

NEWS RELEASE

Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau



RACVB's Forest City Beautiful Initiative Gains Momentum through Additional Funding, Partnerships *Community Foundation of Northern Illinois awards \$38,617 grant funds to project aimed at enhancing downtown Rockford*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 22, 2016

ROCKFORD, IL — The Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (RACVB) announced today a new collaboration with the River District Association (RDA) to advance beautification efforts for its **Forest City Beautiful** initiative, a multi-year program that aims to beautify downtown Rockford.

Since its inception in 2014, the initiative's focus has been to improve downtown civic spaces by restoring public landscapes, installing and planting 75 planters and installing 9 public art sculptures for local residents and visitors to enjoy. Now in its third year, the program expands to further enhance downtown streetscapes, way-findings, walkways and public areas within the River District.

Today, RACVB and the RDA announced that the Community Foundation of Northern Illinois (CFNIL) continued their ongoing support of Forest City Beautiful by contributing \$38,614 from the **Bengt & Mary Kuller Endowment fund**. The grant will help to offset the costs of purchasing and installing 5 benches, 5 bistro tables, 13 chairs and installing way-finding signs (directional signage) throughout the downtown. This is the third consecutive year that the CFNIL has granted money to the initiative. In addition to the funding support this year, they also contributed a total of \$70,000 in 2014 and 2015.

"The Forest City Beautiful project has helped to dramatically change the perceptions of our region by providing cleaner and more attractive spaces, which has led to a better quality of life for our residents and richer experiences for visitors," said Tana Vettore, director of destination development for the RACVB. "Our partners, including our great partnership with Rockford Sharefest, have certainly allowed us to do more, grow faster and show the community the value of creating spaces people can enjoy. We are extremely grateful and excited to continue this mission to love on our city even more in the years ahead."

Several of the newly funded features will begin to appear throughout downtown Rockford in the coming months. Two bistro tables and chairs will be placed at the southwest corner of State and First Streets and three will be placed on the north side of State Street between First and Madison Streets (one will be handicap accessible.) Five benches will be strategically placed between Third and Water Streets. Additional trash receptacles will be placed along State Street along with directional way-finding signage for added conveniences.

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“It has been very rewarding for the Community Foundation of Northern Illinois to take part in supporting the various stages of this project,” Jon Bates, President for the CFNIL, said. “We are very happy that the RACVB and RDA chose to partner this year to keep the progress moving forward in the right direction.”

Since the mission of the Forest City Beautiful initiative is in line with the River District’s goals to unite, advocate and promote efforts to create a thriving business and residential community in Rockford’s downtown neighborhood, the RDA was excited to collaborate.

“We’ve already seen such incredible results from the beautification efforts that have recently taken place. More business owners are continuing to invest in the downtown corridor, community events are increasing by demand and there is a significant amount of people walking, biking and enjoying life outdoors in the River District,” said Leah Tuneberg, executive director of the RDA. “We want to continue bringing awareness to the areas where development will continue to flourish and strategies will continue to be implemented.”

“Our community already has so much to be proud of with the many efforts aimed at creating dynamic public spaces in our region. It’s great to be able to lean in with our partners who continuously show their love for community - which is the most powerful of motivators in driving economic development,” said RACVB president/CEO John Groh. “These collaborative efforts of our elected officials, citizens and community groups are the foundation to the success of this project, and others moving forward.”

Forest City Beautiful is supported by the generous donations of individuals and organizations in the community. In 2014, RACVB seeded the initiative with \$80,000 from its board-designated Wendy Perks Fisher Fund for Innovation and from an initial commitment of \$110,000 from the City of Rockford. In addition to seed funding from the City and RACVB, more than \$120,000 has been raised to support the multi-year beautification effort. In addition more than 2,500 Sharefest volunteers have given their time and talents to this project.

Funders and sponsors to date include:

Forest City Green Sponsor

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

Blue Oat Grass Sponsor

- Illinois Bank & Trust
- Reno & Zahm
- LaMonica Beverages with Darrell & Bobbie Snorek
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- Rockford Housing Authority
- Bill Doran & Company
- David & Colleen Anderson Family
- Mary Ann Smith

Purple Coneflower Sponsor

- WilliamsMcCarthy LLC
- Urban Equity Partners
- Rockford Bank & Trust

Those interested in donating to the initiative can get more information at www.forestcitybeautiful.com or by contacting Tana Vettore at 815.963.8111 or tvettore@gorockford.com.

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

***River District Association** has a focus to unite, advocate and promote efforts to create a thriving business and residential community in Rockford's downtown neighborhood. The River District consists of business areas and residential neighborhoods east and west of the Rock River that encompass Rockford's growing downtown.*

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

The mission of the RACVB is to drive quality of life and economic growth for our citizens through tourism marketing and destination development. www.gorockford.com

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