



Rockford, IL



Rockford, Illinois, is located on both sides of the Rock River in the north-central part of the state. The area had been home to various Native American tribes until the end of the Black Hawk War in 1832. The first European settlers in what is now Rockford arrived in 1834. Germanicus Kent, Thatcher Blake, and Lewis Lemon settled near the mouth of Kent Creek on the west side of the Rock River. The city was originally named Midway (halfway between Chicago and Galena), but eventually became known as Rockford because of the Rock River's rocky ford bubbling near the original settlement.

Midway Village Museum depicts life in northern Illinois from 1890 to 1910 and consists of a Victorian village with 26 historical buildings, artifacts, and several 19th century gardens.

Three museums comprise the Riverfront Museum Campus. The Burpee Museum of Natural History focuses on dinosaurs and the area's natural environment. The Discovery Center Museum features 250 hands-on art and science exhibits, a planetarium, and a TV studio. The permanent collection at the Rockford Art Museum consists of modern and contemporary American art with an emphasis on artists from Illinois.

Exhibits at the Veterans Memorial Hall and Museum feature local veterans and honor the memory of those who fought to defend the United States. Six ethnic groups are represented at the Ethnic Heritage Museum: African American, Irish, Italian, Lithuanian, Polish, and Hispanic. Other Rockford museums include the Camp Grant Museum and the Rockford Auto Museum.

Rockford's historic house museums include the 1865 Tinker Swiss Cottage complex that consists of the cottage filled with original furnishings, artwork, diaries, clothing, and household items; a barn; and a carriage house. The 1871 Erlander Home Museum and Swedish Historical Society feature Victorian décor, collections that include Rockford-made furniture, a collection of dolls created by Charlotte Weibull, and artifacts recalling Swedish immigration to northern Illinois and Rockford's Swedish heritage. Other historic homes in the city include the 1857 Graham-Ginestra House, the 1916 Indian Hill Manor and Farm, and Frank Lloyd Wright's 1952 Laurent House.

Many opportunities for performing arts are available in Rockford. The historic Coronado Performing Arts Center hosts the Rockford Symphony Orchestra, concerts and performances organized by the Rockford Coronado Concert Association, Broadway shows, and traveling shows. The Center is home to The Land of Lincoln Theatre Organ Society's Coronado Grande Barton Theatre Organ. Mendelssohn Performing Arts Center presents concert series with locally, nationally, and internationally renowned performers in many genres. The Rockford Wind Ensemble and Usual Suspects theater company perform at the Nordlof Center. Musical concerts, comedy performances, rodeos, motor sports, and family shows are presented at the BMO Harris Bank Center.

Artists' Ensemble Theater performs at Rockford University's Clark Arts Center, which also produces faculty-and-student directed shows and concerts. The outdoor Bengt Sjostrom Theatre on the campus of Rock Valley College stages musical productions in the summer. Other outdoor concerts are performed at the Sennissippi Park Music Shell, Levings Park, and Nicholas Conservatory & Gardens outdoor terrace.

NEIGHBORHOODS

Downtown Rockford is primarily a commercial, governmental, and cultural center that spans both sides of the Rock River. Residential options include lofts and condominiums, many with river views.

The historic district of Brown's Hills-Knightsville is located on the east side of the river. Knightsville was built for the sole purpose of providing housing for a single industry, the Skandia Furniture Company, which was built in 1889. Brown's Hills neighborhood features large brick homes built on large wooded lots between 1910 and 1940. Eleven homes in Brown's Hills were designed by Jesse Barloga, a prominent local architect whose styles included Early Georgian, Tudor, and Art Deco. Other historic east-side neighborhoods include Prairie Hill, where homes date between 1850 and 1940, and North Highland and South Highland, where homes date between 1920 and 1950.

Newer home developments include Red Oak Estates, which features ranch and traditional two-story styles that were built in the mid-1980s. Tower Hill Estates features traditional two- and single-story housing-styles; Oak Hills offers large contemporary or traditional, two- and single story houses on large lots; both developments date from the 1990s. Bello Reserve homes were built in the 2000s in contemporary styles on large lots.

Bordering the West side of the river in the Churchill's Grove neighborhood, National Avenue and Harlem Boulevard feature large, custom-built homes in Victorian, Tudor, Colonial, Prairie, and Arts & Crafts styles, including designs by Jesse Barloga. Clinton Street in the Edgewater neighborhood also contains Barloga-designed homes. Two Edgewater streets were paved with bricks in 1915, and those same bricks line the street today. Indian Terrace features homes in Arts & Crafts, Prairie, and Shingle styles with small yards.

The Signal Hill neighborhood is characterized by steep inclines on many of its streets. Homes were built between 1880 and 1940.

PARKS AND RECREATION

Rockford's 125 neighborhood parks offer innovative playgrounds with amenities that include an indoor soft play area at CherryVale Mall, 4 skate parks, 3 off-leash dog parks, 3 parks with garden plots, 14 spray pads, 17 paths and trails, and 3 outdoor pools. Rockford offers facilities for participation in many sports, including basketball, cheerleading, dodgeball, football, soccer, swimming, golf, hockey, pickleball, skiing, skating, softball, tennis, volleyball, and track and field.

Sinnissippi Park is a beautiful wooded public park situated along the banks of the Rock River. Sinnissippi Gardens features a rose garden with approximately 2,000 rose plants and a 32-foot floral clock, and is also home to the Sinnissippi Park Music Shell. Adjacent to the gardens is Nicholas Conservatory & Gardens, with a year-round exhibition of tropical trees, plants, and flowers and rotating floral displays.

The 52-acre Alpine Hills Adventure Park features a zipline, a snow park with tubing and terrain park sections, and a 5-hole golf course. Koi-filled ponds, winding paths, streams, and cascading waterfalls are among the landscapes found at Anderson Japanese Gardens. The Windsor Lake Activity Center features catch and release fishing and nonmotorized boating. Levings Park's lake provides the opportunity to wakeboard. Other parks include the Keeling-Puri Peace Plaza, Radio Controlled Flight Field, Klehm Arboretum & Botanic Garden, and Womanspace Labyrinth and Gardens.

Rock Cut State Park's 3,092 acres include two lakes and opportunities for fishing, ice fishing, ice skating, hunting, biking, hiking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, boating, rock climbing, and swimming.

Rockford IceHogs is a professional hockey team affiliated with the Chicago Blackhawks.

EDUCATION

Rockford Public Schools District 205 educates approximately 28,500 students in 25 elementary schools, 6 middle schools, and 5 high schools. The district's special programs include Montessori, gifted, two-way language immersion, STEAM, and high-school career academies.

Higher education is available at Rockford University, which offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in traditional liberal arts and professional fields. Rock Valley College is a comprehensive two-year community college. Career training in selected fields is available at OSF Saint Anthony College of Nursing, Rockford Career College, and Rasmussen College's Rockford campus.

Medical education is available at The UIC Health Sciences Campus-Rockford College of Medicine. Colleges of Nursing and Pharmacy are also located on The UIC Health Sciences Campus.

HEALTH CARE

Rockford is served by the following health care facilities:
 Mercyhealth Hospital-Rockton Avenue Campus: 391 licensed beds.
 OSF Saint Anthony Medical Center: 254 licensed beds.
 Swedish American Hospital: 333 licensed beds.
 Van Matre HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospital: 55 licensed beds.

CITY STATS

2015

City Population	148,422
Metropolitan Statistical Area Population	340,663
Per Capita Personal Income, Rockford, IL, MSA	\$39,674