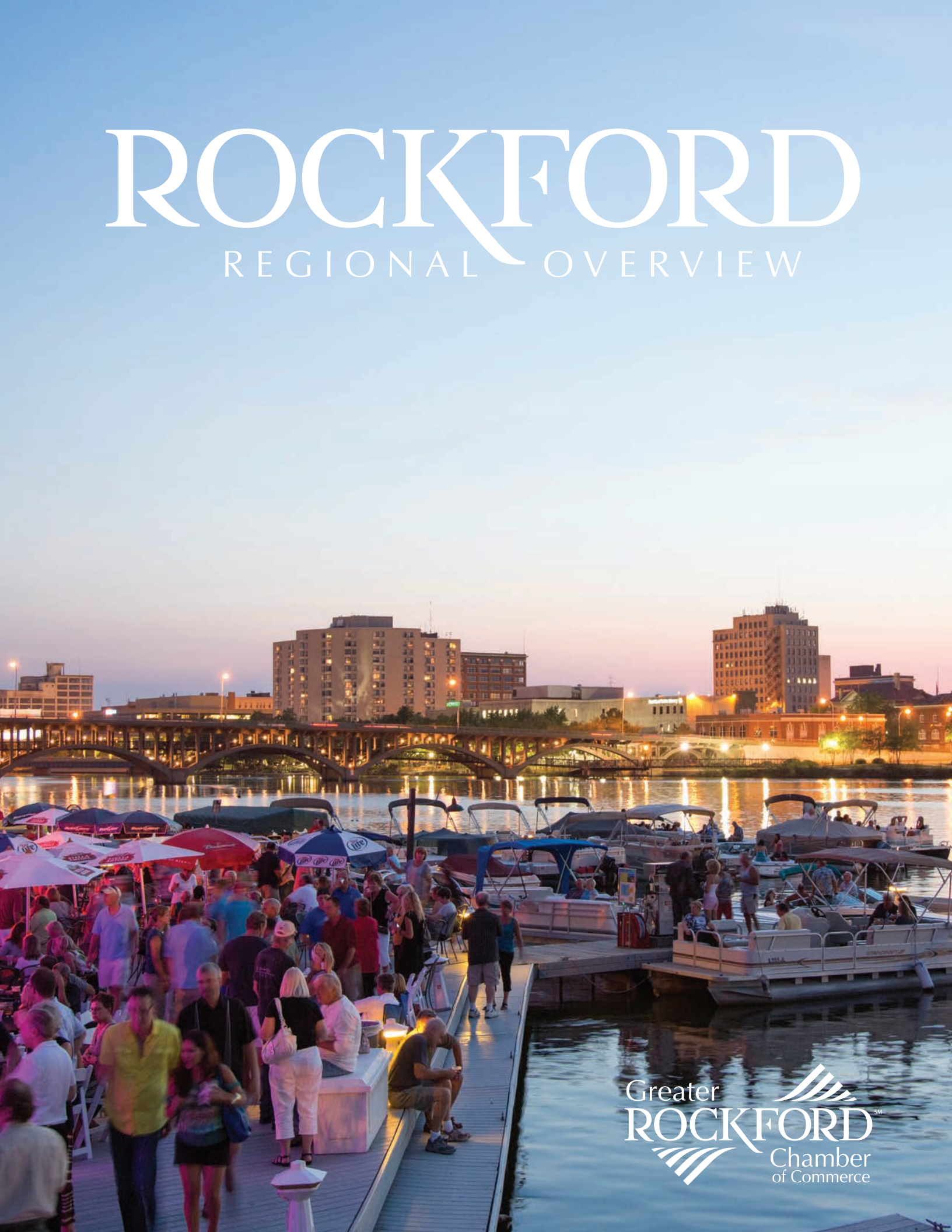
ROCKFORD

REGIONAL OVERVIEW



WELCOME TO ROCKFORD

AT THE TOP IN ILLINOIS

Located on the Illinois/Wisconsin state line, the Rockford Region is rich in opportunity. It's home to industry clusters such as aerospace, advanced manufacturing, healthcare, and automotive. Our robust logistics ecosystem provides easy access to the Midwest and beyond. We continue to strengthen our economic development partnerships, regional educational opportunities, growing talent pipeline, and affordable lifestyle that makes the region ideal for employers and their employees.

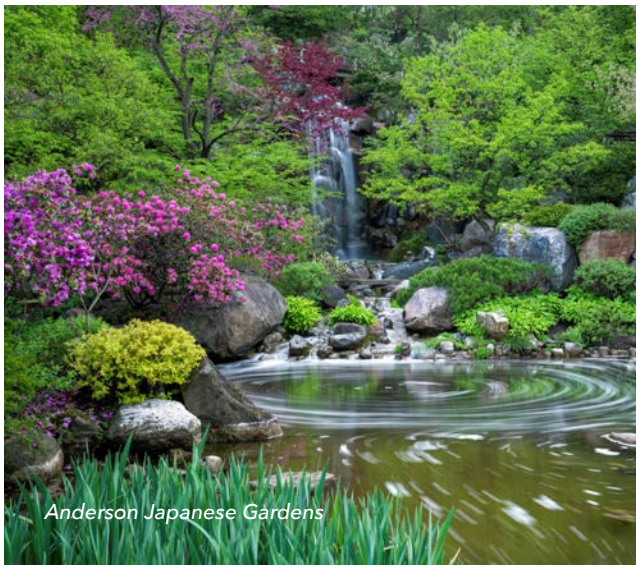
Our local colleges and universities offer essential STEM degrees and programs, as well as certifications and training that get students on the job quickly. Community partnerships help connect students with real-world opportunities, filling the talent pipeline for industries in the region.

In addition to our low cost of living, Rockford residents and businesses enjoy affordable, modern utility service that includes green energy options.

Located near major interstates, class-one railroads, intermodal facilities, and, several major cargo and passenger airports, the region has distribution capabilities to get your products to market quickly and efficiently.

The Rockford Region is a great place to locate or expand your business, and we invite you to learn more in this regional overview about how we can help your business grow.

Rockford's Landmark "The Symbol"



Anderson Japanese Gardens

Coronado Performing Arts Center

Aldeen Golf Club

Tuesday Evenings in the Gardens
Anderson Japanese Gardens

Northern Illinois University
Photo by NIU

TOP INDUSTRIES

THE ROCKFORD REGION HAS A WIDE RANGE OF INDUSTRIES, SUPPLIERS, AND SKILLED WORKERS.

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

The region has a strong history of manufacturing and continues to advance and expand. We're known for our excellence in machining, automation, and metal work.

25,154
MANUFACTURING EMPLOYEES

9%
OF BUSINESSES IN THE REGION ARE MANUFACTURING COMPANIES

21%
OF WORKERS ARE EMPLOYED IN MANUFACTURING

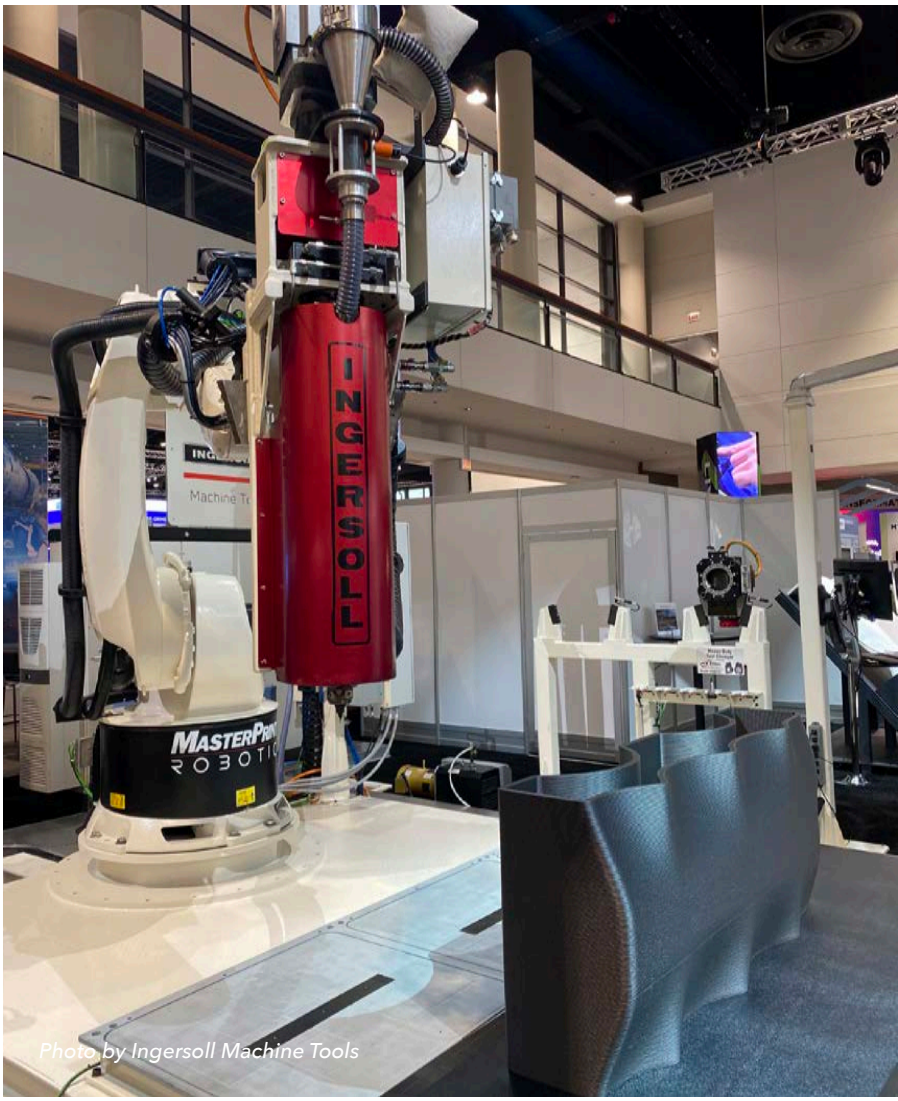


Photo by Ingersoll Machine Tools

LOGISTICS

The region provides organizations with convenient access to national and international distribution options: four major interstates, four major railroads, and three international airports. In fact, the Chicago Rockford International Airport (RFD) is the 13th largest cargo airport in the U.S. for landed weight. It's home to the second largest UPS air hub in North America and a major base of operations for Amazon Air. With proximity to these major distribution resources, companies can transport their products with speed and efficiency.

COMPANIES CAN TAKE ADVANTAGE OF IMPORT AND EXPORT BENEFITS BY PARTICIPATING IN FOREIGN TRADE ZONE #176.

3.14 Billion
POUNDS OF CARGO HANDLED AT RFD IN 2024

126
FLIGHTS DAILY IN/OUT OF RFD

4 INTERSTATE HIGHWAYS PROVIDE ACCESS TO **75** PERCENT OF THE UNITED STATES WITHIN A **24-HOUR** DRIVE.

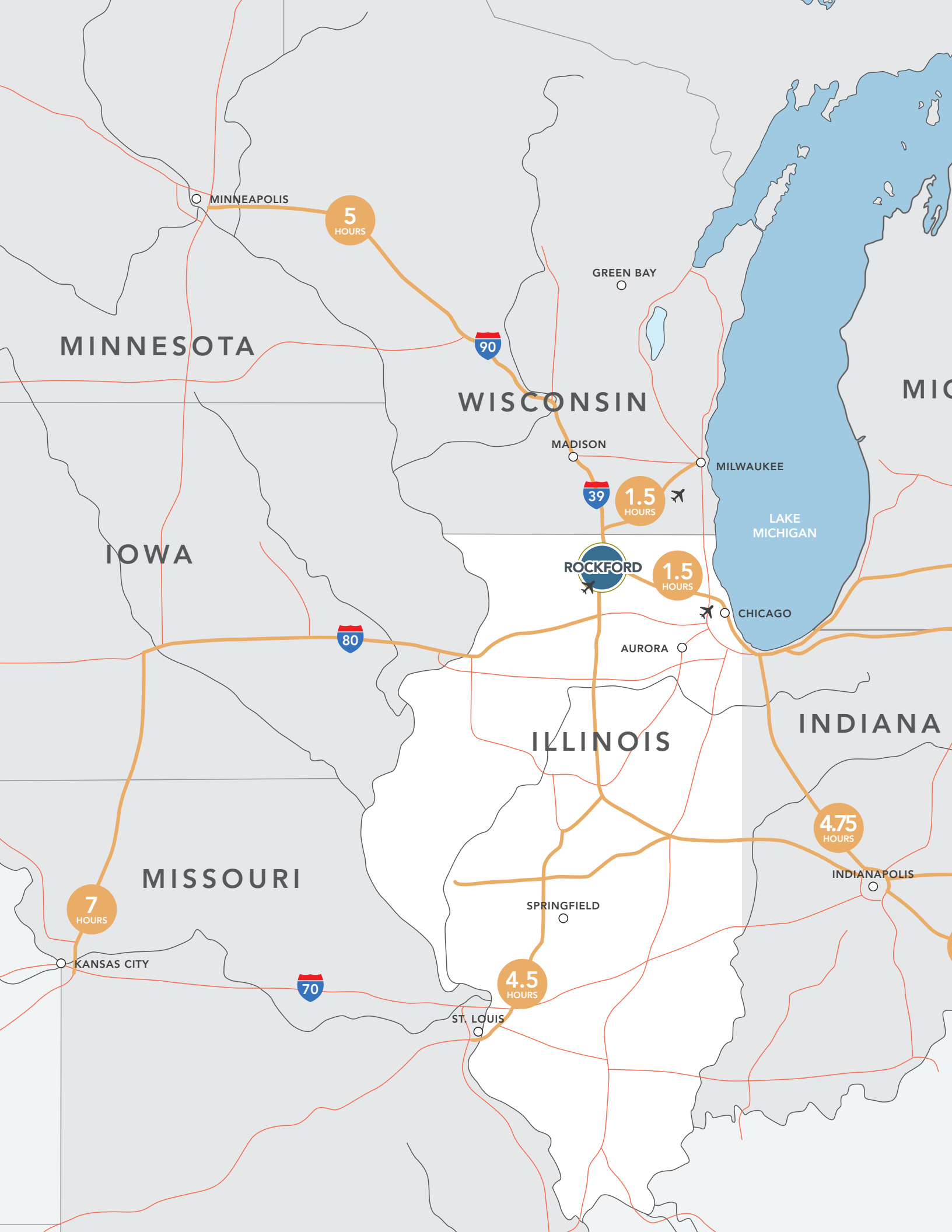
THE REGION IS WITHIN AN **8-HR** DRIVE TO THE **10 LARGEST CITIES** IN THE MIDWEST.

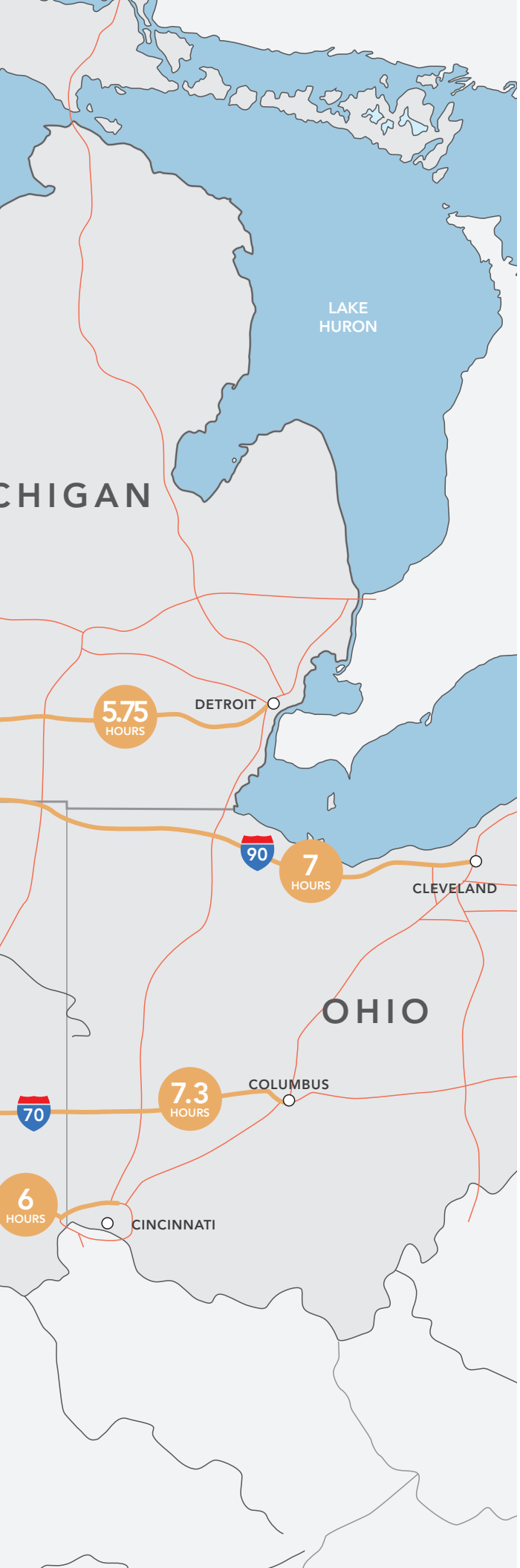
Photo by Collins Aerospace

AEROSPACE

Our aerospace cluster has several tier-one aerospace suppliers, including Collins Aerospace, Woodward Inc., and GE Aviation. We're home to diverse companies at all levels of the supply chain, including assembly, inspection, testing, repair, and software. Companies in the cluster serve industry leaders like Boeing, Airbus, and the U.S. Government.

EVERY COMMERCIAL AIRCRAFT IN THE AIR HAS A COMPONENT OR SYSTEM THAT WAS DESIGNED IN THE ROCKFORD REGION.


MINNEAPOLIS
5
HOURS
GREEN BAY
MINNESOTA
90
WISCONSIN
MADISON
MILWAUKEE
39
1.5
HOURS
LAKE
MICHIGAN
IOWA
ROCKFORD
1.5
HOURS
CHICAGO
80
AURORA
INDIANA
ILLINOIS
4.75
HOURS
INDIANAPOLIS
MISSOURI
7
HOURS
SPRINGFIELD
KANSAS CITY
70
4.5
HOURS
ST. LOUIS



OUR SUPPLY CHAIN

Companies choose the Rockford region because of its strategic location, strong logistics, and skilled labor. Business-driven programs and educational opportunities fill a talent pipeline that keeps the region's robust supply chain functioning.

LOCATION

Rockford is within an eight-hour drive from the 10 largest cities in the Midwest, putting a population of more than 45 million people within easy reach.

LOGISTICS

Rockford has a sophisticated and efficient logistics and distribution network that gets products to market quickly.

LABOR

The Rockford region's two-county metro area has a labor force of more than 166,00 people. And our secondary labor shed extends even farther, with 1.6 million workers within a 60-minute radius.

LEARNING

The region prioritizes education by collaborating with local organizations and institutions to provide relevant certifications and apprenticeships that benefit our residents and our businesses.

LIVE, WORK, LEARN, AND PLAY

Our low cost of living and expanding job market is complemented by access to educational institutions with strategic partnerships to recruit talent and provide training. Rockford is known for its parks and natural areas, community events, dining, and shopping. All provide entertainment and fun for the people and families who call Rockford home.

Photo by NIU

Photo by UIC College of Medicine - Rockford

Burpee Museum of Natural History

Rockford Peaches Mural
Rockford's Midtown District

Photo by NIU

Photo by West Rock Wake Park

Rockford Dance Company

Prairie Street Brewing Co.

Photo by Contry Homes Group, LLC

Photo by West Rock Wake Park

Woodward, Inc. 2023, used with permission

View of Downtown Rockford

LIVE

TOP 15:
BEST PLACES TO MOVE TO IN THE NATION
Source: Reader's Digest

NO. 1 U. S. REAL ESTATE MARKET
BEST PLACES TO LIVE
WSJ/Realtor.com

Rockford City Market

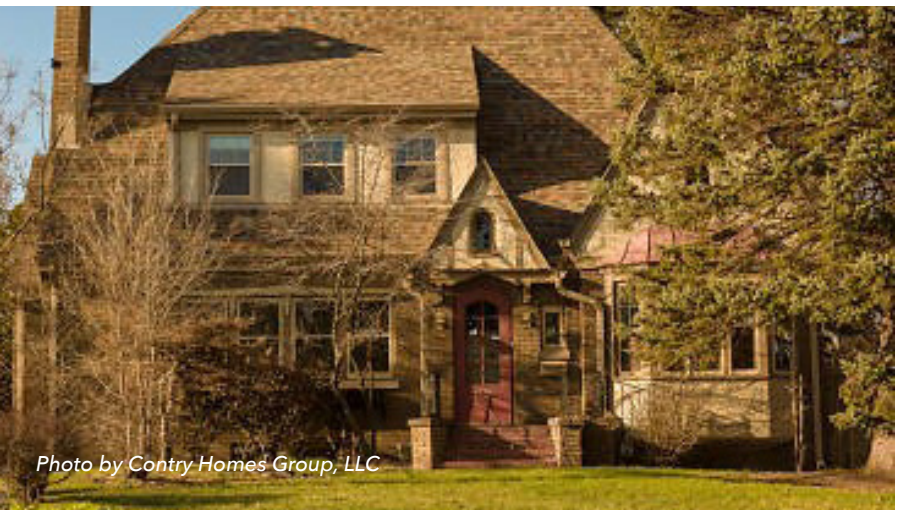


Photo by Contry Homes Group, LLC

ROCKFORD REGION POPULATION DATA

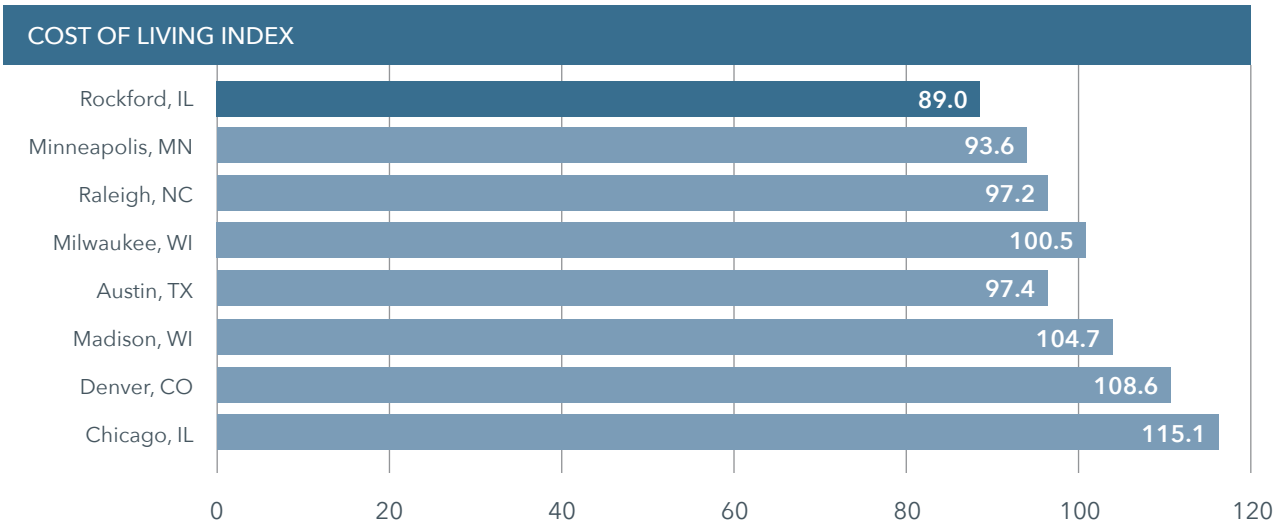
336,605
POPULATION (2023)

134,604
HOUSEHOLDS (2023)

166,535
LABOR FORCE (2023)

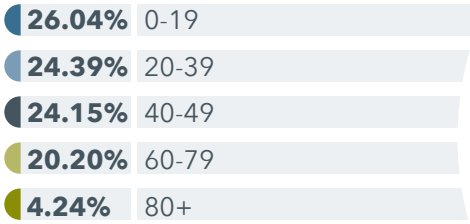
25,622
POST SECONDARY ENROLLMENT (2023-2024 SY)

NO. 4
HEALTHCARE ACCESS & HOME AFFORDABILITY
(FOR THREE STRAIGHT YEARS)
Source: Reader's Digest

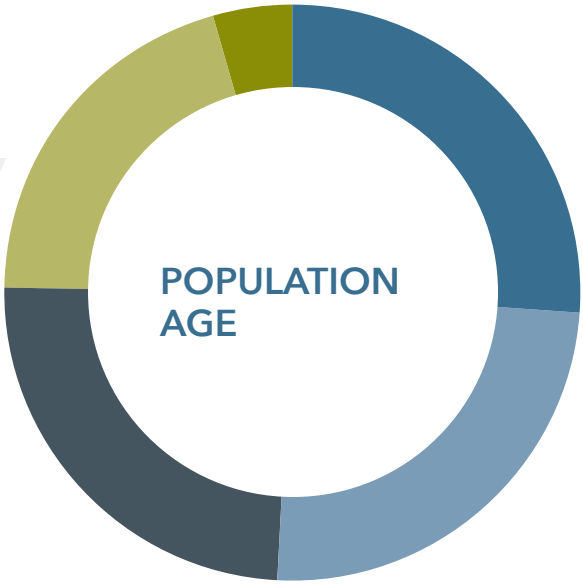


Source: C2ER; Annual Average 2024

MEDIAN AGE 39.7



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Rockford MSA, 2023



COMMUTE TIMES 23.6 MEDIAN MINUTES

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

$64,343	$67,099	$78,538
WINNEBAGO COUNTY	ROCKFORD MSA	NATIONAL

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; 2023

WORK

Companies in the Rockford region enjoy a number of advantages, including talent pipelines that generate skilled workers, an impressive transportation corridor, innovative logistics leaders, and industry clusters in advanced manufacturing, aerospace, food processing, automotive and more.

Original equipment manufacturers and original suppliers succeed here, as demonstrated by the billions of pounds of cargo that are moved through the area and billions of dollars of goods that are manufactured here and exported across the globe. The Rockford region has a rich history of hard work, skilled labor, and productive solutions. Companies who invest or expand here reap the benefits of this storied past in building and growing businesses.

#8
BEST CITIES FOR BLACK AMERICANS' CAREER GROWTH
Travel Noire

#4
BEST PLACES TO WORK IN MANUFACTURING
Industry Week

#1
BEST CITY IN ILLINOIS FOR NEW HOMEOWNERS
Insurif

TOP INDUSTRIES

ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

HEALTHCARE & MEDICAL SCIENCES

TRANSPORTATION, LOGISTICS, & DISTRIBUTION

TOP EMPLOYERS	INDUSTRY	EMPLOYEES
Collins Aerospace	Advanced Manufacturing	2,300
Stellantis	Advanced Manufacturing	1,500
Amazon	Logistics & Distribution	1,300
PCI Pharma Services	Logistics & Distribution	1,200
Woodward	Advanced Manufacturing	1,200
United Parcel Service, Inc.	Logistics & Distribution	1,000
Taylor Company	Advanced Manufacturing	1,000
General Mills, Inc.	Food Processing	650
Bergstrom	Advanced Manufacturing	500
Lowes Distribution Center	Logistics & Distribution	500
Perfetti Van Melle	Advanced Manufacturing	400
Rockford Toolcraft, Inc.	Advanced Manufacturing	400
Estwing Manufacturing Company, Inc.	Advanced Manufacturing	300
Ingersoll Machine Tools, Inc.	Advanced Manufacturing	300
GE Aviation	Advanced Manufacturing	300
TH Foods, Inc.	Food Processing	300

ILLINOIS TAX INFORMATION

4.95% INDIVIDUAL INCOME TAX

9.5% CORPORATE INCOME TAX

6.25% SALES TAX

NO INVENTORY TAX

NO PERSONAL PROPERTY TAX

Photo by AAR Corp.

Woodward, Inc. 2023, used with permission

Photo by RFD

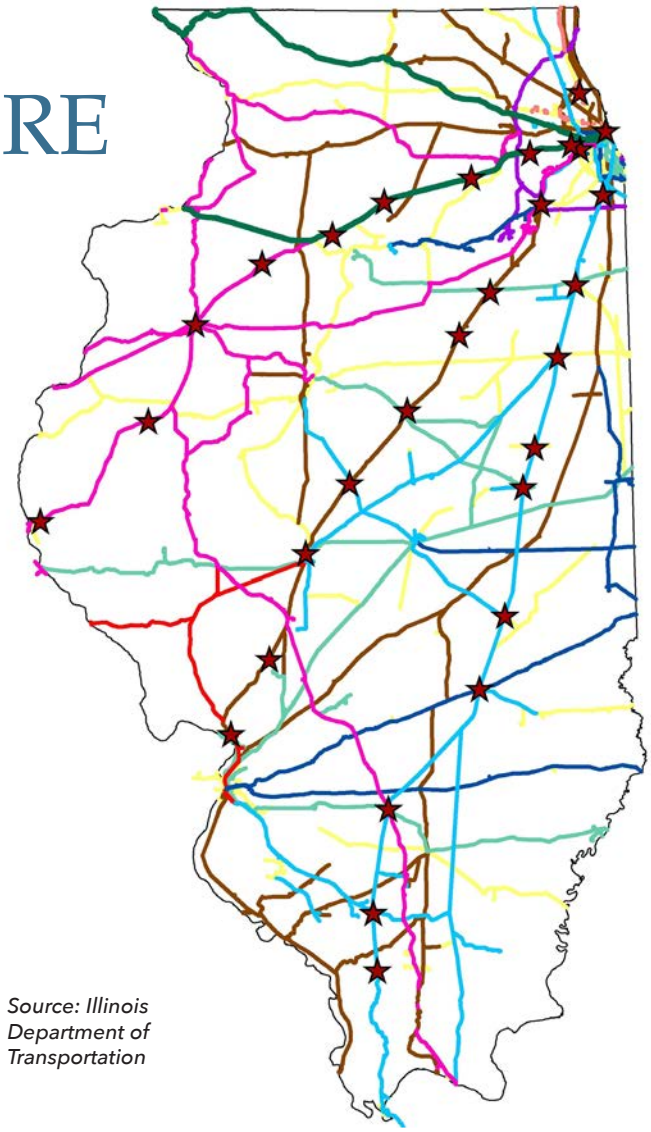
OUR INFRASTRUCTURE

THE ROCKFORD REGION IS WELL SERVED BY RAIL

- Illinois R Passenger Stations
- Illinois RR Future Passenger Routes

Illinois Railroads

- Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF)
- Canadian National (CN)
- CP Rail Systems (CPRS)
- CSX Transportation, Inc (CSXT)
- Elgin, Joliet and Eastern Ry, Co (EJE)
- Kansas City Southern Ry (KCS)
- Norfolk Southern Ry (NS)
- Union Pacific RR (UP)
- Other Railroads



Source: Illinois Department of Transportation

CHICAGO ROCKFORD INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Photo by RFD

- An AAR Corp. maintenance, repair, and overhaul facility.
- 10,000 and 8,200 feet of hard surface runway capable of landing any aircraft operating today.
- Foreign Trade Zone benefits (FTZ #176).
- 24/7 customs, federal inspections.
- CES (Centralized Examination Station).
- Multiple FBOs – full spectrum aviation services.

OUR UTILITIES

Rockford is desirable for its competitive utility costs and ample capacity. Along with abundant fresh water, Illinois is also ranked third in the country for grid modernization, 10 spots ahead of our closest Midwest neighbor in terms of electricity. Illinois' industrial and commercial prices are among the lowest in the Midwest and compare favorably with other key states.

WATER & SEWER

The Region is considered attractive for its water capacity, quality, and service.

Producing biogas during the wastewater treatment process, Four Rivers Sanitation Authority is self sufficient, utilizing up to 71% of the energy produced to run the treatment plant.

ELECTRICITY

Competition among multiple utility companies results in lower power prices, industry-leading performance, reliability, and access to renewable energy options throughout the region.

32%

THE AVERAGE INDUSTRIAL RATES ARE 32% LOWER THAN RATES IN THE TOP 20 LARGEST U.S. METROPOLITAN AREAS.

CLEAN ENERGY

Companies can get 100% clean energy in the Rockford Region using solar panels and wind turbines to generate electricity. The Exelon - Byron Generating Station produces up to 2,347 megawatts (MW) of zero-emissions energy, powering more than two million homes.

Winnebago County has access to eight interstate natural gas pipelines and additional storage fields to incorporate natural gas into a clean and affordable energy economy.

SMART CITY

The City of Rockford is working with SiFi Networks to construct a state-of-the-art, citywide, fiber optic network, bringing faster connectivity to every home and business in Rockford.

"This private, $200 million investment in our city is a true game changer, bringing stronger, faster, fiber optic network to our community. This agreement also has the potential to help us fulfill our goal to attract more high-tech business to our community."

- Rockford Mayor Tom McNamara

INTERNET & BROADBAND

The Rockford Region's existing IT infrastructure can provide up to 10 gigabit-per second broadband service, for both business and residential use; it is directly connected to the Greater Chicago Regional Area Network. The region is served by looped fiber optic lines for redundancy. Additionally, customers can be served by more than one broadband provider, for further redundancy.

LEARN

The Rockford region is home to world-class two- and four-year educational institutions that are affordable and accessible. They also work closely with local companies to support and train a thriving workforce. Their proactive initiatives lead to degrees in STEM and provide the certifications and training students need to find employment quickly. Rockford-area education partners continue to develop innovative programs and partnerships to support local businesses.

COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES (FALL 2023)	ENROLLMENT
Northern Illinois University	15,504
Rock Valley College	5,480
Kishwaukee College	2,807
Highland Community College	1,369
Beloit College	948
Rasmussen College	1,332
Rockford University	1,249
Judson University	1,058
Rockford Career College	733
University of Illinois – College of Medicine	886
St. Anthony College of Nursing	228

STEM DEGREE ATTAINMENT	COMPLETIONS
Science	225
Technology	298
Engineering	295
Mathematics	66

NIU @ ROCK VALLEY COLLEGE

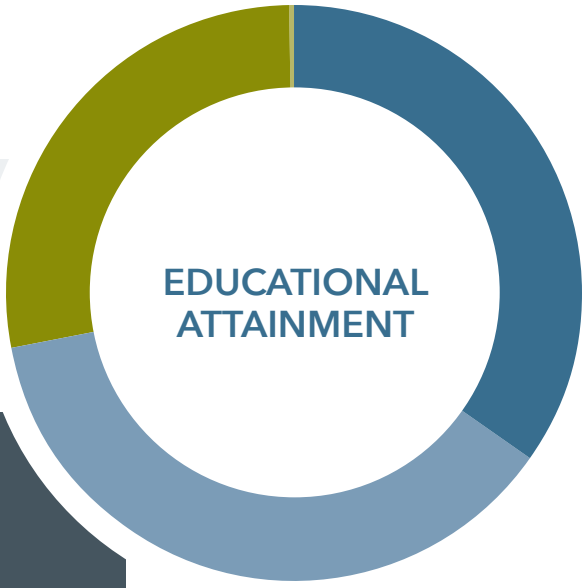
NIU Engineering @ RVC brings NIU's top-ranked engineering program to Rockford, allowing local students to earn an ABET-accredited bachelor's degree in engineering and technology without leaving the RVC campus.

TOP 50
IN THE NATION
U.S. News & World Report

ROCKFORD PROMISE

Rockford Promise is a nonprofit organization that believes education is an economic driver. Through donations and civic partnerships, it offers full-tuition scholarships to Rock Valley College, Saint Anthony College of Nursing, Rockford University, and Northern Illinois University to qualifying graduates of Rockford Public Schools District 205. Qualifying students of Boylan Catholic High School can earn scholarships to Rockford University.

- **30.7%** High School Diploma Equivalency
- **33.1%** Associates/Some College
- **24.4%** Bachelor's or Higher
- **0.2%** Apprenticeship



APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAMS

Participants in Illinois-based, labor-management apprenticeship programs are, on average, required to take over 7,000 hours of classroom and on-the-job training before completing their program. This is roughly 30% more than what is required at a typical four-year university in Illinois.

APPRENTICES BY AGE

- **43%** Ages 24 and Under
- **57%** Ages 25-54

Rockford University
Photo by High Impact Creations

Photo by Rock Valley College

PLAY

In Rockford, life is affordable and convenient. Our low cost of living makes creating an enjoyable and comfortable life here simple. While it has an expansive footprint, the area is easy to navigate with minimal windshield time.

Rockford's growing urban environment includes locally-owned craft breweries, unique restaurants, coffee shops galore, and boutique shopping.

Theaters, museums, dance studios, and music venues offer varied and affordable opportunities for cultural enrichment.

Outdoor play and recreation include water sports on the Rock River, world-class golf courses, sports venues, and a robust network of local and state parks.

THE ROCKFORD REGION INVITES YOU TO COME LIVE, WORK, LEARN, PLAY, AND ENJOY.

#7
BEST CITIES TO LIVE IN OUTSIDE OF CHICAGO

– Livability

Rockford IceHogs, Professional Hockey League

Rockford's Peace Plaza

WNIT at UW Sports Factory
Photo by Rockford Park District

Stroll on State

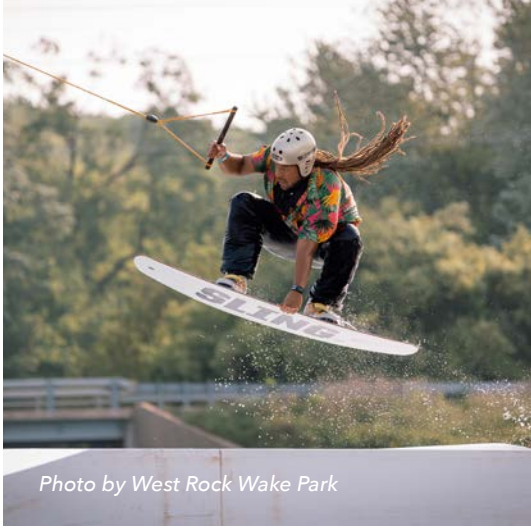


Photo by West Rock Wake Park

Cheap Trick

ARTS, CULTURE & RECREATION

Hard Rock Casino Rockford

OUTDOOR SPACE

FOREST PRESERVE/ CONSERVATION ACRES

17,209+ ACRES

PARKLAND ACRES

8,629+ ACRES

HIKING TRAILS

190+ MILES

Aldeen Golf Club

815-987-8100

308 W. State Street
Suite 190
Rockford, IL 61101

www.rockfordchamber.com

2025

Greater ROCKFORD℠ Chamber of Commerce

Photos used, with permission, courtesy of GoRockford

Prairie Street Brewing Co.