



THE CITY OF
ROCKFORD
PROGRESS

A Monthly Report from the Office of Mayor Lawrence J. Morrissey

Welcome to the first edition of the *Rockford Progress*, a monthly operations report designed to provide a monthly update regarding City municipal operations, capital improvement program updates, economic development updates, and other special events and news of note. I hope you will find it informative and comprehensive as to the progress we continue to strive for as an organization and as a community in our journey of achieving our mission of “*Excellence Everywhere for Everyone*”.

- Jim Ryan, City Administrator

ROCKStat in Review

PUBLIC SAFETY HIGHLIGHTS

Rockford Crime Offenses Drop 7%!

Police Services— Through the end of August, Group A offenses have dropped approximately 7% from the same time period from 2013. City-wide, violent crime has dropped approximately 5%, while property crimes have dropped 7.5% year-to-date from 2013. Aggravated battery/shots fired incidents have decreased approximately 25% from 2013 during this same time period. Burglary incidents are down approximately 12%, while robbery incidents are up approximately 5.5%. Auto thefts (-5%) and burglary to motor vehicle/theft to motor vehicle have dropped approximately 8% from 2013. Also noteworthy is that traffic fatalities are down 40% from a year ago. Recidivism of crime incidents continues to be a problem in our community, as parolees arrested through August of 2014 are up 34% from 2013, as well as adult probationers that have been arrested, up 5% from last year. One good sign is that juvenile probationers arrested this year has dropped 17% from 2013. Another highlight city-wide is that self-initiated calls for service by police officers have increased approximately 13% from 2013, a good indicator of proactive community policing. Domestic violence continues to plague our community. Domestic-related crime incidents currently represent 20.6% of all crime incidents year-to-date, an increase of 4% over last year during this same time period. For violent crime during the month of August, 26.5% of all violent crime was domestic related. This must continue to be an area of focus for our Department and our community. At the District level, Group A offenses are down approximately 3.8% in District 1, with violent crime down approximately 1%, and property crimes down 10% from last year. In District 2, Group A offenses are down 8.8%, with violent crime down 6.3% and property crimes down 7.8%. In District 3, Group A offenses are down 5.2%, with violent crime falling by 5.1% and property crimes falling 3.6% from a year ago.



PUBLIC SAFETY HIGHLIGHTS (continued)

Rockford Crime Offenses Drop 7%!

Police Community Engagement—The Rockford Police Department, along with other City and community partners, again held another successful National Night Out on August 5th at the campus of Rock Valley College, with over 600 citizens attending. In addition, the Department once again held its Junior Police Academy conducted by the School Liaison Unit for 30 students age 13-17. The Department also held its 1st annual Public Safety Camp, in partnership with the Rockford Fire Department, targeting students entering the 4th grade. Two camps were held with 30 students in each camp.



During the Labor Day Holiday, the Department worked with IDOT to keep our streets safe with a directed DUI enforcement detail. Five DUI arrests, five suspended licenses, 20 citations for speeding, and other citations were given for the two details that were completed.

Other news of note is that the Department will hire 15 new officers on the force on September 24th.

Rockford Total Fire Incidents Fall by 23%!

Fire/Emergency Medical Services— Through August, the Rockford Fire Department has conducted 13,673 EMS and Search and Rescue incidents, up 3.7% from the same time last year. One highlight is that total fire incidents have dropped by 23% from last year, virtually dropping in all categories (residential and commercial fires, vehicle fires, outside fires, and open burning fires). The largest decline was in outside fire incidents, dropping over 30% from last year at this time. Public education activities have increased 77% over last year, with the Department providing outreach to 12,784 people through the end of August. Total 911 calls have dropped by 2,920 calls this year, a decline of approximately 3.6%. This is a positive indicator. EMS and Search and Rescue calls for service continue to increase, and is the dominant work load for the Department. Year-to-year, it represents approximately 79-80% of the Department's service delivery. "Service/Good Intent" calls (36%) and "False Alarm/False Calls" (19%) have increased substantially since 2011, for example. Over-utilization and misutilization of emergency medical service continues to be a concern.



PUBLIC SAFETY HIGHLIGHTS (continued)

Rockford Total Fire Incidents Fall by 23%!

Fire/Emergency Medical Services News of Note — The Department has been conducting Rapid Intervention Team (RIT) training to improve firefighter safety. At the neighborhood level, the Department recently conducted home safety surveys in the areas of 15th Avenue and Chippendale Ct, making contact with over 100 homeowners and passing out 29 smoke detectors, 4 CO detectors, and battery replacements to improve fire safety in this neighborhood. With continuous education and training as one of the hallmarks of the Rockford Fire Department, Division Chief Matt Knott was named to be on a national committee to revalidate the IFSTA Essentials Firefighting Manual. Fire Chief Derek Bergsten was re-designated as Chief Fire Officer from the Center for Public Safety Excellence, and was also named to serve on the Florian Committee, a new national program lead by Rosecrance. Several Fire District Chiefs recently received accreditation as Illinois Professionals in Emergency Management (IPEM). In August, 12 students started a new paramedic class and 2 new Telecommunicators were hired on to the Rockford Fire Department.

PUBLIC WORKS HIGHLIGHTS

91% OF ALL 2014 SERVICE REQUESTS YTD RESOLVED

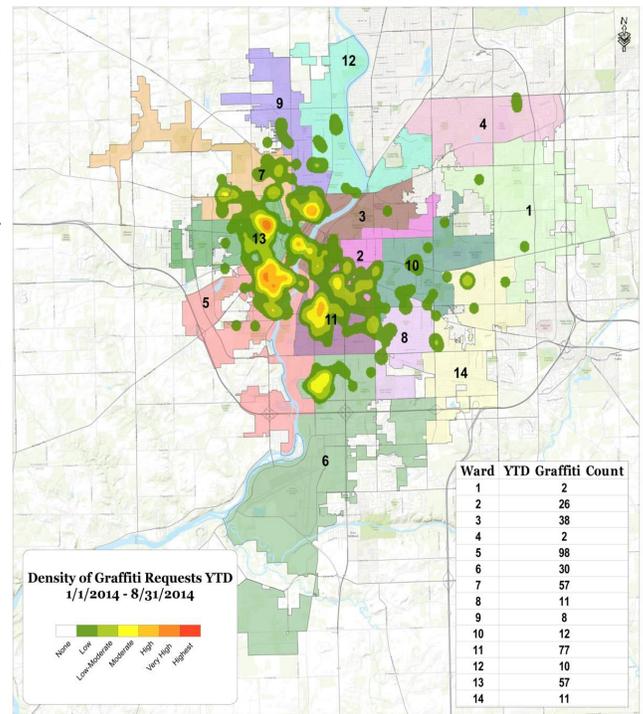
Transportation Services — The Street and Forestry Division has received 5,717 citizen service requests to-date, and have completed 91% through the end of August, leaving unresolved requests 374 less than at the same time in 2013. All street sweeping and snow and ice restoration requests have been completed. Pothole patching service requests (91%), right-of-way service requests (92%) and storm sewer maintenance (94%) are substantially complete. Approximately 78% of all forestry requests have been resolved. The emerald ash borer continues to place great demand on the Forestry Section of the Division, with 349 open forestry requests through August. This trend is forecasted to continue through the winter. Approximately 315 new trees have been planted through August, 144 more than 2013 at this time. Traffic operations response time is strong, with street light outages (street light outages repaired in less than 5 days) and traffic signal outages being repaired (signal outages repaired in less than 24 hours) according to performance goals.

Creek maintenance is scheduled to begin in September. In addition, the pavement marking program completed in August has delayed sign replacement goals during the month, so much of this work will happen in September and October of this year. Pothole patching remains a significant work detail, and with staffing back at budgeted levels, significant activity will occur over the next few months before winter operations.



PUBLIC WORKS HIGHLIGHTS (continued)

Graffiti Abatement Services — The Street and Forestry Division has seen a 6% increase in graffiti cases (452) compared to the same time period in 2013. The average response time for removal is 1.3 days, but that performance metric was improved to 1.1 days during the month of August. The month of June was our highest month for graffiti cases at 108. On average, the Department is averaging approximately 56.5 cases per month in 2014. Ward 5 has the highest amount of graffiti cases with 98. Wards 5, 7 and 11 have more cases (232) than all other wards combined (204). The Public Works Department and Police Department have been working together on graffiti cases, and several arrests were made in July that have slowed graffiti down in the month of August, with 12 fewer cases in August 2014 compared to August 2013. We encourage residents and businesses to call the Graffiti Hotline at 815-961-3243.



Water Division Services— Due to the backlog of winter main and service repairs, the emergency repair benchmark of getting water back on after repairs has increased from the 2-hour goal to three hours in August. In addition, the average number of days needed to correct a meter problem is 44 days in August, compared with the benchmark performance standard of 30 days. One of the reasons for this was a redeployment of resources to deal with some water billing issues that have since been resolved. Total customers with an amount past due over 30 days as a percentage of revenue is only 3.6%, below our standard of 5%. Due to mild weather and lower water usage, operating revenue as a percentage of plan has dropped from 104% in July to 90% in August. In August, Well 17, located at 3700 Brookview, was decommissioned and demolished as part of our system-wide upgrade plan. Rockford is fortunate to have excellent water quality, sufficient water supply, and stable water pressures since our \$75 million system upgrade. The Division is working on more utilization of social media. It recently hosted the Belvidere Water Department to educate them on our new systems, and the Water Division successfully re-certified the Water Division Environmental Laboratory. In the next few months, the Division will be completing chemical room upgrades at secondary well sites, and will be requesting bids for reservoir repairs at wells 18 and 31.



PUBLIC WORKS HIGHLIGHTS (continued)

Capital Improvement Program — The Engineering/CIP Division continues implementation on a very aggressive 2014 Capital Improvements Program. The following are highlights of major projects in progress and under development:

Buildings/Facilities

- **Fire Station 3:** Construction is well underway for the new Fire Station 3 located on Marchesano Drive. Masonry walls are now going up and the facility should be under roof for interior work by winter of this year.
- **Geographic Police Facilities:** Site selection has been narrowed down to the former New Towne Post Office for District 3, which was just acquired by the City this month. The former Turner School site located on Broadway has been selected for District 2. Land acquisition is scheduled for early October for this facility. A final selection for District 1 should be selected by early October. The goal for the Police Department is to move out of the Public Safety Building into temporary space by the end of the year and begin development of the three police district facilities this winter and spring of 2015.
- **Amtrak:** A community meeting was held on September 3rd to collect input from stakeholders on the specific location and design for the new Rockford Amtrak station. A follow-up meeting is to take place in late October/early November. Work continues behind the scenes on land acquisition and environmental due diligence for the potential properties where the station is to be located.
- **Downtown Sportscore** (former Ingersoll building): Staff is currently working on retaining a historic preservation consultant to archive the former 205 administration building while awaiting a reply from IHPA on concurrence to demolish the building. The intergovernmental agreement between the City and District 205 is on the September 23rd agenda for final approval from the District related to the disposition of real estate and demolition of the building. The construction plans for the Downtown Sportscore are currently under development in collaboration with the Park District. We anticipate 75% design plans at the end of September. Plans and specifications are expected to be final by the end of October. Exterior site plans are under development, and are expected to be bid in the late winter. The City is currently assisting the Watch Factory tenant with relocation. The tenant is anticipated to be out by the winter of this year. Staff is working on a partial demolition of the Watch Factory building and it will be prepared for IHPA review by late fall. Staff is currently working with vendors to sell and salvage surplus materials and crane equipment from Ingersoll as a jump start to the interior demolition that will occur under the building contract. Staff is also working with the Union Pacific railroad to develop a crossing between the upper tier and lower tier of the site. Grant administration between the City and the State continues. The City has received preliminary approvals from both the USEPA and IEPA for use of funding for brown-field remediation of the site totaling approximately \$1.1 million. This effort is being coordinated by the Community & Economic Development Department.



PUBLIC WORKS HIGHLIGHTS (continued)

Buildings/Facilities

- **Concourse Parking Garage:** Proposals were received by the County for a design-build option to repair the Concourse Parking Garage. These proposals are currently being evaluated by the City and the County, and the City and County are meeting with regard to potential finance and ownership options. It is hoped that we will have an option to present to the City Council and County Board by early October.
- **Outdoor Market:** Demolition and surface parking lot plans are completed and will be sent out to bid in mid-September. The project includes demolition of the Water Street parking structure demo and partial completion of a parking lot to be usable before winter season. Larson and Darby is working on the plans for the architectural elements of the outdoor market (i.e. pavilion) so that it can be bid over winter and constructed in the spring to be completed for the 2015 City Market season. This is being funded through Illinois River Edge funds.
- **Indoor Market:** The Legal Department is working with the Rock River Development Partnership on a sub-grantee agreement for this project. Full design for this project won't proceed until this is finalized. Grant amendments for land acquisition have been processed as well as grant extensions and usage of historic tax credits for the project.

Major Highway Corridor Improvements

- **West State Phase 1—** A grand opening was held this month celebrating the completion of the first phase of the West State Street corridor project. Final landscaping and park development will occur this Fall and Spring of 2015. The second phase of West State construction, from Independence to Day, is slated to begin late summer of 2015. Land acquisition is underway.
- **South Main Corridor improvements—**The reconstruction of South Main from US Bypass 20 to Harrison is substantially complete. Final bike path construction and landscaping remain and should be substantially completed by the end of the year. South Main reconstruction from Harrison to Morgan is well underway, and all four lanes and median construction should be substantially completed by the end of the year. Final work won't be completed until next year. The final section of South Main, from Morgan to Cedar Street, will begin next year. Bike path construction along the west banks of the Rock River to Lane Street has commenced. Plans for the conversion of South Main from Wyman to Cedar are underway and will be ready for bidding and construction for the 2015 construction season.
- **Harrison Avenue Corridor—** The Harrison Avenue Bridge over the Rock River is approximately 75% complete and will be finished by winter of this year. This will provide a new bridge deck and new sidewalks for this aging bridge.



PUBLIC WORKS HIGHLIGHTS (continued)

Major Highway Corridor Improvements (continued)

- **Harrison Avenue Corridor**— Land acquisition for the complete reconstruction of Harrison Avenue between 11th and 20th Street continues. Barring land acquisition issues, this project will be ready for bidding and construction by Summer 2015.
- **East State Street Corridor**— East State Street resurfacing, from Fairview to Bell School, is 80% complete, and is anticipated to be fully complete by October. City staff has concurrently resurfaced many commercial streets along the corridor to give a fresh appearance to our major retail corridor. The reconstruction of the intersection of Bell School and E. State Street, lead by the County, is to be ready for bid hopefully by Spring next year for a 2015 construction. Due to the pedestrian safety traffic issues here, this is a high priority to complete. Street lighting for E. State Street will be included for this infrastructure project. In addition, this month saw the City Council approval of street lights to be installed on the Miracle Mile section of E. State Street between Fairview and Alpine. The goal is to have a uniform street light installation along the E. State Street corridor from Fairview to the Tollway over the next five years, as well as continuous pedestrian improvements along the corridor.
- **North Main Street Corridor**—The section of North Main Street from Auburn to Riverside is slated for the next large State highway reconstruction. Land acquisition is underway, along with construction plans. Overhead utility poles remain an outstanding issue that needs to be resolved, and undergrounding these utilities present the best option for long-term stability and final ultimate appearance of the corridor. It is anticipated that this work will begin some time in 2015, but with utilities, that remains uncertain.

Environmental Remediation Projects

- **Avon Street Manufactured Gas Plant Remediation**— Com Ed has completed remediation of this brownfield site located off of Avon Street west of Kent Creek. More than 230,000 tons of soil and debris were removed from the site and more than 80 million gallons of water treated at the site. All contaminated materials were safely disposed under the oversight of the IEPA. The site has been reseeded with grass and is now cleaned to residential environmental standards.
- **Fordam Dam Remediation Project**— Located just south of the new Downtown Sportscore project, ComEd has made substantial progress on remediating the site. A total of 36,474 tons of non-hazardous soil and 13,447 tons of concrete has been removed from the site through the end of August. Approximately 570 tons of concrete were removed for recycling. The majority of this remediation work will be completed this year, but will be finalized in 2015.



COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT HIGHLIGHTS

Economic Development Services— A total of 13 commercial projects (new and retained jobs) have been achieved this year, in excess of the 2014 annual target of 10. Twelve industrial projects (new and retained) have been achieved. This has meant 641 new and retained jobs, with a total private investment of \$80,250,000, and a private investment of \$17,377,713. This is a result of all Development Agreements executed by City Council this year. Below is a brief summary of a number of development activities that the Community and Economic Development Department is working on:

- **West Side Grocery:** The development agreement between IFF and the City has been approved by City Council and the zoning is scheduled for final approval on September 15, 2014. IFF has closed on the necessary properties outside of City ownership for the project. The closing for the City owned property will be completed by September 30, 2014 with a goal of starting construction this Fall/Winter.
- **123 S. Main Street RFP & 134 N Main Street RFP:** We received one (1) response for 123 S. Main Street and two (2) for 134 N. Main Street. Staff completed evaluation of proposals, held phone interviews and in-person interviews. On March 21, 2014 we received a notice of withdraw from Urban Equity Properties on their proposal for 134 N Main Street. As you may be aware, they were identified prior to the RFP process as a potential respondent that would move quickly in the redevelopment of the property. Meetings have taken place with the remaining respondent, Joseph James Partners, in negotiation of a draft development agreement that would include 123 S. Main, 134 N Main and other property owned by Joseph James in the immediate area. The most recent discussion took place August 20, 2014 in an effort to further refine a redevelopment agreement that could be supported by staff and advanced to City Council for consideration. At this time, we have not finalized a redevelopment agreement.
- **Trust Building:** Morgan Management has indicated their willingness to advance the redevelopment of the Trust Building forward. City staff has discussed general terms of a possible TIF development agreement. At the current time we are discussing and evaluating parking alternatives per their request.
- **K's Merchandise:** City staff has been in negotiations with First Rockford Group to redevelop the former K's Merchandise building to include a multi-tenant, state-of-the art call center. They are in the process of advancing construction for a proposed tenant with an occupancy deadline of December 2014. Staff has provided and inducement letter identifying terms of a redevelopment agreement to First Rockford Group, subject to City Council approval to secure the tenant. The development agreement will be advancing to City Council in the coming weeks.



COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT HIGHLIGHTS (continued)

Economic Development Services (continued) -

- **Mary's Market Redevelopment:** The Koch family has acquired all the properties and business as previously presented to City Council and is actively advancing the project. We have provided the Koch family with a draft development agreement, subject to the terms of the inducement letter approved by the City Council, for their review and comment. It is anticipated that the development agreement will advance to City Council later this fall.
- **North Main and Auburn Redevelopment RFP:** This RFP was released on November 18, 2013. Two proposals were received and reviewed and complied with the intent of the RFP. An interdepartmental team including Alderman Tom McNamara and community member Doug Mark have reviewed the proposals. The City Council recently authorized the acquisition of the North Main Street surplus right-of-way to accommodate the existing footprint. At this time, we have not completed recommendations on the two proposals, but would like to have a final recommendation to the City Council in October.
- **Auburn Street TIF:** The Auburn Street TIF creation process was completed during February of this year. The baseline data has been established and the CEDD team is in the process of responding to various businesses and investors within the corridor to discuss the tool and how it may be utilized to encourage investment within the corridor. There has been specific focus on the redevelopment efforts of Phoenix Investors at the previous Amerock site on Auburn Street.
- **Amerock Hotel & Conference Center:** Work continues on implementation of the Development Agreement with Gorman & Co. Site planning and architectural drawings are being completed by Gorman and Company. They continue to secure equity financing with investors and vendors, including historic tax credit and EB-5 immigration through investment finance instruments. City staff is working on right-of-way vacations and land acquisition pursuant to the Development Agreement. Public Works is busy at work with IDOT on the two-way conversion of South Main Street, along with the preliminary planning of the parking deck and proposed Amtrak station. The next step is to assemble a planning committee to develop a long-term master plan for Davis Park as part of the project. Considerable progress is being made.
- **Alpine Hills Adventure Park:** A draft Development Agreement has been submitted to the Park District for their review and comment. We envision that this Development Agreement will be presented to City Council in October.



COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT HIGHLIGHTS (continued)

Economic Development Services (continued) -

- **Ad HOC TIF Committee - TIF Strategy, Planning & Implementation:** The Ad HOC TIF Committee has finalized a TIF Policy Statement and Guideline Scoring System which has been approved by Planning and Development Committee and submitted to City Council. We have solicited comments from the general public and Joint Review Board members over the last 30 days. To date, we have not received any comments. The TIF Policy Statement and Guideline Scoring System is scheduled for approval in September. In addition, the annual TIF report has been completed and forwarded to the State of Illinois.
- **EDEEN:** The EDEEN partners (both funded and unfunded by the City) are actively working with one another in the implementation of the 2014 work plan. Some of the highlighted activities from the various committees include; the Beautification Committee has completed 8 beautification projects to date, the Arts Committee has taken on the challenge of completing two murals (Auto Museum and Madison Street) as well as introducing crosswalk art to the community by scheduling a chalked crosswalk to be completed adjacent the Friday Market in October. The 21st Century Talent Committee is focusing efforts on connecting the unemployed to employment opportunities through job fairs. The New Narratives Committee has completed social media training for the EDEEN partners and actively markets Business Development Area events.
- **Development Agreement Compliance Oversight:** The Department is currently organizing compliance reports of the various development agreements managed by the Department including those from our TIF Districts in order to streamline administrative work during reporting periods and better coordination with the Finance and Legal Departments. As staff continues to work through outstanding agreements, staff will bring those needing resolution in conjunction with the Legal Department to City Council.
- **Economic Development Partners - Project Pipeline Status Report:** The Department is creating an internal contact management and client/project tracking system that is aligned with the RAEDC's Project Pipeline CRM for project management purposes. The goal is to better track all our ED projects (retail, commercial and industrial) and improve how we perform on advancing projects to the next stage of development.



COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT HIGHLIGHTS (continued)

Economic Development Services (continued) -

- **Enterprise Zone:** Staff is currently working on strategies and boundaries for the submittal of a new Enterprise Zone (EZ). Applications are due to the State by December 31, 2014. New qualifying criteria for unemployment, employment opportunities, poverty, brownfield or federal disaster area, large scale business closings, vacant structures, tax base improvement plan, public infrastructure plan, and career skills programming as a community will all assist in the ranking and later approval status of an application. All communities that currently have and that do not currently have an Enterprise Zone may apply and compete to receive an EZ designation. As part of this process, the Department is implementing a new administrative reporting system. As a leader in the State, Economic Development Manager Mark Williams is also serving as the President of the Illinois Enterprise Zone Administration and providing insight and input on pending legislation. Potential boundaries will be reviewed with City Council this Fall.
- **Section 108 Loan Pool:** The Department is in the process of coordinating with the Department of Housing and Urban Development related to the exploration and feasibility of the implementation of a Section 108 loan program to be funded and backed with CDBG dollars. The Department has had a number of conversations with HUD and regional partners to facilitate the program. It is anticipated a fund of 2-3 million dollars focused on providing funding of \$30,000 - \$60,000 would best meet the community needs.

Planning Services Section: There is considerable activity within the Department with regards to long-term planning. Here are some highlights:

- **Downtown Comprehensive Development Strategy:** The consultant team (Farr and Associates) has been selected for the Strategic Planning Process, including the first sub area plan for the Central Planning Area (Downtown Master Plan). We will begin to work with the consultant team during the month of September in preparation of a Fall kickoff meeting.
- **2020 Plan Update (2015-2020 Implementation Plan):** Staff has reviewed the 2020 Plan with the Planning & Development Committee (P&D) and as a result, the team has performed a detailed analysis of the 2020 Plan, plan amendments since 2004, and other local and regional planning documents. Staff has updated the current conditions data and facilitated civic engagement work groups during August. This information will help us analyze current strategies and facilitate discussion/feedback with council members and our residents through neighborhood association and ward meetings during late October as we continue the effort to align the 2020 Plan, CIP and Consolidated Plan.



COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT HIGHLIGHTS (continued)

Planning Services Section (continued):

- **Consolidated Plan 2015-2019 and Annual Plan:** The 2015 – 2019 Consolidated Plan will assist the community in assessing the affordable housing and community development needs, market conditions, and to make data-driven, place-based investment decisions. The consolidated planning process serves as the framework for a community-wide dialogue to identify housing and community development priorities that align and focus funding from the [Community Development Block Grant \(CDBG\) Program](#), [HOME Investment Partnerships \(HOME\) Program](#), [Emergency Solutions Grant \(ESG\) Program](#) with the communities goals. The Consolidated Plan also serves as a guide for projects which will be sited within the city of Rockford's corporate limits and supported by certain Federal and State housing dollars including those activities of the Housing Authority. In these circumstances, a verification of consistency with Consolidated Plan is required.

The Consolidated Plan is carried out through Annual Action Plans, which provide a concise summary of the actions, activities, and the specific federal and non-federal resources that will be used each year to address the priority needs and specific goals identified by the Consolidated Plan. The City reports on the accomplishments and progress toward Consolidated Plan goals in the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER).

Based on the input of the Community, alignment with other established City initiatives and interviews with Alderman, the draft 2015-2019 Consolidated Plan and 2015 Annual Plan will be provided to City Council and the Community in October for a scheduled November approval by City Council.

- **White House Strong Cities/Strong Communities Initiative:** As one of 6 communities selected for the White House Strong Cities/Strong Communities Initiative, Rockford has had the opportunity to work with many representatives from the federal government to develop a work plan to assist us with our three goals of improving economic and community development, reducing crime, and improving educational and job training outcomes. Federal representatives have been working with us for approximately three months, reaching out to various community partners as well as City staff to develop a work plan for the next 18 months.



COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT HIGHLIGHTS (continued)

Neighborhood Development Services: The Neighborhood Development Division has been busy administering several programs related to housing issues in our community. Noteworthy projects include the following:

- **Abandoned Residential Property Municipal Relief Program (APP):** The City was awarded \$250,000 to demolish approximately 30 residential properties. The Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) made this grant available again with an application submittal deadline of December. We are currently evaluating the application process in anticipating another application. Some of the governing requirements of the grant have changed, which will require some modification of our program.
- **National Foreclosure Settlement – Lisa Madigan Grant Award:** The City partnered with NWHomeStart and a number of other agencies and submitted a grant to the Office of Attorney General Lisa Madigan, State of Illinois, under the National Foreclosure Settlement Awards for Housing Counseling and Community Revitalization. The money represents Illinois' share of a national settlement with the country's five largest bank mortgage servicers. \$2.5M by NWHomeStart was received to help those in the region hardest hit with foreclosures. The funds will be distributed under two agreements. The first has been executed to begin foreclosure mitigation and create a housing resource center – a central location for counseling, financial literacy and other housing-related education for homeowners in a 10-county area. The second Agreement will provide funding for the redevelopment of designated areas in Rockford. The City will participate by administering a roof repair/replacement program. Goal is to assist 45 households, with 20 being served this year.
- **Illinois Housing Development Authority Homebuyer Rehabilitation Program Grant:** A grant was awarded to the City for \$540,000 for eligible homebuyers for homebuyers acquisition and rehabilitation of vacant property. A grant agreement was recently executed. Eligible homebuyers will receive either \$3,000 or \$5,000 for down payment and closing cost assistance and up to \$20,000 to rehabilitate the property. Additional grant funds may be available from the City through the HOME program. NWHomestart will be responsible for application intake, qualifying the potential homebuyers, and providing the homebuyer pre-purchase counseling. City staff is responsible for the inspection, determining the scope of work, facilitating the bid process and monitoring the project over the term of the project. It is anticipated that 20 households will be assisted over the 2 year term of the grant.



COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT HIGHLIGHTS (continued)

Neighborhood Development Services (continued):

- **Disposition and Reuse of Vacant CDBG Property:** The City of Rockford (City of Rockford Homestead Board) owns nearly 150 vacant lots. Approximately 1/3 of these properties will meet HUD's reuse requirements as part of the West State Street Corridor project but the remaining lots need to be disposed of utilizing a program which follows HUD's disposition requirements and the City's standards for suitable reuse. Many of the lots are small; adjacent property owners have shown a lack of interest in pursuing ownership. With demolition efforts increasing, the number of vacant lots will increase (but not necessarily be owned by the City). There needs to be a policy and procedure in place for disposition and reuse of property acquired by the City through its use of Federal funds. The Department in conjunction with others would like to further evaluate the potential of a Land Bank within the community.
- **House to Home Project Completed:** On September 9th, the Community celebrated the completion of Home Depot's "House to Home" project at 731/733 Winnebago Street. In partnership with Home Depot, Jeremiah Development, and many other local partners, the City of Rockford assisted with the complete renovation of this duplex for Anthony Birdwell and his family. Mr. Birdwell is a military veteran who was discharged early because of an illness, and was homeless prior to this opportunity. The home was originally a foreclosure property donated to the City and then sold to Jeremiah Development for a nominal cost. Through the help of Jeremiah Development, Home Depot, other corporate sponsors, and thousands of volunteer hours, this home was remodeled and furnished in less than 30 days. An added benefit is that the other half of the duplex will be rented to another military veteran, and will provide supplementary income to the Birdwell family. Many City Departments were involved in this successful project, and work will continue in the neighborhood with additional code enforcement sweeps and infrastructure improvements. Congratulations and kudos to all who were involved with this wonderful project!

Neighborhood Standards Section: —Through August, the Neighborhood Standards section has received 3,477 requests for service on neighborhood code enforcement issues. The 2014 monthly average has been 435 requests for service, down 13% from 2013. In August, 369 code enforcement requests for service were received. On average, the percent of voluntary compliance to code enforcement issues is 62%. In August, this number slipped to 46%. While voluntary compliance is preferred, forced compliance through a code enforcement process occurred approximately 29% of the time as a monthly average in 2014. In August, forced compliance occurred in 49% of the cases. In August, there were 641 nuisance cases, and 106 zoning cases.



COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT HIGHLIGHTS (continued)

Neighborhood Development Services (continued):

- **Neighborhood Standards Section (continued)**— The problem properties team has developed a demolition ranking system approved by City Council that is being used to determine what properties will be demolished as part of the overall demolition of blighted, dangerous and unsafe buildings throughout the City in 2014. Our goal was to demolish 80-100 properties, 4 times more than the typical year. The City is on track to demolish up to 120 residential structures this year, exceeding our goal for 2014.

LEGAL HIGHLIGHTS

Tough Winter Season Brings Increase in Claims

Legal Services: The Legal Department represents the City of Rockford regarding lawsuits and claims brought against it. Through August, the City of Rockford has successfully settled several lawsuits and paid out just \$77,311 in lawsuit settlements. In terms of legal claims, the City has fielded 1,474 claims this year through the third quarter, up substantially from the 658 claims filed for the same period in 2013. This increase was due to the harsh winter conditions and subsequent roadway damage that was a result of the 2013/2014 winter season. Despite a 124% increase in claims filed for 2014, only 19 of these claims were approved for payment, totaling \$37,601.45, a 45% increase over 2013 during the same time period.

- **Freedom of Information Act:** Transparent and open government is a priority for the City of Rockford, and complying with FOIA requests is no different. The Legal Department leads this effort on FOIA coordination for the City, and we are proud to report that the City has responded to over 1240 FOIA requests through the first half of 2014, with a timely compliance rate of 99.3%. In addition, 94% of all requests are approved under the Act, a testament to good government transparency.
- **Collective Bargaining Update:** The City has three main bargaining units: AFSCME, PB&PA, and IAFF. The AFSCME C contract has expired and negotiations are ongoing. The PB&PA and IAFF contracts have expired this month, and ground rules and exchange of first proposals will be occurring within the next two months. The AFSCME main unit and AFSCME B contracts are also expiring this year, and the City will be entering negotiations during the 4th quarter of 2014.