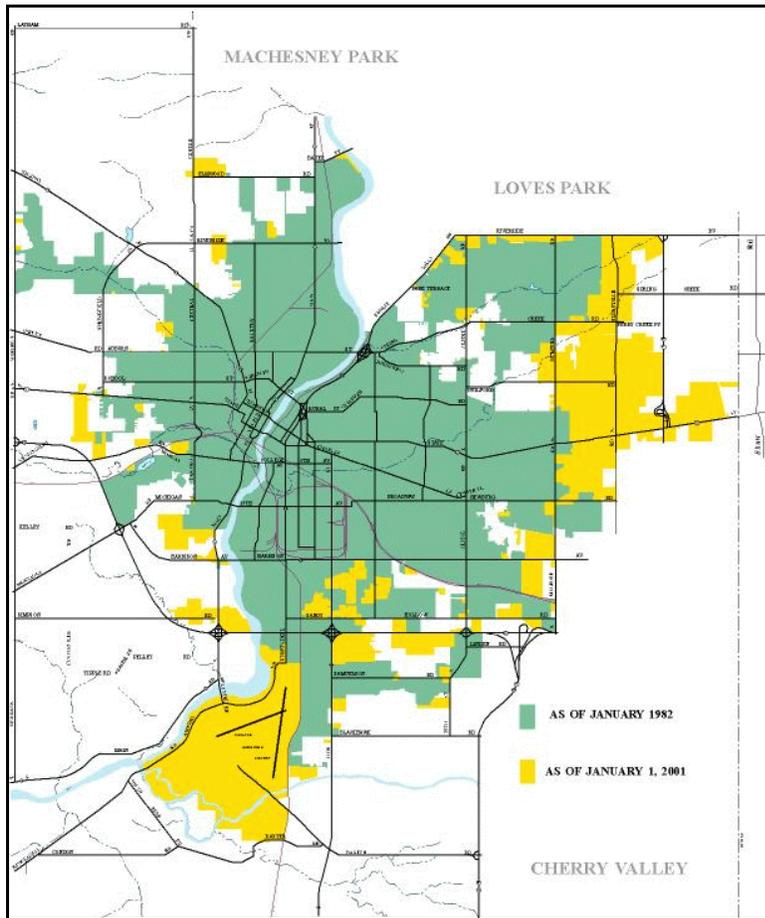


## WHY A 2020 PLAN

Now that the Year 2000 Plan is nearly 25 years old, it's time to do more than just tinker with the plan map. It's time to revisit the principles it was based on and, where appropriate, make adjustments. Age alone, however, is not the primary reason for revising the text of Rockford's land use plan. The primary reason is that Rockford has changed significantly since 1981, in some cases in ways that were not anticipated when the Year 2000 Plan was written.

**Perspective** The Year 2000 Plan was prepared by a joint City-County agency. Consequently, the plan took into account the competing demands of rural, suburban and urban areas, and gave equal weight to, for



example, extension of sewers to the Rockton-Roscoe area and extension of sewers to northwest Rockford. This 2020 Plan, on the other hand, has been prepared by City planning staff who have as their focus the future needs of the City of Rockford. These include the need to retain our tax base, and to be competitive with other communities. This does not mean, however, that we view regional concerns as unimportant. Planning Commission or not, we are still tied together by geographic proximity, interlinking services and common problems. Only by coordinating our land use planning efforts with others around us can we prevent developers from moving down the road (or across the street) to the next jurisdiction. What it does mean is that this plan looks at issues impacting the City of Rockford specifically in more depth than did the Year 2000 Plan.

**Geography** There have been major geographic changes to Rockford since 1981, with the City's total area increasing by 46% from roughly 41 square miles at the start of 1981 to roughly 60 square miles at the end of 2003. Some of these changes took Rockford beyond the Urban Service

District limits as envisioned in 1981, primarily along East State Street.

**Annexation Policies** Geographic changes were largely due to Rockford's aggressive annexation program, which was based on a set of policies adopted by City Council in 1984 and revised in 1993. These policies complimented annexation boundary agreements with Loves Park, Machesney Park and Cherry Valley. These agreements allow all the parties involved to plan better for the future by setting outer limits for each. As a result of the implementation of these policies, the following additions have been made to the City of Rockford:

- ▶ The East State Street corridor from Mulford Road to the Boone County line;

- ▶ Everything bounded by East State Street and Mulford, Guilford and Perryville Roads;
- ▶ Most of the area bounded by Guilford, Mulford, Spring Creek and Perryville Roads;
- ▶ The south side of East Riverside Boulevard from Trainer Road to the Tollway;
- ▶ Virtually all of the area bounded by East State Street, Perryville Road, Harrison Avenue and Mulford Road;
- ▶ All four of the southeast “islands” in the Ken-Rock area — previously unincorporated areas completely surrounded by the City;
- ▶ The Greater Rockford Airport; and
- ▶ Major industrial areas on the north side of the US 20 By-Pass at South Main Street.

**Development Patterns** Fifty years ago, development was fairly evenly divided east and west of the Rock River. That obviously has changed over the years, to the point where Rockford’s west side lags far behind the east side in both the quantity and quality of new development that has occurred. The reasons are varied, although the decision to locate I-90 on the far east side and the issue of race are probably the two most significant factors. Whatever the reasons, the process of continued expansion, even sprawl, on the east side combined with stagnation on the west side accelerated during the last 20 years. The result has been a significant lack of private investment on Rockford’s west side, as well as a pronounced lack of services, retail opportunities and jobs. At the same time, development exploded on the east side with commercial, office and residential development springing up between Mulford Road and the Boone County line. While some signs of a west side revival have come about in the last couple of years, the gap between west and east side development remains huge.

**The Economy** Just a year after adoption of the Year 2000 Plan, the bottom fell out of the local economy to the point where unemployment within the City of Rockford averaged 25% for all of 1982. Clearly, this led to major disruptions in the economic life of the community. To overcome what became a virtual economic depression locally, the public and private sectors joined forces to revive Rockford’s economy, creating the Council of 100 to market local industrial properties and the Rockford Local Development Corporation (RLDC). The latter developed the Greater Rockford Industrial Park (GRIP) in south Rockford near the Airport. Through the efforts of these and other groups, Rockford’s economy has recovered and diversified in the last 15-20 years.



In an effort to enhance our economic base and increase job opportunities, the City has encouraged annexation of new industrial developments through various incentives, including road improvements, investments in the City water system, and participation in sanitary sewer extensions. Examples include the UPS facility at the Greater Rockford Airport, the Motorola facility at Southrock Industrial Park, Chemical Processing at South Alpine and Linden Roads, and Landstar Inway on Simpson Road.

**Solid Waste Disposal** At the time the Year 2000 Plan was written, Pagel Pit — the landfill site for solid waste collected in the City of Rockford — was only expected to last until the mid-1980s. As Pagel Pit is still in use and is, in fact, expected to last another 7 years, something clearly has changed. One significant change is the diversion of a substantial amount of waste to other venues so that the amount of waste being landfilled by Rockford’s citizens has not increased on an annual basis. During 2003, fully 29% of Rockford’s waste stream was diverted from the landfill through curbside recycling and yard waste composting. (This compares with 0.5% in 1974 when Rockford first began recycling.) This combined with new technical improvements to Pagel Pit have increased its expected lifetime by several years. Figures for recycling could be improved by working with the Rockford School District to include them in the City’s recycling program.

In addition to the landfill problem, Rockford faced increasing difficulties in handling disposal of such things as used oil and tires. Out of this grew programs in which Rockford's residents could drop off tires, used engine oil and household hazardous wastes. The latter include paint, antifreeze, flammable liquids, acid, poisons, pesticides, household batteries, and automotive batteries. These drop off programs enable Rockford's citizens to dispose of these items safely and without a great amount of difficulty.

**Transportation** The Year 2000 Plan stated that it was "reasonable to assume that all of us will have to curtail our use of the automobile at some point in the next 15 years." This was after several years of skyrocketing fuel prices and sporadic fuel shortages. Data from the last three censuses show very little change, at least in vehicle ownership and in how people travel to work. (73% drove alone in 1980; 80% did so in 1990 and 81% in 2000. Less than 2% used public transportation during any of the past three decades.) What has changed is the perception of non-automotive transportation in Rockford and its environs, and the increased concern over traffic congestion problems.

- ▶ Pathways have become an important element of our transportation system, not just to transportation planners but to the growing number of citizens who use them on a daily basis. Several miles of new pathways have been built since 1980.
- ▶ The Greater Rockford Airport has a significant role in the community's economy, in sharp contrast to what it was in 1981 when the Year 2000 Plan was adopted. With a new terminal, the UPS facility and expanded landing strips, the Airport has grown significantly in the past 20 years, becoming one of the nation's leading freight terminals in the process.
- ▶ The only forms of non-automotive transportation that have not grown since 1981 are public transportation and passenger rail. Amtrak discontinued service between Rockford and Chicago shortly after adoption of the Year 2000 Plan while public transportation remains a second choice of transportation mode for most local residents.
- ▶ When discussing the issue of traffic congestion, it's important to bear in mind that the only thing in the City east of Mulford Road at the time the Year 2000 Plan was written were Mulford Village on the northeast corner with State Street and the restaurant on the southeast corner. North Perryville Road did not exist, nor did all the retail development between Mulford Village and the Red Roof Inn at Bell School Road. Other factors that have changed over the years include the construction of a new I-90 interchange at East Riverside Boulevard, with a subsequent improvement of Riverside to four lanes; of the Harrison-Springfield connection; of South Central Avenue through the City Yards area; of I-39; and of the Harlem-Elmwood bridge over the Rock River. Despite all the road construction, there is at least a perception that congestion is worsening, undoubtedly driven by the numbers of people waiting at traffic lights at Main and Auburn, State and Alpine, State and Perryville, State and Trainer, and any number of other intersections.

**Density of New Development** This has decreased sharply since 1980 and plays a critical role in any perceptions of traffic congestion that may exist, especially on Rockford's east side. While the City's geographic area has grown by over 40% since 1980, its population has only increased by 7.4 percent. Looking at density strictly on a population per square mile basis, Rockford's density dropped 23% between 1980 and 2000, going from 3,485 to 2,680 people per square mile. This suggests that any perceived problems of increasing congestion may be compounded by the need to make longer and longer trips.

**Plans** The absence of a planning commission has not meant the absence of planning in Rockford. In addition to amending the Year 2000 Plan, Rockford has adopted the following plans in recent years:

- ▶ Rockford Historic Preservation Plan, adopted in 1985;
- ▶ Bullseye! An Action Plan for Downtown, adopted in 1986;
- ▶ City Shores Riverfront Plan Report, adopted in 1988;
- ▶ Strategic Plan for industrial development, adopted in 1992;

- ▶ Destination River Center, adopted in 1993;
- ▶ Blueprint: A Plan for Rockford's Future, adopted in 1995;
- ▶ Consolidated Strategy and Plan for 2000-2004, adopted in 1999;
- ▶ RATS Long-Range Plan, adopted in 2000;
- ▶ Mid Town North Neighborhood Plan, 2004;
- ▶ River District Framework Plan, 2004;
- ▶ Mid Town District Framework Plan, 2004; and
- ▶ On-going planning efforts for everything from bicycle trails to housing.

**Downtown** In 1981, the condition of Rockford's downtown was tenuous, to say the least. However, as a result of planning efforts in 1983 (the Mayor's Downtown Task Force) and in 1986 (Operation Bullseye!), things have changed significantly for the better since then. Major physical changes which have occurred since 1981 include:

- ▶ Reconstruction of East State Street with the addition of brick pavers to the sidewalk area and street trees;
- ▶ Reopening the State Street portion of the downtown mall;
- ▶ Construction of three new parking decks on the west side and one on the east side;
- ▶ Renovation of several downtown buildings, including Stewart Square, Spafford Square, the East Side Centre, the Faust Landmark, and both sides of the east half of the 400 block of East State Street, including City Hall;
- ▶ Relocation of New American Theater to its new facility on the Mall;
- ▶ Development of Davis Park;
- ▶ Construction of the Zeke Giorgi State of Illinois Building on South Wyman Street and of the new Hinshaw Culbertson offices in the Waterworks parking lot north of the Jefferson Street bridge;
- ▶ Renovation of the Coronado Theatre; and
- ▶ Several smaller scale but no less important renovation projects, such as 317 Market Street, the Morrissey Building, Kortman Center for Design, Bacchus, Paragon, Irish Rose and Octane.

Just as important have been the less visible changes that have taken place — formation of the River District, establishment of On the Waterfront as one of the premier summer festivals in the Midwest, and growth of downtown as the heart of Rockford's arts and entertainment community. Along with this has come the recognition that downtown no longer serves as the commercial heart of the community, a recognition that was slow in coming.

**Role of the Riverfront** Rockford is blessed with roughly 14½ miles of riverfront — 13½ miles along the Rock River and roughly 1 mile along the Kishwaukee. These represent a major asset from which both the public and private sectors have realized many benefits, beginning with construction of the Bicentennial Recreation Path between North Second Street and the Rock River. New riverfront parks, private development along the river and special events such as On the Waterfront and the 4<sup>th</sup> of July have focused much attention on the riverfront's value as both an amenity and an economic asset to downtown Rockford. It has served as the focus of a variety of planning efforts in the last several years, including Operation Bullseye!, the City Shores Plan, the regional Rock River Corridor Planning Guide, and the River District's Conceptual Plan and Framework Plan. All recognize the value of the river as a natural resource and as a prime people attractor.



**Adaptive Reuse** More and more, Rockfordians are finding ways to recycle old buildings into new uses. Old City Hall has become an apartment building, as has the old Peterson School. Two other former school buildings, Freeman and Highland, have become office buildings. The old Rockford Publishing Building at 317 Market Street has been transformed into a combination of art galleries, studios and a loft apartment. Upper floors of the Brown Building at South Main and Chestnut Streets have been converted into loft apartments.

**Recreation Facilities** Since 1981, Rockford has seen the development of several regional recreational and entertainment facilities, the primary ones

being the MetroCentre, Aldeen Golf Course, the Sportscore, and Davis Park. These not only provide excellent facilities for Rockford residents, but also serve to draw thousands of people into Rockford for tournaments, festivals and other special events.

**Tourism** Few if any people would have taken the Planning Commission seriously in 1980 if it had suggested that Rockford would receive significant economic benefits from tourism in the near future. Thanks largely to the efforts of the Rockford Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, created in 1985, and to the growth of recreational, athletic and entertainment facilities and programs in Rockford, tourism does in fact play an important part in the local economy. Today, with almost 3,000 hotel rooms, a wide array of functional meeting space, realistic room rates, easy access, first class culture, outstanding golf and a very active CVB, Rockford's tourism industry annually pumps nearly \$250 million in direct and indirect spending and \$5 million in taxes into the local economy. It accounts for just over 3,000 local jobs generating a payroll of nearly \$80 million.



**Arts & Entertainment** Since 1981, Rockford's cultural community has shown measurable and impressive growth, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Based on a survey commissioned by the Rockford Area Arts Council in 1998, the arts and culture represent a \$29 million industry in the Rockford area. Non-profit museums, performing arts groups, and visual arts galleries and studios have all arrived at a sophisticated level of professional artistic and administrative leadership. With the newly expanded and preserved Coronado Theatre, New American Theater, Rockford Theater, Mendelssohn Club, Riverfront Museum Park and Burpee Museum of Natural History, MetroCentre, Davis Park, Ethnic Heritage Museum, Graham-Ginestra House, Tinker Swiss Cottage Museum and Klehm Arboretum all clustered on the north-south axis of Main Street, the Cultural Corridor has established itself as an impressive infrastructure ready for new audiences which will provide even greater economic benefits to the region.

**City Investment** The last 20 years have seen significant investment by the City of local and federal dollars throughout the community. The on-going Capital Improvements Program impacts all areas of the community. City-administered housing and economic development programs have been used to improve conditions in Rockford's lower income areas. For example, significant improvements have been made along South Main Street through the Shopstead program and other redevelopment efforts. Rockford's West Side Alive! Program resulted in the first new construction of single family homes in southwest Rockford in 20 years. The City has invested in five commercial areas through creation of Tax Increment Finance (TIF) districts. (These are identified and explained further in Appendix B.) While there have been no miracle cures to long-time problems, City efforts have resulted in gradual improvements in many areas.

**City Regulations** Since 1981, both the zoning and subdivision ordinance have gone through complete changes. The new zoning ordinance, adopted in 1993, is based on the concept of performance zoning. The subdivision ordinance now includes provisions for extraterritorial review, thereby allowing the City to require that subdivisions located within 1½ miles of the city limits meet City standards with full public improvements.

**Crime** Crime has become a serious issue in Rockford as it has in most cities our size across the country. Whether in our schools, on the street, in our homes or at our workplace, crime — and more importantly, our perception of it — increasingly dictates how we live our lives. Rockford and Winnebago County have the highest rate of criminal incidence in Illinois, not something we ever aspired to. The City, the Police Department and the citizens of Rockford work together daily to lower crime and improve everyone's perception about the threat it poses to people in Rockford. Our efforts to lower crime rates and improve citizen safety involve a community-oriented, pro-active approach that places the emphases on preventing crime before it occurs and solving it once it happens. Specific examples of community-oriented policing tactics introduced by the Rockford Police Department in the last 20 years include special units to patrol both the developments of the Rockford Housing Authority and schools. In addition, the Department's Bike, Community Service, K-9, Tactical, routine Patrol, and Investigative units all provide pro-active services to Rockford citizens in their fight

against crime.

**Brownfields** “Brownfields” are abandoned, idle or underused industrial and commercial sites and facilities where real or perceived environmental contamination exists, making expansion or redevelopment difficult if not impossible. (These are in contrast to greenfields, which in this part of the country are usually cornfields, where the primary source of pollution is agricultural chemicals.) The whole idea of brownfields arose after the 1980 passage of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) by Congress. Superfund, as it became known, gave the US EPA authority to investigate all potentially contaminated sites; allocate responsibility for cleanup of soil, surface and ground water; and force responsible parties to pay. CERCLA had the unintended effect of encouraging sprawl by creating a fear of the potential liabilities of brownfield properties. With Rockford’s heavy reliance on manufacturing for the past 100+ years, this community has faced more “brownfields” hurdles than most. In fact, 10 square miles in southeast Rockford, or roughly 17% of the City’s total area, fell under the cloud of Superfund Study Area status. We estimate that roughly 1,250 acres, or 2 square miles, are actual industrial brownfields. [Of the 6,400 acres in the Superfund Area, 950 (15%) are counted as brownfields. These 950 acres account for 76% of Rockford’s total brownfields area.]

Superfund difficulties have been resolved in many residential areas of southeast Rockford by connecting households to City water. This, however, does not solve the major problems faced by industrial and commercial properties which may require more extensive remediation. This is a problem that the Rockford community must resolve in the near future if it is not to be faced with a substantial area of vacant and abandoned industrial properties at its center.

**Commercial Areas** As is common in other cities across the country, many of Rockford’s older neighborhoods have lost whatever commercial activity they had. This resulted in large part from dramatic shifts in the retail business from smaller, neighborhood stores to “big box” retail development, primarily along East State Street between Mulford Road and the I-90 Tollway. Broadway, 7th Street, West State Street and South Main Street were particularly hard hit.



## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE YEAR 2000 PLAN

Before we embark on a major revision of Rockford’s plan, it’s only fair to ask how well we have done in implementing the one we have. After all, what’s the point of writing a new plan if we didn’t pay any attention to the old one? The following pages should answer that question. The column on the left of each of these pages lists recommendations and proposals included in the Year 2000 Plan; the column on the right, what has (or has not) been done since 1981.

## URBAN SERVICE DISTRICT (USD)

Designed to achieve the following:

Boundaries based on availability and use of public improvements, especially sanitary sewer and water.

Rockford has not allowed development on private wells and septic systems except in the following cases. (1) The proposed development is outside the City's Ultimate Annexation Boundary. (2) The proposed development is in an area where it would be cost prohibitive to extend public improvements because of existing development on well and septic between the City and the proposed development. In these two situations, the staff has recommended denial of the proposal.

Greater use and redevelopment of older urban areas.

Through its Neighborhood and Economic Development programs, Rockford has invested heavily in older residential and commercial areas. Programs range from assistance to homeowners to meet minimum code requirements; to Shopstead projects on South Main, Seventh and West State Streets; to new residential construction through the West Side! Alive Program.

Greater diversity of housing types.

The last few years have seen the increasing construction of "affordable" housing by local developers; significant numbers of multifamily units, both rental and condo; the conversions of older buildings to residential use, such as Old City Hall, and to loft apartments, such as the Brown Building; and a wider range of housing choices for the elderly.

Municipalities in the USD should establish coordinated, rational annexation programs based on their ability to provide the area annexed with full urban services.

Rockford adopted comprehensive annexation policies in 1984, and revised them in 1993. The ultimate boundary adopted as part of these policies assumes the ability to serve the area with sewer and water within the foreseeable future. In addition, Rockford has adopted boundary agreements with Cherry Valley, Loves Park and Machesney Park which are reflected in the Ultimate Annexation Boundary.

## ENVIRONMENT

Should develop long-range plan for solid waste management.

Rockford has had a comprehensive program for solid waste disposal since 1990, including a major recycling effort that removes over 20,000 tons of materials from the waste stream each year (roughly one-third of the total collected); composting on a citywide basis; and disposal programs for household hazardous waste products, used tires and oil.

Implement waste oil recycling programs.

Facility opened by Rockford in 1990 allowing City residents to drop off not only used oil but also tires. Another facility at the Rock River Water Reclamation District allows City residents to drop off household hazardous wastes.

Protect groundwater resources as much as possible.

Rockford incorporated wellhead protection into its Zoning Ordinance in 1997.

Enact and enforce a flood detention ordinance.

The City adopted a Flood Hazard Reduction Ordinance in 1979 as the Year 2000 Plan was being drafted. Additionally, Rockford's Subdivision Ordinance requires completion of a drainage study prior to plat approval and on-site detention with each subdivision plat. City projects are done through the CIP. However, both the Floodway Hazard Boundary maps and the Flood Insurance Rate maps need to be revised to improve accuracy and to include the entire urbanized area.

Review local zoning and subdivision ordinances to see what changes can be made in them to encourage energy efficiency through such things as smaller lot sizes.

Rockford's Zoning Ordinance allows vacant substandard lots that were a lot of record at the time the Ordinance was adopted to be developed as infill. The Ordinance also allows construction of new homes on 60-foot wide lots with a Special Use Permit.

Form a Reforestation and Timber Management Advisory Committee.

Rockford's Trees 2000! Task Force (1986) made recommendations to the City concerning trees on property owned or controlled by the City of Rockford.

Amend local zoning and subdivision ordinances to require all subdivisions and large-lot developments to have a finished grading plan minimizing removal of vegetation and other natural features.

The Zoning Ordinance adopted in 1993 incorporates extensive requirements concerning landscaping, including provisions for Tree Protection and Preservation Plans for new developments and the Buffer Ordinance for parking lots and other specified uses.

## **PUBLIC FACILITIES & SERVICES**

All municipalities in the USD should agree to annexation limits between jurisdictions.

Rockford has such agreements with Loves Park, Cherry Valley and Machesney Park.

Require new development in the USD to use public sanitary sewer and water.

The City has done so since 1984, except for situations described above.

The City should establish a CIP process resulting in a realistic program that it can implement.

Rockford adopted a set of CIP policies in 1985 that have to a large extent eliminated the CIP-as-wish-list that existed earlier. Two sets of policies were adopted — one for financing the CIP, and one for selecting projects to be included.

Existing development should be required to hook up to public sewer and water as they become available.

Through the County Health Department, existing development is required to hook up to available facilities as their private wells and/or septic systems fails. This also applies to new construction and has been enforced for the most part.

The Sanitary District of Rockford and the City should reach an agreement on rehabbing the City's sewer lines and establishing a regular maintenance schedule for them.

The City turned over responsibility for sanitary sewer lines to the Rock River Water Reclamation District in January 1991.

**COMMUNITY FACILITIES**

Rockford Public Library should continue to reopen branches (closed in 1979) and consider the possibility of joint facilities with District 205.

Branches reopened in stages, starting in 1980. Five branches are now open, including one in Lewis Lemon School.

Renovate City Hall and Old City Hall to consolidate City offices.

City Hall was renovated and a new annex built, with the expanded building reopening in 1994. Additional offices were moved into the building, primarily from the Water Division. Old City Hall was subsequently redeveloped as apartments by a private developer.

Build a new State office building downtown.

The Zeke Giorgi Building was constructed on South Wyman Street, opening in 1989.

The Rockford Fire Department should (1) prepare a master plan; (2) locate new fire stations where they can provide the best service to the area they serve; and (3) provide specified levels of service.

The RFD completed a master plan in the mid-'80s, and has located new stations according to needs identified through that planning process. It has exceeded standards recommended in the Year 2000 Plan to the point where it now has a Class 2 rating from ISO, something that few fire departments ever achieve.

All police should be dispatched from the PSB's computerized dispatching system.

All emergency calls are now handled by the 9-1-1 Center.

**HOUSING**

Designate appropriate areas as historic districts to protect the character of these neighborhoods.

Four residential historic districts have been designated — Haight Village, Brown's Hills/Knightsville, Indian Terrace and Garfield Avenue.

Encourage the conversion of vacant structures such as schools or factories into apartments or businesses.

Consider issuing mortgage revenue bonds to provide below-market-rate mortgage loans to low- and moderate-income residents.

Encourage local developers to build not only traditional single-family houses, but also more clustered housing, apartments, townhouses and duplexes.

Local government should assist residents in maintaining and rehabbing their homes.



The City should show what can be done through rehabilitation by holding a rehabilitation fair.

There have been two major conversions into apartments, Old City Hall and Peterson School. Freeman and Highland Schools were converted into offices, while a portion of Garrison School was converted into a day care center.

The City does not issue mortgage bonds, but does provide grants to lower income residents for the down payment and closing costs of homes. The City also offers a new construction program (West Side Alive!) in which affordable homes are built in certain neighborhoods and sold to eligible families, as well as a Homestead Program in which homes are acquired, rehabbed and sold.

Local developers have built several affordable housing subdivisions in recent years, using either private financing, tax credits or tax increment financing. These are located in all parts of the City. Townhouses were built in the 7th Street TIF area by Zion Development Corporation. New apartments and duplexes have been built, some as rental property and some as condominiums.

- ▶ The City partners with local lenders on many programs.
- ▶ YouthBuild rehabs homes with lower income youth.
- ▶ Rockford continues to apply for and receive federal entitlement and nonentitlement grants for programs to assist lower income persons in rehabbing their homes. Over the last several years, this has included the State of Illinois Housing Development Authority (IHDA) funds, Federal Home Loan Bank funds, CDBG funds, TIF funds and Home Investment Partnership Program funds.
- ▶ Rockford provides assistance to roughly 130 households a year through the various housing programs administered by its Department of Community Development.

For the first time, the Affordable Housing Coalition in cooperation with many local for-profit and not-for-profit agencies, including the City, held a Housing Fair in 1997. This has become an annual event.

**LAND USE**

**Residential**

Local land use regulations should include a Flexible Residential District to allow any type of housing as long as it does not exceed planned density levels.

The new Zoning Ordinance allows for just such a thing through its Planned Residential District category.

Development plans should ensure continuity of the interior street system with the planned network.

Locate high density residential development in areas that can readily be served by transit.

### **Industrial**

Amend zoning ordinances to regulate industry by performance standards.

### **Commercial**

No new regional shopping centers will be needed before 2000.

Virtually all planned east side commercial development was shown along East State Street.

Movement of car dealers to East State Street.

Through the subdivision process, we have seen the development of parts of Arnold Avenue, Trainer Road, Reidfarm Road, Sage Drive and Pepper Drive.

The largest concentrations of new apartment development are on Sandy Hollow Road and on North Bell School Road. Neither is currently served by transit, but both could be with some modification of existing routes.

The new ordinance adopted by the City in 1993 includes performance standards not just for industrial uses, but for some commercial ones as well.

While no actual centers in the conventional sense have been developed in Rockford since 1980, it could be argued that East State Street has become the area's newest regional center. The Year 2000 Plan did not anticipate the change to "big box" development or the rebirth of strip malls, both of which are present on East State Street, nor did it address access issues that arise with strip development.

The Year 2000 Plan did not anticipate the explosive growth of Rockford's far east side as being not only along East State Street, but also extending up Perryville Road and along East Riverside Boulevard. The latter was brought on by the new I-90 interchange (not shown in the Year 2000 Plan). However, the heaviest commercial development remains on East State while both Riverside and Perryville have become a mix of commercial properties and offices.

While the Year 2000 Plan correctly anticipated the withdrawal of most new car dealers from downtown Rockford to the east side, foreshadowed at the time by the relocation of Bachrodt's to CherryVale, some have gone to East Riverside Boulevard and some to North Perryville Road instead of East State Street as was planned. This is partly a reflection of no municipal property taxes in Loves Park, and partly a result of the explosive growth of northeast Rockford and of Loves Park. However, others are looking at locations on Perryville Road just north of State Street while at least two dealers, Fran Kral and Strandquist, have opted to remain downtown.

Rockford should use tax increment financing (TIF) and other non-traditional tools to aid in commercial development.

Most Westside TIF funds have been used for parking projects (requested by downtown business owners); \$50,000 has been set aside annually from the Eastside TIF for facade rebates for businesses, with most of the remainder used to pay for the renovation and expansion of City Hall; the Seventh Street TIF has been used for a variety of commercial projects through a rebate program, and for housing. However, a major portion of it is now dedicated to paying for the relocation of Charles Street that occurred in 2002. In order to accommodate larger projects than would otherwise be fundable, the City is floating a \$2,000,000 bond issue for the 7<sup>th</sup> Street TIF which will be allocated through the RFP process. Rockford has established successful Shopstead programs on South Main Street, Seventh Street and West State Street. However, more remains to be done to encourage new commercial development on the west side.

Public improvements should be coordinated with private redevelopment proposals.

This approach has been used most successfully in downtown Rockford, beginning with the reopening of West State Street and construction of the State & Main parking deck in 1985. Construction of the deck was tied to all of its spaces being leased with commitments for five years before work on the deck would even begin. Similar arrangements were made with the two other decks built since then.

Overall, Rockford has done a fairly good job of working within the parameters of the Year 2000 Plan. We have implemented the concept of the Urban Service District, albeit within expanded boundaries, requiring new development to have full urban services while at the same time expanding Rockford's economic base. What we have been unable to do is achieve balanced growth throughout the community or contain the explosion of sprawl to the east. These remain as challenges for the next 20 years.