



## PRESS RELEASE

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### COMMUNITY PARTNERS ‘TIP OFF’ CONSTRUCTION OF DOWNTOWN SPORTS COMPLEX

Rockford, IL – On Friday, April 24, 2015, leaders and community partners from the City of Rockford, the Rockford Park District (RPD), the Rockford Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) the Winnebago County Regional Tourism Facility Board (WCTFB) and their many invited guests, officially ‘tipped off’ the start of construction and redevelopment of the former Ingersoll building into the Downtown Sports Complex, a state of the art youth sports facility located on the Rock River. The construction renovation and development of the Sports Complex is expected to take one (1) year with an anticipated opening date in May of 2016.

In his comments to the event guests, Mayor Morrissey stated “One hundred and fifty years ago, the ground we stand on today was occupied with men and women who made human pedal-powered wood tools for our burgeoning furniture industry. They then transformed that to powered machines for metal working and other industrial components that made Rockford a national manufacturing powerhouse. Today- young and old alike- from all over the Midwest, will come to this facility where we once revolutionized industry, and they will experience the joy of competition, the joy of recreation, and the joy of seeing our youth develop athletic and sportsmanship skills that will help them build a foundation for a healthy and prosperous life.”

The \$24 million capital improvement project will create an urban, indoor sports complex that will complement the region’s recreational facilities currently in place as part of the Rockford Park District system. The project will retrofit the former Ingersoll building, a shuttered, industrial factory located on the Rock River, into multiple hard courts for basketball, volleyball, pickleball, wrestling, cheerleading, and other hard court uses, and will allow the Rockford region to retain, regain and grow sports tourism in an increasing competitive market and provide world class amateur sports tournament facilities for Rockford area residents.

The urban redevelopment project, which was first discussed in 2010 as the Rockford Park District and the CVB began to focus on improving the region’s competitive position in attracting youth sports, quickly moved from

the concept of improving of a few fields to a comprehensive, regional design that would build the model for community partnership known as *Reclaiming First*.

Tim Dimke, Executive Director of the Rockford Park District stated “The true legacy of this project is the unification of the region working closely together in dedicated service to its citizens.”

This community wide, comprehensive plan required the joint effort of regional municipalities and state legislative members who pushed the authorization and implementation of a 2% hotel/motel tax to help fund the sports complexes expansion and the institution of the Winnebago County Regional Tourism Facility Board (WCRTFB) which includes member from the County of Winnebago, the cities of Loves Park, Rockford and South Beloit, villages of Cherry Valley, Machesney Park, Rockton, and Roscoe and the Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau and the Rockford Park District. Each entity has pledged funds which will be used in conjunction with the 2% hotel tax to build and manage the facility.

The City of Rockford is the lead agency in the design and construction of the sports complex. The re-development of the Ingersoll facility will include the installation of eight (8), hardwood basketball courts that are convertible for sixteen (16) volleyball courts. Both volleyball and basketball will be conducted in the North Wing of the facility. The North Wing will also have a mezzanine centrally located within the building. The mezzanine will be comprised of a front-desk, concessions, flex rooms, bathrooms and full service restaurant on the top floor which will contain a patio overlooking the Rock River. There will also be a designated “championship” court within the facility that will support additional seating and serve as a larger venue for championship games.

The facility will support a boardwalk type amenity on the west side grassy area between the building and the river bank. The removal of the triangular southern tip of the building would also enable the City to bring the multi-use path onto the site rather than construct something in the river.

The project will also integrate the Watch Factory property, primarily for parking in support of the tournament activities. There will be a physical connection between the two properties that requires an at-grade crossing of the Union Pacific railroad tracks that bisect the area. The facility will also utilize an existing tunnel that was constructed under the railroad tracks. This tunnel will serve primarily as a pedestrian access points between the lower and upper parking lots.

The Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau will lead tourism sales and marketing efforts for the youth sports facility. Currently, sports tourist annually spend more than \$16 million when in town for tournaments at Sportscore One and Sportscore Two. That amount is expected to double with the opening of the Downtown Sports Complex and expansions at Sportscore Two.

The CVB currently markets the indoor venue as the ‘Sportscore Downtown’ and has begun discussions with the separate entities on complex’s final, official name. Consistent in the naming discussion is the recognition that the Sportscore brand carries a strong identity among tournament directors and participants across the country. This loyalty to Rockford’s Sportscore provides the CVB a distinct advantage when marketing the indoor sports complex.

“Today’s construction tip-off marks the beginning of a new era in our community. For years to come, this world-class sports complex will attract citizens and visitors to downtown Rockford. As a facility, it will sit in a class of its own, distinguished by its size, amenities and riverfront location,” said John Groh, president/CEO of

the Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau. “This groundbreaking is a testimony to the great partners we work with, our supportive community and a bright future in which Rockford will continue to break new ground in the sports tourism industry.”

In addition to providing state-of-the-art recreational facilities for Rockford’s residents, the Ingersoll renovations will create a facility capable of hosting amateur sports tournaments which are projected to bring \$8.4 million of additional revenue, 80% of which will come from out-of-state visitors, into our region annually in the facility’s first years of operation. This revenue inflow will result in the creation of more than 130 secondary jobs throughout the region and twenty permanent, full-time equivalent primary jobs which will be created by the Rockford Park District to operate and maintain the facility. Construction of the Ingersoll facility will create 125 construction jobs.

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