



Thomas P. McNamara
Mayor
Office of the Mayor

December 5, 2025

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my alarm and deep frustration regarding the systematic dismantling of healthcare services on Rockford's West Side by Mercyhealth. For years, Mercyhealth promised a "one hospital, two campuses" model, maintaining the original hospital on North Rockton Avenue while opening a new facility on Riverside. Yet, it has become clear that Mercy leadership has not maintained that commitment and I question their intent from the outset to gradually strip services from the West Side campus, leaving the community that relies most heavily on local healthcare completely abandoned.

This is not merely an issue of convenience - it is a matter of life and death. One of our Rockford Fire Department Driver Engineers, based at a West Side station, recently shared that what once took minutes to transport a patient to Mercy on North Rockton Avenue now requires 18½ minutes - with lights and sirens - to reach Mercy Riverside, and roughly 30 minutes for the return trip, under the best circumstances. That leaves an ambulance out of service for nearly an hour, denying timely emergency care to West Side residents, as Javon Bea and Mercyhealth shifted services to gain state support for their East Side location.

The West Side was promised accessible healthcare, yet the reality is empty buildings and broken assurances. This is unacceptable. Rockford cannot stand by while an entire community is left without the health services it urgently needs. We must demand concrete solutions that restore reliable, accessible care to the West Side - solutions that place the needs of patients above the convenience of hospital administration.

Javon Bea and the Mercyhealth Board first cut mental health, then pediatric services, and then posted signs claiming a six-hour delay for non-emergency care (see attachment) - intentionally discouraging patients. When patients avoided the ER due to their signage, Mercyhealth used the low numbers to justify closures. Would anyone wait six hours if their emergency felt urgent?

In their application before you, Javon Bea and the Mercyhealth Board state that they also needed to close due to flooding caused by the City. Here are the facts - Mercyhealth and Federal Insurance Co. filed complaints in 2019, alleging that the City's 1962 failure to install adequate drainage at the hospital's campus led to the 2018 flooding, constituted an unconstitutional taking, and caused the insurer to pay Mercy Health System \$29.5 million. In 2023, Judge Lisa Fabiano dismissed parts of the lawsuits with prejudice. The City then sought summary judgment on the remaining claims, which Judge Fabiano granted, ruling entirely in the City's favor. These rulings make clear that the City was not responsible for the flooding, and Mercyhealth's claims cannot justify the closure of essential services on the West Side



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The West Side deserves nothing less than a hospital that serves its residents with dignity, reliability and fairness. Rockford as a whole deserves a healthcare system that fulfills its promises, not one that abandons the most vulnerable among us. I urge all relevant stakeholders to act decisively to address this crisis and ensure that local, lifesaving care is once again available to the West Side community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas P. McNamara". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Thomas" and last name "McNamara" clearly visible.

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Mayor, City of Rockford

