

Downtown Kokomo Comprehensive Plan



November 3, 2009

Greater Kokomo Economic Development Alliance

Foreword

The purpose of this plan is to provide a strategic guide for the continued revitalization of Downtown Kokomo. The Plan will focus on the following key components:

- Infrastructure
- Signage
- Public and Private Incentives
- Indiana University Arts Plaza
- Beautification
- Riverfront District
- Events and Entertainment

Together these core components will create an environment for business to thrive and ultimately the creation of jobs in our urban core. It will also provide an opportunity for people to come together for shopping, services, and entertainment. The plan will make downtown more accessible, user friendly and inviting.

The partnership to carry out this plan will be led by the Greater Kokomo Economic Development Alliance, in conjunction with private business, government and non profit organizations.

The public/private partnership will be the best method for carrying out the key components of this plan.

Downtown is a barometer by which outsiders measure the success of any community. A dying downtown reflects a dying community, a thriving downtown sends a clear signal that our community is alive and well and ready for business.

Public and Private Incentive

Private Sector Incentives

- Kokomo Loan Pool (\$2,000,000 Goal)
- Media Marketing Specials
- Landlord Initiatives

Public Sector Incentives

Use of Economic Development Income Tax (EDIT) to fund the following:

- Rent Abatement
- Tax Abatement
- Job Creation Incentives
- Job Training Money

The above private and public incentives will be utilized as recruiting tools to attract several businesses at one time to open downtown. The thought being that the more restaurants, retail and entertainment offered the stronger and more likely it will be for these businesses to survive.

Infrastructure

The following are infrastructure improvements that will make downtown more attractive, user friendly and inviting to business and the public.

- Removal of Parking Meters
- Removal of Stop Lights at key intersection including the square and replacing with decorative 4 way stop signs.
- Removal of “reserved” parking spaces on the square.
- ADA compliant and decorative bump outs on the courthouse square.
- ADA compliant bump outs at Mulberry and Taylor.
- Resurfacing of streets.
- Changing one way streets to two way streets.
- Two hour enforced parking

These infrastructure improvements have begun and the majority of the above work should be completed by late spring. Additional infrastructure projects may be identified along the way and will be added as needed.

Beautification

Pride on our community will be reflected in the beautification efforts in our Downtown and surrounding areas:

The following are the beautification projects:

- Maintain alleyscapes.
- Maintain Indian Maiden and Haynes Sculpture.
- Decorative Flower pots on the new bump outs.
- Continue Flower Pots around the Courthouse square.
- Continue flowers leading to downtown on Sycamore St.
- Encourage downtown business and property owners to match beautification efforts on their properties.
- Planting 3,000 tulips this fall.
- Phase 1 Courthouse beautification underway.
 - \$45,000 Project funded by private sector, public sector, and the Community Foundation.
 - Phase II and III to follow in 2010 and 2011.



Signage

Kokomo Way Finder Sign Program

- Clear, concise, and simple directional signage to take motorists from U.S. 31 to major government, retail, historical, and entertainment areas in Kokomo and Howard County.
- A \$1,250 Community Foundation of Howard County grant was used to hire a tourism expert from Purdue University to help and create the sign an action plan.
- A \$20,000 State Main Street Enhancement Grant and contributions of \$20,000 from Urban Enterprise Association and \$5,000 from Visitors Bureau was used to plan, design, and create construction documents for more than 90 Way Finding signs in Kokomo and Howard County. This was phase one of the Way Finder project. It was completed in 2008. Phase two is fabrication and installation of signs.
- A \$20,000 State Main Street Enhancement grant, a \$5,000 Community Foundation Grant, and a \$5,000 contribution from the Visitors Bureau as a 20 percent match for \$130,000 in Surface Transportation Project funds for the fabrication and installation of 30 signs selected by the City Engineering Department. The plan is to use STP funds to complete fabrication and installation in three phases. The Howard County Coordinating Council and Indiana Department of Transportation have approved the project. The City Engineering Department is waiting on INDOT to take bids. The Engineering Department believes the earliest INDOT will let bids is March 2010.
- Just received was another \$10,000 pledge from UEA, which will be used as a match for a \$20,000 State Main Street Enhancement Grant. Enhancement Grant application was delayed in 2009. Applications will be due first quarter of 2010. This money will be used as a match for another \$130,000 in STP funds.

Riverfront District

A Riverfront District has been approved for Downtown Kokomo.

- The purpose of the district is to encourage the opening, location or upgrade of a variety of unique year-round restaurants and similar facilities in Downtown Kokomo.
- These businesses will capitalize on other amenities, such as the Wildcat Creek, the Walk of Excellence and the Arts Pavilion in Foster Park. This will spur further development and promote the notion of downtown as a gathering area for our community.
- A Riverfront District allows businesses to purchase off-quota liquor licenses, making downtown an attractive area for new and expanding restaurants. These licenses cost \$1,000 annually, and cannot be resold, or transferred out of the Riverfront District.
- The City has put in place guidelines for restaurants and breweries that apply for liquor licenses through the Riverfront District. More information, including application materials, can be found at www.cityofkokomo.org/riverfront.

Indiana University at Kokomo Art Plaza and Sculpture Center

The Indiana Art Plaza and Sculpture Center would bring a new dimension to the urban core of Downtown Kokomo. It would be the first significant investment and expansion of Post Secondary Education in the Kokomo Downtown. The end result would be the stabilization and revitalization of an entire one block area in the center of Downtown. It will also provide for the renovation and reuse of over 27,000 square feet which is currently blighted and/or vacant. This project would also save and renovate three historic structures within this one block area. Green space would compliment the new Art Gallery, Student Classrooms and Administrative offices. This project will create a cultural area that will be a learning center for students, a destination spot for the local community, and a tourism opportunity for Kokomo and Howard County.

The transformation of this one block area will accomplish several things. It will remediate a known Brownfield, provide the opportunity for Leed Green Building and technologies, and it will spur further economic development, investment and job creation in the downtown. This type of development will attract coffee shops, eateries, retail, small businesses and other cultural amenities. The improvement to the quality of life for our community would not be measured by dollars alone.

This venture will also have an impact on the other Arts Organizations in our community. Currently they all operate autonomously and have little interaction with each other. This cultural arts block will provide the opportunity for these organizations, such as the Symphony and Civic Theatre to perhaps reside their offices together and facilitate some joint programming to help ensure their survival in the future. The creation of an arts culture and district will undoubtedly help facilitate job growth.

Events and Entertainment

Downtown Kokomo is very conducive to hosting large gatherings such as festivals and entertainment. The following are yearly events that already happen downtown:

- New Years Eve Ball Drop
- Strawberry Festival
- Haynes Apperson Festival
- Rib Fest
- Taste of Kokomo
- October Fest
- Girls Night out 5k Fun Run
- First Friday Concerts
- Window Decorating Contest/ Turn on the Lights

We will continue to pursue other events and entertainment, with focus on the new Pavilion located in Foster Park downtown. The new Pavilion has the capacity to support major entertainment acts and the park is able to host thousands of spectators.

We will also put an emphasis on promoting our heritage and culture with the events downtown. There is no better place to promote our history and heritage.

Downtown is at the center of it all, and we will build on that theme by providing quality events that attract families from our community and around the region.

