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Kokomo community sees tourism growth

Greater Kokomo Visitors Bureau study reveals impact of local visitor travel in 2019

**KOKOMO, Ind. (Sept. 30, 2021)** – In an effort to measure the impact of tourism in Kokomo and Howard County, the Greater Kokomo Visitors Bureau again commissioned an economic impact study on the local tourism and travel industry.

Data collected during the study focused on 2019 visitor activity in Kokomo and Howard County. The findings are in and show that travelers’ impact on the area has grown since the previous study completed in 2016.

Conducted by Certec Inc., the study found that visitors to Kokomo and Howard County contributed $149.2 million to Howard County’s economy in 2019, compared to $135.4 million in 2016. Of that total, direct expenditures by visitors accounted for nearly $107 million. That’s a 3.4% increase from the 2016 study period.

The visitor spending came from over 1.3 million destination and pass-through travelers in Howard County in 2019, the study reports. Primary expenditures went toward food and beverage, shopping and lodging purchases.

Economic benefits of tourism begin when a traveler to Howard County, either an Indiana resident or an out-of-state visitor, spends money in the county.

“We conduct this study as an effort to quantify the magnitude of the economic impact of the tourism and travel industry on the community,” said Charlie Sparks, President and CEO of the Greater Kokomo Economic Development Alliance. “Tourism has significant impact on the local economy. It creates new jobs, supports area businesses, and increases demand for goods and services related to travel and hospitality.”

According to the study, a total of 1,576 jobs in Howard County resulted from the tourism industry — up from 1,541 jobs from the 2016 study. Tourism-generated jobs provided nearly $30 million in wages in 2019 to Howard County workers.

“These study results show that it is imperative for the Visitors Bureau to continue promoting Kokomo and Howard County as an ideal destination for visitors, conference and event organizers, and pass-through travelers,” Sparks said.

“The Visitors Bureau actively promotes the many attractions and events here in Kokomo and Howard County in efforts to attract new visitors to our county and enhance the visitor experience while travelers are here,” said Sherry Matlock, manager of the Greater Kokomo Visitors Bureau. “With a thriving downtown, museums, outdoor recreational activities, public art spaces, glass factory tours, and a wide variety of dining and lodging options, we have a lot to offer those visiting our community and in addition, for residents to enjoy.”

Matlock added that each of these opportunities to enjoy Kokomo can be found online at VisitKokomo.org.

“Visitor travel and corresponding visitor spending contribute to the sustainable growth of economic development in our county,” Matlock continued. “We anticipate continued growth in subsequent years with the addition of Championship Park, which opened earlier this year, attracting more sports tournaments to Howard County. Sports tourism brings thousands of visitors to Indiana each year. Sports teams, along with corporate travel and those visiting friends and relatives in the area are a few examples of the types of visitors we host in Kokomo and Howard County.

Certec is a Lexington, Ky.-based firm specializing in destination research and market analysis. Data was collected through tourism business surveys and on-site visitor surveys conducted earlier this year.

 **About the Greater Kokomo Visitors Bureau**

The Greater Kokomo Visitors Bureau strives to attract corporate and public tourism to Kokomo and Howard County through the promotion of the area’s many attractions, amenities, and historical significance. The Visitors Bureau facilitates group visits, corporate meetings, sports tournaments, and personal visits for individuals and families, promotes festivals and events, and provides information to engage current residents.