

**GREATER KOKOMO ALLIANCE**

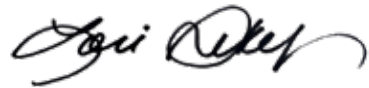
# **ANNUAL REPORT**



# OUR TEAM

The Greater Kokomo Economic Development Alliance team is dedicated to advancing the prosperity of the Greater Kokomo community. Through strategic collaboration, targeted investments, and impactful programs, we work to cultivate an environment where businesses grow, families flourish, and individuals thrive.

Our success is driven by a team of committed professionals who bring diverse expertise in economic and workforce development, business relations, event planning, marketing, and community engagement. With a shared passion for innovation and service, we are proud to play a role in shaping a stronger, more vibrant Kokomo.



**LORI DUKES**, PRESIDENT & CEO



**SHERRY MATLOCK**  
Manager, Visitors Bureau



**COURTNEY BUTLER**  
Manager, Chamber of Commerce



**SUSAN ALEXANDER**  
Manager, downtown and placemaking



**CAITLIN SHEETS**  
Manager, economic development



**MISTY KNISELY**  
Manager, marketing & communications



**MADI CARDENAS**  
Specialist, membership development



**MADDIE SINNAMON**  
Specialist, marketing & communications



**MICHELLE REED**  
Office manager, finance



**CASIE BRADEN**  
Office administration, Inventrek support



**JASON YOUNGMAN**  
Maintenance



**BRANDON SWANK**  
Facilities

# WHO WE ARE

The Alliance is 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 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 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.

# A NEW CHAPTER BEGINS

## DOWNTOWN HOTEL AND CONFERENCE CENTER PROJECT BREAKS GROUND

A groundbreaking ceremony for the highly anticipated hotel and conference center in downtown Kokomo was held in August 2024.

This event marked the beginning of a project that will significantly enhance the local economy and provide a state-of-the-art venue for small conventions, meetings, conferences and more.

“The journey to this point required the combined efforts of so many,” said Lori Dukes, president and CEO of the Greater Kokomo Economic Development Alliance. “This

milestone is a testament to the power of collaboration and the true need for this development in our community. Its impact will be felt throughout the region.”

The project is a partnership between the Greater Kokomo Alliance and Visitors Bureau, the City of Kokomo, Howard County and SSG Hotels. The Kokomo Conference Center is a 55,000-square-foot facility that can accommodate events for up to 1,000 guests.

The new hotel and conference center is designed to meet the

growing demand for premium lodging accommodations and meeting spaces in Kokomo. With the physical integration of the facility featuring modern amenities, upscale rooms, and versatile conference space, the facility aims to attract business travelers, visitors, and local residents alike.

The conference center will also be the new home of the Kokomo Automotive Museum, with a space to display the museum’s permanent collection of historically significant and Kokomo-made Haynes and Aperson automobiles.

Branded as a Hilton Garden Inn, the hotel is expected to have 108 guestrooms that will feature a range of amenities including an indoor pool, fitness center, and ergonomic workspaces, as well as a restaurant and lounge that will cater to both visiting and local guests.



The Alliance broke ground alongside several community leaders at the project site, which is located between Main and Union streets, bordered by Superior Street and Wildcat Creek.

### PROJECT’S IMPACT

Kokomo has been fervent in its pursuit of this development. A new hotel and conference center will foster long-term economic growth and enhance local prosperity.

This project will bring substantial new spending into Howard County, driven by the influx of visitors attending conferences and events. As visitors explore local restaurants, shops, and services, businesses will see increased activity, creating a ripple effect across the community.

Additionally, the development will generate local employment, with workers spending their wages in the area, further boosting the economy.

The project will create a network of economic benefits throughout the region.

The result will be a positive fiscal impact, as new tax revenues from increased sales, property, and occupancy taxes flow back into the community, strengthening Kokomo’s economic foundation for years to come.

### PROJECT SPECS

#### | Conference Center

Facility will encompass a total of 55,000 square feet over 3 floors.

**Floor 1:** Includes a pre-function space, ballroom/meeting space that can accommodate over 1,000 people, and a commercial kitchen.

**Floor 2:** Includes 6 breakout meeting rooms, office space and green room.

**Lower level:** Kokomo Automotive Museum

#### | Hotel

Branded as a Hilton Garden Inn, its five stories will house 108 rooms.

Connects to conference center via pedestrian bridge.

“THIS PROJECT COMES TO FRUITION AT A PIVOTAL TIME FOR KOKOMO. WITH MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS TRANSFORMING OUR COMMUNITY, THIS PROJECT’S IMPACT WILL BE EVEN GREATER THAN WE EVER IMAGINED.” LORI DUKES, ALLIANCE PRESIDENT & CEO



# OUR 2024 LEADERSHIP

## ALLIANCE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Robb Blume**  
Community First Bank of Indiana

**Mark Canada Ph.D.**  
Indiana University Kokomo

**John Cardwell**  
Cardwell Built Construction

**Josh Cox**  
Indiana American Water

**Don Damron**  
Ascension St. Vincent Kokomo

**Kirk Daniels**  
Daniels, Alexander & Daniels  
Freedom Financial Group

**Jack Dodd**  
Howard County

**Mark Dubois**  
Western School Corp.

**Jeff Griffin**  
Purdue Polytechnic Kokomo

**Ethan Heicher**  
Ivy Tech Community  
College Kokomo

**Jeremy Keating**  
Stellantis

**Amanda Lewton**  
Sun King Kokomo

**Cary Mawbey**  
First Farmers Bank & Trust

**Derek McMichael**  
Community Howard  
Regional Health

**David Miller**  
General Motors Components  
Holdings

**Mayor Tyler Moore**  
City of Kokomo

**Scot Ortman**  
Kokomo Grain

**Amy Pate**  
RACI

**Susan Perry**  
Haynes International

**John Roberts**  
Howard County

**Krystal Ruble**  
Krystal Ruble State Farm

**Tony Stewart**  
City of Kokomo

**Christina Vaughn**  
Rite Quality Office Supplies

**Lori Warren**  
P.F. Hendricks & Co.

**Paul Wyman**  
The Wyman Group

## DOWNTOWN & CREATIVE PLACEMAKING COUNCIL

**Kristin Boor**  
Bohemian Tattoo Club

**Miles Fairchild**  
Kokomo High School

**Jaydin Goins**  
Kokomo High School

**Ann Inman**  
The Hobson

**Amanda Lewton**  
Sun King Kokomo

**Gary Rhinebarger**  
Rhine Hall Events

**Kenton Schroer**  
Bridgeway Church

**Lainey Schroer**  
Community First Bank of  
Indiana

**Justin Thacker**  
Eastern High School

**Tom Tolen**  
City of Kokomo

**Lori Warren**  
P.F. Hendricks & Co.

## INVENTREK COUNCIL

**Greg Aaron**  
PlayPros

**Andy Baker**  
AndyMark Inc.

**Bryan Bitner**  
CPS Midwest

**Robb Blume**  
Community First Bank of  
Indiana

**Chad Foster**  
Foster Technologies

**Jeff Griffin**  
Purdue Polytechnic Kokomo

**Bob Hingst**  
Mid-America Beverage Inc.

**Margaret Johnson**  
The Wellness Garden

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

**James Berry**  
BerryIT

**Frank Faulkner**  
Howard County

**Robert Hickman**  
Community First Bank of Indiana

**Karen McLean**  
NIPSCO

**Todd Moser**  
Community Foundation of  
Howard County

**Jeff Nelson**  
Community First Bank of Indiana

**Gregg Notestine**  
Region Four Workforce Board

**Amy Pate**  
RACI

**Wes Reed**  
City of Kokomo

**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 Corp.

**Pam Isaac**  
Howard County

**Bambi Roe**  
Courtyard by Marriott

**Jennifer Rollins**  
Kokomo Symphonic Society

**John Sarber**  
Indiana University Kokomo

**Joe Thatcher**  
Bullpen Ventures

**Christina Welch**  
Hampton Inn & Suites

## CHAMBER COUNCIL

**Alec Downing**  
First Farmers Bank & Trust

**John Fansler**  
Budget Blinds

**Lisa Girton**  
The Productive Assistant

**Laura Hileman**  
Guardian Angel Foundation

**Pam Isaac**  
Howard County

**Margaret Johnson**  
The Wellness Garden

**Julie Keb**  
Star Financial Bank

**Cash Lamberg**  
BerryComm

**Amanda Lewton**  
Sun King Kokomo

**Katie Loman**  
Ivy Tech Community  
College Kokomo

**George Mast**  
Community Howard  
Regional Health

**Clayton Nix**  
Shearer Printing and Office  
Solutions

**Lindsay Ousley**  
The Wyman Group

**Patty Pavey**  
Today's the Day  
Coaching & Hypnosis

**Drew Reed**  
Financial Center First Credit  
Union

**Krystal Ruble**  
Krystal Ruble State Farm

**Dick Sanburn**  
Crossroads Community Church

**Tara Scott**  
Indiana University Kokomo

**Trish Severns**  
Kokomo Family YMCA

**Dave Trine**  
City of Kokomo

**Kathleen Walker**  
Solidarity Community  
Federal Credit Union

## TOURISM AT A GLANCE

The Greater Kokomo Visitors Bureau's efforts in 2024 continued to elevate Kokomo's presence at the regional, state and national levels. From promoting major events to creating high-quality marketing collateral to securing valuable media exposure, the division has been instrumental in bringing attention to Kokomo's attractions and increasing visitor-related revenue.

## VISITOR SPENDING'S GROWING IMPACT

A 2024 Economic Impact Study of the travel and tourism industry in Howard County revealed significant growth, with total economic impact reaching \$252.2 million in 2023 – up from \$149.2 million in 2019.

Direct visitor spending accounted for \$181 million, with food, beverage, shopping, and lodging making up over 70% of total expenditures.

New attractions, such as Championship Park, have further fueled this increase, solidifying tourism as a major driver of economic growth.

**WHY IT MATTERS:** The study, commissioned by the Greater Kokomo Visitors Bureau and conducted by Certec Inc., underscores the expanding role of tourism in supporting local businesses and enhancing the region's economy.



### Expanding Kokomo's reach

In 2024, 30,000 copies of the Kokomo Area Guide were distributed across local hotels, attractions, businesses, and state welcome centers, as well as along the Indiana Toll Road.

Through Visit Indiana's brochure lead program, thousands more were sent to travelers requesting Kokomo information, while the digital version remained a popular resource online – demonstrating continued demand for Kokomo's visitor collateral.



### Kokomo goes primetime: To be featured on PBS

In 2024, Kokomo was selected to be featured on Season 4 of the PBS program "John McGivern's Main Streets," a series that highlights the history, attractions, and businesses that make each community unique.

The Plum Media production team visited Kokomo twice, including a multi-day film shoot in August, capturing local landmarks such as Haynes International, Kokomo Opalescent Glass, and downtown Kokomo.

**WHY IT MATTERS:** This national exposure provides a valuable opportunity to share Kokomo's rich heritage, thriving businesses, and welcoming community with a broader audience.

**EYE ON 2025**  
The episode will premiere in March 2025, airing on PBS stations in select markets.



### Shining a spotlight on the total eclipse: Increasing community awareness and impact

In 2024, the Visitors Bureau led local efforts to educate and raise awareness about the total solar eclipse in Howard County.

A dedicated community resource webpage was created to highlight local events, public viewing sites, and safety tips, becoming the most-visited page on the Visit Kokomo website in April, with 3,144 users and 8,018 total pageviews. A comprehensive marketing campaign, including radio, print, and social media ads, further promoted the eclipse and local resources.

**WHY IT MATTERS:** The impact was evident, with all Kokomo hotels selling out the night before this once-in-a-lifetime event.

## KOKOMO RECEIVES SIGNIFICANT EARNED MEDIA IN 2024

The following stories featured Kokomo and Howard County:

**"Musical Fun Alfresco"** – Travel IN Magazine Spring Issue 2024

**"Destination Downtown"** – Travel IN Magazine Summer Issue 2024

**"Indiana's Glittering Legacy: Exploring the Indiana Glass Trail"** – Global Heroes Magazine, July 2024 (story was posted online and included in an insert in the Chicago Tribune and Wall Street Journal)

**"Out & About with Barney" on WISH-TV's Life.Style.Live!** – featured live segment at Kokomo Opalescent Glass

**"Indiana's Historic Journeys"** – Travel IN Magazine Holiday Issue 2024

**"A Midwest Getaway"** – Midwestern Traveler Magazine Fall Issue 2024

**"An Intricate Indiana Experience"** – Midwestern Traveler Magazine Fall Issue 2024

**"12 Days of Giveaways"** – Visit Indiana November 2024 featuring Christmas at the Seiberling

**"Experience Christmas at the Seiberling"** – East Region Indiana Tourism Blog

**"Big-Time Attractions"** – Indiana Connections Magazine December Issue 2024

Additionally, several Kokomo events were featured on Visit Indiana's website and Christmas at the Seiberling was featured in a Visit Indiana Facebook ad.



### Kokomo hosts major softball championship, more great events

In 2024, Kokomo co-hosted the Alliance Fastpitch Softball Championship Series (AFCS) for ages 16-18U, featuring the Opening Day, All-Star Game, and Championship Game at the newly opened Kokomo High School Softball Stadium. The All-Star Game aired live on CBS Sports and drew over 2,000 attendees. With 203 teams participating, the event brought in over 325 Kokomo hotel room nights.

**EYE ON 2025:** Following the success of the tournament, Alliance Fastpitch announced it would host all age group tournaments in Kokomo/Westfield in July 2025, marking a significant opportunity for local tourism and sports events.

## DOWNTOWN AT A GLANCE

In 2024, the Downtown Association facilitated record-breaking events, beautification efforts, and community engagement initiatives that strengthened the vibrancy of our city center. From hosting signature festivals to enhancing public spaces and promoting the arts, the division continues to make a lasting impact on the community.

## STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL MAKES A SWEET IMPACT

The 27th annual Strawberry Festival brought more than 10,000 people to downtown Kokomo on June 7, reinforcing its role as one of the city's most impactful community events.



The festival not only provided a day of entertainment and tradition but also drove significant foot traffic to local businesses, vendors, and restaurants.

With over 150 booths featuring artisans, crafters, and food vendors, the festival created valuable opportunities for small businesses while offering attendees a vibrant marketplace to explore. Live music, hands-on art activities, a free kids' play area, and craft beer added to the lively atmosphere, making downtown a hub of energy and connection.

As an event made possible by over 200 volunteers, the festival continues to bring the community together, support local entrepreneurs, and showcase downtown Kokomo as a thriving destination for residents and visitors alike.

## ARTSAPALOOZA ART MARKET SHOWCASES ARTISTS AND ARTISANS

The Market expanded yet again in 2024, welcoming 32 fine artists and artisans to display and sell their work during the Strawberry Festival.

Featuring ceramics, painting, photography, sculpture, fiber arts, woodworking, and more, this juried market highlights high-quality, original artwork from across the Midwest.

Organizers aimed to grow the arts presence at the festival, attracting even more talent and creating a greater cultural experience for attendees.

Artists were selected by a jury of festival organizers and Indiana artists, ensuring a diverse and high-caliber lineup of exhibitors.

### WHY IT MATTERS

By growing the Artsapalooza Art Market, the festival not only provided a platform for artists but also enhanced the overall festival experience, drawing in more visitors and strengthening Kokomo's downtown as a hub for culture and creativity.

### EYE ON 2025

Plans are in motion to further expand the market, reinforcing downtown Kokomo's reputation as a destination for the arts.



### GROWING COMMUNITY PRIDE

In 2024, the Keep Kokomo Beautiful initiative hosted four planting events, bringing together 175 volunteers to plant 1,125 hanging baskets, 300 perennials, 91 containers, and 25 sidewalk gardens.

The effort also maintained 12 gardens at key locations like Garden Alley, Foster Park, and City Hall, while the Downtown Association also championed the addition of new hanging baskets and improved flower maintenance.

In addition to the annual plantings, volunteers planted more perennials around the Kokomo Family YMCA, Courthouse, and Depot District. The signage was also replaced for the Indian Maiden Garden statue.

Beyond beautification, these efforts play a vital role in placemaking, creating inviting public spaces that enhance quality of life, attract visitors, and support local businesses.

### MORE KEY INITIATIVES IN 2024

The Downtown Association continued its efforts to foster a thriving, inviting, and connected downtown by supporting new initiatives, hosting engaging events, and enhancing public spaces.

- **Supporting DORA:** Facilitated the creation of a Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area (DORA) by connecting downtown stakeholders with the City of Kokomo, enhancing the district's appeal and activity.
- **Downtown District Gatherings:** Hosted quarterly gatherings where attendees learned about DORA, engaged with longtime downtown developer Scott Pitcher, and visited key businesses like Sokuri Sushi and Fired Arts Studio, and a concert and beer tasting at the Kokomo Riverwalk.



### FOCUS ON PUBLIC ART

In 2024, Artist Alley featured 16 works, further enhancing downtown Kokomo's vibrant cultural landscape. A collaboration between the Greater Kokomo Downtown Association and Kokomo Art Association, this outdoor gallery is the transformation of a once-forgotten space into a dynamic hub for public art.

The initiative supports local artists, attracts visitors, and has even inspired similar projects in other communities — proving the power of public art to drive economic activity.



### CELEBRATING COMMUNITY AND CREATIVITY AT FIRST FRIDAY

In 2024, Downtown Kokomo hosted 10 First Friday events, each highlighting a unique theme.

Adding to the festive spirit, the Downtown Association organized a Holiday Window Decorating Contest, with 12 downtown businesses transforming their storefronts into dazzling displays.

The community cast their votes, and Crossroads Community Church took home the top prize during the Ugly Sweater First Friday, bringing a fun and festive close to the year's celebrations.



## CHAMBER AT A GLANCE

The Chamber of Commerce achieved significant milestones in 2024, driving community engagement, supporting local businesses, and fostering professional development. From celebrating member successes to implementing impactful programs and strategies, the division has strengthened connections and delivered meaningful value to its members.



# CHAMBER CELEBRATES 110TH ANNIVERSARY

The Chamber of Commerce has long been the driving force behind our thriving community, championing growth, innovation, and collaboration among local businesses. Its 110th anniversary in 2024 stands as a testament to the resilience and unity that define our business community.

To mark this milestone, the Chamber held a ribbon-cutting ceremony in October, drawing more than 200 people in celebration.

The anniversary was also honored at the Alliance's annual dinner in November, where historical artifacts were displayed, offering a glimpse into the Chamber's rich legacy and its lasting impact on our region.



Automotive pioneer and Kokomo native Elwood Haynes was one of the visionaries who founded the Chamber of Commerce in 1914.

### 2024 ANNUAL AWARD WINNERS:

Awards presented include:

**Economic Impact:** SSG Hotels

**Downtown Champion:** Lainey Schroer

**F.I.R.S.T.S. Award:** Kokomo School Corporation

**Small Business of the Year:** CrossFit Kokomo

**Large Business of the Year:** Trilogy Health Services

**Businessperson of the Year:** Michael Shor

**Ambassador of the Year:** George Mast

**Volunteer of the Year:** Lisa Collins

**IMPACT:** Samaritan Caregivers

**Elizabeth Foster:** Julie Smith



## ATTENDANCE INCREASE

### BUILDING CONNECTIONS, CELEBRATING SUCCESS

In 2024, the Chamber of Commerce remained a driving force in fostering business growth and community engagement. Hosting 112 events with over 1,800 attendees, the Chamber provided valuable opportunities for networking, education, and collaboration.

Throughout the year, 45 ribbon cuttings celebrated key milestones for local businesses, highlighting their growth and achievements.

The Chamber also continued to expand its programming with innovative initiatives like Small Business of the Month and HR Roundtable, ensuring businesses have the resources and support they need to thrive.

Through these efforts, the Chamber strengthened its role as a catalyst for business success in the Greater Kokomo community.



This initiative recognized 10 small businesses in 2024, culminating in the inaugural Small Business of the Year award. The program highlights the vital role small businesses play in Kokomo's economy and reinforces the Chamber's commitment to their success.

**ENGAGED COMMITTEES SHOW GROWING SUPPORT:** The Chamber's committees continue to grow, reflecting the increasing engagement and commitment of our members. Their involvement fosters strong community ties, increases support for member businesses, and ensures the chamber's continuous growth and effectiveness.

**Ambassadors:** A committee of 30 member representatives, this core group of volunteers was very engaged in ribbon cutting events.

**Women's Business Council:** With around 50 women regularly engaged, the council saw strong attendance at its leadership conference and holiday luncheon.

**Young Professionals Network:** Hosted its popular Puzzles, Pies & Pints that connected members in a fun, engaging setting.

### BY THE NUMBERS

80

Number of new members in 2024, while maintaining an 85% retention rate

6,100+

Chamber's total following on social media

372,531

Number of users reached through the Chamber's social media channels in 2024

130

Number of members teeing up for the 2024 Chamber Golf Classic. The highly anticipated event hit capacity for attendance

29,436

Total number of searches of our online membership directory

## INVENTREK AT A GLANCE

Inventrek Technology Park continues to solidify its status as a key driver of economic growth and a valuable resource for the business community. From securing its Certified Tech Park redesignation to hosting global industry leaders, Inventrek continues to support innovation and business development in Howard County.

# ACCELERATING INNOVATION

## ANNUAL DRIVE COMPETITION CONTINUES TO SPUR ENTREPRENEURIAL GROWTH

In 2024, the Drive competition — Inventrek Tech Park’s Shark Tank-style business pitch event — continued to grow, drawing an increasing number of local entrepreneurs eager to showcase their innovative ideas.

The 2024 contest, which was open to startups and expanding businesses in Howard County, provided a dynamic platform for participants to refine their business plans and pitches before a panel of judges, with the \$10,000 grand prize awarded to Luke Talley of Back Woods

Trading Company.

In addition, the competition introduced the new CTP Jumpstart grant, awarding \$2,500 to Crystina Diaz of The Kingdom Kids Learning Center, further expanding support for emerging businesses.

**WHY IT MATTERS.** With each year, the contest builds momentum, offering critical resources and mentorship that not only fuel individual business growth but also strengthen the region’s overall economic landscape.



**2024 WINNER:** The \$10,000 grand prize was awarded to Luke Talley, left, of Back Woods Trading Company.

**EYE ON 2025:** A new contest timeline will allow us to provide extra time for mentorship and pitch refinement, ensuring local entrepreneurs receive the support they need to succeed.

## NEW SERIES EMPOWERS SMALL BUSINESSES TO GROW, SUCCEED

Launched in 2024, the Linked to the Future series, a collaborative initiative between Inventrek Tech Park and the Hoosier Heartland ISBDC, is aimed at helping small business owners address the critical challenges they face daily. This new series offers hour-long, expert-led sessions focused on essential topics like cybersecurity, marketing, and financial management.



Designed with practical, actionable takeaways, each session provides personalized advice that helps business owners solve problems and strengthen their operations without breaking the bank.

Understanding that small business owners often juggle multiple roles, from CEO to IT specialist, the series provides an invaluable opportunity to focus on solving key pain points that can hold a business back.

These sessions offer clear steps to implement right away. In addition, the ability to attend the sessions either in person at Inventrek or virtually via Zoom gives business owners the flexibility to learn on their own schedule.

**WHY IT MATTERS:** By equipping local entrepreneurs with the knowledge and tools they need to thrive, Linked to the Future helps foster a stronger, more resilient small business community. These accessible, expert-driven sessions are a cost-effective way to ensure businesses stay competitive and grow sustainably — helping them avoid costly mistakes and build a foundation for long-term success.



## REVITALIZED SPACES FUEL ENGAGEMENT

Inventrek Tech Park has seen a steady rise in the use of its conference rooms and auditorium over the past few years, a trend that continued in 2024.

Both members and the public increasingly rely on the facility’s state-of-the-art amenities and flexible spaces for a wide range of events — including business meetings, workshops and community gatherings.

This increase is fueled by strategic investments in upgrading the spaces and targeted marketing efforts to promote the venue.

As a result, Inventrek not only remains a key destination for local business activities, but also stands out as a vibrant hub for community collaboration and engagement in the region.



## INVENTREK RECEIVES TECH PARK RECERTIFICATION FROM STATE

In May 2024, Inventrek Tech Park successfully secured its Certified Technology Park redesignation for another four years, ensuring continued access to resources that fuel innovation and business growth.

This designation reinforces the park’s critical role in supporting entrepreneurs and high-growth companies in Kokomo.

The impact of this designation is clearly evident

in the park’s contributions to the local and state economy. A recent economic impact study found that Inventrek generated \$29 million for Howard County and \$37 million for the state in 2023 alone.

By fostering technological advancement and attracting new investment, Inventrek continues to be a powerful driver of economic growth in the region.

### 391 JOBS

Total employment impact of Inventrek’s tenants and members in Howard County

### \$29 MILLION

Total contribution to county’s GDP through the combined efforts of tenants and members

### \$37 MILLION

Total contribution to Indiana’s GDP through the economic activity generated by tenants and members



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AT A GLANCE

While the Alliance's Economic Development division provided significant support to the efforts of other divisions in 2024, it also achieved key successes of its own through collaboration on major community initiatives, facilitating business growth, and driving strategic projects.



## KOREAN SOFT-LANDING: Strengthening international connections



In 2024, the Greater Kokomo Economic Development Alliance continued its efforts to create an inclusive and welcoming environment for the growing international community, particularly with the influx of Korean residents and businesses.

With the arrival of sister EV battery plants in Kokomo, the Alliance focused on supporting the integration of these new neighbors and fostering strong community interactions.

Building on initiatives from 2023, the Alliance expanded its programs to help the business community prepare for working with South Korean companies and employees.

The Alliance continued the Korean Culture Business Training Series, made possible by the Community Foundation of Howard County.

These sessions provided valuable insights into South Korean corporate culture and offered practical advice for local businesses to succeed in a more global environment.

**WHY IT MATTERS:** These ongoing efforts aim to foster understanding, build positive relationships, and ensure Kokomo's growth is met with opportunity and inclusivity.

## SUPPORTING STARPLUS ENERGY

Over the past two years, Inventrek has hosted 11 suppliers and OEMs to support the development of StarPlus Energy in its electric vehicle battery plants, fostering collaboration and investment in Kokomo's growing automotive sector.

## PUT KOKOMO'S NEW BRAND INTO ACTION

In 2024, we took another major step in bringing the Kokomo community's new brand to life with the creation and installation of vibrant light pole banners throughout the greater downtown area.

These eye-catching banners proudly showcase the new branding, adding visual appeal to Kokomo's streets while reinforcing the identity of our community.

Following the development of the brand in 2022, the Greater Kokomo Economic Development Alliance has been working steadily to implement this cohesive new identity. Along with the banners, we have expanded the reach of the brand through statewide advertisements and have continued updating marketing materials, community guides, and our community-focused websites.

The ongoing branding efforts are designed to foster pride among residents and businesses while attracting new residents and visitors. This unified message is helping drive economic development, strengthening the sense of connection and shared values within the community.

We are confident that this refreshed brand will have a lasting impact, empowering residents to take ownership of Kokomo's continued growth and success.

# A WORD FROM THE BOARD CHAIRMAN



**From Cary Mawbey, chairman of the Greater Kokomo Alliance Board of Directors:**

2024 was certainly an exciting time for our community, wasn't it? In the past couple of years, we've celebrated some of the most significant developments in our community's history, and the future they promise is inspiring.

But in the midst of these headline-grabbing projects, there's another story quietly unfolding – the relentless and often behind-the-scenes efforts of the Alliance. Through the Chamber of Commerce, Visitors Bureau, Inventrek Tech Park and the Downtown Association, the Greater Kokomo Economic Development Alliance has been creating an impact that runs so deep it's often unseen.

In fact, many of the things our community enjoys and relies on every day are the result of this work.

Do you enjoy the beautiful flower baskets adorning our streets each summer?

That's the Alliance.

How about the new, modern branding for our community?

Also an Alliance initiative.

See families and friends gathering in downtown Kokomo on the First Friday of the month? What about the Strawberry Festival?

Both Alliance events.

**"THE ALLIANCE IS HERE, DAY IN AND DAY OUT, NOT JUST IN MOMENTS OF BIG ANNOUNCEMENTS, BUT IN ALL THE QUIETER, ESSENTIAL WAYS THAT SUSTAIN AND GROW OUR ECONOMY AND ENHANCE OUR QUALITY OF LIFE. THE ALLIANCE PASSIONATELY PURSUES INITIATIVES THAT STRENGTHEN OUR ENTIRE REGION. "**

Have you strolled the downtown sculpture walk? Visited Artist Alley or one of the other revitalized alleyways?

The Alliance again.

Need community information? You can grab a Downtown Cultural District map, a pocket-sized trail map, a street map, a business directory, a glossy community guide magazine.

All made and distributed by the Alliance.

Have you seen community promotions at Kokomo Municipal Stadium or Championship Park? How about the promotions in statewide and regional travel magazines?

Alliance again.

The Drive business pitch competition, the Korean Cultural Business Training series, ribbon cutting ceremonies, leadership conferences, luncheons, Third House sessions, candidate forums, and training courses for small businesses.

All the Alliance.

The Alliance is here, day in and day out, not just in moments of big announcements, but in all the quieter, essential ways that sustain and grow our economy and enhance our quality of life.

The Alliance passionately pursues initiatives that strengthen our entire region. It allows each division to amplify its unique strengths while coordinating efforts to achieve shared goals. Through this collaboration, our community has been able to take bold steps toward long-term growth.

Our shared vision has guided us and will continue to guide us for generations to come.

Together, we are creating a thriving future built on our shared values, our relentless drive, and our commitment to making our community a place of opportunity.

Here's to the past, present, and future of the Alliance and our community.

# EXPANDING THE ALLIANCE'S REACH

Our reach continues to grow, with increasing engagement across social media, website visits, and other platforms, connecting more people to our community and initiatives. Here's a look at the impact and engagement data from 2024.

**1,652,983**

TOTAL IMPRESSIONS ON SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS

**42,717**

TOTAL FOLLOWERS ON ALLIANCE SOCIAL MEDIA

**286,769**

TOTAL PAGEVIEWS ON ALLIANCE WEBSITES

**150,439**

TOTAL USERS ON ALLIANCE WEBSITES


**8,340**

TOTAL SUBSCRIBERS TO ALL ALLIANCE NEWSLETTERS, WHICH HAVE A 38% OPEN RATE

**40,000**

NUMBER OF COPIES DISTRIBUTED OF THE CHAMBER AND VISITOR GUIDES

**6**

TOTAL NUMBER OF WEBSITES MAINTAINED BY THE ALLIANCE 

## FIND US ONLINE

Due to its varied missions, the Alliance operates a number of websites, including:

### GREATERKOKOMO.COM

Our organization's official website

### VISITKOKOMO.ORG

Focused on attracting visitors & informing current residents of the community's offerings

### THISISKOKOMO.COM

A residential attraction website & community guide

### FIRSTFRIDAYKOKOMO.COM

Dedicated to the Downtown Association's monthly event

### WELCOMETOKOKOMO.COM

An international welcome guide

### KOKOMOSTRAWBERRY FESTIVAL.COM

Dedicated to the annual downtown festival presented by the Alliance

## GET INVOLVED!

The Alliance's mission is to create a thriving and supportive community, and we can't do it without you. Whether you're interested in becoming a member, an event sponsor, or a volunteer, your involvement is crucial to our success and the betterment of our community.

### BECOME A MEMBER

Joining as a member means you're an integral part of the Alliance mission. Members receive valuable benefits and resources, but you are also invited to network with like-minded individuals dedicated to the greater Kokomo community.

### BE A SPONSOR

Our sponsors are key partners in our journey. By sponsoring an event or initiative, you'll gain visibility and recognition within the community while supporting programs that drive meaningful change. Sponsorship is a powerful way to align your brand with a cause that matters.

### VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME

Volunteering is a hands-on way to contribute to our community. Whether you have a few hours a week or can commit to a larger project, your time and skills are invaluable. Volunteers help us run events, assist our membership, and beautify our community. Regardless of the involvement, as a volunteer you will make a direct impact on the community.

### GET IN TOUCH WITH US!

#### Contact the Alliance by phone:

Alliance, Inventrek Tech Park: 765-457-2000  
Visitors Bureau: 765-457-6802  
Chamber, Downtown Association: 765-457-5301

#### You may also visit our offices located inside

Inventrek Tech Park, 700 E. Firmin St., Kokomo, IN 46902

### LET'S GET SOCIAL

@GreaterKokomo  
@KokomoChamber  
@DowntownKokomo

@FirstFridayKokomo  
@InventrekKokomo  
@VisitKokomo



**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
INVENTREK TECH PARK  
VISITORS BUREAU**