



*This document last updated December 4, 2023.*

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## DOWNTOWN ROCKFORD OPEN CONTAINER ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT GUIDE



### About the Downtown Rockford Entertainment District

The City of Rockford and the River District Association have formed a partnership to implement a designated area within downtown Rockford aimed at boosting economic activity and vibrancy, following successful models seen in cities nationwide. The establishment of the Downtown Entertainment District allows residents and visitors aged 21+ to conveniently purchase and carry beer, wine, or cocktails from participating bars and restaurants, utilizing designated branded cups within a clearly designated geographic area. This initiative represents one of the first Entertainment Districts in the State of Illinois, providing an additional amenity for socializing and shopping.

The City and River District Association met with downtown business owners and surveyed businesses, employees and residents of the designated area to understand how each group felt about this opportunity. The district boundaries are limited to better control and monitor the impact of the district on downtown. A new ordinance was approved by the City Council and an information session was provided to businesses with liquor licenses to ensure proper compliance.

Feedback and comments will be collected on the Entertainment District's impact. If you would like to share your opinion, email [info@riverdistrict.com](mailto:info@riverdistrict.com) to share your thoughts.

**The Downtown Rockford Entertainment District goes into effect Dec. 1, 2023.**

#### What is an Entertainment District?

An Entertainment District allows patrons aged 21+ who purchase alcohol from licensed participating bars and restaurants to carry their drink in designated and branded containers within a specified geographic area in downtown Rockford.

Each business within the designated area has the authority to determine their level of participation. Bars or restaurants have the freedom to sell and participate according to their discretion and in compliance with their liquor license. Additionally, retail and entertainment establishments may choose to welcome or restrict entrance to their premises to patrons with branded cups as they deem it necessary.



# DOWNTOWN ROCKFORD OPEN CONTAINER ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT GUIDE



## Downtown Rockford Entertainment District Boundaries



## Days and Hours of Operation

The Downtown Rockford Entertainment District operates seven days a week. \*

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
10 a.m. – 11 p.m.	4 p.m. – 11 p.m.	4 p.m. – 11 p.m.	4 p.m. – 11 p.m.	4 p.m. – 11 p.m.	4 p.m. – 11 p.m.	10 a.m. – 11 p.m.

*\*Participation in the Entertainment District by a special event is at the discretion of the special event permit holder.*



# DOWNTOWN ROCKFORD OPEN CONTAINER ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT GUIDE



## Participating and Non-Participating Locations

Businesses located within the Entertainment District boundaries can submit a form to identify whether they want to opt-in or opt-out of the district. Below are examples of what will be used to identify participation. The appropriate sign will need to be posted.



- ❖ **Green:** Beverages Sold Here, no outside alcohol permitted is noted on sign
- ❖ **Blue:** Beverages Welcome is for retail/service businesses that welcome patrons to carry an approved to-go drink into their establishment
- ❖ **Red:** Please No Beverages is an optional sign for any retail/service business that does not want patrons carrying in open containers with alcohol.

### City Market Pavilion, Davis Park and Joe Marino Park

The outdoor City Mark pavilion, Joe Marino Park, and Davis Park are considered a parking lot and park respectively, therefore patrons shall not bring in open containers of alcohol onto the premises, unless a special event decides to allow the Entertainment District to extend into their event. The intent to opt-in to the Entertainment District must be included on their special event applications when it is submitted to the city. If a special event has been opted-in, all rules and regulations shall apply. The special event applicant shall obtain all required approved containers and signage/notices from the City prior to the event.



## DOWNTOWN ROCKFORD OPEN CONTAINER ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT GUIDE



### Entertainment District Requirements

The Downtown Rockford Entertainment District has the following rules:

- Alcoholic beverages cannot be brought into the district from home or from any establishment other than those participating businesses.
- Alcoholic beverages must be in River District-provided and approved cups only, which will be branded with the program name.
- Alcoholic beverages can only be consumed on the public sidewalk (e.g.: the common area) located within the boundaries or inside participating businesses.
- Beverages cannot be consumed on the road, in parking lots, on private property or in any parks or green spaces.
- Alcoholic beverages cannot be removed from the boundary area.
- Patrons may not enter a retail store or any other private business with an alcoholic beverage that has been purchased at an approved Entertainment District establishment unless the business has provided approval.

### Business Requirements

Businesses located in the Entertainment District and selling alcoholic beverages must follow the below regulations:

- Businesses with a valid liquor license within the Downtown Entertainment District may permit a patron to carry one (1) alcoholic drink from their premises in an approved to-go cup. No participating licensed business shall allow a patron, guest, or member to exit its licensed premises with more than one open container of alcoholic beverage.
- Participating businesses with a valid liquor license within the district will be provided with a green window sticker indicating their participation.
- Participating licensed businesses located within the Downtown Entertainment District shall post, at all points of egress from their premises, a map of the boundaries of the district (QR code w/ link to map is acceptable).



## DOWNTOWN ROCKFORD OPEN CONTAINER ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT GUIDE



- No business or person within the district that does not have a valid liquor license shall sell, offer to sell, or serve on their premises any alcoholic beverage.
- Persons may be permitted to remove alcoholic beverages from a participating licensed premises only in cups approved by the City of Rockford and no such alcoholic beverages shall be removed from the licensed premises in a can, bottle, glass container or other container, except as otherwise allowed by law.
- All alcoholic drinks must be carried in an approved container only, which shall have approved branding.

### Businesses located in the Entertainment District and NOT selling alcoholic beverages must follow the below regulations:

- Retail, service, entertainment, or other businesses may allow patrons to enter their premises with an alcoholic drink in an approved container. However, businesses may prohibit patrons from bringing in alcoholic drinks by posting an approved notice on their door or window.
- Retail, service, entertainment, or other businesses within the district will be provided with either a blue or red window sticker indicating their participation.
- Alcoholic beverages may only be carried into a retail store or any other private business if it has been purchased at a participating licensed business in the Downtown Entertainment District in an approved container.



## **Patron Requirements**

The possession and consumption of an alcoholic beverage in an Entertainment District is subject to the following regulations:

- Persons may be permitted to remove alcoholic beverages from a participating licensed premises only in cups approved by the City of Rockford and no such alcoholic beverages shall be removed from the licensed premises in a can, bottle, glass container or other container, except as otherwise allowed by law.
- Alcoholic beverages shall not be brought into the Downtown Entertainment District from home.
- Alcoholic beverages may not be removed from the Downtown Entertainment District boundaries.
- No person shall carry an alcoholic beverage into any business that has opted out of the program.
- All approved cups must be disposed of in a proper receptacle prior to leaving the Downtown Entertainment District boundaries.
- Alcoholic beverages shall not be consumed on any street, parking lot, or in any parks or green spaces.

## **Special Events**

Special events at the outdoor City Market pavilion, Joe Marino Park, and Davis Park may opt-in to the Downtown Entertainment District on a case-by-case basis. Special event applicants shall indicate their intent to opt in on their special event applications submitted to the City. If a special event has decided to opt-in, all rules and regulations set forth in the city ordinance shall apply. The special event applicant shall obtain all required approved containers and signage/notices from the City prior to the event.



## Downtown Rockford Entertainment District Frequently Asked Questions

### What is an Entertainment District?

An Entertainment District is a defined outdoor area where alcoholic beverages, sold by an establishment licensed for the sale of alcoholic beverages for on-premises consumption, may be consumed.

### When does the Entertainment District go into effect?

The Downtown Rockford Entertainment District goes into effect on December 1, 2023.

### How will the Entertainment District boundaries be marked?

Here is the [map](#) of the Entertainment District.

### What are the days and hours of operation of the Entertainment District?

Monday through Friday the Entertainment District begins at 4 p.m. and ends at 11 p.m. Saturday and Sunday the Entertainment District begins at 10 a.m. and ends at 11 p.m. All days of the week cups will stop being sold at 10:30 p.m.

### Why are City Market & Davis Park not included in the Entertainment District boundaries?

The outdoor City Market pavilion, Joe Marino Park and Davis Park are considered a parking lot and a park respectively. Liquor is not allowed in city parks, unless opted-in by a special event.

### How does a business opt-in/opt-out to the Entertainment District?

Businesses with a liquor license can submit [this form](#) to identify if they want to opt-in or opt-out of the Entertainment District. Retail, service and other businesses can use [this form](#).

### How will participating businesses be marked?

You can see a list of [participating locations here](#). Window clings will be displayed in participating businesses to identify those that have opted into or out of the district.

### What cups will be used for the Entertainment District? What is the cost to my business to use these cups?

The River District Association will provide blue branded plastic cups for cold drinks and white Styrofoam with blue branding for hot drinks for licensed businesses that opt-in to the district. The cold drink cups are \$.25 each and hot drink cups will be \$.50 each for business owners. If a business needs more cups, they should email [info@riverdistrict.com](mailto:info@riverdistrict.com) with the quantity of hot and cold cups needed.

### How will the City of Rockford handle any increase in litter?

The City of Rockford will install additional trash receptacles within the district, as well as increase the scheduled pickup of trash in the area.





## **Downtown Rockford Entertainment District Frequently Asked Questions (cont'd)**

### **How many alcoholic drinks can I purchase at one time in the Entertainment District?**

Businesses with a valid liquor license within the Entertainment District may permit a patron to carry one (1) alcoholic drink from their premises.

### **Can I take an alcoholic beverage in my Entertainment District cup home with me?**

No. Cups should be disposed of in a nearby trash receptacle prior to exiting the Entertainment District.

### **Can I drink my own alcoholic beverage, pour it into a branded cup and walk around the Entertainment District?**

No. Only drinks purchased from qualified businesses within the Entertainment District are allowed. No glass bottles, or outside drinks are permitted with the boundaries.

### **Will additional outdoor seating be provided within the Entertainment District?**

Patrons can enjoy their beverage in public gathering spaces where seating is provided (other than in Davis Park and Joe Marino Park). Businesses that provide seating for their patrons is restricted to their patrons only.

### **Can a food truck or mobile pushcart sell alcoholic beverages as part of the Entertainment District?**

No. Participating locations must have a valid liquor license for onsite consumption.

### **Can a convenience store sell alcoholic beverages to-go as a part of the Entertainment District?**

No. Participating locations must have a valid liquor license for onsite consumption.

### **What do I do if I am a retailer within the Entertainment District and do not want alcohol inside my business?**

All businesses located within the Entertainment District have the option to opt-out of the district; and do not have to allow alcohol within your place of business. Signage will be provided to all businesses that choose to participate or not, to clearly indicate their status within the Entertainment District.

### **Can I take my alcoholic beverage into a vehicle within the Entertainment District?**

No. No person shall possess an alcoholic beverage while driving a vehicle, including bicycles and scooters. An open container of any alcoholic beverage is also prohibited in the passenger area of any vehicle while on right-of-way within the Entertainment District.

### **What happens if I leave the Entertainment District boundaries with an alcoholic beverage?**

Individuals who leave the Entertainment District in possession of alcoholic beverages can be criminally charged.