



ROCKFORD AREA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

QUARTERLY REPORT

FY21, Q3

January - March, 2021



The mission of the Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau is to drive quality of life and economic growth for our citizens through tourism marketing and destination development.



gorockford.com



RACVB MISSION STATEMENT

The Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau drives quality of life and economic growth for our citizens through tourism marketing and destination development.

PRIORITY RESULTS

CREATE ECONOMIC WEALTH

The Rockford region experiences growth in tourism's leading indicators.

ENHANCE TOURISM PRODUCT

The Rockford region offers unique and marketable experiences and venues that meet or exceed visitor expectations and enhance quality of life for citizens.

ENGAGE CONSTITUENTS ON BEHALF OF TOURISM

RACVB tourism marketing and destination development efforts have broad support among key stakeholders.

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT/CEO



The third quarter of our Fiscal Year 2021 was filled with optimism and been one of preparation as we look ahead to overcoming the pandemic and a safe return to tourism and travel.

Over the past year, we have experienced what happens when travel and tourism go away. We've seen just how essential tourism is to our communities, our local businesses and partners. RACVB is determined to work collaboratively to bring back the positive economic impact of tourism through a proven strategic regional approach to sales, marketing, positioning, support of our partners and destination defining product development.

As you'll see in this quarterly report, our ability to remain agile and ready to stimulate economic impact creatively remains at the core of our focus. You will read more on these examples, such as securing the first-ever Women's Division 1 WNIT Tournament, beautification efforts CRE8IV and Forest City Beautiful, our first-ever Restaurant Week, group sales initiatives and more.

As we move forward, we will continue to lead the way in the safe return to tourism and work collaboratively to find new sustainable funding sources that will help to make our region competitive in the tourism industry.

Be well,

John Groh
RACVB president/CEO

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RACVB NEWS

WELCOMING DIVERSITY - MOVING FROM STATEMENT TO ACTION

The Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau is an organization that promotes the Rockford region and proudly works to welcome visitors to our community. We believe diversity is one of this region's greatest attributes.

As an organization and as a community, we have more work to fully embrace the celebration of diversity and efforts focused on equity and inclusion. While we cannot take ownership of the work of all organizations, we absolutely can and should do our part to help our region be welcoming to all.

Last summer, the RACVB made a public statement supporting our Black community. Nearly immediately, we knew that was not enough. We knew then and affirm now that we must move from individual statements to commitments with actionable steps and accountability. To move toward further action, RACVB's board and staff, under the guidance of board members

Jennifer Furst, Tiana McCall, and John Penny, and team members Martesha Brown and Austin Taylor, committed to listening.

Over the next few months, we gathered in person and virtually with individuals from our minority and LGBTQ communities asking for input and feedback on every area of our operation. The feedback group represented civic, business, and nonprofit sectors with representation from public health, law, advocacy, marketing, hospitality, small business, the immigrant community, and more.

What they shared was helpful, heartfelt, and challenging. Based on the feedback group's input, we developed nine commitment statements, and our board unanimously adopted policy changes that collectively constitute

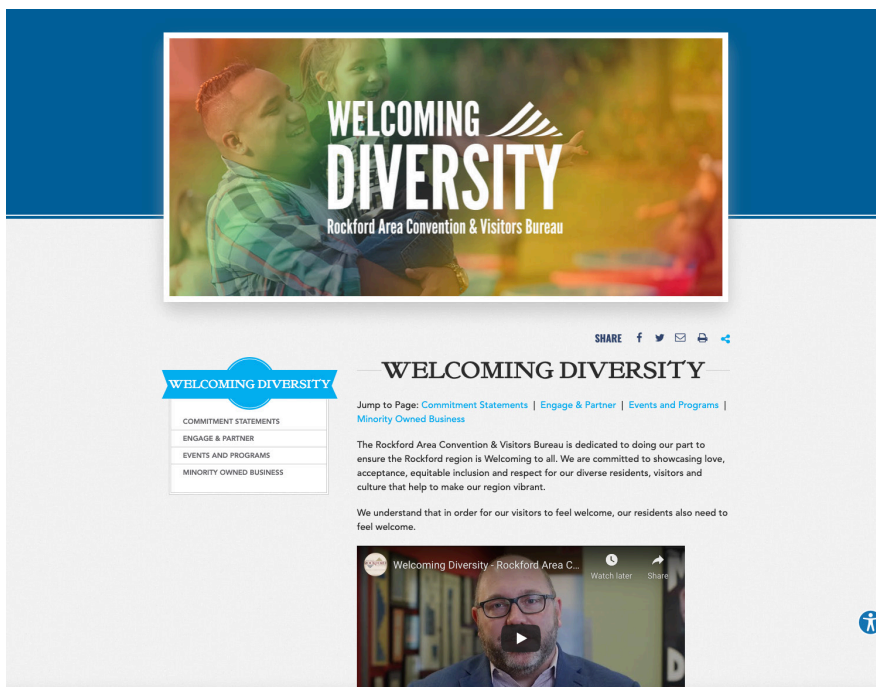
WELCOMING DIVERSITY



Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

RACVB's Commitments to our Diverse Community" to "Welcome Diversity." Following the board's approval, our staff worked together and developed specific actions and measurements to ensure we live up to our commitments. Working with our partners and being even more intentional in our interactions and daily activities, our entire team will work to fulfill our commitments.

Since making this commitment, our team has put action behind our statements launching the Welcoming Diversity micro-site, www.gorockford.com/welcoming-diversity. The micro-site acts as a central hub on the many ways visitors and community members can experience the RACVB's commitment to our diverse populations included but not limited to: a listing of events celebrating cultural diversity, ways you can engage and partner with the RACVB, opportunities to support minority-owned businesses, and how the RACVB plans to continue our commitments. In future quarters we look forward to continuing these efforts and reporting back on how we are taking a stand to further embrace and celebrate newfound opportunities to become better allies as we "Welcome Diversity."



Welcoming Diversity microsite homepage on GoRockford.com website

MARKETING

MEDIA MENTIONS & PLACEMENTS

RACVB attracts visitors to the Rockford region by working with regional and national media outlets. Pitches focus on economic development, tourism marketing and travel public relations.

- Chicago Parent** - "38 Chicagoland Museums Families Should Visit At Least Once"
(Discovery Center Museum included in list of Children's Museums category)
- PureWow** - "The 10 Most Charming Small Towns in Illinois"
(Rockton showcased including Dairyhaus and Blackhawk Farms Raceway)
- Insurify** - "Insurify's 2021 Best Cities for New Homebuyers Awards"
(Rockford named best city for new homebuyers in Illinois)
- Sports Illustrated** - "From 'A League of Their Own' to Building a Museum of Their Own"
(Highlighting the International Women's Baseball Center)



Sports Illustrated article

SOCIAL MEDIA

TOP FACEBOOK POST
 January 7 | 30,844 people reached

GoRockford
 Published by Andrea Cook · January 7 ·

In partnership with the [City of Rockford Government](#), the RACVB is set to host its inaugural To-Go Rockford Region Restaurant Week from Monday, January 18 through Sunday, January 24. To commemorate Restaurant Week, join us in ordering to-go to help celebrate and support the hardworking local food and beverage service industry.

During this year's To-Go Rockford Restaurant Week, establishments will offer their most creative carryout, delivery and to-go packages for patrons of all palette types. These specials include a variety of exclusive menu items, themed take-out options, limited time promotions, and more. Residents and visitors are encouraged to venture out safely following state health guidelines for pick up and carry-out, or enjoy delivery to participate from the comforts of home.

Check out <https://www.gorockford.com/restaurant-restaurant-specials/> for a list of specials!
[#GoRockford](#)

395 49 Comments 140 Shares

FACEBOOK
 440,773 people reached
 (146 posts)
 29,724 followers

INSTAGRAM
 75,711 impressions
 (23 posts)
 12,769 followers

LINKEDIN
 1,153 followers

TWITTER
 77,670 impressions
 (99 tweets)
 6,545 followers

EARNED MEDIA (January - March, 2021)

RACVB works to attract visitors by directly pitching stories to media. We focus pitches on economic development, tourism marketing and travel public relations.



\$422,260

Ad equivalency



45,649,888

Total impressions



2,547

Number of mentions

NEW YOUTUBE VIDEO
 March 23 | Rockford Region Restaurants

9:53 / 7:09



YOUTUBE

13,505 video views

784 subscribers

TO-GO ROCKFORD REGION RESTAURANT WEEK

The inaugural **To-Go Rockford Region Restaurant Week**, organized by RACVB, occurred from **January 18 - 24, 2021**. During the week, local residents and visitors were encouraged to buy local from favorite restaurants, brewers, wineries, and retailers. 38 local restaurants and shops provided specials and deals for the week, and RACVB also gave people the opportunity to win \$500 to a local restaurant with the Dine Local Year-Long Prize Package. The RACVB found great success from this first-ever local food and beverage promotion featured predominantly on GoRockford's social channels (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram). The To-Go Rockford Region Restaurant Week page on the GoRockford.com website received 10,776 pageviews, and 99,828 people were reached on Facebook through various posts about the event.

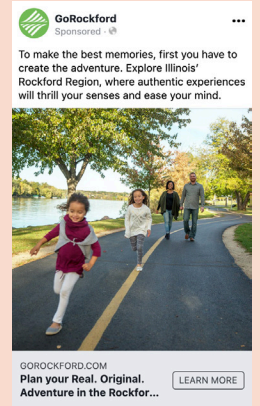


Following the success of Restaurant Week, the RACVB marketing team worked with local videographer, Pablo Korona, to highlight **Rockford's restaurant scene**. The video features four uniquely delicious restaurants in the Rockford region: Crust & Crumbles, John's Restaurant & Pizzeria, Shogun Japanese Restaurant and Little Nick's BBQ.

ADVERTISING

Leisure Advertising

RACVB worked with Madden Media to create a series of digital ads for the leisure market through Google Responsive Displays and Facebook Remarketing ads. Imagery reflected outdoor fun locations in the Rockford region.

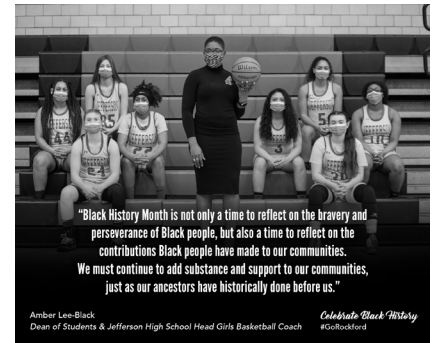


To-Go Rockford Region Restaurant Week

RACVB partnered with Channel 13 WREX to create a PSA to promote the inaugural To-Go Rockford Region Restaurant Week. The promotions ran in January leading up to the event week.

WELCOMING DIVERSITY

The RACVB is committed to Welcoming Diversity and Inclusion in the Rockford region. As part of that effort and commitment, our team celebrated **Black History Month** in February and **Women's History Month** in March with strategic promotions on social media highlighting the significant work that has been accomplished from our locals doing great work each and every day. Social media posts during Black History Month highlighted local citizens and featured a quote from each person of their response to the question, "What does Black History Month mean to you?"



Black History Month post featuring Amber Lee Black

GOROCKFORD.COM WEBSITE STATISTICS

MOST SEARCHED TERMS

- Wine Lifestyle
- Rockford IL
- Rockford Restaurant Week

MOST SEARCHED EVENTS

- To-Go Rockford Region Restaurant Week
- Snow Park at Alpine Hills
- Hot Wheels Race to Win Exhibit

MOST SEARCHED LISTINGS

- Anderson Japanese Gardens
- Burpee Museum of Natural History
- Discovery Center Museum

Website Traffic Sources

55% Organic	12% Social	4% Paid	23% Direct	6% Referrals
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63,634 total website visitors

SALES EFFORTS & RESULTS

SALES HIGHLIGHTS

In January, the RACVB received word that Triple Crown Sports was looking for a site to host their **Postseason WNIT Division I women's basketball tournament**.

Because of the pandemic, WNIT saw a need to change the format for their March 2021 tournament. Rather than having all of the games hosted by participating schools, they sought four sites throughout the country to host eight teams per regional location. The RACVB sales team produced a bid proposal featuring the UW Health Sports Factory as the host venue to host the March 18-22 tournament. We were thrilled to receive notice a few weeks later that the Rockford region would be one of the four regional sites alongside tier 1 cities Charlotte, Fort Worth, and Memphis. The tournament was a great success and could not have done without the help of many community partners. Partners included local hotels, restaurants, RAVE, BMO Harris Bank Center, Northern Illinois University, and the Rockford Park District. The tournament resulted in over 800 room nights and created an estimated economic impact of \$403,000.

The RACVB began hosting the **Illinois State Bowling Congress (USBC)'s Women's and Open Tournaments** last quarter. The RACVB last hosted this tournament in 2016. The tournaments



WNIT Tournament at UW Health Sports Factory

secured for 2021 span over eight weekends, starting February 27, and will run through May 2. at three locations. These host locations include Cherry Bowl (Rockford), Don Carters (Rockford), and Park Lanes (Loves Park). This tournament is one of the region's first large-scale sports tournaments to return during the COVID-19 pandemic and expects to see over 400 teams throughout the matches.

The RACVB registered and is preparing for two upcoming virtual trade shows to help bring more business to the Rockford region. First up is the **Sports Huddle Up 2021 Virtual Trade Show** that will include 16 hours of rights holder RFP presentations. Sports ETA is hosting their 2nd **SPORTSBIZ Xchange** May 18-20. This virtual networking event connects the sports events & tourism industry, featuring business appointments and industry networking opportunities for its members.

BOOKING HIGHLIGHTS

Triple Crown Sports 2021 Post Season Women's WNIT

March 17 - 21, 2021
800 room nights
\$403,000 EEI

G3X Lacrosse/Team Illinois Lacrosse Summer Invitational Tournament

July 9 - 11, 2021
1,000 room nights
\$532,724 EEI

All In Volleyball 2021 McHenry County College VB Invitational

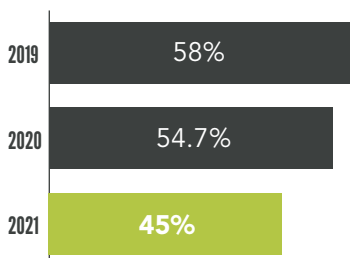
August 20 - 21, 2021
225 room nights
\$135,202 EEI

EEI Total = **\$1,070,926**

Kicking the calendar year off with USBC Bowling and the WNIT Post Season Basketball Tournament has brought much hope and excitement to the safe return to tourism. The RACVB sales team will continue to work closely with our local partners and tournament directors to help secure a strong calendar of events lined up for 2021.

WINNEBAGO COUNTY HOTEL STATISTICS (January - March 2021)

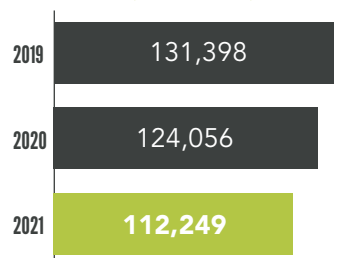
Year to Date Hotel Occupancy



Year to Date Average Room Rate



Year to Date Room Demand (rooms sold)



Year to Date Revenue (in millions)



DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT QUARTERLY UPDATE

During the third quarter, a lot of work has been taking place behind the scenes to wrap up the Merry and Bright Holiday celebration and prepare for the upcoming spring and summer season.

As the holiday season closed out, volunteers once again gathered for the annual "Back in the Box" day, where all of the holiday decorations were collected, inventoried, and stored away until next fall when Santa's Workshops will begin again. While this year was not a traditional Stroll but did include more decorating the ever before, volunteer from the community still completed over 626 hours to decorate the downtown for the holiday season.



Back in the Box Day volunteers
Destination Development

Established by RACVB in 2014 to improve downtown civic spaces and stimulate business development and community pride, Forest City Beautiful started with restoring public landscapes, planting bright seasonal containers, creating inviting seating areas, adding trash receptacles, installing wayfinding signs, and public art. Since that time, the program has blossomed to include initiatives such as iconic placemaking features such as the "Rockford" letters at Davis Park, management of over 700 street banners, and our CRE8IV Transformational Art murals. During the third quarter the Destination Development team has been working on crucial elements of Forest City Beautiful, including maintenance, location review of the over 90 planters changed seasonally to add color and visual appeal for downtown visitors and shoppers.

While the pandemic put the CRE8IV Mural Transformational Arts Program on a brief hiatus, 2021 will bring more artists and more public art to Rockford and our surrounding communities. In March, the team launched a formal call to artists for both murals and sculptures in preparation



Downtown Rockford mural painted by Chris Silva

FOREST CITY BEAUTIFUL

Forest City Beautiful is a solid example of the power of public private partnerships. We are grateful for our partners in this effort including, but not limited to:

City of Rockford
Orthollinois
Illinois Bank & Trust
SwedishAmerican
BMO Harris Bank
Williams McCarthy
MembersAlliance Credit Union
Rockford Area Realtors
FehrGraham
Woods

We also extend deep gratitude to Rockford Sharefest for their years of logistical and volunteer support in installations throughout the area and especially at Davis Park.

for a bright and vibrant return to beautification, starting this Spring 2021. A special thank you to our partners, donors, and sponsors who help to support the Forest City Beautiful initiative.

RACVB BOARD & STAFF

RACVB BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jennifer Furst (Chair)
FurstStaffing

David Anderson
Anderson Japanese Gardens

Kevin Frost
City of Rockford

Jay Sandine
Rockford Park District

Todd Cagnoni (Vice Chair)
City of Rockford

Marcus Bacon
Radisson Hotel & Conference Center

Tiana McCall
Rock Valley College

Carol Schuster
University of Illinois College of
Medicine Rockford

Noel Nickel (Treasurer)
SwedishAmerican

Nathan Bruck
City of Loves Park

John Penney
Painters District Council No. 30,
Local 607

Darrell Snorek
Lamonica Beverages

Einar Forsman (Secretary)
Rockford Chamber of Commerce

Bryan Davis
SupplyCore

Ted Rehl
City of South Beloit

Chad Anderson
Anderson Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram

Patricia Diduch
Village of Rockton

RACVB STAFF



John Groh
President, CEO



Lindsay Arellano
Vice President of Sales & Service



Martesha Brown
Director of Advancement



Andrea Cook
Senior Manager of
Marketing & Communications



Kara Davis
Executive Assistant



Heidi Gee
Office Coordinator/Receptionist



Elizabeth Miller
Creative Services Manager



Joanne Nold
Director of Finance
& Administration



Kristen Paul
Director of Destination Development



Austin Taylor
Group & Event Services Manager

