

# ANNUAL REPORT

2021-2022



GREATER KOKOMO  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE

# 2022: A YEAR OF TRANSITION

## **Charlie Sparks retires as President/CEO**

After 42 years of bringing economic development to his hometown of Kokomo and across the State of Indiana, Charlie Sparks retired in October 2022 as president and CEO of the Alliance.

Sparks took the reins of the Alliance in 2014 and continued a record of success in community and economic development that he solidified while serving as Vice President of the Indiana Economic Development Corp.

In his final years of leading the Alliance, Sparks was a driving force in the creation of an industrial park that will be home to StarPlus Energy's electric vehicle battery plant.



## **Lori Dukes takes the helm**

In November 2022, Lori Dukes took over as president and CEO of the Alliance, succeeding Charlie Sparks. Dukes brings nearly two decades of experience in operations, workforce development and business development.

She joined the Alliance in October 2021 as manager of economic development and Inventrek Technology Park. In her time at the Alliance, she has focused on providing local businesses with resources that will help them compete and thrive in today's economy.

She has also led workforce development initiatives, including working toward programs that provide the future workforce with the soft and hard skills sought by today's employers.



## MEET THE ALLIANCE TEAM



**COURTNEY  
BUTLER**

As Chamber manager, Courtney oversees Chamber functions and advocates for businesses and organizations in our community.



**SUSAN  
ALEXANDER**

As Manager of Creative Placemaking & Downtown Initiatives, Susan helps create a vibrant and thriving city center.



**SHERRY  
MATLOCK**

As Manager of the Visitors Bureau, Sherry promotes Kokomo and Howard County to increase visitors and visitor spending in the community.



**MISTY  
KNISELY**

As Manager of Marketing & Communications, Misty shares the great work being accomplished by the Alliance and throughout Greater Kokomo.



**MICHELLE  
REED**

As Office Manager, Michelle handles the day-to-day operations of the Alliance and Inventrek facility.



**MADI  
ROSWOG**

As Membership Development Specialist, Madi helps members make the most of their Chamber membership.



**CASIE BRADEN**

As Office Administrator, Casie helps keep the Alliance firing on all cylinders and ensures our members are well cared for.



**JASON  
YOUNGMAN**

As Facilities Manager and Jack of All Trades, Jason maintains all aspects of the Inventrek facility and grounds.

# 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 consists of the combined efforts of 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 that plan 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 employers 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 community economic prosperity for the maximum benefit of current and future generations

### **Economic vitality**

Facilitate the economic growth of the community through the attraction of jobs, investment, visitors, and residents

### **Talent attraction**

Develop, retain, and attract talent to enhance the community's workforce, culture, and diversity

### **Innovation and entrepreneurship**

Foster an optimistic, persistent entrepreneurial culture and provide infrastructure for innovators to create and grow business enterprises

### **Placemaking**

Promote and support efforts to drive investment in quality assets to benefit current and future employers and residents

### **Organizational Development**

Drive initiatives not tied to a specific strategic priority, but instead promote functions of organizational activity essential to the growth of the Alliance as a whole.

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**WE ARE  
PASSIONATE  
ABOUT CREATING  
PROSPERITY FOR  
KOKOMO AND  
HOWARD COUNTY**



# OUR 2022 LEADERSHIP

## ALLIANCE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- **Greg Bewley**, Cartridge World
- **Robb Blume**, Community First Bank of Indiana
- **Mark Canada**, IU Kokomo
- **Kirk Daniels**, Daniels, Alexander & Daniels Freedom Financial Group
- **Jeff Griffin**, Purdue Polytechnic
- **Ethan Heicher**, Ivy Tech
- **Kevin Johnston**, Duke Energy
- **Jeremy Keating**, Stellantis
- **Amanda Lewton**, Sun King Kokomo
- **George Mast**, Community Howard Regional Health
- **Cary Mawbey**, First Farmers Bank & Trust
- **Mayor Tyler Moore**, City of Kokomo
- **Scot Ortman**, Kokomo Grain
- **Amy Pate**, Realtors Association of Central Indiana
- **John J. Roberts**, Howard County
- **Blake Rollins**, General Motors Components Holdings LLC
- **Tony Stewart**, City of Kokomo
- **Christopher A. Smith**, Taylor Community Schools
- **Greg Tipton**, Haynes International
- **Christina Vaughn**, Rite Quality Office Supplies
- **Lori Warren**, P.F. Hendricks & Co.
- **Mary Kate Wyatt**, Legacy Barn
- **Paul Wyman**, Howard County

## CHAMBER ADVISORY COUNCIL

- **Greg Bewley**, Cartridge World
- **Jack Dodd**, Howard County
- **Lisa Girton**, The Productive Assistant
- **Laura Hileman**, Guardian Angel Foundation/Guardian Angel Hospice
- **Cash Lamberg**, BerryComm
- **Katie Loman**, Ivy Tech Community College
- **George Mast**, Community Howard Regional Health
- **Karen McLean**, NIPSCO
- **Clayton Nix**, Shearer Printing & Office Solutions
- **Amy Pate**, Realtors Association of Central Indiana
- **Sandy Powell**, General Motors Components Holdings, LLC
- **Jonathan Rogers**, WWKI 100.5
- **Krystal Ruble**, State Farm Insurance
- **Santos Salinas**, Edward Jones, Financial Advisor
- **Trisha Severns**, Kokomo Family YMCA
- **Jerry Smith**, BMO Harris Bank
- **Dave Trine**, City of Kokomo
- **Cathy Valcke**, Indiana University Kokomo
- **Nino Voskhul**, Community Howard Regional Health
- **Mary Kate Wyatt**, Legacy Barn

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

- **Greg Aaron**, Community Foundation of Howard County
- **Peggy Baugher**, BMO Harris Bank
- **James Berry**, Berry IT
- **Roger Feldhaus**, Region 4 Workforce Board
- **Robert Hickman**, Community First Bank of Indiana
- **Kevin Johnston**, Duke Energy
- **Jennifer Jordan**, City of Kokomo
- **Dustin Lane**, Comcast Business
- **Karen McLean**, NIPSCO
- **Daryl Maple**, Howard County
- **Jeff Nelson**, Community First Bank of Indiana
- **Amy Pate**, Realtors Association of Central Indiana
- **David Tharp**, Security Federal Savings Bank
- **Haley Tomlinson**, Duke Energy

## VISITORS BUREAU BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- **Kirk Daniels**, Daniels, Alexander & Daniels Freedom Financial Group
- **Jeff Griffin**, Purdue Polytechnic Kokomo
- **Dean Hockney**, Kokomo School Corporation
- **Marie Lindskoog**, Western Governors University
- **Laura O'Donnell**, O'Donnell & Vent, LLP and The Experience Wedding & Event Venue
- **Bambi Roe**, Courtyard by Marriott
- **Jennifer Rollins**, Kokomo Symphonic Society
- **Joe Thatcher**, Pro X Athlete
- **Christina Welch**, Hampton Inn & Suites

## DOWNTOWN & CREATIVE PLACEMAKING COUNCIL

- **Tony Budenz**, Kokomo Family YMCA
- **Allison Hopkins**, Community First Bank of Indiana
- **Makayla Keating**, MK Media, Marketing & Design
- **Amanda Lewton**, Sun King Kokomo
- **Julie Robins**, City of Kokomo
- **Cathy Valcke**, IU Kokomo
- **Lori Warren**, P.F. Hendricks & Co.
- **Robin Williams**, Fleur de Lygon

## INVENTREK COUNCIL

- **Greg Aaron**, Community Foundation of Howard County
- **Andy Baker**, AndyMark, Inc.
- **Peggy Baugher**, BMO Harris Bank
- **Bryan Bitner**, CPS Midwest
- **Robb Blume**, Community First Bank of Indiana
- **Jeff Griffin**, Purdue Polytechnic Kokomo
- **Bob Hingst**, Mid-America Beverage
- **Jennifer Jordan**, City of Kokomo
- **Andy Rink**, DigiDog Tech
- **Brent Seaman**, Frontline Logic

# 'A DREAM COME TRUE'



## STELLANTIS AND SAMSUNG SDI MAKE \$2.5B INVESTMENT

Electric vehicle battery  
plant to be built in Kokomo

Kokomo will be the site of Stellantis' and Samsung SDI's first North American electric vehicle battery manufacturing plant. The first plant of its kind in Indiana, the multimillion-square-foot facility will further cement Kokomo as one of the top auto manufacturing cities in the nation as the auto industry moves toward an electric future.

Through a joint venture called StarPlus Energy, Stellantis and Samsung SDI are investing more than \$2.5 billion to construct the lithium-ion battery production plant in Kokomo and will create 1,400 new jobs.

The new facility will supply battery modules for various vehicles produced at Stellantis' North American assembly plants. It will support Stellantis' new strategic plan, Dare Forward 2030, which calls for all of its passenger car sales in Europe and 50% of passenger car and light truck sales in the U.S. to be battery electric vehicles by the end of the decade.

# INDUSTRIAL PARK A MAJOR SUCCESS

## *StarPlus Energy's plant to consume entirety of acreage*

The \$2.5 billion development announcement in May 2022 brought to fruition a plan put in motion years ago by the Greater Kokomo Economic Development Alliance.

Having long advocated the need for an industrial park in Howard County, the Alliance was able to begin work in earnest on such a development in 2019.

The Alliance partnered with the City of Kokomo and Howard County to purchase

142 acres of land adjacent to Indiana 931 (just south of East 300 North and the Kokomo Engine Plant) in 2021. For perspective, the property could house more than 100 football fields.

Having land already secured put the community in a solid position to compete for the Stellantis/Samsung SDI development as a portion of the required property was immediately available.



**THE SITE OF EV BATTERY PLANT BEING BUILT IN KOKOMO**  
(PHOTO COURTESY OF THE KOKOMO TRIBUNE)



# ATTRACTING VISITORS

**THE VISITORS BUREAU STRIVES TO ATTRACT CORPORATE AND LEISURE TRAVEL TO KOKOMO AND HOWARD COUNTY THROUGH THE PROMOTION OF THE COMMUNITY'S MANY ATTRACTIONS, AMENITIES, AND HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE.**

## **PRESERVING HISTORY**

The CVB assisted automotive heritage preservation efforts by providing financial assistance to keep 3 historic Haynes automobiles in Howard County for future local automotive display.

## **MAKING HEADLINES**

Hosted a travel writer and worked with five other travel writers creating stories and blogs featuring Kokomo in 2022. These stories and blogs were featured in *travellIN* magazine, *Visit Indiana Insider's Blog*, and more.

## **INDUSTRY LEADER**

CVB Manager Sherry Matlock was invited to participate as tourism industry guest speaker for the Indiana Tourism Association's Annual Tourism Academy and four classes in the IU Kokomo Hospitality & Tourism Management Program.

## **STATEWIDE EXPOSURE**

The Visitors Bureau led efforts to include Kokomo attractions and eateries on Indiana Culinary Trails and the newly launched Indiana Arts & Culture Passport.





# SPORTS TOURISM



Sports tourism is one of the fastest growing sectors in visitor travel. Kokomo has experienced significant growth in sports tourism over the past several years through activity at both existing and newly built facilities, like Championship Park. Ranging from youth, college and even senior adult tournaments, these sporting events bring players, families and fans to Kokomo, spurring visitor spending in the community through money spent at local restaurants, retail, attractions and lodging.

In 2022, Kokomo hosted a diverse set of sports tournaments and championships, ranging from PBA bowling, college baseball, state horseshoe throwing, college cross country, youth baseball, basketball, state golf, sprint car racing, and college and national softball. These events brought thousands of visitors to Kokomo and Howard County.

## ONE EVENT'S IMPACT

### NATIONAL AMATEUR SOFTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP SERIES CAME TO KOKOMO IN JULY 2022

- 3,000+ fastpitch softball players from 180 teams participated
- 1,500+ hotel rooms in Kokomo, Hamilton County and Indianapolis were booked for teams, umpires, staff, and families
- Estimated 425+ hotel room nights were booked in Kokomo
- 3,500+ people were in attendance at Kokomo Municipal Stadium for All-Star Game, aired on ESPN-U
- Series co-hosted with Grand Park and Championship Park.

# CULTIVATING PUBLIC ART

## A TRANSFORMATIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY



**STACI HAUS, OWNER/OPERATOR OF MIDDLE OF NOWHERE FOOD TRUCK  
A RECIPIENT OF A CREATIVE & CULINARY ENTREPRENEUR SCHOLARSHIP**

Through the Creative & Culinary Entrepreneur Scholarship program, Susan Alexander, manager of Downtown Initiatives, bolstered budding entrepreneurs and helped them navigate the path to their business launch or growth.

The program advanced 12 entrepreneurs' businesses, including retail operators, chefs, artists, and an experiential theater company. The scholarship program afforded creative entrepreneurs an opportunity to conduct a market test for their business ideas.

It's been shown that locally grown entrepreneurs have more longevity in their space, which makes for a more stable and sustainable economy.

### GRANT-FUNDED PROGRAM

- Of a \$25,000 Taking Care of Main Street grant awarded by Indiana Main Street, \$15,000 was dedicated to operational expenses so that the Downtown Association may continue its arts and culture development goals despite decreased revenue due to COVID.
- The association was one of just two applicants — out of 60 across the state — to be awarded an additional \$10,000, which was used for the Creative & Culinary Entrepreneur Scholarship program.



# DOWNTOWN SUCCESSES IN 2022



## NATIONAL ACCREDITATION

The Greater Kokomo Downtown Association was designated as a nationally accredited Main Street America program for meeting rigorous performance standards. This program recognizes exceptional commitment to preservation-based economic development and community revitalization.

## COMPLETED PROJECTS

**ARTIST ALLEY:** Produced the 9th annual Artist Alley exhibit with over 20 paintings and sculptures.

**STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL:** Expanded annual all-day event to include the Artsapalooza Art Market. More than 100 volunteers served over 6,650 strawberry desserts during the festival on the courthouse square.

**KEEP KOKOMO BEAUTIFUL:** Volunteers planted 1,000 hanging baskets; 38 sidewalk, alley and parking lot gardens; and 81 containers.

### 'WE ARE KOKOMO'

A mural was installed on the north façade of the historic train depot in downtown thanks to an Indiana Destination Development Corp. grant. The work of IUK graduate Sienna Urbina, "We Are Kokomo" expresses the idea that the identity of a place rests with the character of its people and not simply its geographic location. That concept is reflective of the Alliance's work in downtown as we strive to engage the public as much as possible in our revitalization mission.



# ENGAGING MEMBERS

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## PARTICIPATION IN COMMITTEES, COUNCIL GROWS



**WOMEN'S BUSINESS COUNCIL MEMBERS AT THEIR HOLIDAY LUNCHEON**

**AMBASSADORS:** The committee is rapidly growing and very engaged. With 30 active ambassadors in 2022, the group was able to create a vision statement, "Making our community stronger one connection at a time." The group holds its meetings at various locations to build new connections and help support local businesses and organizations.

**WOMEN'S BUSINESS COUNCIL:** More than 60 women participate in the WBC. Together, they hosted a successful Leadership Conference and Holiday Luncheon in 2022, with over 300 in attendance for both.



**YOUNG PROFESSIONALS NETWORK**

**CHAMBER COUNCIL:** Our 23 council members are very active and engaged. The council has been very impactful with helping to plan the Chamber's 2023 calendar of events and offering feedback as business leaders in the community.

**YOUNG PROFESSIONALS NETWORK:** The group is beginning to fully recover from pandemic delays. In 2022, the group hosted a Boos and Brews Halloween Open House as well as a Ugly Christmas Sweater Party, and 4 networking events.



**26**  
RIBBON  
CUTTINGS  
IN 2022



## MAKING CONNECTIONS

Chamber members are offered community insight and exposure through participation in our events and programs. In 2022, the Chamber helped its growing membership make productive connections through dozens of events and activities.

**82 /** networking events

**3 /** Coffee & Conversations

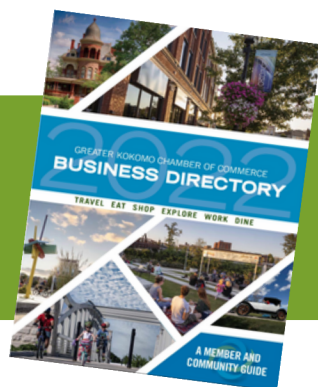
**6 /** legislative events

**136 /** golf outing participants

**70 /** new members in 2022

**10,000**

copies of the 2022  
Chamber Business  
Directory distributed



## AWARD WINNERS 2022

- **Economic Impact Award:** StarPlus Energy
- **Downtown Champion:** Jonathan Rogers, WWKI
- **F.I.R.S.T.S. Award:** Todd and Amber Jordan, Kokomo Toys
- **Small Business of the Year:** BerryComm
- **Large Business of the Year:** Community Howard Regional Health
- **Businessperson of the Year:** Richard "Dick" Moore (Awarded posthumously)
- **Ambassador of the Year:** Kathleen Keppner, Solidarity Community Federal Credit Union
- **Volunteers of the Year:** Jerry Smith, BMO Harris & Laura Hileman, Guardian Angel Hospice Foundation
- **IMPACT Award:** Turning Point S.O.C.
- **Elizabeth Foster Award:** Margaret Johnson, The Wellness Garden

## 2021

- **Ambassador of the Year:** Jerry Smith, BMO Harris
- **Volunteer of the Year:** Sarah Pitzer, Community First Bank of Indiana
- **Businessperson of the Year:** Robb Blume, Community First Bank of Indiana
- **IMPACT Award:** Ivy Tech Community College
- **Small Business of the Year:** Popcorn Café
- **Large Business of the Year:** Stellantis
- **Downtown Champion:** Lori Warren, P.F. Hendricks & Co.
- **F.I.R.S.T.S. Award:** Kirk Daniels, Daniels, Alexander & Daniels Freedom Financial Group



# FUELING ENTREPRENEURS

## THE DRIVE COMPETITION AWARDS \$10K



The Drive, a Business Pitch competition, returned in September 2022 to award \$10,000 in seed money to a local entrepreneur during a “Shark Tank”-style event.

Three contestants pitched their business idea to a panel of judges in front of an audience. Heather Dame, owner of Lucky Lemon Bakery, was selected as the winner.



The Kokomo vegan restaurant is now expanding into its first dine-in restaurant and growing into Hamilton County as a result of the competition.



**THE CONTEST IS OPEN TO THOSE WITH A STARTUP IDEA OR EXPANSION OF AN EXISTING BUSINESS LOCATED WITHIN HOWARD COUNTY.**

# CREATING COMMON SPACE

## BUILDING PROJECT DOUBLES AS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE

In May 2022, Hydration Station owners Rodney and Amy Ellis partnered with the Alliance to open a second location of their popular Greentown eatery inside Inventrek.

The addition saw a complete lobby remodel with a variety of seating styles so that customers may choose those most suitable to their needs. The design goal was to create an atmosphere that kept in mind the intended use for the tenants as well as to acknowledge that Inventrek, which houses Purdue Polytechnic Kokomo, is also a college environment.

Because the Alliance understands the importance of developing programs and initiatives to engage our community's youth in meaningful projects, Inventrek partnered with the Kokomo Area Career Center to create the new lobby space.

Multiple programs within KACC – including welding, woodworking and architecture – worked together and alongside the Inventrek team to identify and execute a design plan.

## CREATING EV INFRASTRUCTURE

The Alliance received a grant from General Motors to help our community understand its need for the deployment of EV infrastructure. To that end, Inventrek partnered with GM and Purdue Polytechnic Kokomo to study our current infrastructure opportunities and how they can be expanded.

As part of the grant, an electric vehicle charging station was installed in December in the west parking lot at Inventrek.

The type 22 unit is available for community use.



# 2021 YEAR IN REVIEW

GREATER KOKOMO ALLIANCE'S IMPACT

**\$229,000,000**

In October 2021, Stellantis invested in three of its Kokomo plants to produce fourth-generation eight-speed transmissions, retaining 662 jobs.

**556**

ACTIVE  
MEMBERS



**1.03M**

SOCIAL MEDIA REACH

**20,000**

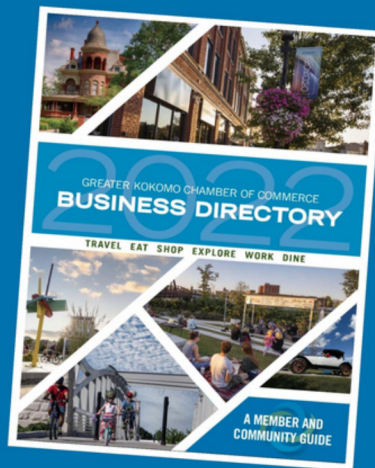
VISITOR GUIDES  
DISTRIBUTED BY CVB

**\$10K**

Seed money awarded to a local entrepreneur as part of The Drive, a Business Pitch Competition.

**11**

Number of statewide publications that featured Kokomo as a result of the Visitors Bureau's efforts



**10,000**

COPIES OF BUSINESS  
DIRECTORY DISTRIBUTED

**142**

Acres purchased by the Alliance in December 2021 to create an industrial park and position the community to compete for capital investments

**\$25K**

Grant money awarded to the Downtown Association for the Creative & Culinary Entrepreneurs program

**44**

TENANTS AT  
INVENTREK

**250**

ONLINE RESPONSES TO  
ARTS & CULTURE SURVEY



**9**

SCULPTURES  
SELECTED FROM  
ARTISTS IN THE  
MIDWEST &  
BEYOND

**1,000**

Flower baskets  
planted by 40  
volunteers

**1916**

Production year of a  
Haynes automobile  
purchased by CVB



# KOKOMO

## NEW COMMUNITY LOGO

### NEW BRANDING FOR KOKOMO COMMUNITY

In 2022, the Greater Kokomo Alliance assembled a committee of community stakeholders to research and develop a brand with cohesive messaging for the community. Through focus groups and surveys in conjunction with a professional marketing group, a new brand identity was created for the community of Kokomo.

This brand includes a community logo, color palette, and messaging that reflects the community's unique character and aspirations.

The goal of the new brand is to have a cohesive image of the community both online and in-person. Additionally, it aims to improve the community's image of itself.

This new branding accurately represents the community and our shared values and thus will empower residents to make a positive impact in their community.

### KOKOMO'S STORY

We have a history that's worth celebrating. One built from the can-do spirit of doers.

Our roots run deep, under factory floors engrained with a rich automotive and industrial heritage. Our people dreamed big and built bigger.

Now, it's our innovative spirit that's leading the way to new possibilities. Though we are dedicated to preserving our past, we greet you with the modern amenities you expect along with warm hospitality. We have a makers' spirit. We are authentic.

We are unmistakably Kokomo.

Let us surprise you.



WE'RE HERE FOR YOU!

All offices of the Greater Kokomo Economic Development Alliance are housed inside Inventrek Tech Park located at 700 E. Firmin St., Kokomo.

**Alliance,  
Inventrek**  
765-457-2000

**Chamber,  
Downtown**  
765-457-5301

**Visitors Bureau**  
765-457-6802

## FIND US ONLINE!

Learn more about the initiatives of the Greater Kokomo Alliance or stay up-to-date with the latest happenings:

**[GREATERKOKOMO.COM](http://GREATERKOKOMO.COM)**

**[VISITKOKOMO.ORG](http://VISITKOKOMO.ORG)**

**[THISISKOKOMO.COM](http://THISISKOKOMO.COM)**

**[FIRSTFRIDAYKOKOMO.COM](http://FIRSTFRIDAYKOKOMO.COM)**

## LET'S GET SOCIAL!

@GreaterKokomo  
@KokomoChamber  
@DowntownKokomo  
@InventrekKokomo  
@VisitKokomo



