

Amy Salamon

From: R1 Planning Council <info@r1planning.org>
Sent: Thursday, June 5, 2025 2:06 PM
To: Amy Salamon
Subject: [Test] R1 June 2025 Newsletter - 🏠 Land Bank Extends Service Area

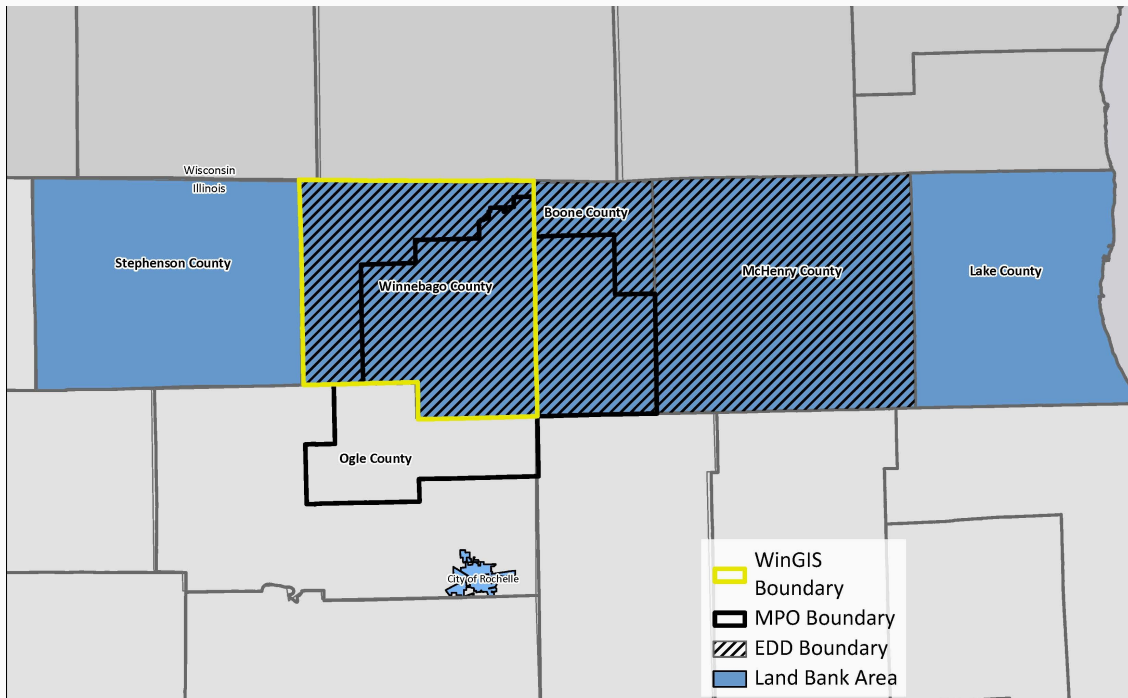
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June 2025

Fighting Blight in 6 Counties

Land Bank Extends Service Area to include Lake County



Northern Illinois Land Bank Authority (NILBA) added Lake County to its service area.

NILBA now serves six counties in northern Illinois: Stephenson, Winnebago, Boone, McHenry, Ogle, and Lake.

Under this partnership, Lake County Land Bank Authority will refer suitable properties to NILBA, whose staff of four will take care of all the other tasks necessary to clear property liabilities and resell. Leaning on NILBA's expertise is more efficient for Lake County and expands the impact that both organizations make in neighborhood revitalization.

NILBA has a history of success in fighting blight; acquiring and selling 44 properties for nearly \$1.5 million in sales since its start in 2019. Its involvement in repurposing vacant properties has converted distressed neighborhoods into safer, attractive ones providing a higher quality of life for all residents.

LCI Now Taking Applications for Round 2

The second round of the Livable Communities Initiative (LCI) is now open! Neighborhoods can apply for technical assistance from R1 to draw up a plan to increase their quality of life. Selected communities will later become eligible for implementation funding.



Key Dates

Application Period: **June 2, 2025 – August 4, 2025**

Neighborhood Presentations to R1 Board: **October 23, 2025**

R1 Board Approval: **November 13, 2025**

Learn more and apply on the [LCI 2025 Engage R1 page](#). LCI intends to stabilize and revitalize middle neighborhoods - those teetering between growth and decline. Community leaders: check the map at the Engage R1 link above to see if your neighborhood is eligible.

The first round was held in fall 2024, with the Keith Creek neighborhood its first awardee. R1 is currently holding planning meetings with neighborhood residents and leaders to determine their needs and priorities.

Don't miss this chance to shape your neighborhood's future!



Open for Public Comment

Click on the survey title to participate

 [Resilience Improvement Plan](#)

The Resilience Improvement Plan (RIP) will identify impacts to regional transportation caused by natural hazards like flooding, extreme temperatures, and severe storms. This survey is

asking for the kinds, locations, and impacts of weather events that you experience.



[Broadband Accessibility](#)

R1 is leading an initiative to expand internet access, affordability, and equity. This survey is looking for users' feedback regarding their current service and satisfaction (or lack thereof), and how they use the internet.



[U.S. EPA Brownfield Coalition Grant](#)

This grant allows communities to recommend locations for potential brownfield assessment. Brownfields are unused properties that may contain contaminants that must be addressed before redevelopment can occur.

Building Bridges to Hope



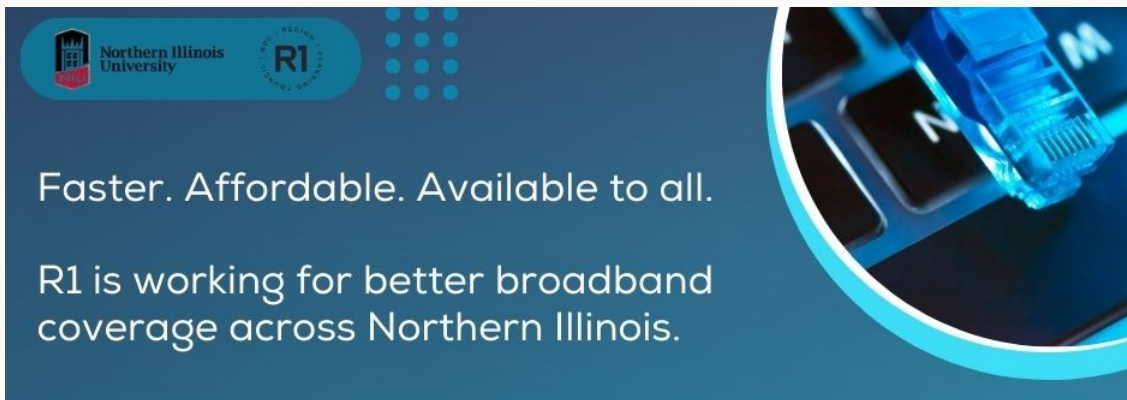
The third annual Building Bridges event was held on May 21 at Cliffbreakers in Rockford. This celebration of mental health was hosted by NAMI Northern Illinois and the Winnebago County Community Mental Health Board (WCCMHB).



Top: Jamie Tworkowski, founder of To Write Love On Her Arms, was the keynote speaker, sharing his experiences in leading a movement to provide hope and resources for people struggling with depression, addiction, self-injury, and suicide.

Center, left: Dick Kunnert (Vice-Chair), Mary Ann Abate (Chair), Dr. Terry Giardini, and Jeff Nielsen are a few of the WCCMHB board members that make this mental health infrastructure possible. *Center, right:* Marshmallow's Hope (representatives are seated) uses WCCMHB funds to educate the public on mental health support, suicide prevention, and therapy.

Bottom: The Building Bridges to Hope event featured a meet and greet, showcasing all 41 of the WCCMHB funded programs for core and accelerator funding, allowing attendees to discover the variety of mental health services in the county funded by the mental health half-cent sales tax.

Broadband Survey Looks for Regional Coverage Gaps

A graphic with a dark blue background. On the left, there is a logo for Northern Illinois University and a circular logo with 'R1' and 'REGIONAL' text. To the right of these logos is a grid of blue dots. The main text reads: 'Faster. Affordable. Available to all. R1 is working for better broadband coverage across Northern Illinois.' On the right side, there is a circular inset image showing a close-up of a blue Ethernet cable plugged into a network port on a keyboard.

 Northern Illinois University 

Faster. Affordable. Available to all.

R1 is working for better broadband coverage across Northern Illinois.

Take and share the [survey](#) so we can determine the coverage, affordability, and equity gaps across Northern Illinois. R1 will then use that information to help local governments in the four-county region understand how and where to prioritize broadband expansion.

Bright Careers Ahead

First Clean Energy Training Graduates Certified for Good-Paying, Lasting Careers



Left: Awaken Foundation's construction training prepares graduates for their choice of career options: weatherization, clean energy construction, building auditor, or construction apprenticeships.

Right: Shanequa Clark is one of the first proud graduates of Zion Enterprise's solar training cohort, receiving the nationally recognized NABCEP certification.

For some residents in Rockford's disadvantaged communities, getting a good-paying, lasting career seems out of reach. In just months, 20 of those individuals are now looking for careers - not just going from job to job - after graduating from Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) workforce training in May.

They are the first completed cohorts in the Rockford hub's CEJA workforce development program. Graduates chose their career path from the following programs:

Organization	Graduates	Certification
Awaken Foundation L3c	7	Weatherization/Clean Construction
Zion West Enterprise	9	Solar Panel Installation
Rock Valley College	4	CNC Machinery Operation

CEJA is not your typical workforce development initiative. Focusing on underserved neighborhoods, it offers free instruction and by giving stipends for completing major course milestones, actually pays students to train. Supports for barriers like transportation or childcare are provided and participants receive a dedicated case manager to help at every step along the way, from registration to resume preparation. It also broadens the regional economy by preparing workers to fill the additional jobs that will provide the state with 100% clean energy by 2050.

A new training cohort begins every 12 weeks, with the next expected in early fall. You can help

by spreading the word on how transformational this program is for participants and the companies that have hired them.

There are a number of ways to get involved:

- Schedule a presentation for your organization
- Share social media posts or program flyers
- Attend one of our job fairs or invite us to one of yours
- Contact our employment specialists to learn about the advantages to hiring CEJA graduates

Contact Amy Salamon at asalamon@r1planning.org for more information or to request materials.

Rockford Business Owners: Looking for Your Feedback in 2nd Quarter Business Sentiment Survey

How's business? If you are a Rockford region business leader, the Greater Rockford Chamber of Commerce (GRCC) wants to see it from your point of view! Share your feedback by taking just five minutes to fill out the Business Sentiment Survey. Open to all business leaders, it provides feedback about the business community to various partners and stakeholders.

You can complete the survey at [this link](#).



The first quarter Business Sentiment Survey results showed that the Rockford area business climate is largely positive. A steady stream of business openings - such as the Think Big! business incubator (groundbreaking shown here) - is fueling a strong and diverse business climate. Photo courtesy of WREX.

Distributed quarterly, this anonymous survey is designed to capture the attitudes, behaviors, and demographics of Rockford region businesses. Data will then be used to determine trends and identify economic development opportunities. This will make our region more competitive for businesses looking to locate or expand here, hire talent, and more.

First quarter results were overwhelmingly positive:

- 56.7% of business owners felt their business is healthy.
- 88.2% will invest the same or more in their business in the coming year.
- 45% plan to increase staff in the coming year.
- The availability of a skilled workforce is the biggest barrier to growth.

The survey will be open from June 2 – 15.

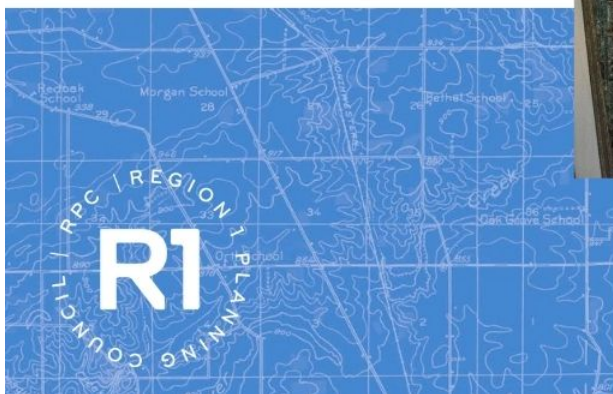
The logo features the words "Employee Spotlight" in a large, bold, white sans-serif font. Behind this text is a circular graphic composed of the words "ROCKFORD REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL" in a smaller, white, sans-serif font, arranged in a circle around the central text.

**Employee
Spotlight**

Patricia Moton

Community Impact Associate

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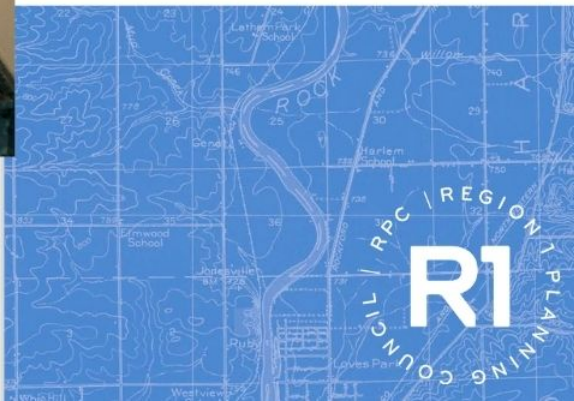
Patricia Moton joins R1 as a Community Impact Associate. She has a bachelor's degree in Legal Management from the University of Santo Tomas, Philippines and a master's in Management-Public Administration. She has wide range of coursework and experience in topics such as project management, administration, economics, law, logistics, coaching, and social work. She was also a Certified Agile Associate, a flexible, adaptive project management methodology. Patricia will be responsible for Winnebago County Community Mental Health Board coordination and projects.



Ellie Sander

Associate Housing Planner

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Ellie Sander is R1's new Associate Housing Planner. She has a bachelor's degree in Urban Studies and Planning and another in Spanish from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Her specific areas of interest within urban planning are community development, housing, and food justice. At UIUC, she participated in an independent research study assessing food accessibility for people in urban and rural communities who live alone. Ellie is part of the Sustainability team, working on the Housing Coordination Plan and brownfields sites.

2025 Interns



(left to right)

Jarrett Johnson graduated this spring from Wartburg College with a bachelor's degree in History. He will also join the Economic Development team, writing grants and analyzing data.

Mackenzie Key is majoring in Mathematics and Statistics at the University of Iowa. She also is cross country and track team captain. Mackenzie will use her computer science and math analysis skills on the Community Impact team.

Oliver Johnson is a Rock Valley College graduate and current Geospatial Science major at University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point, minoring in GIS and Spatial Analysis. In addition to GIS courses, he has studied natural resources and environmental science. He will be honing these skills with the Sustainability team this summer.

Cesar Medina is an Urban and Regional Planning major at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. His projects and studies have been in areas like transportation, healthcare access, land use development, and environmental justice. He will dive deep into these topics as part of the Transportation team.

Nick Fehrle graduated this spring from North Central College with a bachelor's degree in Business Economics. Before he heads to law school in the fall, he will put his economic studies to work as part of the Economic Development team.

Abbie Barnhardt is a familiar face around R1, returning for her third summer to conduct data analytics for the Community Impact team. She is part of Concordia University's Computer Science Scholar Program, which will earn her a bachelor's degree in Computer Science with a concentration in Artificial Intelligence and Robotics, and a master's degree in Computer Science with a concentration in Business Data Applications.

Sean Patel is a Computer Science major at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. He is looking toward a career in software engineering and data science, which his work with the R1 Community Impact data analytics team will provide valuable experience.

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