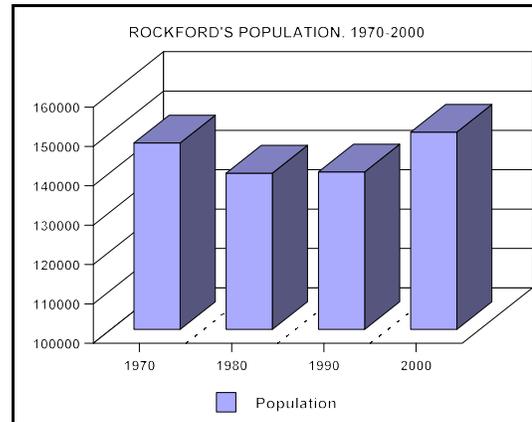


WHO WE ARE

When the Year 2000 Plan was written, the Planning Commission found that several changes had occurred in the makeup of the local population between 1950 and 1970. (The plan was produced before data from the 1980 Census were available.) Not surprisingly, things have continued to change since 1980, some in ways that were anticipated, others in ways that were not. The following pages outline what some of those changes are.

- ▶ Rockford's total population fell considerably short of the expectations of the Year 2000 Plan. While the Plan anticipated an increase from 147,370 people in 1970 to 155,358 in 1980 and to 167,089 in 1990, the reality was an initial decline followed by a slight increase, largely attributable to annexations. The actual population dropped to 139,712 in 1980, then rebounded to 140,003 in 1990. The 2000 Census showed Rockford's first true increase in 30 years with the City's population growing to 150,115.



What these figures do not show is how the City has fared in comparison with the rest of Winnebago County. As the graphs in Appendix A show, Rockford's population as a percentage of the County total has been declining for the past 30 years. While this drop has not been by a huge amount — going from 60% in 1970 to 54% in 2000 — it is a dramatic change when viewed in light of the large increase in geographic area covered by the City over the same time period. These two factors taken together indicate that Rockford's gains, primarily on the east side, have been at the expense of the older parts of town.

- ▶ In reviewing Census data for the past 20 years, we can see that all of the growth has taken place east of the Rock River, and that before 1990, all of that was limited to northeast Rockford — east of the river and north of East State Street.

Table 1 Total Population of Rockford, 1980-2000						
	1980	1990	2000	1980-1990	1990-2000	1980-2000
Northwest	35,974	34,017	33,894	-1,957	-123	-2,080
Southwest	21,094	19,164	18,932	-1,930	-232	-2,162
Southeast	53,523	52,432	58,143	-1,091	5,711	4,620
Northeast	29,121	33,795	39,146	4,674	5,351	10,025
TOTAL	139,712	139,408	150,115	-304	10,707	10,403

- ▶ Rockford's minority population nearly quadrupled between 1970 and 2000, growing from 12,672 in 1970 to 47,437 in 2000. In 1970, 8.6% of Rockford's residents were minorities; this increased to 17.1% in 1980, 20.3% in 1990 and 31.6% in 2000. In addition, the distribution of the minority population has shifted dramatically since in the last 20 years. In 1980, fully 76% of Rockford's minority population lived on the west side; however this had dropped to 60% in 2000 with southeast Rockford overtaking southwest as the quadrant with the highest number of minorities. This in part reflects the fact that the total population

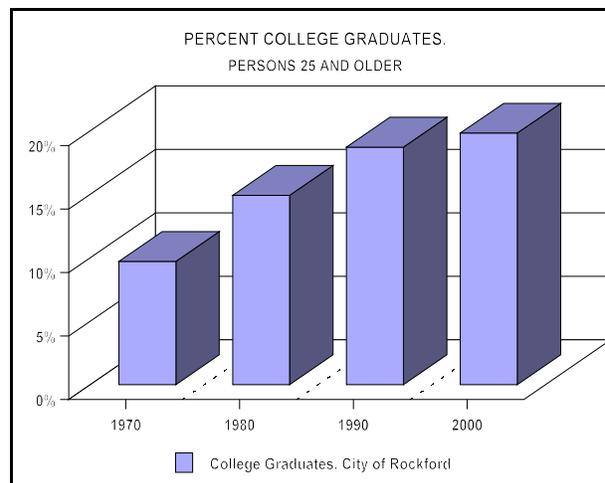
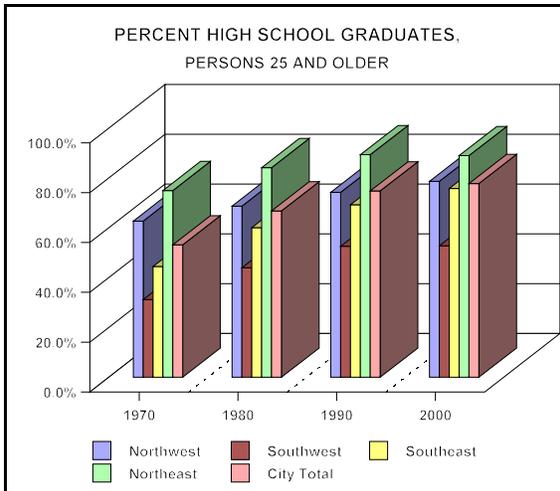
grew significantly on the east side while continuing to decline on the west side. As a result, although southwest Rockford was home to only 32% of the City's total minority population in 2000, just under 80% of the people living in southwest Rockford in 2000 were minority. This concentration within southwest continues to grow, from under 40% in 1970 to 66% in 1980 to its current level.

Table 2 Minority Population of Rockford, 1980-2000						
	1980	1990	2000	1980-1990	1990-2000	1980-2000
Northwest	4,159	6,446	11,419	2,287	4,973	7,260
Southwest	14,026	13,869	15,094	-157	1,225	1,068
Southeast	4,770	6,364	15,357	1,594	8,993	10,587
Northeast	995	2,140	5,567	1,145	3,427	4,572
TOTAL	23,950	28,819	47,437	4,869	18,618	23,487

- ▶ As the proportion of minorities within the total population has increased, the makeup of the minority population itself has changed over time. In 1980, 78% of minorities were African-American, 17% were Hispanic, and 1.5% were Asian-American. By 2000, this had changed to 54% African-American, 32% Hispanic and 7% Asian-American. (Note: Minority data for the last three census periods are not strictly comparable since the Census Bureau's way of counting minorities has evolved over that time. The 1990 Census was the first in which it was possible to count the Hispanic population without double counting them as a member of one of the major racial groups; the option of checking off multiple races was introduced in the 2000 Census. Approximately 5% of Rockford's population – 2,550 people – identified themselves as being of more than one race.)
- ▶ The median age of Rockford's population has increased over the last 20 years, reversing the trend from 1950-1970, to the point where the median age in both 1990 and 2000 (32.9 and 34.4 respectively) exceeded its previous high of 31.4 years in 1950. In the interim, it declined to a low of 26.7 years in 1970. At the same time, the population under age 15 has stabilized. After dropping from 37.6% of the population in 1970 to 22.0% in 1990, it increased slightly to 22.6% in 2000.
- ▶ As anticipated in the Year 2000 Plan, household size continued to decline through 1990, with a median household size of 3.0 people in 1970, 2.6 people in 1980 and 2.5 people in 1990. In 1990, fully 61% of all Rockford households contained only one or two people while only 9% contained five or more. These figures were 50% and 18% respectively in 1970. However, household size appears to have stabilized as the 2000 Census shows an average household size of 2.5 people. This same trend applies to the rest of Winnebago County as well.
- ▶ Types of households have also continued to change. While over two-thirds (68.8%) of all households were families with both a husband and wife in 1970, only half (49.9%) were in 1990. The decline continued in 2000 when the figure dropped to 43.8%. An even starker contrast arises when limiting the discussion to families. In 1970, 87.6% of all families were traditional, two-parent families; by 1990, this had decreased to 68.2%, dropping even further to 61.0% in 2000. At the same time, the percentage of families with children living with only one parent rose from 23.8% in 1980 to 31.8% in 1990 to 39.0% in 2000. Another new trend in families was introduced in the 2000 Census when grandparents raising grandchildren were counted for the first time. In Rockford, 1,576 grandparents were responsible for raising their grandchildren in 2000.

Table 3 Single-Parent Families with Children in Rockford, 1980-1990									
	1980			1990			2000		
	Families	Single-Parent		Families with Children	Single-Parent		Families with Children	Single-Parent	
		#	%		#	%		#	%
Northwest	4,654	994	21.4%	4,368	1,479	33.9%	4,417	2,002	45.3%
Southwest	2,938	1,260	42.9%	2,617	1,464	55.9%	2,374	1,417	59.7%
Southeast	7,141	1,683	23.6%	6,755	2,101	31.1%	7,193	2,810	39.1%
Northeast	3,900	493	12.6%	4,194	670	16.0%	4,648	1,045	22.5%
TOTAL	18,639	4,432	23.8%	17,944	5,715	31.8%	18,632	7,274	39.0%

- ▶ Rockfordians have become better educated in the last 20 years. While just over half (53.2%) the people 25 and over were high school graduates in 1970, over three-fourths (77.8%) were in 2000. Perhaps the most encouraging sign here is that the two quadrants of the City that showed below 50% in this category in 1970 have also shown dramatic increases in high school graduates since then. On the negative side, while southeast Rockford has continued to make dramatic increases over the last three decades to the point where it almost equaled the City average in 2000, the southwest quadrant still lags seriously behind the rest of the community with only 53% of its residents over 25 having a high school diploma. This has serious implications for the residents of southwest Rockford as they look for employment that pays enough to live on. While gains have been made in the disparity of educational attainment across the community, more work remains to be done to continue to close the gap.



- ▶ Complementing the high rate of high school graduates within Rockford is the growing percentage of high school graduates who go on to complete four years or more of college. This nearly doubled from 9.7% in 1970 to 18.7% in 1990, increasing slightly to 19.8% in 2000. Despite these gains, Rockford still lagged behind Illinois as a whole and the nation in high school and college graduates in 2000. At that time, 81.4% of Illinois' residents over the age of 25 were high school graduates, while the national figure was 80.4 percent. Equivalent figures for college graduates were 26.1% for Illinois and 24.4% for the U. S.

- ▶ If you were to look solely at Census data, you would think that Rockford's employment picture has done fairly well since 1980. Unemployment went from 7.0% in 1980 down to 6.1% in 1990, then back up to 7.3% in 2000. Unfortunately, this does not give any indication of the 20% unemployment Rockford experienced in 1982, or of the long climb back to single-digit unemployment rates since then. There were roughly 15,000 fewer jobs in Rockford in January 1983 than in January 1982; all but 2,000 of these "missing" jobs were in manufacturing. As a result of increased economic development activity in both the public and private sectors, Rockford has diversified its economy somewhat in the last 10 years. (Manufacturing accounted for 43% of jobs in Rockford in 1970, 38% in 1980, 32% in 1990 and 26% in 2000.) However, the local economy is still more heavily dependent on manufacturing than the nation's as a whole where only 14% of the workforce was engaged in producing goods in 2000.

The following table illustrates the uneven geographic distribution within Rockford of unemployment over the last three census periods. One quadrant, northeast, has had less than 4% unemployment for the complete 20-year period; while another, southwest, has increased from 14% to nearly 18% during that same time. The other two quadrants have ranged from 5% to nearly 8%, roughly approximating the citywide average.

	1980		1990		2000	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Northwest	1,214	6.8%	876	5.0%	1,272	7.8%
Southwest	1,219	14.0%	1,212	15.9%	1,248	17.7%
Southeast	1,894	6.9%	1,736	6.1%	2,099	7.2%
Northeast	494	3.4%	555	3.2%	761	3.7%
Total	4,821	7.0%	4,379	6.2%	5,380	7.3%

- ▶ Median household income increased by 50% between the 1980 and 1990 censuses, then by another 33% during the 1990s. While these gains appear to be a positive factor, the fact remains that Rockford lost ground in relation to Illinois and national figures. Our 1990 median household income was 88% of the state median and 94% of the national one; by 2000 these figures had dropped to 81% and 90% respectively. Equally important, an evaluation of the median incomes for each census period and for each quadrant shows different parts of the City going in different directions. Citywide, the percentage of households earning less than 80% of the median income (HUD's demarcation for lower income) stood at 40% in both 1980 and 1990, dropping to 36% in 2000. However, the southwest quadrant housed a disproportionate share of lower-income households in all three census periods, as the following table shows.

	1980		1990		2000	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Northwest	5,052	38.2%	5,473	40.5%	5,355	40.4%
Southwest	3,991	55.9%	4,209	64.6%	3,666	59.1%
Southeast	8,770	41.5%	9,293	42.7%	9,593	40.3%
Northeast	2,899	27.8%	3,139	24.1%	6,255	39.4%

Total	20,712	39.9%	22,114	40.4%	24,869	35.9%
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It should also be noted that median household income in Rockford has not kept pace with the rate of inflation, either regionally or nationally. For example, the Rockford median income of \$9,171 had the same buying power as an income of \$19,477 did in 1980, adjusting for inflation. However, Rockford's median household income in 1980 was \$18,419, 5.4% below the rate of inflation. It worsened during the next decade with median income in Rockford falling 8.5% below the rate of inflation in 1990. While median household income did increase from 1970 to 1990, buying power (as judged in comparison with the rate of inflation) decreased by 8.5 percent.

- ▶ While Rockford's population has increased only slightly since 1970, the number of households has grown substantially. From roughly 47,300 in 1970, the number of households increased to 52,150 in 1980, an increase of 10.2%, with an additional 7.3% increase between 1980 and 1990 to a total of 55,960. This trend continued in 2000 when the Census showed a total of 59,158 households in Rockford. These increases are due partly to new construction and partly to annexation. All quadrants of the City showed increases over the 20-year period except southwest.

Table 6 Number of Households in Rockford, 1980-2000						
	1980	1990	2000	1980-1990	1990-2000	1980-2000
Northwest	13,465	13,536	13,223	71	-313	-242
Southwest	7,112	6,615	6,232	-497	-383	-880
Southeast	21,080	22,822	23,853	1,742	1,031	2,773
Northeast	10,491	12,986	15,850	2,495	2,864	5,359
TOTAL	52,148	55,959	59,158	3,811	3,199	7,010

- ▶ While the number of households in Rockford increased dramatically over the last 20 years, especially in comparison with the much smaller increase in population, the distribution of households has become even more skewed than it was in 1980. East side households increased from 60% of the Citywide total in 1980 to 67% in 2000. The most disturbing factor to the figures in Table 6 is the obvious disinvestment in housing on Rockford's west side, especially in the southwest quadrant which lost 12% of its households over the past 20 years. At the same time, the number of households in the northeast quadrant increased by over 50 percent.

And as was the case with Rockford's total population, the number of households in the City has dropped dramatically as a percentage of the total in Winnebago County. Specific numbers are in the graphics in Appendix A, but Rockford's portion of households in the County went from 63% in 1970 to only 55% in 2000. Over the same time period, Loves Park and Machesney Park combined grew from 10% to nearly 15% and the remainder of the County went up by 3 percentage points.

- ▶ The proportion of owners to renters has been virtually unchanged since 1960 when it peaked at 61.8%. Since then it has dropped slightly to the 1990 level of 59.9%. In 2000, it showed a slight increase, rising to 61.1%. (Before 1960, the proportion of owners had been significantly lower, being 39.4% and 53.7% in 1940 and 1950 respectively.)
- ▶ The number of vacant housing units increased dramatically over the past 20 years. In 1980, 2,450 units were vacant according to the Census; this increased to 3,300 in 1990 and to 4,400 in 2000. Put another way, vacant units now represent nearly 7% of our total housing stock. Equivalent figures are 3% for Loves Park/Machesney Park and just over 4% for the rest of the County. Causes for Rockford's higher vacancy

rate vary. The City's substantially larger supply of older housing, the virtual abandonment of some areas, construction of substantial numbers of new starter homes, and the movement out to the east side and to areas outside the City all contribute. Whatever the root causes, these numbers point to a significant problem that the City needs to address in the near future.

The sum of all these parts?

- ▶ Rockford's total population was about the same in 1980 and 1990, then increased by about 10,000 between 1990 and 2000. Most if not all of this increase was due to annexation.
- ▶ At the same time, our minority population increased, with growing diversity among minorities.
- ▶ Our population is older, with the median age increasing from 29.9 years in 1980 to 34.4 years in 2000.
- ▶ While the number of people remained stable, the number of households increased by 13.4% between 1980 and 2000. The necessary corollary of this is that households have become smaller.
- ▶ Rockford had more one-parent families with children in 2000 (39% of all families with children) than in 1980 (24% of families).
- ▶ The proportion of adults with high school diplomas increased from 67% in 1980 to 78% in 2000 while the percentage of those with four years or more of college went from 14.9% to 19.8 percent.
- ▶ Rockford's percentage of low-to-moderate-income persons remained at roughly 40% in both 1980 and 1990, but increased to 48% in 2000.
- ▶ The ratio of owner-occupied housing remained steady at about 60%.
- ▶ The number and percentage of vacant housing units has climbed continuously since 1980, reaching 7% of the total housing supply in 2000.

For a more detailed discussion of current housing conditions, see pages 87 through 90 for a summary of information contained in the 2004 *Housing Market Study* prepared for the City of Rockford by Western Economic Services.

To put these numbers in context, please see the charts in Appendix A which compare data for the City of Rockford with equivalent data for Winnebago County, Loves Park/Machesney Park, and the rest of the County. As mentioned above, these numbers indicate that while Rockford may be growing, it is not keeping pace with the rest of Winnebago County. And when population and household totals are viewed in light of Rockford's substantial increase in geographic area, they can lead to only one conclusion — that our population has become much less dense over the last 20-30 years. In fact, density has dropped by roughly 23%, going from 3,485 people per square mile in 1980 to 2,680 in 2000. This has serious implications in terms of the cost of City services, environmental costs, and the impact on a dwindling supply of prime farmland.

Projections

Just as important as understanding who we are now is determining how much — or even if — Rockford's population is likely to grow in the coming years. This forms a critical element in determining how much additional housing will be needed, expected demands on public services and demand for new employment opportunities.

Population projections for any city are complicated by the fact that boundaries change over time, and by each city's ability to compete in the regional market with other communities for new development in the future. Population projections for a governmental unit with fixed boundaries, such as Winnebago County, are less complex by their very nature — there is one less variable to take into account when doing the projections. Reasonably accurate straight-line projections based on net increase or rates of increase over time can be applied in these cases. Future trends can be estimated and projected according to a series of assumptions.

For the City of Rockford, however, the development and implementation of several policies and the amount of success in their implementation will impact future population change and population counts at any given time as much as if not more than demographic changes taking place in the region as a whole. These include

the following:

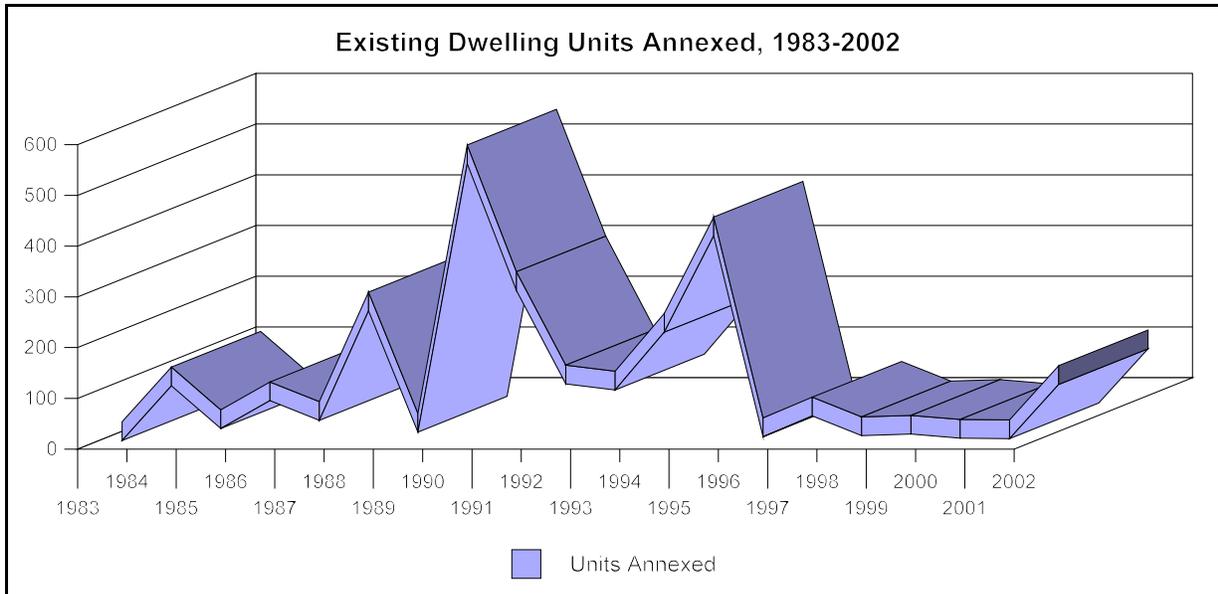
- ▶ Annexation policies and efforts;
- ▶ Policies toward housing development in general and according to geography and type;
- ▶ Policies toward deteriorated or abandoned structures;
- ▶ Policies towards economic development and retail development; and
- ▶ Policies towards neighborhood reinvestment, redevelopment and infill development.

The future economy also has a major impact on net migration and, consequently, housing demand. This in turn clearly impacts population figures. If the economy is down as it was in the early 1980s, housing abandonment and “vacant for sale” will be up while housing construction will be down. Generally, at the time of the last four censuses, the economy has been at a neutral point, with the economic low points occurring a few years after the census and the high points occurring late in each decade. These economic trends are reflected in housing construction and vacancy rates. For example, it is expected that the City’s housing vacancy rate was much higher in 1982 or 1983 after several employers had closed their doors than the April 1980 figure of 4.5%. (See data at the end of the chapter.)

Other factors, some very difficult to predict, can negatively impact City population growth while the rest of the County and region do well. For example, the sewer moratorium imposed during the 1960s and early 1970s severely limited growth within the City while at the same time resulting in substantial growth in other parts of the County where construction was allowed on septic systems instead of sewers. The same can be said for the financial and legal difficulties faced by the Rockford School District over the last 20 years. More recently, the predominance of starter home construction within the City has led to high vacancy rates as households move from apartments to these starter homes. Their apartments are filled by other households moving up, leaving behind after several tiers of move-ups a higher vacancy rate among older, marginal rental properties. At the same time, the shortage of higher-end new housing in Rockford has contributed to the housing boom in Boone County, Roscoe and other nearby locations. All of these imponderables taken together result in a very difficult task in trying to determine what the City’s population will be in 2020 or at any point between now and then. For that reason, we produced three series of population projections based on different sets of assumptions. These are explained in the paragraphs below.

Population Projections, Series A

For Series A projections, it was assumed that the net dwelling unit increase per year for the City would be the same as it was from 1992 through 2001 — 369 units due to new construction minus demolitions, and 120 units due to annexation of existing homes for a total of 489 additional dwelling units per year. Achieving these numbers will require aggressive annexation efforts because the 1992-2001 figures include parts of the Superfund area islands, some of which were forcibly annexed with the rest being annexed following their connection to the City water system. As the chart below shows, increasing population by way of annexations can vary significantly from year to year. If annexations in the future fall short of these figures, then the numbers would have to be made up through increased new construction in the City, requiring a stronger new construction market than experienced over the past decade.



The Series A population projections use the assumptions described above for increased dwelling units per year combined with a set of assumptions about equivalent vacancy rates and population per household.

The **A-1 Projection** was made based on the following assumptions:

- ▶ Population per household will remain the same as it was in the 2000 Census over the next 20 years. Considering that it was 2.47 in 1990 and 2.46 in 2000, this is a reasonable assumption. Additionally, increases in population per household stemming from Rockford's growing Hispanic population are expected to be balanced by the aging population and single-person household formation.
- ▶ The "equivalent vacancy rate," the vacancy rate that compensates for people in group quarters (not households) by folding them into the general population, is projected at 4 percent. For example, in 2000 there were 150,115 people in Rockford. Of these, 145,789 were in households and 4,326 in group quarters. There were 59,158 households (occupied housing units) and 4,412 vacant housing units for a total of 63,570 housing units. If the population in group quarters, which is difficult to forecast, is mathematically transferred into the general population in households at the same rate as the "normal" population per household (2.46), the remaining vacant units would be 2,653 [4,412 vacant housing units minus (4,326 people in group quarters ÷ 2.46 people per household)], which is 4% of the total number of housing units.

The equivalent vacancy rate of 4% from the 2000 data, the 2000 persons per household figure of 2.46 and the Series A housing unit projections derived from 1992-2001 trend data were used to produce the A-1 population projections. These result in the following projections for total population in the City of Rockford:

- ▶ 2005 155,901
- ▶ 2010 161,675
- ▶ 2015 167,449
- ▶ 2020 173,223

The **A-2 projection** used the same vacancy equivalent and dwelling unit forecast as the A-1 but increased the household size slightly to 2.5 people, a slight reversal in the household size trend. These assumptions result in a 2020 population of 176,040 for the City of Rockford.

The **A-3 projection** assumes a continued decline in household size to 2.4 people per household and an

increased vacancy rate of 5 percent. This results in a 2020 total population of 167,238.

In general, the Series A projections represent the general status quo for Rockford's housing market during the 1992-2001 period and ties to the aggressive annexation of existing residential subdivisions soon after they have developed. This is a reasonable forecast with the A-1 projection being the most likely because of the leveling off of household size from 1990 to 2000, a nationwide trend.

Population Projections, Series B

The Series B housing projections assume that the City would implement more aggressive efforts to encourage development within the City while discouraging or preventing development just outside the City limits, but within Rockford's 1½-mile extraterritorial area. For these projections, a net dwelling unit increase of 500 dwelling units per year is projected from new construction with an additional 50 units resulting from annexation of existing homes. Although the Series B figure will be more difficult to achieve than the Series A figures, it is achievable if steps are taken to eliminate the competition from the area just outside the City and to encourage more residential development northwest and southwest.

Population projections for Series B were made using the same persons per household and vacancy rate assumptions as in the Series A projections. The resulting Series B projections are somewhat higher than the parallel Series A projections. The most likely, the B-1 projection, shows a 2020 population of 176,105 in Rockford. Overall, the Series B projections should be considered optimistic.

Population Projections, Series C

The most recent new construction and annexation trends (1997-2001) have not been as high as the 1992-2001 trends. Demolition of existing housing units, however, has taken place at a much higher level than in previous times. The Charles Street realignment project, economic development projects, and aggressive efforts to remove abandoned structures have all contributed to this trend. If these trends continue, annual net dwelling unit increases will be limited to about 288 units. The Series C population projections are derived from this housing unit projection, producing a more likely projection of 163,730 for 2020, a 20-year increase of 13,615 people or 6,807 per decade. This is the most likely trend if the City is not aggressive with both annexations and new development, especially to the northwest and southwest where Rockford has much more room to grow without going too far from downtown, and if the demolition of residential structures continues. The positive aspects of the trends tied to the Series C projections is the improvement to the housing stock by demolishing vacant, deteriorated structures while encouraging developers to build a mix of new housing units rather than just starter homes that were predominant during the 1990s.

Projection Summary

Projected population for the City of Rockford is summarized in the table below for each of the projection series.

The Series C-1 projection is the most reasonable of these projections. It is a relatively conservative projection, but it is also tied closely to the most recent trends. It should also be noted that it is nearly identical to the projections prepared by Health Services Research at the University of Illinois College of Medicine/Rockford that will be used in Rockford's next Consolidated Plan. Because these two projections are so close and the Health Services Research projections are already being used in the City's Housing Study, they have also been used as the basis for the 2020 Plan.

Table 7. PROJECTED POPULATION OF ROCKFORD BY PROJECTION SERIES				
	2005	2010	2015	2020

Series A-1	155,901	161,675	167,449	173,223
Series A-2	158,436	164,304	170,172	176,040
Series A-3	150,514	156,089	161,663	167,238
Series B-1	156,621	163,115	169,610	176,105
Series B-2	159,168	165,768	172,368	178,968
Series B-3	151,210	157,480	163,750	170,020
Series C-1	153,527	156,928	160,329	163,730
Series C-2	156,024	159,480	162,888	166,392
Series C-3	148,223	151,506	154,789	158,072
UICOM/R	152,686	155,434	158,543	162,031
C-1/UICOM/R	0.5%	0.95%	1.1%	1.0%