



Lawrence J. Morrissey, Mayor

## PRESS RELEASE

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **MORRISSEY OUTLINES SEVERAL COMMUNITY PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS**

Attached is a memorandum from Mayor Morrissey to City Council members which was distributed earlier this week, outlining and providing updates on several key community partnership efforts in the areas of education, regional planning, political advocacy, and social services.

The memorandum discusses in further detail the proposed public-private partnerships of *Community Education Partnership*, *Regional Center for Design and Planning*, *Rockford Global Alliance*, and *Community Collaboration, Inc.* In the memorandum, Mayor Morrissey urges City Council members to provide input and thoughts on how these new community partnerships can be implemented successfully and collaboratively.

“In order to improve in the areas of education, regional planning, political advocacy, and social services in the Rockford region, we must develop creative partnerships to solve problems,” stated Mayor Morrissey. “While developing new partnerships and collaborations are sometimes challenging to the status quo, we are leading boldly and working together to achieve more for Rockford’s future. We are building important partnerships that will enable the City to provide critical leadership in these areas.”

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## MEMORANDUM

To: Aldermen  
Department Heads  
Mayor's Office Staff

From: Mayor Morrissey

Date: Sunday, March 25, 2007

Re: Update on Community Partnership Efforts

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It was a pleasure to provide the community and the Council a review of the past year and preview of upcoming initiatives at the State of the City address on March 15. The main theme of the speech, *Leading Boldly; Working Together*, points to the progress we have made during our past opportunities to work together; but it also points to the chance for improved community leadership through creative partnerships. I would like to provide some more detail on the collaborative partnerships discussed at the State of the City as well as other public-private partnership opportunities. I also invite your thoughts and input on these efforts.

As discussed below, the *Community Education Partnership*, *Regional Center for Design and Planning*, *Rockford Global Alliance*, and *Community Collaboration, Inc.*, are newly announced or proposed public-private partnerships designed to provide direction and leadership in many critical areas such as education, regional planning, political advocacy, and social services.

### EDUCATION

The City of Rockford historically did not provide consistent leadership in education. To reverse that trend, I appreciate the Council's support for Adam Smith, our first *Director of Education and Life-Long Learning*. As I discussed at the State of the City address, Adam's work has helped us make critical reductions in truancy by developing our partnerships with the School District, the United Way, and Winnebago County. Adam and our Human Services Department have also helped develop our *Mayor's Youth Advisory Council* and our positive multi-tiered youth program, the *nFactor*, which has received a great deal of praise and support in the community.

To further these initiatives, to pursue additional efforts, and to ensure a strong and consistent connection between our schools, our City government, and our community, we have been working with several of our education partners to develop the *Community Education Partnership*. This new organization, now chaired by Fritz Jacobi of the Rockford Register Star, is a developing 501(c)(3) corporation. In addition to supporting the *nFactor* and our anti-truancy initiative, the organization will foster other collaborative efforts I discussed at the State of the City address such as *The Rockford Promise*, *University Village at Rockford College*, and exploring Charter School opportunities.

### REGIONAL PLANNING

The City has also lacked coordinated and consistent regional planning, which has been commented upon for many years. I appreciate the opportunity we had to begin the improvement process last year by holding the first City Council-County Board retreat. I would like to see us do that again this year. We also held last year the first-ever policy member retreat for the Rockford Area Transportation Study ("RATS"), our metropolitan planning organization. But to support broader planning efforts and more consistent efforts that build off of past visions for better regional planning, we proposed the development this year of a *Regional Center for Design and Planning*.

The concept for this center is that it would be both a physical place to house offices like our RATS organization and it would represent a more collaborative way of regional planning and design. A new 501(c)(3) board has been proposed to help run the center and to support excellence and collaboration in community design. This Center might also house other synergistic organizations such as the River District Association or the Arts Council. The Center would also provide a retail space to showcase regional plans and visions in a way that would invite the public to view our plans and provide input on those plans.

This is really not a new idea; this kind of concept was discussed in conjunction with past efforts like the *Regional Initiative for Community Excellence* ("RICE") and a center like this was also seen during the 2002 inter-regional visit sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce to Chattanooga, TN. The River District organization has consistently supported this concept since members of that organization participated in the Chattanooga trip. Moreover, members of the trip from Janesville, WI came back from the trip and have already started their own center. I had the chance to visit their center last year in a trip organized by the River District Association. The idea of this separate 501(c)(3) board is modeled after both the Chattanooga efforts as well as the City of Chicago, which has a separate 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation called *The*

*Chicago Metropolitan Planning Council*, which supports a public-private vision and partnership in planning Chicago's metropolitan growth.

In conjunction with the Design Center initiative, the RATS policy committee members are now considering a change in the organization that would bring the organization a more consistent focus on all aspects of land planning in conjunction with transportation planning. This new focus would be modeled off of what the City of Chicago has done by recently merging its transportation planning organization, Chicago Area Transportation Study, "CATS", with its land planning organization, the Northeastern Illinois Planning Commission, "NIPC", to become the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, "CMAP". In that spirit, we have proposed that RATS be renamed to RMAP to better reflect the new agenda for the organization. We are also pursuing proposed State legislation right now that would financially support the development of more robust planning organizations like CMAP and RMAP throughout the State.

We are doing additional analysis on possible locations for the center, recruiting members for the organization, and developing bylaws and analyzing other operating needs for this effort. I should have more to report on this effort over the next few weeks and invite your input.

### ADVOCACY

The City also has lacked consistent and coordinated leadership in political advocacy. For years, lobbying has happened on an *ad hoc* basis that failed to include City Council input. It has been disjointed, uncoordinated, only marginally successful, and lacked direct City leadership. While I have heard from a newspaper reporter that there are some City Council members concerned about being "left out of the loop" I can assure you that this is not my intention and, indeed, the opposite is true. My goal is to provide much better opportunities for Council input on our community advocacy agenda. In the past, I don't think anyone on the Council or in the Community even knew there was a "loop" to be left out of. Now, our effort will be known and we will have an opportunity to provide Council leadership.

In fact, in the past, there were lobbying efforts by this community that were mostly lead by our Convention and Visitor's Bureau. While I appreciate their efforts and while there has consistently been Council representation on their Board, there was no direct involvement from the Mayor's Office or the City Council in leading those past efforts. I was also told that when I appeared after I was elected at one of the meetings of the "Results Coalition", as the past effort was called, that it was the first time a mayor had come to one of those meetings. I think it is simply impossible to have an effective regional lobbying effort without direct leadership and responsibility from the Mayor's office as the chief City administrative official who presides over the City Council.

An effective lobbying and advocacy effort must provide a professional, coordinated approach to both federal and State lobbying. We must do more than take an occasional trip to Washington or Springfield; instead, we must have a presence "on the ground" throughout the year to monitor legislation, build relationships, and identify opportunities. The effort should also capitalize on the work of prior organizations and efforts and involve both public and private sector partners sharing complementary goals. Thus, I have been working with local partners that were part of the prior "Results Coalition" to propose a new 501(c)(6) organization, the Rockford Global Alliance. In addition to political advocacy, this organization can provide policy coordination among various organizations like the Rockford Area Economic Development Council, Convention and Visitor's Bureau, and City and County government.

The past "Results Coalition" had no bylaws and no direct involvement from the Mayor's Office. The new organization would do both. Proposed bylaws of the RGA include leadership by the City of Rockford with the Mayor of the City of Rockford serving as the standing chair of the organization. It is also proposed that this organization would have better regional input by having the County Board Chair serve as the standing vice-chair of the organization. This means that no matter who the Mayor is or who the County Board Chair is, the organization would move on with the leadership of these offices. I would envision this organization interfacing effectively with the newly formed Legislative Committee of the Council and I would invite further discussions and input on this organization from the City Council as it develops.

### SOCIAL SERVICES

This community has also lacked coordinated and collaborative leadership in providing social services to this community. We need to stop the cycle of co-dependency of simply providing social services without accountability. Therefore, we have joined in discussions with Winnebago County, the United Way, and Northern Illinois University to support the formation of Community Collaboration Inc., a new 501(c)(3) corporation.

I outlined the vision for this organization in the State of the City address. In short, this organization would in many respects be modeled off of what we are doing with our *RockStat* effort. We would utilize a sophisticated database system allowing for collaboration among multiple social service agencies. This system will also allow for aggregating timely and accurate

information identifying outcomes and trends in social service populations. This will allow for better policy making decisions and accountability through regular management sessions similar to what we have proposed with the RockStat review process.

I understand that supporters of this effort have been meeting with Council members and will continue to do so over the next few weeks. I have been meeting on this issue with staff from our own Human Services Department and our Information Services Department. I have also been discussing the broad opportunities to collaborate with agencies like the Rockford Housing Authority, the Courts and Probation System, and numerous non-profit organizations. I look forward to discussions on this effort with our City Council over the next month, including a possible development partnership agreement with the United Way, Winnebago County, and others.

Again, please contact me with your comments and thoughts on any of these initiatives.