

**Amy Salamon**

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**From:** R1 Planning Council <info@r1planning.org>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, September 10, 2025 12:22 PM  
**To:** Amy Salamon  
**Subject:** [Test] September 2025 Newsletter - R1's Data Expertise Boosts Business Attraction

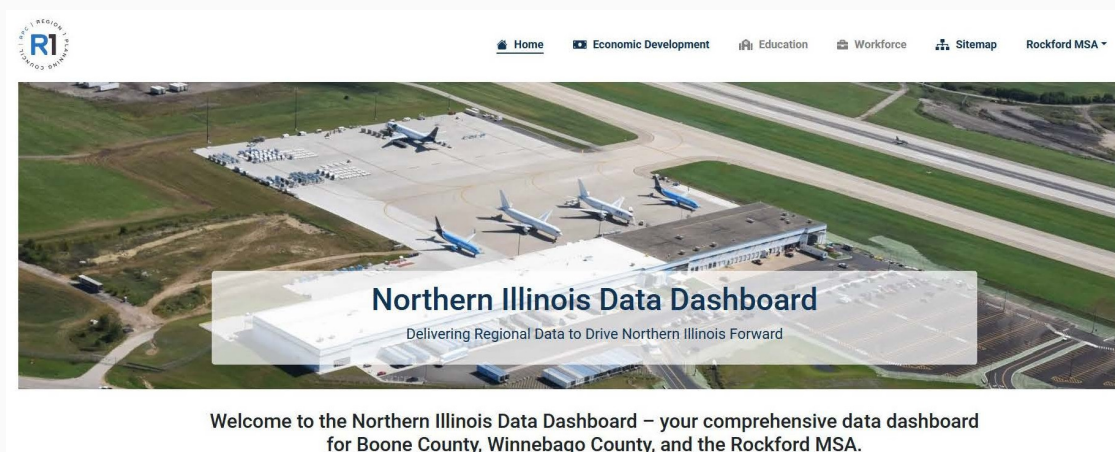
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September 2025

## Economic Data Dashboard the Newest Tool for Business Attraction



**R1 debuted a new online data dashboard** in August to help its economic development partners at Growth Dimensions and Greater Rockford Chamber of Commerce (GRCC) attract businesses to the region. The Northern Illinois Data Dashboard is the answer to site selectors' basic question: How does our region compare to others on critical employment metrics?

This dashboard, developed by R1's data team with input from Growth Dimensions and GRCC, can be accessed at [r1planning.org](http://r1planning.org), [rockfordchamber.com](http://rockfordchamber.com) and [growthdimensions.org](http://growthdimensions.org). You can find information on topics such as job creation, unemployment rate, or gross domestic product and all metrics are updated once federal data is available.

In addition to reliable, region-specific statistics, the dashboard:

- Attracts business development by highlighting the advantages Winnebago and Boone Counties offer.
- Acts as a data and accountability tool for Boone and Winnebago County governments, transparently tracking progress over time.
- Demonstrates a collaborative approach to business attraction, allowing economic development staff to develop bold solutions

"Businesses don't see county lines – only opportunity. Since positive economic effects are felt in both counties, it is natural for economic development organizations to join forces for the benefit of all," said **Isaac Guerrero**, R1 Director of Economic Development.



## Data Advisory Committee

This data dashboard builds up a top R1 priority – producing consistent, reliable data for the region's pressing priorities. The newly formed Regional Data Advisory Committee will oversee how the data is handled and educate stakeholders and the public on what this data means for the region. The group first met in August.

"The advisory group wants to facilitate the collaborative collection, analysis, and sharing of data across important community efforts," said **Jason Holcomb**, Director of Community Impact.

The committee meets every other month with members from public and non-profit organizations in health, economic development, education, recreation, housing, and social services sectors.

## Where in the World is R1's Data Bike?



It's been four months since **Joel Freudenberg** began riding the region's bike paths to record their conditions. In that time, he's covered 92 miles and fully mapped about three-fourths of the region's trails. All of those trails are now visible on Google Street View and bicycle ridership counts have been taken at 36 locations.

It's an intensive (but enjoyable) effort to improve trail maintenance and encourage the public to get out and ride/run/stroll.

When complete in 2026, the State of the Trails Data project will provide an interactive, publicly available map with amenities and conditions of the region's 144 miles of shared use paths and trails. R1 will also provide a report to organizations responsible for the paths, as well as continue collecting bicycle user counts to help with long-term bicycle network planning.

"Over the coming months, R1 will analyze the condition of the Rockford region's paths and trails, creating the *State of the Trails* report. This report will be shared with key decision-makers and the public so they can use our insights to create their own prioritized maintenance plans," said **Nathan Larsen**, R1 Associate Planner.

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## New WCCMHB Funding Boosts Grassroots Agency Services



Winnebago County Community Mental Health Board (WCCMHB) Grassroots funding opens new doors for organizations to help their neighbors facing mental health or substance use challenges. This initiative provides \$2 million in capital for up to 10 grassroots organizations to start or expand mental health or substance use services. These small organizations are often closely connected to their communities and have a deep understanding of individual needs.

“The grassroots funding opportunity allows the Board to support small nonprofits while simultaneously addressing the mental health or substance use needs of Winnebago County,” said **Mary Ann Abate**, WCCMHB Board President. “We recognize that smaller nonprofits are uniquely positioned to address certain local mental health and substance use issues.”

Letters of Interest (LOI) from interested organizations are due on **Friday, September 12** at 5 PM. Selected organizations will be invited to fill out a full application, with an option to receive grant writing and management help from an experienced mentor organization. For more details, see <https://r1planning.org/community-impact/wccmhb/wccmhb-funding-resources/>

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## Summer Trustee Auction Results

# 2025 TRUSTEE AUCTION SALES RESULTS



**76**  
vacant lots

**5**  
houses  
(with lot)



**1**  
commercial  
property



**\$339K**  
in sales



The summer 2025 Boone and Winnebago County Trustee Auction was held from August 12-19. The auction is an annual event that sells off abandoned properties reclaimed by the county. By encouraging new buyers to rehabilitate properties, it gives new life to neglected properties, eliminates blight, and breaks the cycle of abandonment.



# R1's Commitment to Accessibility

## ADA Title II Compliance



R1 is taking proactive steps to comply with Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Title II requires that all public agency facilities, programs, and services are accessible to people with disabilities.

These requirements include appointing an ADA Coordinator, posting a public ADA notice, designing a grievance procedure, completing a self-evaluation, and developing a transition plan. R1 is wrapping up an internal review to identify barriers and will then move on to planning next steps for compliance.

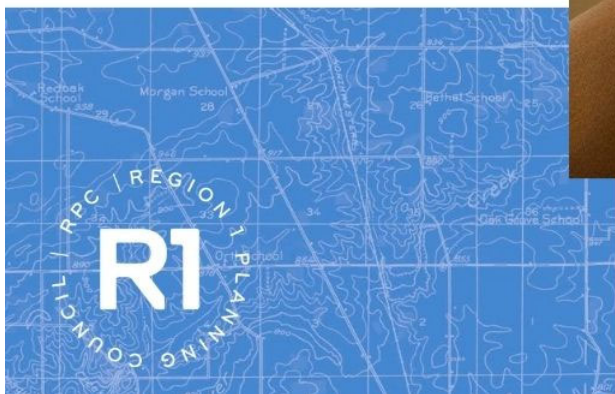
“As a public-facing organization, R1 is here for everyone – without barriers – which is why we’re going through this process and making sure that commitment is upheld,” says **Paige Witherow**, R1 ADA Coordinator.

R1 encourages individuals with disabilities, advocates, and community members to participate in upcoming public meetings and provide feedback. See future R1 newsletters and social media accounts for details as they are available.

## Raegan Hilbrant

### Community Impact Specialist

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**Raegan Hilbrant** joins R1 as a Community Impact Specialist. She recently received her Master of Public Health degree from the University of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine and holds a Bachelor of Arts in Public Health and Bachelor of Social Work from Miami University. During that time, she interned with the City of Philadelphia and the CDC, and completed research with the Children's Hospital of Pennsylvania and Penn Injury Science center. At R1, she will be part of projects like the domestic violence medical response and conduct the EPA Community Health Needs Assessment.

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