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NEWS RELEASE

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City Improves Downtown Parking Opportunities

ROCKFORD, Ill (February 7, 2007) — The River District Association announced today that the City of Rockford has changed downtown parking policies in an effort to allow individuals more time for downtown activities, such as business meetings, shopping, dining, or enjoying performances and events at downtown venues. The River District Association stands behind these parking changes, which include:

- Extension of hourly parking restrictions from two hours to three hours in the two public parking lots located at the corner of N. Main & Mulberry Streets. One lot is next to Paragon & Octane and the other is across from the Rockford Public Library
- Transitioning the permit-only (M-F, 8 – 5) lot at the corner of Wyman and Jefferson Streets to a three-hour parking lot that is open to the public seven days a week

In addition to these changes, there is and has been free, unlimited parking after 5 p.m. and on weekends in all of the above parking lots, as well as all municipal parking lots.

Further, there is free parking for parking decks (garages) after 5 p.m. and 6 p.m., depending on the garage, and most of the time on weekends (sometimes a parking fee of \$3 will be charged at some of the garages when there are events at the MetroCentre; \$5 is charged at the Pioneer Parking Deck across from the Coronado Performing Arts Center/314 N. Main St.).

In response to the new parking policies, Rockford Mayor Larry Morrissey stated, “We have new and exciting things happening downtown – 26 new businesses opened last year alone, more businesses are moving in in 2007, the Coronado has an ambitious year of programming ahead for it, and the upcoming renovations at the MetroCentre will draw in more crowds in the near future. To ensure the success of such positive changes in the downtown area, we need to accommodate patron parking needs. These new parking policies are a great demonstration of Rockford’s commitment to the downtown area.”

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Signs to indicate the new parking rules will be installed on Wed., Feb. 7, 2007. The changes will be implemented on a six-month trial basis. After the trial period, the City will assess if the new policies have resulted in the desired effect, and, if so, it will implement the new policies indefinitely.

The City, River District Association, and Downtown Retailers Collective request the support of downtown employers and employees by not using the 3 hour spots for parking their cars because the new time frame is being introduced especially to accommodate customers of their businesses.

“The River District Association (RDA) and Downtown Retailers Collective (DRC) support this change,” stated Kim Wheeler, Executive Director of the RDA. “We believe it will entice more people to visit downtown establishments and build a positive perception about downtown.”

Officials from RDA and DRC appreciate the opportunity they had recently to meet with City representatives to discuss input from stakeholders about this issue and determine a course of action. The parking changes are in response to the increasing public sentiment that patrons of downtown businesses need more parking time to take advantage of all that downtown Rockford has to offer, e.g., to dine, shop, use salon services, visit the Library, and patronize other professional services.

“The parking changes are really encouraging,” explained Paul Sletten, owner of downtown restaurant Brio and Cru. “One of the best things the City can do to support downtown businesses is to make it easier for our patrons to enjoy our services. With the new changes, my customers can dine without having to get up half way through the meal to move their car or, even worse, end an afternoon out on the town by finding a ticket on their windshield.”

The mission of River District Association is to promote a growing, thriving, prosperous business and residential community in Rockford’s downtown neighborhood, River District.

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