



News Release

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Mayor Appoints Task Force to Advance the Redevelopment of Davis Park

Rockford, Ill. – Mayor Tom McNamara today announced a plan to move ahead with redeveloping Davis Park, appointing a Task Force to implement a visionary master plan and naming the Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau (RACVB) to lead the effort.

“I believe Davis Park is key to the long-term growth and success of Rockford’s downtown,” said Mayor McNamara. “Increasingly, our community is coming together and our central city is coming to life in exciting ways.”

Planned attractions in Davis Park will be a magnet for residents and visitors alike, enlivening the heart of the city and spurring Rockford’s economy in general, the mayor said. The plan calls for an expanded footprint, water features and an ice rink, enhanced music venues, public docks, green space, a sculpture walk, a climbing wall on the exterior of the Lorden Building, attractive gateways and more.

At the mayor’s request, RACVB President/CEO John Groh will chair the new 19-member task force. The group is charged with implementing the Davis Park Master Plan, a visionary set of recommendations developed by another city-appointed group that met in 2015 and 2016 and submitted a detailed final report.

In appointing the task force, the Mayor selected individuals and organizations with passion for the park and the potential it holds. The group includes local residents, as well as representatives from the City, which owns the park; the Rockford Park District, which maintains the park; the Rockford Area Venues & Entertainment Authority which programs the Park; as well as Gorman & Co. which is developing the adjacent Hilton Embassy Suites & Rockford Conference Center (opening in early 2020).

In appointing the RACVB as the lead agency and Groh to chair the group, Mayor McNamara said he turned to an organization with a track record of success.

“The tourism bureau understands the dynamics of developing destinations that improve the quality of life for residents, while also attracting visitors,” said McNamara. “The bureau also understands how greatly these kinds of destinations impact a local economy.”

Mayor McNamara cited the RACVB’s role in working with various organizations and key community partners to help accomplish such projects and initiative as Stroll on State, Reclaiming First, the Laurent House acquisition and restoration, Forest City Beautiful and more.

The new task force is charged with reviewing and refining the Master Plan and seeking input from Rockford’s City Council and the community. The group also will identify funding sources to implement the redevelopment plan.

“RACVB is honored to take a lead role, and every person on the new task force is enthusiastic and excited to get started,” Groh said. “We all realize that Davis Park has tremendous unmet potential, and we can’t wait to make things happen.”

David Anderson, chairman of RACVB’s board of directors, said the quality of life and economic benefits of the project will reach the entire community. “I am encouraged to see the Davis Park plan move from the drawing board to the action stage. Cities that are growing are creating spaces for their communities to gather together and in turn the private sector is responding with new investments in commercial, residential and retail development around these parks. I think we’ll see the same thing here in Rockford.”

The taskforce held its first meeting on Thursday, May 17 and will reconvene after the Memorial Day holiday. The group is expected to wrap up initial work related to refining the Master Plan and determining financial and operational feasibility by the end of 2018.

Members of the Task Force are as follows:

Representing the City of Rockford

Mayor Thomas McNamara
Alderman Joe Chiarelli
Alderwoman Linda McNeely
Todd Cagnoni

Citizen Representatives on the Task Force

Jennifer Furst
Angela Larson
Tiana McCall
Ricardo Montoya-Picazo
Sean Muserallo
Josh Peigh
Maryjo Pirages Reynolds
Ashley Sarver

Representing Rockford Area Venues & Entertainment Authority

Troy Flynn
Tom Walsh

Representing the Rockford Park District

Dan Jacobson
Tom Lind

Representing Gorman & Company

Ben Marshall
Laura Narduzi

Representing Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

John Groh
Tana Vettore

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