



PLAN UPDATE PROCESS

Overview of the Planning Process

The City of Rockford Comprehensive Plan was last completely updated in 2004 when it was adopted by the members of the Rockford City Council. At the time, the 2020 Comprehensive Plan recommended that there be a 10-year review of the plan. The plan was amended in 2008, 2009, and 2011 based on reviews. These amendments were minor, and mostly included updated maps and boundary information. As recommended by City Council, the 2020 Comprehensive Plan was reviewed by city staff. The main purpose of the review was to evaluate the current planning strategies toward achieving the plans vision. At the end of the review process in 2014, city staff recommended updating the strategies to align better with current conditions in the city and to continue considering other regional planning documents developed or updated since the original plan was adopted in 2004. The 2020 Comprehensive Plan review process concluded in May of 2015 with a City Council approval of the 5-year, 2015-2019 Implementation Plan.

This most recent update to the City of Rockford Comprehensive Plan began in 2020. Initial work focused on the research and review of existing comprehensive plans, regional plans, and other development initiatives by the surrounding communities that have an impact on our city and region as a whole.

The next phase of the planning process involved making decisions on what type of Steering Committee to have, how to organize and implement the required Public Par-

ticipation strategies, and the development of a draft outline. Ultimately, the draft outline, after refinement, was used to guide the research necessary to gather the data and information necessary to begin writing the chapters.

Extensive data gathering was used to drive the information that will be presented in each chapter. Various local, regional, and national datasets were researched and utilized in order to be able to present the following information.

Additionally, recent photographs of the city were taken to compliment this information and data, and to help capture the essence of what makes Rockford unique and attractive to so many residents and visitors alike.



Trucks & Tunes - Food Trucks across from City Hall

Key Topic Areas

A comprehensive plan is usually a region's only public document that describes the community as a whole in terms of its complexities and interrelated systems. The plan should focus on many areas and from as many viewpoints as possible. Reviewing the past and current conditions using a broad perspective for both short-term and long-term community decisions is imperative. The real value of a comprehensive plan is that it provides for the coordinated timing and location of development or redevelopment. This is something that zoning or subdivision regulations by themselves do not do.

Public Participation & Community Involvement

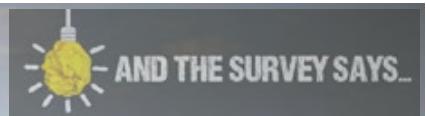
The purpose of focusing on public participation as an important part of a comprehensive plan update is to ensure that the community's needs are addressed to the furthest extent possible. It's very important to engage with the public early in the process using an array of techniques and strategies, and to include multiple opportunities for participation in the process by as many people as possible. It's easy to ask the community for input, but ensuring that participation is productive and equitable may be more difficult given the impact of COVID-19 and the restrictions in place limiting in-person gatherings at the beginning of this process. However, by utilizing digital engagement and outreach strategies, combined with gathering information at more controlled and smaller events, the results from public participation efforts were successful.

By actively engaging the public throughout the duration of the comprehensive plan update, citizens have the chance to influence decisions that are important to them. Public involvement is essential to gather enough information to accurate-



The City of Rockford Comprehensive Plan relies heavily on public input, and engaging the region's residents. We encourage anyone who lives in, near, or regularly visits the City of Rockford to participate in the process by taking this survey!

CLICK HERE → <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RockfordPlanning2022>



The **City of Rockford Comprehensive Plan** will include extensive community outreach, visioning, and public input. It is the official long-range planning and policy guide for the City of Rockford.

It acts as a guide to coordinate and align the following over the next 10 years:

- zoning and land-use
- transportation infrastructure
- economic development investments
- natural resources and open space protection
- the general needs and concerns of community members

The plan serves as the community's voice and portrays what the future of Rockford could look like. It is also a tool for elected and appointed officials to use in making decisions regarding overall development, conservation, and public investment within the City of Rockford's municipal boundary.



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ly represent the public. Engaging the public early in the process is important. It's also important to have a clear, concise, and realistic message that's consistent throughout the planning process. This will help to garner support and ensure a more equitable and successful plan implementation phase.

The following list represents the public participation and community engagement efforts made by staff throughout the entirety of the planning process:

- Rockford City Market engagement efforts included open discussions and information provided to community members, a visioning board, and community survey was given. With the assistance of the Region 1 Planning Council, city staff was present at two Friday night city markets: once in July and again in August of 2022.
- City Staff attended two local high school career fairs where we had the ability to discuss topics that were important to teenagers living in the region. A half-day was spent at both Boylan Catholic High School and Jefferson High School. Students also had the ability to take a digital survey to assist in identifying areas the city was doing well in, and areas that may need extra attention.
- Staff developed an online community survey with 11 questions that varied from basic demographic information, community rankings, funding alignment, and open-ended comments sections. The survey went live in February 2022, and was left open until the draft plan comment period was over. The results were compiled in May 2022, and at that time there were 930 completed surveys. The detailed results are provided in the Public Participation Review and Analysis Chapter at the end of this plan.
- The City of Rockford Draft Comprehensive Plan was completed internally in the fall of 2022, after which an extensive internal review by city staff was finalized. The draft plan was released to the public for reading and to act as the official public comment period running from April 10th to May 10th, 2023.

Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is comprised of members invited to participate in the planning process from the beginning to end, by the City of Rockford. These members represent local community leaders, neighborhood associations, developers, business leaders, and citizens at large. The role of the Steering Committee is to oversee the successful completion of the comprehensive plan through review of the

draft plan, submitting comments and edits, reviewing the various topics, approaches, and policies outlined, assist in planning the public participation process, and help encourage public comment. Additionally, the Steering Committee will aid in the development of chapter goals, objectives, and implementation strategies which will ultimately ensure the plans success.

The committee had the following responsibilities:

- Develop a vision statement for the plan,
- Provide guidance through the entirety of the process,
- To review data, charts, and maps for accuracy and ease of understanding,
- Provide comment and input during all phases of plan development and engagement,
- Identify issues and concerns during plan development and draft review period,
- Relay any public comments or questions that were submitted on your behalf,
- Assist in public participation process and consensus around the plan,
- Represent and portray broad community interests, and
- Act in an advisory capacity to city council or planning committee if necessary.

Implementation Strategies

Comprehensive plans are turned into reality by concerted, coordinated, and consistent attention to implementation after the final plan has been adopted by City Council. This requires that the city administration, managers, departments, and staff at present and in the future, utilize the comprehensive plan as a key reference for decision making and important actions moving forward. Aligning the chapter implementation goals to strategic planning and development initiatives through policies furthers the objectives in the comprehensive plan and helps to ensure a successful implementation phase.