

# Rockford, Illinois

*Industrial Market Exploration*

*By Jack Brown*

# Market Overview

**Rockford, IL** is a **manufacturing-based** economy, specifically in the field of aerospace

- Manufacturing jobs account for over 20% of employment of labor force (US total is ~9%)

*“The Screw Capital of the World”*, specializes in:

Advanced Manufacturing, Aerospace, Automotive, Logistics & Distribution,  
Food Processing, Data Centers, and Healthcare

## Rockford, Illinois Industrial

- Total Population: 333,111
- Labor Force: 161,211

## Notable Warehouses (via CoStar database)

- Lowe's Distribution Center - 1,511,576 sqft
- Berner Food & Beverage Distribution Center - 675,502 sqft
- Misc. industrial parts manufacturers - 558,000 sqft (27,180 sq ft vacant)
- Misc. companies - 523,758 sqft (326,260 sqft vacant)
  - including an Amazon Fulfillment Center - 140,000 sqft
- Amazon Air Hub - 192,000 sqft

**Largest Employers in Rockford MSA**  
(As of Jan. 2022)

Company	Industry	Number of Employees
Rockford Public Schools	Education	4,075
UW Health	Healthcare	3,780
Mercyhealthcare	Healthcare	3,000
OSF Healthcare	Healthcare	2,200
Collins Aerospace	Aerospace Manufacturing	2,000
Woodward	Aerospace Manufacturing	2,000
UPS	Logistics & Distribution	2,000
Amazon	Logistics & Distribution	1,535
Wal-Mart Stores	Retail	1,470
Stellantis (formerly Fiat Chrysler Automobiles)	Manufacturing	1,459
Winnebago County	Government	1,429
Lowe's	Distribution Center, Retail	1,110

## Year Built

- [2008]
- [2019]
- [1962]
- [1980]
- [moved-in 2021]
- [2019]



# Industrial Overview

## 2022 Q2

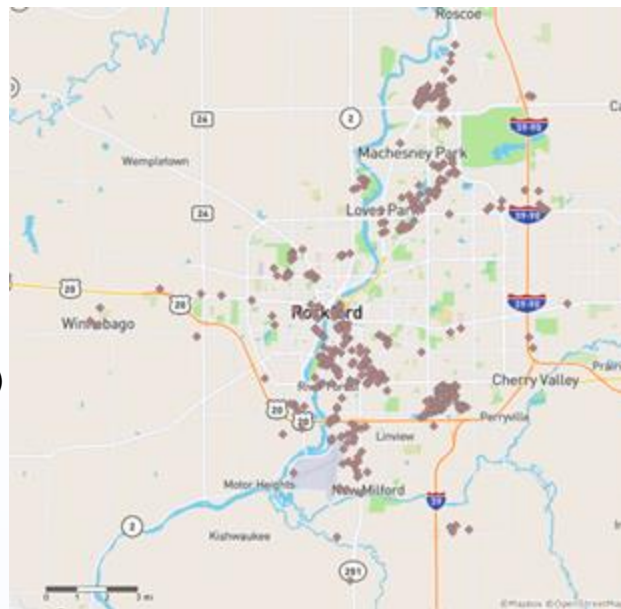
**Rentable Building Area:** 24,818,375 sqft  
**Vacancy Rate:** ~6% ~1,500,000 sqft  
**Net Absorption:** 206,868 sqft (679,344 sqft in last 12 mo.)

**Under Construction:** 109,000 sqft (total of 3 properties)  
**Average Rent:** \$4.73 per sqft (7.7% growth in 12 mo.)

## Existing Inventory Profile

	Total Sqft	Year
Mean	110,072	1976
Median	85,000	1980

Source: CoStar



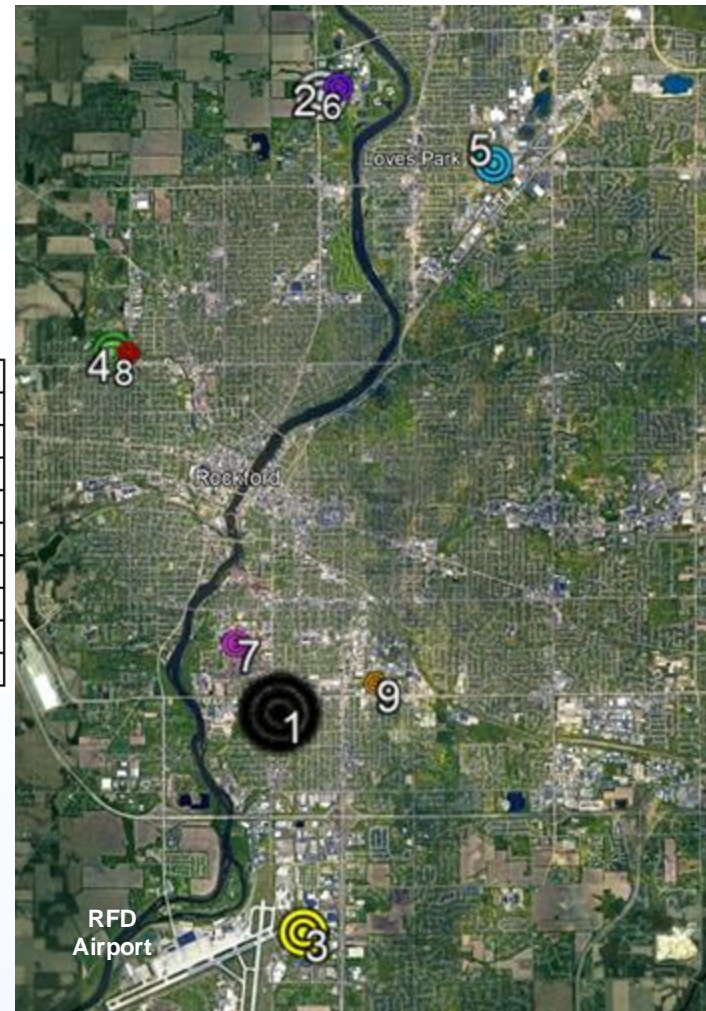
All Rockford warehouses >10,000 sqft in total size

Developer Name	# of Developments Owned in Rockford
STAG Industrial, Inc.	9
Stenstrom Real Estate Development Group	6
Ballard Properties	4
Phoenix Investors, LLC	4

# Warehouses for Lease

#	Address	Available Sqft	Land Owner	Direction from RFD
1	707 Harrison Ave, Rockford	581,000	Sunil Family, LLC	2 mi N
2	4650 Shepherd Trail, Rockford	326,260	Phoenix Investors, LLC	9 mi N
3	1122 Milford Ave, Rockford	305,000	Meiborg, Inc.	<1 mi E
4	4000 Auburn St, Rockford	276,996	Phoenix Investors, LLC	6.5 mi N
5	1354 Clifford Ave, Loves Park	225,000	Joseph Le Lense	9 mi NE
6	1818 Elmwood Rd, Rockford	117,782	Phoenix Investors, LLC	9 mi N
7	340 Blackhawk Park Ave, Rockford	100,000	Shanahowe Transportation, Inc.	3 mi N
8	1240 N Central Ave, Rockford	91,000	Phoenix Investors, LLC	6.5 mi N
9	2020 Harrison Ave, Rockford	80,000	Sunil Family, LLC	3 mi N

Source: CoStar



# Chicago-Rockford International Airport (RFD)

- In 2020, the Airports Council International named RFD as the fastest-growing airport in the world\*
- In 2021, RFD was the 14th largest cargo airport in the United States for landed weight

## RFD is home to:

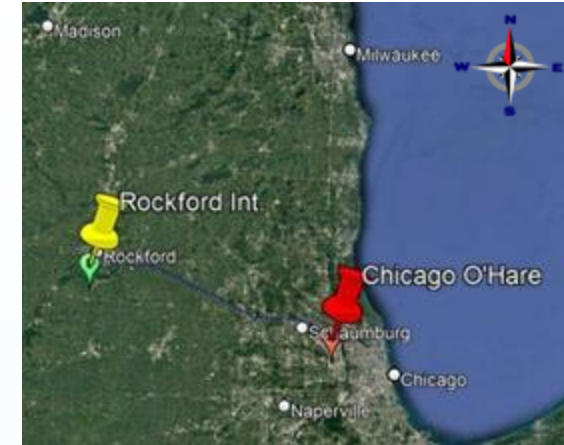
- The second largest of UPS's seven domestic air hubs
- A major base of operations for Amazon Air
- 15 international airlines

International tier one freight forwarders:

- DB Schenker, DSV, and Senator

Other international and domestic air cargo carriers:

- HAE, ABX Air, ATI, Atlas Air, National Airlines, Silk Way West, Emirates, Korean Air, Magma, and ASL



## Chicago O'Hare International Airport (ORD)

- Chicago is a bottleneck in the global supply chain
- ORD is #1 in US for air cargo volume
- ORD experiences congestion due to high inflow of air cargo, but has been actively expanding to combat this
- RFD is located just 65 miles NW of ORD

ORD vs RFD Air Cargo Imports (in lbs.) by Year

Year	ORD	YOY Increase	RFD	YOY Increase
2017	4.3 Billion	---	1.4 Billion	---
2018	4.1 Billion	-4%	2.1 Billion	50%
2019	3.9 Billion	-4%	2.3 Billion	10%
2020	4.5 Billion	15%	2.7 Billion	17%
2021	5.5 Billion	24%	3.4 Billion	26%

Source: Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)

# Strengths

- **Lower cost of operation, compared to Chicago (and sometimes quicker service)**
  - Lower median income than national average, so people will be willing to work for less
  - Rockford region's cost of living is approx. 24% lower than the national average
  - Rockford Avg. Rent: ~\$5/sqft vs. US Avg. Rent: ~\$11/sqft
- **Close proximity to other cities (measured in straight line distance to city centers)**
  - Chicago, IL (80 miles)      - Madison, WI (58 miles)      - Milwaukee, WI (80 miles)
- **Great interstate and railroad connections**
  - 2 major interstates run through the region (I-39 and I-90)
  - Business located here can reach 75% of U.S. businesses within a 24-hour truck drive
  - High truck traffic volume
    - ~12,000 to 18,000 average daily truck traffic between Rockford and Chicago
    - ~17,000 average daily truck traffic between Rockford and north to Wisconsin
- **Industrial economic base and increasingly-large air cargo volumes foster need for warehousing**
- **German freight forwarders Senator and DB Schenker are subleasing 60,000 and 50,000 sqft near RFD to escape ORD congestion**
- **Tax abatements may be awarded to new/redevelopments that result in substantial new job/economic growth, or meet goals set by local government**





# Rockford, IL Business Case

Assumed 1,000,000 SF building with 500 headcount and last mile delivery within 100 mile radius based on population density

- Tenant Occupancy Cost Estimates; 10-Year Recurring, Non-Discounted (rent, logistics, payroll)

Location	Total Costs	Payroll Costs	Rent Costs	Logistics Costs*
Rockford, IL	\$345,905,758	\$256,628,449	\$46,925,573	\$42,351,737
Elgin, IL	\$366,236,497 5.87% increase	\$265,669,130 3.52% increase	\$60,416,675 28.75% increase	\$40,150,693 5.19% decrease
O'Hare Airport	\$400,117,228 15.67% increase	\$277,881,979 8.28% increase	\$87,985,449 87.5% increase	\$34,249,800 19.13% decrease

\*Logistics Costs assumed shipment to high density zip codes (1,000+ per sq mile) around a 100 mile radius of each site.  
The higher the density of people in a zip code, the more shipments to that zip code was assumed.

# Shortcomings

- **Declining population growth (Rockford City - US Census Bureau)**

- 2010: 152,871
- 2020: 148,655
- 2021: 146,962
- 2026: 144,321
- Population projected to keep declining at 1.8%

- **Low annual absorption rate (CoStar)**

- Historical average: only 146,925 sqft
- Forecast average: only 147,257 sqft

- **Lack of speculative development, including only 3 properties, in 2 locations, under construction**

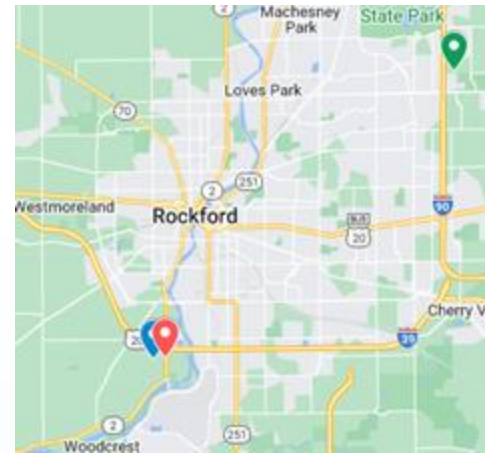
- 📍 planned to finish by July 2022, 📍 & 📍 planned to finish by January 2023

- **Wide current availability of warehouse space, means there may not be a need for more**

- Already > 1.5 million total vacant sqft
- Rockford Vacancy Rate: ~6%
- Total US Vacancy Rate: ~4%

- **Small volume and size of current sales**

- Only 19 sales in the past 12 months, with 180,060 sqft being the largest building sold/leased



📍 60,000 sqft   📍 30,000 sqft   📍 19,000 sqft

**Total: 109,000 sqft**



# Notable Recent News

## **Solutions to congestion are being sought within Chicago (reported in March 2022)**

- Alliance Ground International, the largest ground handler in Chicago, recently invested \$100,000 in a new cargo control system to its Chicago operations, as well as a 253,000 sqft import handling warehouse only 10 minutes west of O'Hare and close to many freight forwarders
- Maestro Cargo is leasing a 164,000 sqft warehouse only 5 minutes from the airport, for 5 years

## **New \$8 million dollar, 240,000 sqft building for cargo approved in RFD (June 2022)**

- The Greater Rockford Airport Authority Board of Commissioners approved \$8 million in finances for a third cargo warehouse building, with a ground handling company making its debut in Illinois by leasing this new 240,000 sqft space

## **Rockford has been consistently losing jobs and labor force members in the past decade, specifically this year**



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

# Build-to-Suite Parks/Listings

## 1) Rock 39 Industrial Park - Build to Suits for Lease



Listed on: rockfordil.com

Address:	Baxter Road and South Mulford Road
City:	Loves Park
State:	IL
Building Type:	Industrial
Available SF:	1,500,000
Pricing Note:	\$3.50 - 6.50 PSF (Annual)
Lease Rate Note:	\$3.50 - 6.50 PSF (Annual)
Lease Terms:	Triple Net
Last Updated:	Jan 10, 2022

### Land owned by:

- (1) US RE Company, LLC
- (2) Rock 39, LLC

## Who Owns the Land in Rockford?

- Lots of Limited Liability Companies (LLCs) own most of the land with development potential in Rockford
- They are better primed to capitalize should the need for development in Rockford increase

## 2) Loves Park, IL Corporate Center - Build to Suits for Lease



Listed on: rockfordil.com

Address:	Beverage Blvd. and Harvey Rd.
City:	Loves Park
State:	IL
Building Type:	Industrial
Available SF:	350,000
Pricing Note:	\$4.50 - 6.50 PSF (Annual)
Lease Rate Note:	\$4.50 - 6.50 PSF (Annual)
Last Updated:	Jan 10, 2022

### Land owned by:

- (1) Danfoss Power Solutions II, LLC

## Which Companies Dominate Land Ownership?

- STAG Industrial Holdings, LLC
- Sunil Family, LLC
- Phoenix Investors, LLC
- Greater Rockford Airport Authority

# Conclusion

After our thorough research, I do not recommend speculative development of the Rockford, IL area, as of July 2022

As covered throughout this presentation, the main findings and reasons for the recommendation above are as follows:

- Very low annual absorption trends; averaging far less than 200,000 sqft per year and not projected to increase much (Historical: 146,925 sqft, Forecast: 147,257 sqft)
- Poor and continually-weakening economy
- Shrinking population size and labor force
- High Vacancy (6%) / Existing warehouse inventory well over 1 million sqft already
- Low volume of sale and lease transactions
- Lack of proven speculative development in recent years
  - Only 3 developments currently under-construction, with a combined total of only 109,000 sqft