

ROCKFORD AREA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

QUARTERLY REPORT

FY23, Q4
April - June, 2023



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



Reflecting on the past fiscal year, we celebrate our achievements while embracing the work ahead. Our primary goal remains revitalizing the tourism industry and restoring momentum to our destination.

Although many indicators point to a strong recovery, challenges persist in certain areas of hospitality and tourism. In 2022, we experienced significant growth and momentum in hotel demand, but there has been a slight decline in 2023, particularly in weekday corporate travel. This is expected to continue until 2025. Consequently, RACVB and our partners must explore innovative approaches to promote our destination, focusing on midweek occupancy by leisure visitors, sports groups and meetings clients.

Securing and hosting sports tournaments is a hallmark for RACVB and the region. In the past quarter, we welcomed events such as the USA BMX Midwest Nationals, USA Wrestling's 16U National Dual Championships, and the Upper Midwest Lacrosse's collegiate Midwest finals. Our exceptional facilities, strong reputation and track record of **success position the region** well in the amateur sports tourism market. However, competition remains fierce.

Looking ahead, we are actively developing a comprehensive **Destination Master Plan**. In the coming weeks, RACVB will host industry-specific focus groups, community town hall sessions, and stakeholder interviews. We also encourage residents to take our **Resident Survey**, sharing their thoughts on the future of tourism and its impact on the region. The survey can be taken at www.gorockford.com/survey.

As summer turns to fall, our destination development staff is diligently planning for **Stroll on State**. We are committed to upholding our tradition of bringing the community together and offering visitors a compelling reason to experience our destination.

Our team is grateful for the opportunity to serve as the destination marketing and management organization for our community. **We are focused on the future**, diligently implementing our action plan, and remain confident in our ability to increasingly make our region even more attractive for residents and visitors.

Be well,

John Groh
RACVB president/CEO

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RACVB NEWS

CRE8IV PUBLIC ART INITIATIVE TRANSFORMS CITY

CRE8IV, an initiative of the Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, returned for its fourth season to create eight impressive large-scale murals in the City of Rockford and one in the Village of Rockton during the CRE8IV: transformational ART festival. Throughout the month of June, local and visiting artists came together to create vibrant murals, bringing the **total number of CRE8IV murals to an impressive 42**. Notably, artists have ventured into new areas, including Auburn St., E. State St. east of Alpine Rd., and the newly designated **ART ALLEY** in downtown Rockford, which features a captivating large-scale mural, a series of smaller murals, and will feature new overhead lighting.



Local muralist Dustin Eckhardt paints a playful floral scene in Rockton.

Vibrant art scenes in cities contribute to distinctive public spaces, adds authentic character, and enhances overall appeal for both residents and visitors. Over four seasons, CRE8IV has had a remarkable influence revitalizing neighborhoods and **transforming public spaces into captivating areas** that enrich our everyday experiences.

In addition to the locations noted above, other mural projects were commissioned and completed on North 2nd St. across from Nicholas Conservatory & Gardens, at the N. Main/Auburn St. Roundabout, and in downtown Rockford on E. and W. State Streets. Furthermore, the Village of Rockton added a second CRE8IV mural, marking the beginning of a park and small music stage.

Another placemaking project supported by RACVB - and led the Rockford Area Arts Council - is the ARTFORIMPACT program which involved wrapping a total of **55 signal boxes** with a series of mini murals. These artistic displays are now located throughout the City of Rockford in each of its 14 wards, showcasing artwork from local artists and past CRE8IV participants.



Artist Jesse Melanson's mural depicts a geometric forest scene at Goodwill in Rockford.

In addition to murals, Matthias Neumann, a sculpture artist and architect based in New York City, created a new piece as part of his renowned "Xabana" series.

This series, which has been exhibited in international venues in Portugal and Italy, now features Rockford's very own "Xabana" sculpture, proudly built, painted, and installed at the corner of E. State & N. Third St. Furthermore, two new sculptures have been installed along North Main St. between W. State and Mulberry Streets, adding to the **13 existing CRE8IV sculptures** that will remain on display until 2024.

To celebrate CRE8IV, an **Art Alley pARTy** took place on **June 8**, featuring live mural paintings, interaction with CRE8IV artists, a DJ, food trucks, and artful games with prizes.

The artists participating in CRE8IV were carefully selected through an **open Call for Artists** process and a local committee-led selection process. In total, **192 artists**, both local and from around the country, with a few international participants, submitted proposals. The selected artists represent a diverse group with unique backgrounds and artistic approaches.



CRE8IV 2023

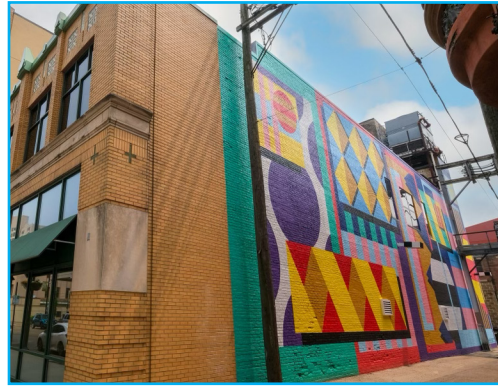
- ★ 9 New Murals
- ★ 3 sculptures
- ★ 192 Applications
- ★ 17 Sponsors
- ★ 1 Alley party
- ★ Mural Dedication/Flag Raising

DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

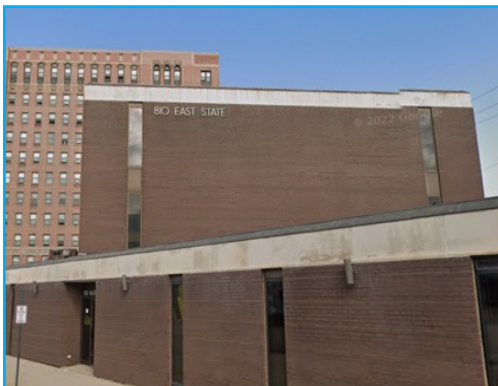
CRE8IV MURALS BEFORE AND AFTER TRANSFORMATION

Residents and visitors are in awe over the new murals added during the **CRE8IV: transformational ART festival**. Ordinary large-scale walls are selected to be transformed into beautiful pieces of art. This year's murals spotlight scenes and imagery portraying the area's natural beauty including plants, florals, animals and butterflies native to the region, themes of belonging, hope, peace and love; diversity and inclusion; youth education, and support for our nation's veterans.

"Every year we are excited when applications start coming in. We end up totally blown away by how many artists want to come to Rockford for the first time and how many want to return because they had a great experience," said Kristen Paul, RACVB vice president of destination development. "It truly is our incredible community that makes this possible. **I remember our first year; we hoped to find support for five projects but ended up with support for nine—now we are on year four and will be completing our 42nd mural.** That doesn't happen without an amazing community that supports art and dreams big."



Chase Melendez paints the colorful shapes on the new Rockford Art Alley, located at 308 W. State St. in Rockford.



Artist duo "OhYa Studio"—Ray Mawst & Brian Kehoe—creates a message of unity for Rockfordians.



The mural honoring local veterans depicts a soldier saluting, poppies and an F35 fighter jet.



Thank you Our Sponsors & Supporters

Bill Doran & Company
Brubaker Family Foundation
Collins Aerospace
City of Rockford
Dean Alan Olson Foundation
Goodwill Industries of Northern Illinois
Kjellstrom Family Foundation
Painter's Union District 30, Local 607
RACVB Board
RACVB Foundation Board
River District Association
Rockford Area Arts Council
Rockford Community Bank
The Harding Family Foundation
& Becky Morris
Winnebago County
Village of Rockton



A woman puts her hula hoop skills to the test during the CRE8IV Art Alley pARTy on June 8, 2023.

MARKETING

MEDIA MENTIONS & PLACEMENTS

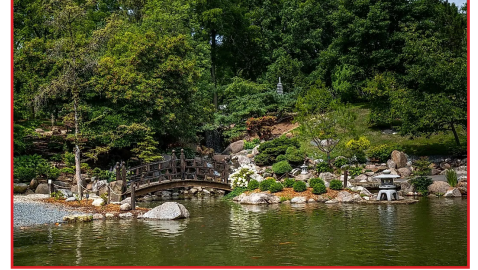
RACVB garners media mentions and placements to draw visitors to the Rockford region. Collaborating with regional and national media outlets, our team diligently seeks and shares captivating stories and compelling content centered experiences in Rockford, visiting the region and destination development. This concerted effort aims to inspire and motivate visitors to explore the area and its offerings.

Above the Wake helps autistic kids get active through wakeboarding



West Rock Wake Park is featured in a USA Today Outdoors wakeboarding article.

8 Ideal Destinations For A 3-Day Weekend In Illinois



World Atlas' three day itinerary in Illinois includes Anderson Japanese Gardens in Rockford.

NATIONAL MEDIA MENTIONS

USA Today Outdoors Wire: "Above the Wake Helps Autistic Kids Get Active Through Wakeboarding" (4/27/23) 63,082,264 and \$233,404 Earned Media

World Atlas: "8 Ideal Destinations for a 3-Day Weekend in Illinois" (6/16/2023) 216,000 impressions and \$1,998 Earned Media

SOCIAL MEDIA



FACEBOOK

245,744 Page Reach
32,384 Followers



INSTAGRAM

58,835 Page Reach
15,667 Followers



LINKEDIN

1,871 Followers



TWITTER

15,716 Impressions
6,496 Followers

Top Facebook Post

June 5, 2023 | Reach 36,310



GoRockford

Jun 5 · 🌐

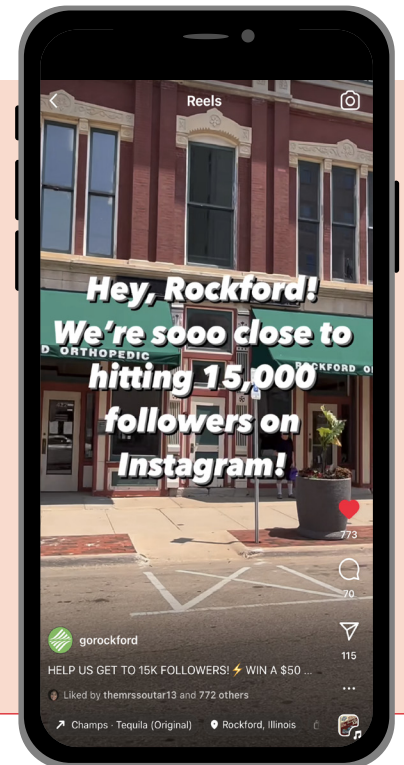
Woah! What a knockout!

Check out this new mural at 202 W. State St. in downtown Rockford. [Ouizi #CRE8IV](#) [#GoRockford](#)



1.8K

115 comments 67 shares



EARNED MEDIA (April - June, 2023)

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



\$1,046,592

Ad equivalency



133,782,264

Total impressions



1,504

Number of mentions

MARKETING

SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

This quarter there were three major social media campaigns that had impressive engagement.

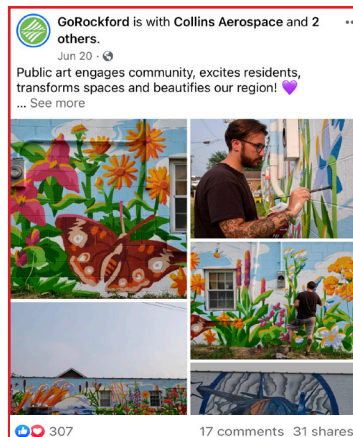
APRIL

As the month of April ushered in warmer weather, our focus shifted towards showcasing the vibrant local businesses and energetic nightlife in Rockford. Our campaign successfully reached an impressive audience of **120,733** viewers, with **3,666** individuals actively engaging across 12 posts.



MAY

During the month of May, we celebrated National Travel & Tourism week by acknowledging the outstanding individuals in Rockford's hospitality industry. Our campaign garnered the attention of **41,559** viewers, with **547** individuals actively engaging across 8 posts.



JUNE

June proved to be an exhilarating month as we directed our attention to the CRE8IV mural festival, highlighting the progress of captivating murals and the lively CRE8IV Art Alley pARTY. Our campaign captivated an astounding audience of **133,096** viewers, with **5,737** individuals actively engaging across 11 posts.

MARKETING EFFORTS

During this quarter, the marketing department was actively engaged in promoting Rockford and the region as a highly sought-after summer destination. In May, the department organized a travel rally at RACVB's office as part of **National Travel and Tourism Week**. As a week's activities, staff conducted surveys among residents and business owners to create a compelling video campaign showcasing what they admire about the Rockford Region.

In June, there was a focus on promoting **CRE8IV: transformational art** and Rockford as an artistic community. This

involved conducting informative interviews with artists to raise awareness about this remarkable initiative.

Additionally, the marketing department played a crucial role in facilitating an

enlightening **NPR podcast** titled **"Under Rocks"**, which featured an interview with a local artist and a captivating mural tour to showcase the diverse range of murals in the Rockford Region.

Furthermore, the marketing department actively participated in the **Rockford Juneteenth** planning committee and had the honor of presenting the Rockford Community awards to deserving recipients during the Rockford Juneteenth celebration.



GOROCKFORD.COM WEBSITE STATISTICS

MOST SEARCHED TERMS

Things to Do in Rockford, IL

Rockford, IL

Events in Rockford, IL

MOST SEARCHED EVENTS

Old Settlers Days

Sinnissippi Music in the Park

Rockford City Market

MOST SEARCHED LISTINGS

Anderson Japanese Gardens

Burpee Museum of Natural History

Discovery Center Museum

Website Traffic Sources

73.8%
Organic

13.6%
Direct

6.7%
Paid Search

3.2%
Social

117,722 total website visitors

SALES EFFORTS & RESULTS

SPORTS AND MEETING SALES HIGHLIGHTS



Youth wrestlers compete in the 16U National Dual Championships on June 9, 2023.

RPS 205 CHICAGOLAND SUMMER SHOWCASE

In collaboration with RPS 205, the Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (RACVB) supported the RPS 205 Athletics Chicagoland Summer Showcase. This NCAA Live event brought together varsity boys basketball teams from Illinois, Kentucky, and Ohio, providing an opportunity for talented students to showcase their skills in front of college coaches from across the country. The showcase, held at the UW Health Sports Factory from **June 16-18**, had an economic impact of **\$435,465**.

USA WRESTLING 16U CHAMPIONSHIPS

The 16U National Dual Championships, organized by USA Wrestling, the Illinois Kids Wrestling Federation (IKWF), and the Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau, took place at Mercyhealth Sportscore Two in Loves Park. This event, which attracted **5,000 athletes** and spectators, contributed to 2,650 room nights and an estimated impact of **\$1,676,871** for the region. This

tournament has become a recurring event, building on the success of the previous year.

UPPER MIDWEST LACROSSE

Another notable event held in Loves Park was the Upper Midwest Lacrosse Conference (UMLC) tournament. This tournament featured the top sixteen collegiate level club teams from Division I and Division II. Teams from 10 different states participated, bringing around **1,000 athletes**. The estimated economic impact of the UMLC tournament on the region.

UNITED STATES WHEELCHAIR RUGBY

The Rockford Region and UW Health Sports Factory recently hosted the USWRA National Championship for United States Wheelchair Rugby. This event, organized by the Oscar Mike Foundation, brought together **18 teams** and attracted over **500** attendees. The estimated economic impact of the championship was approximately **\$244,000**.

USA BMX MIDWEST NATIONALS

The USA BMX Midwest Nationals, held at Searls Park, is a long-standing event in the Rockford Region. This year's competition, which took place June 16-18, saw the participation of **1,016 athletes** and drew a total attendance of **4,200 per day**. Approximately **2,844 room nights** were booked during the event, highlighting its significance in the community. These events not only highlight the vibrant sports scene in the Rockford Region but also contribute significantly to the local economy, attracting participants and spectators from near and far.

BOOKING HIGHLIGHTS

Forest City Fever

April 17– 21, 2024

April 18– 20, 2025

April 17–19, 2026

1500 Combined Room Nights

Estimated Economic Impact \$825,407

2024 52nd Snowmobile Convention

November 1–3, 2024

80 Room Nights

Estimated Economic Impact \$38,552

R2V2 Conference

October 14–15, 2023

50 Room Nights

Estimated Economic Impact \$48,510

2024 Maximum Cheer and Dance

March 21–24, 2024

570 Room Nights

Estimated Economic Impact \$248,547

Future Hotel Room Nights Booked During the Quarter: 17,598 with an economic impact of \$7,811,672.

Number of Bookings: 61

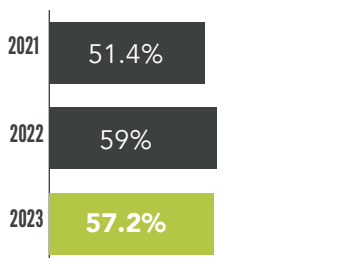


The Oscar Mike team competes at the USWRA National Championship at the UW Health Sports Factory.

WINNEBAGO COUNTY HOTEL STATISTICS

January - June 2023

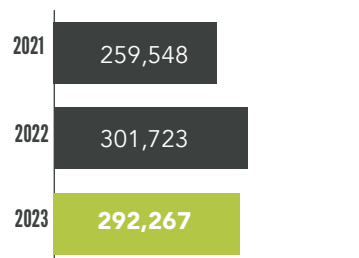
Year to Date Hotel Occupancy



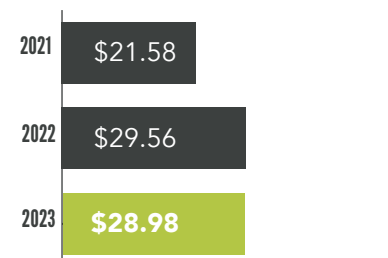
Year to Date Average Room Rate



Year to Date Room Demand (rooms sold)



Year to Date Revenue (in millions)



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