

# ONE ROCKFORD

## CASE FOR ACTION & IMPLEMENTATION PLAN



DECEMBER 2021

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# WHAT IS ONE ROCKFORD?

# What is One Rockford?

One Rockford is an RHDC and community co-led effort to join together with residents and partner organizations in Rockford and help Rockford's people and families succeed.

**Our vision is a Rockford where every resident and neighborhood is valued and everyone works together to build healthy communities.**

Our collective case for action urges residents, neighbors, and organizations throughout Rockford to invest in healthy communities for all.

## Where Does RHDC's Funding Come From?

RHDC previously assumed ownership of Concord Commons, a 216-unit affordable multifamily project-based Section 8 property on Rockford's west side. The RHDC operated this asset until 2020 when, after significant planning, it sold the asset to best reposition the property, improve living conditions for its residents, and meet the mission of the RHDC. The goal is to ensure that the \$6 million generated from this sale can be re-invested in making positive change for the community.

RHDC's board also brings significant experience with real estate investment and will build on their initial \$6 million by working with partners to bring new sources of funding to the West Side. All funded projects will work toward the goal of creating a healthy community.



# Who is RHDC?

Founded on October 19, 1978 as a 3-person board, the Rockford Housing Development Corporation (RHDC) was incorporated by the Rockford Housing Authority (RHA) to promote housing production for low and moderate-income residents through development, purchase and sale, construction of buildings and building support systems, rentals of real estate and further to conduct any other business activity involving development and management of real estate. Shortly after inception, the RHDC became an independent nonprofit corporation, no longer a part of or tied to Rockford Housing Authority (RHA), which it remains today.

The RHDC also assumed ownership of Concord Commons, a 216-unit affordable multifamily project-based Section 8 property on Rockford's west side. The RHDC operated this asset until 2020 when, after significant planning, it sold the asset to best reposition the property, improve living conditions for its residents, and meet the mission of the RHDC.

“

Strong neighborhoods are the foundation for healthy and stable families.

Jerry Lumpkins, RHDC President

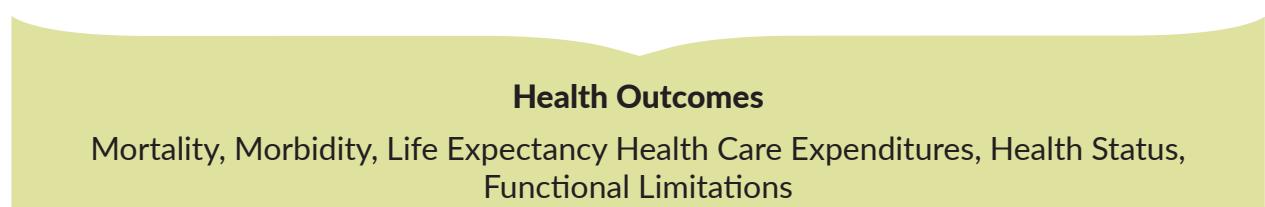
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# Why Did RHDC Launch One Rockford?

RHDC started One Rockford in order to engage residents and partners in Rockford to define what a healthy community looks like. Many of the factors that determine how healthy we will be start with the places we live, and the opportunities we have.

Economic Stability	Neighborhood and Physical Environment	Education	Food	Community and Social Context	Health Care System
Employment Income Expenses Debt Medical bills Support	Housing Transportation Safety Parks Playgrounds Walkability Zip code / geography	Literacy Language Early childhood education Vocational training Higher education	Hunger Access to healthy options	Social integration Support systems Community engagement Discrimination Stress	Health coverage Provider availability Provider linguistic and cultural competency Quality of care



Source: Kaiser Family Foundation

# How Will RHDC Contribute to a Healthy Community?

## 1. Work in Partnership:

Our top priority is building continuing partnerships with community members and organizations. We understand that the people of Rockford are best equipped to tell us what is needed for their health and well-being.

## 2. Contribute our Experience:

Our experience is in real estate development -- development of homes, businesses, and community spaces. We want to use this experience to help ensure that every Rockford resident can Live, Grow, and Thrive.

## 3. Create Real Results for Families and Residents in Rockford



# One Rockford Timeline

## PHASE 1

May - July 2021

### Conduct a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

Understand trends and opportunities for RHDC to act

### Broad First Phase of Outreach

A public meeting, launch of a website and community survey, and work with community partners to spread the word about the next steps

## PHASE 2

August - October 2021

### Understanding Alternatives

Working with the community, the RHDC board, and RHDC partners to develop paths for action and investment

### Focused Second Phase of Outreach

Partner focus groups and opportunity meetings  
Working with the community the RHDC board, and RHDC partners to develop paths for action and investment

## PHASE 3

November - December 2021

### Planning for Action

Setting forth recommendations for RHDC and investment based on community feedback, and data

### Final Outreach

Meetings to share the One Rockford Plan for Action and invite community members to help make this a reality by providing continuing feedback on our work.

**2022 and Beyond: Stay Involved and Provide Feedback on Next Steps!**

Sign up at <https://www.1rockford.com>.

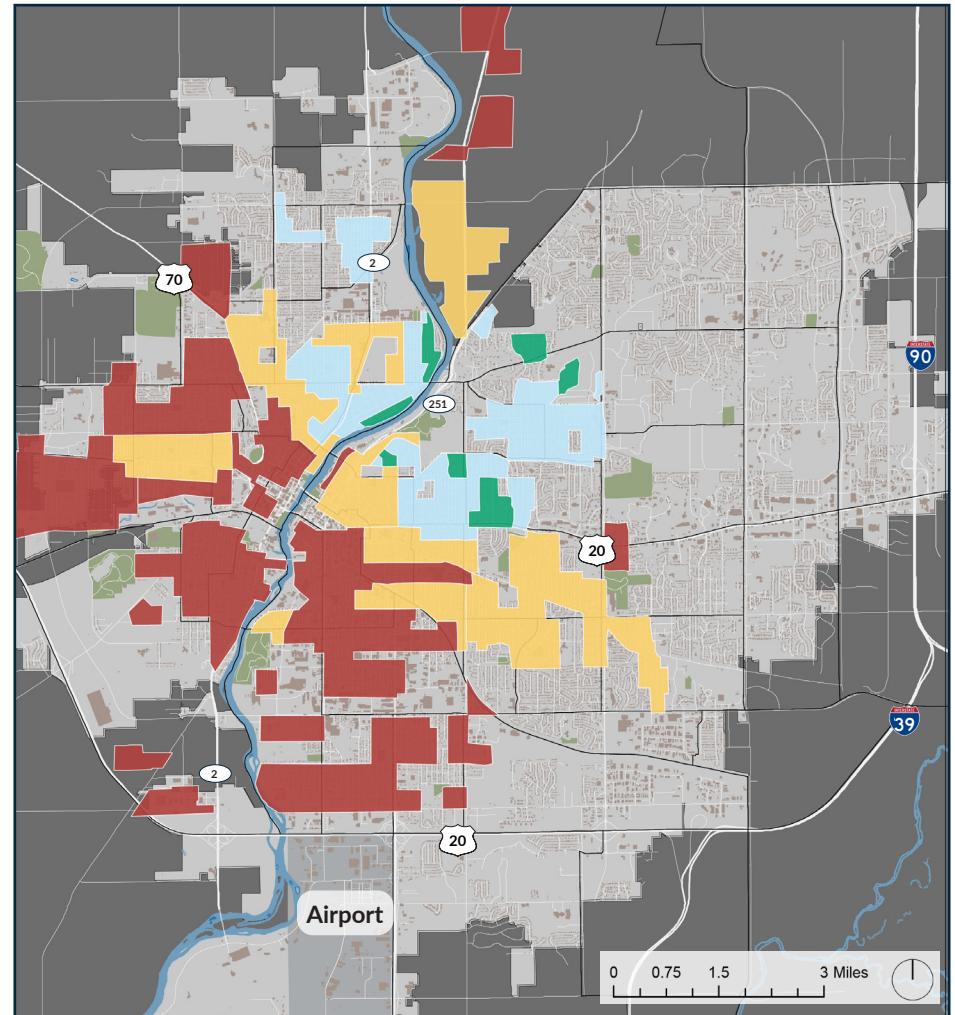
# What the Data Says about Community Health

## Looking to History to Understand the Present

As part of the One Rockford work, we conducted a comprehensive analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT Analysis) that looked at trends within the City of Rockford. One clear outcome is that many of the issues Rockford faces today are rooted in history. At right is a map of the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) “redlining” maps from the 1930s that were used to make decisions about what areas should receive housing investment.

Much of the west side of the Rock River and the south side of the city was rated “C” or “Definitely Declining” and “D” or “Hazardous.” Decisions made in this era still correlate with impacts on communities today; a 2018 study from the National Community Reinvestment Coalition found that neighborhoods ranked as “D” on HOLC maps were 74% low-to-moderate-income and 64% majority-people of color today. Research has also shown that significant health disparities exist for residents in formerly redlined neighborhoods.

Map 1. HOLC Redlining Categories



Source: University of Richmond Digital Scholarship Lab

### HOLC Grade

- |     |                       |
|-----|-----------------------|
| ● A | ● Building Footprints |
| ● B | ● Water bodies        |
| ● C | ● Parks               |
| ● D | ● Airport             |

## Health Disparities Today

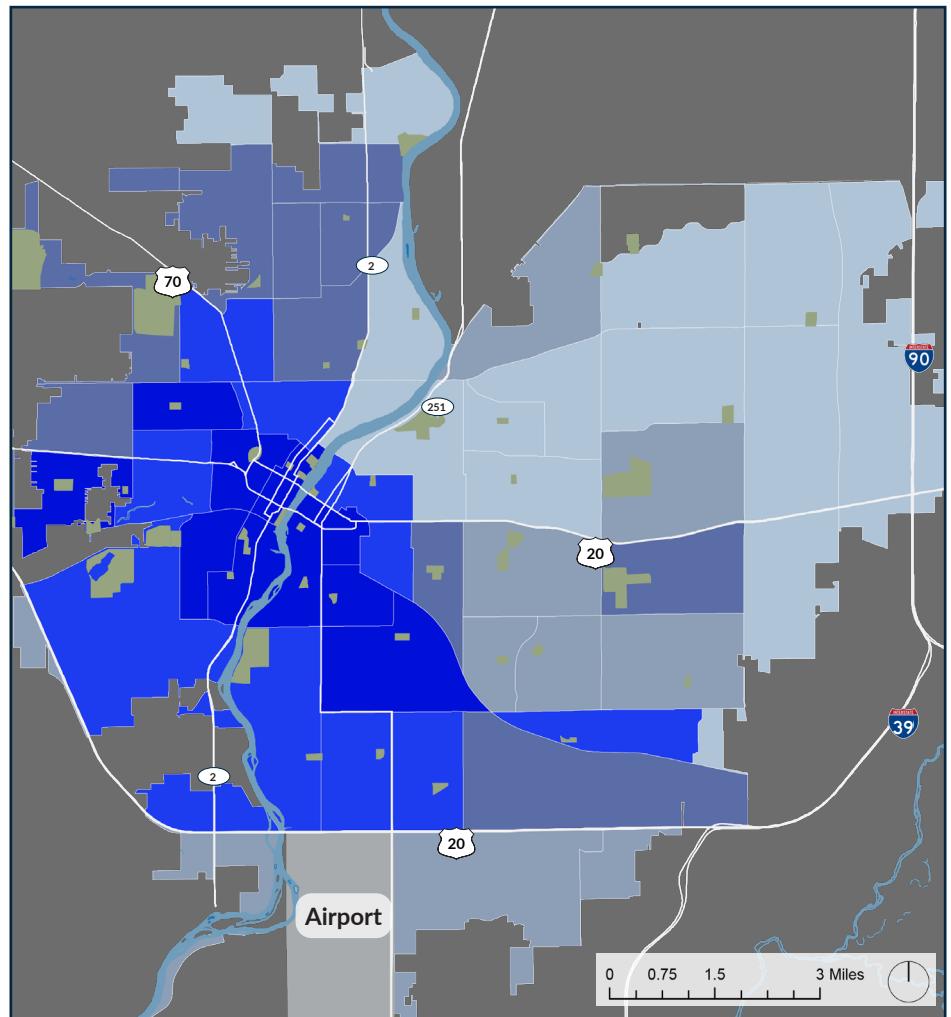
The map on this page is comprised of the following three metrics:

- Physical health not good for  $\geq 14$  days among adults aged 18 years or over
- Mental health not good for  $\geq 14$  days among adults aged 18 years or over
- Current lack of health insurance among adults aged 18–64 years

Again, the west and south sides have some of the most significant challenges related to these health metrics, meaning that the correlation between historic redlining policies and problems with residents' health today seem to hold true locally.

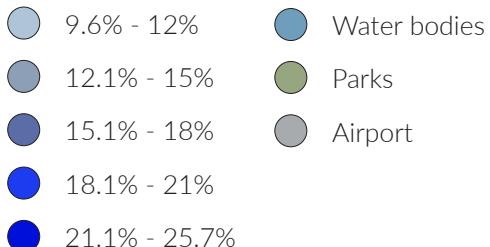
Mental health is a particular concern for residents of Rockford; during the One Rockford engagement work, several residents noted that increasing access to mental health care could also increase community safety.

Map 2. Physical and Mental Health (2020)



Source: CDC Places/500 Cities

### Health Metric Population

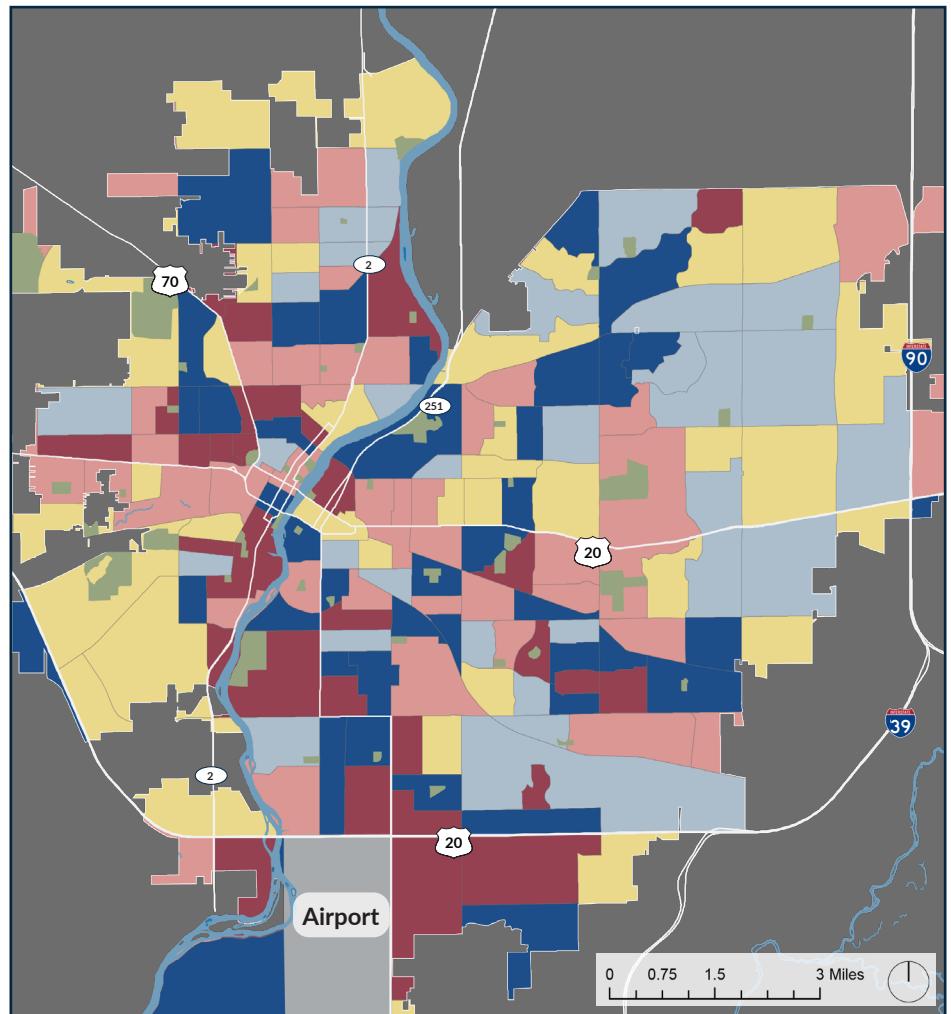


## One Result: Population Change

Rockford's population has declined by 5% between 2010 and 2019, from 153,285 to an estimated 145,609 in 2019. Much of this decline is associated with a corresponding decline in population for the State of Illinois overall. In Rockford, the beginning of the decade-long decline is associated with the recession of 2008-2009.

The map at right shows that this population decline is not evenly distributed across the city. Red and yellow areas are experiencing decline, while blue areas are growing. The west and south sides, while they have some blue areas, appear to have more quickly declining population compared to the city as a whole.

Map 3. Percent Population Change (2010 v. 2019)



Source: 2015 - 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2006 - 2010 American Community Survey 5- Year Estimates

### Population Change

- -71% to -25%
  - -24.9% to -10%
  - -9.9% to 0%
  - 0.1% to 10%
  - 10.1% +
- Water bodies
  - Parks
  - Airport

## Another Result: Vacancy

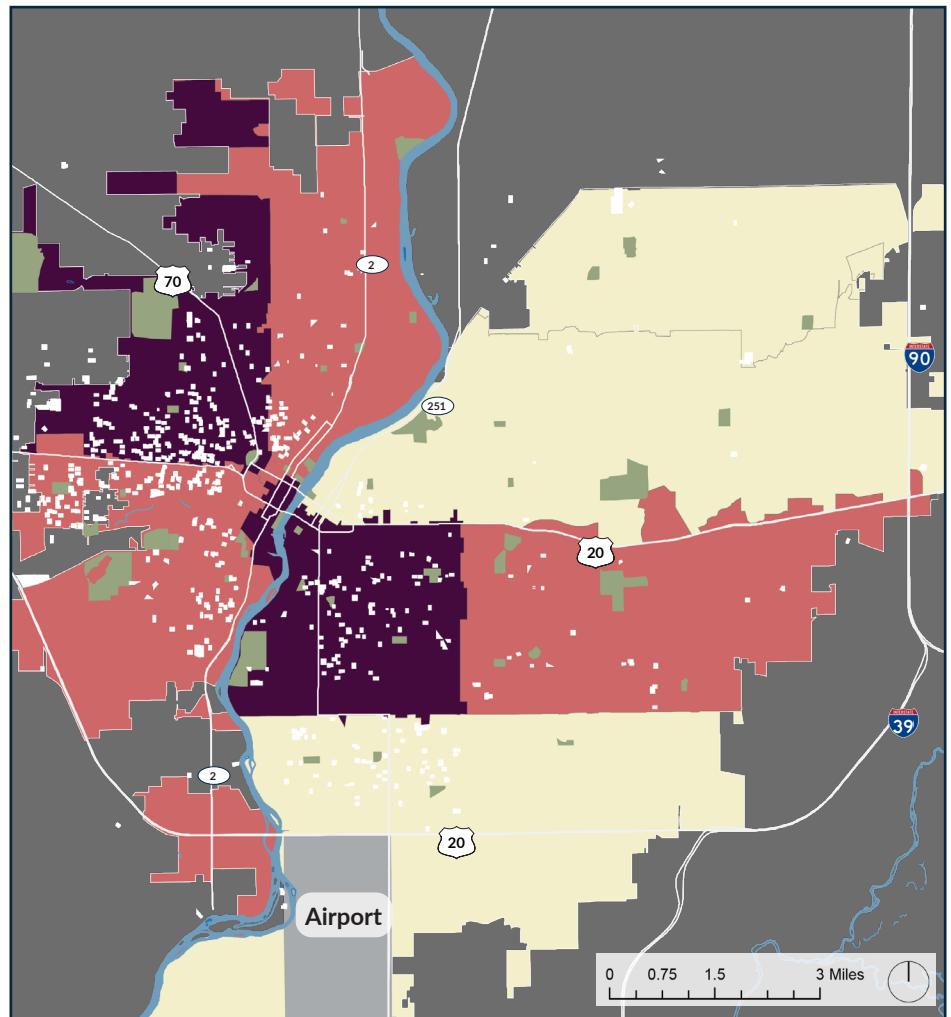
Declining population also leads to increasing housing vacancy in neighborhoods. Rockford as a whole has a vacancy rate of about 9.74%.

Neighborhoods in Rockford experiencing the highest rates of vacancy include:

- Ellis Heights East (30.04%)
- Prairie Hill/Jackson Prairie (23.93%)
- South Gate (21.44%)
- Ellis Heights West (21.21%)
- Signal Hill (20.83%)
- St. Elizabeth (19.74%)
- River Bluff (19.53%)
- New Towne (19.09%)

Most of these neighborhoods are on the west and south sides of Rockford.

Map 4. Residential Vacancies



Source: City of Rockford GIS Services

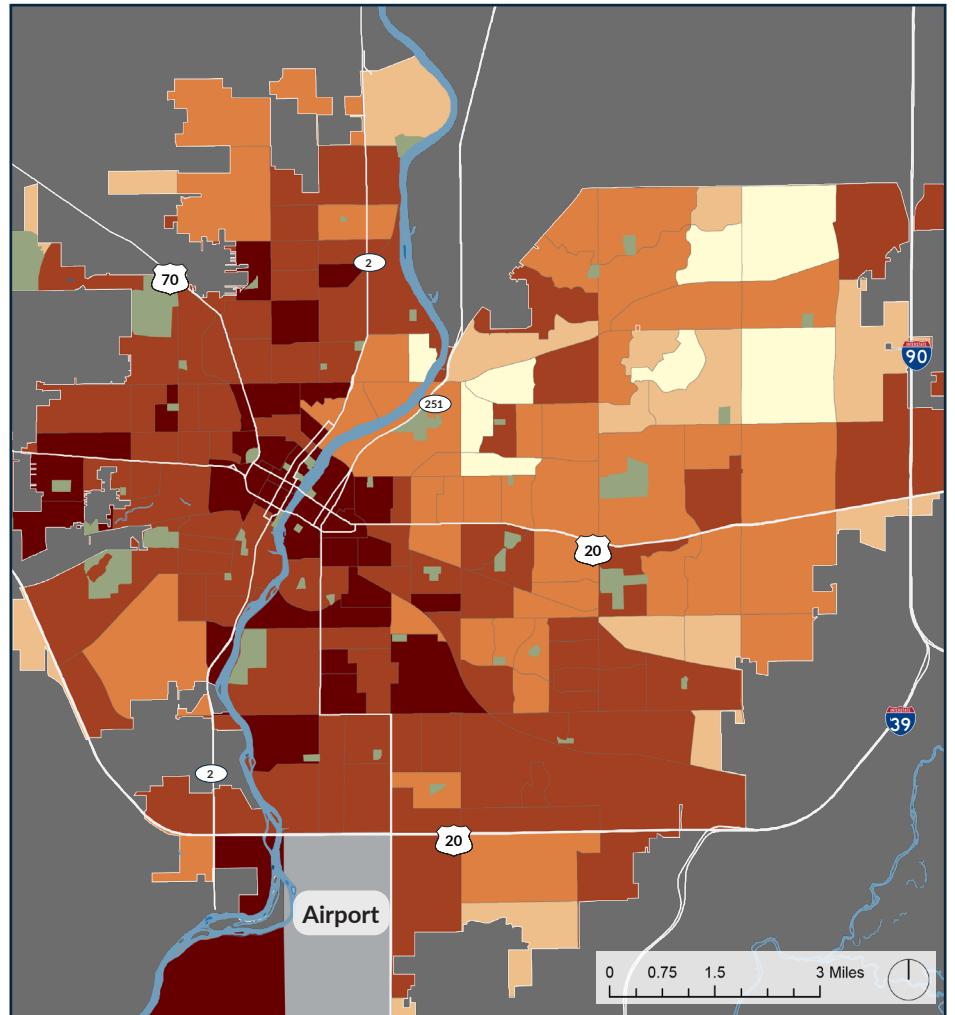
Median Sale Price

- |   |                     |   |                               |
|---|---------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| ● | less than \$47,400  | ○ | Vacant Residential Properties |
| ● | \$47,400 - \$99,900 | ● | Water bodies                  |
| ● | \$99,900+           | ● | Parks                         |
| ● |                     | ● | Airport                       |

## Household Income Disparities

In Rockford, 37-65% of households living in southwestern neighborhoods earn incomes that fall below the poverty line. The median incomes for households in other areas of Rockford tend to be higher.

Map 5. Median Household Income (2019)



Source: 2015 - 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

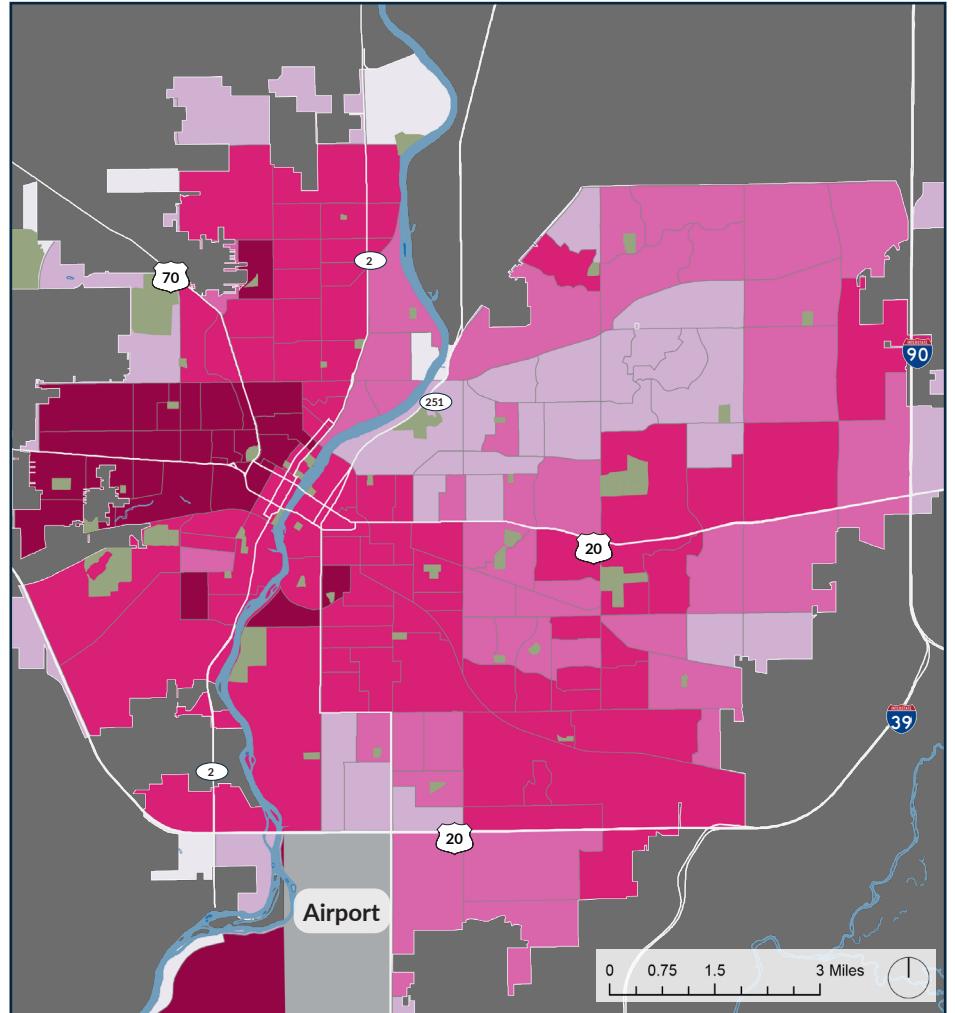
### Median Household Income

- |   |                      |   |              |
|---|----------------------|---|--------------|
| ● | Less than \$25,000   | ● | Water bodies |
| ● | \$25,000 - \$50,000  | ● | Parks        |
| ● | \$50,001 - \$75,000  | ● | Airport      |
| ● | \$75,001 - \$100,000 |   |              |
| ● | \$100,001+           |   |              |

## An Equity Issue

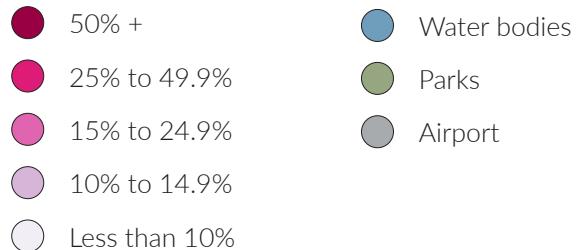
The burdens of redlining, more severe health issues, neighborhood quality of life challenges, and lower incomes fall most heavily on people of color in Rockford, who form a much higher percentage of the population in the southwestern neighborhoods of Rockford than in many other neighborhoods throughout the city.

Map 6. Percent People of Color (2020)



Source: 2015 - 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

### Percentage of People of Color



# The Engagement Process

## **Broad First Phase of Outreach:**

At the start of the project, Asakura Robinson conducted a site visit to meet with stakeholder groups in Rockford. Meetings were held to brief them on the purpose and need of the project, learn about their housing-related priorities and concerns, and how they might participate in this project.

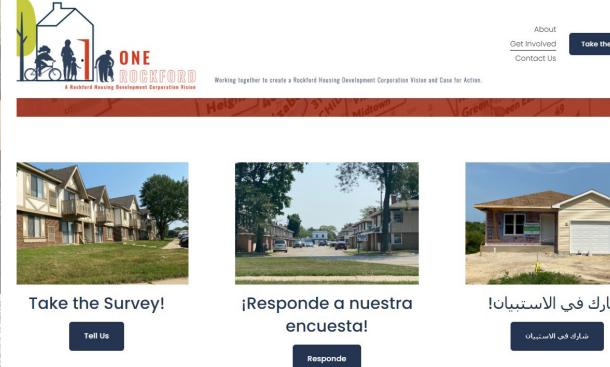
Additionally, a citywide survey issued from August through October in English, Spanish, Swahili, and Lao, collected input around resident visions for Rockford, helping to guide RHDC's next steps.



## **Focused Second Phase of Outreach:**

The second site visit was conducted after a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats report was completed to analyze background data on Rockford.

This round of public engagement was more focused on learning from the West Side community on their priorities and where investments would be best utilized.



# Results of Engagement

We've heard from residents and stakeholders that an active response to these issues is needed -- and needed soon. People want to see catalytic investments in the West Side that improve the social determinants of health in a variety of ways:



Promote community health and well-being, including mental health



Increase safety



Build community wealth



Tackle vacancy



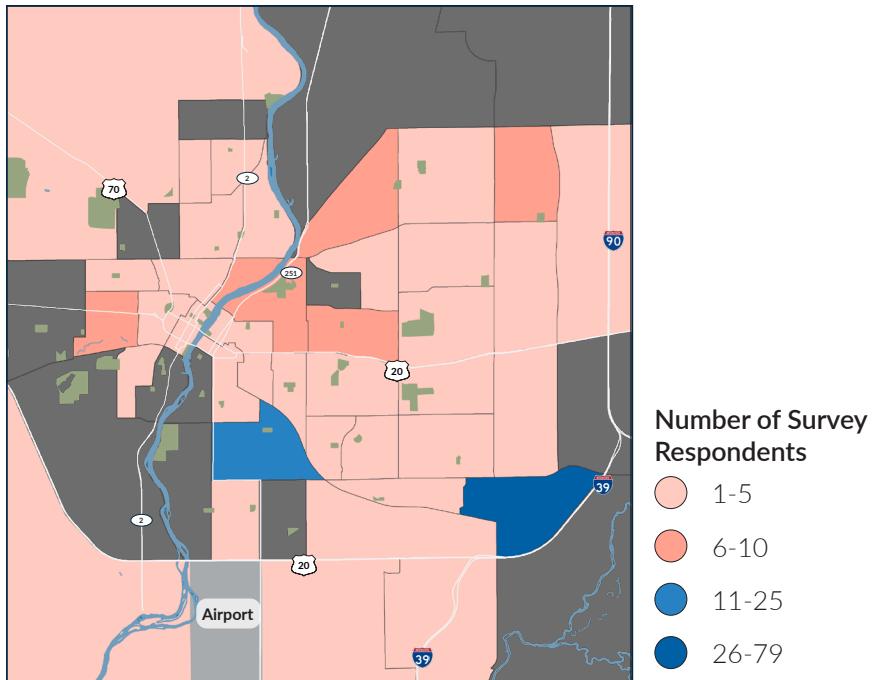
Create gathering spaces and green spaces



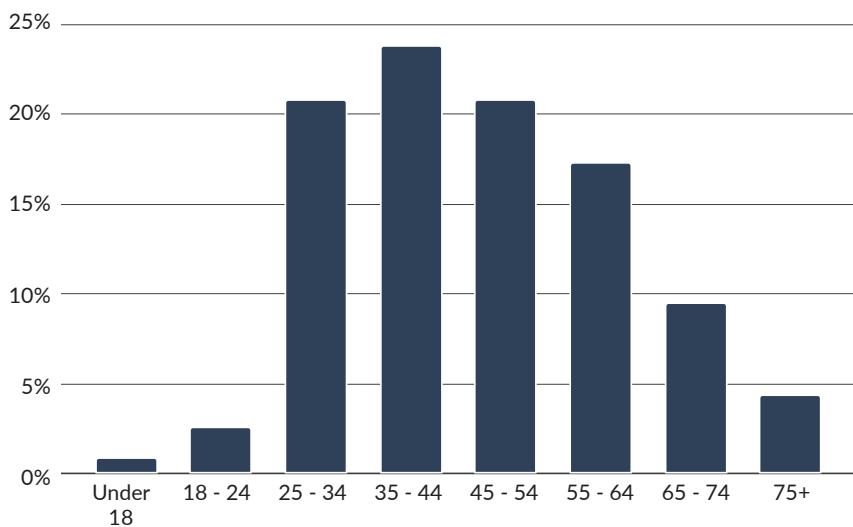
Keep families in Rockford and promote children's well-being

## Who We Heard From:

What census tract do you live in?

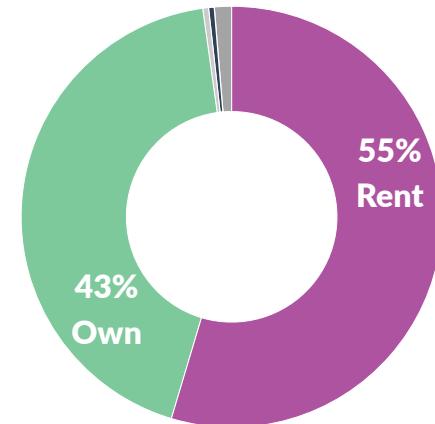


What is your age?

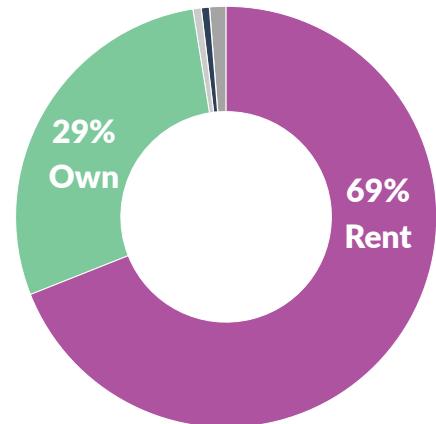


Do you currently rent your home, own your home, or something else?

Overall



People of Color



## What do you hope the news will say about Rockford in 2050?

Chicago work Completely many communities local residents equitable new improved list good Community finally zero years School Just Tops news Nationwide sets Year changed State IL Year national ranked cities safe homes schools business people around crime better jobs now town educated Graduates high neighborhoods growth play homelessness District Great places Police homeless all developers voted th Illinois taxes economic about

## What are your biggest concerns about the future of Rockford?

children schools rate enough about taxes school  
population rates low Poor care Racism  
transportation need streets live new community  
side economic money property business  
all high violence income tax rising  
affordable More Good just west  
access much police people public opportunities

## Tell us how true the following statements are for you.

Not at all true   Not very true   Somewhat true   Very True

I sometimes worry that I will not be able to stay in the home I live in today because of rising costs.



My home needs maintenance, but it is hard to afford to keep it up.



I like the neighborhood that I live in and want to stay in this area.



I like the home I live in and want to stay in this home.



I will need to make changes to my home so that I can keep living there as I grow older.



I feel connected to my neighbors.



50%

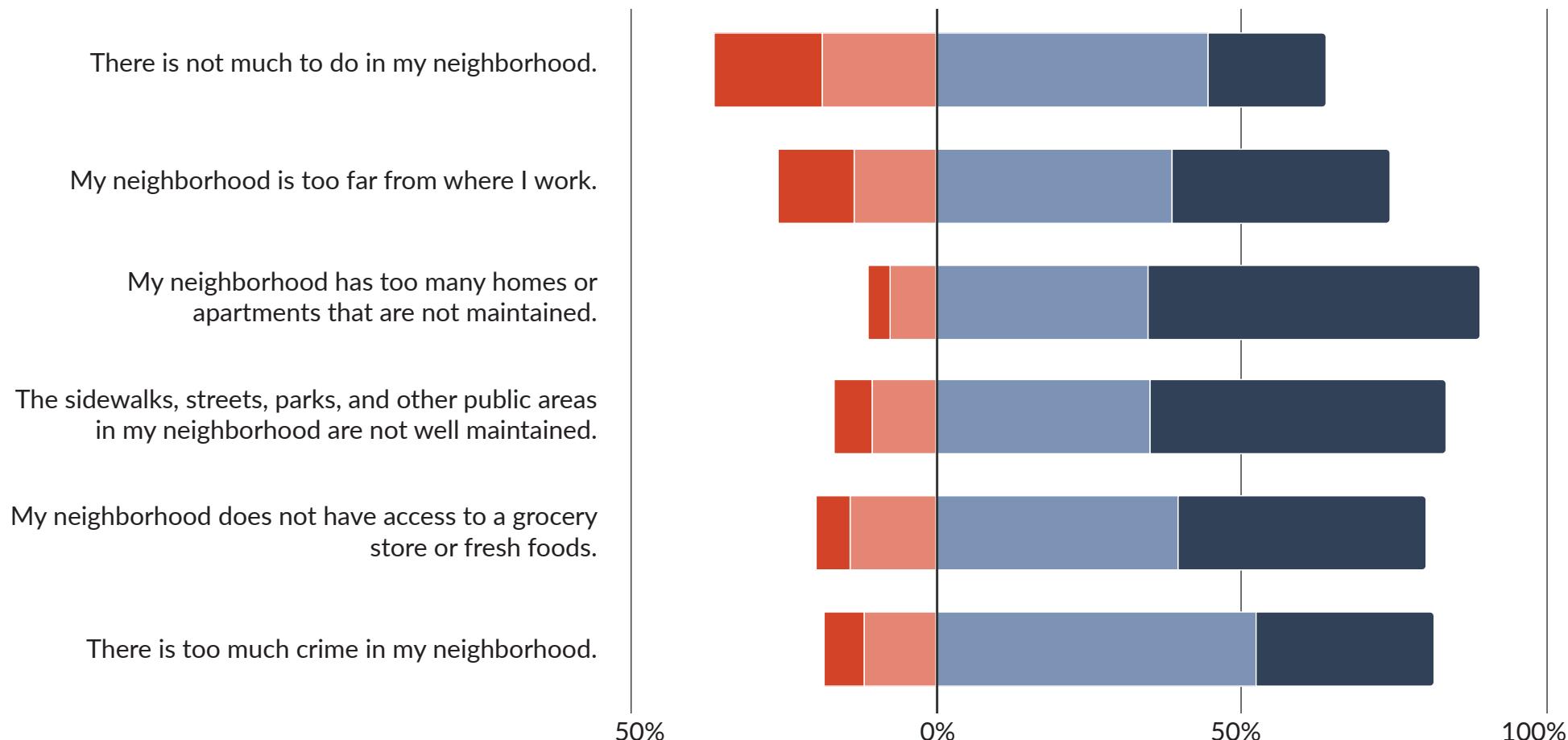
0%

50%

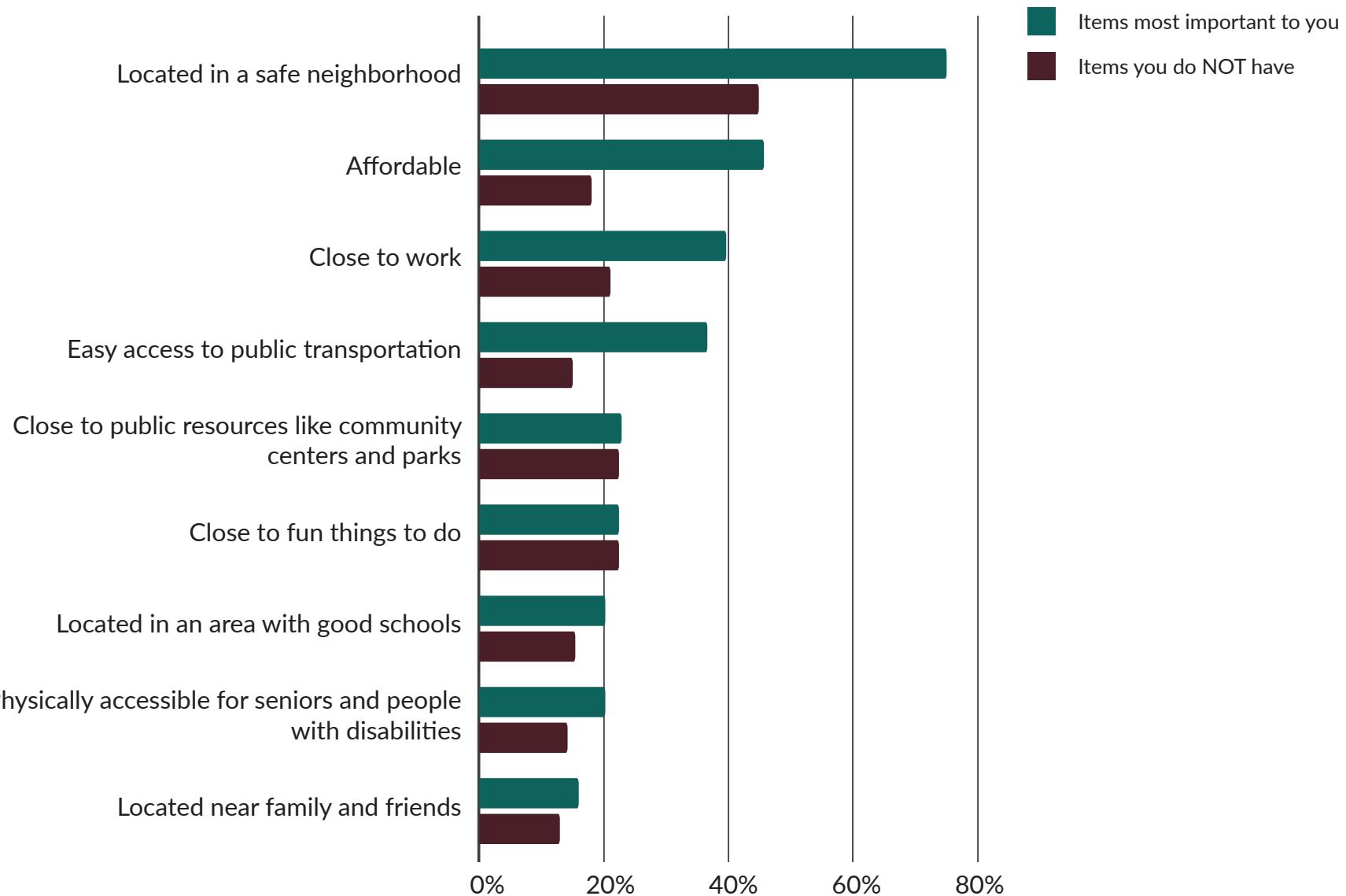
100%

## How concerned are you about the following conditions in your neighborhood?

Not at all concerned   Not very concerned   Somewhat concerned   Very concerned



**What is most important to you in your home? Of the top five items that are important to you in your home, are there any that you do NOT have in your current home, today?**





## Promote community health and well-being, including mental health

“ = What do you hope the news will say about Rockford in 2050?  
Teams Visit Rockford to Learn About “Mental Health for Everyone”

“ = What are your biggest concerns about the future of Rockford?  
Lack of availability for services (mental health, substance abuse, counseling, domestic violence, etc) that are imperative for making the citizens of our community whole.

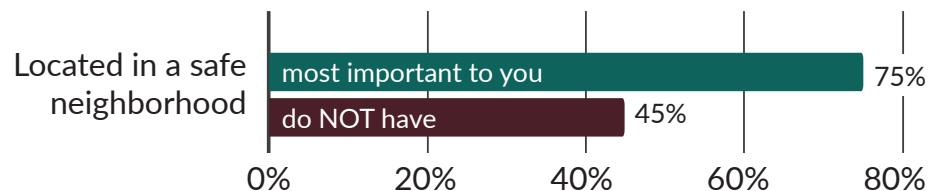
“ = What are your biggest concerns about the future of Rockford?  
Emergency response for the mentally ill



## Increase safety

**75%**  
of survey respondents were somewhat concerned or very concerned about crime in their neighborhood.

What is most important to you in your home? Of the top five items that are important to you in your home, are there any that you do NOT have in your current home, today?



“ = What are your biggest concerns about the future of Rockford?  
Rising crime not acknowledged as a threat to the health of Rockford.



## Build community wealth

“ = Home is...

Home is both the base of the stability of a person's life and a tremendous material advantage... it particularly represents a wealth basis for generations of families

”

“ = What do you hope the news will say about Rockford in 2050?

Poverty rates continue their downward decline as all Rockfordians hold well paying jobs and build wealth.

”



## Tackle vacancy

“ = What are your biggest concerns about the future of Rockford?

Improvements on the west side of Rockford - eliminate abandoned buildings

”

“ = What are your biggest concerns about the future of Rockford?

Vacant buildings on main streets... Blight on West side

”



## Create gathering spaces and green spaces

“ = What are your biggest concerns about the future of Rockford?

Access to public goods/parks and recreation

“ = What are your biggest concerns about the future of Rockford?

No outlet for children or teens

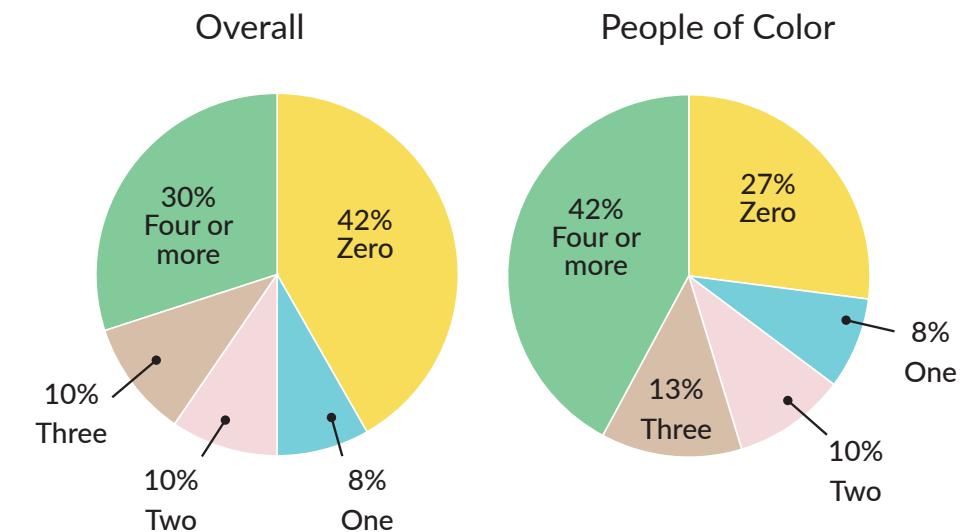
“ = Home is...

A place for family and friends to gather



## Keep families in Rockford and promote children's well-being

How many children under 18 currently live in your household?



“ = What do you hope the news will say about Rockford in 2050?

Rockford IS a city where people want to live, work, play, and raise a family.

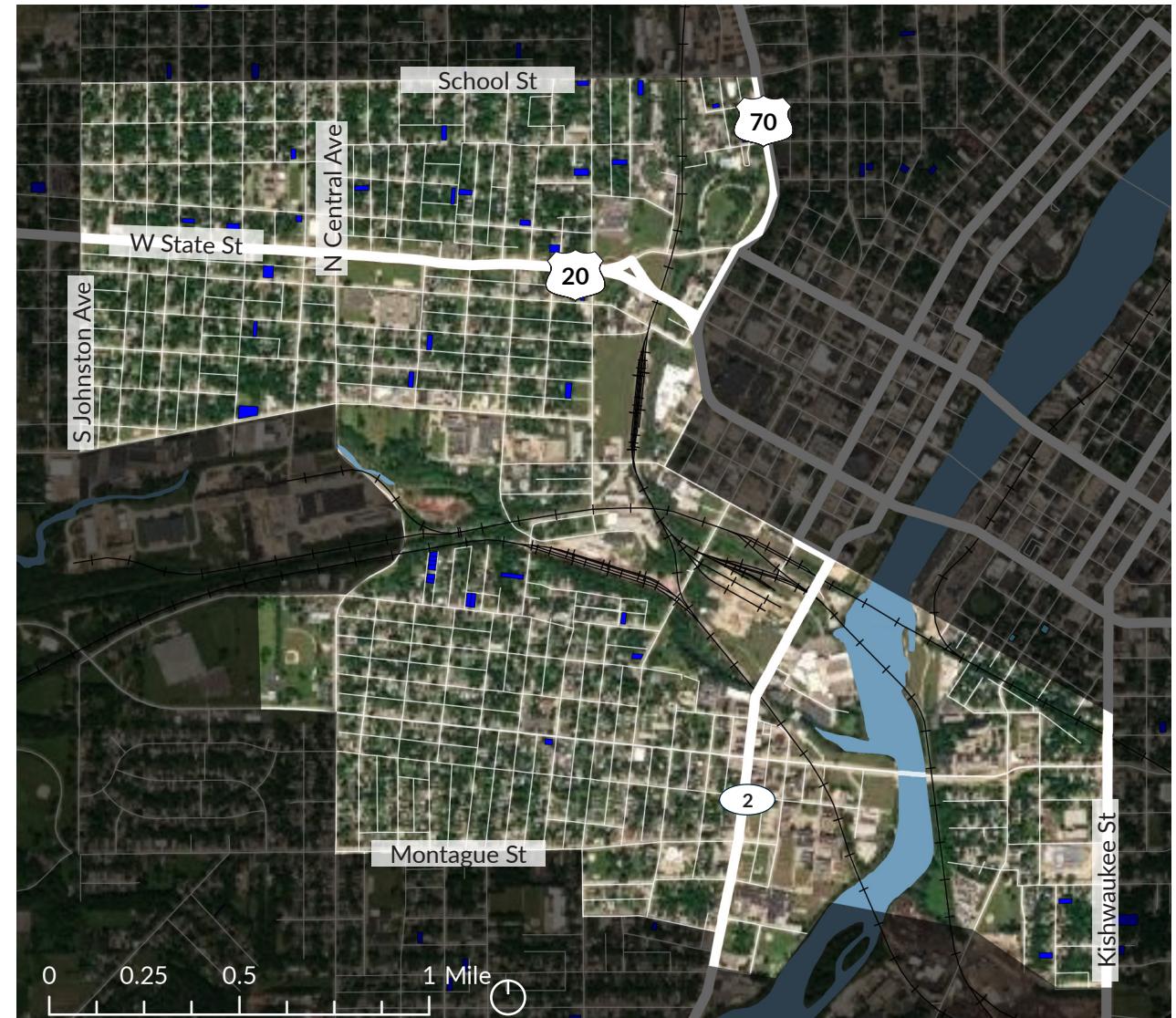
“ = What are your biggest concerns about the future of Rockford?

People leaving Rockford, especially our kids

# ONE ROCKFORD'S NEXT STEPS

# FOCUS AREA FOR REINVESTMENT

One Rockford has selected the following focus area for investment. This area covers Rockford's southwest neighborhoods that have been most affected by disinvestment. While we may invest in other areas of Rockford, this area will be our primary focus. Within the area, we will work with partners to make comprehensive, catalytic investments that help build all the aspects of community health.



## Investing with Partners

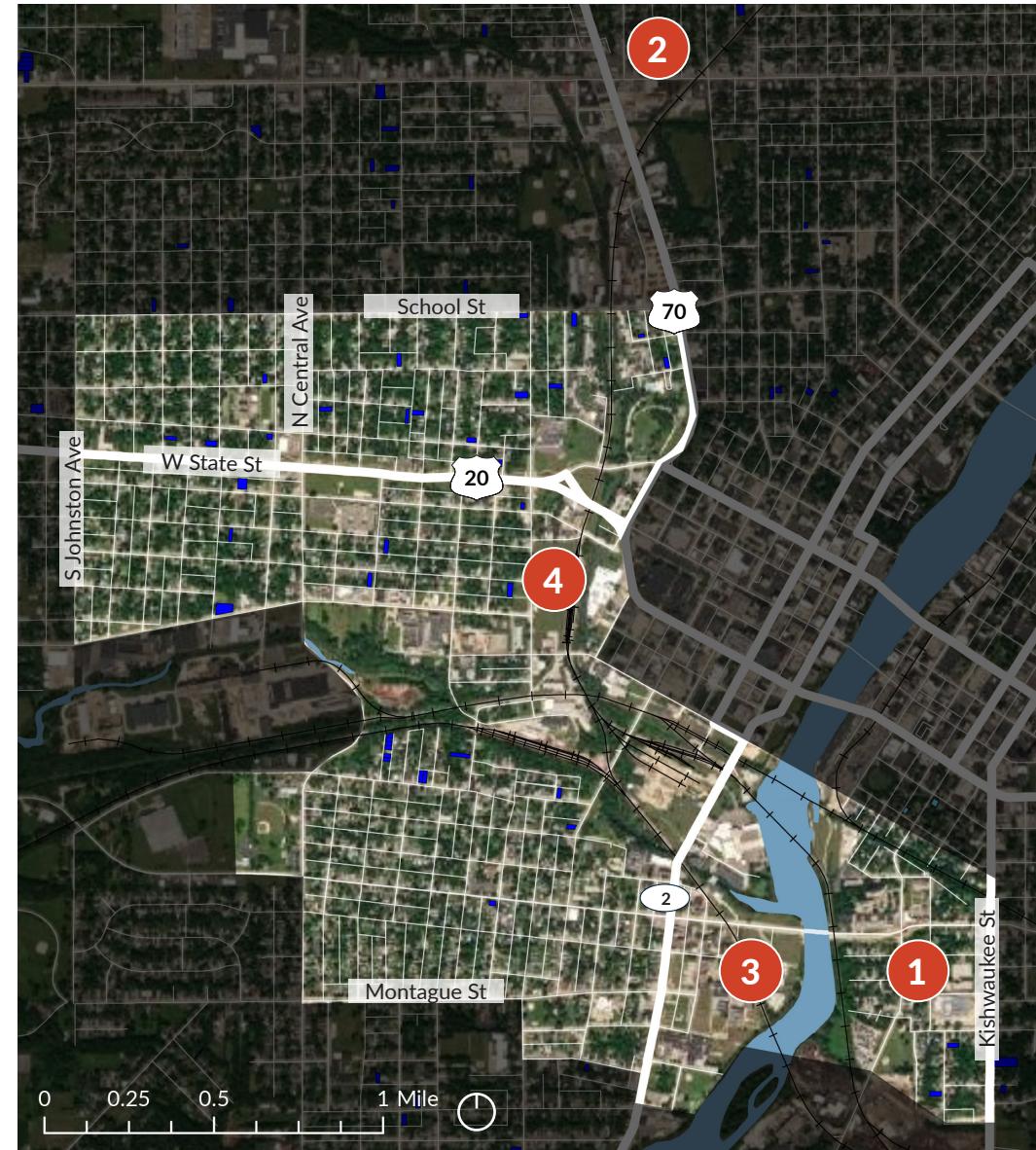
Within the focus area, we have identified four initial opportunities for RHDC to partner on projects that build a healthier community. We can't promise that every one of these projects will be realized exactly the way we present here -- we still need to work with community and partners and complete efforts on each. But together, these projects represent the type of work that RHDC will focus on in the coming three years.

**Opportunity 1:** South Main / ORCHiD Area Infill Development

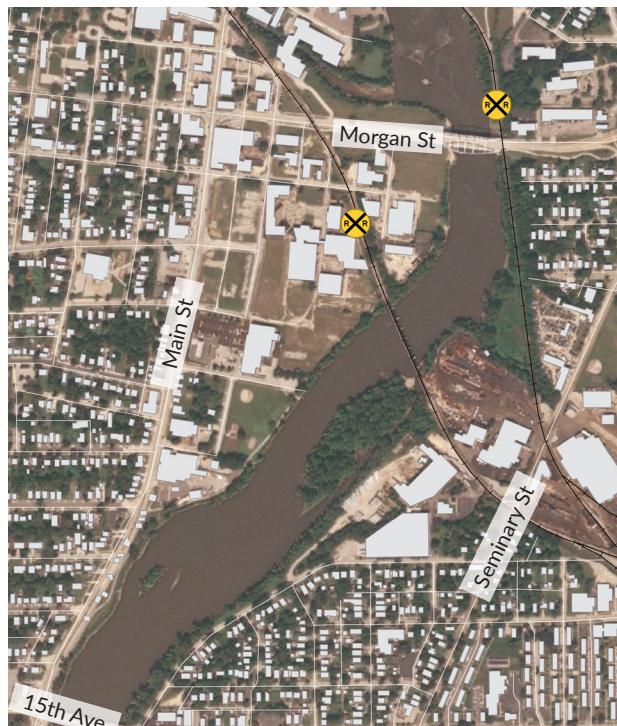
**Opportunity 2:** Youth Equity Center

**Opportunity 3:** Barber-Colman Redevelopment

**Opportunity 4:** West Side Mixed-Use Development with Homes, Child Care, Community Office Space, Cure Violence Program, and Urban Farm



## South Main/ORCHiD Area Infill Development



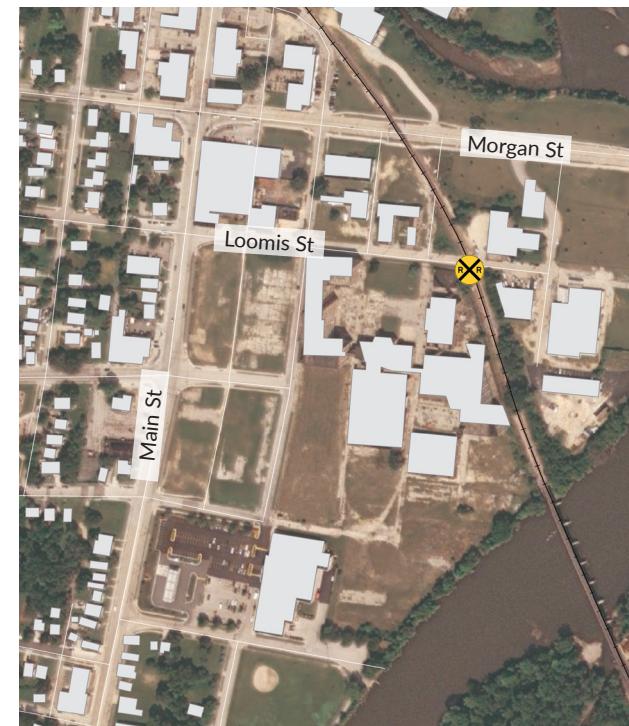
RHDC will work with partners who are focused on infill development of homes and community services in the ORCHiD area and along the South Main Street corridor to identify and fund projects that will build homeownership and community health.

## Youth Equity Center



RHDC hopes to work with the YMCA to assist in developing a Youth Equity Center that will be located just north of the RHDC focus area, near West Middle School. This will provide youth programming, educational support, address family food insecurity, and more.

## Barber-Colman Redevelopment

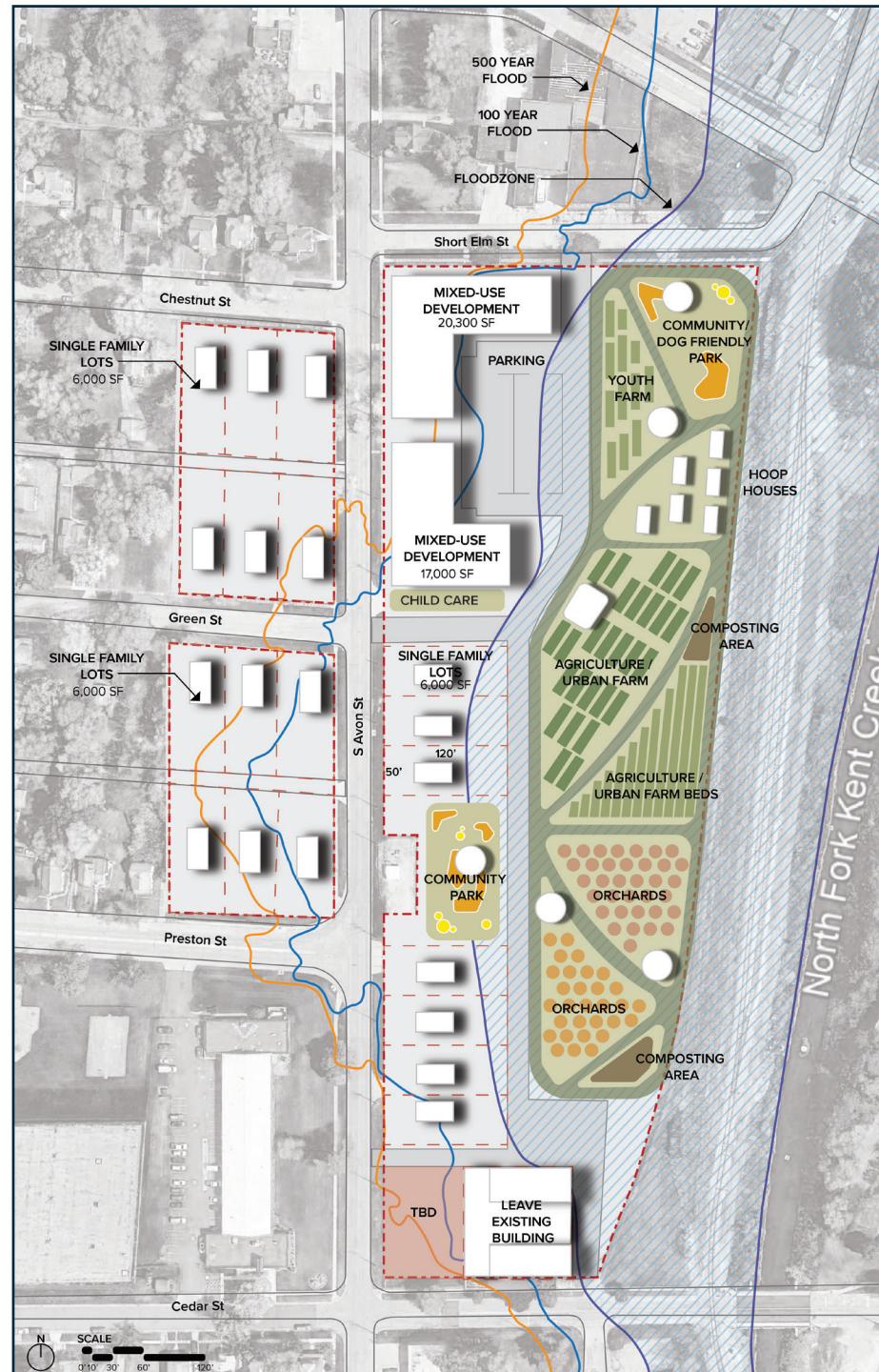


The City of Rockford and its selected development partners are working hard to bring the Barber-Colman Center back to life as an asset for the City and the West Side. RHDC may assist with some of the housing components of the project.

## Opportunity 4: West Side Mixed-Use Development

RHDC is examining sites within the focus area to provide a mixed-use development. "Mixed-use" means that the development can do a variety of things. Some of the items we want to focus on in the project, based on community feedback, include:

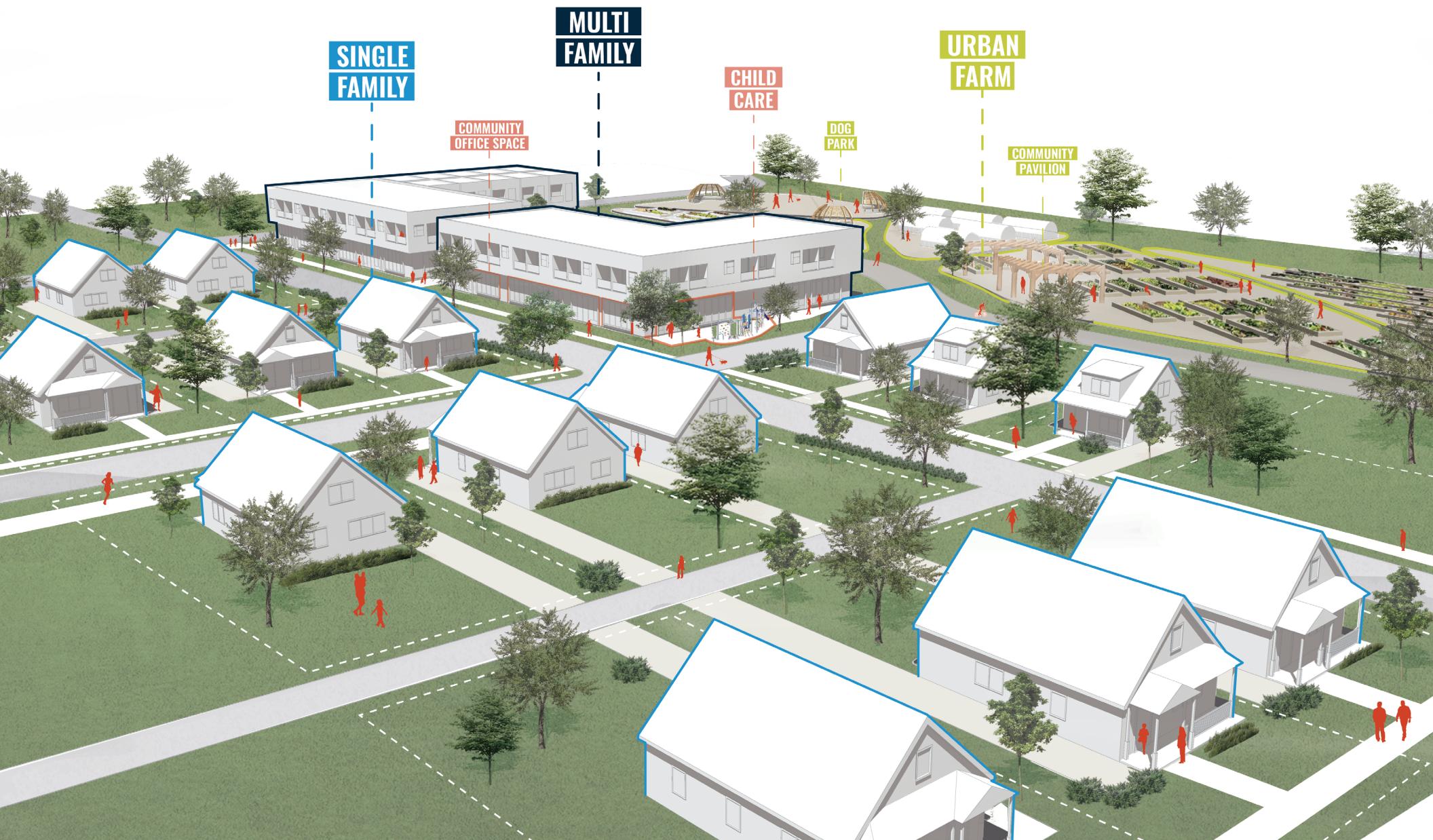
- Quality homes, with a focus on homeownership opportunities and filling in vacant properties
- Community services, including a child care and a set of office spaces and meeting space for community organizations
- A Cure Violence program that helps reduce gun violence in Rockford
- An urban farm that assists with neighborhood food access



## Creating a Catalyst Project

These images focus on a vacant site at 310 S. Avon Street, which is one of the sites RHDC is looking at as we secure a final location for this “catalyst” mixed-use development. This site is attractive because it is located near the State Street corridor, and near Crusader Community Health, one of the most important health care assets inside the One Rockford focus area.

The image is an example of how the project may be designed, but RHDC plans to solicit more community input on the design and programming for the project once we have secured a final site.



## Building Community

One of the key things that we have heard from residents is that projects need to build community. We will be looking to provide quality community spaces. Here, we see an example pavilion that could host farmers' markets or community events; a playground that would be used for the child care but could be for the broader community in off-hours; and a pedestrian area that is part of a "track" loop around the site for residents to exercise.



# Programming Precedents

## Child care center

### Overview:

Access to affordable and quality child care continues to be a barrier for many families across the country. Access to care outside of the 9-5 work day is an additional challenge that few child care centers provide. In Illinois, 59 percent of children in low income families under 6 years old face barriers to care. Specific barriers, such as some parents working some non-traditional hours jump to 61 percent. A quarter, or 29,000 children under 6 have parents that work a majority of non traditional hours in the State.

The disparity of access to childcare between the East and West side of Rockford is stark, with resources such as the YMCA and school district child care centers and preschool located on the Eastside.

This overview provides guidance and inspiration for planning a child care facility. There is the consideration of space for classrooms, administrative offices and other support spaces, as well as ample outdoor spaces for play that also provide shade and green space. Childcare centers for 100 to 160 children range from 8,000 square feet to 15,000 square feet, depending upon the classroom size and number of additional supportive spaces provided.

### Physical Space Requirements

Minimum per person area	35 square feet
Recommended per person area (indoor)	40 - 50 square feet
Recommended per person area (outdoor)	80 square feet

### Sample School Configuration

Classroom	# of Classes	# of Children & Staff	Square Feet	Total Square Feet
Infant	2	16 children & 4 staff	48-50 sf per person	1,000 SF
Waddlers	2	20 children & 4 staff	40 sf min   50 best case	1,200 SF
Toddlers	2	28 children & 4 staff	35 min   50 best case	1,440 SF
Preschool	2	40 children & 4 staff	35 min   45 best case	1,980 SF
	<b>8</b>	<b>104 children &amp; 12 staff</b>		<b>5,620 SF</b>

\*Additional space needed for kitchen, multipurpose play space, administrative offices

Source: YMCA Seattle Classroom standards

## Precedents:

### Design Inspiration



Holy Family Day Home | San Francisco, CA

- 3 story building
- 15,000 sq feet
- Can accommodate 125 people
- 5 classrooms + support spaces
  - Program directors offices
  - Social workers office
  - Play therapy room, multipurpose room, training and volunteer room
- School has community gardens for the classrooms

### Site Programming



Hoffman Early Learning | New Orleans, LA

Hoffman provides quality care, through community partnerships, enrichment activities such as yoga, Spanish language, and soccer. The childcare center also supports increased access through sliding scale and government subsidies for families.

### 24-Hour Care



Tick Tots Around the Clock | Houston, TX

The facility provides 24 hour care for children from 6 weeks old to 12 years old offering families core care from 9 am to 4 pm and extended care outside of those hours. It also offers drop in care, for children that are not already a part of the school community.

# Gathering spaces

## Overview:

Rockford has a rich history of activism and community engagement, but work still needs to be done to support historically disinvested communities. Creating gathering spaces for healing, for play and to grow food and medicine are crucial to support the community coming together to make spaces where they can see themselves reflected, and create economic opportunity.

We envision three spaces on the site:

- Healing garden for remembrance and solace
- Play spaces for children at the child care center and for the public
- Food and medicinal garden spaces to grow culturally relevant foods, support community engagement, and develop locally grown economic opportunity

## Precedents:



Rainier Beach Urban Farm | Seattle, WA

Farm within an urban neighborhood, with educational programming for youth, economic opportunities, and a farmers market

- On site nursery that propagates plants for the City of Seattle Parks department
- East African senior farming project with youth
- Farm camp
- Good food bag subsidies



Planting Justice and Rolling River Nursery | Oakland, CA

Plant and tree nursery and landscape design organization that provides jobs for those reentering the workforce from incarceration.



Kenwood Gardens | Chicago, IL

The Gardens repurposes 13 formerly vacant lots near the train tracks into gathering spaces that will be developed in three phases. Phase 1 entails native plantings, natural walkways and an event space. Later phases will have open work space for artists.

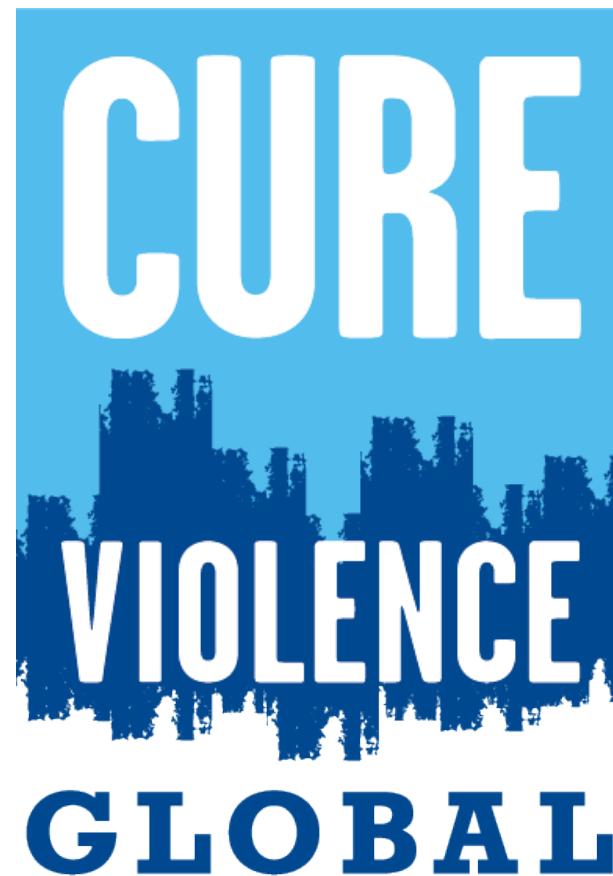
# Violence Intervention Program

## Overview:

Violence intervention (also known as violence interruption, Cure Violence, and CeaseFire) is a model which views gun violence as a public health issue. Similar to preventing the spread of communicable diseases, the spread of violence is done through strategies associated with disease control, through detecting and interrupting conflicts, identifying and treating the highest risk individuals, and changing social norms<sup>1</sup>.

There are three identified models of violence intervention: street outreach, group violence intervention (GVI) programs, and hospital-based violence intervention programs (HVIPs)<sup>2</sup>. In all cases, individuals are identified as being at elevated risk of victims or perpetrators of violent crime, and they are connected to

resources meant to address the social determinants of health and increase their chances of success and survival.



## Street Outreach:

Rather than relying on traditional models of deterrence through law enforcement, culturally-competent outreach workers identify potentially lethal conflicts (e.g., a shooting that may lead to a retaliatory shooting) and work with victims, friends and families of the victim, and other people connected with the conflict<sup>3</sup>. Outreach workers then use mediation techniques to resolve the situation peacefully while also obtaining social services for the people involved, such as job training and drug treatment<sup>4</sup>.

3 Cure Violence Global 2021, Ibid.

4 Cure Violence Global 2021, Ibid.

1 Cure Violence Global, "The Cure Violence Approach," accessed Nov 22, 2021, <https://cvg.org/what-we-do/>

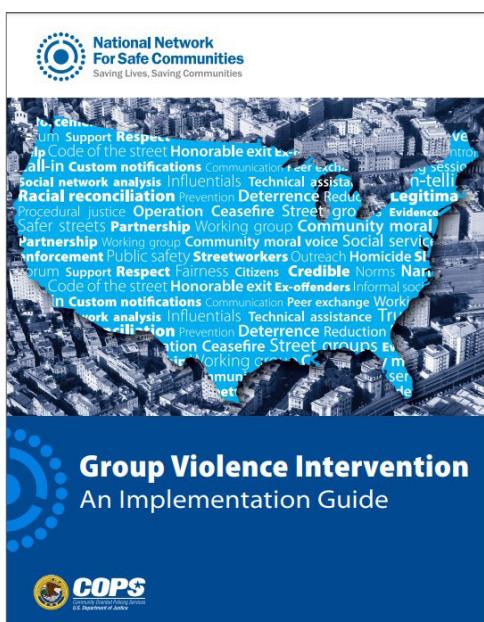
2 Everytown, "Violence Intervention Programs," accessed Nov 23, 2021, <https://everytownresearch.org/solution/violence-intervention-programs/>

## Group Violence Intervention (GVI) Programs

GVI programs host a meeting between potential offenders, law enforcement, social service organizations, and community members, and send a clear message that violence will not be tolerated and will be faced with harsh consequences<sup>5</sup>. Similar to the street outreach programs, individuals are then referred to social services, such as counseling, education programs, and employment opportunities<sup>6</sup>.

5 Everytown 2021, Ibid.

6 Everytown 2021, Ibid.



Group Violence Intervention: An Implementation Guide developed by the National Network for Safe Communities at John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

## Hospital-Based Violence Intervention Programs (HVIPs)

Trusted community members and partners work with hospitals to identify individuals in healthcare settings who are at risk of repeat violent injury<sup>7</sup>. The trained violence prevention professional, who are highly culturally competent and may have shared backgrounds with the targeted individual, then develops a plan for after discharge that "meets their immediate safety needs, provides services, and establishes goals."<sup>8</sup>

## Other Functions of Violence Intervention Programs

Violence intervention programs also serve as a hub for "community residents, local business owners,

7 HAVI, "What is a hospital-based violence intervention program (HVIP)?," <https://www.thehavi.org/what-is-an-hvip>

8 HAVI, Ibid.



Key Components of Hospital-based Violence Intervention Programs

Source: The Health Alliance for Violence Intervention

faith leaders, service providers, and the high risk [residents]" and organizes the community to host meetings and events with a clear yet supportive message against violence and for community peace<sup>9</sup>.

Because of the many functions of the initiative—from conflict resolution, resource hub, to community gathering place—the accessibility and functionality of the space is an important factor.

9 Cure Violence Global 2021, Ibid.

# Funding

In addition to working with partners, another key to making these projects a reality is funding. RHDC has \$6 million from the sale of Concord Commons. The goal is to leverage this funding to \$60 million or more through the use of a variety of sources that will be applied to each project as they are relevant.

Below are some of the types of funding sources RHDC hopes to use in order to build on their initial \$6 million

Homeownership and Neighborhood Infill	Community Assets and Child Care	Non-Profit Partnerships
Habitat for Humanity Partnerships	Health Collaborative Grants	Philanthropic dollars
City of Rockford partnerships	New Markets Tax Credits	Capital campaigns
Lending institutions		

# THANK YOU!

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