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May 13th 2021

Mayor Tom McNamara
Rockford City Council
City of Rockford
425 East State St.
Rockford, IL 61101

Dear Mayor and Members of City Council,

I am writing to express my support of the Rockford Area Tourism Promotion Special Service Area (RATPSSA) because **tourism is essential to the positive economic recovery and growth of our region**. Without the substantial investment from this SSA our city and region stand risk of losing jobs for area residents; revenue for our hotels, attractions, restaurants and other locally owned businesses; and the ability to competitively position our city and region as a destination for visitors and vibrant home for our residents.

Pre-pandemic, our region benefited from **\$409 million in economic impact due to tourism. This also resulted in \$100 million in employment income and supported the livelihood of more than 3,000 hardworking area residents**. These robust numbers from 2019 reflect ten consecutive growth years of tourism's economic improvement to our region.

Unfortunately, the pandemic has severely and negatively impacted the tourism and hospitality industry due to a historic decline in travel. Since March 2020, hotel occupancies have dropped by nearly 30 percent and overall revenue is down 40 percent. This decline in visitor volume not only translated to a decline in revenue for local businesses, but also reduced funds allocated by our municipalities to pay for core government services such as police, fire and public works due to reduced tax revenue.

The RATPSSA is a solution to our region's economic recovery and long-term growth. **As a hotelier-proposed and city-approved assessment on hotel stays, RATPSSA revenue provides a stable source of strategic funding for marketing**, bid payments, and destination development to directly increase hotel occupancy and room rates and in turn, generates visitor spending in our market. It is proven that visitor spending equates to \$9 for every \$1 we invest in tourism marketing – a powerful ROI that will stimulate our recovery.

I encourage you to vote yes to the Rockford Area Tourism Promotion Special Service Area in support of region's recovery. If you would like additional information about the value of a SSA, the role of RACVB, and the plans for tourism recovery, please contact John Groh, president/CEO of the Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Regards,

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