



December 2025

Livable Communities Initiative

Midtown Neighborhood the Round 2 Recipient of Revitalization Planning Assistance



Rockford Peaches and "Welcome to Midtown" murals, courtesy of Midtown District.

Reducing blight, boosting local businesses, raising neighborhood pride.

Midtown neighborhood was recently given the opportunity to receive planning support in order for its residents to help invigorate the place they call home.

The Midtown neighborhood was awarded technical assistance through R1's Livable Community Initiative (LCI), the second Rockford neighborhood to receive support through this program. The Keith Creek neighborhood received technical assistance in 2025 to address flooding concerns and is beginning the implementation phase.

Beginning in February, Midtown community members will spend the next year working alongside R1 to develop a plan to tackle the neighborhood's most pressing livability challenges, as determined by residents during community meetings. Like Keith Creek, Midtown will later be eligible to receive implementation funding once the plan has been completed.

"The LCI program is entirely community-driven, leveraging residents' vision to improve their neighborhoods through support from both public and private partners," said **Chloe Barnes**, Regional Planner and program coordinator. "Community input is essential to the program's success, as residents understand their neighborhood the best."

A third round of LCI technical assistance is expected to be announced in mid-2026.

Open for Public Comment

Click on the survey title to participate



[Green Streets Guide](#)

This survey is collecting your input on plants and other green infrastructure that can improve our streets through better flood management and enhanced aesthetics. This input will be integrated into regional street guidelines that can lead to safer, greener, and more welcoming streets.



[Food & Transportation Access Study](#)

This brief survey is collecting your firsthand experiences with how accessible and available healthy food is in your community.

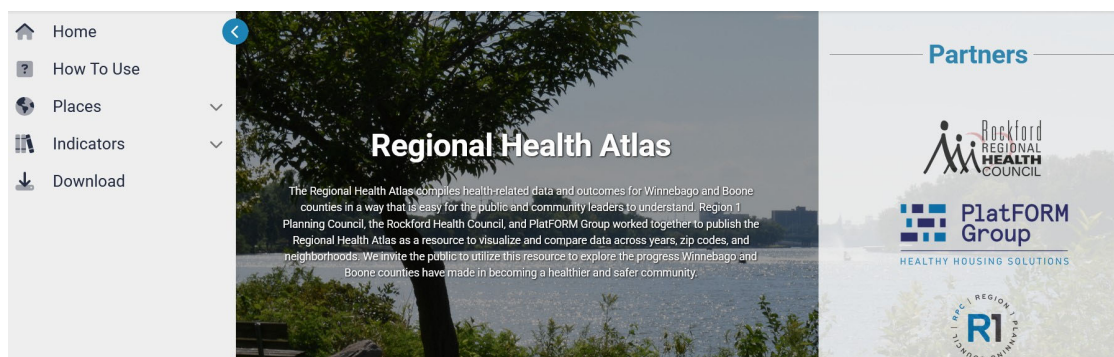


[Winnebago County Community Mental Health Board Public Participation Survey](#)

Provide your experiences with mental health and substance use services to inform the Board's strategic plan. See article below for more information.

Health Data Made Easy

New Regional Health Atlas Provides Data for Community Health Initiatives



The Rockford region's health, simplified.

organizations to create safer, healthier communities in Boone and Winnebago Counties.

"This resource will allow anyone to easily understand health disparities and local trends, helping to guide community health initiatives," says Jason Holcomb, Director of Community Impact.

You can access the atlas at r1.metop.io. There, you can explore 100 health indicators and filter data by geography, date, demographics, and more. Data comes to life through a range of formats – maps, charts, rankings, Excel files. All data is sourced from trusted governmental or nonprofit sources and updated as new information is available.

The Regional Health Atlas is a collaborative effort between the Rockford Regional Health Council, PlatFORM Group, and R1.

Winnebago County Community Mental Health Board Seeks Input for Strategic Plan, Future Funding



In its first year of programming, the Winnebago County Community Mental Health Board (WCCMHB) funded 15 programs. After five years, it has grown to support 38 core programs and added several new funding pathways. As the Board plans its priorities for the next three years, your input will help show where it should focus its work.

The [Public Participation Survey](#) invites community members to provide their first-hand experiences with mental health and substance use services in Winnebago County. Feedback will help identify gaps and be incorporated into the WCCMHB's updated strategic plan. The strategic plan then will be used to direct the Board's future funding priorities.

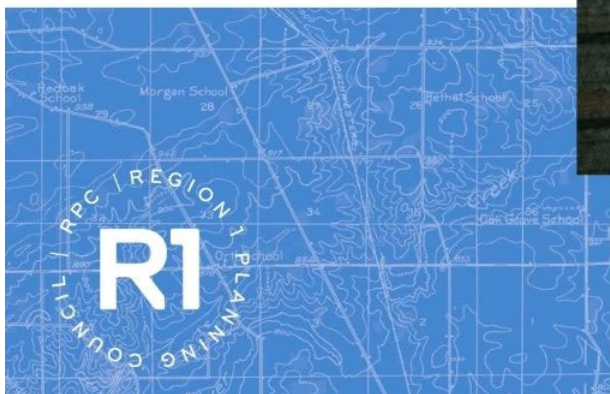
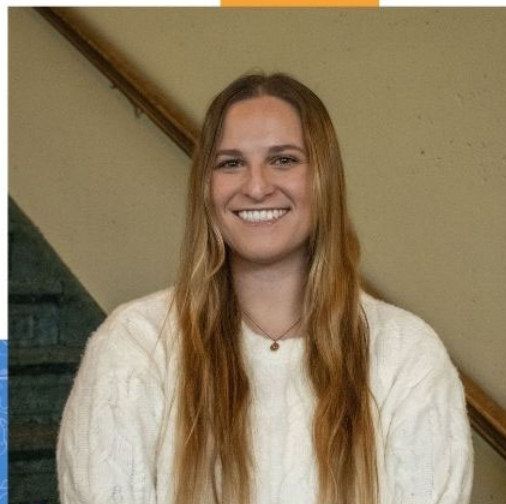
"It is critical that we hear the perspectives of people using mental health services, service providers, and residents wanting to know more about mental health in Winnebago County," said Jason Holcomb, Director of Community Impact. "Their stories help us better understand service gaps and needs to better inform strategic priorities."

Employee Spotlight

Megan Mech

Clean Energy Navigator

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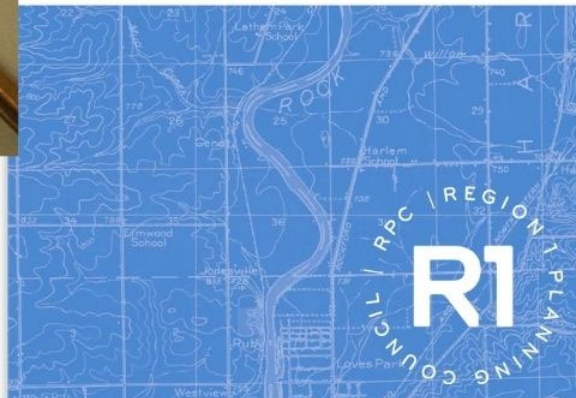
Megan Mech joins R1 as a Clean Energy Navigator. She has a bachelor's degree in Zoology from California Polytechnic State University in Pomona and a master's in Environmental Sustainability with an emphasis in Environmental Law from Loyola University. She worked most recently for the National Park Service as a biological science technician at Padre Island National Seashore. At R1, she will be involved in conducting Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnerships (GRIP) grant activities.



Mikel Carr

Planning Intern

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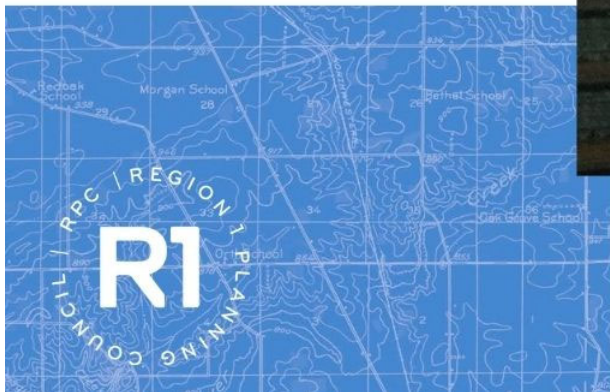


Mikel Carr joins R1 as a Planning Intern. He has a associate's degrees in Fine Arts from Green River, and Business DTA from Everett Community College, a bachelor's in General Studies from Columbia College, and a master's in Business Administration from Columbia College. He is a current doctoral candidate in Business Administration at the Swiss School of Business and Management, writing a dissertation on the connection between public transit and income inequality. He is also a U.S. Navy submarine veteran. Mikel has extensively traveled the world (visiting five continents!) and is now enjoying Rockford's rich architectural history and sense of community. At R1, he will be working on development for the Rockford passenger rail station, RMTD Transit Stop Inventory, and the Food Access Study.

Keagan Carlson

Planner

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Keagan Carlson joins R1 as a Planner. Born and raised in the Rockford region, he returns home after receiving his bachelor's degree in Environmental Science from the University of Alabama. At school, he gained experience in designing and conducting behavioral ecology studies that studied the effects of shifting environmental conditions on wildlife populations. At R1, he will be working on everything sustainability-focused, as well as LCI and Resilience Improvement Plan projects.

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