

2016 annual report

Greater Kokomo Economic Development Alliance:
Serving Kokomo and Howard County through the combined
efforts of the Greater Kokomo Downtown Association, Greater
Kokomo Visitors Bureau, Greater Kokomo Chamber of
Commerce and Inventrek Technology Park.

GREATER
KOKOMO
ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
ALLIANCE

WHO WE ARE

The Greater Kokomo Economic Development Alliance focuses on developing economic prosperity for our community by achieving goals and executing programs that benefit Kokomo and Howard County's residents, businesses, organizations and visitors.

The Alliance is the combined workings of the Greater Kokomo Downtown Association, Greater Kokomo Visitors Bureau, Greater Kokomo Chamber of Commerce and Inventrek Technology Park.

Together, the Alliance's vision, mission and values guide our strategic plan and define the ways in which we execute those plans to accomplish the goals within each organizational priority.



OUR VISION

The shared vision of these five divisions is to foster economic prosperity for Kokomo and Howard County through new investment, population growth, and the continued success of our area's current businesses and residents.

OUR MISSION

The Greater Kokomo Economic Development Alliance aligns, links and leverages resources to build community prosperity.

OUR VALUES

We are guided to act and driven to succeed by four sets of values:

- Integrity and respect
- Inclusiveness
- Efficiency and effectiveness
- Continuous improvement

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Our goals and actions align with five strategic priorities:

- ❖ **Leadership and collaboration:** Drive initiatives that lead to economic prosperity for the maximum benefit of current and future generations.
 - ❖ **Economic vitality:** Grow the local economy through quality job creation and business attraction and increase the number of residents to sustain the community.
 - ❖ **Talent attraction:** Develop, retain and attract talent for industry and cultural vibrancy.
 - ❖ **Innovation and entrepreneurship:** Spur an optimistic, persistent entrepreneurial culture and provide infrastructure for innovators to expand business.
 - ❖ **Quality places:** Promote and lead efforts to drive investments in quality, connected places for future workforce and family needs.
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ALLIANCE STAFF



Charlie Sparks
Alliance
President
& CEO



Mike McCool
Manager,
economic
development



Susan Alexander
Manager,
Downtown
Initiatives



Sherry Matlock
Manager,
Visitors
Bureau



Misty Knisely
Manager,
marketing &
communication



Marla Miller
Chamber
Membership
Development
Coordinator



Joeline Boyles
Controller



Dan Giesecke
Facilities
Manager



Linda Wilson
Administrative
coordinator,
Main Street



Abby Evilsizer
Administrative
coordinator,
Firmin Street

ALLIANCE FACILITIES

MAIN STREET OPERATIONS

- Chamber
- Visitors
Bureau
- Downtown
Association



FIRMIN STREET OPERATIONS

- Inventrek
Technology Park
- The Shared
Drive

ALLIANCE LEADERSHIP

2016 ALLIANCE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- | | | | |
|---|------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| • Chair: Susan Sciame - Glesecke | • Jeff Hauswald | • Cary Mawbey | • Steve Whikehart |
| • Bryan Bitner | • Danny Hiatt | • Peggy Baugher | • Robert Varsanik |
| • DeAndra Beard | • Rhonda Heytens | • Jean Neel | • Sean VerLee |
| • Mayor Greg Goodnight | • Joe Hooper | • James Papacek | • Michael Ward |
| • Jeff Griffin | • Margie Johnson | • Steve Hartwig | • Commissioner Paul Wyman |
| | • Kevin Johnston | • Michelle Simmons | |
| | • Amber Jordan | • Mike Stegall | |

2016 GREATER KOKOMO VISITORS BUREAU BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| • President: Kirk Daniels | • Amber Jordan | • Marie Lindskoog |
| • Jim Calabro | • Randy Morris | • Bambi Roe |
| • Monica Contreras | | • Marlo Stevens |

2016 GREATER KOKOMO CHAMBER COUNCIL

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| • Chair: Peggy Baugher | • Joey Kimbrough | • Randy Morris | • Blake Rollins |
| • Dave Dubois | • Kim King | • Todd Moser | • Crista Tharp |
| • Jason Hoffer | • Jon Marley | • Brian Pier | • Kim Tracy |
| • Jack Ingram | • Shannon Miller | • Brad Priday | • Michael Ward |
| • Dorothea Irwin | • Commissioner Tyler Moore | • Marie Lindskoog | • Karen McCoy |
| | | • Bambi Roe | |

2016 GREATER KOKOMO DOWNTOWN COUNCIL

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| • Co-chair: Bryan Bitner | • Cathy Clearwaters | • Jenny Jordan | • Erin Larison |
| • Co-chair: Ryan Minick | • Stefani Closson | • Carey Stranahan | • Cassie Salinas |
| | • Susan Davis | • Lora Lacy | • Bill Stonestreet |

2016 GREATER KOKOMO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

- | | | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|------------------|
| • Chair: Michael Ward | • Robert Hickman | • Amy Pate | • E.P. Severns |
| • Greg Aaron | • Jennifer Jordan | • David Rayl | • Jeffrey Nelson |
| • Roger Feldhaus | • Jon Marley | • Councilman John Roberts | • Greg Gordon |
| | • Richard Moore | | • Ty Miller |

2016 INVENTREK COUNCIL

- | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| • Chair: Andy Baker | • Lita Rouser | • Frank Lachenmaier |
| • Greg Aaron | • Bob Hingst | • Commissioner Tyler Moore |
| • Jeff Griffin | • Jennifer Jordan | • Mike Stegall |

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENTS

PUBLIC INITIATIVES SPUR PRIVATE INVESTMENT

It's been a great year for Kokomo and Howard County.

Following the lead of the City of Kokomo, private investment has been pouring in. In 2016, the \$16 million, state-of-the-art **Kokomo Family YMCA** opened in downtown Kokomo.

Ground was broken on the \$32 million **Flaherty & Collins** apartment project. Developers say this project would not have come to fruition without the **Kokomo Municipal Stadium**, where the **Kokomo Jackrabbits** saw another season of record attendance in 2016. For a second straight year, the stadium was named Ballpark Digest's Best Summer Collegiate Facility.



Construction is underway on the **Market Street Townhomes**, while the **Tin Man Brewing Co.** opened in The Downtown Depot District just before year end. A **new solar park** opened at the site of the former Continental Steel plant site. The 26-acre park houses 21,000 solar panels producing 7 megawatts of energy.

The **Kokomo Metropolitan Statistical Area** saw the largest increase in Gross Domestic Product in the Great Lakes Region, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis. Furthermore, the Analysis of Bureau of Labor Statistics data by the Associated General Contractors of America reports Kokomo's MSA leads the nation in construction jobs gained based on percentage.

From June 2015 to June 2016, our area gained **200 construction jobs**, representing a 20 percent increase. That's the highest percentage reported in the nation.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE FELL TO LOWEST POINT SINCE 2000

IN SEPTEMBER, RATE HIT 4.1 PERCENT — BELOW STATE AND NATIONAL LEVELS

DUKE ENERGY SITE READINESS PROGRAM

To position the community to better compete for business development opportunity, the Alliance continues to address the recommendations resulting from the participation in the Duke Site Readiness Program and is conducting further due diligence on matters related to available infrastructure and control of property.



931 CORRIDOR BUSINESS ANALYSIS

The Greater Kokomo Economic Development Alliance commissioned a study by **MBA students** in the **Capstone Course at Indiana University Kokomo**. The study examined the effect the construction of the new U.S. 31 had on the traffic patterns and the existing businesses along State Road 931.



NEW CORRIDOR CUTS DOWN ON TRUCK TRAFFIC

ANALYSIS: 80 PERCENT DROP IN NUMBER OF SEMI-TRAILERS ON 931

The study analyzed traffic patterns from 2012 and 2014 and included interviews with 69 businesses along the affected area.

More than 55 percent of businesses on State Road 931 surveyed reported an increase in sales since U.S. 31 opened.

The study also found a significant traffic increase on Ind. 22, making it a new major entry point to our community. The findings called for improvements along this new community gateway.

JEFF SPECK: WALKABLE CITY

The Alliance and Indiana University Kokomo hosted **Jeff Speck**, smart growth advocate and author, for a two-day workshop and public presentation. His visit gave residents the opportunity to learn more about walkability initiatives and how communities can leverage recent investments in the community.

The Alliance hosted Speck for a public presentation that drew more than 200 audience members. Speck also toured downtown Kokomo accompanied by city and county leaders and downtown patrons and also held a small group workshop for city planning participants at IU Kokomo.



CHAMBER OF COMMERCE



Photo courtesy of the Kokomo Herald

After another successful year, the Greater Kokomo Chamber of Commerce has an impressive 623 members. Regardless of its size, each member contributes directly to achieving our mission of acting as a catalyst for economic growth and prosperity for our members and our community.

**MORE THAN 120 NEW MEMBERS
JOINED THE CHAMBER IN 2016**

**ANNUAL CELEBRATION SEES RECORD
ATTENDANCE OF 380 PEOPLE**

The annual Celebration of Community & Commerce saw a record number of attendees — 380. It also saw an increase in the number of sponsors. The annual elegant gala is a celebration of the year's success and is a platform for the presentation of several coveted business and community awards. During the 2016 event, State Rep. Mike Karickhoff presented Charles M. "Mike" Stegall with the Sagamore of the Wabash Award, Indiana's highest honor given to those who have distinguished themselves in the area of service.

The following awards were presented during the event:

- ❖ **Business Person of the Year:** Lisa Holaday of Community Howard Regional Health
 - ❖ **Volunteer of the Year:** Jason Hoffer of First Church of the Nazarene
 - ❖ **Chamber Ambassador of the Year:** Deb Mumaw of Sam's Club
 - ❖ **Small Business of the Year:** Popcorn Café
 - ❖ **Medium Business of the Year:** Coffee Junkiez/Pizza Junkiez
 - ❖ **Large Business of the Year:** First Farmers Bank & Trust
 - ❖ **Impact Non-Profit Award:** Kokomo Family YMCA
 - ❖ **Public Institution of the Year:** Kokomo-Howard County Public Library
 - ❖ **Downtown Association's Downtown Champion Award:** The Coterie
 - ❖ **Greater Kokomo Visitors Bureau's FIRSTS Award:** Volkswagen Cruise-In organizer Garry McNew
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NETWORKING AND PROFESSIONAL EVENTS

The Chamber hosts a variety of events for its membership:

- **Business Matters Luncheons** feature knowledgeable speakers who tackle topics of importance to business leaders
- **Business After-Hours** events give businesses an opportunity to open their doors to the Chamber membership and allow members time for networking
- Four **"Bagels & Business"** events created networking and educational opportunities
- New in 2016, **Deeper Connection Lunches** were limited to small groups and allowed for more intimate networking
- The **annual Chamber golf outing** involved 113 golfers, 30+ sponsors and 35+ volunteers
- The second annual **Chamber Summit** was attended by 44 members. The event focused on social media marketing and featured speakers and breakout sessions.
- 26 **ribbon cuttings** were held for member businesses



STRONG EVENT ATTENDANCE IN 2016

MORE THAN 3,350 PEOPLE ATTENDED 36 EVENTS

INDIANA HEALTHY COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

In an effort to help our community maintain healthier lifestyles, the Chamber began the process of seeking an **AchieveWell designation** in 2016 and recruited a commission of community leaders with a like-minded interest.

In Kokomo, the Chamber is serving as the driving force for obtaining this **Wellness Council of Indiana** status because we understand the success of an economy is directly tied to the overall quality of its workforce. While Indiana ranks high on national rankings of job growth and best places to do business, the state is near the bottom in regard to the health and well-being of its population.



INDIANA HEALTHY
COMMUNITY

THE CHAMBER IS SPEARHEADING THE PROCESS OF SEEKING AN ACHIEVEWELL DESIGNATION AND HAS RECRUITED A COUNCIL OF COMMUNITY LEADERS WITH A LIKE-MINDED INTEREST.

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS

The Chamber's Young Professionals organization gives young leaders an opportunity to network with other young professionals. In 2016, the group sponsored the annual **20 Under 40 Awards**, a holiday open house and a Business Matters luncheon. Group members added a new event in 2016 — the **Downtown Pub Crawl**. The event was well received and on the schedule for 2017.



[In an effort to increase its membership in the coming year, the group hosted an informational meeting to encourage more people to get involved. More than 30 people attended.]

WOMEN'S BUSINESS COUNCIL

The council enjoyed another successful year of connecting, mentoring and developing businesswomen in our community.

With **Dr. Sue Ellspermann**, Ivy Tech Community College president and former Indiana Lt. Governor, as keynote speaker, its annual **Intentional Leadership Women's Conference** drew 74 attendees.

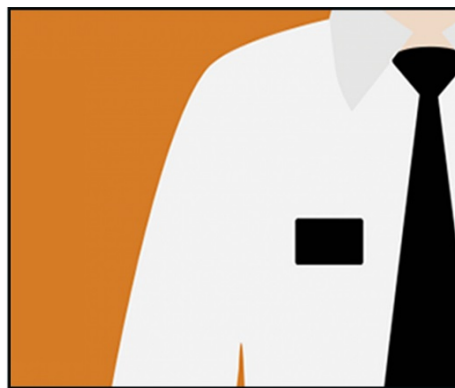
The WBC also held its annual holiday luncheon and **Celebrating Women of Excellence Awards**.



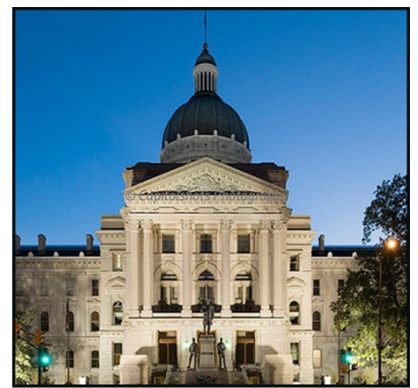
MORE CHAMBER INITIATIVES



The Chamber sponsored two candidate forums in the run-up to the general election. Both events were well-attended by candidates and residents.



The Chamber continues its focus on recruiting former members. In 2016, the effort resulted in 13 businesses renewing their memberships.



Featuring our area's Indiana state legislators, each of the Third House Sessions saw an attendance of 50+

GREATER KOKOMO VISITORS BUREAU

BICENTENNIAL TORCH RELAY

Indiana celebrated its 200th birthday in 2016, and Howard County threw quite the party thanks in large part to the efforts of the Alliance and Visitors Bureau.

Sherry Matlock, manager of the Visitors Bureau, worked alongside the state tourism office to coordinate the **Indiana Bicentennial Torch Relay's passage** through Howard County. One of the state's signature Bicentennial events, the planning for the torch relay was a **two-year process** that involved planning the route, facilitating torchbearer nominations and selections alongside a **local Bicentennial committee**.

The relay ended in downtown Kokomo on the Courthouse Square, where a **closing ceremony** was held and the torch was extinguished. **More than 300 people** attended the community celebration that included music by the Kokomo Park Band and Kokomo Men of Note, automotive heritage exhibits, kids' activities, and the Indiana Bicentennial Experience.

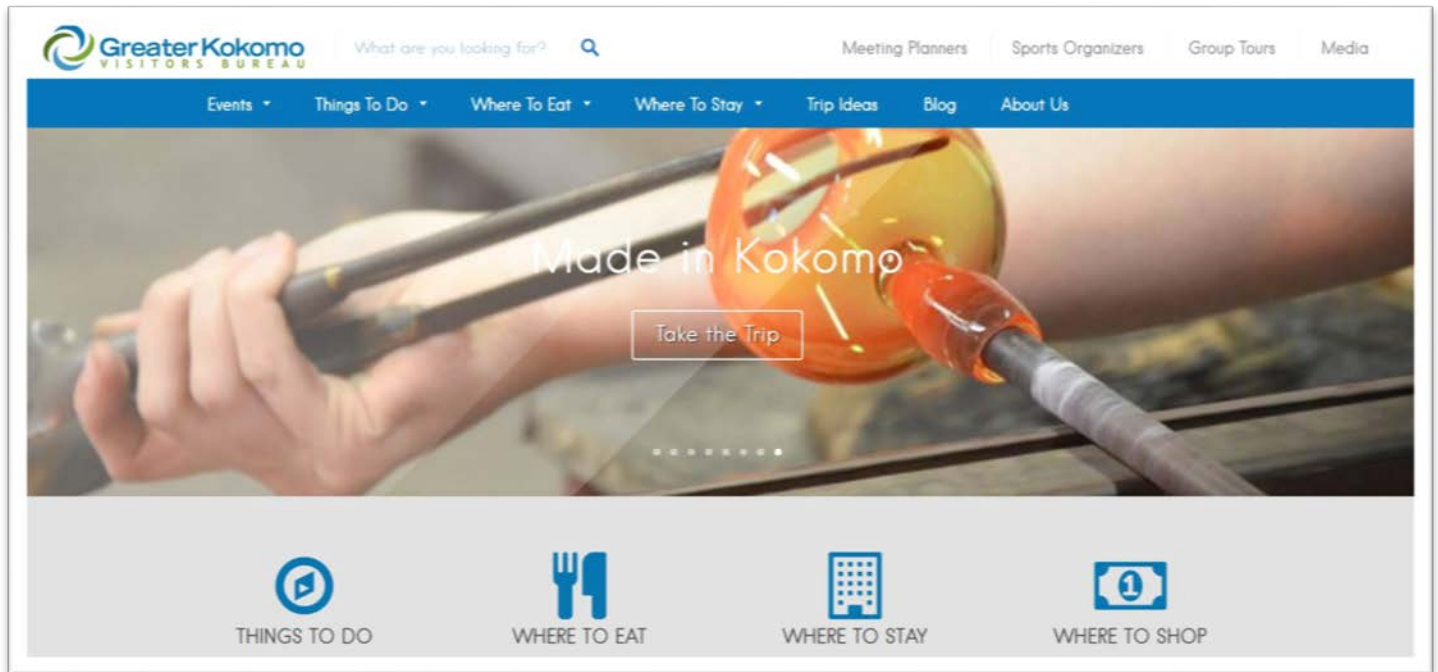


MAKING THE LONG-TERM COMMITMENT

ALLIANCE CEO/PRESIDENT CHARLIE SPARKS SERVED AS
HOWARD COUNTY'S BICENTENNIAL COORDINATOR

BICENTENNIAL AUTOMOTIVE CELEBRATION

The Visitors Bureau also supported and participated in "**Kokomo Salutes Indiana's Automotive Heritage**," an Indiana Bicentennial-endorsed automotive event which brought **3 national car clubs** to Kokomo with **50 Indiana-built cars**, visitors from 18 states, and **182 total hotel room nights** booked.



NEW WEBSITE LAUNCH

Finding the previous website cumbersome and limited in capabilities, the Visitors

Bureau undertook a **six-month process** to launch a new, more user-friendly website in 2016.

Working with a web designer, a **new, completely redesigned and mobile-responsive website** was launched in August 2016. This new site, **visitkokomo.org**, allowed for blog integration and a more user-friendly calendar of events. Now, users can submit their community events through the website.

Also, the new site allows **each local attraction to have its own dedicated page** with complete details and photos. The site also plots points of interest on a map, including things to do, where to eat, where to stay and where to shop.

MOBILE-RESPONSIVE AND USER-FRIENDLY DESIGN

CHANGES CREATE AN IMPROVED EXPERIENCE FOR VIEWERS

NEW CAPABILITIES, NEW CAMPAIGNS

With the new website's additional capabilities, the Visitors Bureau launched a **new seasonal campaign** in 2016. The inaugural issue featured **"Christmas in Kokomo."**

A **designated page** on the website housed individual postings of the many Christmastime happenings in the community. The landing page had **3,528 clicks**, and its individual postings had a shared total of 2,291 clicks. An **impressive 40 percent** of site visitors went beyond the landing page.

With strong social media promotion, the **campaign was wildly successful**. We look for similar success in 2017 as the seasonal campaigns continue.

SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVE

THE MARKETING PROMOTION
REACHED 63,103 FACEBOOK USERS,
HAD 606 SHARES, 3,649 CLICK-THROUGHS
AND 1,994 REACTIONS

EVENT ATTRACTION

In 2016, the Visitors Bureau was active in securing **events and conventions** in our community. These efforts resulted in **increased exposure** for the community and boosts in **hotel stays**.

The following events were brought to Kokomo in 2016:

- **2016 Prospect League All Star Game** at Kokomo Municipal Stadium: 66 total hotel room nights were booked and provided hospitality for 13 pro baseball scouts.
- **American Legion Baseball State Finals** at Kokomo Municipal Stadium: 319 total hotel room nights were booked.
- Assisted with attracting state meetings for **2016 Sigma Phi Gamma Sorority Indiana Province Convention**, **Indiana Society of Radiologic Technologists State Conference**, and the **Indiana Head Start Conference** with 350 combined attendees and 114 total hotel room nights booked.



NEW NEWSLETTER LAUNCHED

In an effort to reach more potential visitors, a **quarterly newsletter** was launched in the fourth quarter. Stated to be published quarterly and in addition to the monthly newsletter promoting our calendar of events, the newsletter will **focus on seasonal entertainment opportunities** in Kokomo and Howard County.

The **inaugural newsletter** was "Christmas in Kokomo," which featured holiday happenings. The email marketing campaign was sent to **1,500 recipients**.

OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF NOTE

- ❖ Hosted **2 regional travel writers** with Life is Poppin' & Midwest Traveler that continue to generate exposure for leisure travel in Kokomo and Howard County. These writers spent multiple days touring local attractions, exploring outdoor recreation and dining at locally owned restaurants.
- ❖ Hosted **8 tour groups** with 250 total participants.
- ❖ Continuing to pursue the development of a **Hotel & Conference Center** in downtown Kokomo.
- ❖ Sherry Matlock participated in **Livable Communities** panel discussion at the Kokomo YMCA and discussed how residents can be local ambassadors for visitors

**MORE THAN 23,000 KOKOMO
VISITOR GUIDES DISTRIBUTED IN 2016**



INVENTREK TECHNOLOGY PARK

It was shaping up to be a **great year** for the Inventrek Technology Park.

At the end of July, staff was halfway through a **two-phase facility improvement project** and the business incubator program had 27 tenants. The Shared Drive was up to 20 members.

At that time, staff was also making plans for a new event for entrepreneurs, **PitchFeast**.

Then, on Aug. 24, **devastating tornadoes** tore through Kokomo.

Inventrek was in their path and **suffered extensive damage**.

Mitigation efforts

left a nearly **bare bone facility** that required a complete restoration. In December, completion of the **main roof repair** allowed for **interior restoration** to begin while work on the secondary roof continued. We expect the renovated facility to **reopen in March** and are working to **rebuild occupancy**.



HIGH OCCUPANCY RATES AT FACILITY

AT THE TIME OF THE AUG. 24 TORNADO, INVENTREK HAD 39 OF 41 OFFICE SUITES LEASED, 94 PERCENT OF LEASABLE SQUARE FOOTAGE UNDER CONTRACT AND 27 TENANTS ENGAGED IN DIVERSE BUSINESS SECTORS

RETAINING TENANTS

Staff worked with local property owners to secure a **temporary space** for 5 tenants and The Shared Drive to set up shop **within days** of the facility's closure. Those five tenants and several others previously housed in the Inventrek facility **are actively planning their return** to the facility once it reopens while even more have expressed the same interest.

KOKOMO DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION

FRESH TASTE: A TRUE CULINARY EXPERIENCE

A new downtown Kokomo event was introduced in 2016: FRESH Taste. The event paired local chefs and food producers to bring downtown visitors a night of fresh eating in a unique setting. Truly a **culinary experience**, the September event — held in the transformed first level of the **downtown parking garage** — was dedicated to showcasing the **fresh, locally grown ingredients** available at the Downtown Kokomo Farmer's Market.



NEW EVENT SHOWCASES LOCALLY GROWN FOOD

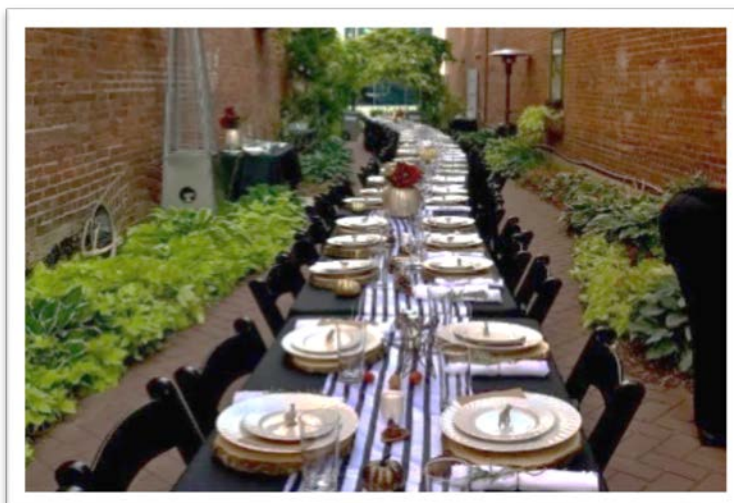
LOCAL CHEFS SHOPPED THE KOKOMO DOWNTOWN FARMERS' MARKET FOR ONE OR MORE OF THEIR DISH'S KEY INGREDIENTS, THEN TEAMED UP WITH A LOCAL GROWER TO CREATE A SINGLE DISH FOR THE WELL-ATTENDED EVENT IN THE PARKING GARAGE

DOWNTOWN KOKOMO FARMERS' MARKET

This was the first year the farmers' market operated under its **own 501(c)3 status**. Though it acquired the nonprofit status after receiving a \$248,000 grant from the USDA in 2015, the Downtown Association continues to act as **an in-kind partner and major supporter** of the organization.

The market **added three new events** this year, including a **Farm to Fork dinner**.

The event was focused around a **locally sourced** and elegant meal prepared and served in the Garden Alley in downtown Kokomo.



RAIN GARDEN PLAZA

In partnership with the Howard County **Master Gardeners Association**, Howard County **Commissioners**, and the Howard County **Stormwater District**, the Downtown Association transformed an unused area into a **green infrastructure project**.

The area near the county parking lot at the corner of Mulberry and Main streets was **retrofitted** to include two **rain gardens** and a variety of physical and visual improvements designed by the Master Gardeners.

Beyond the water quality focus, the new space also includes a variety of **other aesthetic and structural improvements**. A permanent performance stage was built for use at First Friday and other downtown events, while new lighting fixtures and 200 feet of **rebuilt sidewalk** provide a more comfortable waiting area for riders at the intersection's City Line Trolley stop.



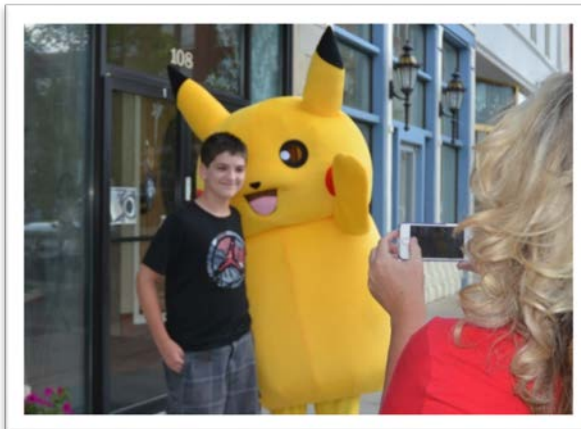
FIRST OF ITS KIND IN HOWARD COUNTY

THE GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT WILL REDUCE THE DISCHARGE OF STORM AND SEWER WATER INTO THE WILDCAT CREEK DURING A STORM EVENT.

IN 2016, THE COUNTY-FUNDED AND ALLIANCE-ADMINISTERED DOWNTOWN RENT ABATEMENT PROGRAM HAD 5 NEW PARTICIPANTS, BRINGING THE TOTAL TO 38 SINCE ITS INCEPTION.

POKEMONDAYS – THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

The **Pokemon GO** craze swept the nation in 2016, and the Downtown Association capitalized on the augmented reality game's popularity to bring **new visitors** to downtown, including many from out of town. Players **were invited to downtown Kokomo** where 20 game lures were set. Partnering with Sam's Club, the **10-week event** proved popular with teenagers and young adults.



[Capitalizing on a national trend, the 10-week event drew younger and out-of-town crowds to downtown on a typically slow day of the week]

FIRST FRIDAY CONTINUES TO GROW

A monthly event, First Friday continued to grow in 2016 through partnering with and engaging more than **200 businesses, organizations and arts groups**.

For the second year, the **Strawberry Festival** was held in conjunction with First Friday.

Visitors to downtown had the opportunity to enjoy a summer dessert and festivities during the lunch hour and then stick around straight into the evening hours for dinner and First Friday events.



OTHER ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF NOTE

- ❖ Twelve **new art pieces** were placed in **Artist Alley**, which is the first outdoor public art gallery in Howard County. The gallery features paintings, multimedia works and sculptures, including an 1894 Haynes Pioneer automobile replica of the original created by Kokomo native Elwood Haynes.
- ❖ **Kokomo Bike Nights** were held monthly from May through September, inviting a new audience to downtown.
- ❖ Dubbed "**The Downtown Art Piano**," a local family donated a piano and sponsors had it fitted with a sturdy base and wheels to make it portable. Students then turned it into a playable work of art that downtown businesses and organizations may "check out." A little tuning and it was ready to be played by the public, making its debut at First Friday.



KEEP KOKOMO BEAUTIFUL

NOW IN ITS SECOND YEAR, THE EVENT:

- FEATURED 8 BEAUTIFICATION EVENTS
 - ENGAGED 400 VOLUNTEERS
 - PLANTED 1,122 FLOWER BASKETS
 - PLANTED 104 GARDEN AREAS
 - REMOVED 1.5 TONS OF DEBRIS FROM THE WILDCAT CREEK AND THE COMMUNITY'S WALKING TRAILS.

WORKING TOGETHER: Keep Kokomo Beautiful is a partnership with the City of Kokomo, Howard County, Country Raisin's, Wildcat Guardians, Discover Howard County Trails and the Howard County Stormwater District.

MARKETING INITIATIVES



INCREASED PROMOTION

This year saw the increased usage of **established media partnerships** in the community. The Alliance has long held advertising partnerships with several local media outlets, including two local newspapers and radio stations. In the fourth quarter, the Alliance began to

fully utilize the tradeout opportunities available, with the Alliance seeing a **significant increase in promotions** in the local market. These partnerships afford the Alliance and its divisions **hundreds of radio commercials** and more than **60 printed advertisements** at no cost.

Filling its open **marketing and communications position** — hiring Misty Knisely in August — the Alliance saw an increase in its **media coverage** in 2016. In addition to increasing relationships with local media, the Alliance has started to build relationships with **Indianapolis-area media outlets**. The increased media relations efforts have already resulted in a **live segment** on an Indianapolis TV news station of the Downtown Association's New Year's Eve ball drop.

MARKETING GRANT

The Alliance was awarded a **\$2,500 grant** from Duke Energy's Marketing Partnership Program to create **marketing materials** to promote the Kokomo community's many recent quality-of-place investments to **spur** residential, visitor and economic **growth**.



It's one of just 12 local economic development groups in Indiana to be awarded such a grant. The funding will go toward the Alliance's marketing project that looks to **attract new residents** to the community by showcasing our many public and private investments.

We will work in **partnership with hiring managers** throughout the community to distribute our message.

MAJOR GAINS IN SOCIAL MEDIA

In 2016, **3,493 website sessions** were acquired from social media, as opposed to 1,137 in 2015 — representing a 207 percent increase. Gains through **Facebook** were of particular note, marking a nearly **300 percent increase** over 2015.

This is a result of not **only increasing audience numbers** (new likes and followers) on social media platforms, but also **significant increases in engagements**.

The following chart shows the significant gains the Alliance's divisions are seeing via Facebook:

DIVISIONS' FACEBOOK PERFORMANCE

PAGE	2016 LIKES	2016 REACH	2015 LIKES	2015 REACH
Greater Kokomo Alliance	658 (+150)	49,505 (-9,112)	508	58,617
Downtown Association	4,164 (+634)	475,045 (+20,810)	3,530	454,235
First Friday Kokomo	5,851 (+1,150)	490,370 (+138,055)	4,701	352,315
Chamber of Commerce	1,072(+526)	289,327 (+226,395)	546	62,932
Visitors Bureau	1,550(+637)	268,105 (+194,367)	913	73,738
Total Facebook Activity	13,295 (+3,097)	1,572,352(+570,515)	10,198	1,001,837

WEB TRAFFIC CONTINUES TO GROW

In 2016, **GreaterKokomo.com** continued to see an increase in pageviews and unique pageviews. The site saw a **significant drop in bounce rate**, which is likely attributed to the **additional content** being added in the last quarter of the year. Numbers are expected to continue to increase as efforts to **fully populate the website** continue in 2017.

This chart shows a 2016 vs. 2015 comparison of site traffic on GreaterKokomo.com:



REFERRAL INCREASES ACROSS INDIANA AND BEYOND

The website saw increased referral rates from right here in Kokomo (up 7.96% from 2015) and for several cities across Indiana and beyond. The following are the top referrals outside Kokomo for 2016:

- Indianapolis: 3,603
- Chicago: 2,184
- Noblesville: 353
- Fort Wayne: 321
- Lafayette: 314
- Logansport: 278
- Detroit: 253
- Peru: 24

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Some say adversity builds character, some say adversity reveals character. I say adversity can do both. In our community, whether that adversity has been the result of an economic downturn or an act of nature, it has both built and revealed this community's character.

Our employers, citizens, local government and non-profit organizations always rise up in the face of unanticipated difficulties and unexpected challenges.

We not only undertake the efforts required to address those challenges that present themselves, but we also maintain a focus on those efforts and initiatives that were so important to us before the adversity came our way.

We don't put aside our priorities - even temporarily - and shift our entire focus to recovery. We keep building community while we're rebuilding structures.

That may well be one of the key ingredients to our success as a community – we are resilient.

At the Alliance, we intend to continue to put that resilience to work for the good of our members and our community.

We appreciate your support and look forward to even more success in 2017

CHARLIE SPARKS

