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NEWS RELEASE
For Immediate Release:
October 16, 2007
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Rockford becomes Designated Illinois Main Street Community

Rockford, IL -- River District Association is pleased to announce Rockford has been designated a Main Street Community by the Illinois Main Street Program under Lt. Governor Pat Quinn's office.

River District Association is the organization that facilitates the Rockford Main Street program and has been an Associate Member of Illinois Main Street since September 2005. During this time staff, board members, and volunteers have been going through various training sessions to learn about the Main Street Four Point Approach, as well as working on other tasks required for designation.

A special Designation Ceremony is planned for Monday, October 22, 2007. It will be at 1:30 p.m. at The King's Table Café (inside Stewart Square, 308 W. State St. You may also enter from the 100 block of S. Main St. entrance.) The ceremony will be in the atrium near The King's Table Café. It will last about 45 minutes with a dessert reception following.

Lt. Governor Pat Quinn will be host the event. Other guest speakers will include Rockford's 3rd Ward Alderman, Doug Mark, and Cynthia Powers Hall, Director, Mayor's Office of Tourism, Culture and Special Events. River District Association Board of Directors President, Rebecca Kopf, will also make comments.

River District Association activities related to the Illinois Main Street program:

- 2006 and 2007 had an information table about Rockford and River District at the "Main Street Day at the Capitol" in Springfield
- Staff, board members, volunteers attended several educational workshops presented by Illinois Main Street in 2006 and 2007
- River District Association hosted the 2006 Northern Illinois Basic Training 2 day workshop in Rockford at First Presbyterian Church with approximately 40 participants from various communities
- Partnered with City of Rockford and EDGE to present two educational entrepreneur forums in 2007
- Started tracking business activity in 2006 – 27 businesses opened or moved into downtown; 16 expanded or renovated; 10 closed. 2007 to date: 15 opened or moved into; four expanded or renovated; 7 closed.
- Started a building inventory in 2006
- Completed a downtown business survey in 2007
- Restructured River District Association organizational committees to match the Main Street Four Point Approach
- Fostered development with the completion of the Framework Plan Implementation Study – a plan that outlines development opportunities downtown, financial resources, and tasks to implement suggested projects
- Presented an Urban Living Tour in 2006 and 2007 – a tour of residential spaces that have been renovated; promotes living downtown and investment in the area

- Presented a Commercial Renovation Tour in 2007 – a tour of spaces in older buildings that have been renovated for commercial use; promotes adaptive reuse of older buildings and investment in the area
- Coordinated an image campaign to promote a positive image of the neighborhood and direct people to the website so they can see the many opportunities available downtown.
- Promoted a downtown farmers market in 2007

Excerpted from www.IllinoisMainStreet.org:

What is Illinois Main Street?

Illinois Main Street is a comprehensive community revitalization program that promotes historic preservation and economic development of the state's traditional business districts.

Illinois Main Street provides training and technical assistance to participating communities. Illinois Main Street is based on a model developed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation

Illinois Main Street helps communities define their own vision and works with them to make that vision a reality. Local staff, businesses and volunteers provide grassroots leadership, raise money and spearhead revitalization activities

The Main Street Four Point Approach is :

- 1. Organization** - Developing and sustaining an effective downtown management organization.
- 2. Design** - Improving the appearance of the downtown buildings and streetscape through historic preservation.
- 3. Promotion** - Marketing the district's unique assets to bring people downtown.
- 4. Economic Restructuring** - Improving the downtown's economic base by assisting and recruiting businesses and finding new uses for underused space.

Presently, Illinois has 69 active Main Street communities, growing from 9 when the program began in 1993. Since its inception, designated communities have reported net gains of more than 1,500 new downtown businesses, and created 3,200 full-time jobs and 2,400 part-time jobs. Main Streets have spurred more than \$123 million in public improvements and more than \$411 million in private reinvestments in their downtowns.

Illinois Main Street is overseen by a Advisory Council chaired by Lt. Governor Pat Quinn.

To learn more about the Illinois Main Street program visit the website: www.IllinoisMainStreet.org or e-mail: Wendy.Bell@illinois.gov or call 217/782-5990.