



GOROCKFORD QUARTERLY REPORT

Photo Credit: Kevin Haas, Rock River Current

FY25, Q4 April - June, 2025

GO ROCKFORD
Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

The mission of GoRockford is to drive quality of life and economic growth for our citizens through tourism marketing and destination development.

gorockford.com



GoRockford Mission Statement

GoRockford 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

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

A NOTE FROM THE PRESIDENT/CEO



As we close out fiscal year 2025, I'm filled with pride and gratitude reflecting on the progress we've made together as a vibrant community. This year was not just about growth, but about the power of shared purpose and momentum. The launch of **IRONMAN 70.3 Rockford** in June marked a transformative moment for our city. More than **10,000 visitors** and **2,500 athletes** from around the world came to experience Rockford, supported by over **1,500**

volunteers and countless neighbors who created unforgettable memories, from "Sprinkler Alley" to hotel-based ambassadors across town.

Our success extended far beyond race day. In April, we were honored as the **2025 Sports Tourism Organization** of the Year by **Sports ETA**, a recognition of our team in driving economic growth through sports tourism. And thanks to **Insurance King**, a custom Rockford-branded NASCAR vehicle hit the track before **1.1 million viewers**, putting our GoRockford brand on a national stage.

We also continued to invest in what makes Rockford shine year-round. Through **Forest City Beautiful**, we enhanced Rockford with seasonal plantings and placemaking elements.

Our **Made for Rockford** initiative expanded its reach, from welcoming new residents to telling Rockford's story to a national audience through PR and talent recruitment.

On the sales front, our team booked over **22,000 future hotel room nights** and **\$13.7 million in projected economic impact** this during this quarter alone.

GoRockford social channels earned reached historic levels with June 2025 marking our highest-ever monthly views.

Thank you for your continued partnership in shaping a thriving, vibrant destination. We're just getting started.

Be well,

John Groh
GoRockford President/CEO

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GoROCKFORD NEWS

IRONMAN 70.3 ROCKFORD DEBUTS



A triathlete leaps into the Rock River for the swimming portion of IRONMAN 70.3 Rockford on June 22, 2025.

Rockford proudly hosted its first-ever **IRONMAN 70.3 triathlon**, on **June 22, 2025**, welcoming more than **2,500 athletes** and **10,000 visitors** from **45 U.S. states**, and **36 countries**. Competitors faced **70.3-mile course**, including swimming, biking, and running through the Rockford region.

Planning took nearly two years and required coordination between GoRockford, IRONMAN, and local, county, and state agencies. GoRockford is grateful for their support in making this event a success.

During the race, the community showed up to support athletes by cheering them on and some took it upon themselves to help cool them off. A stretch of Harlem Blvd. and National Avenue quickly earned the nickname **"Sprinkler Alley"** from athletes, and it became a symbol of the community spirit that defines us. Many athletes credited those sprinklers and the cheering neighbors with getting them across the finish line.

Over **1,560 volunteers** including a team of hotel-based ambassadors helped visitors navigate the city. As temperatures soared into the 90s, local agencies adapted swiftly, ensuring hydration, shade, and cooling stations were accessible.

The event demonstrated Rockford's capacity to host large-scale, world-class events.

Hotels hit **98% occupancy** on race night, showing high economic impact.

This marks just the beginning. Rockford's three-year IRONMAN agreement is expected to bring more than **\$25 million** in economic impact through 2027 and the next IRONMAN 70.3 Rockford is set for **June 14, 2026**.

GOROCKFORD WINS PRESTIGIOUS SPORTS TOURISM AWARD

GoRockford was honored as the **2025 Sports Tourism Organization of the Year** by the **Sports Events & Tourism Association (Sports ETA)** on April 23 at the Sports ETA Symposium in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Chosen from more than **80 national entries**, GoRockford earned the award for its significant impact in attracting and hosting sporting events that drive economic growth and strengthen Rockford's reputation as a top-tier sports destination.



Lindsay Arellano, Vice President of Sales and Service and Kara Davis, Senior Sales Manager accept the Sports Tourism Organization of the Year award at Sports ETA in April.

ROCKFORD RACES ONTO THE NATIONAL STAGE AT NASCAR RACE

On **April 19**, Rockford captured national attention as more than one million **NASCAR** fans tuned in to the **Xfinity Series North Carolina Education Lottery 250** at **Rockingham Speedway** to see a Rockford-branded car speed around the track. Wisconsin native **Josh Bilicki** drove the custom car featuring the GoRockford logo, Rockmen Guardians, Rockford Peaches emblem, the Symbol sculpture, and a Sock Monkey, showcasing of Rockford's cultural and manufacturing legacy. The car was sponsored by Dan Block, owner of Rockford-based **Insurance King**, who began partnering with Bilicki in 2019. For NASCAR's first race at Rockingham in over 20 years, Block used the high-profile opportunity to promote his hometown. The **32,000-seat stadium sold out**, and the race was broadcast live nationwide on the CW Network.

The race car design not only celebrated Rockford's identity but also drove traffic to gorockford.com and generated buzz on social media. GoRockford also sent out nearly 500 Josh Bilicki hero cards after



The Rockford-themed car prepares for the race at Rockingham Speedway on April 19, 2025.

the race to NASCAR enthusiasts around the U.S. Fans were encouraged to tune in, cheer on the Rockford-theme car, and share shout-outs using Rockford's presence during this high-speed spotlight moment. Viewership for the race was up 19% from last year's tenth race and viewership peaked at **1,187,000** total viewers.

SALES EFFORTS & RESULTS

SPORTS AND MEETING SALES HIGHLIGHTS



Dr. Kat Williams announces the Women's Baseball World Cup during a news conference at Rivets Stadium in June.

Rockford Raptors, were held at **Mercyhealth Sportscore I and II** on **April 4-6** and **April 11-13**. The first weekend brought **154 teams** and an estimated **10,000 attendees**. The second weekend included **308 teams** and over **7,000 attendees**. Teams hailed from throughout the Midwest including Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Indiana, and more. Over **5,000 room nights** were booked for the tournaments and total estimated economic impact is **\$3.4 million**.

USA BMX NATIONALS RIDES TO ROCKFORD

From **June 13-15** the **USA BMX Midwest Nationals** returned to **Rockford BMX at Searls Park**, drawing over **1,500 athletes, 3,500 spectators**, and generating more than **3,000 room nights**. With a history of hosting the event for over 30 years, Rockford once again delivered an exceptional competition weekend that brought an estimated economic impact of **\$800,000** to the region.

WOMEN'S BASEBALL WORLD CUP COMING IN 2026

The **International Women's Baseball Center (IWBC)**, in partnership with GoRockford, has been awarded hosting rights for the **2026 World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) Women's Baseball World Cup – Group Stage**, taking place **July 22-27, 2026**, at **Rivets Stadium**. This marks the first time Illinois will host this prestigious global tournament and only the second time it has been held in the United States.

TABLE TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIPS RETURNS

The quarter started off with the return of the **2025 National Collegiate Table Tennis Championships**, hosted by the **National Collegiate Table Tennis Association (NCTTA)**. Held at **U.W. Health Sports Factory** on **April 3-6**, this prestigious competition featured **250 student-athletes** from more than **50 colleges and universities**, battling for national titles in singles, doubles, and team events. The tournament returned after 12 years. Nearly **25 U.S. States** were represented and the tournament brought in an estimated economic impact of **\$479,253**.

PURI CUP EXPANDS

Two thrilling weekend, two soccer tournaments, the **Puri Cup College Showcase** and **Puri Champions Cup** were back and bigger than ever. The youth soccer tournaments, hosted by

BOOKING HIGHLIGHTS

World Baseball and Softball Confederation

July 22-27, 2026
1,000 room nights
Estimated Economic Impact \$3 Million

USA Ultimate College Division 1 Championships

May 22, 2026
1,450 room nights
Estimated Economic Impact \$750,000

Tough Mudder 2025

August 23-24, 2025
500 room nights
Estimated Economic Impact \$520,000

National Colligate Table Tennis Association

April 9-12, 2026
800 Room Nights
Estimated Economic Impact \$460,000

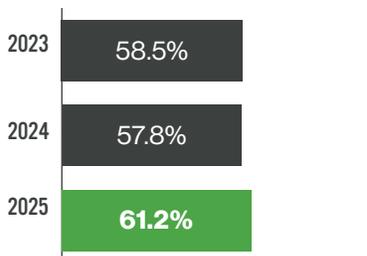
Future Hotel Room Nights Booked During the Quarter: 22,725 with an economic impact of \$13.7 Million
Number of Bookings: 43



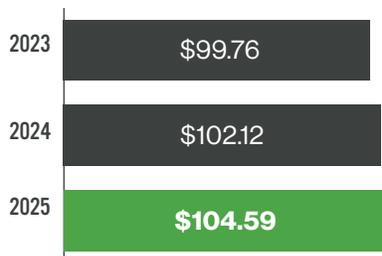
Competitors face off during 2025 National Collegiate Table Tennis Championships in April.

WINNEBAGO COUNTY HOTEL STATISTICS Jan - June, 2025

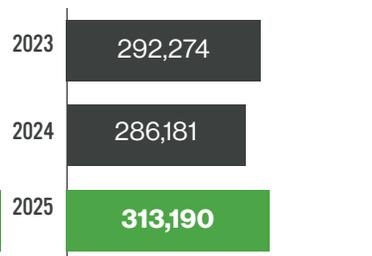
Year to Date Hotel Occupancy



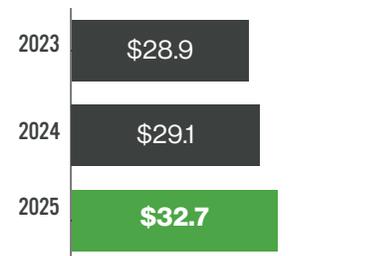
Year to Date Average Room Rate



Year to Date Room Demand (rooms sold)



Year to Date Revenue (in millions)



MARKETING

MEDIA MENTIONS & PLACEMENTS

GoRockford 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.

NATIONAL MEDIA MENTIONS

Explore.com: *“The Best Things To Do In Illinois That Steer Clear Of Chicago, According To Travelers”* (06/16/2025) 108,000,000 impressions and \$3,996,000 Earned Media

Chicago Tribune: *“2025’s Hottest Housing Markets Mean Great News For Midwest Sellers”* (04/11/2025) 122,000,000 Impressions and \$4,514,000 Earned Media

TimeOut Magazine: *“The best day trips from Chicago for an exciting adventure”*(04/07/2025) 15,000,000 Impressions and \$555,000 Earned Media

The best day trips from Chicago for an exciting adventure



TimeOut Magazine lists Rockford locations including Discovery Center Museum, Anderson Japanese Gardens (pictured) and Prairie Street Brewing Co. for a Rockford day trip itinerary in their April article.

SOCIAL MEDIA



FACEBOOK

4.4 Million Views
46,526 Followers



INSTAGRAM

1 Million Views
22,397 Followers



LINKEDIN

2,732 Followers



TikTok

1.1 Million Post Views
5,427 Followers

Top Facebook Post

June 9, 2025 | Impressions 361,128



EARNED MEDIA (April - June, 2025)

GoRockford works to attract visitors by directly pitching stories to media. Pitches are focused on economic development, tourism marketing and travel public relations.



\$27,600,000
Ad equivalency



2,980,000,000
Total impressions



1,400
Number of mentions

MARKETING

SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

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

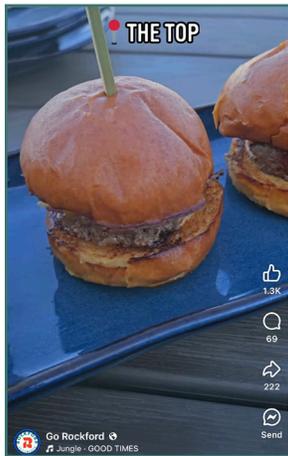
APRIL

Promoting spring attractions, spring blooms and seasonal openings was the focus of April. A post about **Mrs. Fisher's** hot bag sale brought recording breaking views (almost **500,000**) to TikTok and earned over **1,500 followers**. April's posts brought in **914,488 viewers** between channels, and an increase of **68%** from 2024.



MAY

The main focus of May was **National Travel and Tourism Week** (see sidebar). Another focus was promoting farmer's markets and outdoor fun such as rooftop dining (left) and outdoor events such as **Rockford City Market**. The biggest post of the month was goat hiking at **Gretta's Goats** with **822,000 views** between channels (including TikTok). May's posts had **1.6 million viewers** between Instagram and Facebook.



JUNE

Outdoor cultural events were one focus of June, promoting Pride events, **South Main Mercado** and **Juneteenth**. A big social media focus was **IRONMAN 70.3-Rockford**, promoting where to spectate and where to eat and go for visitors. GoRockford's marketing team created a welcome ad for **IRONMAN** visitors garnering over **60,000 impressions** and a low cost per click of **\$0.12**. Views between channels for June was **2.8 million**, the highest views per month in GoRockford's social media history.



NATIONAL TRAVEL AND TOURISM WEEK; INFLUENCER VISITS

NATIONAL TRAVEL AND TOURISM WEEK

National Travel and Tourism Week returned **May 4 - 10**. The national event celebrates travel's role in driving economic growth. GoRockford's celebration included awarding local partners in the hospitality industry with peer-nominated Hospitality Hero Awards. This is the third year of these awards, and GoRockford delivered awards and baskets to partners six recipients. The 2025 winners are:

- ★ **Warren Franklin**, Anderson Japanese Gardens
- ★ **Samantha Hochmann**, Tinker Swiss Cottage Museum
- ★ **Ryan Woodrow**, Rockford IceHogs
- ★ **Kim Vertiz**, Elora Home Interiors
- ★ **Willion Henderson**, Embassy Suites
- ★ **Elvis Bilich**, Hard Rock Casino Rockford (pictured)



INFLUENCERS

GoRockford worked with two influencers to promote Rockford in different ways. **Mapping Our Tracks**, focused on outdoor adventures visiting **Gretta's Goats**, **Anderson Japanese Gardens**, and dining outdoors at **Prairie Street Brewing Co.** Their reel received **730,000 views** and over **8,332 likes** on Instagram.

Sassy Confetti, a Chicago-based influencer focused on a girl's getaway. Her itinerary included **Beyer Stadium**, **Rock Cut State Park**, dining at **Hidden Creek Estates** and **Abreo**, and nightlife at **The Music Box**. She delivered two reels with a combined **39,000 views**.

FAM TRIP

In partnership with Illinois Office of Tourism, GoRockford hosted a FAM trip of 39 international writers visiting Illinois for IPW Chicago 2025 in June. Their Rockford experience included a visit to **Laurent House**, a Frank Lloyd Wright gem; a tranquil walk through the stunning **Anderson Japanese Gardens**; and a delicious lunch at **Fresco at the Gardens**. The writers were from Europe and Asia.

GOROCKFORD.COM WEBSITE STATISTICS

MOST SEARCHED TERMS

- Rockford Events
- Made for Rockford
- Restaurants in Rockford, IL

MOST SEARCHED EVENTS

- IRONMAN
- Old Settlers Days
- Mimosa Festival

MOST SEARCHED LISTINGS

- Anderson Japanese Gardens
- Rockford City Market
- Olson Lake Beach

Website Traffic Sources

39.6% Organic

34.6% Paid Search

10% Direct

2.7% Paid Social

1.2% Display

210,484 total website visitors

DESTINATION DEVELOPMENT

FOREST CITY BEAUTIFUL BLOSSOMS IN ROCKFORD



Planter pots full of color line the streets of downtown Rockford.

This spring and summer, GoRockford continued its work through the **Forest City Beautiful** initiative, an ongoing public beautification effort designed to elevate the visual appeal of Rockford.

The initiative was launched in **2014** and has transformed the downtown region. Launched as part of GoRockford's long-term vision to enhance public spaces and support tourism, Forest City Beautiful is a collaborative effort that partners with city agencies, community organizations, and sponsors. The program has installed over **150 decorative planters**, and flower beds that line E. State Street.

The project brings vibrant landscaping, seasonal plantings, hanging flower baskets, and streetscape enhancements including banners that inspire community pride and create a more inviting experience for residents and visitors alike.

The program may be at its peak during the spring and summer months, but the planter pots are maintained year round. Holiday-themed decorations and greenery are added in late fall leading up to Stroll on State and the holidays.

Paired with the **CRE8IV: transformational art** initiative, which added 57 murals and 16 sculptures to the region, Forest City Beautiful is a placemaking effort to bring community pride to Rockford.



Forest City Beautiful includes planter beds, pots, hanging plants, banners and cafe tables and chairs in Rockford.

2025 SPONSORS

Forest City Beautiful could not be possible without the financial support of local community partners. We are grateful to these sponsors for their support of this beautification effort. *

David & Colleen Anderson Charitable Foundation

Bergstrom, Inc.

Coyle-Kiley Insurance Agency
WIFR

LawnCare by Walter

Rockford Park District

LuAnn and John Groh

Franchesco's Ristorante

Rockford University

Community Foundation of Northern Illinois

Wipfli

BMO Center

Bobbie Holzwarth & Norm Lindstedt

Carol & John Schuster

Thomas McNamara

Jim Pirages

Marcia Mueller

Dickerson & Nieman Realtors

KMK Media Group

Geno lafrate

Jennifer Furst

Greg Watt

Rocktown Adverntures

Northwest Illinois Alliance of Realtors

Maurice West

Jim & Pam Keeling

Justin & Theresa Kegley

Sue & Vint Buckwalter

Patricia Diduch

Kim Keefe/Compass

Sue & Vint Buckwalter

Leslie West

*Sponsors listed as of 06/30/25

MADE FOR ROCKFORD

LEADERSHIP ROCKFORD



Whitney Martin celebrates her Leadership Rockford graduation at a luncheon in April.

Made for Rockford Program Director Whitney Martin successfully completed the eight-month **Leadership Rockford** program, by the **Greater Rockford Chamber of Commerce**, which builds leadership skills and civic awareness through hands-on engagement with local government, business, and nonprofit leaders. Following graduation, Whitney was invited to return as an ambassador for future cohorts. She also used the program as a relationship-building tool to engage with new residents participating in the program—supporting Made for Rockford's retention mission.

ROCKFORD PROMISE PARTNERSHIP



Students pose Rockford Promise's Promising Futures Graduation, held at Coronado Theatre.

Made for Rockford formalized a new partnership with **Rockford Promise**, focused on retaining talent by encouraging local scholars to return to Rockford post-graduation. Program Director Whitney Martin delivered an address at the Promising Futures Graduation ceremony, speaking to hundreds of attendees about the value of building a life and career in their hometown. This initiative reinforces the goal of long-term community investment and connection.

SPEAKING ENGAGEMENT: ROLE CALL TALENT ATTRACTION SUMMIT

Whitney Martin was selected as a featured speaker at the national **Role Call Talent Attraction Summit in Cleveland, Ohio** in June. She delivered a fast-paced PechaKucha-style presentation showcasing Rockford's lifestyle, economic opportunities, and community appeal. The summit brought together national leaders in place marketing and workforce development, allowing Made for Rockford to contribute to and learn from cutting-edge strategies in talent attraction.

PR AGENCY ACTIVATION

To support national storytelling efforts, GoRockford retained **Development Counsellors International (DCI)**—a top-tier PR agency specializing in talent attraction. DCI will help elevate Rockford's visibility outside the region through media relations, campaign strategy, and placement opportunities. The goal is to tell Rockford's story through compelling narratives that attract new residents and professionals.

GO TEAM ACTIVATION: IRONMAN 70.3 ROCKFORD

The **Go Team** was deployed during IRONMAN 70.3-Rockford in June to welcome thousands of athletes and their families. Positioned in hotels across the city, Go Team members served as local ambassadors—offering guidance, answering questions, and providing personalized recommendations. Their presence helped create a positive, welcoming atmosphere and strengthened Rockford's reputation as a visitor-friendly destination.

MAKE IT MAKE SENSE CAMPAIGN

Made for Rockford deployed a digital marketing campaign with Madden Media from March to the end of June and reached people through a variety of digital tactics. The campaign was called **"Make It Make Sense"** and included a variety of creative and accompanying text about rising cost of living and that relocation to Rockford, makes sense as the solution.

The marketing channels included Google ads, Meta, LinkedIn, iHeart radio, remarketing ads and out of home ads. The out of home ads were located on digital displays in the Chicago market including Millennium Park, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago Riverwalk and Magnificent Mile.

The total number of impressions for the campaign was over **10 million** for all tactics and resulted in over **120,000 clicks** to the Made for Rockford website.



GoROCKFORD BOARD & STAFF

GoRockford Board of Directors

Geno Iafrate (Chair)
Hard Rock Rockford

Tiana McCall (Vice Chair)
Illinois Department of Commerce and
Economic Opportunity

Mick Gronewold (Treasurer)
Fehr Graham Engineering
& Environmental

Dana Martin (Secretary)
Rosecrance Behavioral Health

Carol Schuster
University of Illinois
College of Medicine - Rockford

Jennifer Furst
Furst Staffing

Shelton Kay
Rockford Regional Health Council

Richard Shuga
Painters District Council
No. 30 Local 607

Todd Cagnoni
City of Rockford

Gretchen Gilmore
Rockford Area Venues &
Entertainment Authority (R.A.V.E.)

Angela Larson
Greater Rockford Chamber of
Commerce

Chintan Thakkar
Decorum Management Group

Patricia Diduch
Village of Rockton

Bobbie Holzwarth
HolmstromKennedy

Ricardo Montoya-Picazo
Office of State
Representative Dave Vella

Patrick Thompson
Winnebago County

Duncan Geddes
City of Loves Park

Sonya Hoppes
City of South Beloit

Jay Sandine
Rockford Park District

Kirk Weitzel
Rock Hospitality

Ald. Kevin Frost
City of Rockford

GoRockford Foundation Board of Directors

Carol Schuster (Foundation Chair)
University of Illinois College of Medicine
Rockford

Geno Iafrate (Vice Chair)
Hard Rock Rockford

**Marco Lenis
(Foundation Treasurer)**
Vocational Rehabilitation Management

**Gina Caruana
(Foundation Secretary)**
Foresight Financial Group

David Anderson
Anderson Japanese Gardens

Jennifer Furst
Furst Staffing

Jeff Marrs
Morgan Stanley

Leslie West
State Farm

Rebecca Francis
Ignite Change Solutions LLC

Theresa Kegley
Movement Fitness

Jim Pirages
AGHL Law

Alexis Wright-Conniff
Woodward

GoRockford Staff



John Groh
President, CEO



Kristen Paul
Executive Vice
President



Lindsay Arellano
Vice President of Sales &
Service



Joanne Nold
Vice President of
Finance



Amanda August
Social Media and
Communications Specialist



Chenaire Barmore
Community Engagement
Coordinator



Miranda Brook
Customer Experience
Coordinator



Kara Davis
Senior Sales Manager



Elizabeth Falls
Marketing Manager



Julie Huber
Destination Development
Operations Manager



Lindsey Kromm
Accounting Assistant



Whitney Martin
Made for Rockford
Program Director



Emily Plumb
Sales & Servicing
Manager



Leah Ticknor
Office Manager &
Executive Assistant

MEETING MINUTES

**GoRockford Board of Directors
March 19, 2025
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
GoRockford Annex**

Board Present: Todd Cagnoni, Kevin Frost, John Groh, Tiana McCall, Carol Schuster, Bobbie Holzwarth, Shelton Kay, Dana Martin, Ricardo Montoya-Picazo, Gretchen Gilmore, Darrell Snorek, Geno lafrate

Board Absent: Sonya Hoppes, Mick Gronewold, Jay Sandine, Patrick Thompson, Patricia Diduch, Kirk Weitzel, Angela Larson, Duncan Geddes

Guest Speaker: Tiffany Gallagher

Staff Present: Kristen Paul, Joanne Nold, Lindsay Arellano

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:34 a.m. by Vice Chairman Geno lafrate.

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

It was moved and seconded to approve the December 18, 2024, meeting minutes. Motion carried.

Internal Monitoring Reports:

After discussion, it was moved, seconded and approved to accept the Internal Monitoring Reports including John Groh's CEO interpretations, for monitoring on:

- 1.0 Global Ends (deferred from January)
- 1.3 Communicate with Constituents (deferred from January)
- 2.2 Treatment of Staff
- 2.3 Financial Planning/Budgeting (deferred from January)
- 2.4 Financial Condition & Activities (deferred from January)
- 2.8 Communication & Support to the Board

Governance Process:

The Board's Annual Conflict of Interest form needs to be completed and returned to Kristen Paul.

Tiana McCall appointed the following to the 2025 Board Audit & Budget Committee: Mick Gronewold, Todd Cagnoni, Dana Martin, Darrell Snorek and Kyle Keith. It was moved and seconded to approve the committee slate as presented and the motion carried.

Carol Schuster made a motion to approve the engagement of Benning Group to conduct the Fiscal Year 2025, 2026 and 2027 fiscal audit and to authorize Mick Gronewold as board treasurer to finalize and execute the engagement agreement with Benning Group. The motion was seconded and approved.

Strategic Discussion/Presentation on Organizational Funding:

John Groh discussed hotel taxes and growth from 2005-2024. Despite a 48% increase in hotel revenue, the money received by GoRockford has not increased. This highlights the need to consider alternative funding sources.

Guest speaker Tiffany Gallagher from Civitas presented to the board on the potential establishment of a Tourism Improvement District (TID) for Winnebago County hotels. Civitas, a national leader in TID development, specializes in working with hoteliers and destination organizations across the country, including several in Illinois. Gallagher provided an overview of the TID structure, emphasizing that this supplemental funding mechanism is an assessment rather than a tax, meaning funds collected must directly benefit the hotels that are assessed and be in addition to existing funding. Unlike a bed tax, TID funds are overseen by a board of hoteliers and must be used for initiatives that increase hotel demand and revenue.

The board discussed the benefits of a TID, noting that there are currently 215 TIDs across 23 states, with Peoria, DuPage County, and Chicago moving forward with similar efforts. Peoria, upon approval, is projected to generate \$1 million annually from its TID. Rockford previously began exploring establishing a TID in 2019, but efforts paused in 2021 due to hotel industry concerns about utilizing the state's existing Special Service Area law. A new 2023 state law has since addressed those concerns. Rockford's current 14% hotel tax rate remains below the 20% consumer tipping point observed in other markets.

Following discussion, the board reached a consensus to move forward with exploring a county-wide TID process. Next steps include engagement with hotel owners and general managers, stakeholder education, and the development of a fact sheet and talking points to support outreach efforts. The board also discussed its potential role, noting that this round of TID efforts would benefit from greater board involvement. While formal board approval is not required at this stage, endorsement and active participation will be key in advancing the initiative.

Adjournment: At 8:56 a.m. Chair Tiana McCall adjourned the meeting.

The next meeting is Wednesday, April 23, 2025

Respectfully submitted,



Darrell Snorek, Board Secretary
kp

**GoRockford Board of Directors
April 23, 2025
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
GoRockford Annex**

Board Present: Todd Cagnoni, Kevin Frost, John Groh, Tiana McCall, Carol Schuster, Bobbie Holzwarth, Dana Martin, Gretchen Gilmore, Jay Sandine, Angela Larson, Duncan Geddes, Rich Schuga

Board Absent: Sonya Hoppes, Mick Gronewold, Patrick Thompson, Patricia Diduch, Kirk Weitzel, Darrell Snorek, Geno lafrate, Shelton Kay, Ricardo Montoya-Picazo,

Guest Speaker: DCI-Susan Brake, Brittany Borsanyi, Taylor Fruedenberg, Fallon Carter

Staff Present: Kristen Paul, Joanne Nold, Lindsay Arellano

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 7:33 a.m. by Tiana McCall

Approval of Meeting Minutes:

It was moved and seconded to approve the March 19, 2025, meeting minutes. Motion carried.

Guest Presentation:

DCI, in partnership with GoRockford and the Greater Rockford Chamber, is a PR company hired to promote the Rockford Region on a national level. DCI shared strategy details on generating positive media coverage designed to assist with economic development, tourism growth and talent attraction. Discussion included how to shape local coverage, local influencers and how to elevate the region to attract talent for positions such as the new RPS superintendent and other key roles.

CEO Monitoring Reports:

It was moved, seconded, and approved to accept the Internal Monitoring Reports, including John Groh's CEO interpretations, for monitoring on:

- 1.2 Enhance Tourism Product
- 2.1 Treatment of Customers & Partners
- 2.3 Financial Planning/Budgeting
- 2.4 Financial Condition & Activities

Board Development Committee Report/Approval Election of Officers, Board Members:

It was moved and seconded to accept the recommendations of the Board Development Committee to elect, in one slate the following:

OFFICERS: The following individuals are recommended to serve as an officers, each serving a one-year year term, beginning at the conclusion of the June 2025 meeting and concluding June 2026.

- Chair: Geno lafrate, Hard Rock Rockford
- Vice Chair: Tiana McCall, State of Illinois
- Treasurer: Mick Gronewold, FehrGraham
- Secretary: Dana Martin, Rosecrance Behavioral Health

- Immediate Past Chair: Carol Schuster, University of Illinois College of Medicine Rockford

RETURNING: The following individuals are recommended to serve an additional three-year term, beginning at the June 2025 meeting and concluding June 2028.

- Kevin Frost, City of Rockford
- Bobbie Holzwarth, HolmstromKennedy
- Geno Iafrate, Hard Rock Rockford
- Richard Shuga, Painters District Council No. 30 Local 607
- Kirk Weitzel, Rock Hospitality

NEW: The following individuals are recommended to serve as voting board members for a three-year term, beginning at the June 2025 meeting and concluding June 2028.

- Jennifer Furst, President, Furst Staffing
- Chintan Thakkar, CHA, CHCS – President / CEO, Decorum Management Group

Expired Terms: The following member's term is expiring.

Having served two consecutive terms, the member is not eligible for an additional term. As such, he will depart the board following the June meeting with the gratitude of the board and staff.

- Darrell Snorek

FOUNDATION: The following individuals are recommended to serve an additional three-year term, beginning at the July 2025 meeting and concluding in July 2028.

- Rebecca Francis, Ignite Change Solutions

The motion carried unanimously.

CEO Report:

GoRockford won sports tourism of the year at the Sports ETA Conference, which is a culmination of all our sporting events, facilities, services, and partnerships. Huge congratulations to the team and the community for coming together to win this prestigious award.

IRONMAN is only two months away, and coordination and planning are going well. The board is encouraged to attend the event and is invited to assist with distributing medals to the finishers.

Josh Bilicki raced the GoRockford car at the NASCAR Rockingham event. It is estimated that the car received \$4,000,000 in earned media. The partnership was fully paid for by Insurance King to celebrate Rockford.

It is estimated that in the first quarter, the GoRockford website has generated over 50,000 referrals to partner websites—up over 300% year over year.

Partner Updates:

Todd Cagnoni and Kevin Frost shared that the new Aldermen will be sworn in next week. Also, the construction bids for Davis Park redevelopment are live and due back in June.

Duncan Geddes shared that the Parks Chamber has updated their full website and ticketing system. In addition, there is an after-hours event planned at Rockford Pool and Spa.

Partner Updates:

Todd Cagnoni and Kevin Frost shared that the new Aldermen will be sworn in next week. Also, the bids for Davis Parl are live.

Duncan Geddes shared that the Parks Chamber has updated their full website and ticketing system. In addition there is an after hours event planned at Rockford Pool and Spa.

Angela Larson shared that nominations are live for 40 under 40. Leadership Rockford just celebrated its graduation of its 70th cohort. The Mayor's luncheon is scheduled for tomorrow and will include the state of the city.

Gretchen Gilmore shared that the Icehogs have made the playoffs and play in Rockford Friday night. If they win, there will be a second game on Sunday.

Jay Sandine shared that Clarence Hicks has been renovated and a ribbon cutting is forth coming. The turf field was donated by the Chicago Bears. A community celebration us forthcoming. Buddy Baseball has broken ground for a park designed exclusively for children with disabilities.

- Dana Martin shared that the art museum had its most successful Art in Bloom. The immersive exhibit will end on May 11, all are encouraged to attend.

Tiana McCall shared that the state of Illinois annouced that the City of Rockford received 2 million for phase two of the Madison Street rehabilitation.

Adjournment: At 8:56 a.m. Chair Tiana McCall adjourned the meeting.

The next meeting is Wednesday, June 25, 2025

Respectfully submitted,



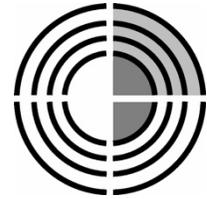
Darrell Snorek, Board Secretary
kp



MONITORING REPORTS



Governing Policy of the
GoRockford Board of Directors



Ends Policy Policy 1.2 Enhance Tourism Product

Ends

To: GoRockford Board of Directors
From: John Groh, President/CEO
RE: Internal Monitoring Report – Ends Policies
Monitoring on Policy 1.2 – Enhance Tourism Product

I hereby present my monitoring report on your Ends Policy 1.2, "Enhance Tourism Product," in accordance with the monitoring schedule set forth in Board policy. I certify that the information contained in this report is true. This report covers the twelve-month period between April 1, 2024 and March 31, 2025.

Signed,

Handwritten signature of John Groh

John Groh
President/CEO

April 15, 2025

POLICY 1.2 – ENHANCE TOURISM PRODUCT

BROADEST POLICY PROVISION: "The Rockford Region offers unique and marketable experiences and venues that meet or exceed visitor expectations and enhance the quality of life for citizens."

- 1. There is a hospitality culture among tourism workers and residents
2. There are high-quality meeting venues and sports facilities
3. There are a variety of special events and festivals (either owned or supported by GoRockford) that encourage repeat and ongoing visitation to the destination
4. There is a suitable range of visitor accommodations for business, leisure and group travelers
5. The Rockford Region offers a safe and beautiful environment
- Landscaping/beautification of key public spaces
- Public art enhances civic spaces
6. The Rockford Region's transportation infrastructure meets tourism needs

CEO INTERPRETATION: (no change) I interpret successful achievement to be reflected in continually improved quality and diversity of experiences available to visitors and citizens in the Rockford Region.

Involvement in new product development can span a spectrum from providing input during planning phases to investment in research or design and advocacy. The level of GoRockford's participation will vary from project to project based on need and available resources. Ultimately, GoRockford's efforts should result in a stronger hospitality culture and service levels, high-quality facilities, a suitable range of accommodations and a safe and beautiful environment with adequate transportation infrastructure.

Further, I interpret "unique and marketable" to mean that our product is easily and positively differentiated from other products offered by competitors; as such any product development efforts should be geared toward developing unique ("only-available-in-Rockford Region") products and experiences that will further enhance and add credibility to our brand positioning.

I interpret “meeting or exceeding visitor expectations” to mean our customers consistently provide positive feedback on their experiences while in our destination. I interpret “enhance the quality of life for citizens” to mean that citizens of Rockford and Winnebago County are the primary beneficiaries of new products and experiences. Our mindset will be that what is compelling/appealing to residents will have a high likelihood of attracting visitors.

The six subsequent provisions to this policy quite fully interpret what successful achievement would look like. My interpretations and reporting on each appear below.

NOTE: Thrive 2035 – Destination Master Plan.

In June 2024, GoRockford’s board approved - and in September we unveiled - the Thrive 2035 Destination Master Plan, a comprehensive 10-year vision aimed at enhancing the Rockford region's appeal to both visitors and residents. The plan focuses on leveraging natural assets, revitalizing urban spaces, and fostering economic growth through tourism.

Key Strategic Goals:

1. **Invest in Tourism Product:** *Enhance existing attractions and develop new offerings to drive year-round visitation, including implementing the Keith Creek Greenway plan to increase bike mobility and connect public parks.*
2. **Create Compelling Experiences:** *Curate authentic and unique visitor experiences that showcase Rockford’s identity, such as expanding the collection of trails and greenways radiating out of downtown Rockford.*
3. **Create Cool, Vibrant Spaces & Neighborhoods:** *Develop attractive, inclusive public spaces that encourage exploration and engagement, including a comprehensive analysis and new master plan for Downtown Rockford.*
4. **Enhance Connectivity & Mobility:** *Improve access and transportation options, such as expanding trail connectivity and pursuing the development of a region-wide e-bike rental system.*
5. **Develop Our Workforce & Attract New Talent:** *Foster local talent growth and position Rockford as a desirable place for workforce development, aligning with the Thrive 2035 goal to develop our workforce and attract new talent.*

REPORT:

1. **There is a welcoming culture among tourism workers and residents.**
 - a. **Minority and LGBTQ visitors and residents feel welcome.**

CEO INTERPRETATION: (no change) I interpret “welcoming culture” to mean that our tourism industry employees and residents demonstrate a welcoming attitude toward all customers, including minorities and members of the LGBTQ+ community. I interpret it to be the board’s priority that GoRockford is actively involved in and leading efforts to create a sense of belonging where visitors and residents of diverse backgrounds feel intentionally included and welcome in our destination.

REPORT: GoRockford routinely surveys key contacts/account managers for group sales (e.g., meeting planners, tournament organizers), and the results show Rockford and GoRockford continue to meet and, in most cases, exceed customer expectations, including being welcoming to all.

Trip Advisor & Yelp

GoRockford also regularly monitors online consumer feedback sites such as TripAdvisor and Yelp. On these sites, consumers use a 5-point rating scale to provide feedback on their customer experience. Such sites allow consumers to rate and provide feedback and learn from the experiences others have had at those venues.

- The following are the top performers according to Trip Advisor/Yelp:
 - **Trip Advisor: 31 Rockford area hotels listed on Trip Advisor**
 - The top five “Traveler Ranked” hotels are Embassy Suites, Hilton Garden Inn, Radisson Hotel & Conference Center, Hampton Inn, and Fairfield Inn.
 - Top 5 Average experience: 4.44
 - **Trip Advisor: 128 (114 in 2024) Rockford area “things to do”:**
 - The top five attractions “Traveler Favorites” are Anderson Japanese Gardens, Discovery Center Museum, Sinnissippi Park, Frank Lloyd Wright’s Laurent House, and Burpee Museum of Natural History.
 - Top 5 Average Experience: 4.68 (increase from 2024’s 4.5)
 - **Yelp: Over 240 Rockford Region restaurants.**
 - The top five restaurants ranked by most reviews are GreenFire Restaurant, Prairie Street Brewing, Pigs Mind, Lucha Cantina, and Lino’s.
 - Top 5 Average Experience: 4.16 (same as 2024)
 - *Due to the number of restaurants, we do not manually (or otherwise) compute average scores for the full data set.*

Minority and LGBTQ+ Visitors and Residents Feel Welcome

At the present time, GoRockford does not have a way to measure the level to which minority and LGBTQ+ visitors and residents feel welcome in the destination.

However, according to the Human Rights Campaign, “there are many ways that cities can — and do — support their LGBTQ+ residents and employees.” The Municipal Equality Index was designed by the HRC Foundation to help residents learn how inclusive their city’s laws and policies are of LGBTQ+ people. In 2024, the City of Rockford received a perfect score – 100 – and was one of five in Illinois that did, along with Champaign, Springfield, Aurora, and Chicago. This national recognition reflects the city’s strong policies and practices in support of LGBTQ+ residents and visitors, further contributing to a positive perception of Rockford as a welcoming destination.

In addition, GoRockford supported and/or promoted a variety of events in 2024–2025 that celebrate and affirm cultural identity and inclusion, including Juneteenth, the SOAR Awards, Rockford Pride Fest, and the South Main Mercado. These events were promoted through paid and organic marketing, highlighted on GoRockford.com, and supported through sponsorships and strategic partnerships.

Taken together, these activities and recognitions reflect meaningful progress toward ensuring that minority and LGBTQ+ visitors and residents feel welcome in the Rockford Region.

I am reporting achievement on this sub-end.

2. There are high-quality meeting venues and sports facilities

CEO INTERPRETATION: (no change) I interpret it to be the board’s priority to see that the region offers facilities and venues that are of high quality, but this does not require that ALL facilities meet this standard, as such a standard would likely be unattainable and not within our control. Further, “high-quality” means that meeting venues and sports facilities are respected within the industry and continue to receive recognition for their excellent standards. Importantly, we will know that this standard is met when customers consistently choose our venues for their events.

REPORT: The following demonstrates achievement:

- The Hard Rock Casino Rockford officially opened its permanent facility in 2024, adding 23,000 square feet of premier event and concert space to the region. This state-of-the-art venue significantly enhances the region's capacity to host high-profile entertainment, business functions, and group events. Designed with flexibility in mind, the event center accommodates concerts, banquets, expos, and other large-scale gatherings, elevating Rockford's appeal as a regional entertainment and meetings destination. In addition to boosting visitation and overnight stays, the casino complex supports hundreds of jobs and contributes directly to tourism-related tax revenue. The development also catalyzed interest in nearby hospitality investments, including future hotel and dining options adjacent to the site.
- The Mercy Sportscore complexes and UW Health Sports Factory have continued to host various sports, including soccer, fast-pitch softball, lacrosse, ultimate frisbee, and various adapted sports. Customer reviews have been very positive, and they are considered top facilities in the industry. Additional investment or reinvestment will be necessary for the coming years to remain competitive in the long term.
- The Hilton Embassy Suites and Rockford Conference Center are open and operating at high occupancy. The space features 160 guest rooms and 20,000 square feet of meeting space.
- BMO Harris Bank Center recently completed a substantial remodel and now offers a better guest experience.

The meetings market in the Rockford Region continues to face structural limitations, particularly in the availability and condition of suitable venues. While properties such as Embassy Suites and Hard Rock provide high-quality space, the overall market remains underdeveloped due to the aging of several hotel properties and a lack of large, modern, flexible venues to attract regional and national conferences. This has impacted the region's competitiveness in the meetings and conventions sector.

Thrive 2035 specifically identifies the expansion and modernization of meetings infrastructure as a priority, recommending a detailed assessment of current assets and the development of new venues that align with the region's growth in sports tourism, cultural events, and urban revitalization. The plan also emphasizes integrating meeting and event spaces into broader downtown and riverfront redevelopment efforts — creating vibrant, walkable districts that enhance the attendee experience and extend visitor stays.

Addressing these gaps will require strategic investment, public-private partnerships, and alignment with broader tourism and economic development goals outlined in the Thrive 2035 plan.

I am reporting achievement, although there is work to be done to remain competitive going forward.

3. There are a variety of special events and festivals (either owned or supported by GoRockford) that encourage repeat and ongoing visitation to the destination and that appeal to diverse audiences.

CEO INTERPRETATION: (no change) I interpret it to be the board's position that special events and festivals have a key role in defining our region's image and play an important part in attracting visitors to the region and in providing a high quality of life for citizens. To that end, it is the board's priority that GoRockford work collaboratively with other entities in supporting new or existing destination-defining events/festivals or in creating and/or owning/operating them.

In determining how GoRockford stewards its resources, key considerations include: will the event 1) help foster an image of the community that is consistent with our brand promise, 2) take place at a time that doesn't unnecessarily compete with existing events and when the market has excess capacity (e.g. low hotel occupancy) and 3) create a new or significantly different experience not currently represented in the marketplace.

Further, I interpret this to mean that GoRockford will develop and execute a plan to ensure proactive support of events and the development of " visitor-focused " events catering to diverse audiences, including but not limited to ethnic minority groups, the LGBT community, and persons with disabilities. Examples of accomplishing this include local outreach to these groups through planning committee affiliation, sponsorship of specific events, conference participation, and the creation of additional outreach efforts to secure and retain events for the audience, as communicated above.

REPORT: The following demonstrates achievement since the last report:

Stroll on State, presented by Illinois Bank & Trust

In 2024, Stroll on State celebrated its 12th anniversary. The event hosted all of the traditional elements, including Letters to Santa, Parade, Dasher Dash 5k, multiple stages, and more. Fireworks remained at the end of the night and launched from Jefferson St. bridge to ensure a larger viewing area. New additions this year included a drone show with over 200 drones, the return of live ice carving, and two Santa houses for free visits with Santa.

Not including 2020 (due to being virtual), it is estimated that over 700,000 people have attended Stroll on State throughout its 12-year history. Illinois Bank and Trust is committed as the presenting sponsor for an additional year. An average of 2,500 hours of volunteer time is utilized to power the event.

CRE8IV: Transformational Arts

CRE8IV 2024 marked a vibrant culmination of GoRockford's regional mural initiative with a dynamic three-day celebration of music, visual arts, and community creativity. The festival was hosted in downtown Rockford and featured multiple live performance stages, immersive art zones, interactive experiences, and a stunning drone light show that lit up the night sky. The event brought together artists, residents, and visitors to celebrate the transformative power of public art.

A major highlight was the completion of over 6,000 take-home art projects created by families, children, and individuals of all ages — a testament to the program's accessibility and community engagement.

With the festival, GoRockford concluded the CRE8IV mural initiative, which has successfully installed 57 large-scale murals across the Rockford region since its launch in 2019. These works — now permanent installations — contribute significantly to the beautification and cultural identity of the community, aligning directly with Thrive 2035's call to "Create Cool, Vibrant Places and Neighborhoods" through public art and placemaking.

The sunset of the mural phase does not signal an end to CRE8IV's spirit. Instead, it positions GoRockford to evolve its public art strategy in alignment with Thrive 2035, exploring new mediums, partnerships, and spaces that continue to foster creativity and vibrancy throughout the region.

Community Sponsorships

In addition to GoRockford-produced events, we sponsor or directly support many events and initiatives throughout the community. Examples of 2024/2025 events supported include Juneteenth, SOAR Awards, and Festival of Lights at Sinnissippi Park, Phantom Regiment, South Main Mercado, and more.

The GoRockford sales, marketing, and destination development teams have met to develop a collaborative plan to reach the diversity-related portion of this goal. Thus far, the team has created tactics and is working toward a list of potential events to be integrated into a comprehensive sales prospect list.

Additionally, the team is working toward building relationships with association groups that can assist in the desired outcome, such as ConnectDiversity, Hispanic Meetings & Travel, National Coalition of Black Meeting Planners, and the Black Travel Alliance. Further, to become more aware of diverse events, we have added an event entry form on

the welcoming diversity microsite on gorockford.com. The online form allows us to capture events to promote and stay connected with potential event owners.

I am reporting achievement.

4. There is a suitable range of visitor accommodations for business, leisure, and group travelers.

CEO INTERPRETATION: (no change) I interpret “suitable range” to mean that Rockford has accommodations for both individuals and large groups, including high-quality, budget-minded facilities with full and limited service.

Visitors to the Rockford Region can choose from a variety of accommodations, including hotels, motels, short-term rentals, and campgrounds. There are high-quality facilities with full-service amenities and more budget-minded, limited-service accommodations. GoRockford partners with Simpleview and BookDirect on the GoRockford.com website to provide a booking portal to find current deals and information on local hotels.

In December 2024, the WoodSpring Suites opened in Loves Park, adding 122 extended-stay rooms to the regional inventory. This property meets the needs of business and leisure travelers seeking longer-term accommodations near key employment and sports venues. Additionally, construction is underway on a new Hampton Inn on Bell School Road, which will add 94 rooms within close proximity to Sportscore Two and Mercyhealth Javon Bea Hospital.

While these developments support regional demand, there remains a critical gap in hotel inventory within downtown Rockford. Currently, the Embassy Suites by Hilton is the sole full-service hotel in the city center, and although it has proven highly successful, it cannot alone meet the demand created by downtown events, festivals, conferences, and entertainment venues like the BMO Center and Coronado Theatre.

Thrive 2035 specifically calls for increased downtown lodging options to complement the growth of visitor-facing infrastructure, the redevelopment of Davis Park, and the emergence of new riverfront attractions. The addition of at least one new hotel in downtown Rockford—preferably with flexible meeting space and mid-scale pricing—would significantly enhance the destination’s competitiveness and ability to attract group travel, corporate meetings, and extended visitor stays.

The anticipated hotel development adjacent to the Hard Rock Casino Rockford will add an estimated 250–500 rooms to the region’s overall mix, serving a growing entertainment and business travel segment. However, this property alone will not address the specific needs and opportunities of the downtown core.

I am reporting achievement while also identifying downtown hotel development as a key opportunity for strategic investment and future growth, as outlined in the Thrive 2035 plan.

5. The Rockford Region offers a safe and beautiful environment

- Landscaping/beautification of key public spaces
- Public art enhances civic spaces

CEO INTERPRETATION: (no change) I interpret “a safe and beautiful environment” to mean visitors and residents should feel secure and free from danger and that their surroundings are visually pleasing and free of trash/litter, neglect, and blight.

I interpret that the inclusion of provisions specific to landscaping and public art indicates the board places a high and strategic value on GoRockford’s developing programs and partnerships that result in improved beautification and vibrancy of key public and civic spaces – i.e. downtown Rockford, around major tourism facilities, key traffic corridors, and gateways into Rockford and the region

Further, GoRockford's focus in this area should be concentrated in areas of greatest impact related to our ability to grow visitor demand and volume. Consistent with other board priorities, GoRockford should seek to collaborate with other entities, not duplicating efforts or programs.

REPORT:

While ensuring all residents and visitors feel secure and free from danger, as it relates to the work GoRockford can influence, the following demonstrates achievement:

- The Forest City Beautiful program began in 2014 and continues to expand. In January, the City of Rockford approved a new six-year agreement to continue growing the program. The new contract includes additional funding for street-level planters and additional lots surrounding City Hall and along South Main Street.
- In the prior year, GoRockford took ownership of additional pieces of sculpture by donation, which are now on display at the City Market Pavillion and the Main/Auburn Roundabout. GoRockford owns a total of 10 sculpture pieces.
- Our CRE8IV mural program commissioned a total of 57 murals throughout the region.

These beautification and placemaking efforts directly support Thrive 2035's strategic goal to "Create Cool, Vibrant Spaces and Neighborhoods." By enhancing visual appeal and civic pride through art, landscaping, and infrastructure improvements, GoRockford is helping elevate visitor perceptions and increase dwell time and repeat visitation—particularly in walkable districts such as downtown, South Main St., and major gateway corridors.

- The first phase of Davis Park's redevelopment began with the removal of the Lorden Building from the site in 2022. The City of Rockford has hired Smith Group and Fehr Graham to execute architectural and engineering plans, which should begin construction in July 2025 and open in June 2026. Davis Park's redevelopment, long prioritized by community stakeholders, is a visible commitment to reimagining the city's riverfront and providing a centrally located gathering space. GoRockford continues to support and advocate for this project as a key component of the region's tourism infrastructure. Upon completion, Davis Park will provide a versatile venue for concerts, markets, and festivals while serving as a scenic anchor along the river.
- GoRockford continues to manage the City of Rockford streetlight/post banner program. The banners are featured on the main corridors throughout the city. There are 913 banner locations (up from the 842 locations in 2023).

While GoRockford does not have direct oversight of public safety, we collaborate with city departments and event organizers to promote a secure and welcoming environment during key tourism activities. Anecdotal feedback and customer surveys from events such as Stroll on State, Rockford City Market, and sporting tournaments consistently reflect a positive sense of safety and cleanliness, which is critical to a positive visitor experience.

I am reporting achievement.

6. The Rockford Region's transportation infrastructure meets tourism needs

CEO INTERPRETATION: (no change) I interpret it to be the board's priority that there are several modes of transportation into and out of the community and that such systems can handle the passenger/vehicular needs of our visitors. Also, it would mean that there are sufficient transportation options available for visitors during their stay within the community. Further, GoRockford is involved in ensuring transportation infrastructure and systems continue to improve.

REPORT: The following demonstrates achievement, although continued progress is needed:

The Rockford Region benefits from excellent highway access, with multiple interstate corridors (I-90, I-39, and US-20) connecting the community to major population centers across the Midwest. These roadways support the vast majority of the region's visitor traffic, particularly for group travel, sports tournaments, and regional leisure getaways.

Passenger air access at Chicago Rockford International Airport (RFD) remains leisure-market focused, primarily serving outbound travelers. However, in recent years, the percentage of inbound passengers has grown — representing an encouraging trend in RFD functioning as a gateway for visitors, not just a departure point. In 2024, Allegiant Air introduced seasonal nonstop flights to Los Angeles (LAX) and Nashville (BNA), contributing to a record-breaking year with 262,432 passengers, a 9% increase from 2023.

While the LAX route was discontinued in early 2025 due to Allegiant's closure of its LAX operations, the Nashville route is scheduled to resume in May 2025.

Additionally, RFD has announced the return of international vacation flights through Apple Vacations, with seasonal nonstop service to Cancun/Riviera Maya, Mexico; Punta Cana, Dominican Republic; and Costa Rica beginning in January 2025.

Rail connectivity is also on the horizon. In the FY2020 state budget, Governor Pritzker approved funding for intercity passenger rail service between Rockford and Chicago. Infrastructure improvements are currently underway, and service is anticipated to begin in 2027. This will significantly expand access to the region for business and leisure travelers alike, especially those without private vehicles.

Intra-community mobility remains an opportunity for growth. While the region is largely car-dependent, Thrive 2035 recommends expanding alternative transportation options such as trail systems, bike infrastructure, and micro-mobility programs (e.g., e-bike or scooter rentals). These options would enhance visitor experience in walkable districts and near major attractions. GoRockford continues to participate in discussions with city and regional partners on supporting future mobility enhancements that are aligned with visitor needs.

In 2021, Rockford was awarded a \$16.5 million federal grant through the U.S. Department of Transportation's RAISE (Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity) program to enhance downtown mobility and infrastructure. This funding supports the reconstruction of a 2-mile stretch of Chestnut and Walnut Streets, introducing protected bike lanes, improved pedestrian pathways, decorative lighting, and streetscape enhancements. Additionally, the grant facilitates the purchase of three electric buses and the establishment of a downtown circulator route by the Rockford Mass Transit District (RMTD), promoting cleaner and more efficient public transportation options.

These improvements align with the Thrive 2035 plan's objectives to enhance regional connectivity and mobility. By fostering a more accessible and sustainable transportation network, the project aims to boost economic development, improve safety, and provide equitable access to essential services and amenities for all residents and visitors.

Given the primary markets we serve — regional drive-in leisure and group travel — the transportation infrastructure currently meets tourism needs. Continued improvements, especially in visitor-facing mobility, intermodal access, and downtown navigability, will further strengthen the visitor experience and the region's tourism economy.

I am reporting achievement while also identifying transportation-related mobility and connectivity enhancements as a future focus area aligned with Thrive 2035.

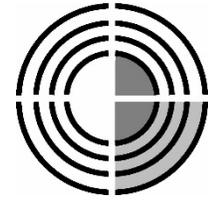
Conclusion:

GoRockford's work over the past year reflects meaningful progress in enhancing the Rockford Region's tourism product. Across public art, event activation, hospitality development, and infrastructure advocacy, we continue to build a destination that is competitive, inclusive, and aligned with the bold aspirations of Thrive 2035. While gaps remain — particularly in meeting space, downtown lodging, and mobility — our direction is clear, and our momentum is strong. I am confident that with sustained focus and collaboration, we will continue elevating the region's appeal to visitors and residents.

Prepared by: John Groh/Kristen Paul



Governing Policy of the
GoRockford Board of Directors



**Executive Limitations Policy 2.1 – Treatment of Customers,
Partners & Stakeholders**

Management Limitations

To: GoRockford Board of Directors
From: John Groh, President/CEO
RE: Internal Monitoring Report – Ends Policies
Monitoring on Policy 2.1 – Treatment of Customers, Partners & Stakeholders

I hereby present my annual monitoring report on your Executive Limitations Policy 2.1, Treatment of Customers, Partners & Stakeholders, in accordance with the monitoring schedule set forth in Board policy. I certify that the information contained in this report is true for the annual period ending March 31, 2025.

Signed,



John Groh, President/CEO

April 15, 2025

POLICY 2.1

“With respect to interactions with customers, stakeholders and/or partners, the President/CEO will not cause or allow conditions or procedures which are unfair, unsafe, undignified, untimely, unresponsive, or which fail to provide appropriate confidentiality or privacy.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (There have been no changes since the last report.) I interpret “unsafe” conditions as those that would risk jeopardizing the physical safety of customers or others at the GoRockford office or at our sponsored events and functions. This includes ensuring facility safety, such as safe layouts, snow/ice removal, trip hazards, etc.

I interpret “undignified” conditions to be those that would cause embarrassment or are inconsistent with a culture of providing a friendly, welcoming and respectful customer service experience. All customers, stakeholders, partners and residents are to be treated with respect and in a friendly manner.

I interpret “untimely” and “unresponsive” as meaning that programs, activities and meetings are to take place as scheduled, and inquiries, applications, registrations, etc., are to be addressed and/or responded to within commonly accepted timeframes, such as one business day for telephone messages and email messages or to acknowledge requests for additional information.

I interpret “fail to provide appropriate confidentiality or privacy” as actions that infringe on the individual’s privacy (addressed further, along with confidentiality, under Provision 2.1.1 below) and time such as repeated, unnecessary or overly long phone calls, meetings or communication from GoRockford.

REPORT: Regarding safety, GoRockford’s office space has been maintained to prevent undue risk of injury. In the past year, there have been no accidents or injuries to employees, customers, or visitors at our office.

When organizing events, logistical considerations always incorporate safety as a concern. No injuries or accidents have involved attendees at GoRockford-sponsored events (such as news conferences, industry partner meetings,

etc.). Additionally, as GoRockford plans for Stroll on State and our first IRONMAN event, significant consideration is given to public safety. GoRockford works closely with staff from the City of Rockford's Public Works, Fire Department and Police Department (and other related agencies) to ensure a safe environment. This is accomplished through active engagement and safety planning prior to each event with partners.

I'm pleased to report that complaints of disrespectful, undignified, and unnecessarily intrusive treatment by GoRockford are so rare that, while we have a documented complaint procedure, we have not had to activate our system of complaint tracking and response in this regard to GoRockford. Many compliments about the way our staff have treated customers/stakeholders have been received (via letter, e-mail, and/or telephone). While I've informed the board periodically of such compliments, a file is maintained and available for review upon request.

No complaints or concerns have been raised regarding privacy and confidentiality. Our processes for assuring confidentiality are outlined in section 2.1.1.

I am reporting compliance.

Accordingly, the President/ CEO shall not:

2.1.1 "Collect, review, transmit, or store client data/information without protecting against improper access to that information."

CEO INTERPRETATION: (There have been no changes since the last report.) Information collected from customers and stakeholders must be available only to appropriate staff as needed. It is to be stored, shared, and, when appropriate, destroyed in a manner that ensures documents/data are not accessed by or circulated to any parties other than those with relevant staff duties.

REPORT: GoRockford has established security systems for its documents, buildings, and equipment that meet good business practice standards.

We have a system for building security; the office building is protected by an alarm system, and the office space is locked and alarmed at the end of each day. To further enhance security at the office, exterior security cameras are installed, and a keyless entry system is in place with individual codes for each staff member. All phone mailboxes and computers are password protected. GoRockford stores and disposes of paper and electronic documents/files according to a board-approved records retention policy that complies with all state, federal, and regulatory policies.

All client information stored on our computer systems requires a login name and password to gain access, and files are backed up multiple times daily. Additionally, client and partner records and contact information are stored in an internet-based, industry-specific Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system that is updated and checked for accuracy on a regular basis.

Credit card information is collected for retail sales at the bureau in electronic format to process transactions using Square. Receipts and reports display only the last four digits of the credit card number. All staff members handling the credit card information have undergone background checks. Entré Computer Solutions remotely monitors our IT environment on a 24/7 basis with real time data from our network. The NetMonitor program protects our system from data loss and data theft while providing a continuous network. Reports are provided to staff as concerns arise and annual meetings are held with consultants to review the results.

No instances or complaints have been received regarding improper use of or access to stakeholder or customer information held by GoRockford.

I am reporting compliance.

2.1.2 “Operate without clearly conveying to customers/stakeholders/partners what may be expected from the services offered.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (There have been no changes since the last report) I interpret this to mean that customers, stakeholders, and partners are properly informed about our services, programs, and special events using various methods; (i.e., emails, news events, newsletters, blogs, etc.) and that, particularly for those to register for or participate in specific GoRockford functions, the information clearly and accurately portrays details to avoid confusion or misunderstandings regarding expectations.

REPORT: GoRockford regularly communicates information about its special events, online training/webinars, services, and programs with its customers/partners using various means of communication, e.g., phone, website, e-mail, mailings, social media, and direct contact.

Customers/partners are provided with a list of programs and/or services. Materials are updated and typically include the disclaimer that all “information is subject to change.” For further assistance, our name, address and contact numbers are on print/non-print materials. GoRockford updates its customers, partners, stakeholders and community on an ongoing basis through news releases, industry partner newsletters, our website, news events, media appearances, community events, and via social media. Additionally, group clients (e.g., meeting/event planners) receive written confirmation of what services GoRockford will provide as part of our servicing commitment for their event.

All news releases, newsletters, advertisements, and printed materials are required to be proofread for accuracy and clarity by a minimum of two people in addition to the writer.

GoRockford follows a pre-established written procedure for handling all complaints regarding our programs and services, and I am pleased to report there have been no complaints in the past year of GoRockford pertaining to the portrayal of programs or services.

I am reporting compliance.

2.1.3 “Operate without clear procedures to address complaints/concerns raised by customers/stakeholders/partners.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (There have been no changes since the last report.) I interpret this to mean that GoRockford must have an easy-to-understand procedure for addressing complaints or concerns received from customers, stakeholders, or partners.

REPORT: GoRockford does have a complaint policy and procedure. The policy includes details on how complaints should be documented, processed and resolved and who on staff should be involved in resolving the issue. Further, the policy differentiates processes for complaints against GoRockford vs. partner organizations/businesses.

I am reporting compliance.

2.1.4 “Operate without earnest efforts to collaborate with other organizations and entities to achieve GoRockford’s Ends.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (There have been no changes since the last report.) I interpret this to mean we must consistently work strategically cooperatively and collaboratively with appropriate local, regional, state, and national organizations, governments, and businesses to achieve GoRockford’s ends.

REPORT: GoRockford staff works with key partners to advance the tourism industry by hosting regular meetings with industry partners, providing consistent communication through a variety of avenues and encouraging participation in GoRockford initiatives.

These meetings engage industry partners in the planning and execution of many GoRockford programs, initiatives, and services. GoRockford solicits input from area hotel and sites/attractions partners through regularly scheduled meetings, including hotel general manager/director of sales meetings, marketing partnership meetings, and periodic meetings with media partners, business leaders, elected officials, and other similar stakeholder groups.

The following provides a snapshot of how GoRockford has been involved in collaborative efforts and demonstrates compliance:

- GoRockford is participating in meetings with Tommy Meeks, the organizer of Rockford’s Juneteenth Celebration, and the committee in preparation for the 2025 celebration.
- GoRockford’s Forest City Beautiful initiative’s scope expanded with a new 6-year agreement with the City of Rockford.
- GoRockford has maintained its quarterly Marketing Partners meetings with hoteliers, site, and attraction executive staff. The use of the Partner Portal via gorockford.com has increased engagement with our partners and allows for self-managed changes to listings and events.
- GoRockford staff is working collaboratively with the City of Rockford in the “Rockford Day” initiative to encourage events in all 14 wards.
- GoRockford staff provide leadership and serve on boards and committees of partner organizations to increase collaboration toward accomplishing GoRockford goals/priorities. In the past year, groups served in this capacity by GoRockford include, but are not limited to:
 - Anything that Floats committee
 - Destinations International committees
 - Greater Rockford Chamber of Commerce – Economic Development Committee & Workforce Development Committee
 - Illinois Destinations Association (formerly Illinois Council of Convention & Visitors Bureaus)
 - Juneteenth committee
 - Laurent House Foundation board
 - Next Rockford strategy team
 - Parks Chamber of Commerce board
 - R.A.V.E. diversity advisory board
 - River District Association board
 - Rockford Area Arts Council board
 - Rockford Day committee
 - ACE committee
 - Sports Illinois – an IDA committee

I am reporting compliance.

2.1.5 “Operate without earnest efforts to continuously engage and build relationships with our diverse communities and residents.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (There have been no changes since the last report.) I interpret this to mean the GoRockford staff will intentionally engage with our diverse community through both formal and informal avenues, including engagement in community groups, committees, or with organizations managed by or in support of diverse communities in ways that will provide additional insights on our ability to practice allyship. Further, we will seek out opportunities to engage with individuals and organizations (e.g., via emails, calls, meetings, volunteer service) to ensure collaboration and relationship building.

REPORT: Over the past year, the following actions demonstrate compliance:

- In 2024, Stroll on State continued to create additional holiday décor, including nutcrackers, painted in a way to represent a diverse population. Our staff grew partnerships with Soar Radio, Coalition of Latino Leaders, Think Big!, and the Rockford Regional Hispanic Chamber of Commerce to ensure diverse representation on all music stages and throughout the vendor areas
- In 2024, Stroll on State partnered with over 10 nonprofit groups to fundraise at Stroll S'more's, hot chocolate, and bars to raise money and awareness for their organization.
- CRE8IV: transformational art included murals, mural artists, and mural locations that focused on or fostered inclusion, diversity, and belonging. These include representation of ethnic minority groups, the disability community, and the LGBTQ community. Many of the murals are in neighborhoods with highly diverse populations. Our process to select artists and locations included dialogue with members of our diverse communities and residents.
- GoRockford supported the SOAR Radio Gospel Music Awards through financial support and by providing 60 welcome bags. SOAR Awards CEO Justin Francis said the 8th annual SOAR ceremony exposed the community to the best in gospel music. The 2025 event was the first held at the new Hard Rock Casino.
- In addition, during the year, GoRockford partnered with several groups to support and, in some cases, help plan events and festivals that were, in part, planned for diverse audiences, including Inner City Reconstruction Group's Juneteenth celebration, Eight Fifteen Capital's annual series of events, M.A.S.A.'s Tamale Fest, and South Main Mercado.

I am reporting compliance.

2.1.6. “Operate without a process for considering the viewpoints of customers, stakeholders and/or partners along with relevant data and trends when considering matters of public policy or legislation that may materially impact RACVB or the industry.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (There have been no changes since the last report.) I interpret this to mean that when GoRockford considers taking positions on public policy or legislation that has the potential to materially impact GoRockford or the industry, it must have a process that considers the views and opinions of key stakeholders, customers, and/or partners.

Further, our analysis must consider currently available information, fact-based data, and trends on the related topic under consideration. I define “material impact” as indicating that the policy or legislation could significantly impact GoRockford or the industry, positively or negatively. Recent examples include legislation on “bathroom bills,” sanctuary city policies, gun control ordinances, and policies regarding LGBTQ rights. Locally, the issues might revolve around the imposition and use of industry-related taxes or tax incentives for industry projects/investments.

Notably, I interpret that while this policy requires that we consider the views of partners, customers, and stakeholders, we are required to especially consider the impact on GoRockford or the industry, not necessarily the impact on a single business or group of businesses/organizations.

Finally, when dealing with public policy, time is often of the essence. During such times, GoRockford staff will use their best judgment in making decisions and communicating the organization's viewpoints, keeping board members and partners apprised as appropriate.

REPORT: GoRockford staff utilizes a “filters” process designed to weigh the viewpoints of all sides, including potential opposition, of issues and measures what effects it may have on GoRockford's standing in the community or the industry at large. The “filters” process is used to evaluate public policy anytime RACVB is asked to make statements/take a position on public and private ventures of material impact or that RACVB has not previously taken a position on.

During the past year, no issues have risen to the level of activating the formal filters process, nor have concerns been raised regarding GoRockford's failure to consider the views of customers, stakeholders, or partners in public policy or legislation matters.

I am reporting compliance.

2.1.7 Operate without ensuring our marketing, advertising, and other efforts reflect and celebrate the diversity of our community and without utilizing communication channels owned by or proven to be successful in reaching diverse audiences.

CEO INTERPRETATION: (There have been no changes since the last report.) I interpret this to mean that as we implement marketing and advertising efforts, we will showcase visually and through cultural celebration our community's ethnicities and diverse populations, intentionally including underrepresented groups, including ethnic minorities, the disability community, and LGBTQ+ communities.

I interpret "utilizing communication channels owned by or proven to be successful in reaching diverse audiences" to mean that GoRockford will allocate a portion of its advertising budget to using media outlets that specifically cater to diverse individuals, including media outlets for individuals who speak/read a language other than English. Notably, I interpret that while this policy requires that we consider these media outlets, we should also consider the amount of use and ad spending within these outlets to ensure appropriate comparability and effectiveness.

I interpret "celebrate the diversity of our community" to mean GoRockford will seek and implement ways to share and create positive narratives surrounding the rich history and contributions of the many ethnicities and diverse individuals within Winnebago County. In addition, I interpret it to be the board's intention that we establish partnerships and promote the work of others and their efforts to showcase the unique history of the Rockford community, intentionally being inclusive of the impact made by minority individuals in the region.

REPORT: The following demonstrates compliance:

- GoRockford continues intentionality in ensuring diversity and inclusion in marketing materials and events. Below are some of the specific examples within recent programs:
 - Rockford Region restaurant industry video showcasing women, cultural and ethnic minority business owners, and utilizing minority social media influencers
 - Black History Month "What does black history mean to you" campaign
 - Women's History Month "Women of the 815" campaign
 - Stroll on State tree lighting ceremonies and musical performances stage representation
 - Stroll on State food/vendor markets and small business support
 - CRE8IV mural themes and imagery
 - Partnered with a disability and LGBTQ+ influencers to promote travel options in Rockford
- GoRockford Marketing team is working to incorporate additional marketing channels including for advertising Stroll on State: ads were purchased in El Sol and La Bamba radio to help reach our Spanish-speaking Latino and Hispanic communities. In addition, radio promotional interviews were completed with local radio stations 106.3 and SOAR Radio to help reach African American community members.
- GoRockford maintains AudioEye on GoRockford.com, an online tool that increases accessibility throughout the site. It has a recognizable global accessibility icon that lives on our website, and a toolbar is available for navigation as needed.

I am reporting compliance.

Prepared by: John Groh/Kristen Paul



102 N. Main St.
Rockford, IL 61101
Ph 815.963.8111

Date: April 17, 2025
To: GoRockford Board of Directors
From: John Groh, President & CEO
Re: Summary of:

- Internal Monitoring Report on Management Limitations
 - Monitoring on Policy 2.3 – Financial Planning / Budget
- Internal Monitoring Report on Executive Limitations
 - Monitoring on Policy 2.4 – Financial Condition and Activities

Monitoring Report 2.3 refers to fiscal financial planning and budget.

Monitoring Report 2.4 deals with RACVB's ongoing financial condition and has attached the preliminary Balance Sheet, preliminary Summary Income Statement, and Cash Flow Statement as of March 31, 2025.

We are reporting compliance in all matters contained in monitoring reports for the period ending March 31, 2025.

Please call me with any questions regarding these reports.



John Groh
President & CEO



Internal Monitoring Report - Management Limitations

March 31, 2025

Monitoring on Policy 2.3 – Financial Planning/Budget
Monitoring on Policy 2.4 – Financial Conditions and Activities

SUMMARY

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Compliance: | The President/CEO reports compliance on all 2.3 and 2.4 monitoring reports. |
| 2. Line of Credit: | GoRockford ended the month of March 2025 with a \$0 balance on its line of credit. |
| 3. Total Current Net Assets: | \$1,413,648 |
| 4. Total Current Liabilities: | \$1,417,873 |
| 5. Board Governance: | Budgeted \$10,100 – year-to-date expense is \$23,674 |
| 6. Total Operating Revenues: | \$3,094,171 year to date at March 31, 2025 for FY25 |
| 7. Total Operating Expenses: | \$3,188,815 year to date at March 31, 2025 for FY25 |
| 8. Trade Acts. Receivable: | \$57,876 (does not include hotel taxes or grants) |
| 9. Accounts Receivable Grants: | \$55,032 |
| 10. Accounts Payable: | \$143,819 |
| 11. Total Cash on Hand: | \$1,069,988, including \$177,003 Funds Held in Trust and \$789,719 Designated Funds |

SEE MARCH 2025 FINANCIALS



To: GoRockford Board of Directors
From: John Groh, President & CEO
RE: Internal Monitoring Report - Management Limitations
Monitoring on Policy 2.3 – Financial Planning/Budget

I hereby present my monitoring report on your Management Limitations Policy 2.3, “Financial Planning/Budget,” in accordance with the monitoring schedule set forth in Board policy. I certify that the information contained in this report is true.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Groh", written over a horizontal line.

John Groh, President & CEO

April 17, 2025
Date

POLICY 2.3 – FINANCIAL PLANNING/BUDGETING

BROADEST POLICY PROVISION:

“Financial planning for any fiscal year or the remaining part of any fiscal year will not deviate materially from the Board’s Ends Priority, risk fiscal jeopardy, or fail to address multi-year planning considerations.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (Same as the previous report.) Except for the multi-year planning component, I submit that the Board has comprehensively interpreted this broadest policy statement in its subsequent provisions.

As to multi-year planning, I interpret this policy to require that we sufficiently project all capital and depreciation needs and develop financial resources needed to achieve our Board’s Priority End Results. I also interpret this policy to indicate that as the President & CEO, I have the flexibility to revise budgetary projections throughout the year, but I am to keep the Board apprised of material changes, and any changes must meet all the criteria in this policy.

My interpretations and reporting data are presented below. I will utilize the fiscal information provided in the March 31, 2025 preliminary financials.

REPORT: On July 24, 2024, the board approved a twelve-month budget for the fiscal year (July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025), with a projected net loss of \$16,387 after depreciation of \$55,000.

Accordingly, the President & CEO shall not allow budgeting that:

2.3.1 “Risks incurring those situations or conditions described as unacceptable in the “Financial Conditions and Activities” Board policies 2.4.1 - 2.4.4.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (Same as the previous report.) I interpret this policy to require that I ensure that financial plans and budgets prepared must avoid the liquidity risk situations and conditions described as unacceptable in the 2.4 Financial Condition and Activities Board policies. These policies include items such as expending more funds than have been received during a fiscal year relative to

operating reserve guidelines, incurring the organization, settling payroll and payables in a timely manner, and ensuring timely filing of government payments and filings.

REPORT: On July 24, 2024, the board adopted a twelve-month FY25 budget for July 2024 through June 2025. The budget was approved with a projected loss of \$16,387 after depreciation of \$55,000.

The bureau did not draw on the line of credit during the last fiscal year due to stable hotel tax revenue and conservative spending. All budgeted revenue for FY25 is consistent with our mission, and all revenue received during the quarter ended March 31, 2025, was from sources consistent with our mission.

I am reporting compliance.

2.3.2 “Omits credible projection of revenues and expenses, separation of capital and operational items, cash flow, and disclosure of planning assumptions.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (*Same as the previous report.*) I interpret this policy to mean that the budget prepared, utilized, and available for presentation must have adequate data to support the credibility of projections. It must highlight the separation of capital items from operational expenses, include a presentation of cash flow expectations for the year, and convey the key assumptions used in creating the projections.

REPORT: The VP of Finance & Administration, along with the President/CEO and program directors, developed the annual budget based on sales and marketing plans, historical financial data, and projected revenue from hotel taxes, state grants, and other predictable sources. Capital expenditures were budgeted separately from expenses. A cash flow projection and a narrative budget summary of assumptions were prepared and shared with the Audit Committee and GoRockford Board for budget approval.

Management is provided monthly financial reports comparing actual results to budget, and the GoRockford Board receives quarterly financial reports, including a cash flow statement, along with a financial analysis of any unanticipated activity. We ended the quarter of March 2025 with a \$0 balance on our line of credit, demonstrating that our revenue, expenses, and cash flow projections were reliable.

I am reporting compliance.

2.3.3 “Plans the expenditure in any fiscal year of more funds than are conservatively projected to be received.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (*Same as the previous report.*) This policy requires that a conservative projection of revenues must exceed our most realistic projection of expenses for any fiscal year.

REPORT: Only revenue that is contracted for, on hand from the retained earnings of prior years, or reasonably attainable (e.g., sponsorships) is budgeted.

The projected twelve-month FY25 budget shows a deficit of \$16,387 after depreciation. Before depreciation of \$55,000, the budget has projected net income of \$38,613.

I am reporting compliance.

2.3.4 “Omits allocation for board prerogatives during the year than as set forth in the Cost of Governance Board policy 4.10.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (Same as the previous report.) As the Board establishes its budget for what it believes is important to invest in its own governance, this policy requires that I ensure that the annual budget I prepare for the corporation as a whole allocates at least as much as is stated in the Cost of Governance policy for board prerogatives and functions.

REPORT: The amount set forth in our approved FY25 budget for the cost of Board prerogatives is \$10,100 and is budgeted for board consulting and retreats.

I am reporting compliance.

2.3.5 “Fails to maintain operating reserves equivalent to three months of basic operating expenses. Operating reserves are defined as available cash on hand in cash or highly liquid assets and do not include any line of credit or other form of cash flow debt instruments in the calculation thereof.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (Same as previous report) I interpret this policy regarding liquidity to require that our financial planning must maintain cash or cash equivalents of at least three months of basic operational costs (estimated at approximately \$436,000 for FY25 under the approved budget). As outlined in the policy, this includes cash on hand and highly liquid assets, which I interpret to include the calculation of total short-term assets less short-term liabilities. Additionally, the calculation of operating reserves does not include access to any line of credit or other form of cash flow debt instruments.

NOTE: In June 2023, the board approved a new Reserve Fund Policy that calls for building a designated cash reserve fund over time up to 25% of the annual expense budget for personnel and operations, in combination with the \$250,000 line of credit already in place (thus, approximately \$186,000 for FY25, complemented by the existing \$250,000 line of credit). This will be funded from operating revenue, namely hotel tax revenue, one of our few sources of revenue that is not designated.

REPORT: As of March 31, 2025, the bureau's operating reserve bank account balance was approximately \$37,500, with monthly transfers of \$2,500 from the operating account to the reserve account. Thus, we are on track to implement the new policy's recommendations and requirements.

At the current transfer rate of \$2,500/month, the reserve fund will grow by \$30,000 annually. Assuming continued funding and no withdrawals, the balance is projected to reach the target by March 2030.

Revisions to Board Policies 2.3 and 2.4 are recommended to ensure consistency and clarity across governing documents. These revisions should explicitly acknowledge the Reserve Fund Policy and incorporate the designated reserve fund as a distinct component of the organization's overall liquidity and risk management strategy. Updating these policies will align financial oversight expectations with the current board-approved approach and clarify the distinction between the original three-month liquidity requirement and the long-term reserve-building goal.

As we are in compliance with the new Reserve Fund Policy, I am reporting compliance.

REFER TO MARCH 2025 FINANCIALS

Attachments: Income Statement, Balance Sheet, Cash Flow
Prepared by: John Groh and Joanne Nold 4/17/25



To: GoRockford Board of Directors
From: John Groh, President & CEO
RE: Internal Monitoring Report- Executive Limitations
Quarterly Monitoring on Policy 2.4 – Financial Condition and Activities

I hereby present my monitoring report on your Management Limitations Policy 2.4, “Financial Condition and Activities”, in accordance with the monitoring schedule set forth in Board policy. I certify that the information contained in this report and the accompanying Income Statement and Balance Sheet are accurate in all material respects.

Signed,



John Groh, President & CEO

April 17, 2025
Date

POLICY 2.4 – FINANCIAL CONDITION AND ACTIVITIES

BROADEST POLICY PROVISION:

“With respect to the financial condition and activities, the President & CEO will not cause or allow the development of fiscal jeopardy or a material deviation of actual expenditures from the board’s Ends priorities.”

CEO’s INTERPRETATION: (Same as the previous report.) I submit that the board’s concerns about avoidance of fiscal jeopardy are comprehensively interpreted in this policy’s subsequent provisions. Regarding expenditures, I interpret “material deviation of actual expenditures from the Board’s Ends priorities” to mean avoidance of waste, such that all expenditures are to be viewed as investments towards the achievement of GoRockford’s Ends.

REPORT: My interpretations and reporting data on the fiscal jeopardy provisions are presented with those provisions noted below. With respect to expenditures deviating from Ends policies, anticipated expenditures itemized in our FY25 budget are reviewed by the Board when monitoring to ensure adherence to our Financial Planning/Budgeting Policy (2.3). Material variances (none this reporting period) are noted in the monitoring of provision 2.4.5 below.

Accordingly, he/she may not:

2.4.1 “Expend more funds than have been received in the fiscal year to date unless the operating reserve guidelines are met according to 2.3.5.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (Same as the previous report.) This policy requires that year-to-date expenses be less than corresponding revenues. Any exceptions are subject to the operating reserve guidelines.

REPORT: As of March 31, 2025, we have recorded operating revenues of \$3,094,171 and incurred operating expenses (expending of funds) before depreciation of \$3,188,815, resulting in a loss of \$94,644 from operations. After depreciation expense, we are reporting a net loss of \$136,647 for the fiscal year. The approved budget projected a net loss of \$138,024 on March 30. Therefore, our budgeting, revenue, and expenses are on target with the plan.

I am reporting compliance.

2.4.2 “**Indebt the organization, with the exception of: credit cards or credit accounts used for regular business purposes and paid in full each month; accessing a Board-approved Line of Credit in an amount not to exceed \$100,000, with notification to Board Governance Committee of any draws on the line within four business days of each draw. Draws of over \$100,000 require Board approval. Any draw on the line should be viewed as a short-term float and be accompanied by a plan for repayment, ideally within 90 days.**

CEO INTERPRETATION: (Same as the previous report.) This policy gives the CEO the latitude to approve any draws against the line of credit (currently maintained at \$250,000) within the parameters explicitly stated in the policy provision.

Further, I am to ensure that GoRockford credit cards are used only for bureau purposes and that balances are paid in full each month. However, consistent with my interpretation of Policy 2.4.3, I interpret that other credit accounts can be settled by the due date if terms are specifically agreed upon and otherwise within thirty to sixty days.

REPORT: The Bureau entered the quarter with a balance of \$0 on the line of credit. As no draws were made during the quarter, it ended March 2025 with a line of credit balance of \$0.

In May 2022, the board approved the bureau borrowing up to \$100,000 for the newly acquired building at **310 S. Winnebago St.** On September 14, 2022, the bureau received a \$100,000 loan from IL Bank & Trust to pay for major roof repairs and masonry work. The loan is amortized on a 30-year repayment schedule at 6.15% interest, but **monthly payments of \$1,940 started on October 14, 2022, to repay the loan in 5 years.** The loan is secured by the building.

The board officers approved, and the board later ratified, the Bureau to apply for an **Economic Injury Disaster Loan (EIDL)** in April 2020. The initial loan proceeds of \$10,000 were received on May 1, 2020, and are forgivable under the program. The final loan proceeds of \$75,400 were received on June 19, 2020, and carry a term of 30 years, at 2.75%, with deferred monthly payments of \$322 that started in December 2022 after multiple delays. The loan payments are paying down accrued interest only until June 2025, at which time a portion of the monthly payments will also pay off the principal.

Finally, corporate credit cards and accounts were only used for typical business purchases during the March 31, 2025 quarter.

I am reporting compliance.

2.4.3 “Operate without settling payroll and payables in a timely manner.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (Same as the previous report.) Payroll must be paid as required every other Friday. For other payables, I interpret “timely” to mean by the due date if terms are specifically agreed upon and otherwise within thirty to sixty days.

REPORT: As of March 31, 2025, trade accounts payables totaled \$143,819. Payables continue to be settled within 30 to 45 days unless they are dependent on grant funding that has been delayed. In those situations, we have received payment flexibility from the vendors. Payroll has been paid timely on a bi-weekly basis.

I am reporting compliance.

2.4.4 “Allow tax or other government ordered payments or filings to be overdue or inaccurately filed. Requirements include but are not limited to annual independent audits, audit compliance, annual 990 statements, annual budgets, quarterly activity reports and financial statements, minutes, and agendas from Board meetings.

CEO INTERPRETATION: (Same as the previous report.) All tax and government-required payments or filings must be made promptly and accurately.

REPORT: All withholding taxes and other such payments or filings for the period have been made on time and accurately. Federal and state income tax withholdings have been submitted to the proper taxing authorities within 5 business days following the payroll dates. Federal and state unemployment taxes have been paid by the end of the month following the payroll quarter. There are no outstanding filings, and there have been no late penalties. The annual Form 990 for the year ended June 30, 2024 was filed by the due date of December 15, 2024.

I am reporting compliance.

2.4.5 “Make a single purchase or commitment of greater than \$25,000 unless such purchase was explicitly itemized in monitoring reports previously disclosed to the board. Splitting orders and /or paying from two consecutive fiscal years to avoid this limit is not acceptable.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (Same as the previous report.) The Board must specifically approve all single expenditures of more than \$25,000 that were not previously disclosed as part of budget monitoring data.

Further, I interpret that individual expenditures paid to a single vendor and, in the aggregate, exceeding \$25,000 do not require board approval if they are within the overall projected expense for the fiscal year. As noted in the policy, splitting payments to avoid this limit is not acceptable.

REPORT: (Same as the previous report.) During the quarter, no purchase or commitment more than \$25,000 has been made that was not specifically projected in the annual budget or subsequently approved by the board.

I am reporting compliance.

- 2.4.6 “Solely execute payments in an amount greater than \$5,000, or solely execute any payments to himself/herself. Signatures are to be in the priority order of signing as outlined in Policy 4.8.2.C where signatures on checks are required by Board member.”**

CEO INTERPRETATION: (*Same as the previous report.*) No checks or electronic fund transfers (EFTs) can be solely executed in an amount greater than \$5,000, nor solely executed as payments to the President/CEO.

REPORT: (*Same as the previous report.*) For this period, no checks in an amount greater than \$5,000 have been executed solely, and no solely executed payments have been made to the President/CEO. Other signators were as specified in Policy 4.3.

I am reporting compliance.

- 2.4.7 “Acquire, encumber, lease or dispose of real property.”**

CEO INTERPRETATION: (*Same as the previous report.*) All decisions regarding the purchase or sale of land or buildings are considered to be at the discretion of the Board of Directors.

REPORT: (*Same as the previous report.*) No real property has been encumbered, acquired, or disposed of during this period.

I am reporting compliance.

- 2.4.8 “Operate without aggressively pursuing material receivables in accordance with commonly accepted practices.”**

CEO INTERPRETATION: (*Same as the previous report.*) I interpret a “reasonable grace period” to be sixty (60) days and “material” to be receivables that, when collected, are of greater value than the cost of collection (including staff time). I interpret “aggressively pursuing” to require regular follow-up in writing, over the phone when all other avenues have been exhausted, and when the cost would benefit the recovery utilizing a collection agency.

REPORT: At the end of this period, no material receivables were outstanding.

I am reporting compliance.

- 2.4.9 “Obtain revenues from sources that are not, in fact and appearance, legal and consistent with the ends policies, mission and values of the organization.”**

CEO INTERPRETATION: (*Same as the previous report.*) I interpret this policy as allowing staff to identify and generate new revenue streams and sources without requiring explicit board approval (as long as they meet the “prudence” test). However, “prudence” in this case is further defined to preclude any revenue sources that conflict with our mission and values and thus could provide embarrassment to the organization and its constituents.

REPORT: (Same as the previous report.) During this period, no revenues have been obtained from sources that are inconsistent with GoRockford’s mission and values or would provide embarrassment to GoRockford or its constituents.

I am reporting compliance.

2.4.10 “Use restricted funds for purposes other than stated by the contributor or use Board designated funds except as explicitly authorized by the Board.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (Same as the previous report.) This policy requires that we manage finances consistently with generally accepted accounting principles regarding the segregation and use of restricted funds. “Restricted” contributions are monies directed to GoRockford to be used for a specific purpose. Board-designated funds are those funds the board had pre-determined to hold in reserve for specific purposes.

REPORT: (Same as the previous report.) Finances have been managed in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, and any restricted funds will be reported separately in the balance sheet attached to this report. Funds have only been used for their intended purposes.

I am reporting compliance.

2.4.11 “Operate without adequate internal controls over receipts and disbursements to avoid unauthorized payments or material dissipation of assets. The organization shall not have secret funds, and it shall prohibit any unaudited transactions or loans.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (Same as the previous report) Controls must be in place to ensure all receipts are properly recorded, and disbursements are appropriately authorized. Further, all payments (checks, EFTs, credit card purchases, petty cash, etc.) must have corresponding documentation sufficient to satisfy the auditor. Finally, we may not make unaudited loans of any type.

REPORT: (Same as the previous report.) Internal controls in place are consistent with Board policy and the generally accepted accounting principles (GAAP) prescribed by the Board-appointed auditors. As part of the annual audit, the independent auditor reviews our internal control procedures in place during the year. The organization does not have secret funds and does not allow unaudited transactions or loans. The most recent audit for FY24 reported a clean opinion.

I am reporting compliance.

2.4.12 “Pledge any of the assets of the corporation as security within any contracts.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (Same as the previous report.) No assets can be pledged as security within any contracts without board approval.

REPORT: (Same as the previous report.) During the period, no corporation assets were pledged as security within any contracts.

Internal Monitoring Report – Management Limitations
Quarterly Monitoring on Policy 2.4 – Financial Condition and Activities

In June 2020, the board approved the bureau's application for an Economic Injury Disaster Loan in the amount of \$75,400. The loan required the bureau to pledge personal property as collateral.

In May 2022, the board approved the bureau to obtain a loan secured by the newly acquired building at 310 S. Winnebago St. to finance major building improvements. A \$100,000 loan was obtained on September 15, 2022, from Illinois Bank & Trust. The loan is secured by the building.

I am reporting compliance.

2.4.13 “Allow the expenditure of organizational funds for travel purposes which are not specifically related to or consistent with the organization’s purpose and functions.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (*Same as the previous report.*) Compliance with this policy is achieved when all travel expenses can be justified as reasonable investments toward achieving our Priority Results.

REPORT: (*Same as the previous report.*) All expenditures for travel during the quarter have been consistent with the organization’s purpose and function.

I am reporting compliance.

REFER TO MARCH 2025 FINANCIALS

Attachments: Income Statement, Balance Sheet, Cash Flow.
Prepared by: John Groh and Joanne Nold 4/17/2025

Rockford Area ConventionisitorsBureau
Statement of Financial Position
March 31, 2025
April 17, 2025

ASSETS

Current Assets

Petty Cash	\$ 132.00	
Cash - Operating IL B & T	36,945.42	
Cash - Designated Funds	789,719.25	
Cash - Capital Planning & Dev	18,548.37	
Cash - Private Sector Funds	10,073.16	
Cash - Operating Reserve	37,567.16	
Cash - Funds Held in Trust	177,003.14	
Accounts Receivable	57,876.03	
Mktg Ptr Grant Receivable	21,924.93	
Other Grants Receivable	33,107.00	
City/County Gov't Receivable	82,288.25	
Due from Foundation	2,143.34	
Other Receivables	87,588.89	
Inventory	8,796.18	
Prepaid Expenses	<u>49,935.47</u>	
 Total Current Assets		 1,413,648.59

Property and Equipment

Furniture & Equipment	502,578.13	
Leasehold Improvements	635,079.30	
Accumulated Depreciation	<u>(921,755.06)</u>	
 Total Property and Equipment		 215,902.37

Other Assets

Long-Term Receivable	<u>776,514.20</u>	
 Total Other Assets		 <u>776,514.20</u>

Total Assets **\$ 2,406,065.16**

LIABILITIES AND CAPITAL

Current Liabilities

Funds Held in Trust	\$ 164,586.11	
Accounts Payable-Operating	143,819.93	
Accrued Payroll	78,920.85	
Accrued Vacation Pay	49,666.75	
Payroll Taxes and Withholding	(2,270.37)	
Accrued Interest	906.09	
Unearned Income	<u>982,244.51</u>	
 Total Current Liabilities		 1,417,873.87

Long-Term Liabilities

Unearned Income	776,514.20	
SBA Loan Payable - LT	<u>75,400.00</u>	
 Total Long-Term Liabilities		 <u>851,914.20</u>

Total Liabilities 2,269,788.07

Capital

Net Assets	272,915.44	
Net Income	<u>(136,638.35)</u>	
 Total Capital		 <u>136,277.09</u>

Total Liabilities & Capital **\$ 2,406,065.16**

Income Statement
For the Nine Months Ending March 31, 2025
April 17, 2025

	Current Month	Year to Date Actual	Year to Date Budget	Year to Date Variance	Annual Budget
OPERATING REVENUES					
City/County Gov't Agreements	\$ 98,437	1,236,711	\$ 1,197,801	38,910	\$ 1,617,467
County, other city contracts	1,051	13,566	13,613	(47)	16,946
Marketing Partnership Grant	11,451	68,388	68,388	0	85,000
LTCB Grant Revenue	47,620	428,580	428,580	0	571,450
Other Grant Revenue	228,743	575,440	575,439	1	1,080,280
Stroll on State	0	351,317	362,800	(11,483)	362,800
CRE8IV Revenue	0	0	0	0	20,340
Forest City Beautiful	0	92,653	93,366	(713)	167,400
Other Revenue	43,748	255,955	254,764	1,191	254,764
Coop Partnership Revenue	0	45,899	46,000	(101)	46,000
Advertising Revenue	1,772	12,340	13,500	(1,160)	18,000
Miscellaneous Income	59	9,162	9,400	(238)	9,700
Interest Revenue	532	4,160	30	4,130	40
TOTAL OPERATING REVENUES	433,413	3,094,171	3,063,681	30,490	4,250,187
OPERATING EXPENSES					
Total Personnel	105,966	1,107,055	1,136,821	(29,766)	1,485,134
Total Operations	20,629	181,405	176,076	5,329	224,690
Total Activities	332,845	1,900,355	1,846,805	53,550	2,501,751
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES	459,440	3,188,815	3,159,702	29,113	4,211,575
INCOME FROM OPERATIONS	(26,027)	(94,644)	(96,021)	1,377	38,612
NON OPERATING REVENUE					
In-Kind Revenue	7,115	93,795	64,035	29,760	85,383
PARTNERSHIP REVENUE	(7,115)	(93,795)	(64,035)	(29,760)	(85,383)
NON OPERATING EXPENSES					
Inkind Expenses	7,115	93,795	64,035	29,760	85,383
PARTNERSHIP EXPENSE	7,115	93,795	64,035	29,760	85,383
INCOME FROM PARTNERS	0	0	0	0	0
Depreciation Expense	4,667	42,003	42,003	0	55,000
NET INCOME	(\$ 30,694)	(136,647)	(\$ 138,024)	1,377	(\$ 16,388)

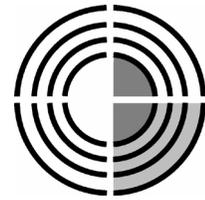
For Management Purposes Only

Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau
FY25 Cash Flow

	Actual July	Actual August	Actual September	Actual October	Actual November	Actual December	Actual January	Actual February	Actual March	Budget April	Budget May	Budget June	FY25 TOTALS
Initial Cash Balance (not including funds held in trust)	\$ 1,015,539	\$ 1,018,885	\$ 933,893	\$ 746,038	\$ 828,264	\$ 890,633	\$ 842,693	\$ 841,713	\$ 1,065,783	\$ 892,985	\$ 907,558	\$ 879,348	
Add Cash Receipts:													
City Contract	127,993	170,530	172,855	172,437	165,554	161,506	121,426	100,286	107,619	128,793	134,806	156,067	1,719,872
County/S.Beloit Contracts	3,944	943	882	3,353	25	2,502	3,269	722	1,132	1,129	885	1,319	20,104
LTCB Grant/Marketing Ptshp Grant				200,000	129,062			170,741	114,582		121,450		735,835
Other grants	16,327	31,974				19,742	50,000	181,734	11,184	100,000		175,000	585,961
Made for Rockford receipts	100,000	25,000			50,000		150,000			75,000		50,000	450,000
Forest City Beautiful/Sculptures/Murals	25,000		68,842		9,822		2,096			50,000		69,000	224,759
Other Revenue	5,000	11,803	18,326			8,826							43,955
Stroll on State	9,500	27,100		-	99,000								135,600
Annual Meeting			32,444	10,910	400	400	100						44,254
Advertising revenue	972	534	956	1,384	1,687	831	3,375	1,153	1,340	1,500	1,500	1,500	16,731
Interest income	386	639	515							500	500	500	3,040
Misc Income	942	4,498	131	344	2,898	295	2,991	606	2,684	150	150	150	15,839
Total Cash Receipts	290,064	273,020	294,951	388,429	458,448	194,101	333,257	455,241	238,541	357,072	259,291	453,536	3,995,950
Less Operating Expenses:													
Total Personnel	114,710	158,623	108,210	107,935	116,554	112,122	172,854	110,085	105,966	120,000	120,000	120,000	1,467,059
Total Operations	16,744	29,704	13,715	22,490	20,390	19,461	20,728	18,658	20,629	20,000	15,000	20,000	237,519
Total Activities	110,957	164,786	358,042	171,339	250,634	102,969	136,703	99,928	282,244	200,000	150,000	400,000	2,427,602
Total Operating Expenses	242,411	353,113	479,967	301,764	387,578	234,552	330,285	228,671	408,839	340,000	285,000	540,000	4,132,180
Plus Other Receipts:													
Prepays expensed	10,400												10,400
Less Other Disbursements:													
Transfer to Reserve Fund	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500	30,000
Payments for Outstanding Payables	50,000												50,000
Payments for Debt Service	339	339	339	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,017
Payments for Fixed Assets	1,868	2,060		1,939	6,000	4,989	1,452					3,000	21,308
End Cash Balance	\$ 1,018,885	\$ 933,893	\$ 746,038	\$ 828,264	\$ 890,633	\$ 842,693	\$ 841,713	\$ 1,065,783	\$ 892,985	\$ 907,558	\$ 879,348	\$ 787,384	



Governing Policy of the
GoRockford Board of Directors



Executive Limitations Policy 2.8 – Communication & Support to the Board

Management Limitations

To: Board of Directors
From: John Groh, President/CEO
RE: Internal Monitoring Report – Management Limitations Policies
Monitoring on Policy 2.8 – Communication & Support to the Board

I hereby present my monitoring report on your Management Limitations Policy 2.8 – Communication & Support to the Board, in accordance with the monitoring schedule set forth in board policy. I certify that the information contained in this report is true for the six-month period ending June 2025.

Signed

John Groh, President/CEO

June 25, 2025

POLICY 2.8 – COMMUNICATION & SUPPORT TO THE BOARD

“The President/CEO will not permit the board to be uninformed or unsupported in its work.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (No changes since last report.) One of the primary obligations of the CEO is to ensure the board has all necessary facts, evidence, knowledge and resources for the fulfillment of its role, as the board has defined it in its governing policies. I submit that the subsequent provisions comprehensively define this policy. Interpretations and reporting data are presented below.

“Accordingly, he or she may not:”

2.8.1 “Neglect to submit monitoring reports (including the President/CEO’s policy interpretations, as well as compliance/achievement data) required by the board (see policy 3.4 on Monitoring President/CEO Performance in Board/Staff Linkage) in a timely, accurate and understandable fashion.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (No changes since last report) The CEO shall submit monitoring reports in the month designated in policy 3.4. Each report shall include interpretation of each policy indicating whether that interpretation is new (noting whether any material changes have been made since last report), data that is factually accurate, and enough data for the board to make an informed judgment as to whether compliance/achievement is reasonably substantiated. I interpret “timely” to mean the board receives the report in advance of the scheduled board meeting, during which they will review the

report. I interpret “understandable” to mean that the information provided, and the logic outlined in the report would make sense to most people.

REPORT: All monitoring reports for the period were submitted within the specified month and distributed to the board prior to board meetings in compliance with policy 4.3.3.c., The January 2025 meeting was cancelled, and reports on 1.0, 1.3, 2.3 and 2.4 were deferred to March.

- January 29, 2025 (meeting cancelled)
- March 19, 2025
 - 1.0 Global Ends (deferred from January)
 - 1.3 Communicate with Constituents (deferred from January)
 - 2.3 Financial Planning/Budgeting (deferred from January)
 - 2.4 Financial Condition & Activities (deferred from January)
 - 2.2 Treatment of Staff
 - 2.8 Communication & Support to the Board
- April 23, 2025
 - 1.2 Enhance Tourism Product
 - 2.1 Treatment of Customers & Partners
 - 2.3 Financial Planning/Budgeting
 - 2.4 Financial Condition & Activities
- June 25, 2025
 - 2.8 Communication & Support to Board
 - 2.9 Programs/Events/Services/Logistics

The board has not conveyed any concerns about accuracy or ability to comprehend the information and data presented. All reports were approved, and in doing so the board accepted the CEO interpretations as reasonable and that reports demonstrated compliance or achievement.

I am reporting compliance.

2.8.2 “Let the board be unaware of any actual or anticipated noncompliance with any Ends or Management Limitations policy, regardless of the monitoring schedule set forth by the board.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (No changes since last report.) The CEO shall notify the board whenever there is an incurred or anticipated violation of Board Ends or Executive Limitations policy. I interpret “in a timely manner” to vary depending on the perceived importance of the non-compliance issue. Where the importance is deemed by me to be serious or potentially damaging to the organization, actual or anticipated non-compliance issues should be reported as soon as they are known. When the importance is deemed to be minor and the period of non-compliance is expected to be brief or related to an ongoing circumstance previously brought to the board’s attention, non-compliance should be at least reported in the regularly (or otherwise) scheduled monitoring report.

REPORT: There were no such issues during this reporting period.

I am reporting compliance.

2.8.3 “Let the board be without objective background/decision information it periodically requests, or unaware of relevant trends, anticipated adverse media coverage, or material external and internal/organizational changes. The Board should be notified in advance of material internal changes, when feasible.

CEO INTERPRETATION: (No changes since last report.) At its request or when the board is preparing to make policy decisions, I am to submit background information and/or provide opportunities for dialogue with and/or data from industry experts, as requested by the board, on the pros and cons of the options being considered, and/or those otherwise available and in my estimation viable for board consideration. While some bias as CEO is, in my estimation, inevitable, I am obligated to temper any such bias with the presentation of objective information.

Further, I am to keep the board aware of observed industry and/or community trends that may impact favorably or negatively on the organization. In addition to formal reporting on board policies, I am to keep the board apprised of material developments. Material external changes such as major developments in our industry sector, issues with major stakeholders, legal challenges, etc., are to be conveyed to the board no later than the next board meeting, but perhaps sooner than dictated by the situation. The criteria for timeliness of board awareness of issues such as negative media coverage or litigation are based on when the material will become public and/or otherwise impact the organization. I interpret material internal changes to be issues such as significant revisions to strategy, to revenues or expenditures (that are compliant with our financial policies) or personnel changes at or above mid-management.

REPORT: When apprised by the board chair of action items on upcoming agendas, staff and I regularly prepare background information that is included in the board packets or other communications. We attempt to present logical and reasonable options and recommendations, and the pros and cons of each, and assure all new board members are equipped to govern according to approved policies.

In all cases, care is taken to provide information that is as complete and unbiased as possible. The board has not conveyed any concerns about a lack of adequate or objective information being presented.

The board has been informed of material **external** changes by the next board meeting, or sooner as the situation dictated/allowed. The following examples demonstrate compliance:

- On June 10, the board was informed that GoRockford will join our partners at the International Women’s Baseball Center to announce that the World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) has officially awarded the hosting rights of the WBSC Women's Baseball World Cup Group Stage 2026 to IWBC and Rockford.
- On June 9, the board was invited to the VIP IRONMAN Hospitality Experience for the inaugural **IRONMAN 70.3** race on Sunday, June 22.
- On June 3, the board was informed that 2025 CRE8IV Sculpture Program approved by Rockford City Council.

- On April 1, GoRockford Announces 3rd Round of Restaurant Grants
- On January 22, the board was informed of Rockford Restaurant Week starting with a record 65 restaurants participating.
- On January 16, the board received the final Stroll on State by the numbers and press release.
- On January 17, the board was notified that IRONMAN 70.3 Rockford had sold out.
- On January 10, the board was invited to attend a BMO/Rave news conference announcing Rockford would host the 2026 AHL All-Star Classic.
- On January 2, the board was informed to hold this date/time news conference during which we will celebrate alongside a local partner as they announce a major, first-time event that will take place in Rockford and Illinois in 2026.

The board has been notified in a timely manner of material ***internal*** changes. For example, the board is notified in advance of media coverage regarding the organization (positive or negative), as we are aware of the coverage. The following demonstrates compliance:

- On June 10, the board was informed that Leah Ticknor has joined our team as Office Manager and Executive Assistant.
- On April 15, the board was informed GoRockford has been named the 2025 Sports Tourism Organization of the Year by the Sports Events & Tourism Association.
- On April 7, the board was informed that Rockford Branded Car in NASCAR Race Local Insurance Agency Drives Exposure for Rockford by Sponsoring Car

I am reporting compliance.

2.8.4 “Let the board be unaware of Board or Board member actions that, in the President/CEO’s opinion, are not consistent with the board’s own policies on Governance Process and Board/Staff Linkage, particularly in the case of Board or Board member behavior that is detrimental to the work relationship between the board and the President/CEO.

CEO INTERPRETATION: (No changes since last report.) I am to notify the board chair if I am aware of any board or board members’ actions that are inconsistent with the board’s own policies, especially if such actions undermine the board/CEO relationship. In the case of perceived non-compliance on behalf of the chair, I will report non-compliance issues directly to the board if the perceived non-compliance is not resolved after discussing the concern with the chair directly.

REPORT: There were no such issues during this reporting period for GoRockford’s board.

I am reporting compliance.

- 2.8.5 “Present information in unnecessarily complex or lengthy form or without differentiating among three types of written communications:**
- a. monitoring**
 - b. decision preparation, and**
 - c. incidental/ “FYI”**

CEO INTERPRETATION: (No changes since last report.) Correspondence to the board is to be concise and identified as one of the three types listed in the policy. I interpret “monitoring” to be those items connected with the designated monitoring reports. I interpret “decision preparation” to be background material necessary or helpful for decision-making and “incidental” to be information/FYI type material.

REPORT: Information in all correspondence with and materials provided to the board (especially board meeting packets) has been labeled as either monitoring report-related, informational/FYI, or for preparation to make decisions or act. If the communication is urgent or requires immediate action, the content is labeled accordingly. Board meeting agendas are clear and indicate where attachments are included, or action is required.

I am reporting compliance.

- 2.8.6 “Allow the Board to be without logistical and administrative support for official board, officer or committee communications and activities.”**

CEO INTERPRETATION: (No changes since last report.) As CEO, I am to ensure adequate support for operations of the board, its officers and committees. I interpret “official” to mean those functions dealing with the carrying out of the board’s governing responsibilities, including those of its officers and committees. Examples of support include arranging meeting schedules, meeting space, fulfilling communication needs, copying and distributing correspondence and materials, recording minutes, providing refreshments, etc.

REPORT: Staff support for board functions, including production and distribution of board meeting packets, minutes, meeting logistics and refreshments and similar arrangements for the work of the board and official board committees is regularly provided. No concerns to the contrary have been conveyed by the board to the CEO.

I am reporting compliance.

- 2.8.7 “Deal with the board in a way that favors or privileges certain board members over others, except when (a) fulfilling individual requests for information or (b) responding to officers or committees duly charged by the board.**

CEO INTERPRETATION: (No changes since last report.) This is interpreted as meaning that I am to view the board, collectively, as my superior and am to provide communications about board issues and policy choices to all board members, rather than just to the chair and/or board members I may view as “sympathetic” to my concerns.

The exceptions are the two circumstances stated above as “a” and “b,” and I also interpret an exception to be when working with individual board members in their occasional capacities as

“volunteer staff members.” While I am to pass requests for agenda items to the chair, the background information supporting my request is to be distributed to all board members. I further interpret this is pertinent only to business dealings, not to personal or social relationships.

REPORT: Monitoring reports, informational content and background information on action items are distributed to all board members. Significant e-mail exchanges and other conversations have and do take place with individual board members, either as colleagues or pursuant to exceptions as set forth in the policy, but this correspondence does not limit the awareness or authority of the board.

I am reporting compliance.

2.8.8 “Neglect to supply for the consent agenda those items delegated to the President/CEO yet required by law or contract to be Board approved, along with applicable monitoring information.”

CEO INTERPRETATION: (No changes since last report.) The CEO will submit for the board’s agenda all items that require board approval when such is mandated by third-party business requirements, the law, or per board policy. When such items are submitted, the background information supporting the action item will include written substantiation of adherence to relevant board policies.

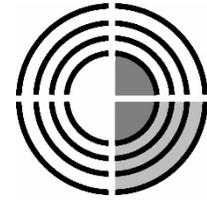
REPORT: Staff regularly executes agreements, contracts and reports with government and private entities, and all is done within the approved executive limitations policies. No such instances of required consent agenda items have been documented within the timing of this report.

I am reporting compliance.

Prepared by: John Groh, Leah Ticknor 6/16/2025



Governing Policy of the
GOROCKFORD Board of Directors



Executive Limitations Policy 2.9 – Programs/Events/Services/Logistics

Management Limitations

To: GOROCKFORD Board of Directors
From: John Groh, President/CEO
RE: Internal Monitoring Report – Management Limitations Policies
Monitoring on Policy 2.9 – Programs/Events/Services/Logistics

I hereby present my monitoring report on your Management Limitations Policy 2.9 – Programs/Events Services/Logistics, in accordance with the monitoring schedule set forth in Board policy. I certify that the information contained in this report is true for the annual period through June 30, 2025.

Signed,



John Groh, President/CEO

June 25, 2025

POLICY 2.9

“With respect to the programs and events produced or services provided by the organization, the President/CEO shall not fail to ensure these programs, events or services exceed community/industry standards for excellence in programming, safety and audience amenities.”

CEO INTERPRETATION (No change since last report): I interpret this to mean GoRockford will be informed of and utilize best practices in event planning, regularly evaluate all appropriate programs and events, implement GoRockford service standards and ensure that customer concerns and complaints are addressed promptly and appropriately.

REPORT: GoRockford utilizes systems for event planning, service standards and appropriate safety guidelines when planning or hosting GoRockford events.

GOROCKFORD staff continually seeks educational opportunities to ensure knowledge of best practices in the event planning and tourism industry. Examples of practices incorporated or improved upon in the past year include:

- GoRockford’s core service values require that we create an atmosphere of customer focus, whereby the needs of the customer are paramount, and staff has the flexibility, knowledge and procedures in place to meet those needs. The use of budgets, checklists and policies guide planning efforts for programs/events/services.
- Evaluation forms and/or surveys are distributed at or after selected events, special events, tournaments and conferences hosted or planned by GoRockford. The results are compiled and reviewed as a means of guiding our continual improvement efforts.

- GoRockford follows a pre-established written procedure for handling customer/visitor complaints and takes appropriate action. First the complaint is documented and categorized as urgent, GoRockford complaint or industry partner complaint. The category determines the degree of GoRockford involvement. If needed, as dictated by procedures, a task force is then assembled to handle the complaint. There are no written complaints within the timeline of this report.
- GoRockford has a written crisis communication plan in place that includes avenues of communication with visitors should a large-scale emergency arise.
- GoRockford has a written crisis management and communication plan specific to Stroll on State that is reviewed and approved by Rockford City Council members and the Police and Fire departments.
- When necessary, GoRockford employees use outside consultants and coordinate strategic site visits to help examine best practices.

I am reporting compliance.

Accordingly, he or she may not:

2.9.1 “Fail to produce and implement an operational plan designed to ensure that the programs, events or services are well organized, are safe for all attendees, and run on schedule.”

CEO INTERPRETATION (No change since last report): I interpret this to mean that when creating and hosting community/stakeholder events, or as related to GoRockford’s involvement with events produced by customers/clients, GoRockford must have in place and utilize appropriate plans to ensure GoRockford and staff are prepared, an event is well-planned and runs on time, and all measures are taken to ensure a safe environment.

REPORT: GoRockford staff uses an operational plan and checklist for all GoRockford hosted programs or events. This ensures the event is well organized, safe and runs on schedule, as evidenced by the responses to follow-up evaluations that demonstrate GoRockford standards are met.

When servicing groups and events, staff utilizes an extensive planning process including standards for opening ceremonies, welcome bags, information tables and additional standardized systems and instruments. Post-event evaluations ensure servicing standards are met, as exemplified by the following chart below. These numbers reflect no change year over year. Customer satisfaction remains strong.

Feedback From Group Customers

	Overall Satisfaction (Venue Experience) (scale 1/low-5/high)	Satisfaction with GOROCKFORD Staff (scale 1/low-5/high)	Intent to Return
Meeting/Event Planner Survey FY 24	100% ranked 4-5 (Actual 9)	100% ranked 4-5 0% ranked 3-2 (Actual 9)	88.89%

I am reporting compliance.

2.9.2 “Fail to work actively and cooperatively with venue management, as well as with neighboring property owners/merchants/residents to minimize any inconvenience or other negative impacts caused by the event(s).”

CEO INTERPRETATION (No change since last report): I interpret this to mean that the GoRockford should work in a professional manner to partner for success within the business and tourism community, taking measures to ensure a positive public perception of Bureau programs and services, as well as the local visitor industry.

REPORT: When working with unique and/or large events, GoRockford staff works with venue managers, municipal public works staff, public safety officials, neighborhood representatives, business owners and local media partners to prepare and proactively plan for event participants. By utilizing checklists, a variety of methods of communication and advanced planning meetings, staff members continue to maintain high service standards and take measures to uphold this policy and maintain a positive perception of these events.

Other services the GoRockford provides to ensure a successful event include:

- Convention/tournament calendars are updated/distributed monthly to Hotel Managers, attractions, and various organizations in the Rockford Region to inform them of citywide events.
- GoRockford reaches out to local media partners to invite them to attend press conferences and provides press releases to bring awareness to the community.
- Notifications are sent to downtown business owners when tournament or conference events are held at the BMO Center or UW Health Sports Factory.
- GoRockford notifies local restaurants and businesses of upcoming events by distributing a calendar of events and by posting on gorockford.com.
- Work with meeting/event planners to expedite any conflicting events that may overlap.

There have been no significant concerns raised by venues or neighbors in the past year.

I am reporting compliance.

Prepared by: JG/LT

**INCIDENTAL
INFORMATION**



Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

GoRockford & Rep. Maurice West Announce Nearly \$190,000 in State Grant Funding to 51 Area Restaurants

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 2, 2025

ROCKFORD, IL — GoRockford (formerly Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau) is pleased to announce recipients of its third round of restaurant grants, targeted to local eateries still struggling with high unemployment taxes because of the COVID-19 pandemic. **A total of 51 businesses received grants in this round, sharing \$189,871.52** in much-needed financial relief.

“The Restaurant Relief Grant is making a real difference for our local hospitality industry,” said **John Groh, President/CEO of GoRockford**. “These businesses shape our community identity, spark creativity and create vital jobs. We’re proud to see another round of funding go to the hardworking restaurant, bar, and coffee shop owners whose passion helps Rockford and our region grow, thrive and remain a vibrant place to live and visit.”

The following restaurants received grants in the third round of the program:

- 27 Aluna @ Octane
 - Abreo Restaurant
 - Alchemy at Aldeen/ Gio events
 - Alpine View Restaurant
 - Broadway Joe's (Dusty Boots Saloon)
 - Carlyle Brewing
 - Casey's Pub
 - Culver's of Winnebago
 - District Bar & Grill
 - Don Carter Lanes
 - Famous Dave's Rockford
 - Forest Hills Lanes
 - Franchesco's Ristorante
 - Golden Corral
 - Greenfire Restaurant & Bakery
 - Hoffman House
 - Hope & Anchor English Pub
 - J. W. Marc's Fusion Café
 - Joe's Casa Di Amici
 - Johnny Pamcakes
 - Johnny Pamcakes Too
 - John's Restaurant
 - LimaMar Restaurant
 - Lucha Cantina
 - Machine Shed
 - Mary's Market
 - Mulligan's of Rockford
 - Murphy's Pub & Grill
 - Onyx Bar & Grill
 - Oscar's Pub & Grill
 - Park Lanes
 - Pig Minds
 - Pizza Ranch
 - Rookie's Pub & Grill
 - Rusty Nail Tavern
 - Scanlan's
 - Spider Sushi
 - Stockholm Inn
 - Stockyard Rock Burger Bar/Half Baked Bar
 - Tad's Bar & Grill
 - Tavern on Clark
 - Thai Hut Restaurant
 - The Cherry Bowl
 - The Filling Station
 - The Norwegian
 - The Olympic Tavern
 - The Pomodoro
 - Thunderbay Grill
 - Tower Kitchen & Bar
 - Viking Lanes
 - Vintage @501/TacoLibre
- MORE –



Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

GoRockford/Restaurant Grant/PAGE 2 OF 2

Businesses received varying amounts, depending on the impact of COVID to their unemployment tax rates. The largest single grant amount awarded in this round is \$21,622.96 to a restaurant that is new to the program. Of the 51 recipients, 17 are new applicants, highlighting the continued need for assistance within the local restaurant industry.

“Rockford’s restaurants, bars and coffee shops are more than just businesses—they’re the heart of our community,” said **Illinois State Representative Maurice West**. “This grant program provides critical support to help them recover and thrive. I’m proud to see another round of funding go directly to local establishments, ensuring they can continue serving our residents and creating jobs. Investing in our small businesses means investing in the future of Rockford.”

Administered by GoRockford and secured by Illinois State Representative Maurice West, the grants were awarded to eligible businesses in Winnebago County through an application process and professional review panel. The program aims to mitigate the financial strain placed on restaurants due to required unemployment tax payments incurred during shutdowns and staffing shortages. The recipients were selected based on demonstrated eligibility. All eligible applicants that applied and met all criteria were awarded grants.

Across three rounds of funding in 2024 and 2025, the program has awarded a total of \$855,158.06 in state-funded grants to 52 local businesses.

For additional information about the Restaurant Relief Grant Program, please visit GoRockford.com/Restaurant-Grant.

About: GoRockford is the official destination marketing and management organization for Rockford and Winnebago County and is responsible for promoting the Rockford region as an attractive travel destination and enhancing its public image as a dynamic place to live and work. Through the impact of travel, GoRockford strengthens the economic position of the region and provides opportunities for people in our communities. www.gorockford.com

State Representative Maurice West is serving his third term representing the 67th House District in the Rockford region. A Rockford native, Rep. West serves as Assistant Floor Whip in the 103rd General Assembly.

FOR MORE INFORMATION & MEDIA INQUIRIES:

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Pam Maher, pam@kmkmedia.com; 779.221.3760

Top Collegiate Table Tennis Players to Compete in Rockford at 2025 Nationals

Teams from 25 countries will travel to Rockford for the tournament

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: April 3, 2025

What: GoRockford and Rockford Park District are pleased to welcome the return of the **2025 National Collegiate Table Tennis Championships**, hosted by the **National Collegiate Table Tennis Association (NCTTA)**. This prestigious competition will feature close to 250 student-athletes from more than 50 colleges and universities, battling for national titles in singles, doubles, and team events. The event includes both co-ed and women's teams, with players aged 17–30. Nearly 25 U.S. States are represented at the 3-day competition.

This will be the first time since 2013 that Rockford hosts the tournament, reaffirming the region's status as a premier destination for high-profile sporting events.

When: Thursday, April 3 – Sunday, April 6, 2025

Where: UW Health Sports Factory 305 S Madison St, Rockford IL 61104

Why: The event is expected to bring an estimated **\$479,253 in economic impact** to the Rockford region, drawing **2,000 participants, coaches, and fans**. Teams travel from all over the world, and represent 25 countries, the most being from China and the U.S., however a record five teams will be attending from Canada.

“We are excited to welcome the National Collegiate Table Tennis Championships back to Rockford after 12 years,” said **Kara Davis, GoRockford Senior Sales Manager**. “This is a major win for our community, and it's incredibly rewarding to see our efforts come full circle. Hosting this event again not only showcases Rockford's world-class sports venues but also brings vibrant energy and meaningful economic impact to our region.”

Other: Spectator Admission is \$10 per day or \$20 for a weekend pass.

Contact: Willy Leparulo, willy.leparulo@nctta.org, 850.445.0780

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Lindsay Arellano, GoRockford Vice President of Sales and Service, 815.489.1664, larellano@gorockford.com

Puri Cup College Showcase and Puri Champions Cup Back in Rockford

Tournaments Set to Bring \$3.4 Million in Economic Impact to Rockford Region

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: April 4, 2025

What: GoRockford and Rockford Park District are thrilled to welcome the **Puri Cup College Showcase** and **Puri Champions Cup** to the Rockford Region. The youth soccer tournaments, hosted by Rockford Raptors, will cover two exciting weekends. The first weekend brings **154 teams** and is expected to have **over 10,000 attendees**. The second weekend is expected to have **308 teams** and over **7,000 attendees**. Each team has an average of 16 players. Men's teams range in age from 8U to 19U and women's range from 11U to 19U. Teams hail from throughout the Midwest including Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Indiana, and more. Over **5,000 room nights** are booked for the tournaments and the estimated economic impact is **3.4 million dollars**.

When: **Puri Cup College Showcase** Friday, April 4 – Sunday, April 6, 2025
Puri Champions Cup Friday, April 11 – Sunday, April 13, 2025

Where: **Mercyhealth Sportscore Two** 8800 E Riverside Blvd, Loves Park, IL 61111

Why: Rockford has hosted the Puri Cup since 2012. The tournaments continue to attract more teams every year, with the first weekend attracting 30 more teams than last year.

“The return of the Puri Cup tournaments is a testament to the growth of Rockford as a soccer town,” said **Lindsay Arellano, GoRockford Vice President of Sales and Service**. “This tournament continues to grow, filling our hotels and bring in thousands of players, spectators, and fans, and we are thrilled to welcome them to the Rockford region.”

“We look forward to hosting the area’s largest soccer tournament and to being a familiar location where athletes are also able to showcase their soccer skills. Sports are such a big part of so many families' lives, and have tremendous physical, emotional, and mental benefits along with teaching valuable life skills,” said Louis Mateus, General Manager of Mercyhealth Sportscore Complexes.

Contact: Frank Mateus, Director Rockford Raptors Soccer Club, 815.505.1590 or frankmateus3@gmail.com

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Lindsay Arellano, GoRockford Vice President of Sales and Service, 815.489.1664, larellano@gorockford.com



Rockford Branded Car in NASCAR Race on April 19 Local Insurance Agency Drives Exposure for Rockford by Sponsoring Car

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 7, 2025

Rockford, IL - NASCAR fans nationwide will get a glimpse of Rockford at 200 miles per hour when they watch the **NASCAR Xfinity Series**' North Carolina Education Lottery 250 **at Rockingham Speedway on Saturday, April 19**, in North Carolina. The much-anticipated NASCAR return to the historic Rockingham Speedway – known as “The Rock” – will include race car driver and Wisconsin native Josh Bilicki driving a **Rockford-branded car** sponsored by **Dan Block, owner of Rockford-based Insurance King**.

The car features the GoRockford logo and brand colors, an illustration of Rockford's beloved Rockmen Guardians, a Rockford Peaches logo honoring the city's baseball legacy, an image of Symbol by Alexander Liberman, and a playful Sock Monkey nodding to Rockford's manufacturing history.

Block began sponsoring Bilicki's racing team in 2019. “I wasn't a fan of NASCAR. I'd never even watched a race before sponsoring Josh. But it's been amazing,” **Block said**. “The relationship has expanded every year. Now NASCAR fans watch for our car designs and posts on Facebook, so we decided to use the race car during the Rockingham race to promote my hometown of Rockford.”

The 32,000 seat Rockingham Speedway is sold out for the April 19 race, and it's anticipated **more than one million people will tune in to watch the broadcast live** at 3 p.m. CST on the CW Network. It's the first time a NASCAR race has been held at Rockingham in more than 20 years.

“Insurance King is a great sponsor and partner in so many ways,” **stock car driver Josh Bilicki** said. “Dan's game to try anything, even having the cars we've designed now part of video games people play. He also likes to give back to his hometown of Rockford, so the newly designed car is perfect for that.”

Block's Insurance King agency writes low-cost auto policies. It opened in 2001 and currently has offices in 15 states. Insurance King was the first insurance agency to ever sponsor a NASCAR driver.

“Insurance King's NASCAR sponsorship is good for Josh, it's good for Insurance King and now it's good for Rockford,” said **GoRockford President & CEO John Groh**. “When Dan asked us to partner, we knew it would be a chance to drive awareness of Rockford on a national level. The Rockford brand, graphics and gorockford.com web address provide exposure for our city and is a perfect fit with Rockford's historic ties to NASCAR and racing. We're grateful to Dan Block and Insurance King for this awesome opportunity.”

Fans are encouraged to tune in to the race and spot the Rockford-branded car during the live broadcast. Share your screenshots and shout-outs on social using #GoRockfordRacing.



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About: Insurance King has helped drivers drive legal for less since 2001. Founded in Rockford, IL, Insurance King writes policies in multiple states, such as Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Ohio, Mississippi, Missouri, Tennessee, Texas and Wisconsin. Their services include auto insurance, motorcycle insurance, SR-22 insurance, SR-50's, FR Bonds, and renters' insurance. Insurance King's mission is to keep drivers safe while driving and to help save your hard-earned money.

FOR MORE INFORMATION & MEDIA INQUIRIES: Pam Maher, pam@kmkmedia.com; 779.221.3760



IWBC & ROCKFORD AWARDED WBSC WOMEN'S BASEBALL WORLD CUP GROUP STAGE 2026

IWBC and Illinois Event Resumé to Now Include Women's Baseball World Cup for First Time Ever

ROCKFORD, Ill., June 10, 2025 – As announced today, the World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) has officially awarded the hosting rights of the **WBSC Women's Baseball World Cup Group Stage 2026** to the International Women's Baseball Center (IWBC) in Rockford, Ill., USA. Scheduled for July 22-27, 2026, Group Stage play will mark the first time ever that the Women's Baseball World Cup is held in Illinois and only the second time in the United States.

"We are delighted to take the Women's Baseball World Cup back to the United States," said WBSC president **Riccardo Fraccari**. "The 2018 edition at the USSSA Space Coast Complex in Viera, Florida, attracted unprecedented attention and helped players and younger fans reconnect with the history of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League. In 2026, the WBSC Women's Baseball World Cup will land in Rockford, Illinois, where that legend started. It will be a memorable experience for the whole WBSC family and the international women's baseball community."

As the world's only nonprofit dedicated to the preservation and advancement of women's and girls baseball, IWBC collaborated with the WBSC, local and national partners on a multi-year bid process. Alongside GoRockford as IWBC's domestic title partner, the WBSC Women's Baseball World Cup Group Stage 2026 will be played next summer at Rivets Stadium in neighboring Loves Park, Ill. In addition, IWBC and WBSC will activate World Cup programming at venues across the region, including Rockford's historic Beyer Stadium.

"When the International Women's Baseball Center came to Rockford in 2016, we promised to bring the world to this community – well get ready, here they come," said **Dr. Kat Williams**, IWBC CEO. "The IWBC is excited to partner with GoRockford, the City of Rockford, Rockford University, Rockford Park District and the Rockford Rivets to host the very best of women's baseball next summer."

The WBSC Women's Baseball World Cup is the most prestigious women's baseball event in the world, adding to IWBC's growing resumé of programs that drive economic, brand and community impact locally and globally. A two-stage program over consecutive years, the 10th edition of the WBSC Women's Baseball World Cup concludes in Summer 2027 with the six-team Final Stage – which IWBC and Rockford remain a finalist to host.

"This is a landmark moment for Rockford and a proud milestone for GoRockford. Hosting the Women's Baseball World Cup Group Stage 2026 puts our community on the global stage and reaffirms our deep commitment to advancing women's sports," said **John Groh**, president/CEO of GoRockford. "The prestige of this tournament brings powerful economic, reputational and civic benefits to our region – while honoring the legacy of the Rockford Peaches and inspiring and supporting the next generation of athletes. We're proud to stand with the International Women's Baseball Center in championing this historic event and can't wait to welcome the world to Rockford."

-MORE-



Page 2 of 2, IWBC to Host WBSC Women's Baseball World Cup Group Stage 2026 Next Summer

IWBC's impact extends through a myriad of programs including: educational symposia; celebrating cultural icons like the Rockford Peaches and the acclaimed film *A League of Their Own*; hosting community block parties and youth clinics; and cultivating global opportunities like the WBSC Women's Baseball World Cup. Moreover, IWBC and Rockford – a city affectionately known as “The Cradle of Baseball” – are poised to deliver long-term impact for women's and girls baseball and sports, as IWBC continues its quest to build a six-acre headquarter campus adjacent to Beyer Stadium. To date, IWBC has invested \$2.5 million in this south Rockford project and neighborhood.

“We are absolutely thrilled that Rockford will host the 2026 Women's Baseball World Cup Group Stage. This is only the second time this prestigious global event has been held in the United States, and we're ready to make a big splash,” said **Tom McNamara**, City of Rockford mayor. “From our deep baseball legacy to our passionate community, Rockford is the perfect stage for the world's best to compete. We can't wait to welcome the teams, fans and energy that come with it.”

The competition schedule, ticket packages, community activations and more event information will be announced in the coming weeks. For the most current updates, follow IWBC's World Cup digital home at www.IWBC.org/worldcup, as well as IWBC and WBSC social channels. Moreover, the WBSC's official Women's Baseball World Cup website can be followed [HERE](#).

In addition to the WBSC and GoRockford (domestic title partner), IWBC would like to thank all of its World Cup Group Stage sponsors to date, including: Rockford Park District (practice sites, Beyer Stadium activations), Rockford Rivets (games site) and Rockford University (team housing, practice site). Partnership opportunities for the WBSC World Cup Group Stage 2026 remain available – for more information, contact Nick@PlusSevenCompany.com.

About IWBC: At the International Women's Baseball Center, education is the cornerstone of our mission to protect, preserve, and promote all aspects of women's baseball, both on and off the field. We strive to inspire the next generation of players by helping them realize their dreams of not only participating in the sport, but also of passing on all they learn and achieve for generations to come. For more information, visit www.IWBC.org.

Media Contacts: Dr. Kat Williams, CEO, International Women's Baseball Center, KWilliams@IWBC.org, 304.617.4474; Nick Povalitis, founder, Plus Seven Company, Nick@PlusSevenCompany.com, 815.708.1644.

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USA BMX Midwest Nationals Returns to Rockford

Race set to bring over \$800,000 dollars in economic impact

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 13, 2025

What: GoRockford, Rockford Park District, and Rockford BMX are excited to announce the return of the **2025 USA BMX Midwest Nationals**. The exhilarating competition is expected to bring in over 1,500 athletes, 3,500 spectators, and 3,000 room nights. The Midwest nationals event has been hosted in Rockford for over 30 years and will bring an estimated economic impact of over **\$800,000 dollars**.

Last year's Midwest Nationals drew nearly **800 riders** and **3,300 fans** from **33 states** and six countries, solidifying Rockford BMX's status as a top-tier stop on the USA BMX circuit. Families are invited to enjoy this free, action-packed event featuring the opportunity to watch experienced BMX athletes in thrilling races.

"Rockford BMX continues to be one of the region's standout hidden gems," **said Garret Rapp, Public Relations Director for Rockford BMX**. "We're proud to offer one of the top-ranked tracks in the nation, right here in Rockford. The 2025 USA BMX Midwest Nationals, will bring thousands of riders and families together for an exhilarating, action-packed three-day experience."

When: **Friday, June 13 – Sunday, June 15**
Friday, Racing begins at 1:30 p.m.
Saturday, Racing begins at 9 a.m.
Sunday, Racing begins at 8 a.m.

Where: **Rockford BMX Searls Park 4950 Safford Road, Rockford, IL 61101**

Why: BMX (Bicycle Motorcross) is a fast-paced off-road bicycle sport on dirt tracks with jumps and obstacles. The sport started in the 1970s and has been growing in popularity ever since. Founded in 1977, the American Bicycle Association (ABA) is the world's largest BMX racing organization with over 70,000 members racing at more than 300 sanctioned tracks across North America. United States operations are conducted under the brand USA BMX and Canadian operations are known as BMX Canada.

"Rockford BMX has been an integral part of our community, hosting weekly races throughout the summer and welcoming riders of all ages and abilities," **said Lindsay Arellano, GoRockford Vice President of Sales & Service**. "We're incredibly grateful to track owners Candy and Jake Karau, the Rockford Park District, and the entire local community for their dedication and enthusiasm in making events like this possible, helping to solidify Rockford as a vibrant hub for BMX."

"We are honored once again to host the USA BMX Midwest Nationals," **said Candy Karau, Track Operator, Rockford BMX**. "We operate our track to the highest standards, offering races all summer. We appreciate the dedication and support we receive from our community, and we look forward to another incredible year of racing in Rockford."

Other: General parking is \$10 per day. Admission is free and open to the public. For competitors' registration fees and more information, visit www.rockfordbmx.com.

BMX Midwest Nationals Page 2 of 2

Contact: Garret Rapp, Rockford BMX Public Relations Director: 815.608.6158

About USA BMX

Established as the American Bicycle Association in 1977 and headquartered in Tulsa, Oklahoma, ABA is the nation's largest cycling organization with more than 70,000 members with combined racing and freestyle events at more than 300 sanctioned BMX tracks across the United States and Canada. ABA empowers and elevates the early stages of bicycle development by creating opportunities through facility development, programs, and national events. As a result, ABA has developed a structured blueprint. A cyclist can progress from humble beginnings on a balance bike to becoming a BMX Olympian by establishing these roots.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION: Lindsay Arellano, GoRockford Vice President of Sales & Service: 815.489.1653 or larellano@gorockford.com

Where to Watch & Park

Spectator Guide for IRONMAN 70.3 Rockford

Community Invited to Watch and Cheer Athletes June 22

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June 12, 2025

ROCKFORD, IL — The 2025 IRONMAN 70.3 Rockford is making history as the first-ever IRONMAN race in Illinois. The event is sold out, with 2,500 athletes participating from 13 countries and more than 30 U.S. states. The IRONMAN 70.3 race includes a 1.2-mile swim, 56-mile bike ride, and 13.1-mile run through Rockford and surrounding communities. Spectators are invited to welcome and cheer competitors on Sunday, June 22, with the race starting at 7 a.m.

Whether you're cheering from a bridge over the Rock River or joining the spectator party in Rockton, there are plenty of ways to catch the action and celebrate this historic athletic milestone. **Find more information at gorockford.com/ironman/.**

BEST SPECTATOR SPOTS

SWIM COURSE (1.2 miles) – 7 a.m.

- Rock River Recreation Path
 - (Park at YMCA – 200 Y Blvd.; Nicholas Conservatory lots are closed for the Swim Course)
- Riverfront Museum Park Path – 711 N. Main St.
- Prairie Street Brewhouse – 200 Prairie St.
- Rockford Public Library Riverwalk – 215 N. Wyman St.
- State St. and Jefferson St. Bridge sidewalks

BIKE COURSE (56 miles) – beginning around 7:30 a.m.

- 100–200 block of S. Wyman St., Rockford
- 200–300 block of W. State St., Rockford
- Downtown Rockton – Main Street, 8 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Note: Most of the bike course is rural, with limited spectator access due to road closures.

RUN COURSE (13.1 miles) – beginning around 9:30 a.m.

- Rock River Rec Path (Park at YMCA, 200 Y Blvd. or Nicholas Conservatory, 1354 N. 2nd St.)
 - NOTE: The path is CLOSED to allow athletes to run the course. Spectate from grassy areas adjacent to the path.
- Riverfront Museum Park parking lot – 711 N. Main St.
- National Ave., Rockford (please follow all traffic and closure instructions)

FINISH LINE – beginning around 10:30 a.m.

- 100 block of S. Main St., downtown Rockford

ROCKTON SPECTATOR PARTY

Downtown Rockton, Main Street – Sunday, June 22 | 8 a.m. – 12 p.m.

Don't miss the excitement in Rockton as athletes fly by on their bikes!

Family-friendly activities in Settlers Park and along Main Street include:

- A fun obstacle course for spectators
- Shopping, food trucks, sign-making to cheer on athletes
- Cheering is encouraged!

RACE DAY PARKING

Special event parking is available for \$5/day at three downtown Rockford parking garages:

- Concourse Parking Garage – 200 S. Church St. (Open all day)
- Pioneer Parking Garage – 311 N. Main St. (Open all day)
- State & Main Garage – 301 W. State St. (Must enter before 6:30 a.m., cannot exit until after 2 p.m.)

Street parking and surface lots are also available throughout the downtown area. Be sure to follow all posted NO PARKING signage.

For updates on the 2025 IRONMAN 70.3 Rockford-Illinois triathlon and information on attending IRONMAN events, please visit gorockford.com/ironman/. Athlete inquiries may be directed to Illinois70.3@ironman.com.

To learn more about the IRONMAN® and IRONMAN 70.3 brands and series of events, please visit www.ironman.com. Media inquiries may be directed to pam@kmkmedia.com or devin@kmkmedia.com.

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About GoRockford

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