city.
- Reduce crime. Improve sidewalks on East State Street. Increase police presence everywhere.
- Lower taxes, more jobs.
- Easier access to downtown and better parking.
- A visitor tourism information center on East State Street near the I-90 exit.
- More recreational things for visitors to do while they are in town. Volcano Falls is a good example. More restaurants in areas of hotels.
- Clean up vacant buildings, improve streets.

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Better access to downtown area. More quality signage along I-90, I-39, and shopping/hotels along these highways (including Bypass 20).
- Rockford needs to turn the lights back on and lower crime. They need to support the local festivals like On the Waterfront and ethnic festivals. All were run out of the city. More support for RACVB, the police and fire departments. Less for TIFF Districts and commercial projects.
- Parking, because I can't walk long distances. But not bad enough yet to have a handicap card. I can't go anywhere by myself, like going downtown on my own, etc.
- Revitalize downtown! Send gang bangers/cons back to Chicago!
- More variety on activities/entertainment for visitors and residents of Rockford as well. Lower crime and more positive things for young people to do in the area.
- Clean it up! Landscape and the thugs!
- Strong leadership with a reasonable vision to improve Rockford's image. With a willingness to compromise and work with all groups to that end. Something that is lacking on all points. Improve the infrastructure, schools, taxes that would draw people not only to visit but even move into Rockford. The tourist industry can be an important part of any city/area economy but tourism jobs do not support a local economy. Most jobs are part-time and low pay.
- Jobs and things to do - more plans, etc.
- Just keep doing what you are doing. Very pleased to live here.
- More family events and athletic events and lots of advertising.
- A downtown area thriving with theater, restaurants, night life, art galleries, and parking.
- Clean up crime.
- Reduce crime. The residents of Rockford need to be more positive about their city. Media needs to focus on the good things. All we ever hear is about the bad things. That is what sticks in your mind. Example - How many articles in the paper do I need to read about recent murders?
- (1) Sidewalks connecting hotels and restaurants. (2) Public transportation (small vans) to various venues. (3) Fewer empty public buildings.
- Focus on cleaning up the West side. Crime, vacant buildings, etc. It would be a major improvement.
- Better roads. Ours are embarrassing!
- Advertising, Rock Cut Park.
- Make the city more inviting!
- More festivals, like Stroll on State.

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Improve physical upkeep and overall appearance, more sidewalks in areas where visitors traffic.
- Improving streets - too many rough roads.
- More connections with others.
- Need a casino, but not downtown.
- I'm not sure, but I have enjoyed the downtown activities - Stroll on State, Friday Market Day, etc.
- Decent roads with construction completed well and within a restricted timeline that doesn't drag on forever ... frequently with little work being done.

Rock Valley's automotive program and truck driving certification are excellent adaptations for the community. If the Rock Valley development at the airport is handled properly, it too will be a vocational Godsend for the area.

We pick up travel info and keep files for future reference when traveling. Not overly impressed with what we've found for the Rockford area. We travel a great deal and add much to local economies through our lodging and hotel tax, etc., meals out, gas, purchase tickets to events and purchase antiques for a sideline business.

The gaming parlors (5 machine deals) are also a deterrent to the looks of the community. I frequent several major casinos in different parts of the country and have difficulty believing what has been allowed to develop, especially in the "Parks."

- Better streets, fewer vacant buildings, visually appealing, more activities.
- Reduce littering/garbage around city, promote positive aspects of Rockford in the media.
- Coming from Wisconsin to Rockford - crime is unbelievable - afraid to walk down the street.
- Stop patting themselves on the back and get some real help. The Republican ethnocentrism of the leaders make it difficult to have a good vision or self-assessment.
- Have more flights out of the Rockford airport (i.e., New York, Los Angeles, and Denver) and then advertise on Chicago radio and TV about these flights. (Free parking - convenience from western suburbs.) Attract businesses like Costco, Whole Foods, and Trader Joe's which will bring more people into Rockford from the surrounding areas.
- It's hard to build up your community when there are losers tearing it down. Get rid of all the crime and drug addicts.
- Clean up the West side of Rockford and NOT just the downtown area!
- Stop shootings, drugs, and gangs in Rockford.
- I have commented many times about the gateways into downtown and/or the I-Pass west and north. We have a limited access road system for the remainder of downtown. No stop light until exiting downtown, many cities this size have an easy access to downtown - better streets would help that.

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- A more inviting vibrant downtown would be helpful, currently looks rather rundown.
- Less crime.
- Play to the strengths - tournaments of all types. Dominate amateur sports - huge impact for economy, tourism. A decorate gate - waste of money, same with nature paths - no economic impact/payback.
- High demand events/performances in a revitalized downtown, hunting areas.
- Offer things to do, and not just promote one side of town. Look and explore growing all areas of this town. Bring more jobs here. This use to be a town that offered some opportunities, but now it doesn't offer anything. It's very depressing here. I would not recommend anyone to live here. As soon as my child graduates, I'm leaving this town. Everyone else has already left.
- Not so scary.
- Keep improving all areas listed. Items #15-19 and somehow get a handle on crime; especially West side "hot spots."
- More events in Rockford.
- More visible (or advertised) unique local eateries and shops, otherwise, one city is the same as another!
- A hotel/convention center downtown, with more events at the Metro Centre and Coronado theatre.
- Less crime shootings.
- Lower taxes - make improvements - stop wasting tax money.
- Clean up the streets. Add more family-friendly activities.
- Keep cleaning up Rockford. Keep tearing down rundown property and certain places where people gather and then get into trouble. Tear these places down. If you are a first time visitor, you could get the wrong impression.
- Create a safe town. The homeless in the downtown district is a horrible sight to see. Bring in/create more theater shows but not at the Metro Center. The Coronado is a beautiful venue that needs to be used more.
- Amtrak.
- I think downtown needs to come to life again. More shops, places of interest. Safer areas to walk through the main streets. My father-in-law lived in Rockford in the late 1960s. He walked to work (an insurance firm). We need to bring it back!
- Easier access to downtown attractions and restaurants. And improved downtown sidewalks, snow/ice removal, and parking.
- Better leadership.

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Make the area safer. Hate not being able to go places because you are not safe driving through town. I could never live in Rockford. I work there but we are safe in our little town.
- Increase police patrol in Southwest Rockford and parts of Northwest Rockford.
- A vibrant, thriving downtown and fewer empty factory buildings. I personally would spend more time in Rockford if RACVB and others promoting tourism cared less about sports and more about the arts. The sport tourists were horrible - demanding people - at least to the hotel staff people. So please find others to promote Rockford to!
- Lower crime rate.
- Curb crime, make safer better place to live and work and fix up area so better to come to, live in, work in, and want to be in!!
- Make it a getaway place - city people wanting to visit more country or small town with grand amenities.
- Help transform Rockford. Develop positive enthusiasm and attitude for itself.
- Cleanliness of city. Reconstruction of roads and bridges. Positive reports from media and social media.
- Employment opportunities, education excellence, positive thinking environment.
- Keep improving school system. Make safer.
- Clean up the "bad" rundown side of Rockford. Need kid-friendly outdoor activities (teens).
- Revitalize downtown (i.e., one-stop shop, dining, shopping, shows, seasonal events, movie theater, mall, train.) Stop developing the outskirts and give businesses incentives to go downtown.
- Improve roads, fill in the potholes. Sidewalks along East State Street shopping corridor so they may walk from the hotels. Continue cleaning up and revitalizing downtown.
- With respect to a gateway, refer to Beloit, WI. The smiley face on the water tower and welcoming website invite visitors. Developing the Rock River corridor including the Main Street space would be helpful to successful businesses already on the Main and Morgan area. The Main St. corridor needs to act as an artery allowing quick and easy access to downtown from the highway. The State St. route is too slow from the highway.
- Promote and improve golf. More unique shopping.
- Free downtown parking, river walk, craft shows (like they used to have at the Metro Center).
- Kid-friendly environment - package deals - good hotel rates. Fliers listing activities and attractions.
- Casino, shopping centers, downtown shops like years ago, less crime, no housing projects. Venita Harvey has it right!!!!

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- More things like RFD Air Show.
- Better parking downtown, less abandoned buildings, lower crime rate. Rockford needs a better reputation, no one wants to come to the ninth worst city in the U.S.
- Make parks accessible to archery hunters. It is done all over, why not here? Parks do and could generate so much more if you would utilize and market the acreage going to waste. Bike paths are awesome. Keep up the forward thinking “for all” processes.
- More convenient parking downtown. More art events.
- Eradicate gangs, drug dealers, and prostitution. Stop Rockford and Winnebago County from being another Chicago. Gangs, drugs, and politics.
- Tourism is important to the economy, but Rockford is NOT a tourist destination by any stretch of the imagination. We have Jane, and the Rockford Museum Center, and Burpee Museum, but after a day of them you’re done. We have quite a few small boutique museums, i.e., Tinker Cottage, Erlander House, and several others but nothing to really draw the masses.

The BMO Harris event Centre is only open with concerts sporadically. There should be 2-3 events there every week. Concerts draw people whether they are rock, country, classical doesn't matter. We have a beautiful facility and it stands empty.

The Stroll on State was great. It drew thousands of people, and the city complained there were too many people and it was too crowded.

On the Waterfront died a slow death because the quality of music went downhill. No big names and the people quit coming. It used to be a great event. It could be again.

The City Market is another great event, but it is only a one night event. When it closes at 8:00 pm there should be something else going on to keep the people downtown. Perhaps a street dance or concert.

Reroute the traffic to Jefferson and Walnut so shoppers have room to visit the shops in the area. Have the Forest City Queen running for a river cruise. Have some carriage rides.

East State has the small eateries and a few shops. That is a good start. Expand on it. Cities like Omaha, NE and Chattanooga, TN have well-developed downtown areas. There is a very small town in Indiana, Nashville, in Brown Co. about 50 miles SW of Indianapolis that is a great example. Check it out. Dozens of small shops and eateries. People flock there by the thousands.

When it comes to restaurants, we have a handful of local restaurants but mostly we have the same-o-same-o restaurants as every other town in the country. Some grants or low interest funding to get more new locally owned restaurants possibly on the river, or a downtown marina similar to the one on Riverside in Loves Park by the bridge with an outdoor deck would be another possibility.

The whitewater course would be great. We have a beautiful river, use it. Kayaks, canoe races, sculling, raft races, and speed boat races are all possibilities. Oregon has a river

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

boat restaurant that is really nice and a river boat casino is another possibility.

We had a chance for a race track. NASCAR people spend millions of dollars a year. We blew that and it went to Joliet. Ask them how it has improved their economy.

There is always going to be someone who doesn't like what is going on. Don't let them hold you back. As for feeling safe, I feel safe. There will always be someone who wants to cause trouble, but a small police presence at these events would stop most trouble before it starts.

- On the Waterfront.
- More funding for public safety.
- Bring in more entertainment. Quit spending money on roundabouts. Bring in more things to do.
- Newer, cleaner buildings/streets. Less rundown areas and vacant buildings.
- Less crime.
- Get Rockford/Winnebago County off all the lists of “worse place” and ask local media to stop reporting this information!
- Fix Alpine Road!
- True reduction in the crime rate. Not the smoke and mirrors, feel good programs of Mayor Morrissey and Chief Epperson! Transparency in local government, too!
- Improve safety and overall appearance. Transform Rockford downtown hotels.
- Fix the roads. There’s nothing to show off in Rockford. I plan on moving back to CA cause Rockford is screwed. I would never recommend someone visit.
- The appearance of the city overall - not just making attractive places more attractive. The perceived crime in many neighborhoods. Solve the poverty of the economy, not just making the rich opportunities richer.
- Less crime. An efficient and non-confusing way to get to downtown from the interstate.
- Clean it up and promote the outdoors.
- Putting attractions and complexes outside of Rockford city limits.
- Boo Rockford! I am a Chicago transplant. Rockford needs to embrace businesses from the Chicago area. For instance, the horrible way Beef-a-Roo owners have blocked Portillo’s for the past ten years.
- Clean up the West side of Rockford.
- A significant reduction in all crime; an increase in high-income, well-educated professions living in Winnebago County; and an overall positive emphasis on quality of life in Rockford and Winnebago County.

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Try to fill empty buildings. Repair streets.
- Fix roads and reduce crime to lower fear and perception of Rockford as unsafe and lacking entertainment.
- Less crime.
- Lower crime rate! Waterfront type festivals. Casinos. Improve mental health care in the county - too many mentally ill on the streets that shouldn't be. Improve the first impression of Rockford when arriving from the West (Business 20).
- Improve the areas near the airport and West State Street, 11th Street, and Main Street. Thank you!
- FIX THE STREETS, I visited a town in Wisconsin with only 19,000 residents and they pay ¼ in taxes that I do and their streets are wonderful. I have heard visitors in Rockford comment that we are a nice place, but our streets suck! A really great impression of our city. ☹
- More positive news.
- There are not any decent hotels except by the tollway.
- Cleaner streets and walkways, need curbs, sidewalks, better road conditions, more amusement attractions, concerts, bring back OTW!
- Less crime.
- I think there have been too many negative reports and lists that Rockford has been included in. Bringing down the crime rate and making the community safer for everyone should be the first priority.
- More jobs and employment of minorities, increasing minimum wage, crime control, etc. (oh, freedom and justice for all!)
- Less crime.
- Stop the crime.
- Less crime and urban blight. More beautification project - love the flower baskets and planters.
- Many streets need repainting of lanes - this would brighten our look, and make it easier for folks to safely find their way.
- High employment = happy population = money to spend = better for business. Roads kept up - some landscaping on main roads.
- Use some of the substantial tax dollars RACVB receives to improve facilities that will generate traffic to Rockford area.
- Most successful midsize and larger cities have vibrant downtown shopping, restaurants, and venues. Rockford has a ways to go, but seems to be turning a corner. Roads need work drastically.

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Media needs to be more positive. There is no “downtown” anymore. Stress activities that are available, more theater events.
- An improved downtown.
- Lack of sidewalks and crossing on State Street is a disgrace. Video slots are out of control. Also paycheck lenders. Streets need to be swept.
- Do the same things Machesney Park is doing. There must be attention and focus by Rockford to I-90 if there is to be any hope of attracting people to downtown Rockford.
- Removal of abandoned buildings at all gateways of city and main thoroughfares, better streets and roads, lower crime rate, and promotion of attractions and activities open to the public. I think a major hindrance for Rockford is the terrible rating of Rockford in nationwide lists (crime).
- Less crime and lower taxes.
- Improving the West side of town - less crime, more police presence, and more hotel establishments.
- Better transportation, cabs, buses, rail. Sidewalks or over highway crossings. Better parking downtown. Trader Joe’s.
- Lower crime, better education, lower taxes, revitalize downtown, safer parks and bike paths.
- Get rid of crime.
- Stop the crime, more police officers, different mayor.
- Physical appearance is #1, curb appeal, high end signage (gateway, entrance, etc.) - a beautiful looking city is a city people want to be in. Ugly strip malls need to be updated and beautified. The beautiful flowers and banners downtown should be all the way across East State Street as well.
- Lower crime rate.
- Casino downtown - more high grade entertainment to Coronado and Metro Place.
- Less crime, less gun shots, and violence. More involvement of community residents in solving the violence problem with neighborhood watches, partnering with police, etc.
- Sidewalks, Uber, benches at bus stops.
- More jobs, better transportation/roads/access, nightlife, LGBT-friendly businesses and organizations.
- Plenty of easy and free parking downtown. Safety downtown. Clean up dingy and foul smelling alleys downtown.
- Controlling sprawl, emphasizing local uniqueness, discouraging the homogenous American look.

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Better roads, too many potholes.
- Improving downtown Rockford with beautification projects.
- Clean up around roads. Less crime.
- Modernize downtown. Rail service to north and east. Airline service to more locations. Motel complex downtown.
- Keep it clean.
- Better traffic flow to events - gateway.
- Up keep of local attractions - Magic Waters, Coco Key (including Clock Tower Resort), and museums.
- Deal with the crime rate.
- Better free parking, better access to activities, especially on the West side downtown.
- Outside events, musicals, food, trains, buses, airlines, river, car shows, and information advertised.
- More information in an easy format, distributed widely. Continued promotion.
- Working hard to clean up crime. It is an everyday job.
- Try to improve quality of life in all areas of town. Make community college free at local level, don't wait for government backing (federal or state).
- In my opinion, Rockford has always proclaimed to have wonderful parks and bike paths and parks to explore. While this may appeal to a certain part of the demographic, it does not appeal to a majority of people who are looking for entertainment in the form of concerts, eateries, and establishments to drink and unwind in. There is really nothing of interest downtown since it seems that the only venue is Ice Hogs games. I don't care for sporting events, certainly not a small time affiliation like the Ice Hogs, and would like to see concerts and other entertainment back at the BMO Center for which it was originally designed. I would like the names to be headliners, well recognized and not just country musicians, which it seems, have been the majority of the artists. I think it was a mistake for "On the Waterfront" to stop, since it did bring in tourists from other cities. I don't know if it was mismanaged or what exactly was the issue for it to end, but I do know that a lot of the names that were brought in were either outdated or unknown to the general public. The prices for food and drink were too high, plus the cost or admission was too high, especially when you can drive to Milwaukee and go to a wonderful festival (every year) with non-stop music and food, and the cost to enter is below what Rockford charged. They were intelligent enough to have festival grounds planned and executed, with the same vendors year after year. You knew what you could get in the way of food, and consequently look forward to it. I think it would have been advantageous for Rockford to have done the same thing, actually have a festival grounds planned and have the area concreted so that if the weather were inclement guests did not have to be concerned with getting muddy from

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

walking on grass. It was too spread out; it should have been more localized to a specific area, so that you didn't have to walk so very far from parking to program. Rockford should look to Milwaukee as an example and to Wisconsin in general. The festival grounds are not just used for a one-time event, but are utilized for several festivals throughout the year, i.e., German Fest, Italian Fest, and Greek Fest, etc. The summer is definitely long enough to provide more than one event each year. Also, look to the Wisconsin Dells for inspiration. If there are more water parks, and entertainment and lodging centrally located to the events, with parking, I believe it would bring much needed tourist dollars to this area. This area (Rockford) has been the same ho-hum area for as long as I can remember, and has always made too much out of the parks and bike paths, etc. All of which are okay if you have small kids and want to enjoy nature for a while, but how much nature does one person need, and for how long? Once you've seen one tree and a lake your pretty much done with that. There is nothing to do at a lake (other than picnic, hike, and camp which the geese have made difficult because of the feces, not to mention the tics). If you can't launch a motorboat, that takes Pierce Lake off the table. There should be great entertainment for single adults, of all ages. There should be a variety of musical events, to interest groups of all ages. An area that is built up with several bars and restaurants should all be in walking distance to one another. There isn't an opportunity to go anywhere in this city without driving, the public transportation is just not efficient or readily available enough. It doesn't run all night, limited hours. Public buses should be running every 15 minutes, no longer, and waiting areas should be clean, safe, and well lit - with someplace to sit that is protected from the elements. There are no taxis readily available. You have to call ahead and they may or may not show up, or show up late and their prices are too high. It seems like the city planners have done a poor job for many, many years and it is time to get young fresh minds with vision planning this city. Once again, the planners really need to look to Milwaukee for ideas. I go every year to Milwaukee Fest, and would always bypass On the Waterfront. Better entertainment, better food, and less expensive. Cleaner, concreted, and I knew just what to expect, and I look forward to it again this summer. These are just my opinions, and I thank you for your time and attention.

Note: First thing I noticed in that survey was once again, trying to be nature oriented. Nothing referencing real entertainment. The whitewater rafting is pretty farfetched. That river looks dirty, doesn't have a safe current flow and is a lawsuit waiting to happen. There has to be some adjustment to the thinking if they're leaning to that!

- Terrible reputation - West side needs to be cleaned up and crime needs to come down. I wouldn't come to Rockford if not being born and raised here. ☹
- Rockford feels like the dumping ground for criminally inclined persons, much like ungoverned border control of people moving or trying to gain access to a community or country not their own. Unregulated character types allowed.
- Better roads, fewer "cash and go" stores, more businesses (food) downtown, sidewalks on State Street/main roads, clean roads, and tear down abandoned buildings/houses.
- Lower crime, better news highlighted about region.

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Many rundown houses and areas put off friends and family from Northwest Chicago Suburbs. I mostly feel safe in Rockford but not as safe as 20 years ago. Also, some areas I would not be alone in at times.
- Improving our schools. Having places for teens to go instead of hanging out on the streets. Lights should of never been taken down. Ridiculous. Also, do not change 9th Street and 6th Street. Too much waste of money. For visitors - better directional signs.
- Less crime and lower taxes.
- More attractions for the 30-45 year old demographic.
- Revitalization of rundown areas in Rockford, lower crime rate, need sidewalks, more bike paths, beautification efforts for main thorough fares. The Nicholas Conservatory is way too expensive! It's a shame that we cannot bring visitors there without considering the high cost!!
- Repair and replace the streets of Rockford and clean up and fix up the decaying and blighted neighborhoods.
- Lower real estate taxes to encourage people to move here.
- Much more attractive "Welcome" signs/displays (especially on State/I-90).
- More beauty, more progressive rehab. Better roads. Better educated work force. Better culture and arts.
- At East State Street and I-90 the area near the exit could use some ornamental trees and shrubs.
- Tear down slum houses, replace with gardens.
- Local art, downtown first - try to keep Ice Hogs!
- Less crime and homeless people.
- Physical appearance and personal safety combined.
- More parking downtown, especially for events at the Metro Centre. Demolish unused buildings and factories.
- Amtrak service - more than once a day - similar to Harvard for small towns and Chicago to travel to area and to go to outlet malls and other places of interest. Easier, better, and more access.
- Get rid of the blight and violent crime.
- Thriving economy (jobs) and better schools in Rockford. Happy residents.
- Perhaps something for senior citizens that's fun!
- Clean up the city. Tear down junk houses. Get rid of non-running cars. Make the streets safe. Get rid of the punks that run the city and the bad cops.

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- More outdoor recreation!
- More parking downtown, fewer vacant buildings, free/low-fee activities to enjoy year-round.
- More attractions at the BMO Centre. Weekend events in the summer ex - like Beattie Is - Festival.
- Improve street and road signs - making it easier to get around. So many streets are missing name signs, stop signs not marked "Cross traffic does not stop." And we must have 100 streets that changed their names multiple times.
- Place more emphasis on outlying villages. Rockford isn't the "be all to end all" of Winnebago County.
- Less crime.
- Drive Highway 20 East daily. Smells like poop two or three miles east or west of the river. I'm not in favor of giving one more red cent for an already way too expensive place to live!
- I am not one to ask this question, as I am 65 years old and my focus is more on survival than attractions or entertainment. I think it is best to ask age groups between 25 and 50 years old.
- Considerable reduction of drugs and its culture. Rockford has become known as a melting pot for drug dealers (heroin) and the main reason we will likely be moving away. We love our home but it is becoming intolerable.
- Upgrade the West side of town before it is too late.
- Downtown cannot be revitalized without good (within walking distance) hotels. Hotels will not be built without more draws downtown. Vicious circle.
- Pave roads, clean up the town, stop the crime rate, lower property tax rate, get rid of empty buildings.
- Good news - stop the negative and print more positive news.
- Lower crime rate, more officers, more good paying jobs.
- Safety, getting rid of the condemned buildings in town.
- First general aesthetics of the city - show pride, care about the city. Downtown and riverfront development is a must.
- Good restaurants and shops.
- Clean up downtown and demolish homes and old businesses that have been empty for years.
- Less crime, more parking.
- Appearance, safety, more festivals, outdoor attractions.

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- I am relating two personal experiences which I am labeling as two hidden taxes to live within Rockford's city limits population and surrounding area shoppers, etc.

The first hidden tax costs are for premature and costly vehicle suspension repairs and replacement costs due to the poor condition of most of the city streets and avenues.

Since 2006 I have spent nearly \$4,000 on such vehicle suspension repairs. I absolutely hate driving on Rockford streets and avenues, so can you imagine the shock and poor impression made upon tourists who have come here?

The second hidden tax costs are associated with Rockford's old city water infrastructure. That infrastructure is generally described as having approximately 155,000 citizens. I can understand why the city put the \$1.8M water filtration plant online to comply with EPA requirements to treat that putrid water, but in my opinion, it was an emergency stopgap to get into compliance, not the wiser course of action which should have been planned for and developed in the past several decades. The deteriorating quality of the Rock River watershed led me to experiment and take action.

A hidden tax cost of just under \$600, plus upkeep by installing a practical, self-cleaning Whirlpool Whole House Water Filtration System to remove salt particulate and chlorine.

I placed it after my water softener, and adding a valve from that output to a 5 stage reverse osmosis system to remove worse including fluoride and remaining chlorine to give me kitchen drinking/cooking water quality. My TDS readings before the R.O. are 248ppm, and after the R.O. are 4-6ppm (parts per million) soluble solids. Water at ppm is very drinkable water. Are tourists/shoppers served that quality of water?

The City of Rockford has an online Water Department video claiming a high quality test of local water? In my opinion, that water cited is from their best new well, probably at about 80% quality. Also in my opinion, the 5% get the 80% quality water and the 95% population gets the 20-30% quality watershed water. Additionally, in my opinion, the City of Rockford watersheds quality as related by the EPA is an average of several watershed sources of municipal water.

Search online best places.net, enter Rockford, IL, and navigate to health for the ratings on air and water. Do you know what that 53% watershed quality means? It is my learned opinion that the actual % quality is much lower for the Old City water infrastructure for the 155,000. It tells me that the 53% is an average of the impaired Rock River watershed and the more healthy well sources in other locations in the City of Rockford. How else would a potential resident, visitor, tourism/shopper, viewing the city water quality video claimed water purity? If I were a potential tourist visiting Rockford, I would look up the foregoing facts and conclude that something smells in the City of Rockford, IL.

The City of Rockford needs quality, improved streets/avenues, and new watershed sources to close down the impaired Rock River source. That is precisely what should be done to get positive tourism/shopper feedback. How is that for tourism appeal?

How do I know that the Rock River is my watershed source for my water? I searched online at EPA.gov and navigated to My Water, where I entered my street address, and up popped my residential source as the "impaired Rock River."

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

How convinced am I? Besides for myself, my home improvement of added water filtration system is an added selling point for a potential buyer. Imagine the City of Rockford making a tourism drawing card of advertising quality water during their visit, without any added jolts while driving on streets/avenues.

Conclusions - Rockford has been going in the wrong direction. I have been going in the correct direction. I was shocked to see where this survey is focused. The City of Rockford should be focused on keeping citizens here, a focus which would then naturally attract family visitors, tourism, and shoppers.

Whoever, in the governance of the City of Rockford, over the past 3 decades had decided to forgo sound and vital economic development and financial reserves to weather the reality of repetitive recessions, have miserably failed this community.

The only sound notion in this survey is to maintain and improve facilities for amateur sports tournaments because I know that naturally draws outside visitors.

A whitewater rapids course on the impaired and foul Rock River? Are you kidding? Every time I see anyone fishing it or sporting in it, I cringe. Can you imagine the impressions on new visitors or tourists experiencing the impaired Rock River by drinking it, showering in it, or sporting in it? In my opinion, it is a fishy and dead issue.

To summarize: Do you want to know what I tell any relative who plans to visit me in Rockford?

1. If you plan on parking your RV in my driveway, you can have access to my electrical power, but I do not recommend that you tap into my outside water faucet because the water is putrid, has more chlorine than a public swimming pool, and smells of rotten egg gas.
2. Don't plan on anything on or in the Rock River.
3. Don't plan on driving all over town because you will destroy your vehicle suspension, and if you are very unlucky, hit a fully open and exposed deep pothole. If not a pothole, an innocuous series of high ridge seam repairs that will rattle your vehicle or a series of open seams, and be careful to pay attention to another driver ahead of you suddenly slowing down when encountering the same.
4. If it is shopping you are looking for, save yourself the grief and shop online and let UPS destroy their vehicle suspensions.
5. If you happen to be driving on a street or avenue getting a cheap resurfacing, be alarmed about any high V.O.C. asphalt being used in the resurfacing, simply because cheap smells bad. Just do not breathe it and get off of that street or avenue ASAP.
6. If you go to a restaurant, first ask if the R.O. filter the water used in cooking or for drinking.
7. If you go to a motel or hotel, first ask the same, and in addition if the motel water has been filtered to remove any excessive city water chlorine. Ask what the ppm reading is on their water.
8. If anything I have warned you about is alarming, find another city rated better than Rockford, and I will visit with you there.

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Improve roads, clean up spaces, de-clutter signs - especially for closed businesses.
- Better zoning and higher-end shopping similar to St. Charles.
- Better jobs to support improvements.
- More activities within the community, fewer abandoned buildings.
- Stronger laws against punk gangs to make visitors feel welcome. More independent restaurants.
- Bring more stores to Rockford. We are headed in the right direction with new restaurants and stores. We would love a nice department store like Nordstrom.
- Increase support for the public schools would be a great place to start.
- Metro Policing, zoning setbacks, change perception of poverty, blight, crime.
- Eliminate many of the video gaming slot places - there are so many in everything but bars it is making Rockford look cheap and tacky, dingy and dangerous. Develop the Rock River Waterfront like San Antonio, Texas - big draw and attractive, fun and interesting. We could use the waterfront so much more. Be creative.
- Less crime and blighted areas, distinctive attractions, improve access from highways.
- More positive press about what Rockford offers visitors and residents.
- Start having more events that are diverse in ethnicity, for everyone. And make the appearance of our city and county more attractive and welcoming to visitors. We need to utilize social media to promote and advertise all the great attractions that we already have open to visitors in our city.
- The City of Rockford needs a stronger police presence. I don't feel safe in Rockford at night. If that were to change, I think more people would visit.
- Better street upkeep! (Remarks from out of town visitors!) Fix the streets! Better looking gateway/welcome.
- Better roads! All visitors comment on how bad they are!
- Less crime.
- Better roads, less crime, and keeping all highways and rural streets clean of debris.
- Control the crime rate! Everything else is right on track. Would like to see a river boat.
- Better upkeep of roads and properties.
- Clean and fix up the city to make it more presentable, which includes roads. Potholes, littering, abandoned homes, buildings and warehouses that take away a lot of property value from Rockford. All the abandoned homes, buildings, and warehouses should be reversed to better the value of Rockford's economy. More recreational things to do for children and young adults.

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Dramatically, lower crime rate downtown and West side of Rockford. Improve facades on State Street corridor. Improve attractions, attract large chain restaurants (i.e., White Castle, Dunkin Donuts, Home Run Inn Pizza, Jewel Food Stores). Renovate or tear down abandoned buildings to accommodate above (i.e., Sears, CVS, Menards, etc.).
- Positive media!
- Reduce crime and corruption.
- On the Waterfront, 4th of July fireworks, more big events/festivals.
- Safety in the community and things to see and do.
- Overall Rockford is not horrible. There are just so many areas that need fixing or help, that it seems overwhelming and impossible without funds. An easy access from I-90 to downtown, there are so many lights and it takes time, presently. Until the area west of downtown is cleaned up, and far more safe, people will not visit there. Even where the possible rail service is, that's a shady area. Get more events with free admission. Charging for every little venue is crazy. Repair the streets too. Main roads are in bad shape (areas of Alpine, Whiteman, Rockton Ave.).
- Safety and well-being to live, better education system.
- More home owners vs. less people dependent on the tax paying citizens.
- A better website showcasing features and local attractions. Basically, a things-to-do in the area.
- More confidence in personal safety, reduce crime. More sidewalks on East State Street, especially on hotel row. Better maintenance of streets, too many rough roads in and around the city.
- Reduction in crime and low-income housing.
- Clean up the West side and make it more presentable. Have the West siders include the East siders in their activities and projects as we do them.
- More events.
- Better/new roads. Have more through roads and streets.
- It's hard to get too enthused about Rockford when no one does anything to promote or improve much of anything for this small western Winnebago County communities!
- A new mayor, a different chief of police, and a real city council with a backbone.
- Overhaul downtown.
- Reduction in crime.
- Some areas look very rundown. Kind of "dirty." I really like the "Transform Rockford." I believe it helps.

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Bike paths, green space, and remodel or removal of abandoned buildings and houses.
- Better crime control, more businesses, clean up - Rockford looks rundown and dirty in many areas.
- Know they are safe at malls, and downtown; media focus on good things as much as bad, promoting the areas that many youth are involved with.
- Things to do for young adults besides bars, food, and movies.
- Lower crime rate!
- Please keep updating Rockford like you have been. Please continue to have developmental and educational programs for young teenagers so they avoid gangs. Encourage churches, schools, and families to watch out for each other. By all working together, the area will continue to be safe for all and bring more people into the area.
- Improve roads. More attractions, i.e., whitewater rafting.
- Decrease crime rates, improve the schools.
- Bring in attractive businesses; clean up Rockford (roads and buildings), casino, airport expansion (more flights).
- More promotion of all we have to offer. The videos were fabulous!
- Promotion of festivals. Festivals every week/spring/summer/fall.
- Reduction of crime, more aggressive prosecutions.
- More events to attract tourism. Advertise what we have (parks, river, attractions). Advertise packages (hotel, car, tickets to things).
- Make it a more diverse area.
- Lower crime rate, revitalizing downtown events such as Screw City Festival and Stroll on State, promoting State Park.
- More parking downtown. Utilize the river - draw people downtown, i.e., river walks in Oklahoma, Texas, Cleveland, OH.
- Straighten out North Main Street through Harlem Blvd./John St. - make it a two-way street into downtown. Support the hotel downtown. Straighten out, simplify the streets. Make Chestnut/First a two-way to connect Sports Center to hotel.
- Less gambling promotion, promote faith board, multicultural. Prosecution of police misconduct in Winnebago County. Promotion of gender equality and safety. Promotion of faith-based sites of interest to visit. Create super hospital, like John Hopkins.
- Safe, contiguous, walkable downtown restaurant - nightlife - entertainment district.
- Amtrak train!!
- A vital, developed waterfront.

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- The many people I know from outlying communities hate our confusing one-way street system. They refuse to come visit for that very reason. Ben Franklin on advice: A wise man won't need it, a fool won't heed it.
- Appearance/condition of properties is important because first impression coming into city. Abandoned properties need to be dealt with.
- More parking - I haven't been to Rockford in three years. I got a parking ticket at the unemployment office in a one-hour parking space after 13 minutes. I won't be back.
- Would be nice if you saw Rockford police once in a while. We go into Rockford at least once a week and never see a patrol car - we visit all sides of Rockford.
- Change of perception for safety in the city.
- Better communication.
- Less crime, bring back Fazoli's restaurant.
- Revitalize the Rock River front. Make the river front more family-friendly and attractive by building more paths, jogging trails, and entertainment along the river. Improve safety along riverside and West side.
- Have more things to draw them here.
- Start with positive attitudes!
- Water taxis on the Rock River (parking up/in Machesney Park/Loves Park), bicycle tours, horse drawn carriages, street food vendors along river path. We have a natural attraction that is not being utilized to its maximum potential. Street repairs that hold up more than a year - no more band aids!
- Law enforcement - discourage gang activity.
- More events.
- Reduce crime and violence.
- Lower crime.
- Need to get the crime under control, then improve our roads.
- Same as Beloit, continue to publicize the positives that are happening!
- A better overall appearance; fewer vacant commercial buildings and fewer abandoned houses.
- Having a safer city and county. Fixing our roads (North Alpine Road). Tearing down old buildings. Filling empty buildings, especially on Riverside Road when you get off toll on Riverside. There are so many empty buildings.
- Better signage and road directions to Discovery, museums, Metro Centre - where is our Visitor's Center or Centers located?

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- The park district is wonderful in this area. More media promotion of events, RCCA, Rockford College, Metro Centre, etc. Connect bike paths - Perryville with Caledonia for one. Develop hotels at Riverside exchange and more large chain restaurants on 173. Rockford has great music venues in the summer - really a lot of free or very reasonable cost entertainment.
- Hearing about excellent: schools, visitor experiences (hotels, restaurants, entertainment), Rock River and Rock Cut activities, and safety.
- A welcoming downtown would be nice. I'd love to walk and shop and eat downtown on a regular basis.
- There's a lot that this city needs as far as top notch entertainment and various other things. Lots of people go to Chicago or further away for that and shopping.
- More jobs/more entertainment.
- Less box stores, more town planning which probably is too late. It appears there was no thought given to any town planning.
- Smooth streets and roads!! Neat, clean streets, sidewalks, and parking lots. Less crime.
- Possibly better hotels. A hotel downtown. For concert goers and restaurants would be helpful. We need an overpass at State Street and Bell School Road for safety for travelers getting off at bus station. Mandatory! Keep up the good work!
- Get professional jobs, not service jobs. Property taxes higher than Chicago. Young professional people not staying in Rockford, no international entertainment, no train station, higher drop out college rates.
- Keep doing what you are doing - headed in the right direction. Need more police patrols, less crime. Get rid of that darn roundabout.
- More major concerts (like Carrie Underwood, Celine Dion, Rascal Flats) and rodeos. A major baseball team playing here, hiking, horseback riding, and other excursions that are led by a park person. Special events at campgrounds. Even a county fair right out by the airport.
- Get rid of all that free Section 8 housing and the community may become safe again.
- Continue parkway developments along river. Improve reputation regarding crime, government corruption. Continue urban cleanup - West State Street home demolitions was a good move toward eliminating blight image. Conversion to green space was good. Lower taxes to encourage new business and residential property. Improve the activity and options at the airport.
- I have noticed in different travel magazines that Rockford doesn't seem to advertise as much as some smaller cities.
- Safety while visiting. Many people in surrounding towns are afraid to visit Rockford because of the level of crime. Taxes are high all the way around. Sales tax and property are higher

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

than surrounding communities.

- A developed river downtown; centered not just around sports, but cultural activities also.
- Get the crime down.
- More activities, less crime!!
- More family things to do that don't cost a fortune.
- Safety - no shootings, less gang members, more police patrols.
- A variety of things to do. Equestrian trails.
- A vibrant downtown of interesting shops (fashion, gifts, pottery, art) mixed with restaurants in one walkable area. Rockford is too spread out.
- Clean up the bad neighborhoods and crack down on the drug problem.
- As you enter, we could make it prettier. Especially, coming in from the South End of Rockford. More flowers, more trees. I would say a beautiful sculpture or art but I'm afraid it would be vandalized.
- A more vibrant economy - consisting of higher pay jobs that require a higher education level. More restaurants, cultural destinations, and more special events (concerts, theatre, etc.).
- Lower crime.
- Return the death penalty.
- More advertisement of what Winnebago County has to offer for kids as well as adults. I have been living here for two years now and I'm finding out about Rockford's hidden gems from other people - not from advertising. Downtown needs to be kept up. Let people know what is going on downtown so the people can come and support our community.
- Decrease poverty and crime rate. Improve race relations and have less of an East side vs. West side mentality.
- Passenger railroad. Hope the governor keeps the plan in place with no delays.
- I think having a strong visitor's bureau presence just off of I-90 might help. It would be staffed by your most enthusiastic engaging young person.
- Sidewalks, sidewalks, sidewalks - especially from Clock Tower to Alpine. Better more attractive signage. Improve 11th Street from bypass to Charles. Promote, enhance, and highlight bike paths, especially along the river and into rural areas.
- Clean up South Rockford entrances to city. Clean up West Rockford entrances to city. Clean up Southeast Rockford to city. Continue working on revitalization of downtown. Fix our streets. Improve justice system.
- Attractions that are easy to get to and have adequate parking.

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Get rid of Morrissey and Epperson!!!
- Real long-term jobs not just the temporary construction jobs, etc.
- More emphasis on programs to help reduce poverty and increase employment. Too many people seem to only have the direction of illicit activity rather than gainful employment.
- Activities that didn't cost too much for families on limited budget.
- Having family entertainment that isn't expensive or cheaply done. (Not putting enough effort into the planning.)
- Fix potholes, help clean up areas where visitors access the city - 11th Street, Main Street.
- Dealing with certain segments of society who commit crimes, which gives the area a bad reputation.
- Safety
- Hotels giving special offers for families. Reasonable prices in the winter.
- Get rid of crime, drugs, and losers coming from Chicago. Lazy Public Aid girls, get a damn job!!!
- More unique places to eat.
- We need more activities, especially for the youngsters. We need a "White Castle restaurant," more clothing stores, carnivals on holidays, the bus service to run longer on weekends, more jobs.
- Eliminate slots, bars, tattoo parlors, rock concerts, casino rumors, gun shops, e-cig and vapor shops, liquor sales, night clubs, remove alcohol sales from country fairs, etc. Bring back craft vendors at BMO Center, make downtown event parking more affordable.
- Less crime, better streets and roads.
- Keep building on what we have and successful things. Improve transportation (access more than one Amtrak train a day - get Metra out here), clean up blighted areas.
- Make it safer. Making it a beautiful place to look at. More attraction.
- Less crime, quality motels, more family activities.
- Can't be one thing. Has to be many different things.
- Get rid of the crime - why did we have to house the low life from the Chicago housing projects? Why does this city continue to accept the crime level that is here and why doesn't this city try to improve itself? If I could get my money back that I invested in this property, I will sell and move out of this area.
- Rockford has a disappointing reputation in regards to random violence - mostly gang related. Get the Chicago gang/drug influence out of Rockford. Stop being a drop-off location for the homeless. Build on a reputation as a sports center, especially for pre-adults.

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Safer downtown and more attractions downtown.
- Visible commitment to fighting poverty, support for creation of a visible, vibrant LGBT community, visible continuing commitment to a promoting diversity of all types.
- More family-oriented cultural events.
- Destination restaurants, nice shops, beautification, flower baskets everywhere.
- Upkeep of West side. Demolish all property ASAP; faster that's not feasible to repair, remodel.
- Get rid of crime.
- Continue working on present goals to improve area.
- Remove the drugs and thugs! It is sad what has become of Rockford. This city is a dump. If the working middle class could afford to move they would.
- Eliminate unemployment and crime labeling.
- You're well on your way. My family enjoyed the four-day stay! 😊
- Downtown Rockford as it was in the 1960s - 1970s before "symbol" killed downtown.
- Elimination of crime and safety in downtown areas. Promote entertainment and the arts, especially local, more use of BMO Center for contemporary entertainment.
- More attractions, need people to work instead of sucking the government's funding, less violence.
- Cleaning up the city and making it more enjoyable to see.
- More sports venues, entertainment - easy access.
- Improve the appearance of Rockford. We build and add landscaping then don't take care of it. Harrison Avenue for example.
- Clean up the neighborhoods (garbage and empty buildings), fix streets. Homeless are a big problem.
- A casino downtown on the Rock River.
- More restaurants - better schools.
- Less crime!
- Fix streets and roads.
- Revitalizing downtown must include 7th Street. Buildings need to be occupied with a variety of businesses to entice shoppers and diners of all ages. People need to feel safe, we should handle the issues of homelessness and panhandling - not by sweeping it under the rug. Also, we need a better way to publicize events that happen, i.e., I spoke with many people who did not know about the ethnic fair last year.

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Less crime! Love the changes being done on West State Street into the downtown area.
- Jobs!
- Better signage.
- Safety, cleanliness. Not entering city seeing projects, dirty streets, boarded up buildings, lots of potholes. To me, all mean lack of pride, hardships. Live here and be poor.
- Improve safety. Something to do.
- More tropical climate!
- Rockford needs to do something to get good paying jobs here and get people back to work. Focus on Southeast side, around 11th Street area, used to be nice but now too much blight, and dirty looking. Too many vacant houses/buildings, too much crime. I believe due to the RHA destroying building. Now they move into nice areas and bring drug dealing, gangs, shady people in our once nice areas.
- Rockford needs a book fair!
- We cannot compete with Chicago and Milwaukee for music venues and major league sports, so stop trying. Concentrate on quality of life for young families, schools, youth sports, etc.
- Safety. Commute to downtown, downtown development, 24-hour public transportation, balance East side to West side. Not much open downtown after 5 pm.
- Better cultural, diversity and better education.
- I would not support any of the unmarked questions if property taxes would be used.
- Less crime. Don't let repeat offenders out of jail without monitoring them. It's sad that people are afraid to go out anywhere in Rockford not knowing what might happen.
- Exciting shows and expos.
- Get to the root of the crime epidemic in Rockford. More mentoring, training, education for families in poverty instead of handouts.
- Pretty good job being done now. Always emphasize the positives and what is being considered.
- A population that has an income sufficient to maintain their properties. Crime can be reduced by creating jobs for descendants of the factory workers lured here by "The Captains Industry" and forgotten when they sold and closed their factories.
- Costco/Trader Joe's/more West side development.
- Clean up and attractions.
- A better economy.
- Reduce crime, rail connection service.

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- We do feel safe going to RSO at Coronado. The area is very well lit and there is a large police presence. A lower crime rate! There are many wonderful tourist attractions in Winnebago County but some of them are in unsafe areas (Metro Centre). I was in an Aldi's (North Second and Riverside) when three young people (late teens) punks came in and were obnoxious - throwing food, yelling, pushing carts around - scary! Cashier told us they come in a lot. They were two Caucasians and an African American.
- The murder statistics are ridiculous. We need to improve our safety. Make Rockford more welcoming and not so racial.
- More tourist attractions.
- A city museum like one in St. Louis, MO. One of the vacant buildings downtown would be a good location.
- I feel safe on East "suburbs" - would not want to be downtown or West after dark. How can that be improved?
- More jobs, a downtown with more shopping stores. More development on West side.
- Control crime rate so we are not listed as one of the worse places to live.
- More police.
- An all-inclusive community. More job opportunities for residents and open dialogues from the city and residents.
- Decrease crime.
- Fix parks so they don't flood at the tournaments at the parks. Flooding has happened 2-3 times.
- Focus on reducing crime. Synchronize traffic lights on major roads.
- Clean streets, garbage out on day before pickup. Number to call for information.
- Crack down on drugs and violence. Make Rockford classier and cleaner, good values.
- Constant improvement. Getting media to report more good and less bad news.
- Positive development in downtown and surrounding areas of downtown. Improvement in higher educational facilities, i.e., state university.
- More cops, less crime.
- Stop all crimes.
- Vibrant downtown area that has convenient parking, collection of good, local restaurants, and nearby entertainment.
- A train to Chicago. Revitalization of downtown. Continue support of what is already happening.
- Not having so many empty buildings.

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- More private enterprise attractions (waterparks, "Ducks," Dells competition) and attractive hours until 9 or 10 pm, from Memorial Day to Labor Day.
- Lower taxes, lower crime. Clean up the city, downtown, West side, Auburn, stop the violence, more nutritional restaurants serving farmer fresh food that is locally grown, better choice if non-chain restaurants, sidewalks and bike paths for safety. Just to name a few.
- Our reflection of Rockford and Winnebago County: My memories of Rockford as a child, the trees and flora, Rock River before pollution was allowed in, old downtown, beautiful. If Rockford was YOUR front lawn, how would it appear and what spirit would you allow to live. This is my home.
- Less clutter and better cleanup along our streets and roadways. Too many areas of town have been allowed to deteriorate.
- Clean up and improve safety, i.e., sidewalks in the Clock Tower area so more Chinese visitors don't get run over! Also any improvements to bring in visitors should result in a reduction in our taxes, especially real estate taxes. Tax payers are paying for these improvements and we should get a return on our investment.
- To get rid of crime and gangs.
- Good jobs and family values, less taxes. I will be gone after retirement. Good luck!
- Less taxes.
- Downtown/I-90 exit casinos and resorts, trains to and from Chicago/Rockford.
- Lower taxes, economic prosperity.
- Develop ISC/YMCA/Aviator's Region for Sports and Wellness. Forget downtown. This area has I-90/Riverside easy on/off access; some hotels and food adjacent. Somehow link pathways from YMCA (Orth Road) to Rock Cut State Park. This is a nice area which started and should be enhanced. Downtown lacks parking and interstate access.
- Have an overall plan for the city. My nephew is a city planner elsewhere and I asked him if Rockford had a planner. He said we should have several. Well we seem disconnected and at a standstill in the past. Don't be afraid to bring things in that would help us. We missed the boat when we passed up NIU and the dragstrip race track. We need more than Dollar Stores and Slot Machines.
- A casino.
- Unity. If we could get all the separate groups working on the same goal (revitalization of downtown Rockford) to actually work together. Each individual group has its own power structure so the groups have a hard time working together - everyone wants a piece of the pie. If we compete, there is not enough pie; if we share, there's plenty of pie for everyone.
- Improving State Street on the East side. Improving curb appeal. More trees and greenery. Lowering and moving back ugly signs. Get rid of tattoo stores and men's clubs (relocate).

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

Be more discerning with what goes into empty buildings.

- Clean up several areas. Because if they see garbage, etc., all over, they aren't going to want to visit. You passed up the casino and I actually think that would have brought people in and they would have spent money that would have helped on taxes, etc., in other areas. I realize that some people do not like them but they don't have to go. To rely on sports only, will not always win out. You need other ideas.
- More train service and lower crime.
- The things that you are trying to do is a good start, but this has to come together to attract visitors and make the train worthwhile.
- Safety
- Clean up downtown and promote parks and green space, attractions, arboretum, Sinnissippi, Anderson Gardens, and Nicholas Conservatory.
- The East side is where all the shopping and restaurants are. The West side is more crime, poverty, etc. The West side needs better roads, slum houses torn down, lower the crime rate there - enforce all the laws.
- Advertising in Northwest suburbs of Chicago and as to events/attractions in Rockford.
- Forget about downtown Rockford! For the last 40 years (at least) you have thrown away money trying to revitalize it and nothing has worked so far. Let it go!
- More family events such as carnival rides and games.
- Focus on parks, recreation, youth sports, and affordable golf courses.
- Casino
- A thriving, unique downtown experience.
- If they spent less and got more.
- Cleanliness and less crime. People loitering around does not look good for the area. People panhandling all over town - not good.
- Lower property tax. Lower utilities - cost of living.
- Would be nice if we had Machesney Park Mall going with Penney's, Sears, and other stores like at Cherry Vale.
- Re question 14 - plus air/airplane info for kids.
- Better roads. More free venues or lower-priced professionals. A good police department with no disputes between Chief and union.
- Decrease crime. Improve Rockford schools. Promote downtown.
- Improve school system. Lower crime rate.

PAPER SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Less crime.
- Busy downtown for whole family. More sidewalks on East side. Change traffic lights to give more time to walk across streets. People do not walk in Rockford. Visitors wonder where are the people?
- Arts - culture, family events. I attend a lot of Rockford area events because they are usually very good.
- RACVB should be more active in the hotel/motel/restaurant promoting; things to do like a job fair!
- Safety!!! Rockford is not safe anymore!
- Work on the West side of Rockford. Make these people proud of their area. If you help them, they will help you in return. Boost them up instead of always tearing them down.
- Brochures featuring Facebook, Twitter, activities, and opportunities.
- If the focus was making current residents feel safe and not making them want to relocate.
- More cleanup of the city and regrowth of buildings. Feeling safe to take a walk, less abandoned homes, more attractions. Seeing more police force around.
- Making downtown more safe and welcoming.
- Reduce crime!!
- To remove Rockford as one of the most dangerous cities!!

Appendix E

ONLINE SURVEY VERBATIM COMMENTS

These are respondents' views expressed in their own words. Some clean-up for spelling, capitalization, and punctuation has been made but otherwise, comments are presented as written.

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Updating Rockford University Performing Arts and Gallery information
- Through tourism entities
- During Leadership Rockford program
- Have a friend involved. Hear updates at our office meetings, etc.
- None
- High school reunion planning
- City Market
- Misc. other ways not listed here
- I signed up for the email blasts - not sure how I signed up
- Work with Pec Playhouse Theatre
- Emails
- Bridget French
- Through my charity
- Anderson Japanese Gardens
- Thru the river district association
- Pamphlet
- I walk by the building on a regular business
- Been involved in regional efforts
- I was staff for 18 years as tour guide
- Radio
- Email
- Delivered RSO info to your office
- E-mail, organizations in which I belong
- Met them a couple of years ago asking for help to advise folks about 2 Rivers Bluegrass Jam
- Personally know someone on staff
- Saw a contest and they have drove us nuts with advertisements and mail
- Internet search
- Former employer

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Email blasts
- AAA books
- Nothing directly as a group in years - but we are VERY interested in working with RACVB in the future
- Sign at Business Route 20 pointing me to the now closed site in the Clock Tower Inn
- News references
- Eblast
- Working with people that talked about RACVB
- In helping bring an Aquarium to Rockford
- Business relationship
- Leadership
- Employment
- Staff members who serve or have served as a director on a board
- Community involvement
- Through the Rockford Chamber and the Chamber Ambassadors
- I am a Rockford Park District Board Commissioner
- Face to Face numerous times
- Email
- Customer Service training
- Constant Contact Newsletters
- Vendor
- I work downtown and have passed by numerous times
- Through my employment at the Rockford Register Star some years ago
- With Swedish Historical Society
- I am a board member
- Promoting Rockford! We love Rockford and end up in situations together - saying yay Rockford!
- Public presentations
- Family reunion
- I know a Board Member

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Business Manager is on the committee
- As organizational peer
- Involved with projects together
- They are a peer organization of mine
- Police officer
- Many collaborative efforts
- Monthly emails with local events
- RACVB employees have spoken at employment events
- Emails
- Travel Writers Tour Stop
- Midtown Business District, Ethnic Heritage Museum, Irish Marching Society, various board meetings
- Walking downtown
- I used to work there
- Someone I know works there
- I work downtown. There are other active people that I hear about it from
- Interviewed there
- In a welcome to Rockford package, given at a convention
- Familiar with visitor convention centers in large and smaller cities
- Through living downtown
- Rockford Chamber event
- Art events, statistics about Burpee Museum Center, etc.
- Just heard about them thru family
- Special contest our company had, was aided by organization
- Worked near their office
- A co-worker is on the board
- As a partner
- Long-standing working relationship
- Rockford Sharefest

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- I get emails - the Chamber, etc.
- Marketing Partners Meetings
- Professional relationship
- Worked in a hotel sales dept.
- Worked there 109 tears ago
- Community meetings
- When needing information for new residents of the Rockford area via my current employment
- Committee group
- Stopped in for brochures and information
- Space downtown where pick up brochures, etc. and compiled them to give to someone considering a job
- I know people who have worked there

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

- Someone needs to take a look around
- We are not interested with all the junk

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Make it safer.
- Take care of the people that live in Rockford and Winnebago County. The people of Rockford are unhappy because of unemployment, crime, and tanked real estate values; therefore, if the inhabitants are unhappy, the perception follows the same path. Not sure what the RACVB can do about these things our government needs to be held accountable.
- Better upkeep of the city and less murders/shootings.
- Progressive ideas, embracing diversity, cultural experiences, fostering youth outreach programs that greatly impact our community, stop giving/take incentives to businesses that are only underpaying our workers. The list could go on. The question that asks whether social media or other should have more choices.
- A better economy. Cleaner, fresher, newer buildings and storefronts. First class sports facilities. Not half-assed attempts. Better access to downtown via highway. Additions by subtraction - demolish old, empty buildings and give developers a clean slate.
- Fix the roads - not hot or cold patching (NOT using Rockford Blacktop as the contractor); Crime - stop letting slum Chicago based landlords from purchasing property and renting to the people on wait lists to come here to Rockford; a NEW mayor and chief of police; good paying jobs, NOT more retail and restaurants; NO MORE mini casinos/slot machine places that degrade our city; street sweepers that actually suck up the crap on the street; making landlords accountable for their properties and better screening of their tenants; stop wasting tax payer funded projects that are not only in the budget but not necessary. Most of my neighbors have walked away from their homes or moved away/out of Illinois because of what has become of Rockford under the Morrissey administration. It is a shame. More want to leave but cannot sell their homes. One can go on vacation out East or West and be asked by other tourists/hotel clerks "where are you from?" Rockford's Illinois reputation is known around the entire USA.
- Activities to do as a family are always a good thing, especially those with small children. Things similar to the water parks and Monkey Joes.
- Improvements to each of the entry points. More cohesive approach when it comes to welcoming area tournament participants. Increased marketing and advertising for hotels & conference centers.
- My concern is that Rockford, in particular, is trying too hard to attract visitors to problematic parts of town rather than bring tourists to safer and more aesthetic parts of town. Downtown development is fine for business and government, but tourism? There's a reason people in LA are asked to visit Hollywood or Disneyland but not South Central. The Sportscore facilities and other Rockford Park District facilities are high grade as well as some tourist venues, and we have adequate hotel and restaurant facilities to accommodate them. Those are the places for tourists, not downtown where it is far more likely for them to have a negative experience.
- More festivals.

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Better roads!
- Taking pride in our appearance and making a safe environment for people to visit.
- Street signs and light posts.
- A better and safer downtown district!
- More hotels.
- An attractive downtown with emphasis on hotels, restaurants, activities. The river should be utilized much more, a strong riverfront to stroll and eat and an attractive marina. Water taxis!! Strong revitalization of the West Side. Attractive gateways into the city with beautiful roads and countryside. Extra outdoor activities, our parks are a strong resource. More community participation events. Much better entertainment offerings with better parking. Our main arena for events should not be downtown; it should be outside in Winnebago County with its own substantial parking for concerts, visiting top artists, etc. We need to be on the map for something, not fragmented things but some overall theme that brings visitors in. For example, Galena is known for its charm and beauty.
- Additional attractions and better shopping. Annual festivals that appeal to everyone.
- A true youth sports complex. Look at the complexes in Peoria, IL; Elizabethtown, KY; Kansas City; Mauston, WI. Youth sports are a multi-billion dollar business and I think Rockford is just scratching the surface of what it could be.
- More local festivals that are focused on different thing, i.e., food, culture, beer, coffee. Might be something small, but it could be very effective in creating buzz about the town and, therefore, more visitors to the region. Also, a HUGE improvement would be areas where patrons could shop, eat, and WALK around. A plaza sort of feel, where you can park your car for the night and stroll from place to place and there would be a general gathering space. Downtown is doing a great job of that, but it would be nice to have walkable areas on the East side of Rockford which could generate some foot traffic. Having walkable areas throughout the city would make this a much more inviting place to live and visit!
- Easier/safer ways to cross State Street on foot. More bike paths. More coupons for local restaurants and attractions for visitors at sports tournaments, etc. A winery. A better calendar of events, listing all live music, etc. More free live music events in the winter.
- Capitalize on recreation assets to promote visitation. Continue with streetscape improvements. Make the city bike-friendly, Rockford is the least bike-friendly city I have lived.
- More unique attractions.
- We need to ramp up the downtown and make better use of the river front - it is beautiful! There should be a "river walk" with shops and restaurants - not whitewater rafting. I hope the whole Amerock thing works as planned!
- Less crime. More family-friendly activities. Less negative press.

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Cultural events, movie festival.
- A thriving night life downtown, where you can walk from business to business and enjoy music, food, and drinks. While we can never compete with Nashville, it is the same idea. We have tons of musical talent; we could be "Music City, Illinois." There have been several unique shops open along State Street as well as Sienna's Kitchen which will be opening soon. This is a great trend that needs to be encouraged and promoted. An afternoon of shopping followed by dinner and night life will draw people who will want to stay in one of the new downtown hotels. Which would also bring the necessity for adequate parking for possible tour buses.
- Improved accessibility for travelers - increased "walkability" from hotels to dining and entertainment establishments, including paved walkways and lighting. More welcoming and appealing gateways into Rockford and Winnebago County, including Rt. 20 into West Rockford and I-90 from Wisconsin. Our region has PLENTY of phenomenal amenities; we just need to continue to improve our "packaging."
- Take care of crime! Hire more officers. The teenage kids have nothing to do in Rockford in the evenings; entertainment other than movies, eating out, and bowling which are all very expensive.
- Unearth, dust off, and polish the hidden gems of our community. We are so much more than Sock Monkeys and Cheap Trick.
- More one-on-one tourism networking with Boone County. Cross promoting entertainment, park districts, restaurants, and local sports communities.
- Safety in the community, programs for youths, sporting events and concerts, safe parks and recreational areas. I feel the Rock River should be showcased in some way also. It is difficult when we can't really use it 12 months like the river walk in San Antonio, TX but we love being at events that are along the river!
- I think a regular schedule of events would entice more people to come. I think the Amtrak station will be key in attracting visitors, but also building infrastructure around that to keep people interested. Rockford needs more to offer. Whether it's with concerts, festivals, or unique shops and buildings. Our mall does nothing to entice people to visit - our downtown has little to offer besides food and many places are closed entirely on Sunday which isn't inviting for visitors who come up for the weekend. Magic Waters is something that is enticing because it's unique. We need more unique things like that.
- Fix the street, especially Morgan Street. Nice Bridge, beautiful St. Anthony Church, but crappy street to it. Please don't mess with the river. Please don't get a gambling boat. Encourage more stores to move downtown, develop the arts there. Make it a happy place instead of creating more abandoned industrial buildings and parking lots. Develop more free-open parking downtown. I hate the downtown parking.
- Streets, landscaping, overall cleanliness.

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Clean up crime!
- Decent streets.
- 1) Better care and investment in existing assets (sports, culture, & entertainment facilities; physical infrastructure like roads, bridges, parks, schools, neighborhood medians, street lights). 2) Strategically selected assets that build and existing resources that residents and guest all use like new sports, garden, and museum facilities.
- More events and continue to upgrade the downtown area, image is very important; cleaner streets, better sidewalks, less crime.
- Rockford Metro Center is place for a concert.
- Getting the hood rat African Americans out of Rockford.
- More hotels on the Far West End and more attractions. Strong police enforcement. Larger meeting facilities.
- More activities, restaurants, concerts. Please find an event to replace the "On the Waterfront." Summers have not been the same without it. We need to make our area look beautiful. I love the hanging baskets with flowers that I see around the area and I love the black poles that the stoplights are on (this may only be in the Machesney Park area) but they make the area look like it is prosperous.
- I like small, independent shopping. I like attractions that are not run of the mill - Anderson's Japanese Gardens is great. I like non-chain restaurants. I like festivals and fairs.
- Attractions, we already have some great facilities. We need more entertainment options to draw people here. The proposed downtown hotel will be an attraction. The improvements on South Main are long overdue. All entries to city should be welcoming and free of blight.
- More things to do at all hours of the day; more "vice" activities (e.g. casino, liquor consumption at all hours of the day/night); more teen activities which do not include churches or schools or volunteering; a better educated populace (i.e., schooling); less push on a "downtown" of East/West State and North/South Main and more push for the real downtown of East State and Perryville; more shopping options all over town for all residents, interests and income levels; more activities aimed towards young adults (college age); much less Cheap Trick and their offspring performing at every public event unless they play for free; more 500-1,000 capacity musical venues; independent theater and movies like what was once found here via Storefront Cinema, New American Theater, Charlotte's Web, and West Side Showroom; coordinated farmers markets in EVERY neighborhood; fewer craft shows; more places for non-country and non-classic rock to be heard; better radio station formatting (i.e., target younger instead of towards the 35+ demographics).
- Promote the natural assets that we already have as well as the improvements that are proposed for downtown and the entrances to the city from the highway. We have much to offer visitors as well as those who would move here and the action by the people and their positive attitudes can help. Look to the forest preserves and their offerings as well as the

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

park district and then to the many beautiful gardens throughout the city. There is much to see and do and don't down play local talent that is already here for not only their expertise and knowledge, but look also to the seniors who can help in getting out the positives! Accentuate the Positive, eliminate the negatives! YOU know the rest of it, don't mess with mister in-between!!!!

- Stop importing people from the housing projects in Chicago! It has contributed drastically to the crime in this area. Clean up the litter. Repair the roads, especially Alpine Road! The bridge north of Riverside on Alpine and that whole road is something that our out of town visitors have complained about. Tear down the 3,000 abandoned homes and put a park there. Tear down the downtown blight. Keep adding flower baskets to the downtown and along the river. Add a restaurant or ice cream parlor near the bike path/Sinnissippi Park. Advertise local businesses with flyers everywhere, particularly hotels on State Street. Drop our property taxes. No one wants to move here due to that. Improve the local neighborhood parks. Don't just repair potholes - completely resurface the roads.
- Revitalize downtown Rockford - there is a beautiful river that is perfect for a shopping district with building overlooking the river and bars/restaurants with windows/patios along the river. Also, the road infrastructure is terrible. There is no easy way to get downtown. Hwy 251 is a nightmare and so is Bus 20/State St. Downtown should be an epicenter of business and easy to access. Example: Des Moines has easy highway access all the way around the city - downtown also has a fantastic bar/food district which is busy almost every weekend. And promoting local businesses so that when people visit they have places to eat and shop that are nowhere else in the world.
- Improved entrances to the city, continued improvements to the downtown, advertise in magazines such as Midwest Living and AAA all of the great activities and events that Rockford has to offer.
- Better roads, rehabilitating neighborhoods with foreclosed properties, plant gardens, trees, etc. Churchill Park area.
- More planned/free public access to the river/waterfront for eco-friendly recreation, i.e., biking, walking/running, rollerblading, cross-country skiing, canoeing, skulling, fishing, etc., throughout the central/downtown/near to downtown areas, including public-private commercial development for food, fuel, outfitters, retail, and the like.
- More music events such those included in Hometown Christmas.
- Pedestrian overpasses in hotel/restaurant area on East State Street.
- Lower crime rate. More to do things: plays, concerts, historical events, sporting events.
- More things for 25-35 year olds to do.
- More places to shop and eat downtown outside of the evening hours. My grandson plays hockey for the RHC and I hear visiting teams struggling to find places to eat or relax between games, which might only be an hour or two. These people need some direction and assistance. Maybe that is up to the Hockey Club.

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Raise the quality and quantity of education of its residents.
- More shopping and dining opportunities on the West side of town.
- 1) Better road maintenance. 2) Main freeway access through downtown. 3) Clean up abandoned houses on main streets.
- Stop letting Puri build characterless nonsense strips that add nothing original to our community. His chain establishments are the worst thing that ever happened to Rockford. Help private sector individuals start small businesses. Fund the arts. Revitalize downtown. Build green spaces and parks in place of the derelict businesses. Build bike lanes. Be future looking.
- Turn the street lights back on. Our city used to be brightly lit, attractive, and safe. The lights went out, and crime moved in. We have a tarnished reputation. I have relatives who were former lifelong Rockford residents living in Arizona, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, and they have heard about our crime rate and gang problems via their media outlets and social media sites. Until we clean up our act, we will not be able to attract big tourist dollars, it's as simple as that. Instead of trying to lure outsiders in to spend their money over the course of a few days, we should be focusing on keeping our residents here, where they feed the coffers of City Hall 365 days a year. I have been a fervent supporter of our city for my entire adult life, but am increasingly frustrated and dissatisfied. I have a 23 year old son who graduated from Rockford University last year, and have stressed the importance of staying in our home city, and make a positive difference. He has expressed interest in relocating to a safer more upscale environment, and for the first time in my life I think he might just have the right idea. For that I am sorry.
- Clean up the crime.
- Having more big events downtown that can promote lots of different small businesses.
- Highlight the positives we already have - Rock Cut, Rock River, RVC, bike paths, museums, sports centers, Magic Waters, etc. Push those so people associate those with the city when they hear the name "Rockford" instead of our nationally high crime rankings, etc.
- Making major roadways and thoroughfares into town (Rt. 2 and West Bus 20) more physically appealing with less blight, and reducing vagrancy, especially in the downtown and Near North areas.
- More public awareness in media.
- We recently moved out of Rockford because of taxes and crime. I moved here from California 22 years ago and when my parents moved here last year I told them to find a place in Machesney or Roscoe, which they did. I will not go downtown after dark. Safety and limited parking are the main reasons. We enjoy going to the Beloit Farmer's Market, Roscoe or 173 to eat. It is very sad that everyone wants to get out of Rockford. We have had a house in Rockford on the market twice to sell and can't sell it. Growing up in So CA there are so many coastal towns with restaurants, shops, shows. I understand the weather but there

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

is NOTHING to draw people downtown to the beautiful area. Stop giving handouts and get rid of the trash in the SW Rockford.

- More attractive appearance entering the city. Upkeep of medians - example on Perryville. If we are the Forest City, where are all the beautiful trees and medians? Can we take a note from the City of Beloit in how they have revitalized? There is nice upkeep in that once dying city. Of course I am well aware of their philanthropist and now his widow, but we really could take a note from their advancements.
- A more positive attitude by residents is a must!! Continuing with the Rockford First initiative.
- Safer town to live in.
- Spend whatever funds are available to make it our Region much cleaner and much safer. I'd start with more street lights and several smaller sub police stations placed in the areas that really need them. Since the real tax basin is the shopping district on East State, I would also show a much larger police presence 24/7 so our spending visitors feel safe. The bad rental element around Mulford and State have caused crime in the shopping district to grow and it must be stopped. We have great theaters and other venues, let's promote those more. Spending mass dollars downtown right now just won't work. Spend the resources to build from outlying Winn/RFD areas back into downtown. It may take 10-20 years but with jobs anything is possible. Lastly, the Rockford Airport, yes the Rockford Airport not Chicagoland Regional is huge. I'd update/repair the Bypass 20 exits at 11th St. and Rt. 2 so people traveling see clean safe areas, word of mouth about parking, ease and airfare rates will do the rest. Thank you for all the effort.
- I am retired and an amateur photographer. Members of my camera club and myself probably make the drive to Rockford about 3 to 5 times a year for photo opportunities. I have already planned three trips for the club in 2015.
- Better signs on the Interstate!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Like which exits to use for what services.
- More parking and better access to downtown.
- Make Rockford more like an extension of the suburbs. Connect with Marengo, Elgin, Crystal Lake, etc., consolidate space and leave the ghetto out of the nice part of Rockford. The only reason I live here is because of my spouse's work. The only positive I would have to say is there are plenty of restaurant options, the cost of living is cheap, and the part of town I live in is pretty safe.
- Crime rate reduced; sidewalks on far E. State for safety; better nighttime lighting on streets; put the street lights back in; people in jail doing work for us rather than having rights. They could clean up areas like the former chain gangs which I have seen in the 2000's in NC.
- We have the most active park district. We should advertise more. Many outsiders don't know that we have a big outdoor water park, Japanese garden, Klehm Arboretum, Burpee Museum, and many more attractions. We should advertise on I-90 so travelers get to know

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

what Rockford has to offer. Wisconsin's attractions billboards in Illinois, but our Rockford's billboard I have not seen not even on our exits. So in my opinion, we should advertise big time. Also, we must take advantage of having river in our town.

- Get rid of the drugs, the gang-bangers, and the awful crime. Seven murders since the 1st of January is not acceptable. The community needs to feel safe before any visitors are welcomed. Period.
- More public green space, natural areas, and environmental sustainability.
- Get crime under control, have more manufacturing, 4-year college.
- A vibrant downtown and riverfront area. A river walk along the east side of the Rock River, since it makes more sense with City Market and the brewery already in place. No more dangerous and confusing roundabouts, more street lighting. An IMAX theater and an assortment of musical acts at the BMO Center instead of all hillbilly music. Better policing, less public housing. Sending a certain element back to Chicago (Thanks Mayor Box).
- Better downtown. More restaurants, bars, housing. Better infrastructure, sidewalks, roads, etc.
- Strongly leverage, promote, market, capitalize on the positive momentum and the changes that are occurring and will occur over the next 24 months and hopefully beyond.
- Hotels in downtown Rockford. It's the ONLY place in the city where you can eat, drink, and watch attractions WITHOUT having to get in your car and drive to the next establishment. Downtown Rockford is the best place to encourage tourism. It has the capacity and the places of interest to support it. Hotels should be a no-brainer. NEXT: COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES SET IN DOWNTOWN ROCKFORD!!
- Promoting it more for the great things it has!
- Less violence.
- People need to know they are safe. More police presence!!!!
- Stopping the crime.
- Have things to do that are free or low cost.
- A better landscape when entering the city. Less cost for hotel rooms. Better roads and a regional train. Updating Sportscore.
- Make it a safer place with less crime.
- If Rockford Citizens would be more positive in talking about how great it is to live in this area that has so much to offer all age groups. And if all businesses would have employees that are positive to customers and sell how great an area they live and work in! We need to be the Face of Rockford. People sell to people! If you like where you are, it is easy to sell that feeling to people coming here. Rockford has reinvented itself over and over. I think that is pretty exciting. I think it's awesome to think of what will be coming next. The sky is always

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

the limit and the dreams are opening doors all over town!

- Improved access to downtown attractions.
- Is a beautiful place.
- Improve downtown area and make it safer.
- It needs to be more safe, first of all. People aren't going to come visit (or move here) with the headlines that we've been getting. Downtown has a great start for things to do, but there is no place for people to stay down there. And family/friends that have stayed out by I-90 complain that there are no sidewalks to safely get to places to eat over there. It's disjointed. The sports complex downtown will be wonderful and hopefully bring a hotel and tourism business to downtown as well. After seeing the plans for the building, I'm surprised and disappointed that there aren't windows so that you can see the beauty of the river from inside. If we spend the money to renovate a huge building that takes up precious waterfront space, yet we still aren't going to be able to enjoy the waterfront from it, post-renovation, is that the best possible use of the space? Though tourists will use the space on some weekends of the year, why not put a sports-themed restaurant and deck (aka brewhouse) on the river side so that the citizens that live here 365 days a year can enjoy and use the space the rest of the time? It seems like it wasn't thoroughly thought through. Again, disjointed.
- We're on the right path with beautification efforts, putting flower boxes on bridges and hanging planters on light poles. We need more attractions downtown - hotels, restaurants, and active retail along the E. State - W. State - S. Main - N. Main area. It's starting, but we need to go a lot further in making that downtown area a place to go. The indoor sports complex will go a long way towards that and the proposed downtown hotels and new downtown housing will all help. I think we're heading in the right direction. This is my hometown where I was born and raised, and although I lived away for 23 years, it's now my home again and I want to see Rockford be the best it can be.
- Clean up West entrance and South entrance. We have a good start but we must continue to improve.
- I would like to see more options with the Rock River, possibly bar and grills along Shorewood Park, Martin Park. The old Armory building/Discovery Center building could have boat docks/restaurants.
- A whitewater park on the Rock River would be unique in the entire area and would give media attention and visitors to come downtown. Talk to the people of Reno, NV and ask them how much their whitewater park changed the downtown. I talked to them!
- Clean streets and sidewalks that are in good repair. Areas need to be well lit. A downtown area that includes stores not found anywhere else in our area - Nordstrom's, Bloomingdale's, Whole Foods, or Trader Joe's. Then it is worthwhile to go downtown. There's no choice between going to the mall or downtown. Parking should be free or validated by stores.
- I would love an aquarium.

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Less crime. Better schools. Less check cashing/loan stores, slots stores, tobacco stores. All indicative of a bad economy. Maybe tax incentives for new businesses to use our many empty buildings.
- Lower crime!
- When we advertise diversity of our community.
- More family-friendly events, not just appealing to singles. 1. Carousel downtown. 2. Paddle boat area on river. 3. Downtown college campus. 4. More convenient parking. 5. Police on foot or bikes.
- I lived in Rockford for years, and as a kid in South Beloit trips to the "big city" to the south were fun. Now the business I own is in DuPage County. Many cities have drawn new life to downtown by going for "quaint." Look at Hinsdale, Sycamore, or Elmhurst. They've made city center a destination. The river is beautiful and anything to make it a destination is great. It has to be unique and something no one else can offer.
- Making it unique, drawing on its ethnic histories, making it a sports destination, developing downtown, especially along the river. We also need to have the main gateways into the city from the East, West, and South be much more attractive, which I think is in process.
- Stop the crime. Not safe to live or go in certain areas of Rockford and Winnebago County. Home sales have fallen hard and they are not coming back. We need leaders in this State.
- Improved reception of safety, higher paying jobs (will lead to more and more stores/restaurants/etc.), continued beautification projects.
- Package deals for families to enjoy Coco Keys, Burpee Museum, and Discovery Center, like on Groupon. More activities for 16 to 20 year olds that is safe, physically active, and accessible by bus, bicycle, or within walking distance of each other. Having pedestrians walk on the sidewalks. I think it is very intimidating to have people all over town walking in the streets. It isn't safe for walkers or drivers, and it makes our town seem run down where people don't follow the rules. Have a music festival, more plays, and local talents at the band shell.
- Less boarded up businesses and shopping areas. People always go shopping. More activities like walking tours that highlight Rockford's history.
- You just aren't going to get a lot of tourism without a better value proposition. But good facilities for sporting events would help. Soccer, swimming, mountain biking, would draw in crowds and bring in money. I would feel more welcome if the roads didn't look like shit, if downtown looked better, if the whole town was not a giant strip mall of video poker machines. From I-90 no matter how you approach, you see a lot of garbage before getting to downtown with the possible exception of Spring Creek Road.
- Revitalizing downtown should be priority #1 and as I have seen in Joliet and Elgin, as much as I don't care for casinos, they were the impetus for their downtown areas. I lived in Loves Park for 10 years as I transferred to a job within ComEd in Rockford and really grew to love the area and all it offers. I have retired from my full time ComEd job and we have moved to

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

Woodstock to be closer to grandkids but chose Woodstock over other close in suburbs so we could still be CLOSE to Rockford!!!

- Better parking downtown. Always - more quality events, especially on New Year's Eve.
- Better 55+ housing.
- Take in consideration for senior adventure and something to bring us closer.
- Having the Ingersoll building become a reality as a destination sports center. Have hotels and businesses in the downtown area that will encourage people to stay and shop and build our economy.
- Less crime, more attractions, events, and activities. Stroll on State and the City Market are great!
- A more welcoming entrance to the city - at the I-90 entrance, down E. State St., and all along the river. Wonderful things have been happening along the river. We also need to get the crime under control. The high speed rail to Rockford from Chicago would allow easy access for weekend getaways. All in all, Rockford is headed in the right direction.
- River District transportation on the water and on the shore and a trip ticket/passport for downtown attractions.
- Revitalization of the West side. Many people are afraid to travel over the river for activities especially at night.
- Higher building standards for commercial development first. Make our commercial development more attractive and quit catering to the greedy developers. Our commercial building and centers are dull and unattractive and this is what visitors notice first and last. This is what they remember about Rockford! When I visit similar cities, the first difference that I notice between them and Rockford is the commercial development. Start with signage, then facade standards so everything isn't the same because the developers use the most inexpensive plan. Make standards that promote variety and quality and green space! Everything looks like Forrest Plaza in Rockford and everybody sees that. Look at Madison, development in the Chicago suburbs, Denver, and so many others! The commercial development stands out and makes a difference! Developers will still come, maybe even in higher demand. The costs will be passed onto the tenants. But, attractive high end commercial development will bring more traffic to all stores and bring the image of Rockford up a notch! The housing development needs the same improvements too! QUIT LETTING THE DEVELOPERS BUILD CHEAP, UNATTRACTIVE, UNIMAGINATIVE BUILDINGS AND STRIP CENTERS THAT LAST FOR YEARS AS EYE SORES IN ROCKFORD, WHILE THE DEVELOPERS ARE DEPOSITING THEIR MONEY ELSEWHERE IN THE COUNTRY OR EVEN IN OTHER COUNTRIES! ROCKFORD NEEDS TO STAND UP TO THESE DEVELOPERS AND NOT BE SCARED! THEY WILL STILL COME!
- Better control of advertising signage throughout Rockford. For all neighborhoods and business districts to care about the appearance of their areas. "If everyone sweeps the

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

street in front of their own house, the entire city would be clean." Seasonal plantings throughout our gateways. Bring back more of our street lights. More hospitality businesses around the airport to welcome those traveling to or out of Rockford.

- Hard problems, crime, poverty, entertainment, a lively downtown.
- They never have and never will.
- Clean up Rockford. Our grandchildren who live in Peoria, IL think Rockford is a dirty town.
- A cleaner and brighter city. More lighting in areas of town will allow people to feel safer. With today's lighting technology, interesting lighting displays could be done less expensively and draw interest to areas of town that could use sprucing up. Also, a more positive population. Rockford residents tend to be downers and the media seems to feed on it. I think highlighting the positive attributes will attract more visitors.
- Fix the terrible parking problems in downtown as well as the persistent beggars. Tear down the dilapidated old buildings and have shovel-ready projects for developers. Provide water that isn't urine-yellow, doesn't smell like a stale swimming pool, and that doesn't contain radium. Address the gross systemic corruption. Actually, make significant progress in the problem areas instead of just whitewashing it with the "Transform" spiel. No matter how you polish it, a turd is still a turd.
- Clean up the BLIGHT!!
- A lot less of the following: crime, prostitution, shootings, slots places, cash stores, empty homes, empty buildings, more jobs that pay way above minimum wage, lower taxes, better schools, a mall with better stores, more diverse entertainment and entertainment that people here can afford to go to, less politicians working for themselves and not for the people, better roads, better choices of businesses. Less thought by politicians that everyone in this area is basically so poor and unintelligent that they can do whatever they want to do and no one will pay attention. Need to clean up the remaining Housing Authority buildings, stop fighting churches who want to get the homeless off the streets into a warm place by condemning their desire to help by saying their building isn't safe. Look at the houses that have been burned and the factory that was burned by the homeless. Get most, not all of the politicians' heads out of the bottoms and out of the rich people's pockets and do what the VOTERS WANT, not what the big paychecks want. AND bring more business that is AMERICAN and stop letting the factories be bought out by FOREIGN COUNTRIES, so they can shut them down, like they did with Schneider Electric, and don't patronize people who are unemployed by treating them like they are all stupid and don't have a high school education or higher. There are many of us who have more than a high school education; we just can't get paid what we are worth.

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Broader emphasis on crosstown/inter-regional TRANSPORTATION. Clean and MAINTAIN buildings and roads - host and promote (free) events - provide quality overnight accommodations near Downtown - emphasize Rockford's natural resources like Rock River, parks, and gardens. Encourage ARTS community. ALSO, KEEP Rockford residents here! Offer incentives for higher education and job placement. Thanks for asking!
- How about holding a Rockford Days @ Davis Park? Rockford Days would be vintage & antique vendors. I myself, Tammy Livingston & Sara Cox, would love an opportunity to put something like this together. We both have experience with setting up many vendor shows. Thanks for your survey and we look forward to a great 2015.
- More great festivals like the Art Fest and Festa Italianna and the Market on Fridays.
- Less crime, less corruption.
- Far more sidewalks on major thoroughfares such as Alpine and Riverside so people can walk/bike more easily, encouraging better health and easier access. Better, pothole-free smooth roads. An outlet mall.
- Public transit from Chicago to Rockford; enhance and fully utilize the maxing bicycle trails, Rock River, and hiking.
- I have heard of the great ideas of building a great hotel in downtown and a sport convention center around the most unsafe area of Rockford. I think if we want to attract visitors to the Rockford/Winnebago area we want to make sure that they feel safe. I live outside of Rockford, but I have spent my last 20 years working in the Rockford/ Winnebago area as a social worker with the State of IL and in Mental Health Services. I'm familiar with the locations that are in the plans for rehabilitation, and the people that live there. One thing that I haven't heard is what is the local government is going to do with all the people who live in those areas. Is there a plan for relocation?
- You have the right perception as far as a better town, a much better atmosphere. And to make this a safe place for all to come to.
- Aggressively market South Rockford as an ethnic destination - RACVB has NOT done this enough - missed opportunity! Keep marketing downtown! Highlight the West side after South side and downtown are marketed thoroughly. Bring back On the Waterfront! Stupidest decision by this city in a long time - why in the world would you give up the State's biggest music festival? Not smart at all.
- Focus on downtown and the South and West side. Promote the South side's ethnic diversity as a destination and support South Main Street and hotels and train. Bring back On the Waterfront! What a stupid mistake to let it go! Help find funding for Rick's Café or a permanent Cheap Trick or music museum of local artists. Keep up the great work on the Christmas decorations - they are wonderful. Can't believe some years downtown had NONE! Even small towns do Christmas decorations. Play up the Rock River and advertise in Chicagoland area.

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- SUPPORTING & ADVERTISING MORE OF THE ARTS - FOCUS ON SOME OF THE NON-PROFITS that are scratching & clawing to make a difference. SUPPORT & HIGHLIGHT LOCAL BUSINESS.
- Increased support of the classical performing arts outside of the Symphony. Hosting musical events such as major pipe organ, choral, and other classical instrumental contests, seminars, national gatherings, etc. Increasing the encouragement of Rockford to draw folks to our local theaters for live streaming of Opera from the NY Metropolitan Opera. Combining these sorts of events that can overlap would draw a whole new type of visitor to Rockford. Supporters of these events tend to spend money at other places such as shopping malls, restaurants, etc.
- Aquarium
- Consider moving the main office out of downtown Rockford.
- I feel we need to change the negative perception of Rockford as being a violent unsafe place to be. We need to focus, and get the media on board with promoting the POSITIVE in town. Also, the revitalization of downtown is still key.
- Keep moving forward!
- Less crime! The media to broadcast good things that are happening, not just the bad. Better word of mouth!
- Outlet mall, more music coming to the Metro Center or whatever its current name is. Miss On the Waterfront. More family activity areas that are well priced. We have been to the new zip line course and will be trying the new Gateway Park for sledding/skiing. Stroll on State is a nice concept but needs to have more for the kids, my kids are bored, so many people and not much for them to do.
- We need to start cleaning up and maintaining Rockford and the surrounding area. If we can't make ourselves look better, then why would people want to come to, move to, or invest in the area? An example is that no one takes responsibility for the dead animals in the roadway. They just sit there and bloat. Another example is all of the trash and vacant buildings in the downtown area. If we don't take care of "ourselves" who will? It is kind of like a depressed person who stops caring about themselves, we need to start taking care of Rockford.
- A more connected cultural and retail town center.
- An Aquarium in Rockford. Better snow removal on downtown sidewalks. A welcome wagon type experience for the airport when passengers are stranded. A volunteer group would handle this. Another "Why I love living in Rockford!" Campaign.
- More to do and see on the river. Shopping, more restaurants with river view.

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Safety, good advertising stating exactly where to go, walk, and things to do without going through any unsafe areas. Rockford is a short drive for me and I would go, but I am concerned about safety. I also like to have activities primarily in one area. For example, Galena, Illinois has a main strip you can walk, eat, and look at museums without moving your car. That's what I like the best. I don't mind driving a little, but most activities should have a good parking place even on the street or secure parking garage and you should basically be able to get out of your car and start doing things.
- I believe we do a good job of this now, especially with visiting sports teams. When/if the Rockford downtown sports complex and hotel (or hotels) are built, there MUST be plenty of additional parking options available; there is not enough parking space downtown as it is now. It is not welcoming to potential masses of people coming to downtown Rkfd events if they become frustrated because of inadequate NEARBY parking - people do not want to walk a city block or more, especially in winter months! Also, if the above mentioned developments take place, more casual, reasonably-priced restaurants/cafes are desperately needed in downtown Rkfd.
- I would like to see the downtown area taken care of by putting in new sidewalks. I would like to see more festivals in the Rockford area. The crimes in Rockford area are a deterrent to people visiting in Rockford.
- Much higher standards need to be incorporated for community development and public works. Nice sidewalks, roads, attention to weeds in the medians, modern wayfinding, grand entrances/gateways, more flowers and planters in downtown, public art, water features, lighting displays, walking police presence; interacting with people, nice outdoor cafe's at restaurants downtown (set up with high standards), litter control, sweep and snow removal on sidewalks and parking lots daily, street sweep, planned and integrated outdoor seating, new trees needs to be larger and maintained at a high level, light trees with soft white Christmas tree lights, sculptures in downtown, nice trash receptacles, bike lanes, infrastructure improvements on Main Street to Discovery Center, place a high value on customer and citizen experience, if citizens appreciate their surroundings so will visitors. Improve connectivity; start with downtown and work out. Plan with the end in mind. Plan, master plan and execute. Would rather see the downtown be a focus area for improvements with phased in strategies for other areas. Aldermen need to continue and see the bigger picture, voting together for improvements that will impact the greater good. Then move toward improvements. The downtown needs gathering places such as City Market, outdoor seating for dining during lunch and dinner, infrastructure to set up for great street festivals. Invite people to experience our assets, set up places to eat along the river such as food vendors and seating. Support with dollars and commitment the organizations that are making significant changes and experiences happen. Functioning well within a community is more than fix and repair that which is broken. Do you want to live in a family that operates that way? Bring financial experts in who can help direct the dollars we have so that dollars are spent to clean up and present our city well. Lastly, while most cities have those among them who are homeless, most cities absorb them better when there are a lot

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

more people walking around and there's hustle and bustle. During the day, every day, downtown, if the majority of who you see walking outside are people carrying a bag and stick, perceptions are real. The problem will continue. If you walk into a stairwell of a parking garage, and cardboard tents are made in the landings which you must use to get to work ... and it happens daily ... this might be a problem. It feels threatening, frightening, sad, and leaves one feeling hopeless. We can do better than this. Many positive changes are happening that are moving the city in a positive direction, however, I don't think the city should count on volunteers to be the investors into the city. The standards need to be set, master planning in place and staff employed with accountability, pieces in place for execution. Changes that zero in on what our community and visitors want to experience is the key to unlocking people's happiness and trust with our city leaders. What will help them fall in love with our city? Strategically, plan with the end in mind and execute. Thank you for the opportunity to share my opinion in an honest forum.

- Improving main road conditions, clean up areas that visitors have to go thru to get to areas like downtown and make it more welcoming. More police presence, when I drive around it is a rare occurrence to even see the police.
- Keep investing in things like City Market and Stroll on State - it has been exciting to see those develop. Keep investing in museums, parks, and culture.
- Better schools.
- Would like to see major roadways beautified. City of Gardens does a great job with hanging baskets in Rockford and has for years, but would love to see the surrounding communities adopt similar beautification initiatives, especially the 251 corridor running through Loves Park where I live. I would be more than happy to volunteer with this kind of initiative in my neighborhood! I am so proud to live in the Rockford area - I moved here 4 years ago. My only concern living here is safety. It doesn't stop me from living my life, but I think creating a safer environment for ALL Winnebago Co. residents (irregardless of where they live in the city) will greatly improve the quality of life and equality.
- A positive attitude of area residents about their hometown.
- The entrances to the City are of paramount importance. One of the most beautiful is South Main. That still needs attention. The west gateway is also very beautiful with the rolling hills and rural atmosphere. West State still needs attention. The east entrance off the tollway is congested. I would like to see more green. From the North - North Second could use some attention. There is a lot going on 173 but that area is more than Rt. 173. Focus on the assets already there. Add some trees. The junk yard needs a screen. Again, green is nice. I would like to see a rest area added off the State highway. Maybe up near Roscoe.
- Downtown river boat casino instead of hundreds of little video gaming shops that are popping up all over the city.

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Less blight and more road improvements on all sides of town. More green space promotion. Better race relations. Lower crime rate. Extending the Golden Rule with visitors, helping them to feel instantly welcome and at home.
- Less violence. Too many shootings. People need to feel safe and when they read or hear on TV all they get is shootings. More positive news needs to be reported.
- More things to do, we have a lot, but not enough to keep people occupied for a cold winter weekend. My niece and nephew have been coming to visit from CA for over 25 years, they were a few weeks ago during the horrible cold, I just couldn't find anything to do with them. We ended up going to Galena and Madison. Since they have been coming since they were babies, they have been to Discovery Center numerous times and Burpee so many times that they ask not to have to go again and they are adults now. We are on the right track. The entry to Rockford from I-90 is a bit boring, could use something to help make people see us for who we are. The drive down several main throughways is embarrassing. 11th St. is a horrible street, the actual street, bad condition. South Main, Alpine is a disaster. I try to view it from their eyes and not my Rockford born and bred eyes. I love it here but I can see why others may not share my enthusiasm.
- Get rid of all billboards on East State.
- Safer community.
- More unique beautification and art-filled entrances. Literature for folks that spend either a day, three days, or an event weekend in the city. The New York Times runs a column every weekend on spending 36 hours in a given location - they unearth the unique whether it is restaurants, shops, museums, etc. It is complete with times, addresses, and so on. Where would you advise people to go in Rockford if they were here for 36 hours? You could tailor it for children (the sports attendees) or adults. We all have day visitors so where would we take them to impress and please.
- A dedication to excellence and inclusion.
- Attractions - there is very little to do in Rockford. There needs to be a reason to visit Rockford, or to get the word out there more about what there is to do.
- I'm very much in favor of hotels/restaurants/specialty stores in the downtown area.
- Jobs for residents.
- Continuing the efforts of the RACVB and the Rockford Park District. Helping the Rockford School District improve.
- Work on fixing the levels of extreme poverty in our community.
- Better traffic patterns and light timing. Better parking options in downtown for events. Less one-ways in downtown. Signage along State Street is unsightly. SIDEWALKS that connect instead of just in front of one building or block. Better bus routing for shorter waits, bus stops that are covered or have seats and sidewalks instead of mud or snow. Evening bus

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

routes to stores and malls. More special shuttles for events from remote parking spots. Free/low cost shuttles from hotels by the I-39 to downtown events. Special/Direct bus services to large employers from inner city neighborhoods or remote parking based on shift hours. Think Lowes, Call Centers, Malls. College/Student passes at free or added cost to tuition for bus service. Bus services connecting the airport to VanGilder or Greyhound bus pick-up for people who might want to fly into/out of RFD and then travel to Chicago, Madison, etc.

- Sadly, the roads in Rockford are terrible. Having traveled to Madison often, my husband and I have often commented on how their roads are far better than those in Rockford. Stop doing the same thing in construction and maintaining roads if it has been proven that IT DOESN'T WORK! So much money has been spent in this city on "research." How about we make calls to communities that have success in road construction and maintenance, find out what they do and change what we do! Pretty signs are ignored when the roads are so bad.
- Take it one step at a time. The shotgun approach does not work well. Fix downtown first, get it looking beautiful and full of great venues, shops, and restaurants/bars. Do more pocket parks and KEEP THEM LOOKING GOOD, if you don't know what a pocket park is, they take the place of lots where buildings have been torn down. Keeps everything looking good till new development arrives. Make all the main avenues to downtown look pristine and welcoming.
- Basically, just the two working together more!
- A livelier downtown with more invitation for walking, outdoor cafes, and more attractive.
- Less crime.
- Less crime.
- People with pride in this city would help make this city more welcoming. It really is a great place to live and visit but it seems that people who were born and raised in this city do not believe in this city and most importantly in the potential of the city. I have heard and have personal experience with residents who are shocked when they hear that someone visits this city or moved to this city to work or because of the great location and proximity to all the major cities in the area. They immediately say, "Rockford? Why would you choose Rockford?" It's always fun to hear their responses. I think having pride in our city would make this city much more welcoming. But, beyond a better attitude, I think more options to play would be awesome, building up more places to visit near the river such as shopping or activities. I love the announcement of the new sports center near river and will likely be there for volleyball leagues and volleyball tournaments! With that, we need more cheap, quick, and easy food options for sport tournaments within walking distance of that location and ample parking. When events happen downtown, parking is definitely an issue. I would love to be able to park my car and walk to everything and make a day or afternoon/evening of the activities. Also, more festivals year round and near the river. Stroll on State is great for something to do in the winter and we love the City Market. Are you dreaming of anymore? This is a great start! Keep up the good work!

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- More festivals. Reviving "On the Waterfront" don't know if that is exactly it, but something along those lines.
- Upscale shopping.
- A more positive attitude by the residents.
- More fun things to do - amusement park, more concerts, etc.
- More hotels in downtown area, safer cleaner streets, and sufficient mental health facilities to keep unstable people off the street and in a good place where they can obtain the help they need.
- Continue to grow the downtown area with local restaurants, businesses, and entertainment attractions. Utilize the Rock River for more water activities. Present the community with more family-themed events, like Friday Night Flix.
- I was there as a tourist for one month, and I've been warmly welcomed wherever I have been.
- Less crime, less gang activity.
- Free beer.
- Less crime and/or more police. Better streets and lighting.
- Keep prices low for admissions to attractions.
- More attractions, love the Japanese garden, more things like that.
- Less violence, clean streets, less abandoned buildings, more choice in shopping, (Whole Foods, Trader Joes, etc.), better restaurants in the downtown (W. State and Main) area. Free activities - I have no idea how a family of four can afford to go to museums, movies, or much of anything else, even some of the parks and outdoor recreational areas cost. I work and my husband is retired, we can't afford to go to Nicholas Conservatory, we're barely getting by. Better jobs, better pay. Better transportation - Trains to Chicago, Madison, and Milwaukee more than once a week or day. We need trains to these areas at least 3 or 4 times a day, with a way to get back no matter what time you leave these cities. An airport with more airlines coming and going. Southwest would be the best!!!!
- Having things that would be attractive to all types of people, not just for a certain segment of people. I live in 61102 and when I have out of town visitors, if we don't have enough rooms in our homes, we have to take them all the way across town on East State St. to a hotel because the city has not saw fit to develop the west side of the river. Despite the perception that people have of the South and the West sides of the city, there are productive people who work every day to maintain homes and want the same things as people on the East side - secure, clean neighborhoods, and a city they can be proud to invite people to come and visit. We would like to have nice hotels for our family and friends to stay at; nice restaurants to take them to; stores to shop in so we don't have to travel all the way down East State Street. Rockford's entertainment is WEAK. Sports events are about the only thing that is a

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

major draw. Bring a variety of people to the table to help figure out what would make Rockford an attraction, instead of relying on the same old mindsets who come up with the same tired ideas. On the Waterfront was a great attraction when it started out, but it got old and stale because the people who were in charge ceased to come up with anything new that would make it a continued attraction. Festivals are a big draw, but the division in Rockford is prevalent in the way the different nationalities have different ethnic festivals. Rockford is divisive enough! Why can't there be one big festival to bring together the different heritages? Stop taking everything to the East side. The crown jewel of Rockford, the Coronado Theatre, is seriously underutilized. Develop the Times Theater. Make downtown Rockford a "showplace" and a "destination" instead of a place to work Monday through Friday and avoid on the weekends.

- Easier access, train, more Eco-friendly public transportation efforts similar to Atlanta, GA. Improve relations with businesses for travel needs. More P.R. for local attractions, more unified. IMPROVE DRIVING AND PARKING FOR DOWNTOWN AREA!! Roads are too narrow, crazy, dangerous, hate (and hear this from visitors) to drive down there. Too confusing! Embrace the neighboring towns and cities so all benefit from relationship with Rockford.
- Control the gang activity, make sure the staff of county offices are true to the community.
- If we want to revitalize the downtown area you have to move the social services offices and subsidized housing out of the downtown area. I think we need to use the tax dollars we are already collecting to fund projects. We already have high enough taxes. Currently, people and business is leaving the area because of high taxes. If you keep raising taxes people will not come here, and the ones here will leave. The park district should be very close to self-funding instead of being subsidized by tax dollars. Why do we need a Park District Police force and a city police force? Can't the city police patrol the parks?
- Better schools and less crime.
- More development downtown. More locally owned businesses unique to our area. More focus on the Rock River. City and County leaders to work together to make our area safer.
- I think anything that would appeal to families. I have a young son and I would love to take him to events that showcase what Rockford and Winnebago County have to offer. Also, I know for a fact that State Bowling Tournaments bring a lot of people into the city for a few days. It would be nice if we had a bowling alley that could hold that, but I do think that the location of Rockford is the main reason why they don't have it here.
- Vibrant downtown, well light, safe, fun, unique, hip.
- Change the Southwest, West, and Southeast side of town. The choice grant voted down is an absolutely criminal. We should be ashamed of our City officials.
- Upkeep of existing structures.
- Free downtown parking - Joe's Crab Shack.

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Downtown hotels, restaurants, cafes, and cultural venues!
- Less negative media coverage.
- The city caters to the masses (meaning non ethnic groups) and so the entertainment is geared toward those individuals that are more likely to attend. When events for African Americans occur they are held during the week and are more often than not "gospel" events assuming that all African Americans are only interested in that type of venue. If the RACVB is truly interested in making the city more accessible for all individuals, investigate what cities that are the same size as Rockford do to become more inclusive. I have not, nor will I encourage anyone to visit here because it is my belief that our entertainment/recreational activities are one sided and not geared for younger or older African Americans including this survey which although random many of the AA household will not receive.
- Improved safety and better downtown area with possible river boat casino.
- To not be always on the bottom of published lists. I love the parks and the museums and all the arts. We are blessed. I have been a community nurse working for the health department and my clients are spread all over but most are in the projects. How sad, how scary for them, for me. How many murders this month already? Too many for sure. Visitors will know these things. Closing of Singer really? I work three blocks from our beautiful Coronado and see our citizens with mental illness all over. I understand but unfortunately "visitors" don't. I would love to live downtown but my kids would never let me. That has always been a dream of mine. Sad. Wish I could fix it.
- If we who live here embrace it! Peace through music.
- Safety
- Restaurants/hotels greeting people with, "Welcome to Rockford! We're glad you're visiting. Here is some information about local attractions (pamphlet). Enjoy your stay!"
- Bigger name-brand retail (we lose Gap, Eddie Bauer, World Market, Papa Murphy's, etc. Can't attract Trader Joe's or Whole Foods, etc.). Less rundown areas, less crime, bigger name entertainment. Rockford has the cons of a larger urban area, not as many pros.
- Gateways to enter the city, and reduction of crime.
- More places to stay! And also highlighting the wonderful things we do have such as parks and forest preserves.
- Continue adding programs to draw visitors to Rockford. So sad that the On the Waterfront event was given up. Do enjoy the Stroll on State. Sports and Theatre events are good draws.
- More advertisement, more spending on tourism, and make gateway appearance welcoming.
- Family-fun activities. Beautification not just in downtown.
- Winnebago County can work on its own problems, we in Rockford need to make it safe place to live and grow and to clean up the city. Too many abandoned buildings and houses, they

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

say it is tied up in litigation, nonsense, change the rules and clean up the physical appearance of the city. I have never seen a town with more excuses than Rockford.

- I am very hopeful that the "Transform Rockford" project will accomplish that! In the meantime, "Regaining First" will do positive things also.
- Making downtown a viable destination is a priority. Connecting bike paths into a cohesive whole is also a plus. The Riverfront area needs to be advertised more as a go-to-destination. The live music scene needs to be promoted not only to visitors but the community as well.
- Sporting events and other fun events. More events like Stroll on State.
- First and foremost, curb the crime. Stop front yard parking, trash curbside all week and throwing yard waste into streets by residents and grounds maintenance companies. Limit number of cars tenants can have when off street parking is not offered by landlord. Crack down on slum landlords. In general, keep city clean. What good is appealing gateway to city, if you have to look at trash all over streets as dodging bullets to get to destination? But worrying about tourism when it is scary in our schools, on our streets, and in our businesses, is a little hard to fathom. Take care of the residents that pay taxes and the rest, such as tourism, will become easier. We need way more law enforcement than we have right now. Some of us can no longer visit grave sites of our loved ones because of the groups that hang out at our cemeteries. So much has changed. Maybe unsuspecting tourists will come here, but will they ever come back? Fix our city and county and then bring tourists in. So many people would even go to events alone if they didn't have to be afraid. Most Rockford residents will only attend functions with a group.
- Not sure.
- Less crime. Less vacant buildings. More entertainment and activities.
- Hotels close to downtown & where events are held. Having little shops like Galena. For them to feel safe especially downtown Rockford.
- Keep improving the downtown!
- Better control on violence and safety concerns. Beautifying and revitalizing downtown area. People will only go where they feel safe. I personally feel pretty safe going downtown and other parts of the city, but I know others that do not and will not go to those areas. Safety should be one of our top priorities.
- Revitalize downtown, also develop the riverfront to showcase it and make it a destination-but with practical improvements, NOT like the "bridge to nowhere" behind Riverfront Museum Park. That's useless.
- Convention Center Complex that accommodates business shows as its main function as well as hard surface sports.
- Nicer neighborhoods. A lot of stuff is downtown and most people don't feel safe going into the heart of Rockford, especially at night.

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Work on clean streets. Street cleaners can do their job during the night. Build sidewalks and decorative street lights. Archway to city is nice. Make major streets into the city look inviting by adding trees and gardens.
- New entertainment complex with shopping, restaurants, gameworks, outside kids' play area, and concert venue perhaps? Next to or near the AMC on East State. It has open space, next to the interstate and close to hotels and the mall.
- It would be great to have a pamphlet or program showing "what to do in 3 days in Rockford" and produce a different one for each season. For example, page 1 has day one: in the morning, eat brunch at Stockholm Inn, spend the afternoon exploring Anderson Gardens or the Nicholas Conservatory or Klehm Arboretum or Rock Cut State Park, have dinner downtown Rockford at one of these unique places (list options), grab a drink at Prairie Street Brewhouse or the Rathskellar, and end the night at your hotel (list options). Fall could highlight Edwards Apple Orchard, the Pumpkin Patch, a corn maze, the winery out in that area, and Fall Diddley. Winter could highlight ice skating rinks, shows at the Coronado, and the Stroll on State. Spring could highlight the gardens and parks plus places like Midway Village. Summer could highlight outdoor restaurants and beer gardens, events at Davis Park, and fairs/festivals. I think there are lots of interesting things to do in Rockford, but unless you know the area well (I grew up there), it's hard to think how you would spend a whole weekend there. If you give people a sample itinerary, it will advertise the highlights while demonstrating that this is a worthwhile vacation destination. I've seen this format used for another area's visitor's guide (I think it was in Northwest Indiana or McHenry County) and it was very effective. I hope this idea is helpful!
- More festivals, sporting events, and trying to clean up the rundown areas of town.
- Lower crime rate, free downtown parking.
- Inclusivity of all. Family-oriented activities that promote the multiple ethnic groups in Rockford. Better communication and a unified vision of what Rockford has to offer, i.e., Premier Sports town with outdoor recreational activities including golfing, Alpine Hills, arts and performances, and vibrant cultural experiences downtown through restaurants and shops. Each business downtown should speak to the variation of populations in this community.
- A safer city and less rundown/abandoned buildings and trash littered lots. Too much old and not maintained. We could have old buildings that still look beautiful if they were just maintained.
- I think the residents having a more positive outlook. I came to Rockford about 4 years ago and I see all of the positives the community has to offer. However, it seems like those who have lived here for a long time don't see any positives nor do they try. Also, crime and the perception of crime is a factor. I have heard residents say, "I don't go out after dark" or "I don't go downtown because of the crime," that is a problem when you are trying to welcome outsiders. I work downtown and have never felt unsafe but if those who live here believe it is unsafe, you'll have a hard time convincing additional visitors to come.

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Better public schooling, lower taxes, better return on home investment, improved infrastructure (streets, lighting, bridges), cleaner neighborhoods, better paying careers (keep work local, stop awarding work to out of town professionals/companies).
- Continued improvement to downtown. When I visit other cities/communities I am looking for unique experiences and opportunities to engage in the local culture. Downtown Rockford has the potential to offer these experiences and opportunities to visitors. Currently, there is a lot of potential energy focused on downtown which needs to be realized in order for Rockford to be truly transformed.
- Easy transportation to get from Point A to Point B. No cabs or trains make it difficult for people to get here and to explore while here.
- Part of what makes Rockford attractive to our family living out of state is that Chicago is nearby. When friends and family come to visit, a trip to Chicago is usually also involved.
- Fewer empty storefronts and abandoned homes. Removal of downtown one-way streets. Gateway improvement to downtown.
- Locking up all of the gang leaders, giving extremely harsh punishments to the murderers, and having mandatory classes/training for all people who receive government assistance. Basically, doing something about the people who give our city a bad name.
- Just let them know about all the great things we already have. I forward emails to my family out of town and they always "have no idea" what Rockford has to do! Lots of fun stuff to do here!
- More job opportunities.
- Clean up the city - tear down unoccupied buildings and reduce the crime rate.
- Bring some chain restaurants or Beef-a-Roo downtown. Families coming in to use the Ingersoll building for sporting events are not going to be interested in the restaurants downtown. They will head out to East State Street to places they are familiar with. You want to build up downtown with quaintness and that won't keep visitors down there.
- Continue to improve the downtown area with more shopping, restaurants, hotels, music venues, add more festivals and bring back a weekend music/entertainment festival to replace On the Waterfront. It's clear the community and surrounding areas want more music festivals; we need better planning and execution of an event like On the Waterfront. Look how successful Stroll on State is!!!
- Continue to add and grow attractions that welcome visitors. Control crime throughout the county. Deal with blighted areas by improving them to be more attractive. Visitors come to see and do. They will only come if they feel safe seeing and doing.
- TRAIN!!!!!!!!!!!!!! So tired of having to catch the train in Harvard just to get to the city! Better bus system. Empty buses driving around seems like a waste of money. If the bus system was more efficient, people would be taking the train from Chicago to ROCKFORD!!

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Just the other day, I saw the "Rockford" welcome out on Business 20, after getting off I-90 and must say it's a sad statement. Needs sprucing up on all entering corridors "Welcome to Rockford."
- While most shops and employees downtown are always welcoming, some are still pretentious. I recently shopped downtown for Christmas and was not acknowledged in a local shop that had 2 workers and only one other customer in the place. Maybe it was just a bad day but it has happened in the past in other establishments. I guess the attitudes of employees is out of your hands but feeling welcome in a store would be more welcoming to visitors. Also, I would love to see a venue for independent films again.
- Better roads and out of area advertising.
- Fix the roads throughout the entire city (not giving contracts to William Charles Limited for construction work). Second, get rid of the current mayor and chief of police (Morrissey & Epperson). Third, raise the standards back up for all police department personnel (height and weight limits must be kept up) too many unhealthy hires on the force today. Fourth, get the criminals out of Rockford (no more dropping point for paroles). Too many toxic charities in Rockford/Winnebago County area (everyone knows we have charities that give/provide free everything. Too much Section 8 housing and welfare recipients). Sixth, stop bringing all the crap from Chicago to Rockford - way too many on wait lists to come here for free housing, snap, and slum landlords that bring them here. Seventh, bring good jobs back to the area that pay a decent wage \$50,000 annual salaries and above. Eighth, more needs to be done for those already on welfare and having baby after baby and generations on welfare (40 hours of community service, cleaning up the streets where they live, volunteer soup kitchens, mow/rake/shovel their residences' yards and sidewalks) - way too many lazy people on welfare in Winnebago/all of Illinois. Last, no new spending on any improvements/buildings to downtown area until the housing market improves/property taxes are lowered/the city gets their budget under control/all foreclosed properties are inspected and torn down if not in livable conditions/no more roundabouts/no more bridges to nowhere being constructed/make the landlords keep up their properties and rent to decent people that are not welfare recipients/Morrissey's clowns need to stop being able to purchase properties or investments in downtown old buildings and empty lots/make the people of Rockford proud to live here - way too many have left and are planning on leaving soon. Stop the corruption in the School District RPS 205.
- A lower crime rate.
- Better pedestrian and cycling accessibility around all parts of the city. Better signage. Wider variety of attractions, such as BMX/mtn bike park, public (auto) race track, skate park downtown, public art walls, more low cost or free activities for low-income families. More green space, less parking lots.
- Better entertainment options for the young adult population. Rockford is very family-friendly, but it can be boring for young adult professionals.

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Rockford needs more quality shopping options for adults. It seems like everything is geared toward low-income teenagers. We also need good bookstores; Barnes and Noble has become a huge disappointment since relocating to the mall. I want a better selection of books, not more toys. Also, there are so many lovely historic buildings and homes, especially on the West side, that are in decay because nobody is seeing to their upkeep. We have so many hidden gems that even locals don't know about, like the Rockford Rage roller derby team. I'm also sick of hearing how awful Rockford is in the press. How do we go about instilling a sense of personal responsibility and pride in people about their neighborhoods?
- Having lived here all my life, what is there to do in Rockford besides eat, go to church, go to the park?
- Much lower rate of crime and if people actually took care of their own property. Even picking up litter would be nice. Garbage trucks are the biggest litterers. Have you ever driven behind one? Stricter penalties for crime and bringing the death penalty to Illinois (eye for an eye!) please! I am very afraid for the outlook of Rockford and would like to care more since I have been here since birth. The future of my grandchildren looks bleak. Seriously considering moving to another state. Thank you for your concerns, however.
- Enforcement of new zoning laws regulating the look and placement of big box stores on the State Street corridor, and much beautification of State Street west of Alpine Rd heading into downtown.
- Less bad media but that is not avoidable no matter where you live. I promote Rockford all the time. However, I do hear people talking it down, and I just don't see that is bad. People are truly nice here. Rockford cares about extracurricular activities for the children and teens. Homeschooling is great here. So many wonderful opportunities.
- Something like the River Walk they have in San Antonio.
- Fixing our roads and bringing in more businesses.
- Better public safety and lower crimes. It is no secret that we are on the top of this list for Illinois. I don't think anyone would feel safe coming to Rockford for an evening or overnight activity.
- Repair roads and make lane markings more visible, at night or when it rains you can't even see the lane markings. I don't know how out of towners can navigate. Clean the streets of litter, doesn't look very welcoming - maybe misdemeanor arrestees could pick up litter as part of their sentencing. Advertise in Midwest Living magazine things to do on a weekend while in Rockford.
- Safer places to live and better schools. Revitalizing the downtown is a great idea, but the neighborhoods and surrounding areas should improve also. If the neighborhood around downtown is not good, there is no point improving it. Personally, I do not like to park off the main strip and go to places when there are always places for people to loiter and creep in the shadows.

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Safety and reducing stigma about Rockford. More positive events. Make the city prettier to look at. Increase social services so there are less homeless and mentally ill with nowhere to go. And please improve the school district. Get the kids involved in the community!
- Sidewalks on East State Street from hotels to restaurants. Better parking downtown. Concourse garage leaves bad impression. More attractive streets aping on South Main and West State Street.
- Bringing the Amtrak back and not spending money on stupid stuff like the roundabout at North Main and Auburn. Make the town a safer place and have more fun festivals to get the people active in being a part of our community like it was for Stroll on State and make it fun for outside people coming in.
- More city events like Stroll on State, City Market, and Dinner on the Dock. Those are the Rockford events that make me proud to invite my friends/family that are not from Rockford to go to. We're moving in the right direction and the Nay-Sayers have got it all wrong.
- A loop highway that leads directly into downtown area where many events are held. Hotels. More businesses and better shopping options downtown. Some kind of aesthetic standards for buildings need to be in place. Driving through town I cringe at the thought of what our buildings look like to visitors. There is so much architectural ugliness here!
- I recently moved out of the Rockford area and I realize now what visitors see. First, improve the roads. Secondly, create inviting gateways to the community. I've always loved the signs and landscaping using the purple coneflowers by State and I-90 exit. Rockford is surprisingly filled with many locations that out of town visitors would love. I think the RACVB does an amazing job of marketing my former city. I love Rockford and miss it, but thankful for the 23 years I lived there. Keep moving forward and don't let the people at CAVE (Citizens Against Virtually Everything) get you down. You are an awesome city! Love and miss you all.
- Better roads.
- Stopping the shootings.
- I think that improving the downtown area and improving the infrastructure would be good places to start. The City Market and Stroll on State have been great ways to introduce people to the potential of the area, but there are still empty buildings, roads/sidewalks are not in the best of shape, and let's face it, available municipal parking stinks. Rockford tends to be Reactive, not Proactive when it comes to improvements. Also, Stroll on State was held on Small Business Saturday, but some idiot decided to start blocking streets before 7 a.m. Those businesses that were open for regular Saturday hours lost all of that business. Making the area welcoming to visitors should not be at the expense of the residents, or the people whose shops are what are bringing people downtown. Keep the business owners involved and informed, they have a better idea of what can bring people in. Try and get more flower shows to come here, we have wonderful gardens, promote them more in the Spring & Summer.

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Keep the streets repaired. Less gang/criminal activity. Improve the schools - which can only be done by the vast improvement of home situations. Too many bad environments. So - you or I won't be able to really help. I'm very sorry about this. Churches' active involvement (not just Christian churches) & maybe good grandparents can be of great aid!!
- Improving and maintaining the roads and sidewalks and sweeping the streets free of litter.
- More family-friendly activity, beautification including less litter! Less crime/improved police force, better roads.
- If we want people to visit Rockford, go back home to suggest that others visit Rockford and get people back here at least annually, we have to be known as a safe and welcoming place, both in reality and in the media. It is, also, important to be connected and in the loop with other major areas. Amtrak service and inter-city bus services would make Rockford a great gateway for departure to places like Chicago, Madison, Milwaukee, Galena, St. Louis, etc., as well as, Rockford becoming a great destination from those other great cities. This could facilitate an increase in attendance for events that are held here and, also, increase visits to all of our local attractions. If we encourage people to leave their cars at home, we need a transit system that easily links visitors with all of the major attractions, airport, restaurants, and lodging in our city. Bike rentals should also be readily available to allow visitors and locals to reach all neighborhoods and attractions. Neighborhoods should be more walkable, so they can easily get around when they get off at their stop. Water taxis could link all of the hotels, restaurants, and events that are located on or near the river. What about "cultural and fun," hop on/hop off trolley routes that would link up with each other, offer day passes and service all of our major attractions, including Clock Tower Resort, Showplace 16, Magic Waters, City Market, Aviator's Stadium, Starlight Theater, Anderson Gardens, Midway Village, Alpine Hills, Tinker Cottage, Rockford Museum Park, Davis Park, the Coronado, Klehm Arboretum, West Rock, Metro Center, Children's Farm, etc. The trolleys could also have a stop in each major business district in order to connect people to some of our great, local restaurants and shops that are located in different neighborhoods. This could, also, increase ridership from those neighborhoods. There could be daily service from Memorial Day to Labor Day and weekend service only the rest of the year. Locals would also use this system. The stops for most all of our bus and trolley routes should be covered to protect passengers from the elements. There should be phone Apps for knowing when the next bus or trolley will arrive, a map of what is around each stop, etc. Think "user friendly"!
- Professional level jobs and safety.
- The police department in the city needs to follow policy and create police reports on all incidents needing reporting. The school system needs to follow policy on violence and be fair with all children. Word of mouth and Media on all of the violence in the city scares people away. I personally feel safe walking down any street in the city, however, many people are frightened. The more businesses that open and remain opened in the downtown area should continually bring more visitors. The loitering around the McDonald's on State and Jefferson needs to clean up. Also, more police traffic downtown will show that safety is

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

of utmost importance. The park district is the BEST!! Free movies in the park is great, music downtown from local singer songwriters with lighter rock, not too heavy, outside in the summer months of the cafes or on the river. If it was promoted, then the local musicians can sign up and people can watch for free down by the river couple days a week. Then it would bring more traffic into the small eateries.

- Clean up crime.
- More things to do, especially for younger people.
- More parking.
- More stuff to do besides eat and have children. That's all people do around here. Base yourselves off of Chicago.
- Sidewalks and pedestrian crossings near hotels, eating establishments, shopping. I know that the West End entrance has been spruced up, but the East End off I-90 is less than inviting. The ramp exit onto State Street is confusing and dangerous (yield/merge, need an extra lane). Brighten up the area and make it inviting - flower boxes and good lighting. Example, the beautiful baskets over Rockford's bridges. If the main roads into Rockford (State Street East and West, South Alpine) are inviting all the way in, people will feel safe to explore Rockford as they pass through, and maybe the next time, may make it a destination for the Burpee Museum, Discovery Center, BMO Events, Coronado Events, Magic Waters, etc. And not just stay cooped up in hotel and neighboring fast food establishments.
- I've been thinking about this for a very long time, okay check this out. How could/would it be to have a plaza downtown? A plaza big enough to have around a hundred people? It would include a beautiful Fountain (Tourism) (pictures) (people could say, hey! Meet me at the fountain downtown!). Tables so people can hang out. Wi-Fi. It could be surrounded by coffee shops or existing stores and restaurants around it. Live music would be great. Some sort of area where kids can play. Modern playground. TREES, TREES, TREES. You're welcome. Think about it. I'm pretty sure people would LOVE it.
- Less crime, more shopping, Portillo's more than just one.
- Better venues at our beautiful Coronado Theater & BMO Harris Bank Center.
- Take a look at statistics!! How many fatal shootings have we had in Rockford just in the 2015 year? The morale of the Police Department is at an all-time low and is justified. You can't bring visitors into the city if, as a resident, you don't feel safe.
- Sidewalks around the hotels and on State Street so our visitors will stop getting hit!!! And sidewalks in general along the main roads. Also, how about a sign ordinance? Ridiculous signs and billboards all over State Street - looks junky. Perryville has some nicer, less obnoxious signage. Also, Discovery Center is a huge draw, but they need some restaurants in that area. It would be nice, if we could attract some nice retailers, too (Whole Foods, Cherryvale). And, Milwaukee has that awesome public market. It would be awesome to have a year round Rockford City Market. Just thoughts.

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Beautification of gateways. Better signage. Positive Public Relations in area media. Positive energy and recommendations from all citizens.
- Maybe nice lamp banners along E. State. Maybe make the other entrance of Rockford on N. Alpine more welcoming too!
- I don't know.
- Downtown hotel.
- I lived in Rockford for 23 years but I am uncomfortable if I am downtown alone. The roads in Winnebago County are bad and worse in Rockford. The Sports Cores and golf courses are a definite positive. Empty homes and businesses look as though our area is not maintained.
- More friendly, safe, welcoming feel. I feel we have enough events and activities. Don't "feel" that hometown safety we use to have.
- More police!!
- Lower crime rates in Rockford. A casino in Winnebago County. More cooperation between Rockford and other villages/cities in Winnebago County.
- Safer neighborhood. Updated downtown. More security.
- Street lights! Taking so many out was a stupid move with little thought about the overall effect. Makes our city look poor with little actual monetary gain.
- Multiple downtown hotels. More frequent and smaller theme-based music and art festivals. Downtown has great resources to support these events. Development of neighborhoods and neighborhood businesses. Some are a regional draw: Stockholm Inn, Raskeller, Olympic, even Uncle Nick's.
- Quit putting money into making the place look pretty. Maybe invest in actually fixing the community and controlling the crime rate, then focus on spending all of our hard earned tax dollars on "pimping" your city. This city has its priorities out of line.
- Reduce crime, improve public schools, and reduce homeless walking around downtown.
- Thriving downtown with shops, better roads/infrastructure, and a railway.
- Several things that are already being done, revitalizing downtown, which has started with Friday night activities during the summer, we need more outdoor concert events, really miss On The Waterfront, renovate our old historical buildings, a key area I've noticed is across from Carlyle's. Also, a great new addition is the Rockford Brewery, with Dinner on the Docks; making safe connections with bike paths in Winnebago County to adjoining counties; most of all, getting railway connection accomplished.
- Innovative recreational activities, attractions, and train to/from Chicago.
- A revitalized downtown with restaurants and shopping, movie theaters, and entertainment. More restaurants and bars on the river. Build those and bring people to them, and people

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

will want to come to town for conventions, sports events, and entertainment. They will want to stay downtown in little boutique-type hotels. The hotels can't exist w/o revitalizing the downtown!

- Less crime. Cleaner neighborhoods.
- Revitalizing the downtown area and building better facilities in the downtown area, promoting museum and art/culture attractions, bringing better entertainment to the area, including more plays and entertainers. Rockford does not do near enough of this, and the City Council does little to solve any problems. They are more interested in lining their own and Mayor Morrissey's family pockets.
- Safety is key - I feel safe in many areas but some neighborhoods are bad. I was unaware of any talk of a whitewater course - that would be great. Last fall my family decided to canoe the Rock but couldn't find a local rental/shuttle facility. I would like there to be more activities for all age groups and better restaurants. Sometimes there are activities that I would enjoy but I don't hear about them in time or they are cost prohibitive. Better advertising? Mostly I become aware of things through a friend who works for the county. Fix downtown! This area REALLY needs better public transportation.
- It will be soon once there is more viable hotel space, not just on the tollway perimeter.
- I see that show on TV (Discover WI) and I wish IL had a show like that. I'm sure IL has a lot to offer even Rockford that people in southern IL or even WI don't even know we have in Rockford, IL. Rockford needs to get the word out somehow about all that we have!
- This town and county is a joke - less crime might help out a lot. We make the top 5 with every worse town survey to live in all the time. We have no jobs that offer people to come here that pays any wages for a family to live anymore. It's sad, a very sad situation and it has become a very ghetto place to live. That is why more and more people are trying to get out!
- More family- and kid-friendly events and activities. As a mom with 2 young kids, I'm always looking for new options of things to do with my kids, especially in the winter and easily accessible.
- Work on more safety!!!! Promote more neighborhood watch areas.
- More events like City Market and Stroll on State.
- Getting rid of the West side gang banging. Promote higher education and programs involving kids, community, and police right in the heart of these areas. Maybe a carnival of some sort for the police and community can really get to know who they are trying to help and help raise awareness of the way police are perceived and take out of the minds of that police are all bad because their parents raise them that way. Clean up the "ghetto"!!!
- Rockford needs to take control of the rampant crime that happens all over town. Their schools are just now heading in the right direction. Again, clean up the issues concerning a good quality education for their future citizens.

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Crime must get under control. I don't even want to go out and do things so I sure wouldn't invite family or friends to town. It feels dirty because there is so much crime.
- More attractions: bigger water park, big festivals, well-known bands (concerts), better name brand stores in the mall. Kids, teen, adult group sporting events, i.e., football, basketball, cheerleading, wrestling, soccer tournaments. Make Rockford seem more inviting in your advertising. Show the East side more and the downtown district. Put more businesses downtown, not just restaurants but not too many small boutiques. You need something that will last and thrive. BRING THE METRO that runs from here to Chicago. Bring in private investors if the state or city won't pay for projects. Just get things done.
- Stop the crime on the West side - everywhere really - but the West side is like the wild, wild, West with people shooting each other.
- Reduce crime, add more affordable attractions, and beautify downtown, more shops downtown, presence of security!
- Update or redo the Davis Park stage and have more outside concerts. Have more family-oriented events. A GameWorks or Dave & Busters.
- Upkeep of ALL areas of the area, particularly the City - Downtown, West Side. The whole world doesn't exist on Perryville.
- I would suggest more inviting entryways (East, West, North, and South), removal of unsightly billboards, uniform regulation of esthetic signage, positive conversation by residents, adequate/convenient/reasonable lodging, diversity in events for age and ethnic groups.
- Stop pushing so hard for downtown. It is a high crime area and many people will not go there because of it no matter what you say. You say you don't have money for so many things, yet you continue to try to force feed people on downtown, public money should be spent on public safety, raises and job security for city employees, crime fighting, enhancing the police force, and programs to help people in need. Make it a better place to live for your citizens. You should also show more appreciation for the many East side attractions already in place.
- More manufacturing companies, better roads, put neighborhood parks on vacant land, more police patrolling.
- Make safety a priority and tear down those ugly, vacant buildings.
- Downtown Rockford needs dramatic improvement and development, particularly, along our largest and most obvious resource, the river. Boating, docs, river-side restaurants, and shops. These are desperately needed to capitalize on the huge attraction we have, and to further capitalize on the fantastic state and local parks, recreational paths, and fairly low traffic. Cities like San Antonio, St. Charles/Geneva, Lake Geneva, and others have done much to bring Spring/Summer/Fall traffic to their waterfronts, no matter how large or small the body of water. We have a tremendous resource, and this kind of development needs to happen here.

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- Safety. Make Rockford safer.
- Strive to improve what works for Winnebago County and surrounding areas. Make sure the area is being advertised in Chicago, Milwaukee, and cities in Iowa. We need to let people know we are an area with beautiful parks, golfing, churches, and other culture activities. One of the biggest things is improving the education system. Without a good educational systems the rest will not be very relative to seeking permanent residents.
- Learn from other cities' planning and events. Less politics! Work to preserve the past as much as building new parking lots!
- Having a more appealing and safe downtown, organizing more activities and spreading the ones that are organized.
- Rockford would improve by leaps and bounds if we could attract higher paying jobs.
- Less negativity by many of the locals.
- Improving our sporting facilities, more activities/trails in Rock Cut and other parks, cracking down on crime/gang related violence, more advertisement.
- Safety and more concerts, festivals.
- More family-friendly things to do downtown. Easier access to places.
- Less crime. Making all of the most dangerous cities lists is not good. Less drugs on the street. We need some community drug rehab problems and more police.
- Sidewalks, bike paths connecting neighborhoods. Rockford is so cutoff from itself and other communities. I would like to see Rockford work with the county to increase the access for its residents. There are no paths in my neighborhood but I see so many people walking down my street (and it's a busy one!). The closest bus stops are a mile in each direction so I know that is one of the main things people are walking towards. One of my neighbors was hit by a car recently because there are no sidewalks even to shovel, it forces street walking even more and it becomes so dangerous. I have lived in Winnebago County my whole life but not always in Rockford. Surrounding communities are putting in bike paths and most have sidewalks everywhere. My husband and I are always talking about how much we wish we had a safer place to walk the dog or ride our bikes without having to drive to a bike path. It would offer so many benefits including health and safety. I hope this comment was not a waste of time and I also hope I am not alone. I love living in Rockford and look forward to raising my children here. I have already enjoyed the many things that have been promoted, changed, and updated in the city, especially downtown. I am excited to see the city continue to improve! Thank you.
- Cleaner city, more big attractions!
- A new city administration that supports its fire and police. A new city administration that actually cared about the advancement of the City of Rockford as a whole and not their personal agenda. Less greed and ignorance in our elected officials. More attention to what

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

the citizens actually want and not what the mayor and his friends feel will give them the most gain. Address our city services and infrastructure first and then adding tourist attractions. If we continue to take money away from the essential city services and infrastructure, no matter how much you put into new attractions, people will not come. You could probably find some extra cash for tourist attractions if we eliminated some of the 12 attorneys the city has on staff. No other city our size has anywhere near that. Yet, they still seek outside legal advice. Just get a competent city administration that is not interested in personal gain (our mayor can't even cheat the city out of money for his friends correctly) and everything else will fall into place.

- Improve school experience, decrease gun crime. Make West side and Southeast side safe for everyone all the time.
- I am not so much worried about visitors as I am about the people that live here daily. I would like to see the neighborhoods cleaned up, roads repaired, abandoned buildings torn down. I would like to feel safe when out and when I am home. I would like to see more shelters for the homeless. I don't like my tax dollars being spent on building more hotels or motels. I don't see the need for more hotels, motels, and convention centers. We spend so much money for surveys to bring more things to Rockford. How many people want to come here for more than a day? We have so much crime, our education system is not what it used to be. We have arenas, ball parks, sporting events, Metro Center, and now the city wants more. So many people that live here don't have the money to enjoy any of these venues. I think that it's sad that we don't seem to care about Rockford's people.
- Change in public perception.
- Affiliated baseball!!!!!!!
- Developed waterfront on the West side with water taxis.
- Get tough on crime. Celebrate the diversity that exists in the Rockford area. Work on turning unused factory buildings into newer high-tech manufacturing spaces. Create a sense of ownership in Rockford and get people away from the constant complaining that we are so very good at.
- Putting more attractions downtown.
- Better parking and no one-way streets.
- Rockford has the huge advantage of being right off I-90 in-between Chicago, Milwaukee, and Madison. This means we get a TON of travelers coming through Rockford every day, whether it be commuters or businessmen/women coming to Rockford to meet with locals about possible business opportunities. I find when travel, the first thing I notice about a town is the infrastructure. WE NEED BETTER ROADS. East State Street over by I-90 all the way west down to Fairview (State/Alpine area) is AMAZING. We need to make all major roads in Rockford like this (Alpine, Riverside, Perryville, Mulford, Harrison, 11th Street). Every time I drive down Alpine (north of Riverside), I feel like I'm going to get a flat tire. In my honest opinion, Rockford is already pretty attractive to other visitors. We have basically

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

every national chain-type restaurant in Rockford, plenty of gas stations, plenty of hotels. People like things that look good. I recently traveled the entire length of Illinois and all the towns/cities down South do not even compare to Rockford. This city has huge potential; we just need to focus on IMPORTANT things and not how to make the quickest buck. Thank you if you actually read all this. I have to be somewhere so that is why it's not that thought out and organized.

- Bring back the sports tournaments. Our kids were involved with travel sports teams. Rockford has some great facilities and can be even better. Clean up the major entrances into Rockford, publicize what Rockford has to offer in areas outside of Rockford. Get the word out. Offer the "fun" things for the younger adults to partake in. Whitewater rafting, love the idea of the winter tubing, (but keep it affordable for a family). Look at other cities and see what they are doing. Rockford needs to work with surrounding communities to draw people in, stop the political bickering amongst communities and work together!
- Revitalization of downtown Rockford would be a major step in the right direction. Sponsoring more attractions in the area could serve as catalyst to that effort. This wouldn't necessitate large expenditures. Having business establishments host events, on a frequent basis, that showcase local talent, i.e., music, sporting events, amateur theatrical skits (could be high school and college drama clubs), etc. Businesses could provide incentives such as food and refreshment specials to those patrons attending supported functions. Additionally, offering family activities such as ice skating (perhaps the BMO could avail their facilities on occasion) and giving the public the chance to meet local celebrities could likewise garner participation. Businesses that are directly consumer based need to promote the efforts of social organizations such as Transform Rockford, RVC, Rockford University, high schools, civic events, etc. Charitable organizations (such as churches) should also voice support and positive encouragement for community involvement within their congregations. Finally, I believe there needs to be a greater social media presence. The community should be notified of upcoming events well in advance, perhaps a social calendar should be tweeted at the beginning of every month/week. There should be plenty of photos posted following the event as well, to promote ongoing attendance. Through my experience working at a major advertising company in New York City, I know how important it is to get the word out. Social media is a great, if not the best, platform for doing this, as it generates a contagious enthusiasm and is something people constantly check. As a photographer and owner of my own business here in Rockford, I believe that photos can do something that words cannot. You can't capture the smiles and the joy on peoples' faces with words. If people see photos of their neighbors, classmates, co-workers having a great time at a community event, they will be more likely to attend the next one. I can't categorically state that a picture is worth a thousand words, maybe it is worth more. But I can attest to this: where words and text messages are frequently overlooked and ignored, seeing is believing. For my fiancé and I, this area is near and dear to our heart, as we have personally taken initiative to promote civic events such as Stroll on State, RVC's Rumble on the Rock, Ice Hogs, etc., through photography, which you can view on our twitter page (tuogiornphoto) or through my fiancé facebook (William Ciaccio). We are interested in getting more proactive with the Rockford

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

improvement process.

- Better police actions, quit having the Mayor and Co. Chairman arguing all the time, I suspect it is the Mayor's fault.
- I believe our community has a host of interesting things for residents to explore, but out of town visitors require a cluster of activity targeted to their needs to make a stay meaningful. A family may want to visit Discovery Center or Burpee Museum, but there are no family restaurants or kid-friendly places to stay downtown. People may be interested in visiting Anderson Gardens/Klehm, but the hotels are all on the Far East side. Local restaurants downtown are wonderful, but there is little to support daytime activities (shopping/retail experiences) for visitors. It's a cluster of options and activities that makes a destination attractive. Clustering would also allow us to invest in the physical appearance of entry points into our community, facilitate packaging of activities, and provide meaningful amenities and services for the appropriate target audiences.
- Like the question asked - Gateways. There is not much at all exciting about entering our city. West State and South Main are getting improved but there is still much to do to make them attractive and inviting. North Main (Rt. 2) is ho-hum at best and East State looks just like any other city in America with its many hotels and chain stores/restaurants. Not much can be done there, however, there is nothing that sets us apart either. Crime is a HUGE issue, our reputation in that dept., along with high taxes, is absolutely horrid, and have made me contemplate leaving several times myself. And I was born and raised here. This is NOT the same Rockford it used to be. I feel for any student having to come back here, to be honest. The opportunities just do not seem to exist (cool downtown or not).
- A better self-image, better-educated populace, less sprawl, more commitment to live music, updated Riverview Ice House, more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly community.
- Reduce crime and/or encourage our local media to provide a balance of negative and positive news reporting. I understand that "if it bleeds, it leads," and more negativity=more traffic=more \$\$\$, but this is becoming a nationwide problem - not just a local problem - and it's creating a fear that isn't justified. A hotel presence downtown is a must - that's where all our theaters and museums are, not to mention the Rock River, YMCA, Nicholas, etc. More lighting! The one thing I've noticed in traveling to other cities of our size is that they do a much better job of lighting their points of interest and downtown areas.
- Hosting more festivals and special events.
- Reduce crime, beautify entrances to city, especially on South and West sides.
- If they add air conditioning to the ISC expansion they would attract larger events. More events downtown, but really need more parking that is close to the events. Some Friday nights you can't even go down for dinner because there is no parking.
- Improved and modern wayfinding, pride and value for aesthetics, i.e., sweep roadways, add trees and flowers in medians, do not allow medians to be filled with weeds, litter removal, plant mature trees along streetscape not tiny trees, need great sidewalks, and community

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

spaces downtown. A clean city creates a positive culture. Higher standards for outdoor dining.

- Perception is a big issue. We need to continue to improve our image. Improve the gateways to the city. Work on the safety issue.
- Jobs, entertainment, PARKING, safety while visiting our area, hotel/motel ease of access, better routing signs throughout town.
- Keep working on downtown area and a hotel for downtown would be great.
- Lower crime. More unique, original shops and restaurants. Better public transportation.
- Upgraded hotel stock and comprehensive effort to attract tournaments and conferences to facilitate all of the necessary details in a coordinated manner (including competitive hotel rates negotiated in the suburbs).
- I would like you to promote Old Settlers Days more. It's our areas biggest Music Festival. You need to get behind this event and help promote it better!!!
- Make it easier for young entrepreneurs to start innovative small businesses, and increase arts and entertainment. Make downtown a cool place to live and work, young people will move in, start businesses and people from the outside will want to visit. Look at Austin's legalization of food trucks, it enabled creativity to thrive and now people travel to that city just to eat at the food carts. Rockford is not friendly to innovation or creativity.
- Reducing the gun-related crimes.
- Rockford is great community in which I have lived and worked for 71 years. I have had many occasions to work with the RACVB over the past 30+ years. They are a fine group of leaders who know how to get a task done. Working with sporting events on a major scale was a wise move. I don't believe it has diminished their attention to other events. John Groh is a strong leader when steering the boat through some tough waters. The staff is great, however, I shall single out Lindsay A who also knows how to make an event work. Applause with a BRAVO.
- More historical and environmental sites to visit. Better restaurants. A vital downtown (even more than there is now - going in the right direction). Less gambling places.
- More things to do. Fix up downtown, make it safer.
- Lower crime, get rid of gangs!
- Much more emphasis on the Arts, Culture, and the Environment we have with the rivers, forest preserves, conservation areas. We need to emphasize these strong attributes for our own citizens as well as visitors. We do not need to spend more dollars on attracting amateur sports facilities. We need to highlight these incredible attributes to residents of the suburbs and new employees of companies so that they will want to settle here and increase the percentage of young professionals and families. I like tourism but if you market us as a community regularly, the major athletic events you publicize will have a much better view of

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

us as a community and be more likely to attend and/or settle here. Enhancing our community is common work - we all have a roll.

- Perceptions are shaped in large part by resident's self-image. Our property taxes are already ridiculous. Adding another line won't help.
- Dedicated areas (for instance, State Street downtown or Midtown) for Art Galleries, shopping, restaurants, music. An "entertainment district." Rockford has a high percentage of artists and musicians. Making sure they are represented in developing districts will attract people from other cities.
- Sidewalks along "hotel row" on the Far East side out by I-90. In fact, sidewalks all over wherever there are none now. Letting businesses get built without any sidewalks was stupid to begin with. We also could use more bike lanes in shopping areas.
- The east side river walk between Jefferson Street bridge and the YMCA, relocating Cellusuede off of Madison Street.
- More public art and participatory arts festivals. Free parking downtown. Fun family runs. Identify a strength/asset and build from there.
- I just want to comment on a few things. I don't feel safe 100% of the time but I still love it here, I really do. Rockford has a lot of heart and soul, and a vibrant, diverse community full of a lot of young and motivated people looking to make a difference. I think change can be firmly planted by 2 things. A better school situation, and I think more tourism can be achieved by making our community enticing and enriching to entrepreneurs through more opportunities and benefits for startups, entrepreneurs, and local businesses. Not as a temporary thing for the summer or for the staple businesses, but as a major element that is a constant. Cities thrive around the local businesses that make it unique. I don't mean downtown, but everywhere in Winnebago County. The more difficult it is for local businesses to succeed the less 'unique' features Rockford has to offer any outsiders or insiders. Overall, I believe the RACVB IS doing a great job to focus on this more than ever before. But I always live my life knowing that MORE can always be done. My work is never over, and if I can say anything, this is what I would say! Thanks for a wonderful year.
- Heavily promoted cultural events. Creative, visual, performing Arts events and venues. Experiences over materialism, even in the buy local move. The experience is far more important than the goods.
- Less garbage in the media.
- Improve safety.
- A positive attitude with the many opportunities for the various interest groups at the tips of our tongues. We need to emphasize and celebrate the positives - rivers, parks/preserves, access to getting involved (huge draw for young people with degrees to be told you can walk into a job in our city and be a part of working boards and non-profits, that these young people can be leaders NOW vs. when they are 40+). Arts and Culture - our music and art

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

scene is vibrant, but the creation of a unified effort to be seen/heard is missing. Our arts and music groups need a meeting place where we can create and make music together in an unofficial way.

- Safer, more things to do, and more attractive.
- More diverse restaurants or eateries. Wide variety of inexpensive venues for local or regional musical or other talents. Everything seems to cost so much. I'm aware that booking acts or speakers cost \$\$\$, but speaking to a load of deep pockets, at \$100 per plate at Giovanni's really not positively affect the vast majority of Rockfordians. Highly paid Doctors, Lawyers, or Indian Chiefs, won't help the people who could really need the help. This is a POOR city that needs some things to entertain us on the sheep. Years ago some fire dept. group used to book the Metro and put on an oldie show or a Country night. It was around 15 some years ago. What happened to those dates? Thank you for what you are trying to do. Alam
- Less violent crime and bad press.
- Less crime, litter, rundown areas.
- Educate locals and regional families about all the things going on. Many families just do not know.
- Keep moving the direction you're going. Don't let the negative people affect your direction!
- I work in Chicago and Burbs. Every area has its issues but for the most part I am in areas, including Wisconsin, that are clean, populated by polite people and by people that take pride in their homes and themselves. I make the commute because I cannot make the same salary in Rockford. We need more people that are genuine in their desires to make Rockford better. My wife and I have discussed many times moving to the burbs or into Wisconsin and the conversations are becoming more serious in tone so now, unless things change dramatically, in terms of cleanliness, education, and overall safety, it will just take the right job offer and we are gone.
- High quality, excellent lodging in the downtown (near downtown attractions such as performance arena (BMO), Coronado, cultural corridor, museums, and some of the best restaurants in the city).
- Getting rid of the negativity the Mayor and Chief bring to this city and to focus on getting crime down in the city instead of the politics going on at city hall.
- Promote more cultural activities available through local organizations.
- Less violence. More sit down family-oriented restaurants, less fast food, more family-friendly activities.
- A safe community that is not continually on every list of high crime areas. A downtown that is safe and fun. Quality grocery stores like Whole Foods. Streets without craters. A new mayor and police chief without personal agendas that listen to the tax payers.

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

- While much of the work lately seems to be centered around bringing visitors to the area, at the same time, I hope some of these projects also bring opportunities for the community to take advantage of them. For example, having the new downtown sports complex be open to the public a couple days out of the week for open gym.
- More signage of places to see and visit. Signs of city pride, i.e., invest in better flags/signs of upcoming events on light posts on all bridges; invest in plants/flowers on bridges.
- Unique shopping and dining. Sporting events. Unique venues. Things that no one else has that makes us different. Then rail into Chicago.
- Promoting Rock Cut Park, promoting Midway Village and Anderson Gardens. Free concerts at Sinnissippi Bandshell (RSO type). Have a Ravinia-type venue, outdoors in summer for concerts - upscale and in safe area.
- Walkability and bike ability or better public transit. Unique shopping experiences. More riverfront attractions, especially restaurants closer to downtown area. Downtown small music venue nicer than Mary's, but not as nice as Coronado. Like Shank Hall in MKE. Oh and well maintained street lights, plantings, etc. Just drive downtown St Charles. Their street looks awesome. Thanks!
- Attractions and events. And having a hotel within walking distance of downtown sporting and cultural events to encourage people to stay and do more in our community.
- Clean up the political corruption and crime in the city. The mayor and the conga line of freaks that we have as "leaders" are not doing the city any favors.
- Making both the new downtown sports center and the current Indoor Sports Center multisport (include turf sports and hard court for both). The Rockford area is large enough to support two multisport facilities. What is planned is a disservice to the people.
- For starters, keeping them away from downtown. You'll get visitors for tournaments but most will only come once. When they see what a crap hole our downtown is and our "exceptional" crime and violence rate, they won't come back. I have talked with many, many families who are in programs out at the ISC and NONE of them will bring or even let their daughters drive downtown if you move the program down there. You will basically be killing a community program that has been around for 30 years! PLEASE do not move all the court sports downtown!
- A train from Chicago to downtown. More going on downtown, restaurants, and shops.
- More commercial attractions and more appealing accommodations downtown.
- Better roads and a cleaner city. More sidewalks and transportation to/from Chicago.
- Why do we have to do things for visitors? What about the residents already living here? Personally, I go to other places for things to do. Place I don't worry about crime rates.
- Better and bigger indoor entertainment businesses and facilities (it's cold here 9 months out of the year), i.e., trampoline park, Main Event, Dave & Busters, aquarium. I think the

ONLINE SURVEY COMMENTS

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

downtown nightlife area has potential but there needs to be a mall area of a block or two of just restaurants and bars, (also where one can walk around in that area with to go cup beers/alcohol drinks like Savannah, GA - that would be awesome). Need create a place for sport tournaments so people have a reason to come. Once they come, then you need a reason for them to want to come back.

- Continue to develop main entry corridors and highways/streets leading into Rockford's downtown. Continue to replace abandoned rundown houses/buildings with green areas or new business sites. Share the great history of Rockford's beginnings with promoting small as well as large museums downtown. Work with the governor to get the rail station downtown to bring visitors to the community.
- Getting rid of the gangs and revitalizing Rockford. Upkeep and looking face is extremely important.
- Clean up the rundown and vacant private and commercial properties and roads, especially the West side! It's really sad looking over there! There has also been a lot of crime and violence which doesn't help the image of Rockford. Rockford reminds me of Gary, IN ... would you want to stop by Gary for a visit?
- Lower crime rate; a public university; respect for ALL PEOPLE; respect for authority; no inter-governmental fighting; tolerance, in fact, acceptance of all regardless of who they are.
- I am against moving the adult volleyball leagues from ISC to the downtown location. I do not feel that there is enough parking close enough to the building to ensure safety of the player paying to play. Six blocks is a long way to park away from a venue at night, especially when it's an all-women's league.

Appendix F

DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF ENTIRE SAMPLE BY SURVEY TYPE

The following tables present results of the entire survey sample which includes ALL paper returns and ALL online replies (in which at least two survey questions were answered), unlike the survey analysis in Chapters 2-5 which is restricted to online replies where respondents indicated that they lived in a Winnebago County zip code.

While the first table shows the combination of the paper and online responses, the three subsequent tables show the sample's demographic characteristics by survey method.

ALL SURVEY RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS AND COMPARISON TO CENSUS

Characteristic	All Respondents		2013 Census Percent ²
	Number	Percent ¹	
Gender			
Male	564	35.4%	51.7%
Female	1,028	64.6%	48.3%
Age (years)			
18-29	70	4.3%	19.3%
30-39	179	11.1%	15.4%
40-49	273	16.9%	18.5%
50-64	649	40.2%	26.8%
65 and older	443	27.4%	20.1%
Race/Ethnicity			
White, non-Hispanic	1,431	89.9%	71.2%
Black, non-Hispanic	67	4.2%	11.9%
Hispanic	35	2.2%	11.7%
Asian	16	1.0%	2.4%
Multi-racial	21	1.3%	2.5%
Other	22	1.4%	0.3%
Education			
Less than high school	25	1.6%	12.9%
High school diploma	221	13.7%	33.3%
Some college, no degree	368	22.9%	23.8%
Associate's or technical degree	250	15.5%	8.6%
Bachelor's degree	442	27.5%	13.8%
Graduate/professional degree	302	18.8%	7.5%
Presence of Children < 18 in Household			
Yes	417	25.9%	33.6%
No	1,194	74.1%	66.4%

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

²Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Gender percent based on ages 18+ and education on ages 25+

SURVEY RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS
BY SURVEY METHOD AND COMPARISON TO CENSUS

Characteristic	Mail Respondents		Online Respondents		2013 Census Percent ²
	Number	Percent ¹	Number	Percent ¹	
Gender					
Male	355	38.1%	209	31.7%	51.7%
Female	577	61.9%	451	68.3%	48.3%
Age (years)					
18-29	26	2.7%	44	6.6%	19.3%
30-39	81	8.6%	98	14.7%	15.4%
40-49	126	13.3%	147	22.0%	18.5%
50-64	371	39.2%	278	41.6%	26.8%
65 and older	342	36.2%	101	15.1%	20.1%
Race/Ethnicity					
White, non-Hispanic	820	88.1%	611	92.4%	71.2%
Black, non-Hispanic	55	5.9%	12	1.8%	11.9%
Hispanic	21	2.3%	14	2.1%	11.7%
Asian	10	1.1%	6	0.9%	2.4%
Multi-racial	12	1.3%	9	1.4%	2.5%
Other	13	1.4%	9	1.4%	0.3%
Education					
Less than high school	22	2.3%	3	0.4%	12.9%
High school diploma	171	18.2%	50	7.5%	33.3%
Some college, no degree	221	23.5%	147	22.0%	23.8%
Associate's, technical degree	160	17.0%	90	13.5%	8.6%
Bachelor's degree	203	21.6%	239	35.7%	13.8%
Graduate/professional degree	162	17.3%	140	20.9%	7.5%
Presence of Children < 18 in Household					
Yes	204	21.6%	213	31.9%	33.6%
No	740	78.4%	454	68.1%	66.4%

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

²Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates. Gender percent based on ages 18+. Education percent based on ages 25+

SURVEY RESPONDENT LENGTH OF RESIDENCE
BY SURVEY METHOD AND COMPARISON TO CENSUS

Length of Residence in Winnebago County	Mail Respondents		Online Respondents		2013 Census Percent ²
	Number	Percent ¹	Number	Percent ¹	
Total ¹	904	100.0%	592	100.0%	---
Less than 1 year	6	0.7%	6	1.0%	3.1%
1-4 years	39	4.3%	30	5.1%	---
5-9 years	47	5.2%	28	4.7%	---
10-19 years	111	12.3%	69	11.7%	---
20 years or more	701	77.5%	459	77.5%	---

¹Total of respondents who answered this question and live in Winnebago County. Percent based on this total.

²Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2013 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (based on population 1 year and older)

SURVEY RESPONDENT LOCATION OF EMPLOYMENT BY SURVEY METHOD

Location of Employment	Mail Respondents		Online Respondents	
	Number	Percent ¹	Number	Percent ¹
Total ¹	936	100.0%	667	100.0%
Winnebago County	467	49.9%	445	66.7%
Outside Winnebago County	102	10.9%	105	15.7%
Not currently employed	367	39.2%	117	17.5%

¹Total of respondents who answered this question. Percent based on this total.