



# Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats: Existing Conditions that Inform RHDC Investment Priorities in Rockford

Asakura Robinson Company and Spark! Strategic Solutions  
December 2021



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## Summary: Opportunities to Invest in Rockford

This memo summarizes existing conditions in Rockford, IL, with a focus on housing and neighborhood conditions as they relate to the social determinants of health. This analysis can help to inform the Rockford Housing Development Corporation (RHDC) as the Board makes decisions about investment priorities. This memo will also inform final recommendations that will be included in the project's Case for Action and implementation plan.

The memo is organized as an examination of Rockford's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) related to housing and the social determinants of health. We begin our memo with a summary of opportunities, because the core goal of this analysis is to use Rockford's inherent assets, as well as the many challenges it faces, to shape opportunities for RHDC to move forward, create partnerships, and make investments that lift residents of Rockford out of poverty. The strengths, weaknesses, and threats sections that follow focus on current conditions and future trends that affect Rockford's families and households in a positive or negative manner.

### **Opportunity 1: Invest in housing as part of a cross-sector partnership that can lift households out of poverty and rebuild their path to success.**

The shock of the COVID-19 pandemic has enhanced pre-existing disparities among Rockford's families and workers, and cut off the path to success for many low-wage workers. Workers earning less than \$27,000 per year have seen their employment rates plummet by nearly 38% since the start of the pandemic in January 2020, while moderate-wage and higher-wage workers earning over \$27,000 per year have actually seen employment gains in the same time period. As Spark! noted in their Social Determinants of Health memo to Asakura Robinson (which has been incorporated into this SWOT memo), addressing this challenge of persistent poverty requires "holistic investments that support direct housing needs as well as increasing wages, job training, career building, and other income-focused supports." To reach this goal, housing investments need to partner with social and community service provision and offer resources near housing, using a "one stop" approach.

In addition to cross-sector investment that serves lower-income families, rebuilding the path to success requires building the "ladder" of housing for residents at every income level. As part of this study, Asakura Robinson built a 10-year Demand Model which suggests that this "ladder" needs more options for renters at 0-30% and 30-50% of Median Family Income, as well as more options for workforce homeownership at 80-100% MFI. Currently, for those who have secured a unit with the Rockford or Winnebago Housing Authority, there are too few quality options to take the next step as their income rises.

*For more information on this opportunity, see this section of the SWOT memo:*

[Economics: Poverty Remains, and Gains May Be Erased by COVID](#)  
[Housing: Affordable Rental and Workforce Homeownership Constraints](#)



## **Opportunity 2: Address deep-rooted disparities with holistic investment on the West Side.**

The West-East divide of Rockford along the Rock River is real and well-known -- historically Black communities on the West Side have experienced structural racism for decades that has led to disinvestment and disparities in everything from income, to access to healthcare and health outcomes, to educational outcomes, to home values and housing conditions. Investing based on market logic of neighborhoods where a small “tipping point” will lead to market success, or investing based on the logic of economic and fair housing, would suggest that this disinvestment trend should continue. However, investment based on an understanding of historic injustice -- and the community ties and strength that nevertheless persist -- would suggest applying the “cross-sector partnership” defined above to redressing some of the inequities that West Side neighborhoods have experienced. RHDC cannot rebuild the West Side alone, but focused investment can leverage complementary resources and help provide a catalyst that residents can lean on.

*For more information on this opportunity, see this section of the SWOT memo:*

[Segregation: An East-West Divide Rooted in History](#)

## **Opportunity 3: Support housing solutions that create economic resilience.**

Rockford has experienced repeated eras of disinvestment associated with recessions -- and its manufacturing based-economy is uniquely vulnerable to global economic shocks. While health care and other service-based jobs help to balance some of this challenge, COVID-19 has also devastated lower-wage service workers. Fundamentally, Rockford needs a safety net system to continue to survive the challenges that come with a globalized, networked economy. Quality, affordable housing, particularly when realized as neighborhood infill that helps redress the challenges caused by disinvestment, has two advantages. It helps to create that safety net for current workers, and it also rebuilds neighborhoods in a way that builds Rockford’s attraction to new investment. Changes needed in order to realize this vision will include investment in new housing options; however, policy changes such as land use and zoning code alterations may also be helpful in instances where “missing middle” reinvestment could be more economically attractive than traditional single family development. These types of changes often come with changes to the ways that residents see their neighborhoods, and can be highly contested, so they are not something to take lightly -- but if they will help Rockford’s neighborhoods recover, they are worth considering.

*For more information on this opportunity, see this section of the SWOT memo:*

[Economics: Poverty Remains, and Gains May Be Erased by COVID](#)

[Redevelopment: Current Building Activity](#)

## **Opportunity 4: Invest in neighborhood infill and preservation in the urban core, rather than at the edges of the City.**

Rockford’s population decline over the last 10 years tracks with that of Winnebago County and with the state as a whole. However, ongoing development at the edges and increased annexation will only grow the challenges that Rockford households currently face, such as high property taxes, lack of access to public transit, and an “appraisal gap” for households in the



central city that discourages investment due to lack of return. Neighborhood infill and preservation has a variety of aspects, including:

- New development on larger sites in core neighborhoods
- New development on individual vacant lots in core neighborhoods (“scattered site”)
- Preservation and rehabilitation of aging housing stock
- Home repair and homeowner assistance in neighborhoods

As part of this study, Asakura Robinson has created a Housing Quality Index to track which neighborhoods are most likely to have deteriorating housing conditions, as well as examining where homes were built prior to 1979 and may have lead paint hazards that can affect all residents of the homes, but especially children.

In order to coordinate with partners on this major challenge, it will be useful to have tools like the Housing Quality Index and the City of Rockford’s Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy, which is already being used as a template for investment by partner organizations including the City. The Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy takes a specific, market-based approach to investment that can be useful in an area like Rockford that has extensive challenges and limited resources to invest in housing. In particular, it suggests a focus on stabilizing “emerging neighborhoods” which have lower home values and more vacancy; encouraging focused investment in “middle neighborhoods” to help produce neighborhood “tipping points” that will further market-based reinvestment; and ensuring that older properties in “strong neighborhoods” stay up to code. Some of the focused investment in “middle neighborhoods” is already being pursued by entities such as the Rockford Local Development Corporation (RLDC) and other private development entities.

*For more information on this opportunity, see this section of the SWOT memo:*  
[Housing: Neighborhood Housing Quality and Deferred Maintenance](#)

**Opportunity 5: Invest in families’ health and success.**

Families and children represent the future of Rockford. Currently, Rockford’s children are struggling and educational outcomes are declining; the impacts of the “lost school year” during COVID on current students are yet to be quantified. Investments that lift up families and children by ensuring that children have safe, stable, and healthy home environments are critical. National research has shown that children from lower-income communities who are able to move to a higher-income, higher-opportunity area have better outcomes, including higher incomes and greater educational attainment later in life. While Opportunity 2 ensures that RHDC does not need to carry on a legacy of disinvestment in communities that have been marginalized, this opportunity recognizes that not all families need the same thing -- and pursuing affordable housing development in areas of Rockford that have higher wages and are close to jobs is also a chance to help fulfill the Rockford Promise and ensure that all children from Rockford can succeed.

*For more information on this opportunity, see this section of the SWOT memo:*  
[Social Determinants of Health: Inequity in Access to Resources](#)  
[Educational Outcomes: Declines and Disparities](#)



## Strengths

An asset-based community development approach ensures that development programs and projects build on communities' strengths rather than seeking to simply fill deficits. Rockford brings strength in the form of its people and organizations; a growing base of employment in strategic sectors; an urban fabric that includes a revitalizing downtown and well-connected historic neighborhoods; and growing building activity and home prices that, while not yet commensurate with costs in the urban core, are also not growing entirely beyond residents' means as in many larger metro areas. These strengths ultimately mean that RHDC's capital can go further in making change in Rockford than in many places throughout the country, and that the capital can be directed by clear input from residents.

### People: Strong Communities and Organizations

Within Rockford's city limits, there are 81 neighborhood groups and associations, covering one-third of the city. Neighborhood associations are crucial for civic engagement in cities. The collective voice they create elevates their impact and serves as a more direct communication line with city officials. They also enhance a sense of community within a neighborhood. Government officials rely heavily on neighborhood associations to circulate information to community members. Rockford Metropolitan Agency for Planning's Regional Plan for Sustainable Development has goals to collaborate with these groups to increase voting rates, prioritize revitalization strategies, and coordinate neighborhood-wide events.

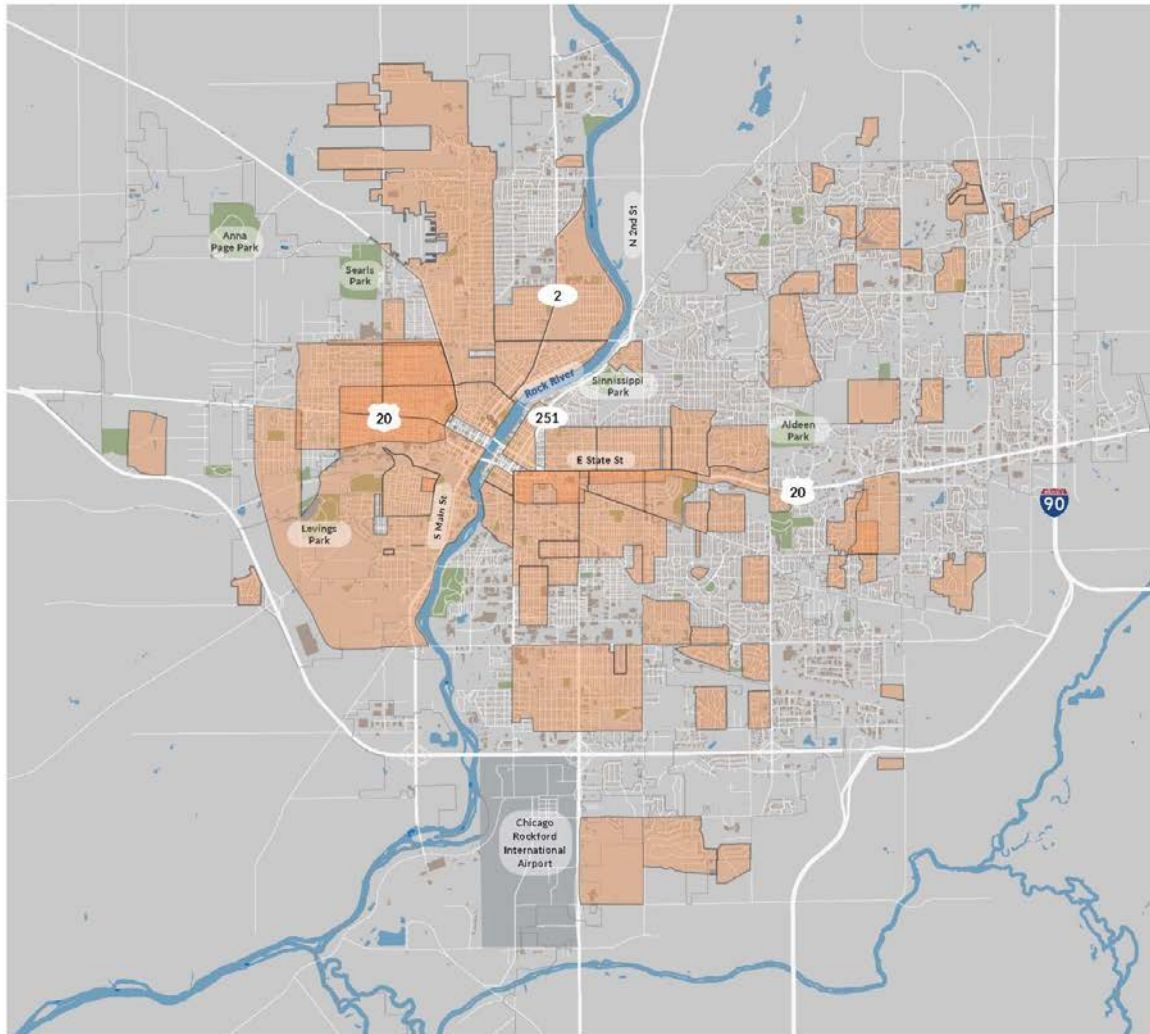
The City of Rockford's most recent comprehensive plan's goals aim to communicate with residents through neighborhood leaders. One of the priorities outlined in the comprehensive plan is to establish official neighborhood boundaries and to view the city as a network of neighborhoods. Additionally, neighborhood organizations are "probably the best source of input from residents to design and implement a plan that responds to their needs." Because of this, neighborhood groups and associations are more important than ever to give all communities within Rockford a voice.

One challenge, however, is that not all of Rockford has these neighborhood groups and associations (see Figure 1). Many of the areas that do not have associations at all tend to be in newer and relatively suburban areas on the East Side; the presence of an association also does not necessarily reflect its level of activity. Areas that do not have community organizations often have more challenges when seeking to have their views represented in policy and investment decisions. Asakura Robinson has interviewed a variety of organizations, including Connect Rockford at the City of Rockford, the United Way / Strong Communities, Transform Rockford, and Forward Fordam, which are seeking to ensure representation from traditionally underrepresented communities. Community engagement for the One Rockford effort will seek to engage these groups and other neighborhood leaders from underrepresented areas as the process moves forward.



Houses of worship can be another key place to connect with residents and ensure that future plans and investments build on the social capital already present within communities. Figure 2 shows that houses of worship are distributed throughout the neighborhoods of Rockford, with particular density on the West Side.

**Figure 1: Rockford Neighborhood Associations**

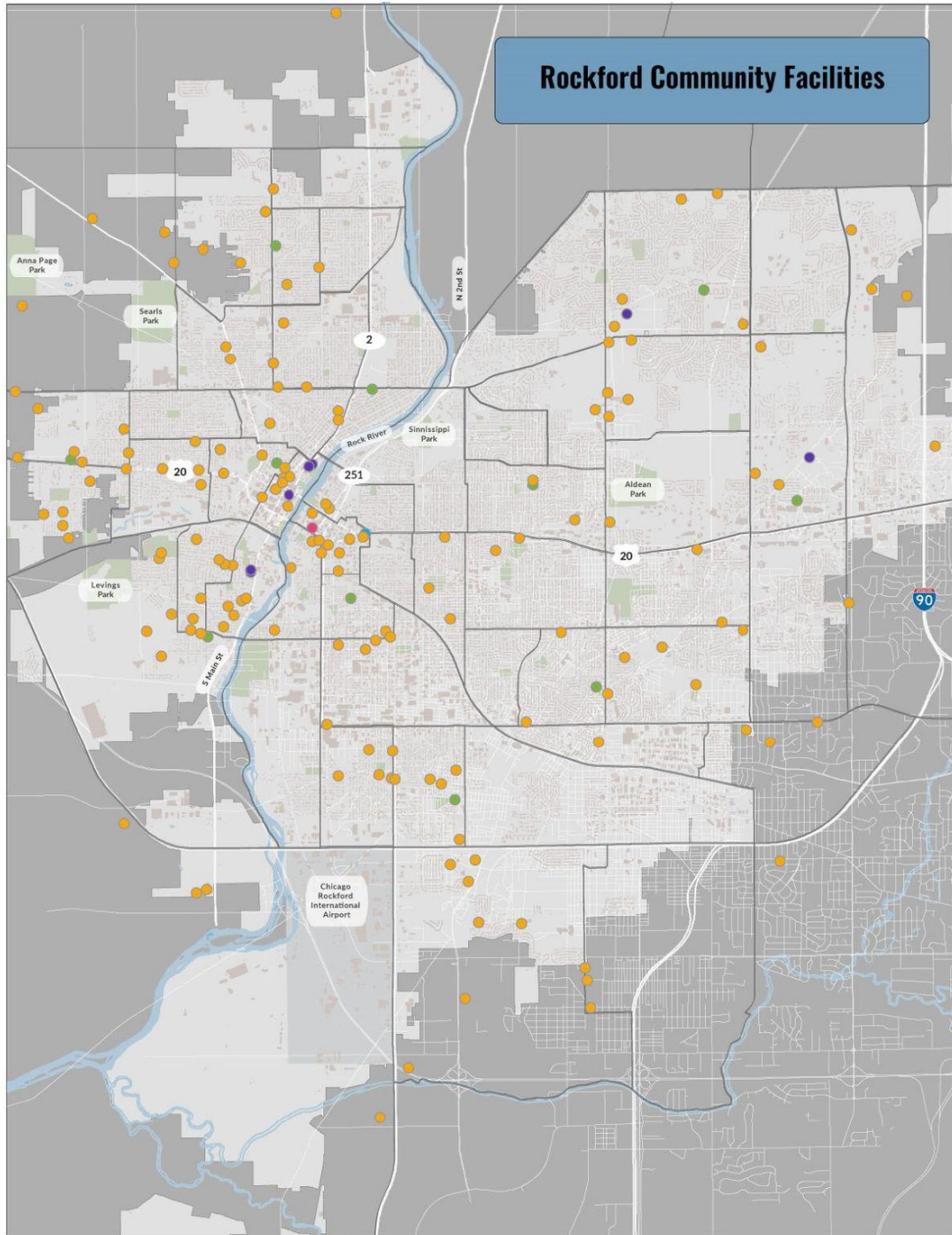


Source: City of Rockford GIS services



- Water bodies
- Parks
- Buildings
- Airport
- Neighborhood Associations

**Figure 2: Rockford Community Facilities, including Houses of Worship**



Source: City of Rockford, Rockford Historical Society, Church Listings

- Worship
- Police
- Fire
- City
- Museum





## Economics: Regional Location and Growth in Specific Industries

Rockford’s regional location draws significant advantages for its residents, businesses, and culture. Its proximity to larger cities such as Chicago, Madison, and Milwaukee strengthens Rockford’s economic opportunities, meanwhile providing its residents comparative quality of life benefits such as affordable housing, real estate, and a low cost of living, with access to parks, rivers, and green space. Rockford’s regional connection to transportation infrastructure — highways, freight rail, and the Chicago Rockford International Airport — continues to be a strength for the region. The airport is an important factor for Rockford’s growing logistics industry (2021-2025 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy).

Rockford, historically and currently a manufacturing-based economy, has diversified in recent years with major investments in the aerospace and health systems. Capital investments in the region’s hospitals and clinics are nearing \$1 billion, since 2016. Air freight business has grown due to the investments in the Chicago Rockford International Airport, which created jobs in aviation and logistics (2021-2025 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy). Rockford area employment in 2019 was more highly concentrated than nationwide distribution in production, transportation and material moving, and healthcare practitioners and technical occupations. The top 10 occupations with the largest number of employees in 2020 are described below, in Figure 3: “Top 10 Industries based on Employment”. General Medical and Surgical Hospitals is the largest industry employer with over 8,000 employees.

**Figure 3: Rockford’s Top 10 Industries Based on Employment**

NAIC	Industry Name	Oct '20 Employment	Average Weekly Wage	Annual Wage
6221	General medical and surgical hospitals	8,049	\$1,468.00	\$70,464.00
7225	Restaurants and other eating places	7,740	\$342.00	\$16,416.00
6211	Offices of physicians	3,719	\$2,203.00	\$105,744.00
3339	Other general purpose machinery manufacturing	3,110	\$1,778.00	\$85,344.00
5613	Employment services	3,009	\$678.00	\$32,544.00
3327	Machine shops and threaded product mfg.	2,975	\$1,116.00	\$53,568.00
4523	General merchandise stores, including warehouse clubs and supercenters	2,856	\$526.00	\$25,248.00
4451	Grocery stores	2,610	\$601.00	\$28,848.00
3335	Metalworking machinery manufacturing	1,810	\$1,210.00	\$58,080.00
6232	Residential mental health facilities	1,704	\$785.00	\$37,680.00

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Employment and Wages Data, October 2020, [https://www.bls.gov/regions/midwest/news-release/occupationalemploymentandwages\\_rockford.htm](https://www.bls.gov/regions/midwest/news-release/occupationalemploymentandwages_rockford.htm)



While these investments in growing national industries are strategic, Rockford's overall economic picture still faces challenges due to international manufacturing competition and a reliance on lower-wage industries. Rockford MSA's average hourly wage (\$22.62) was 12% below the national average in 2019. Of the BLS 25 major occupational groups, Rockford's average hourly wage was only higher for 5 of those occupational groups.

## Urban Fabric: Downtown Revitalization and Historic Neighborhoods

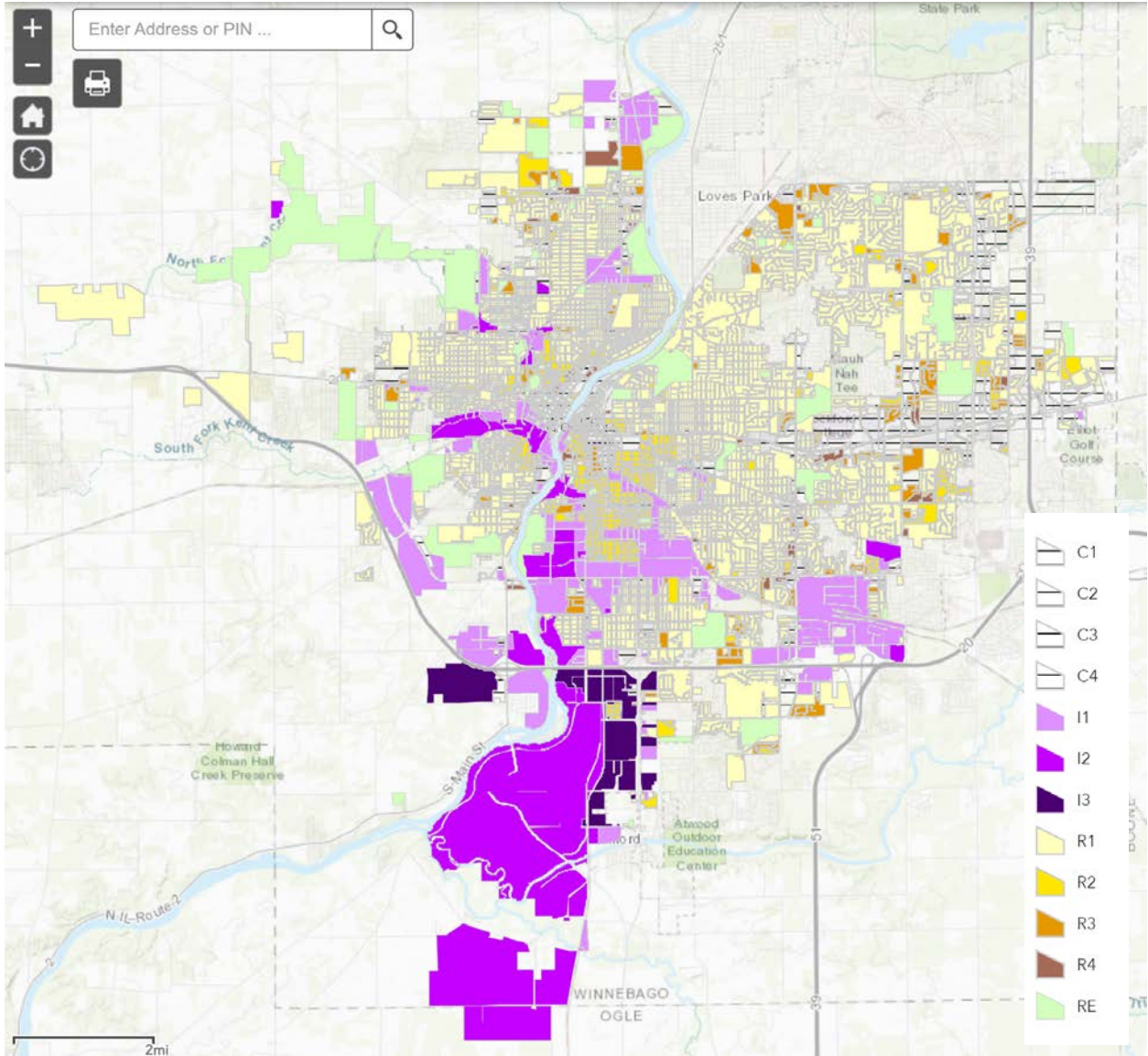
Rockford's historic downtown is actively undergoing revitalization. Jobs in Rockford are spread somewhat evenly throughout the city (2016 Regional Economic Development Report), so downtown Rockford is not a traditional job center. Central Rockford has 20% of Rockford's jobs and less land area, whereas southeast Rockford has 26% of Rockford's jobs but also more land area. Downtown aims to revitalize its underused spaces by attracting more downtown living, investing in road diets and pedestrian/bicycling infrastructure, and developing anchor institutions such as libraries, parks, wellness centers, and aquariums. A new, signature downtown library building is under development as of July 2021, as well as new apartment projects.



Source: Randy von Liski, Flickr, 2020

Rockford's zoning also allows for substantial two-family residential development in areas close to the urban core, which reflects some of the historic small multifamily fabric in those areas and offers more opportunities for infill and preservation -- though, as discussed with stakeholders, not all properties are suited for subdivision. However, there are still substantial areas of Rockford that are zoned only for single-family development. In areas with aging or distressed housing stock, considering code changes could potentially open up new opportunities for "missing middle" development that could add affordability while bringing back vacant or distressed properties. This strategy does come with a substantial likelihood of resident pushback and a strong need for resident organizing and education to better understand why this change to their neighborhood fabric could be desirable, before moving forward with any official proposition.

**Figure 4: Rockford Zoning Map**



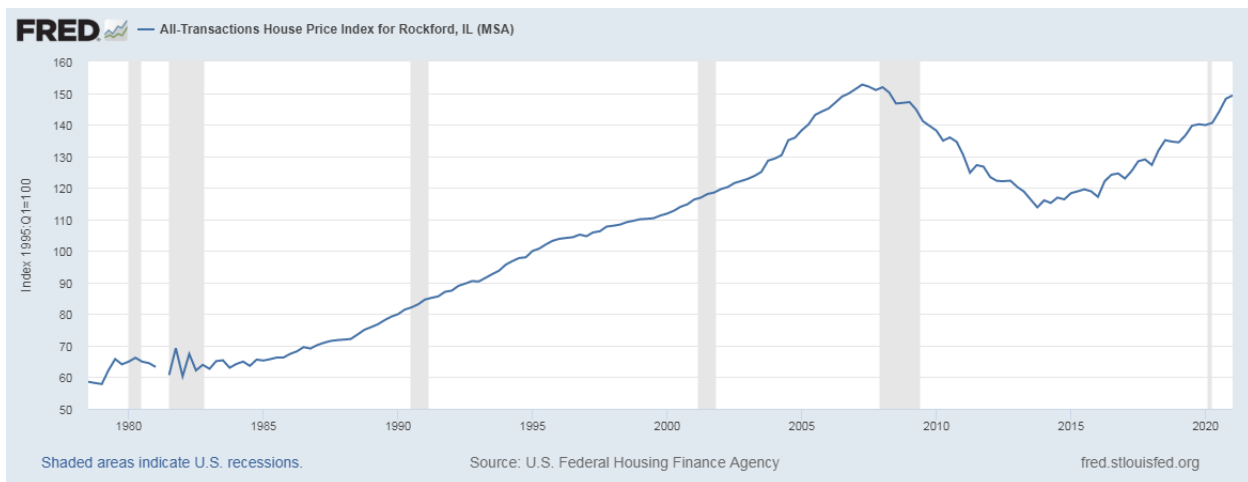
Source: City of Rockford ArcGIS, 2021.



## Housing: Price Growth and Relative Affordability

Median home prices in Rockford have nearly doubled from \$69,000 to \$112,000 over the past ten years from 2011-2020. This doubling of prices indicates recovery from the 2008-2009 recession, as shown in the below graph of the local home price index from the St. Louis Federal Reserve. The price index in 2021 has returned to approximately pre-recession (2007) levels. Greater controls on subprime mortgages put in place after the recession should help to ensure that recovery is based on more solid ground than the rapid price growth shown between 2005 and 2007. However, median prices still remain far lower than in the Chicago area or the state of Illinois as a whole.

**Figure 5: Home Price Index for Rockford, 1960-2021**



Source: U.S. Federal Housing Finance Agency, accessed via FRED.

This level of affordability is not an unmitigated good, because it creates an “appraisal gap” in many areas which discourages new investment and rehabilitation of the existing housing stock. In neighborhoods with soft markets, this appraisal gap requires subsidy to fill the gap between the construction (or rehabilitation) cost of a home and its final sales price. However, this relative affordability means that subsidies needed for affordable housing are still far lower than in many major-market cities where values have increased rapidly, which helps increase the number of housing units that can be created with every dollar.

**Figure 6: Median Home Price, 2011-2020**

Place	2011	2020
Rockford City, Illinois	\$69,000	\$112,000
Chicago, Illinois	\$190,000	\$260,000
State of Illinois	\$150,000	\$216,000

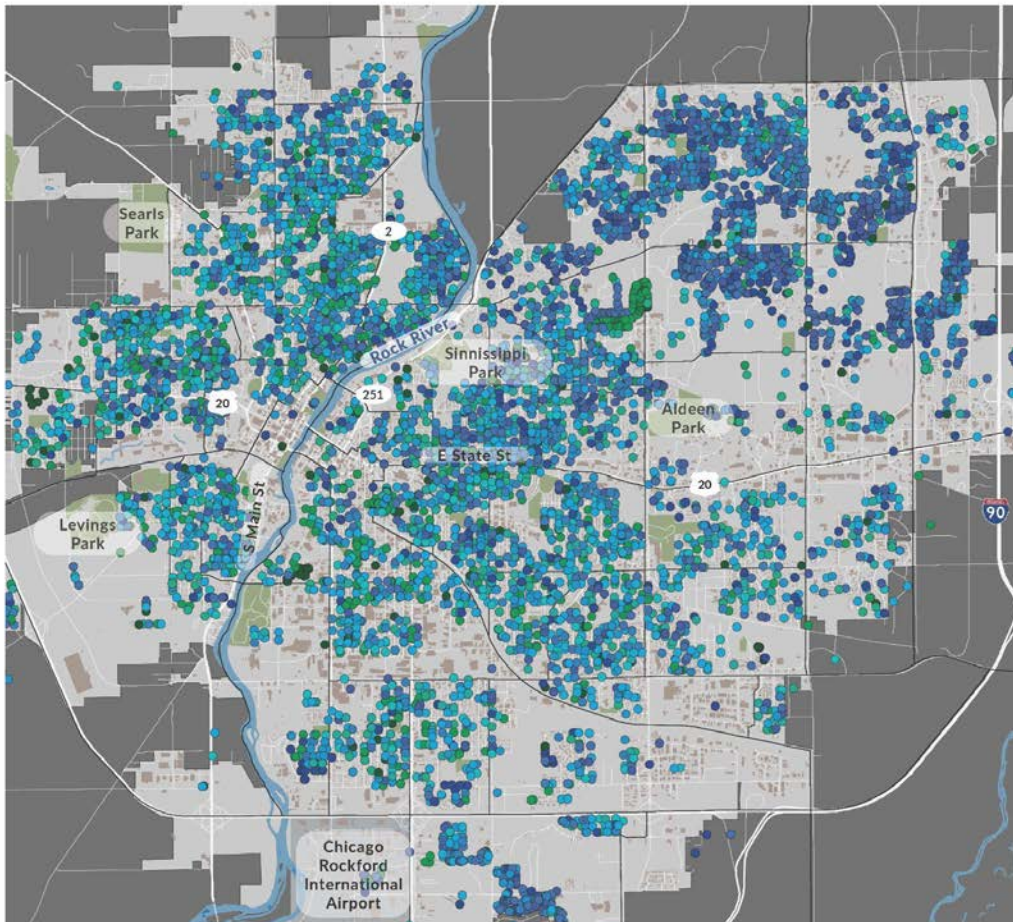
Source: Illinois Realtors, <https://www.illinoisrealtors.org>



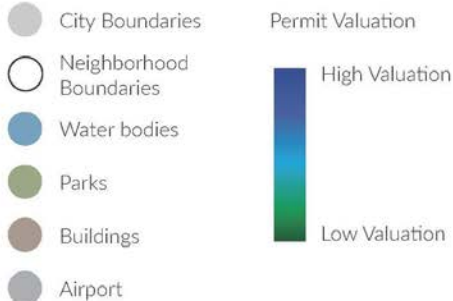
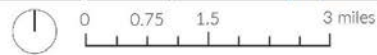
## Redevelopment: Current Building Activity

Stakeholders in our first round of briefing interviews noted that the tight housing market nationally had produced a greater degree of housing redevelopment and building activity, particularly in Rockford's urban core, than seen in the past decade. Figure X shows the current building activity occurring throughout the City by mapping building permits, categorized by their value. Small-dollar permits are less likely to signal a major building surge, as they may be simple repairs to existing homes. There are a significant number of larger-dollar permits scattered throughout the West Side, though fewer in the southwest.

**Figure 7: Current Building Permits (7/15/21) by Value**



Source: City of Rockford GIS services







Despite the positive implications for neighborhood infill contained in Figure 7, new construction currently focuses at the edges of the city, rather than filling in vacant lots in the urban core. This will be discussed and mapped further in the “Threats” section.

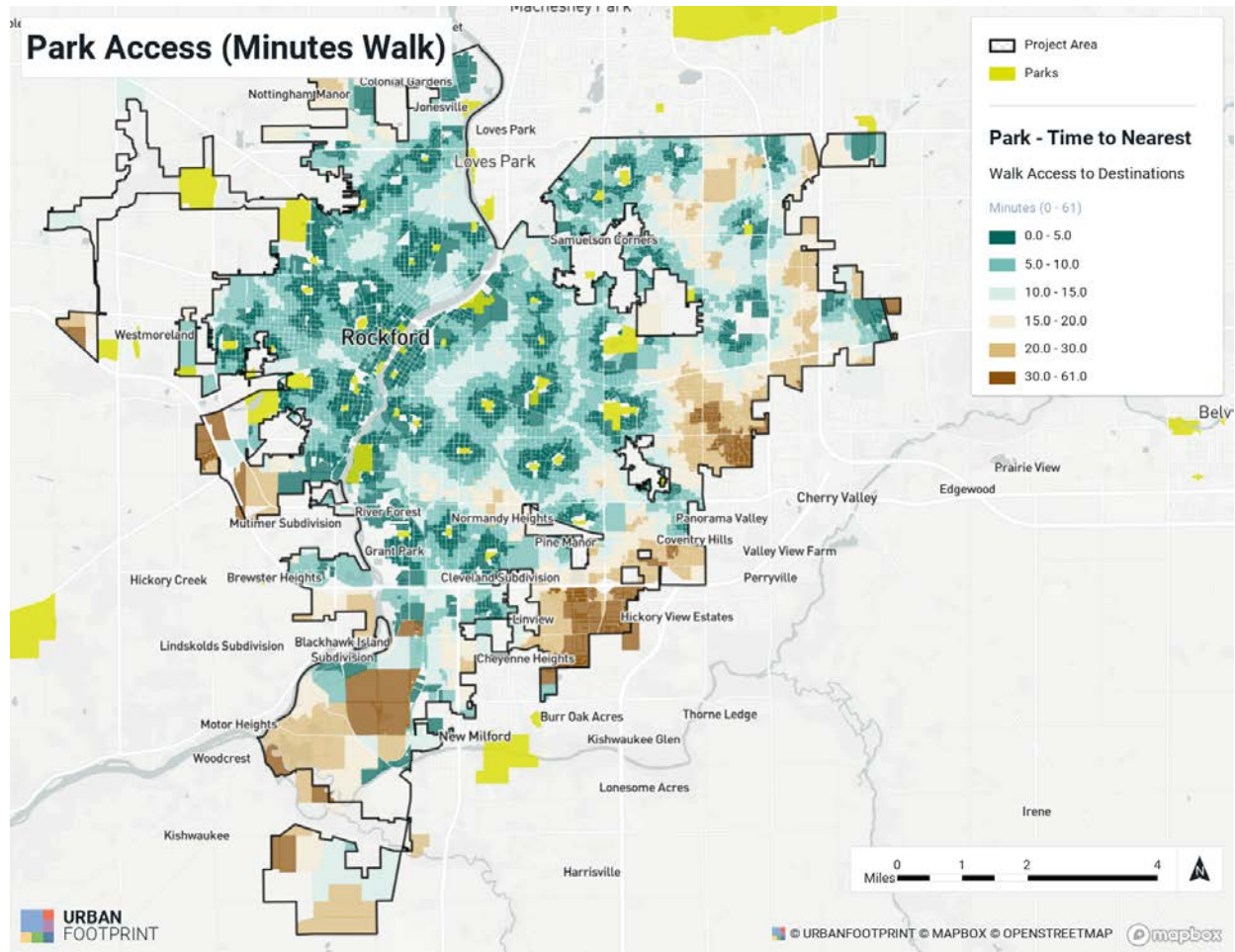
## Social Determinants of Health: Strong Parks and Community Facilities

Positive social determinants of health are often unequally distributed throughout Rockford; these inequalities, and the resulting health disparities, are discussed in the “Weaknesses” section.

However, Rockford’s parks and open spaces are a notable exception. Parks are well distributed throughout the City; most residents, except those on the far suburban fringe of the City, are able to walk to a park within 10 minutes. The Rockford Park District and its the Rockford Park District Foundation are able to leverage both public and private funds towards improving the conditions and public spaces for residents throughout Rockford. This allows the District to maintain a high standard of operations and maintenance throughout the system.

During an interview, the District did note that due to ongoing declines in assessed value, their funding from property tax levies was declining and they would have to consider some cuts to their park areas and/or services. Investments in housing that can raise local property values could therefore have a positive impact on the District’s ability to maintain or enhance the level of service provided to the public.

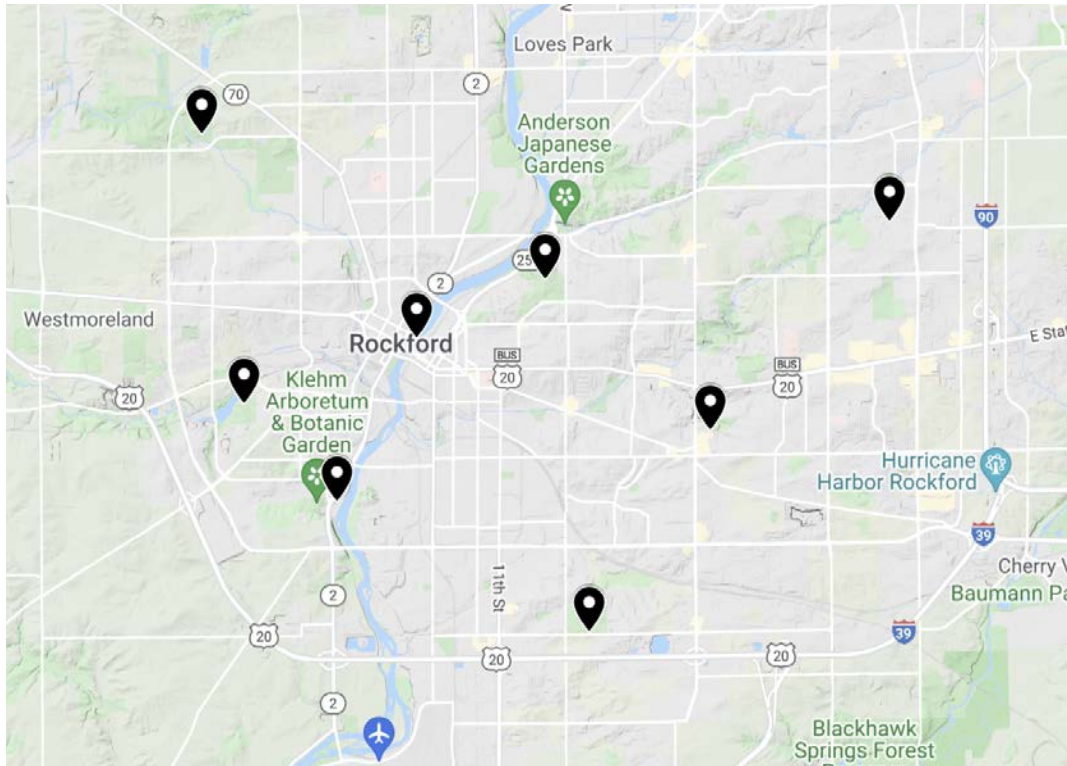
**Figure 8: Park Access (Minutes Walk)**



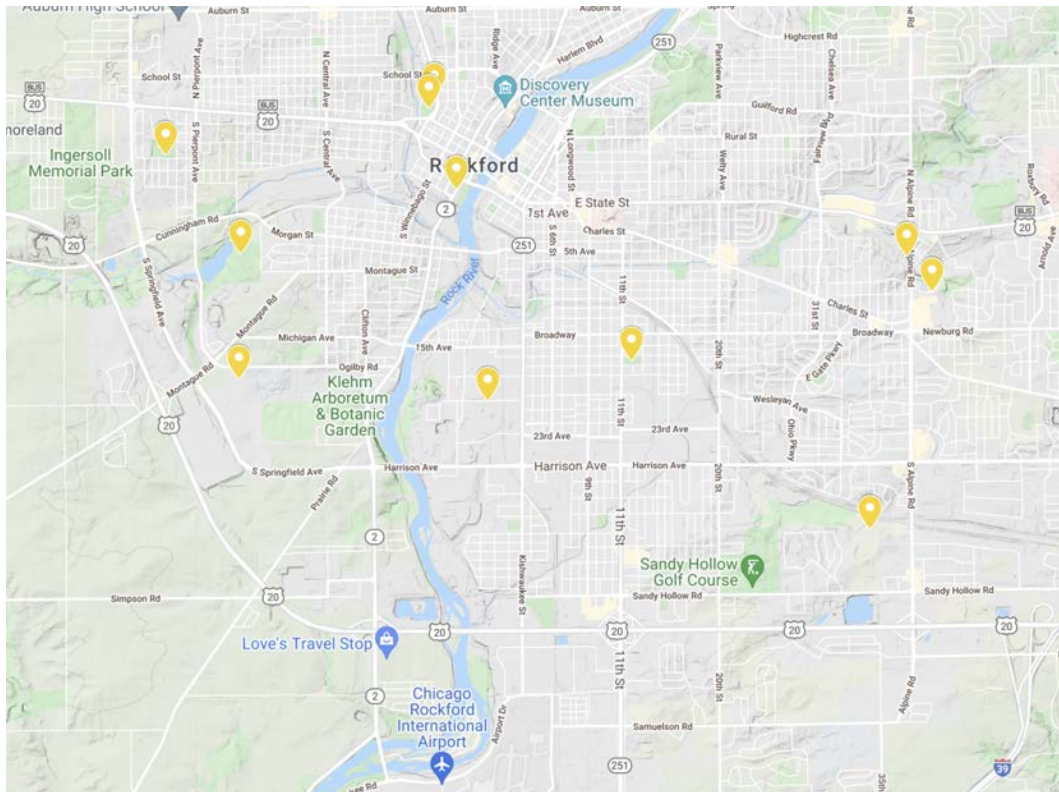
Source: Urban Footprint.

The Rockford Park District is actively pursuing improvements to its facilities to address access and maintain quality throughout the park system. Recently completed capital projects range from maintenance to entire playground replacements. In 2020, these capital improvements benefitted 8 unique park sites throughout Rockford, and 2 additional District-wide capital improvements, as demonstrated by Figure 2.

**Figure 9: Parks and Open Space Capital Improvements Completed in 2020**



**Figure 10: Capital Improvements Planned for 2021**



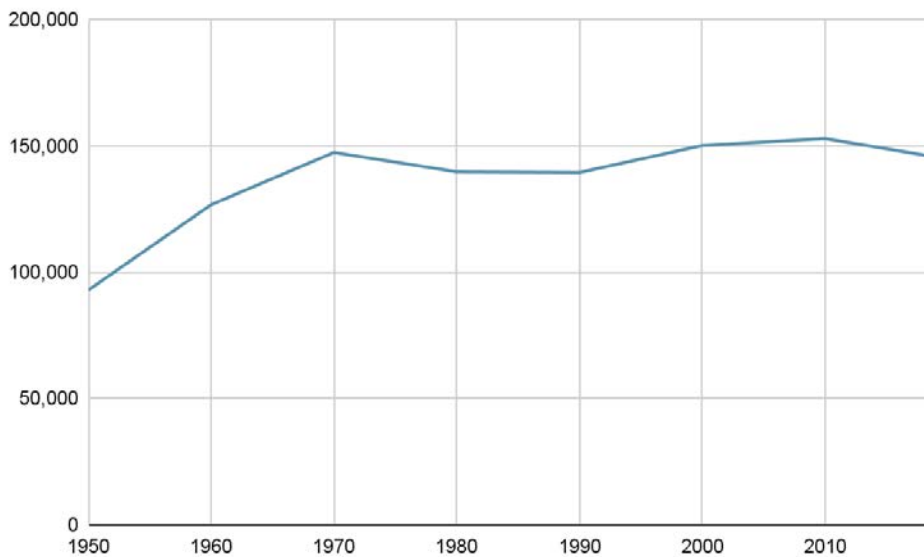


## Weaknesses

### Population: Post-Recession Decline

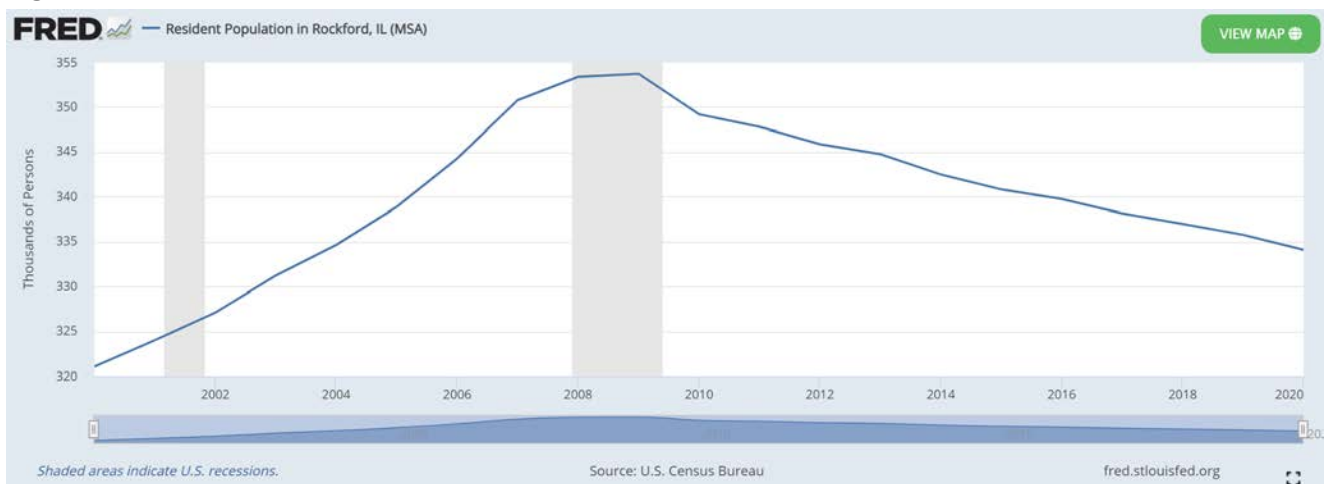
Rockford's population has declined by 5% between 2010 and 2019, from 153,285 to an estimated 145,609 in 2019. Much of this decline is associated with a corresponding decline in population for the State of Illinois overall. In Rockford, the beginning of the decade-long decline is associated with the recession of 2008-2009, as shown in Figure 12.

**Figure 11: City of Rockford Population, 1950-2019**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

**Figure 12: Population of Rockford MSA, 2000-2020**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Resident Population in Rockford, IL (MSA) [RDCPOP], retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis; <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/RDCPOP>, August 10, 2021





## Economics: Poverty Remains, and Gains May Be Erased by COVID

The manufacturing industry is a point of pride for the region, but as an export industry, it is sensitive to global supply trade constraints and trade policy. Northern Illinois has more than double the US concentration of manufacturing employment; one-fifth of its workers are employed in the industry (2021-2025 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy). This means when manufacturing struggles, the region’s economy and workforce struggles.

In the late 2000s, the city of Rockford also was severely affected by the recession of 2008-2009, which both affected the local housing market, and the demand for manufactured goods. Rockford MSA’s unemployment rate grew to 16.3% in 2010 and has been steadily declining since. The unemployment rate remains slightly higher than the MSA, the State, and the nation.

The region has diversified its job base in recent years, as noted in the “Strengths” section, which may have helped fuel a slight decline in poverty between 2012 and 2019. However, despite this work to enhance job opportunities and economic prospects, Rockford’s poverty rates remain almost twice as high as the State and the nation as a whole. In 2018, 19% of Rockford’s workers earned \$15,000 per year or less.<sup>1</sup>

**Figure 13: Poverty Rates**

Place	2012	2019
Rockford City, Illinois	25.1%	22.3%
State of Illinois	13.7%	12.5%
USA	14.9%	13.4%

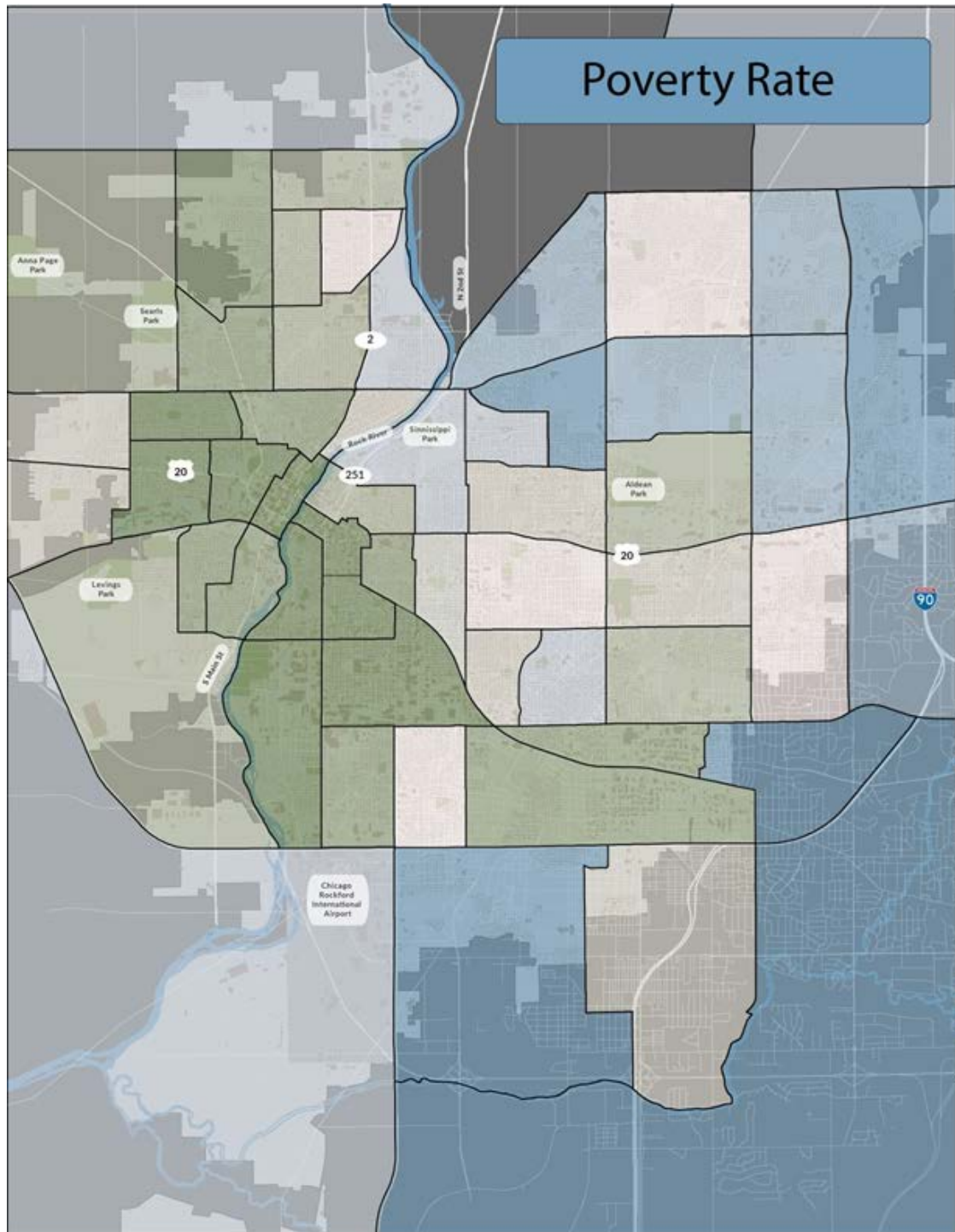
The poverty rate is the ratio of the number of people (in a given age group) whose income falls below the poverty line; taken as half the median household income of the total population.

Figure 14 showcases that in Rockford, 37-65% of households living in southwestern neighborhoods earn incomes that fall below the poverty line. In the sections “Segregation: An East-West Divide” and “Social Determinants of Health,” these neighborhoods specifically are shown to be impacted by racial and ethnic segregation and lower access to food, healthcare, education, and other community resources. Holistic investments that support direct housing needs as well as increasing wages, job training, career building, and other income-focused supports are needed in these areas.

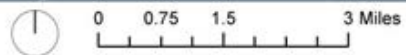
<sup>1</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics, 2018.



**Figure 14: Poverty Rate Disparities within Rockford**

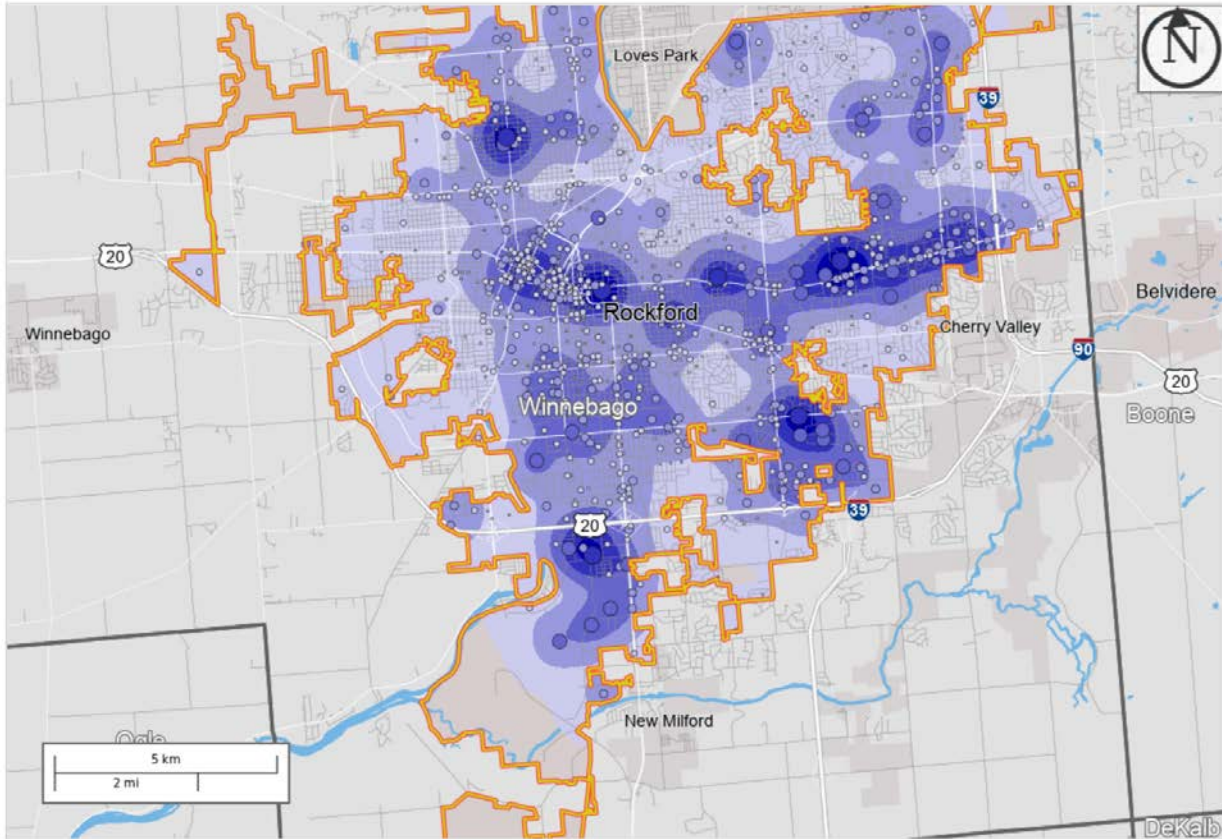


Source: 2019 Food Access Research Atlas



Accessing better jobs can be challenging for those in poverty, particularly for households that cannot afford a reliable personal vehicle, or cannot afford the same number of vehicles as there are workers in their household. Rockford is a multi-centric job market, as mentioned in the “Strengths” section, with only 20% of jobs contained within the historic downtown core. Other job centers extend throughout the city.

**Figure 15: Concentrations of Jobs in Rockford, 2018**



**Map Legend**

**Job Density [Jobs/Sq. Mile]**

- 5 - 364
- 365 - 1,444
- 1,445 - 3,242
- 3,243 - 5,761
- 5,762 - 8,999

**Job Count [Jobs/Census Block]**

- 1 - 5
- 6 - 75
- 76 - 379
- 380 - 1,196
- 1,197 - 2,919

**Selection Areas**

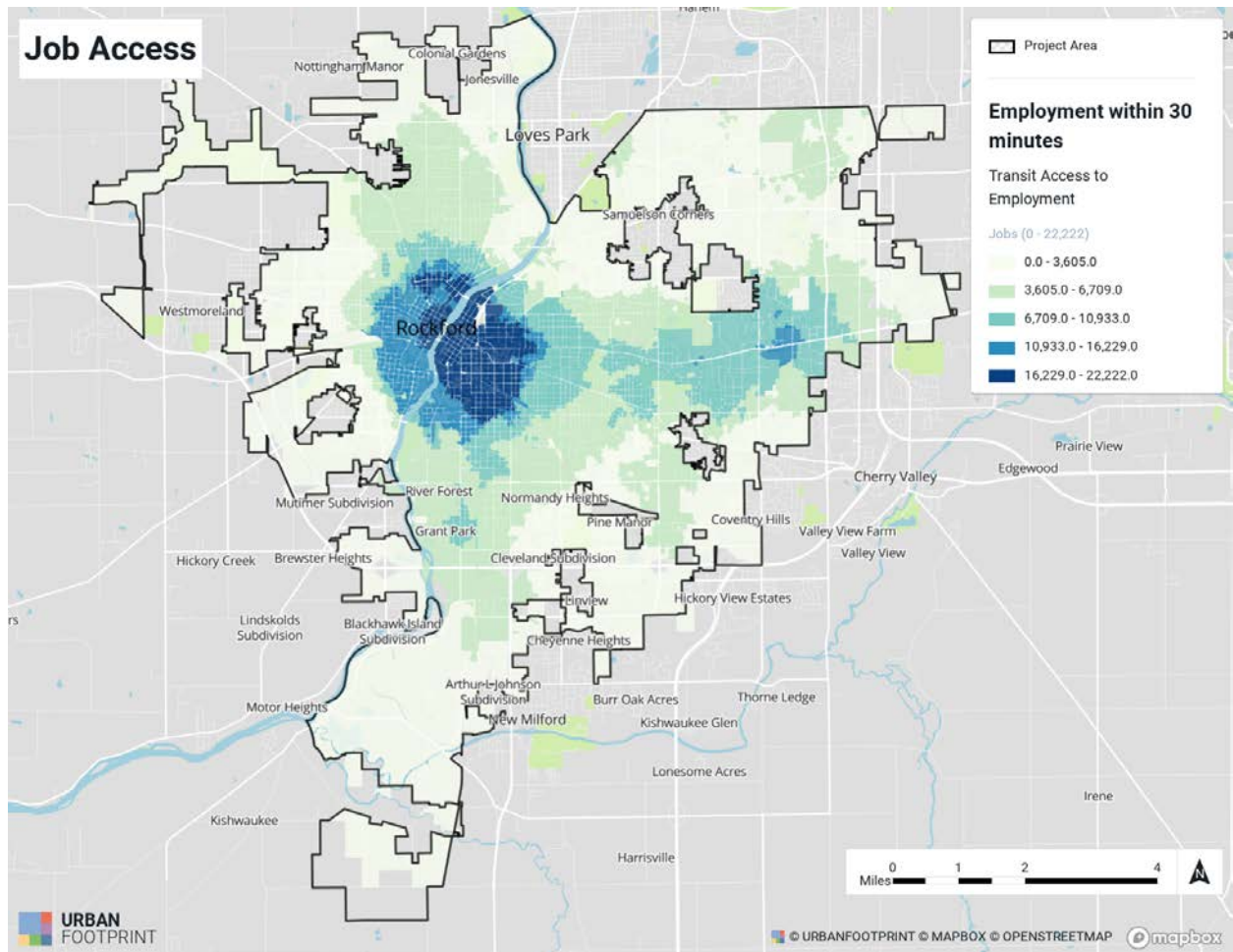
- Analysis Selection



Source: U.S. Census Location Employer-Household Dynamics, Work Area Profile Analysis, 2018.

An analysis of job access via public transit shows that fewer of the jobs outside the historic urban core are quickly accessible by transit. This supports the anecdotal evidence the Asakura Robinson team heard during stakeholder engagement that residents are often riding transit for two hours or more to access jobs, particularly jobs located far to the east side of Rockford. Jobs in the northern and southern portions of the city are essentially inaccessible via transit.

**Figure 16: Job Access Within 30 Minutes of Transit**



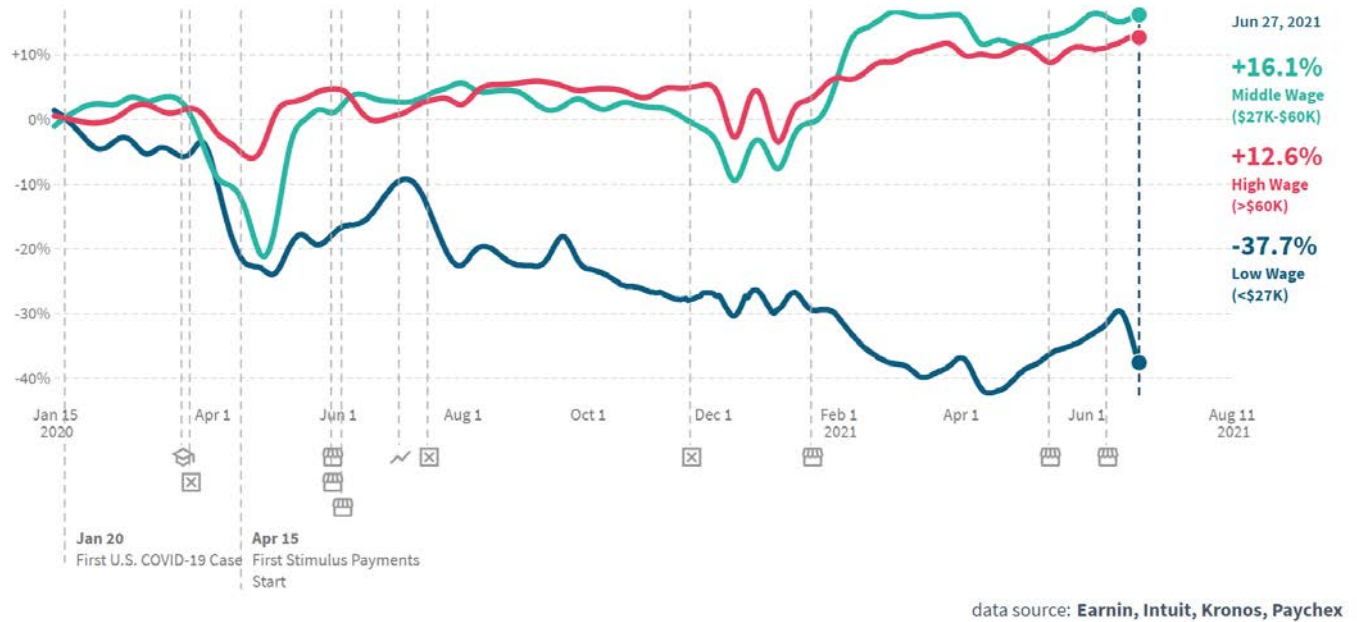
Source: Urban Footprint.





While data on the impact of COVID-19 is still evolving, it is clear that the pandemic has generally enhanced economic disparities between lower-wage workers and moderate-to-higher-wage workers. Data collected by Opportunity Insights shows that while workers earning above \$27,000 per year in Winnebago County have actually seen gains in employment rates since January 2020, employment rates for workers earning less than \$27,000 per year have plummeted by nearly 38% in the same time period.

**Figure 17: COVID Impacts on Employment Rates by Wage Category, January 2020-June 2021**



Source: Raj Chetty, John N. Friedman, Nathaniel Hendren, Michael Stepner, and the Opportunity Insights Team, 2021, <https://www.tracktherecovery.org/>.



## Housing: Affordable Rental and Workforce Homeownership Constraints

Asakura Robinson created a housing demand model using 5-year data from the American Community Survey (2015-2019) and the Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (2013-2018) to estimate the supply and demand for housing units in the city of Rockford. This data helped identify gaps in the housing market for 2019 through 2029. The city's housing market was analyzed by income levels, tenure (renter vs. owner), and unit type (bedroom count). Additionally, the memo compared the supply and demand for housing units by family type. Key findings include:

- There is a **severe shortage of rental units affordable for extremely low-income households** (0-30% Median Family Income or MFI) in Rockford. While there are 8,072 households within the <30% MFI income bracket, there are only 2,670 units in the city that are affordable to households in that income group, resulting in a shortage of **5,402 units**.
- This shortage also has spillover effects on 30-50% MFI households, who technically have adequate housing supply but must compete with 0-30% households for that same supply. Overall, we find that **extremely low income and very low income households are forced to compete** with households of all incomes for housing that is out of their price range.
- **Workforce homeownership** at 80%-100% MFI is also a need, though the surplus of lower-cost ownership units could technically fill this gap. This section of the analysis does not, however, account for housing quality issues that likely affect many low-to-moderate income homeowners and homebuyers in Rockford, and require additional attention to housing construction and rehabilitation. Those issues are discussed in the next section, "Weaknesses: Housing Quality and Deferred Maintenance."
- The city will need to add a supply of 1,667 units over the next 10 years to meet demand and address obsolescence. This supply can be added through preservation of existing stock that may become obsolete, or through construction of new units. This number, and the overall analysis, assumes that household count in Rockford remains the same (no growth or shrinkage in number of households) between 2019 and 2029.
- For renters, the largest existing demand across income groups is for 0-1 bedroom units, and for owners, the largest demand is for 2 bedroom units. These demand levels were reflected in the shortages, as **renters had the largest shortages of 0-1 bedroom units and owners had the largest shortages of 2 bedroom units** across income groups.

For more information on study methods, please see Appendix A: Housing Demand Model Methods.

We group our findings by income bracket and by tenure (owners and renters) in order to provide clear analysis on the variety of needs and demand in the Rockford housing market. In general, it is important to note that while it is useful to examine the demand and supply profile at different





income levels, most units (except actively subsidized units) are not restricted to rental or sale to people at a particular income level. Therefore, a shortage or surplus of homes at one income level affects the supply available to those in other income brackets. Income brackets used in the analysis are as follows<sup>2</sup>:

- “Extremely Low Income” or 0-30% HAMFI: \$0 - \$16,910 annual income
- “Very Low Income” or 31-50% HAMFI: \$16,911 - \$26,550 annual income
- “Low Income” or 51-80% of HAMFI: \$26,551 - \$42,450 annual income
- 81-100% of HAMFI: \$42,451 - \$53,100 annual income
- 100%+ of HAMFI: \$53,101+ annual income

**Figure 18: Housing Demand by Income Bracket**

Income Bracket	Renters	Owners
<p>“Extremely Low Income” or 0-30% HAMFI</p> <p><b>\$0 - \$16,910 annual income</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was a <b>shortage of 5,402 units</b> in 2019.</li> <li>• Gaps occur across all apartment types, but 0-1 BR rental units make up more than half of the shortage, with a shortage of 3,038 units in 2019.</li> <li>• Due to the shortage of units affordable to those at 0-30% MFI, they are likely competing with households of all incomes for units that are out of their price range.</li> <li>• Even assuming no population growth, Rockford will <b>need 5,483 units affordable to this income group by 2029</b> to house today’s population.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No new construction is recommended due to a surplus of 2,334 units, but this does not account for potential deficits in housing quality and condition<sup>3</sup>.</li> </ul>
<p>“Very Low Income” or 31-50% HAMFI</p> <p><b>\$16,911 - \$26,550 annual income</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was a surplus of 269 units in 2019, but not enough to meet the high gap from those in the less than 30% income bracket</li> <li>• As in the 0-30% MFI category, the largest supply shortage is with the 0-1BR units.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Little new construction is likely needed due to <b>excess supply of 1,839 units</b>, but this does not account for potential deficits in housing quality and condition.</li> </ul>
<p>“Low Income” or 51-80% HAMFI</p> <p><b>\$26,551 - \$42,450 annual income</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is an <b>excess of 5,369 units</b> that are affordable to this income. However, residents at this income level compete with residents in the extremely and very low-income brackets for housing. This nominal excess is <b>still resulting in an overall shortage of over 5,000 units</b> affordable to the extremely low income and very low income levels.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A <b>surplus of 4,980 units</b> available for those in this income bracket.</li> </ul>

<sup>2</sup> Based on 2019 Multifamily HUD Income Limits for 2-person households on Rockford City, <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il.html>

<sup>3</sup> One of the surprising outcomes of the analysis was there was an excess supply of owner housing units for extremely low and very low income households (0-30% and 31-50% HAMFI, respectively). Given the ample supply of housing units affordable for these income groups, there is a likelihood that housing costs besides rents and mortgages, e.g., maintenance, utilities, taxes, and insurance, may be creating cost burdens to those in this income bracket.



<p><b>81-100% of HAMFI</b> <b>\$42,451 - \$53,100</b> <b>annual income</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There was a <b>surplus of 1,212 units</b> that are affordable to this income group, which is likely meeting the demand for housing across income groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There was a <b>shortage of 3,693 units</b> affordable to homeowners of this income group.</li> </ul>
<p><b>100%+ of HAMFI</b> <b>\$53,101+ annual</b> <b>income</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There was a <b>shortage of 3,067 units</b> that matched the income levels of this bracket, meaning they are renting units that are affordable to renters in lower income brackets.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>A shortage of 5,318 units</b> that match the price points of homeowners of this income group, meaning these households are buying homes that are affordable to owners in lower income brackets.</li> </ul>

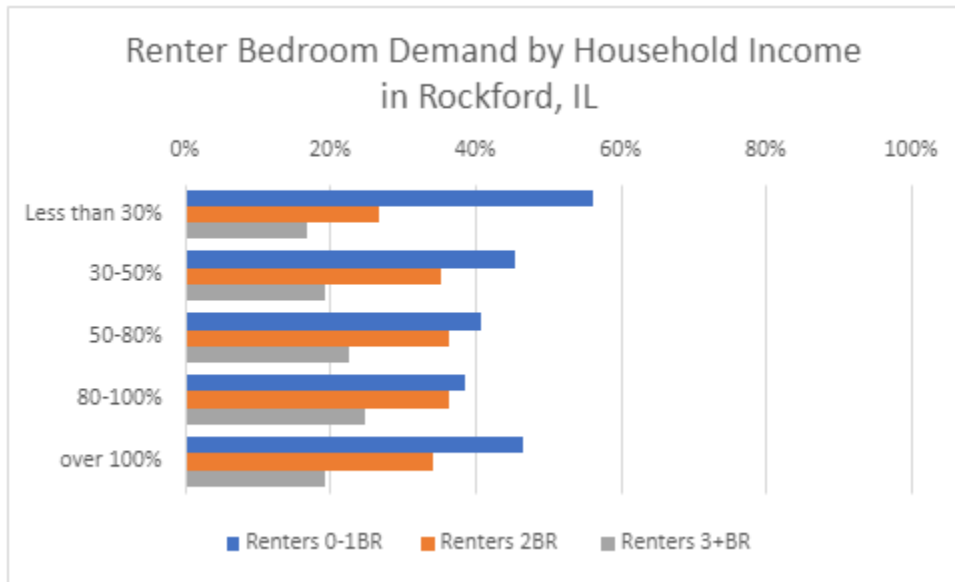
**Figure 19: Demand for Housing Units by Income and Bedroom Count**

	Renters				Owners			
	0 - 1BR	2BR	3+BR	Total	0 - 1BR	2BR	3+BR	Total
0-30% HAMFI	7,758	3,697	2,340	13,795	1,397	3,475	196	5,067
31-50% HAMFI	2,341	1,144	992	5,145	1,341	3,125	245	4,711
51-80% HAMFI	2,223	791	1,237	5,440	1,822	3,928	419	6,170
81-100% of HAMFI	1,041	266		2,700	942	1,914	249	3,105
100%+ of HAMFI	2,433	794		5,235	4,343	8,179	1,323	13,845
Total	15,795	4,840		32,315	9,846	20,621	2,432	32,898

Data Source: CHAS 2013 - 2017 Rockford, IL Data

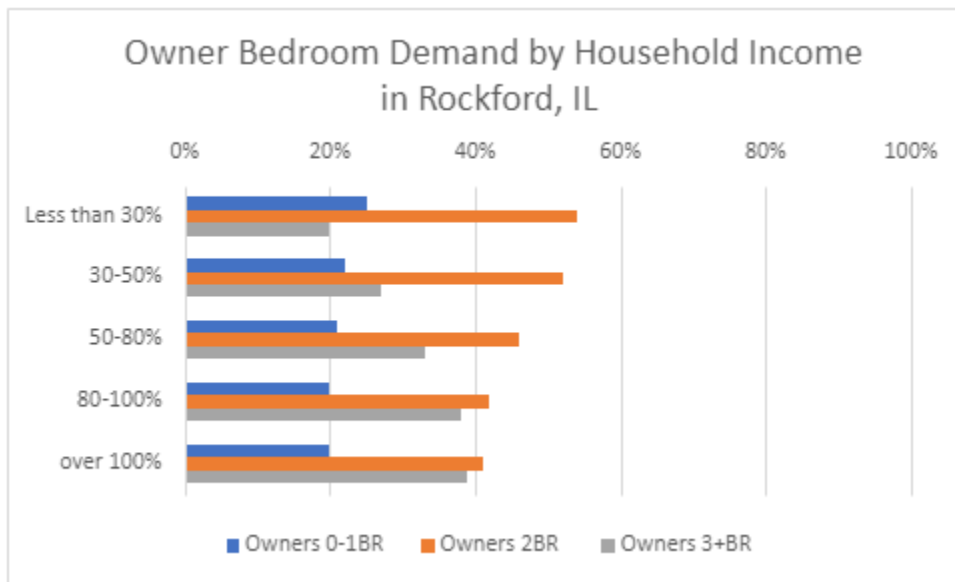


**Figure 20: Renter Bedroom Demand by Household Income in Rockford, IL**



Source: ACS 2015-2019/CHAS 2014-18

**Figure 21: Owner Bedroom Demand by Household Income in Rockford, IL**



Source: ACS 2015-2019/CHAS 2014-18



## Housing: Neighborhood Housing Quality and Deferred Maintenance

The City of Rockford 2020-2040 Consolidated Plan highlights that the largest housing problems in Rockford are housing affordability, housing rehabilitation needs, and the abundance of vacant and dilapidated structures. The previous section on housing demand is challenged by the fact that there is little good available data on housing conditions in Rockford; many households who theoretically have a home affordable to them may be struggling with poor housing conditions or active health challenges. During our initial round of stakeholder interviews we heard about water intrusion, mold, non-functional kitchen and bathrooms, and lead paint as hazards that Rockford residents face, particularly in aging homes that have experienced deferred maintenance.

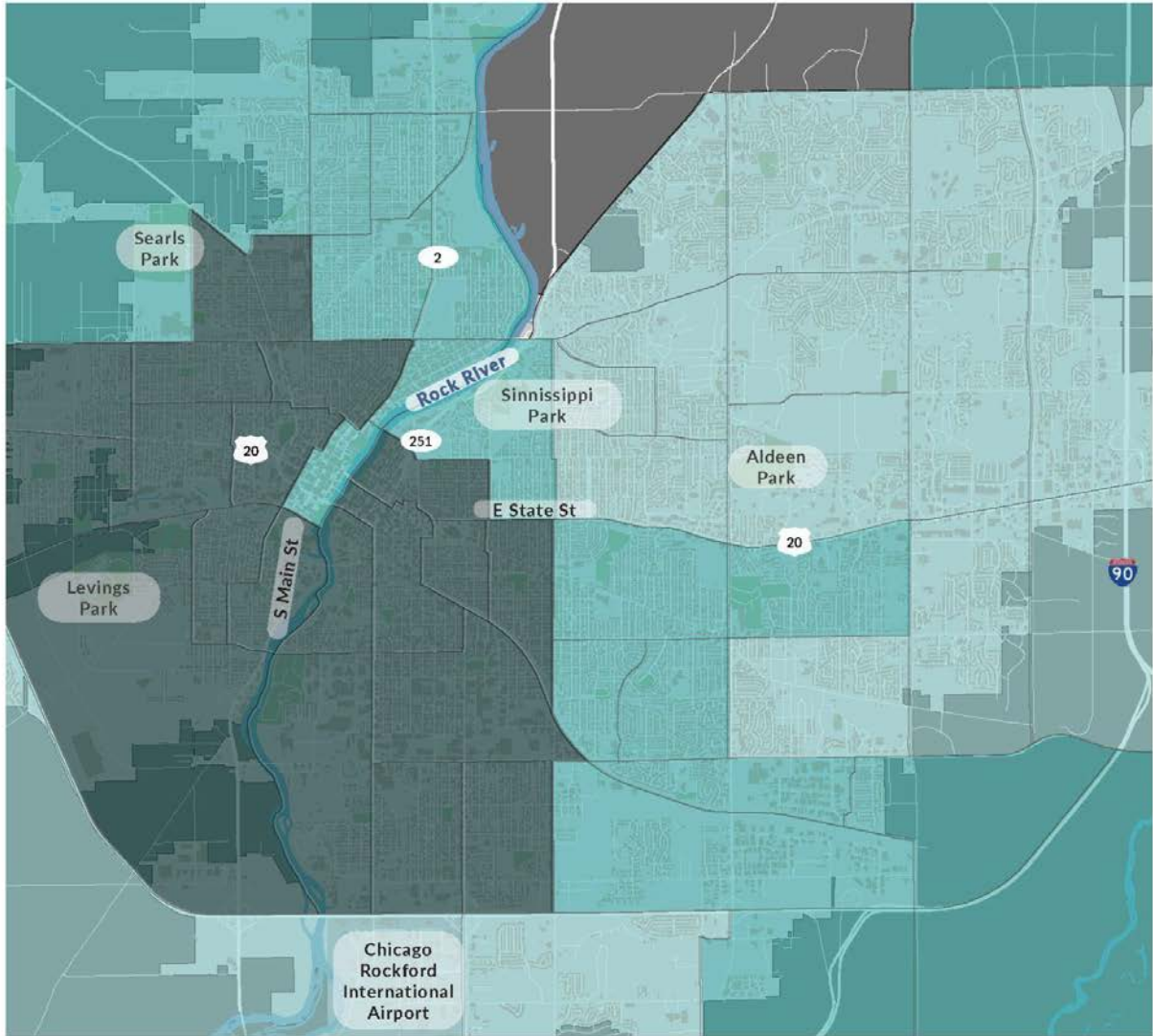
As an initial step in tracking housing quality and condition, Asakura Robinson has created a neighborhood housing quality index that can serve as a template for a broader neighborhood quality of life index for the RHDC. This housing quality index is the first step in the creation of a final “tracking” spreadsheet that RHDC can utilize to measure and monitor success of its investment strategy over time. The results of the index are fairly similar to the analysis that emerged from the City’s Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy in 2019. The advantage of this index is that RHDC will have access to a final, editable version of this index for use in tracking investment and its results over time. To date, the neighborhood housing quality index includes five factors:

- Housing vacancy rate
- Prevalence of residential vacant lots (percentage of all residential lots in neighborhood)
- Average assessed value per square foot of residential structures
- Percentage of housing stock built before 1950
- Total number of code violations

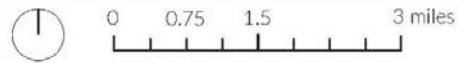
The project team studied these variables because they both take account of current housing conditions, and influence the potential for redevelopment. The results of the draft index, and each individual variable, are mapped below.



**Figure 22: Overall Neighborhood Housing Quality Index Map**



Source: City of Rockford GIS services



- Challenged - Lower-Scoring Neighborhood
- Moderate - Middle-Scoring Neighborhood
- Strong - High-Scoring Neighborhood

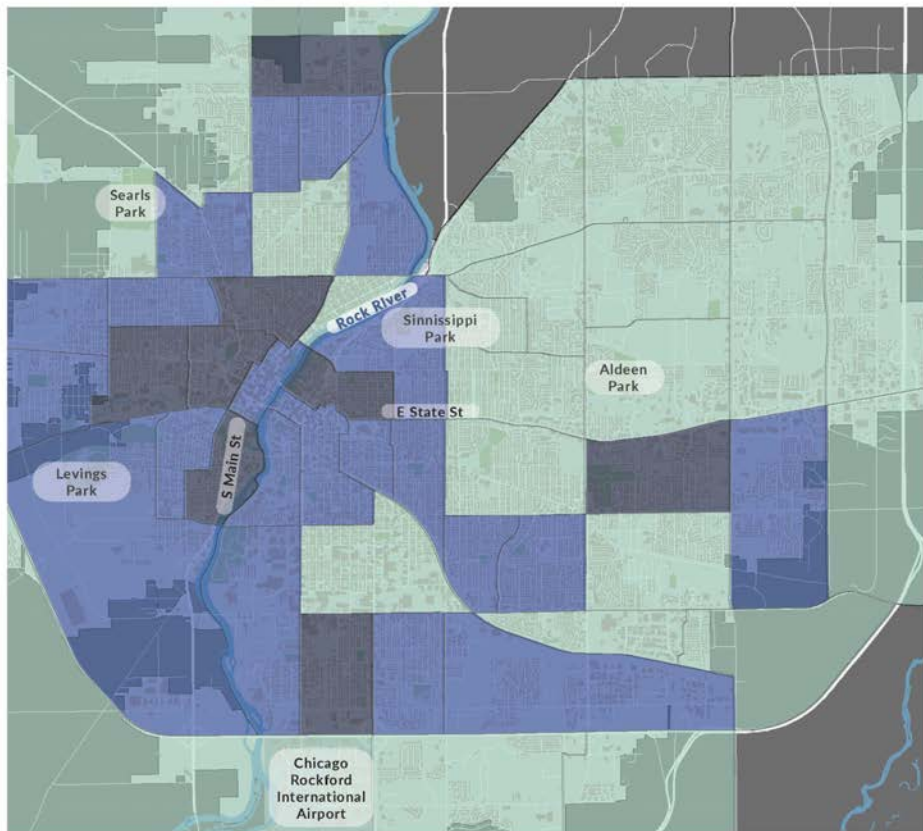


## Housing Vacancy Rates

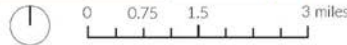
When looking at housing vacancy, Rockford as a whole has a vacancy rate of about 9.74%. Comparatively, neighborhoods in Rockford experiencing the highest rates of vacancy include: Ellis Heights East (30.04%); Prairie Hill/Jackson Prairie (23.93%); South Gate (21.44%); Ellis Heights West (21.21%); Signal Hill (20.83%); St. Elizabeth (19.74%); River Bluff (19.53%); and New Towne (19.09%). Vacancy rate was calculated by taking the total number of vacant housing units in each neighborhood and dividing that by the total number of housing units in the neighborhood.<sup>4</sup> Vacancy Rate scores in the Housing Quality index are categorized into the following brackets:

- Low (score = 3) 1.42% - 8.22%
- Medium (score = 2) 8.23% - 16.14%
- High (score = 1) 16.15% - 30.04%

**Figure 23: Housing Vacancy Rates by Neighborhood**



Source: City of Rockford GIS services  
U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



- 16.15% - 30.04%
- 8.23% - 16.14%
- 1.42% - 8.22%

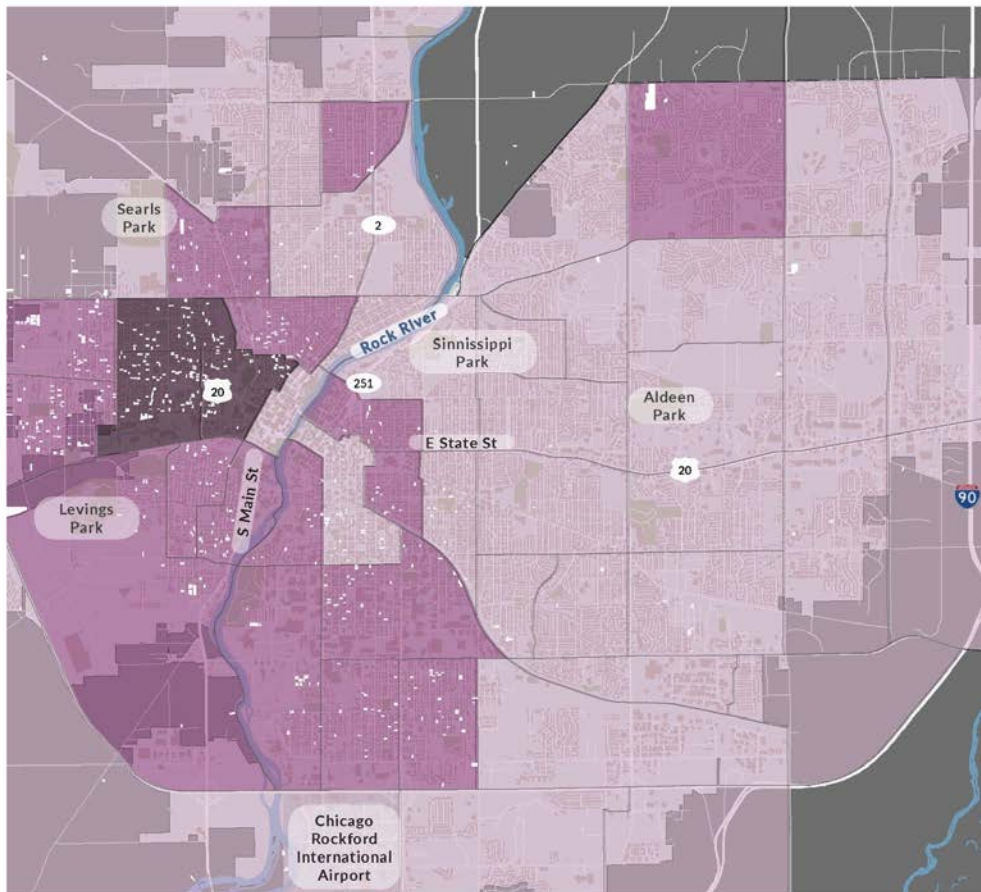
<sup>4</sup> Using Census Tract data from U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table DP04, and joining that to Rockford's neighborhood shapefile.

## Prevalence of Vacant Lots

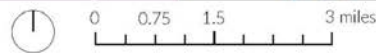
Neighborhoods with the highest percentage of vacant lots not being infilled (i.e. vacant parcels with no structure) include: Ellis Heights East; Ellis Heights West; and Blaisdell Area. These include vacant Land Bank properties, Trustee-Owned properties, Tax-Delinquent Properties that may come to the Land Bank, and privately-owned vacant land. Scores were calculated by taking the total acreage of vacant lots within each neighborhood and dividing that by the total acreage of developable land within the neighborhood. Neighborhoods were grouped into the following categories:

- Low (value = 3) 0 - 0.38%
- Medium (value = 2) 0.39% - 1.12%
- High (value = 1) 1.13% - 2.97%

**Figure 24: Prevalence of Vacant Lots by Neighborhood**



Source: City of Rockford GIS services  
U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



- Vacant Lots
- 1.13% - 2.97%
- 0.39% - 1.12%
- 0 - 0.38%



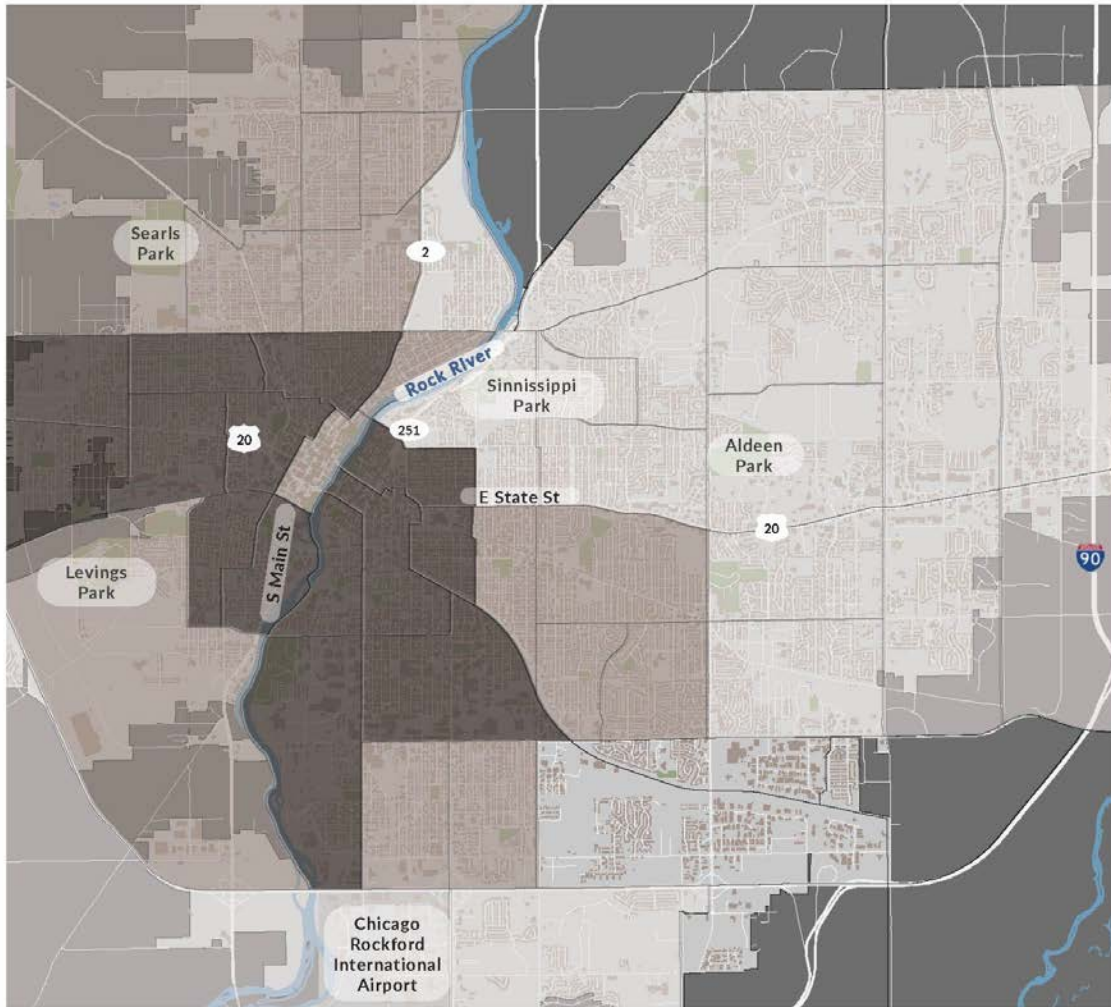


## Assessed Value Per Square Foot

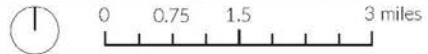
In order to show real estate values for the study area, the project team looked at the average assessed value per square foot for residential structures. Real estate value scores across neighborhoods were measured at the following:

- High \$19.29 - \$26.19
- Medium \$12.38 - \$19.28
- Low \$5.46 - \$12.37

**Figure 25: Average Assessed Value Per Square Foot (Residential) by Neighborhood**



Source: City of Rockford GIS services  
City of Rockford, Tolemi data, 2021



- \$5.46 - \$12.37
- \$12.38 - \$19.28
- \$19.29 - \$26.19



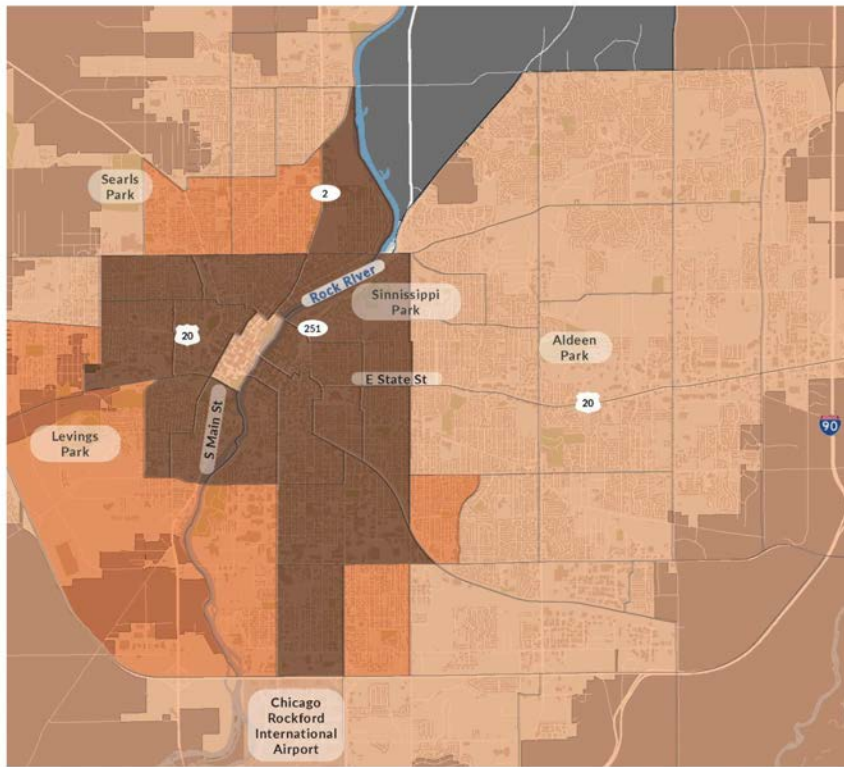


## Percentage of Housing Stock Built Before 1950

The City of Rockford also faces challenges with deteriorating and aging housing structures. Rehabilitation costs are too high for most homeowners and landlords and the rate of return is too low for owners and landlords to make investments in improvements.<sup>5</sup> The lack of affordable accessible housing and reasonable accommodation for individuals with disabilities is another larger unmet housing need and problem.<sup>6</sup> Much of Rockford's mid-century modern housing stock is designated as historic residential structures and there are regulatory and cost barriers to making accommodation improvements.<sup>7</sup> Measures for percentage of oldest housing stock include:

- High 0 - 26.01%
- Medium 26.05% - 52.01%
- Low 52.02% - 78.02%

**Figure 26: Percentage of Housing Stock Built Before 1950 by Neighborhood**



Source: City of Rockford GIS services  
U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



- 52.02% - 78.02%
- 26.02% - 52.01%
- 0 - 26.01%

<sup>5</sup> City of Rockford, 2020, "FY 2020-2024 Five-Year Consolidated Plan and FY 2020 Annual Action Plan", Retrieved from:

[https://rockfordil.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/2020-2024-ConPlan\\_2020-AAP\\_FINAL.pdf](https://rockfordil.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/2020-2024-ConPlan_2020-AAP_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

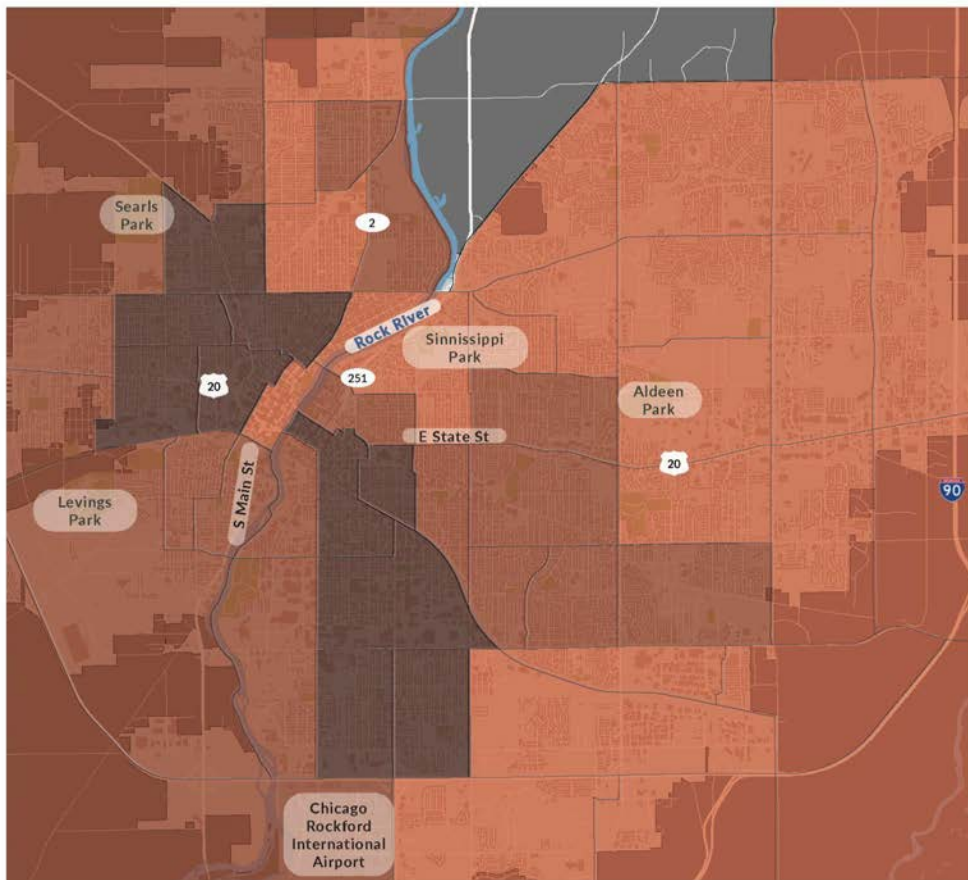
<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

## Number of Housing Code Violations Cited

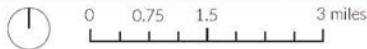
Housing-related code violations can also inform neighborhood quality by setting property standards. Code violations used for this analysis excluded non-housing-condition related violations such as sanitation/garbage; tow/vehicle & access; open burning; nuisance noises (police). Neighborhoods with the highest number of code violations include: RHM Area; Broadway Mahlquist; Ellis Heights West; South Gate; Victory Homes; Haight Village/Midtown; Ellis Heights East; Blaisdell Area; Signal Hill; and Keith Creek East. The team calculated code violations scores by looking at the sum of the total number of violations across each neighborhood in the study area. Measures for code violations include:

- High 0 - 14
- Medium 15 - 66
- Low 67 - 154

**Figure 27: Number of Housing Code Violations Cited by Neighborhood**



Source: City of Rockford GIS services  
City of Rockford, Tolemi data, 2021

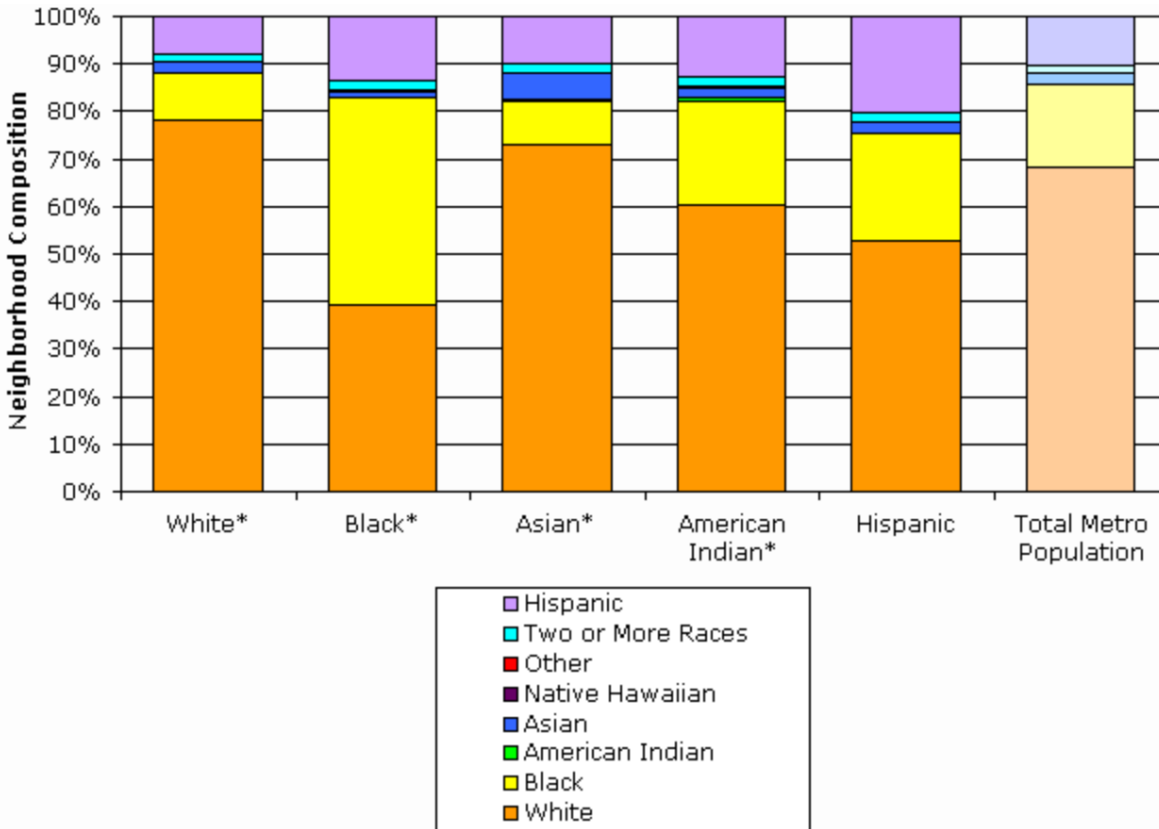


- 67 - 154
- 15 - 66
- 0 - 14

## Segregation: An East-West Divide Rooted in History

Neighborhood segregation by race and ethnicity can be measured in a variety of ways. An “exposure index” provides a measure of neighborhood composition as compared to the total population of the metropolitan area as a whole. It provides a measure of segregation by showing how much different racial and ethnic groups tend to cluster by neighborhood, rather than reflect an even distribution of the population. The graph below from CensusScope shows significant segregation between Black and White residents, with Black residents making up a far larger proportion of the neighborhoods where they live compared to the population as a whole.

**Figure 28: Exposure Indices for Race and Ethnic Groups in Rockford, 2000**

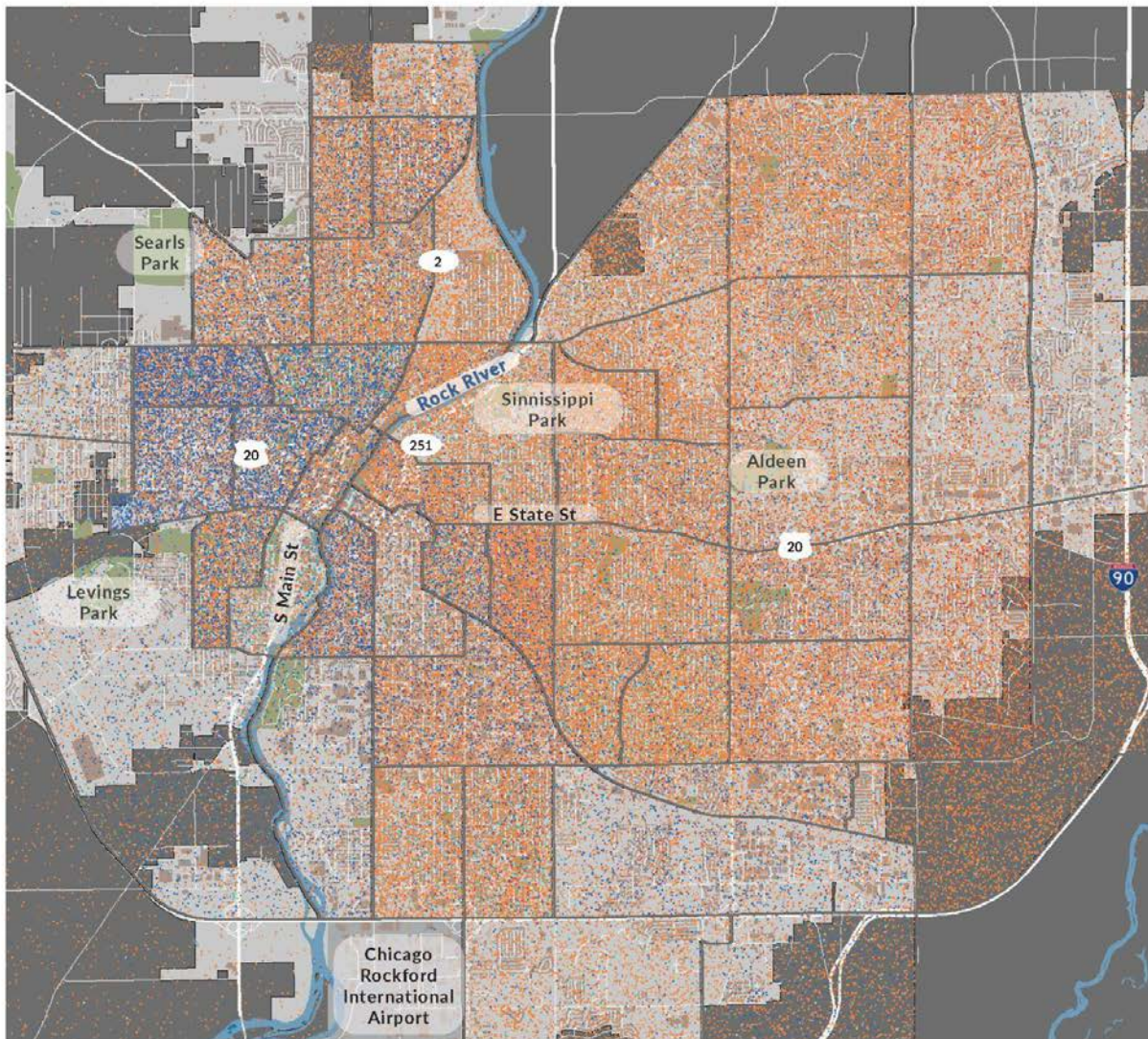


Source: William H. Frey and Dowell Myers' analysis of Census 2000; and the Social Science Data Analysis Network (SSDAN).

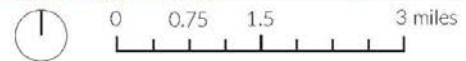
This graph reflects analysis of Rockford as of Census 2000, which has certainly aged at this point. However, follow-up “dot density” mapping for this analytic effort, shown in Figure X on the next page, shows similar trends. White residents tend to cluster in select central neighborhoods and on the East side of the Rock River, while Black residents are far more concentrated on the West side of the river than their share of the population (22%) would suggest.



**Figure 29: Dot Density Map of Persons by Race/Ethnicity, Rockford, 2019**



Source: City of Rockford GIS services  
U.S. Census Bureau, 2015-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates



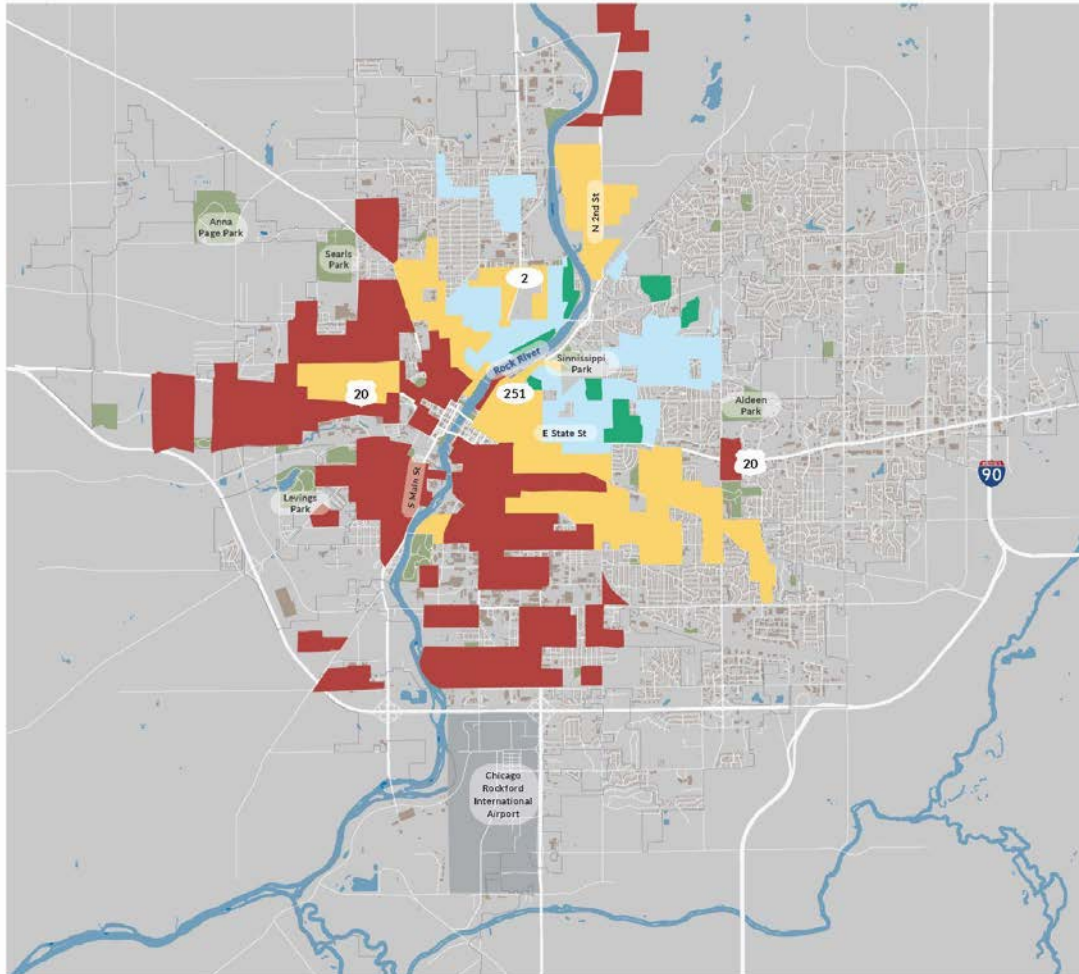
- 1 dot = 1 person
  - Total Population = 187,606
  - White (73.03%)
  - Black (18.38%)
  - Two or more races (3.78%)
  - Asian (2.98%)
  - Other (2.49%)
  - American Indian and Alaska Native (0.34%)
- \*Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander population is less than .01%

Examination of Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) maps from the 1930s show that problematic decisions about investment have been made based on residents' race and ethnicity since Rockford's early days of growth. Much of the west side of the Rock River was rated "C" or "Definitely Declining" and "D" or "Hazardous" in these assessments of neighborhoods' desirability and eligibility for aid. Decisions made in the early to mid 1900s 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.<sup>8</sup>

**Figure 30: HOLC Redlining Categories, Rockford**



Source: University of Richmond Digital Scholarship Lab



**HOLC Grade**

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| Water bodies | A |
| Parks        | B |
| Buildings    | C |
| Airport      | D |

This analysis should not be read as dismissive of other populations of color, including more recent immigrant populations such as Hispanic/Latinx, Lao, Congolese, Syrian, and other

<sup>8</sup> Mitchell, Bruce and Juan Franco. 2018. HOLC “Redlining” Maps: The persistent structure of segregation and economic inequality. National Community Reinvestment Coalition. Online at [https://ncrc.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm\\_uploads/2018/02/NCRC-Research-HOLC-10.pdf](https://ncrc.org/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2018/02/NCRC-Research-HOLC-10.pdf).





residents who have come to reside in Rockford more recently. Instead, it reveals a pattern of inequality that can affect communities of color and lower-income families more broadly when resources and investment is distributed unevenly, as discussed in the following section.

## Social Determinants of Health: Inequity in Access to Resources

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines the social determinants of health (SDOH) as "the conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems shaping the conditions of daily life."<sup>9</sup> The data maps that follow will take a deeper look at the community, educational, food, health, and housing facilities across Rockford and the different degrees of access that residents have to these resources. Understanding how SDOH impacts Rockford's communities will help to inform current gaps and access individuals may or may not have.

Addressing social determinants of health is a primary approach to achieving health equity, when everyone has the opportunity to live a healthy life. When looking at Rockford, being able to understand how access to quality education, healthy food, quality healthcare, community facilities, and safe housing is impacting its communities, we can better understand the next steps in providing a more equitable future for all.

### Education Facilities

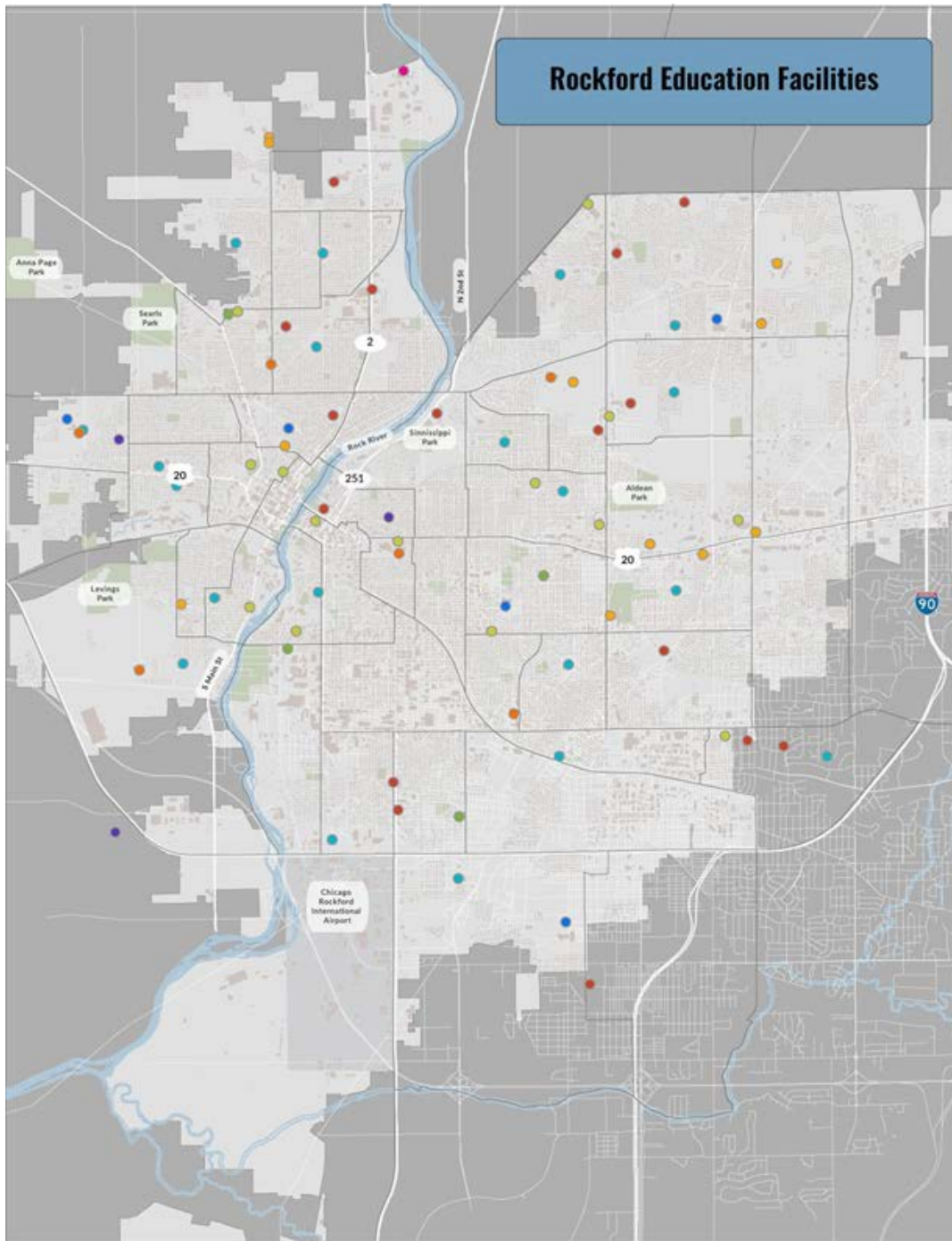
Figure 31 begins to showcase the difference in access to SDOH between western Rockford and eastern Rockford. According to Healthy People 2030, "Early childhood development and education are key determinants of future health and well-being. Addressing the disparities in access to early childhood development and education opportunities can greatly bolster young children's future health outcomes." As this map shows, there are forty six public schools spread across the city (including four early childhood centers, twenty one elementary schools, six middle schools, five high schools, five special program schools, and three charter schools).

Daycare centers appear to be most concentrated in the city's northeast quadrant, limiting access to families in the western areas of the city. Private schools also appear to exist mostly in eastern neighborhoods, with a few sprinkling the northern area of Rockford. Colleges in Rockford also seem to be located predominantly in the eastern part of the city.

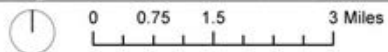
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<sup>9</sup> The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' initiative Healthy People 2030 uses SDOH in its efforts to improve health and well-being. Information and definitions from their work will be referenced throughout this SDOH report.

**Figure 31: Rockford Education Facilities**



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Illinois Dept of Children & Family Services



- |                          |                               |                                |                 |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Public Middle School     | Public Special Program School | Public Detention Center School | Day Care Center |
| Public Elementary School | Public Early Childhood Center | Private School                 |                 |
| Public High School       | Public Charter School         | College                        |                 |

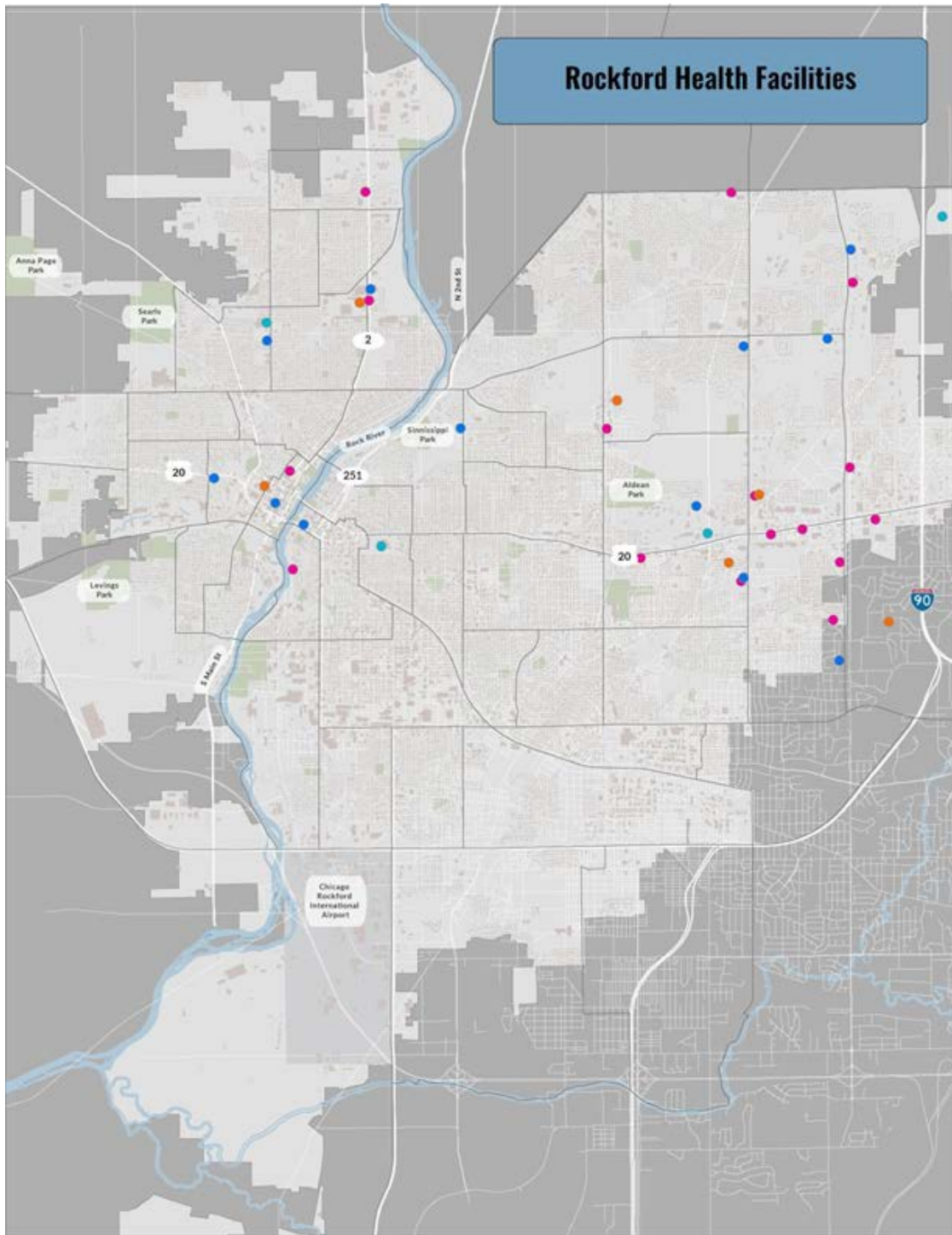


## Health Facilities

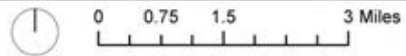
Access to health facilities presents an even more unequal picture than access to educational and daycare facilities. Healthcare facilities included in Figure 32 are dental, medical, behavioral health, and hospitals. This map shows that the majority of these facilities exist in the northeast quadrant of the city. There are a few centrally located facilities, but one hospital, two dental, two medical, and one behavioral health facility all sit at a northern cross point for the fifth and eleventh ward. None of these facilities are located in the sixth ward. The southern part of the city appears to be without options for nearby healthcare access. Any nearby facilities (not included in this data map) are specialty care (nursing homes, rehabilitation centers, etc) or one urgent care facility -- which can be expensive, even for those who are insured.

According to Healthy People 2030, "Inconvenient or unreliable transportation can interfere with consistent access to health care, potentially contributing to negative health outcomes. Studies have shown that lack of transportation can lead to patients, especially those from vulnerable populations, delaying or skipping medication, rescheduling or missing appointments, and postponing care." There are major gaps within access to care for Rockford when reviewing this data map. There are entire communities without healthcare options nearby, which as mentioned, can impact many areas of an individual's healthcare needs, including access to emergency care, ongoing chronic care, and primary or preventative medical care.

**Figure 32: Rockford Health Facilities**



Source: 2021-07 Google Listings



- Dental
- Hospitals
- Medical
- Behavioral Health



## Mental Health, Physical Health, and Lack of Insurance

The map in Figure 33 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

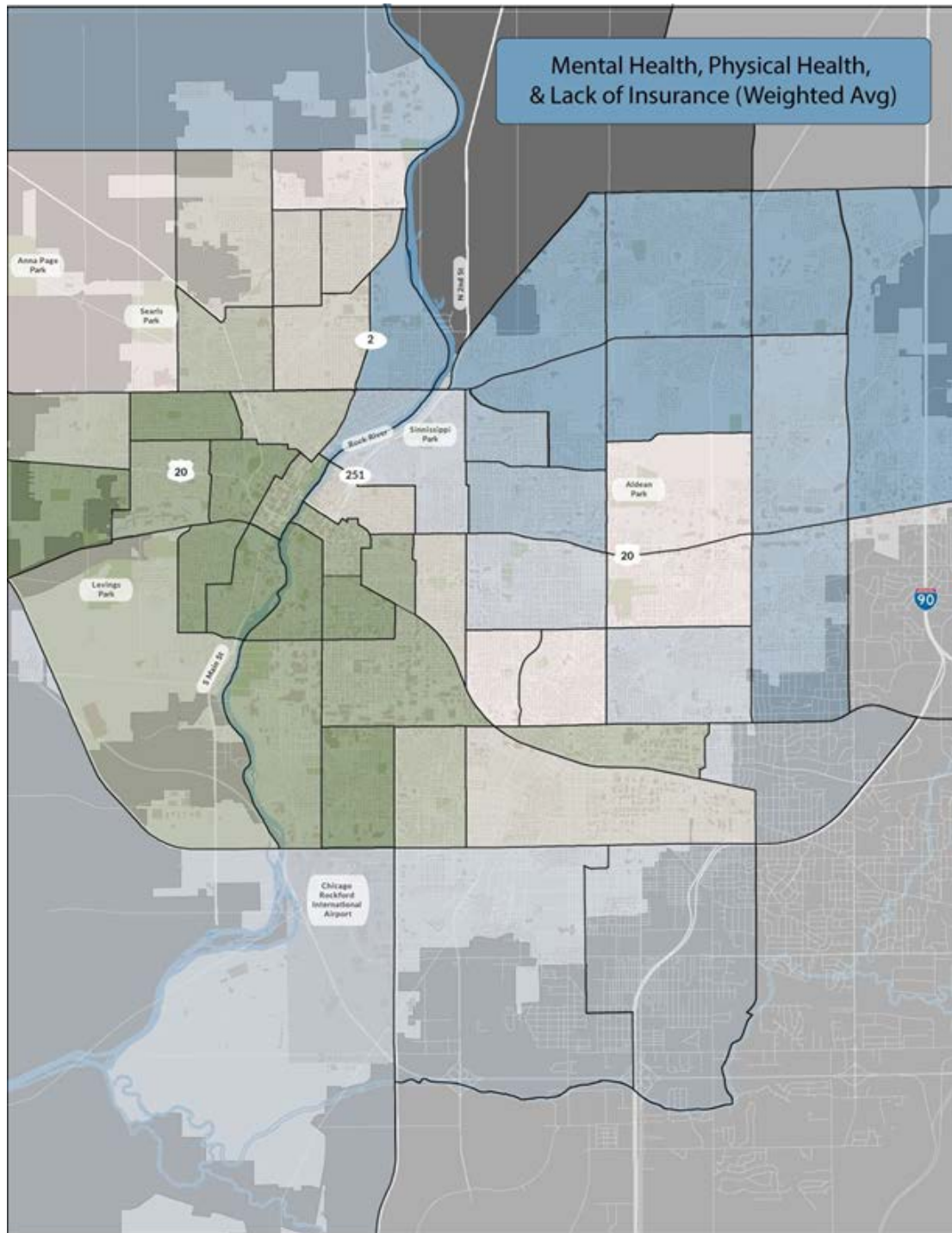
According to Healthy People 2030, "Inadequate health insurance coverage is one of the largest barriers to healthcare access, and the unequal distribution of coverage contributes to disparities in health." Inadequate insurance coverage can also leave individuals vulnerable to high-cost care or prolonging care that is needed. Again, according to Healthy People 2030, "Out-of-pocket medical care costs may lead individuals to delay or forgo needed care (such as doctor visits, dental care, and medications), and medical debt is common among both insured and uninsured individuals."

The correlation is evident in communities in Rockford as shown in Figure 33. 21-27% of western central residents report that their physical and mental health are not good along with a lack of health insurance for adults between the ages of 18-64.

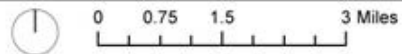
During initial engagement with residents in June 2021, mental health and access to mental health care was a repeated concern asserted by residents. Some saw increased access to mental health care and support as directly correlating to safer homes and neighborhoods.



**Figure 33: Mental Health, Physical Health, and Lack of Insurance**



Source: 2017 CDC Places/500 Cities





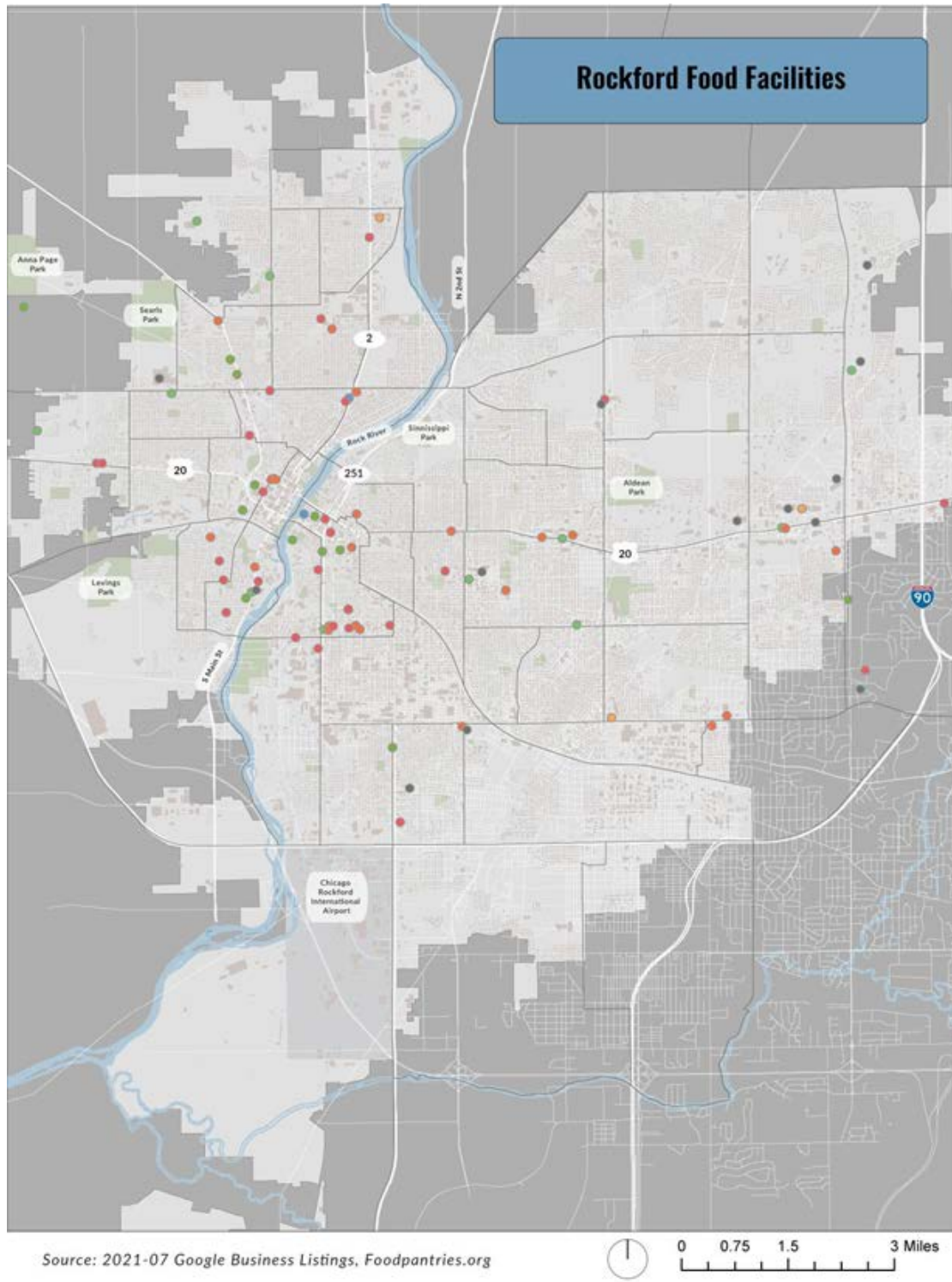
## Access to Fresh Food

Figure 34 shows food facilities (including fourteen grocery stores, twenty three local markets, five supermarkets, twenty seven convenience stores, twelve dollar stores, thirteen food pantries and two farmers markets) located in Rockford. Looking at this map, there are clear areas of the city that have limited access to food stores. This data map identifies convenience stores and dollar stores as food sources, but those shopping options do not provide the same health and food access that a grocery store or supermarket can provide.

These gaps in food access have created multiple food desert regions in the southwest area of the city and the north central neighborhoods above East State Street. There appears to be one supermarket centrally located in the southeastern part of the city, but with gaps surrounding that area that could limit access for those communities. Limited access to supermarkets and grocery stores for these communities leaves residents with limited healthy options. Even when convenience stores and small markets stock healthy foods, they are often too expensive for people with a low income to afford.

Figure 35 better tells the story of food accessibility for different communities in Rockford. Residents who live in the southwestern part of the city are further from a supermarket and in more cases are without a vehicle to access the store. Between 25-59% of housing units in southwestern neighborhoods are without a vehicle and are beyond a half-mile from a supermarket. That percentage drastically decreases the more north and east you move across the city. Again, according to Healthy People 2030, "Individuals without a vehicle or access to convenient public transportation, or who do not have food venues with healthy choices within walking distance, have limited access to foods that support healthy eating patterns." Access to healthy foods contributes to health outcomes to an individual's health throughout their life. Having limited access to healthy food can lead to poor health outcomes. "Evidence shows that poor nutrition and an unhealthy diet are risk factors for high blood pressure, diabetes, and cancer." (Healthy People 2030). (Data Source: USDA Food Access Research Atlas Data 2019)

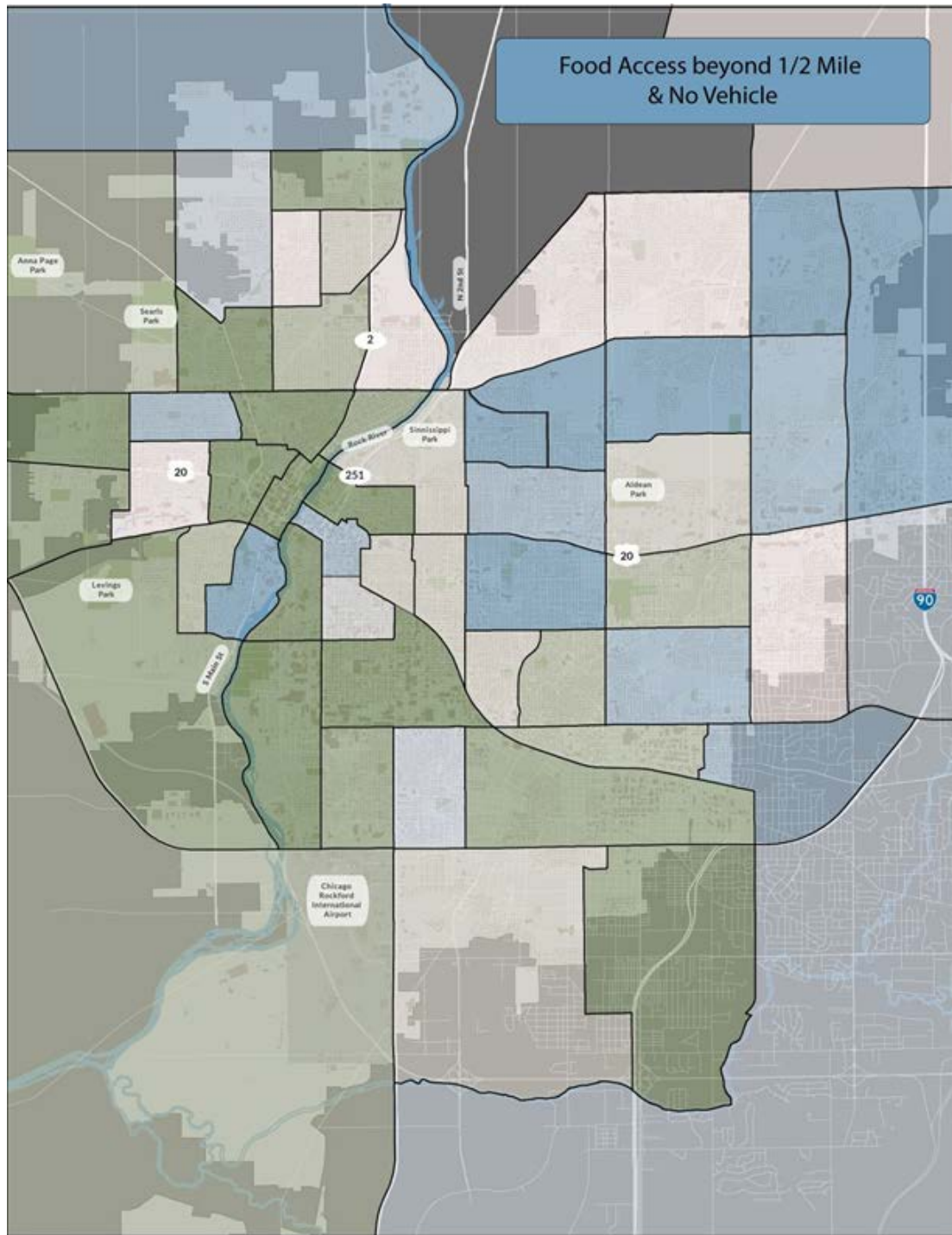
**Figure 34: Rockford Food Facilities**



- Grocery Store
- Market
- Food Pantry
- Convenience Store
- Farmers' Market
- Supermarket
- Dollar Store



**Figure 35: Percentage of Households with No Vehicle, Food Access more than 1/2 Mile**



Source: 2019 Food Access Research Atlas





## Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Related Health Conditions

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs, are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (0-17 years). These include forms of abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual), neglect (physical or emotional), and household dysfunction (mental illness, mother being treated violently, divorce, incarcerated relative, or substance abuse). Again, according to the CDC, "ACEs are linked to chronic health problems, mental illness, and substance use problems in adulthood. ACEs can also negatively impact education, job opportunities, and earning potential."

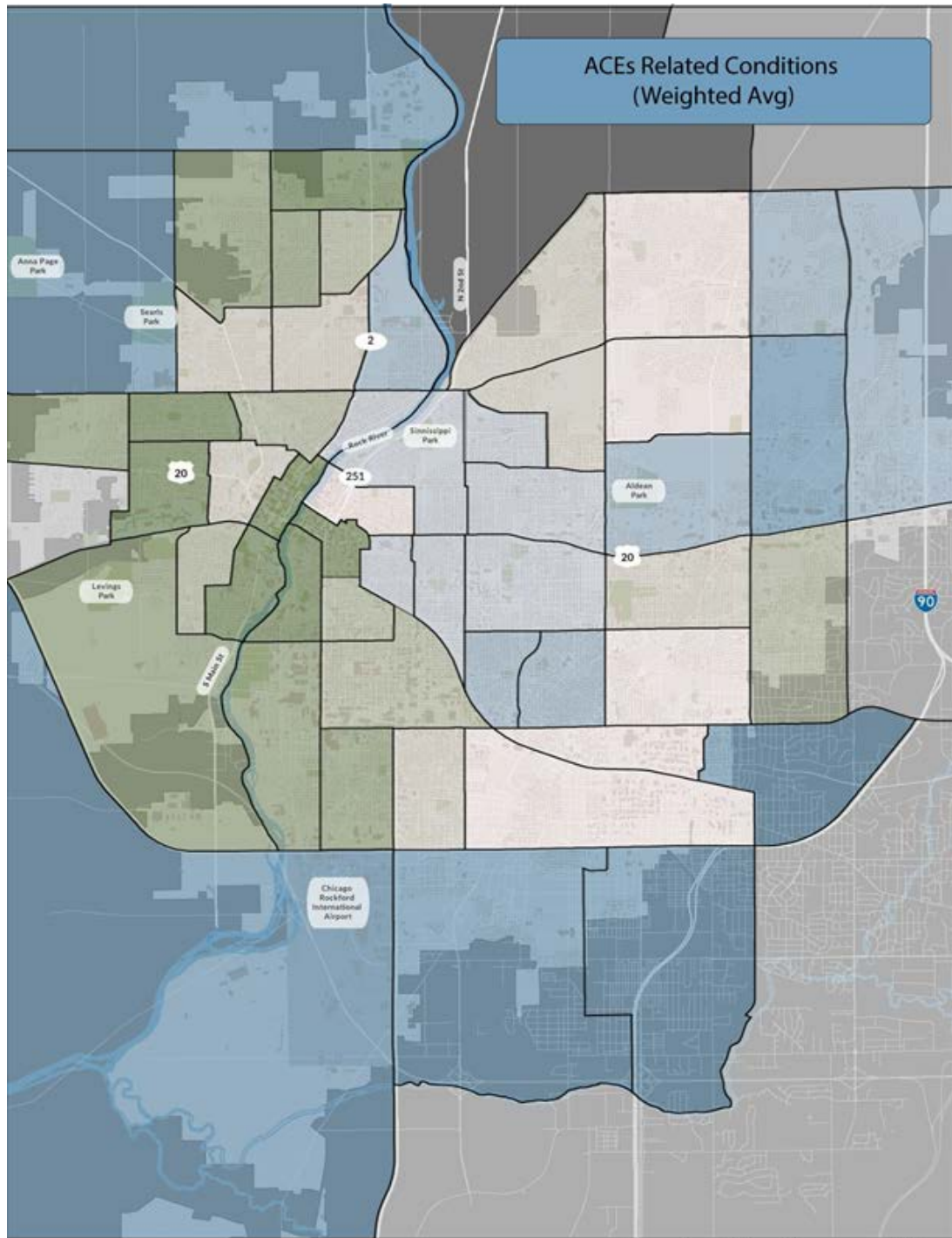
About 61% of US adults self-reported that they had experienced at least one type of ACE, whereas nearly 1 in 6 reported experiencing four or more types of ACEs. This is important to understand because ACEs are preventable and their impacts are long-lasting. Figure 36 shows a weighted average of some of the health indicators that ACEs directly impacts, including:

- Taking medicine for high blood pressure control among adults aged  $\geq 18$  years with high blood pressure
- High cholesterol among adults aged  $\geq 18$  years who have been screened in the past 5 Years
- High blood pressure among adults aged  $\geq 18$  years
- Obesity among adults aged  $\geq 18$  years
- Chronic kidney disease among adults aged  $\geq 18$  years
- Arthritis among adults aged  $\geq 18$  year
- Physical health not good for  $\geq 14$  days among adults aged  $\geq 18$  years
- Mental health not good for  $\geq 14$  days among adults aged  $\geq 18$  years
- Diagnosed diabetes among adults aged  $\geq 18$  years
- Current asthma among adults aged  $\geq 18$  years
- Coronary heart disease among adults aged  $\geq 18$  years

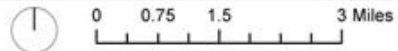
Given that 27-34% of west-central Rockford residents experience these health outcomes in adulthood; understanding that these health outcomes can often be tied to ACEs can help inform prevention for future generations. Again, according to the CDC, "Preventing ACEs could potentially reduce a large number of health conditions. For example, up to 1.9 million cases of heart disease and 21 million cases of depression could have been potentially avoided by preventing ACEs."



**Figure 36: ACEs Related Conditions (Weighted Average)**



Source: 2017 CDC Places/500 Cities

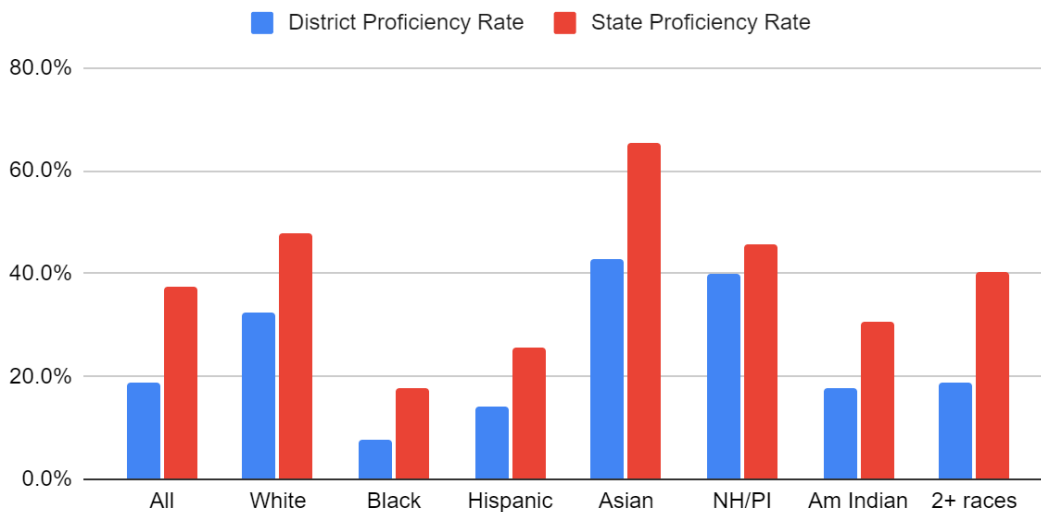




## Educational Outcomes: Declines and Disparities

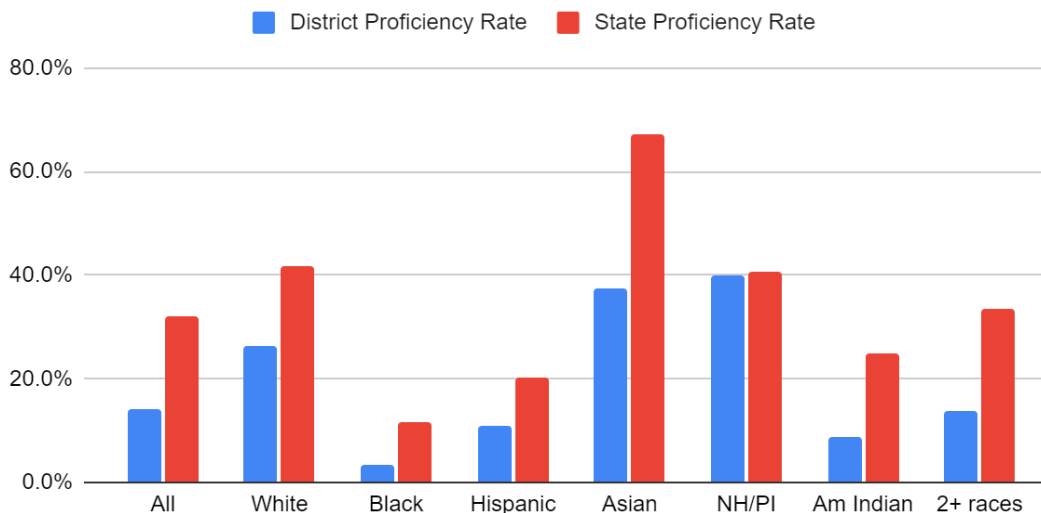
Educational outcomes in Rockford are low relative to the state. Based on 2019 data, the proficiency rate for English language arts (ELA) and math for the Rockford School District 205 (“Rockford Public Schools”) are less than half that of the state as a whole.<sup>10</sup> Students of color are experiencing even greater disparities: for example, Black students in the district saw an ELA proficiency of 7.7% and math proficiency of 3.4%; and Hispanic students saw an ELA proficiency of 14.2% and math proficiency of 10.8%.

**Figure 37: ELA District and State Proficiency Rates by Race and Ethnicity, 2019**



Source: Illinois State Board of Education, 2019.

**Figure 38: Math District and State Proficiency Rates by Race and Ethnicity, 2019**



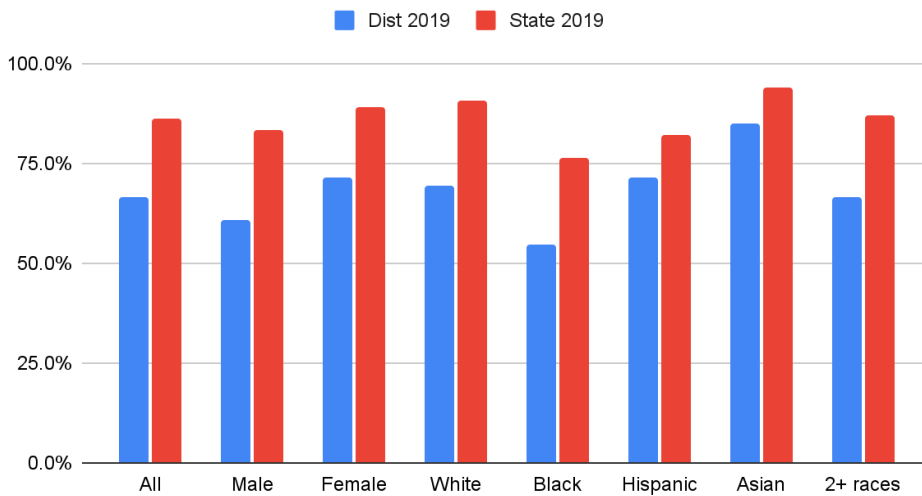
Source: Illinois State Board of Education, 2019.

<sup>10</sup> Illinois State Board of Education, “Illinois Report Card: Rockford SD 205,” District Report for 2019, <https://www.illinoisreportcard.com/District.aspx?districtId=04101205025>; [http://webprod.isbe.net/ereportcard/publicsite/getReport.aspx?year=2019&code=041012050\\_e.pdf](http://webprod.isbe.net/ereportcard/publicsite/getReport.aspx?year=2019&code=041012050_e.pdf)



Graduation rates for Rockford Public Schools are also below the state graduation rates for students across race, ethnicity, and gender. Similar trends are seen for graduation rates as were seen for proficiency rates, with lower graduation rates for Black and Hispanic students and higher rates for Asian and white students.

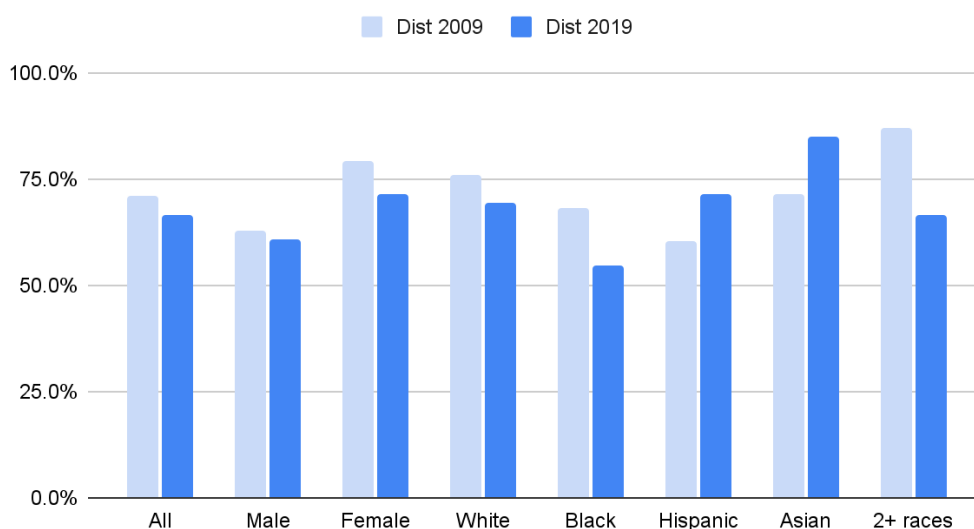
**Figure 39: Graduation Rates for District and State, 2019**



Source: Illinois State Board of Education, 2019.

Graduation rates for Rockford Public Schools have declined in the 10-year period between 2009 and 2019, with 70.9% of students graduating in 2009 and 66.4% graduating in 2019, a difference of nearly 5%. This trend holds true across racial and ethnic groups in Rockford, with the exception of Hispanic and Asian students, both of which saw an increase in graduation rates. Hispanic students have one of the highest graduation rates in the district at 71.5%.

**Figure 40: Graduation Rates for District and State, 2009-2019**



Source: Illinois State Board of Education, 2019.

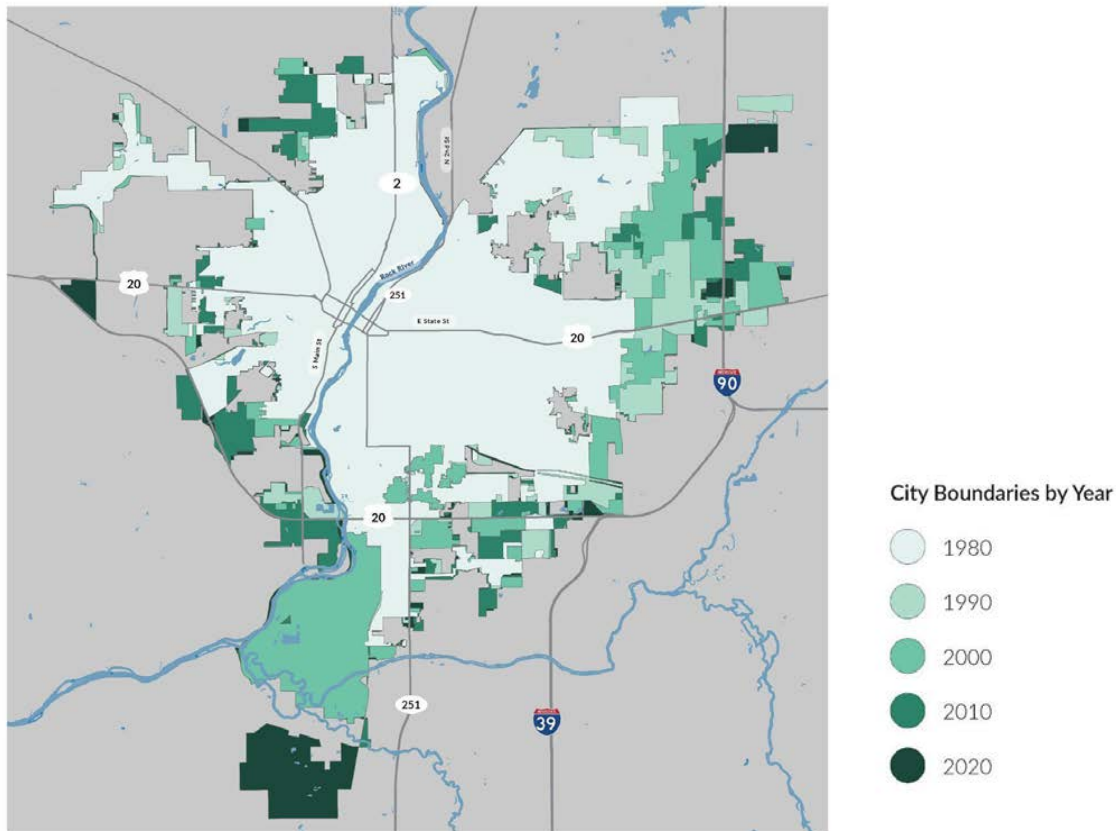
## Threats

“Threats” in this context are larger trends that affect the well-being and health of Rockford’s residents. The two key threats discussed in this section are the trend toward annexation rather than infill for new development in Rockford, and the potential effects of climate change in the community.

### Annexation: A Short-Term Solution with Long-Term Costs

Over the last four decades, Rockford’s boundaries have continued to expand through annexation. In the short term, annexation can help cities adjust for declines in population by adding new development to the property tax rolls. However, the City then takes on responsibility for public services to these new areas, which brings long-term costs for roads, police and fire service, underground infrastructure, and more. While tax rates have lowered slightly for Rockford residents in recent years, tax-rates.org still rates Winnebago County as having one of the highest median property tax rates in the nation.<sup>11</sup>

**Figure 41: City of Rockford Boundaries by Decade, 1980-2020**



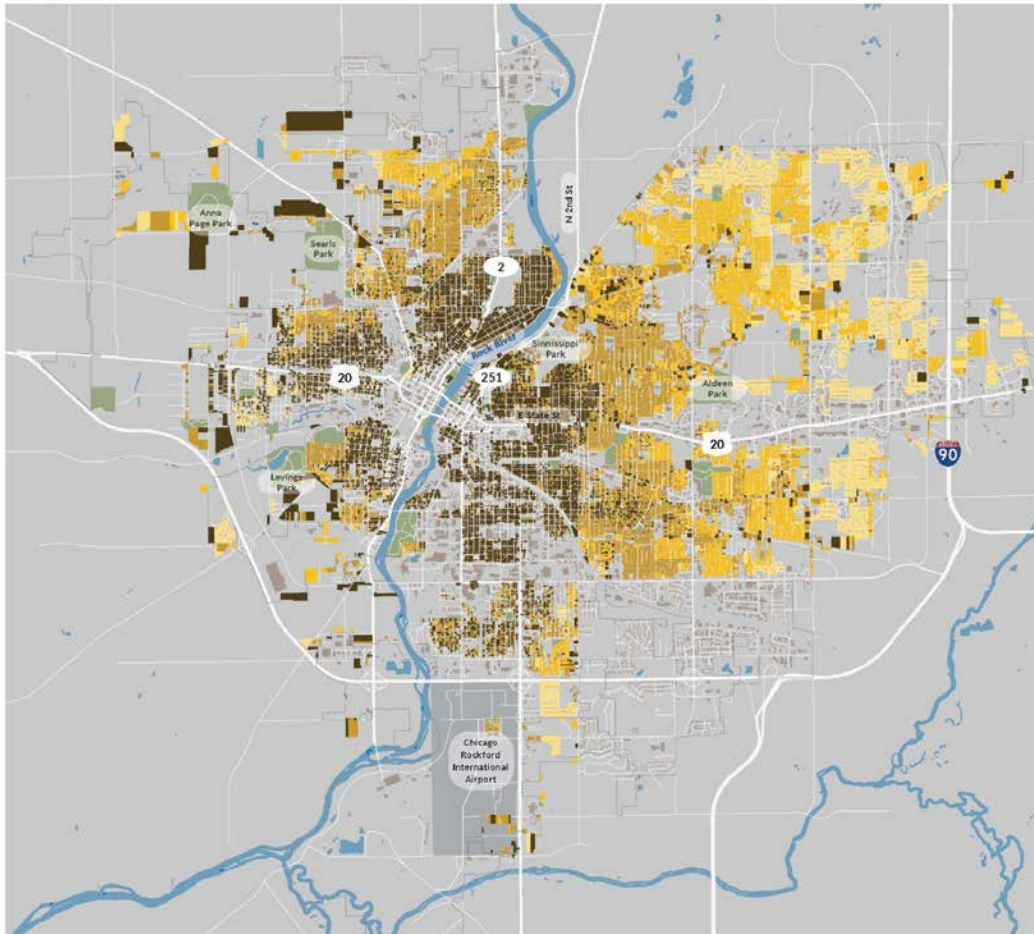
Source: U.S. Census Tiger/Line Files

<sup>11</sup> Tax-Rates.org. Winnebago County Property Tax. [http://www.tax-rates.org/illinois/winnebago\\_county\\_property\\_tax](http://www.tax-rates.org/illinois/winnebago_county_property_tax)



Housing development patterns in Rockford also radiate out from the City's central historic core toward the more recently annexed edges. While some historic areas are well-preserved, much of the historic core is in areas that now have some of the City's lowest housing values. Older houses require more maintenance and repair, thereby creating a problem where homeowners must decide if reinvestment in their home is worth the cost. This puts Rockford in a precarious position where the aging housing stock declines in quality, driving further outward growth.

**Figure 42: Year Housing Built in Rockford**



Source: Winnebago County Tax Assessor

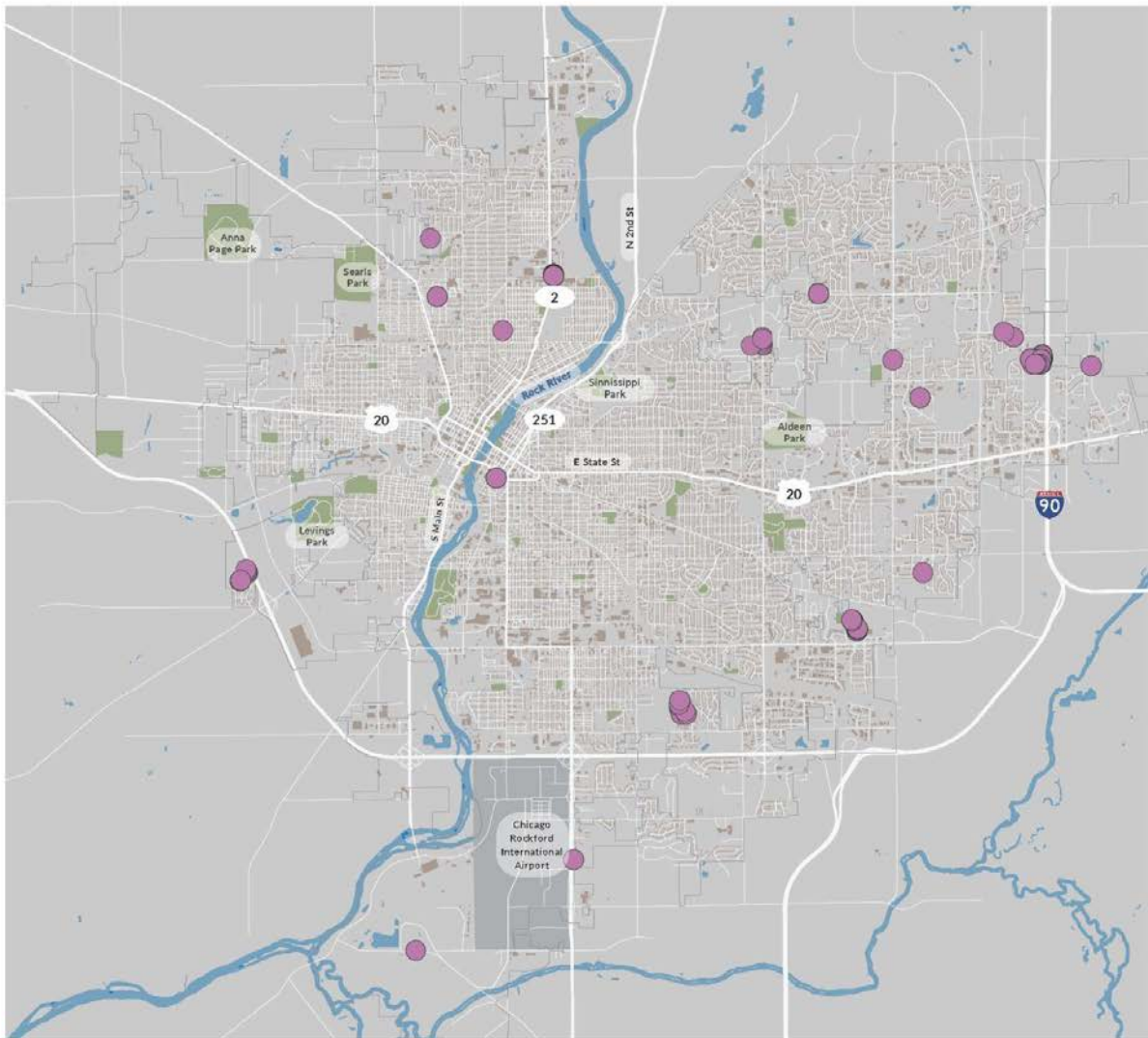


**Year Built**

- |              |             |
|--------------|-------------|
| Water bodies | 1981 - 2020 |
| Parks        | 1961 - 1980 |
| Buildings    | 1941 - 1960 |
| Airport      | Before 1941 |

New construction building permits in Rockford currently concentrate toward the outer edges of the City, rather than in areas that experience concentrated vacancy. Catalytic investments that can help redirect these trends will help reduce property tax and housing costs for Rockford over time.

**Figure 43: New Construction Building Permits as of 7/15/21**



Source: City of Rockford GIS services



- Water bodies
- Parks
- Buildings
- Airport
- New Construction Permits



## Climate Change: Extreme Heat and Flooding

Climate change is also an ongoing threat that affects future housing and community needs in Rockford. A recent climate assessment from The Nature Conservancy suggests that days of extreme heat will become more common (100 degrees or more), while winters will become milder.<sup>12</sup> Homes with aging air conditioning systems may experience stresses and require more reinvestment in retrofits to accommodate hotter years; if air conditioning is unreliable, serious health consequences could result for families.

The climate assessment also notes that climate change will cause wide swings in precipitation and could increase the potential for flooding events.<sup>13</sup> Rockford has already had issues with flooding in the Keith Creek area, and while detention requirements for new development help to mitigate flood potential, growing uncertainty about precipitation could cause more frequent street and home flooding in the future. In some cases, buyout programs may be required such as the program implemented in the early 2010s during the Keith Creek Greenway Flood Mitigation Project.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> The Nature Conservancy, 2021. An Assessment of the Impacts of Climate Change in Illinois. [https://www.nature.org/content/dam/tnc/nature/en/documents/IL\\_Climate\\_Assessment\\_2021.pdf](https://www.nature.org/content/dam/tnc/nature/en/documents/IL_Climate_Assessment_2021.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> City of Rockford, 2010. Keith Creek Greenway Flood Mitigation Project. [https://www.illinoisfloods.org/content/documents/2d\\_keith\\_creek\\_greenway\\_flood\\_mitigation\\_project.pdf](https://www.illinoisfloods.org/content/documents/2d_keith_creek_greenway_flood_mitigation_project.pdf)



## Appendix A: Housing Demand Model Methods

This analysis used data from American Community Survey (ACS) 2019 5-Year Estimates of the Census Bureau, the 2013-2017 Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS) data, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) data, the State of Cities Data System (SOCDS) Building Permits Database from HUD for Rockford city, IL. The ACS and CHAS data were used to estimate 2019 levels of demand and overall supply and SOCDS permit data was used to project 2019 supply. In addition, an obsolescence rate of 0.3% was used for each year up to 2029 estimating the dwindling supply of housing due to demolition, housing quality and other factors that impact reduced housing units over time.

### *Estimating Supply*

2019 rental unit supply used ACS 2019 5-year estimates<sup>15</sup> of rental units by gross rent, which allowed a breakdown of supply by income of affordability using the latest HUD information for 2019 Income limits for 2-family households.<sup>16</sup> The household rate was the average determined by ACS 2019 Data for Rockford listed in Housing Characteristics, DP04 Table. From this base supply, the model accounted for vacancy and obsolescence, as well as new units based off of housing permits for residential construction issued by the City of Rockford in 2019.

Rockford, IL and national vacancy rates were used to account for vacant units which could be counted towards the supply of units, in addition to currently-occupied units. The national vacancy rate was assumed to be the “natural vacancy rate,” which means the number of vacant units for sale or for rent on the market divided by the number of households plus vacant units on the market.”<sup>17</sup> The difference between the national and Rockford, IL vacancy rate was used to determine housing stock that could be counted as additional supply of housing.

The vacancy adjustment was distributed to the proportion of households that fit each income bracket in Rockford, which used CHAS estimates of households by income.<sup>18</sup> For example, 282 units would be off the market if Rockford was to achieve the “natural vacancy rate,” and of that, the model assumes that 30% or 84 units removed from the market would need to be affordable to households at 0-30% MFI, as 30% of renter households are of that income bracket in Rockford.

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<sup>15</sup> Census Bureau, ACS 2014-2018 5-Year Estimates, B25063 Gross Rent.

<sup>16</sup> HUD FY 2019 Multi-family Income Limits Summary

<sup>17</sup> Eric S. Belsky, Rachel Bogardus Drew, and Daniel McCue, (2007). Projecting the Underlying Demand for New Housing Units: Inferences from the Past, Assumptions about the Future

<sup>18</sup> CHAS 2006-2017 data, Rockford city data, <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/cp.html#2006-2017>





**Figure 44: FY 2019 Income Limit Category by dataset**

Income Level	CHAS annual income limits: Renters	CHAS annual income limits: Owners
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Used to estimate units by income limit for renters in 2019</li> <li>Used 2019 HUD Rockford, IL MSA FMR Area, assuming Income Limits for families with 2 people, because average household size is 2.3 for renters per ACS 2019 through the Selected Housing Characteristics Data Set</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Used to estimate units by income limit for supply of owners in 2019</li> <li>Used 2019 HUD Rockford, IL MSA FMR Area, assuming Income limits for families with 2 people, because average household size is 2.4 for owners per ACS 2019 through the Selected Housing Characteristics Data Set</li> </ul>
“Extremely Low Income” or 0-30% HAMFI	\$0 - \$16,910	\$0 - \$16,910
“Very Low Income” or 31-50% HAMFI	\$16,911 - \$26,550	\$16,911 - \$26,550
“Low Income” or 51-80% of HAMFI	\$26,551 - \$42,450	\$26,551 - \$42,450
81-100% of HAMFI	\$42,451 - \$53,100	\$42,451 - \$53,100
100%+ of HAMFI	\$53,101+	\$53,101+

An obsolescence rate of 0.30% was applied to the 2019 supply by income bracket, a rate which was verified by prior research.<sup>19</sup> The obsolescence rate accounted for the homes removed from the market over the forecasted period of time based on age (declining conditions) or demolition. The SOCDS Building Permits Database of HUD provides estimates of residential building permits issued by jurisdictions including the City of Rockford, IL, and this was used by the model to estimate the supply of new housing added in 2019.<sup>20</sup>

### *Estimating Demand*

CHAS data was used to estimate the proportion of households in each income bracket for renters and owners, which was then used to distribute the total renter households and owner households for 2019 to estimate the count of households by income. This percentage for households allowed us to account for any differences in data between households in ACS data and CHAS data by disaggregating, and converting counts into percentages.

<sup>19</sup> National Association of Home Builders, “More New Homes Needed to Replace Older Stock,” August 2, 2018, <https://www.nahbclassic.org/generic.aspx?sectionID=734&genericContentID=263243>

<sup>20</sup> HUD, State of Cities Data System (SOCDS) Building Permits Database, <https://socds.huduser.gov/permits/>



**Figure 45: Estimated Distribution of Households by Income**

Income Bracket	Renters		Owners	
	Percentage	Count	Percentage	Count
0-30% MFI	30%	7,795	7%	2,160
31% - 50% MFI	20%	5,140	10%	3,105
51% - 80% MFI	21%	5,445	17%	5,465
81% - 100% MFI	10%	2,695	13%	4,225
100+% MFI	20%	5,235	54%	17,675
Total	100%	26,310	100%	32,630

Data source: CHAS 2013-2017 data, Rockford city data,  
<https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/cp.html#2006-2017>

### Assumptions

This distribution of households by income, which represents the demand for housing by affordability level, when disaggregated into demand for housing by affordability and by bedroom counts helped break down CHAS data to estimate percentages of households by income and by types—elderly family, small family, large family, elderly non-family, and non-elderly family.<sup>21</sup> Each household was assumed to have unique sets of demand for different unit counts—for example, for renter households classified as small families of 2 to 4 people, it was assumed that 20% would need a 0- to 1-bedroom unit, 55% would need a 2-bedroom, and 25% would need 3-bedrooms or more. This 2020 Demand Model assumes that the household count is steady, and not experiencing an influx of new residents. Household growth in Rockford has expanded its growth boundaries in recent years with shrinking populations<sup>22</sup>. 2019 proportions of owners and renters assumed no change from 2019 proportions based on ACS 5-year estimates.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> CHAS 2013-2017 Place data, Rockford city,  
[https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/cp.html#2006-2017\\_query](https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/cp.html#2006-2017_query)

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.wifr.com/content/news/Rockford-fastest-shrinking-city-in-ill-one-of-fastest-in-US-571103071.html>

<sup>23</sup> Census Bureau, ACS 5-Year Estimates, S1101 Households and Families. Estimates for 2016, 2017, and 2018.



### *Data Qualifications*

The estimates were made using the latest available data, which may not account for shifts (particularly in the COVID environment of constrained housing supply) since the data was released. Qualifications to the data are listed below:

- 2019 proportions of owners and renters assumed no change from 2018 proportions (46% renters and 54% owners) based on ACS 5-year estimates, which is based on the most reliable available data but has the potential to be outdated.
- Proportions of households by income level were estimated using 2013-2017 CHAS data, which averaged the count of households in each income category for the years 2013 through 2017. CHAS data was preferred over 2019 5-year estimates from ACS due to the ability of CHAS data to estimate income levels exactly at or below certain percentages of HUD Area Median Family Income (HAMFI or MFI), and the breakdowns that CHAS provides by household type that are not available through ACS.
- The national obsolescence rate of 0.3% may not accurately reflect 2019 obsolescence rates specific to Rockford.