

# Tourism Community Report

# 2023





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## To Our Valued Partners, Community Members And Stakeholders:

The past year was marked with great opportunities and advancement for our community and for our organization.

In August, Johnson Consulting, Inc. issued its final report studying the SoIN region's potential as a conference and meetings destination. SoIN Tourism brought local partners to the table and provided context for the study. After thorough review – from concept to feasibility to site selection, Johnson found that the Clarksville South redevelopment area offers the best location to develop a facility with nearly 100,000 square feet of function and meeting space. Now the hard work begins: financing, constructing, marketing and opening that long-discussed project.

Other new visitor experiences for first-time and return visits continue to emerge. The redevelopment of the former Jeffboat site will open a new market for river cruise dockings. The potential addition of passenger rail service will expand access to our area. SoIN Tourism will be a resource and partner to maximize the potential of these projects. We're in conversation with area partners to help bring new festivals and events in the future – realizing the potential we saw when we pursued Abbey Road on the River in 2015. We demonstrated to the world that, yes, SoIN can be a great place for major events. Stay tuned for more news in 2024.

To prepare our board and staff to take advantage of these new opportunities, we engaged a strategic planning consultant. This will help us focus our efforts on high-priority and high-return initiatives. The goals for the board outlined in the plan include:

- Champion Destination Enhancing Development
- Advocate for Destination Experience Upgrades
- Continue to Build Awareness, Appreciation and Support for the Visitor Industry and SoIN Tourism.

Finally, SoIN Tourism took a major leap, relocating our visitor center and office after 27 years to a new spot in the heart of one of SoIN's busiest foot-traffic districts. A block from the Ohio River and from Jeffersonville's Big Four Station Park, the visitor center can now maximize its impact on visitors. Those who use visitor centers are more satisfied with their visit and are more likely to return. We are eager to welcome, and re-welcome visitors at this new location.

While we move into our new offices, we're also looking to move the needle on our visitor economy. With the help of our tourism partners, we'll continue to strive to make the SoIN experience meaningful, memorable and enriching to both visitors and residents.

**Jim Epperson**  
*Executive Director*

**Mark Bliss**  
*Board President*

## Tourism's Economic Impact, 2022\*

**\$509**  
**Million**  
in Tourism Spending

- Visitor spending on hotel, food & beverage, rental homes, shopping, recreation, etc.
- From visitors from Indiana, other states, & international destinations
- On leisure & business trips
- Overnight or day trips



Total traveler spending supported **6,935** Jobs



**56¢** of every tourism dollar stayed in Clark and Floyd Counties

\*Most recent economic impact data

Source: 2022 Economic Contribution of Tourism in Clark County, Floyd County, Rockport Analytics

## Where is SoIN?



# New Businesses in 2023

**Almost 30 new locations have joined Team SoIN in 2023. New and existing businesses are boosting our local economy. They are creating spaces where visitors and residents want to spend time with friends and family. They are building community through events and programming.**

In the spring, we celebrated the opening of two outdoor attractions, which are sure to bring nature and adventure lovers to SoIN. The Woods ATV Adventures gives visitors access to 500 acres of forest filled with rugged ATV trails. Clarksville's Origin Park opened its first amenities, providing the public with paddling access to Silver Creek and the first of many nature trails to hike at the future 430-acre riverside, urban park.

Culinary offerings and shops multiplied across our two counties, with SoIN's first oyster bar, a restaurant serving Louisiana cuisine and a bike shop near the Big Four Pedestrian Bridge offering electric bike rentals. From the Spice & Tea Exchange in the west, to Charlestown Coffee and Cream to the east, to Goodbounce Pickleball Yard in the south and Freckled Mama Boutique in the north, our community provides plenty of ways to experience Hoosier Hospitality.



Our partners — restaurants, hotels, shops and attractions — are what make SoIN special and keep visitors coming back. It's our mission

to support our partners as they serve visitors. To ramp up our support of these essential tourism businesses, we re-vamped our Team SoIN meetings, providing attendees with useful sales and marketing information that could be easily applied to drive visitors to our partner businesses. The information was useful — and fun! We are in the business of tourism after all.

We're not the only ones serious about Hoosier Hospitality. To support new and existing restaurants, Ivy Tech Community College partnered with Southern Indiana Works, Prosser Career Education Center, and Caesars Foundation of Floyd County to develop a culinary training program teaching kitchen safety, food prep, customer service and more.

As our counties and region continue to grow, with many major development projects on the horizon, we look forward to continuing successful strategies, as well

as expanding and experimenting with new ways to help our partners reach their full potential.

## Partner Support

### Marketing

- Advertising to potential visitors
- Provide matching cooperative marketing funds
- High quality communications to targeted audiences
- Acquire leads

### Visitor Services

- Enhance visitors' and residents' experiences in SoIN
- Outreach to consumers in select target markets
- Connect visitors to partner businesses
- Provide local event support

### Sales

- Sell group-friendly experiences to tour companies, leaders, influencers
- Provide group business leads to partners
- Assist partner tourism businesses in meetings, motor coach, event and sports markets

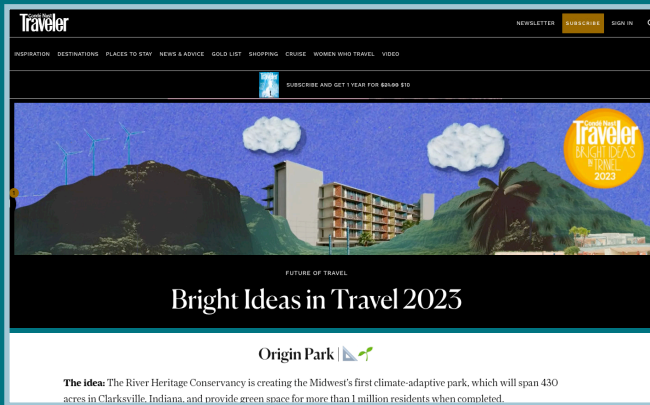
### Communications

- Generate stories about the SoIN visitor experiences
- Host travel journalists and influencers
- Produce a high quality annual visitor guide



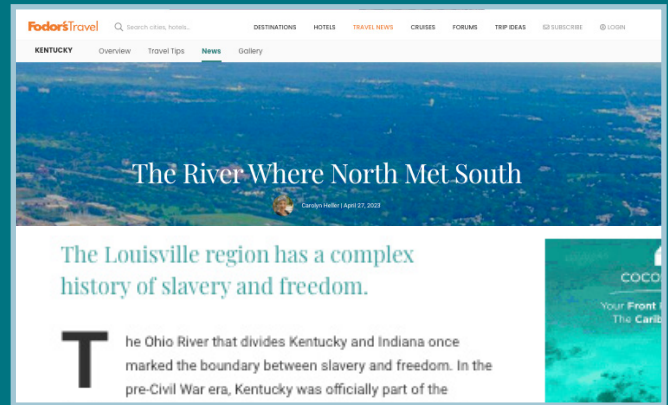
# Media Relations

## 2023 SoIN Media Placements



### "Bright Ideas in Travel 2023"

Origin Park featured in annual Conde Nast list



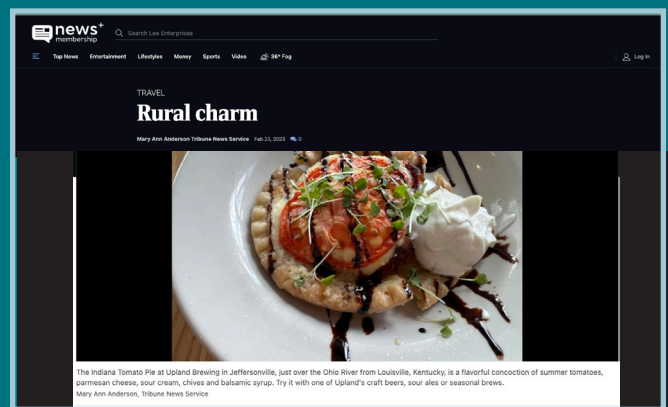
### "The River Where North Met South"

by Carolyn Heller for Fodor's Travel



### "Midwestern Waterfronts"

by Paula Aven-Gladych for Select Travel  
(group travel options in Clarksville)



### "Southern Indiana's fertile vineyards, historic hotels enhance its rural charm"

by Mary Ann Anderson

## Media Relations

Integrated with SoIN Tourism's marketing campaigns is a media relations campaign promoting the region. In addition to monthly appearances on local NBC affiliate, WAVE TV, SoIN Tourism works with local, regional and national outlets to obtain coverage about SoIN and our partners.



**7** travel journalists and influencers visited SoIN and produced travel stories.



SoIN Tourism generated more than **169** (96 unique) media placements touting tourism in Clark & Floyd Counties.



# Marketing Communications

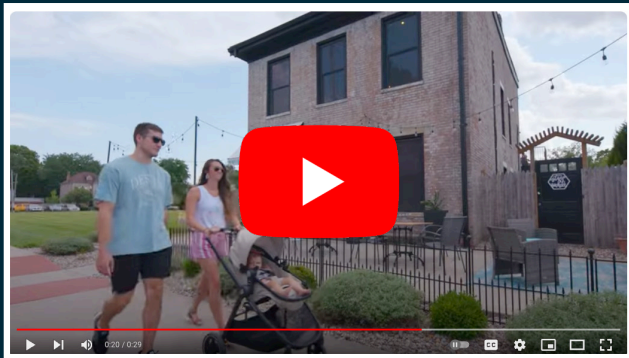
SoIN Tourism uses focused, integrated marketing and communications campaigns to enhance awareness of the destination. These campaigns help convince people to visit our attractions, stay in our hotels, dine in our restaurants, shop in our retail outlets and experience our parks.

## Marketing and Paid Advertising

SoIN Tourism uses a combination of traditional and digital advertising to reach potential visitors.

### Brand Awareness Campaign

SoIN Tourism's brand awareness campaign continued using digital streaming platforms, retargeting, search engine marketing and social media ads. New commercial spots were introduced to the video ad lineup in 2022.



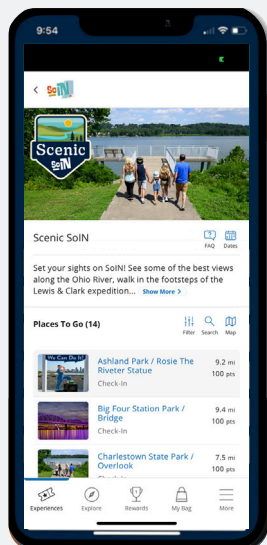
What is SoIN?

The campaign reached nearly **3.2M** in these target markets:

1. Chicago
2. Ohio: Cincinnati, Dayton and Columbus
3. Michigan: Detroit, Grand Rapids and Lansing
4. Indiana: Indianapolis, South Bend and Lafayette
5. Local/regional: Louisville, Evansville and Paducah
6. Fort Wayne

### SoIN Promotions Activities

SoIN Tourism collaborated with partners to develop passport programs aimed at driving visitation to tourism businesses. The digital passports included the SoIN Fun Trail and Scenic SoIN. Scenic SoIN was the first of a series of year-round passes SoIN will have available to visitors moving forward.



**1,629** passport signups in 2023

**46%** increase in participants over 2022

Participants checked in **1,653** times at **90** of the participating Clark and Floyd County businesses.

### Social Media & Email Marketing

SoIN Tourism engages fans and followers in meaningful conversations about the destination on social media and in email marketing. Our social media channels give potential visitors a positive first impression about Clark and Floyd counties.

#### Email Marketing



**7,887**

New Email Subscribers

**54%**

Open Rate

Industry average: 39.7%





# Sales & Visitor Services

## Sales

SoIN Tourism staff sells the area to contacts within the group tour (motor coach), sports, event, and meeting markets. Sales activities in 2023 were back in full swing after the pandemic dip of 2020.

### How SoIN Tourism Works



## Groups to SoIN

Sales activities:

- Attended 9 travel trade industry shows
- Provided trade show notes to all partners on Team SoIN Partner Portal
- Conducted 2 sales missions
- Hosted a familiarization tour, resulting in several booked tours
- 2 site visits

### Tracked Group Tours Who Visited SoIN



53 Overnight  
Motor  
Coaches



253 Day  
Trips

Motor coaches contributed nearly **\$1 million** in estimated economic impact

## Visitor Services

### Community Outreach

SoIN Tourism's staff members engage with visitors at local events and with potential visitors at out-of-town travel shows.

- SoIN Tourism's events teams at 10 events in 2023
- Acquired 1,508 consumer leads
- Community Events and Consumer Shows
  - » Spring Street Festival
  - » New Albany Bicentennial Park Concerts (2 weekends)
  - » Jammin' in Jeff (5 weekends)
  - » Abbey Road on the River
  - » Clarksville Touch a Truck
  - » AAA travel shows: Columbus, Indianapolis, Louisville, Chicago



SoIN Tourism operates two visitor information centers: the SoIN Visitor Center in Jeffersonville, and the Henryville Welcome Center at the rest area on southbound interstate 65.

# SoIN Tourism Developments & Accolades

Growing our destination requires SoIN Tourism to grow and keep improving, too! In 2023, our team expanded to include a **Research & Data Manager** and a **Marketing Coordinator**. These roles will allow SoIN to further amplify our destination and support our partners in marketing their amenities, events and curating world-class experiences.

We renewed our partnership with a software company specializing in mobile passes. Passports like the **SoIN Fun Trail** help drive business to our partners, encouraging them to check in for prizes. In its third year, the SoIN Fun Trail continues to attract new signups. We also launched our first year-round passport, called **Scenic SoIN**, which highlights our most scenic locations.



In June, we had the pleasure of announcing that the group tour industry's annual **TAP Dance** conference will be hosted in SoIN. The conference, scheduled for June 9-11, 2024, is an opportunity to showcase the best of Clark and Floyd counties to group tour operators from around the world.

To cap off the year, we moved to a new location with high foot-traffic. We look forward to promoting SoIN from our new location at **228 Spring Street** in Jeffersonville. Along with becoming part of Jeffersonville's "Main Street," the move is expected to increase visibility and traffic for our visitor center, allowing us to serve more visitors as they look for tips on all of the best things to do in Clark and Floyd counties.

## 2023 SoIN Awards



### Best Places to Work

SoIN Tourism was recognized in Louisville Business First's 2023 Best Places to Work in Greater Louisville.



### ITA Member of the Year

Chief Marketing Officer Luanne Mattson was named Indiana Tourism Association's Member of the Year.



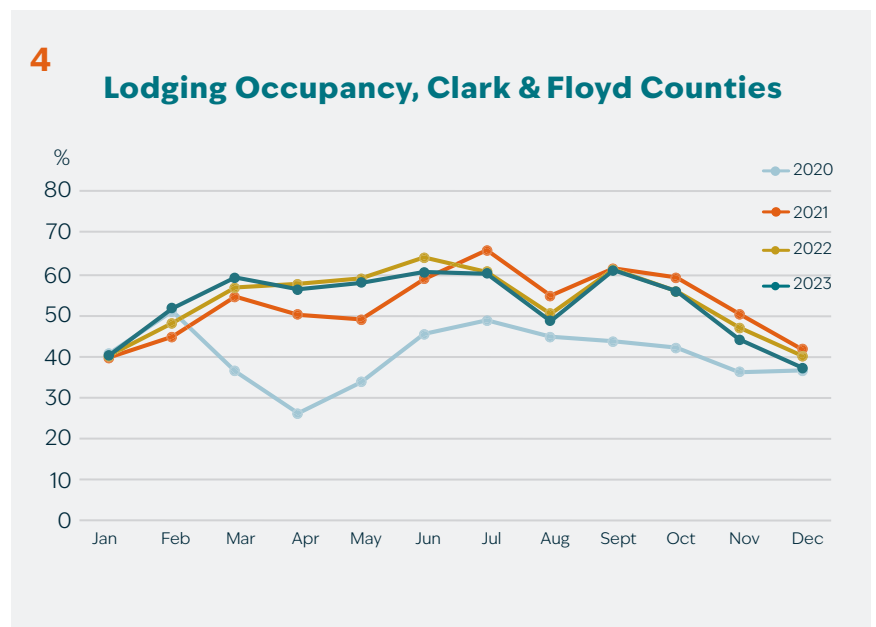
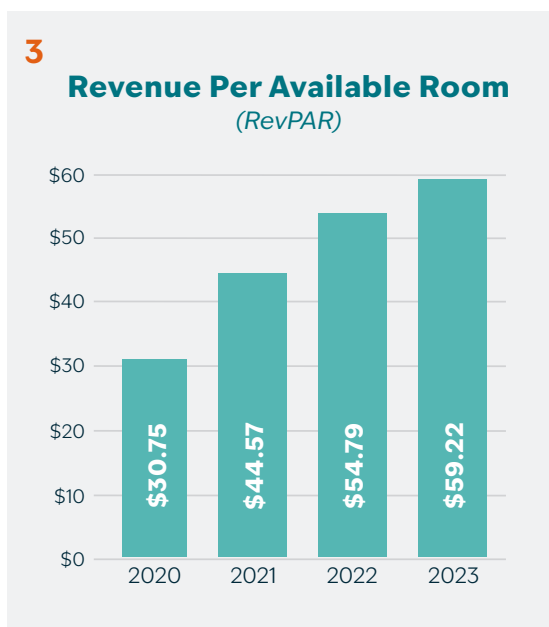
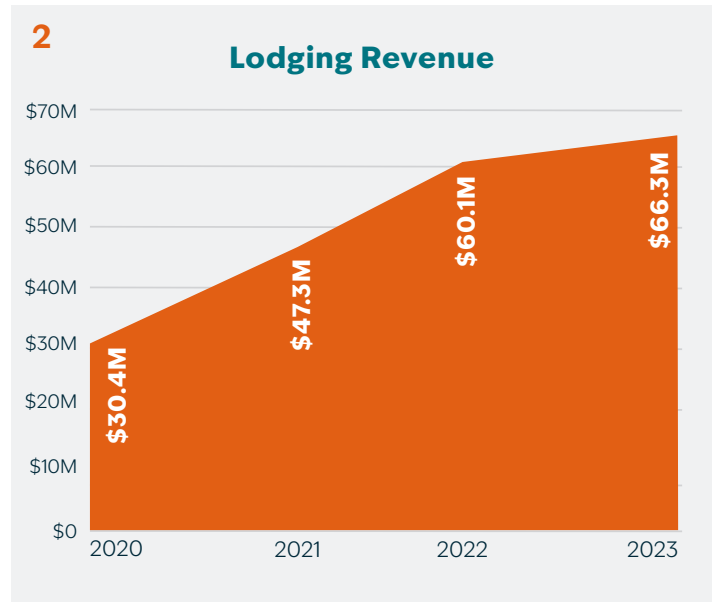
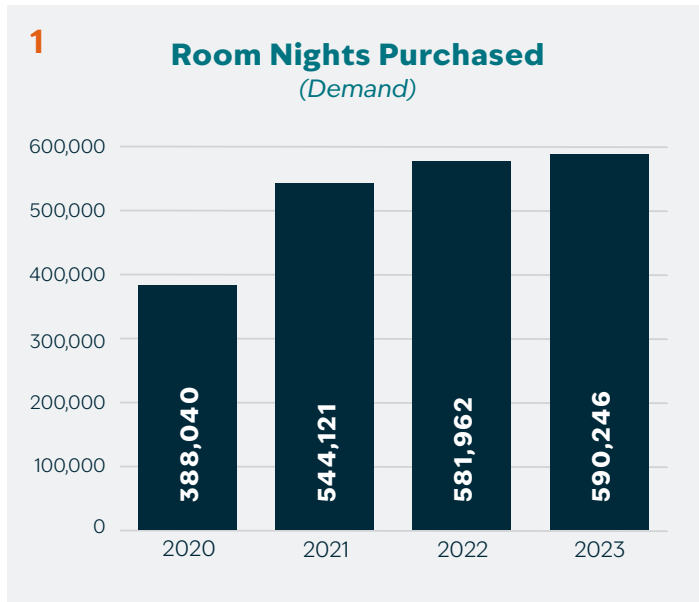
### Spirit of TAP

Trade & Consumer Sales Manager Todd Read received the Spirit of Tap Award during the 2023 TAP Travel Conference



# Clark & Floyd Counties' Lodging Industry Performance

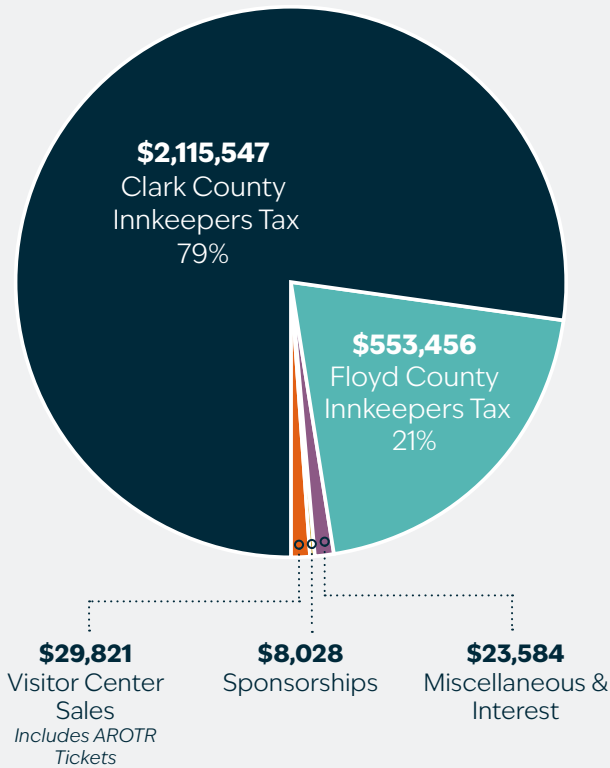
The performance of the lodging industry is one indicator of the tourism industry's overall health. Although growth from the pandemic's depths has leveled off, there's still great news for hotel investors and our local economy demonstrated by total lodging revenue and Revenue per Available Room.



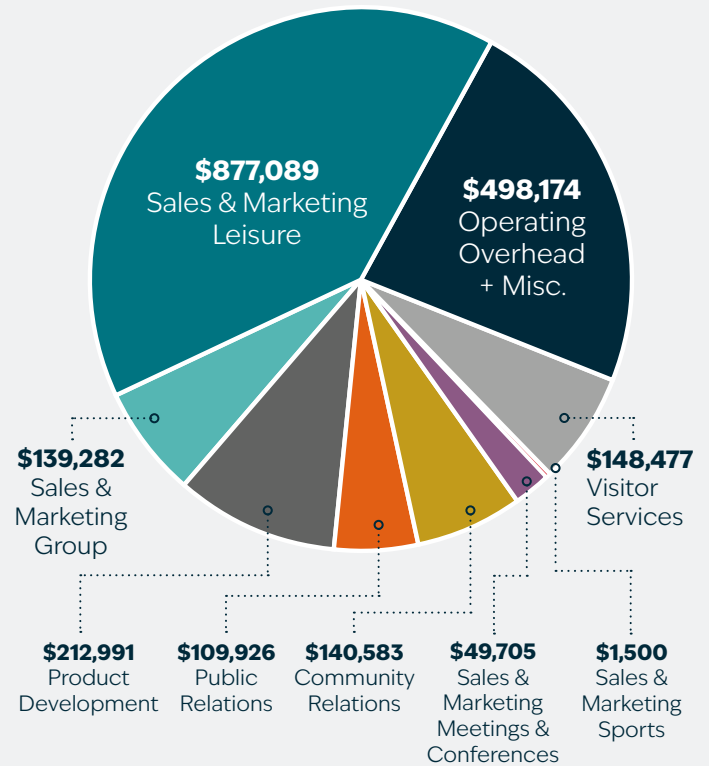
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# SoIN Tourism Financials

**Revenue by Source**



**Expenses by Market Segment**



## Capital Development

### Tourism Capital Development Bonds

Unique among Indiana's destination marketing organizations is SoIN Tourism's Capital Development Fund, which is used to retire debt in the form of municipal bonds. These bonds are held by our city, town or county partners. The bonds act as seed money for public and private investment in tourism projects within Clark and Floyd counties.

Bond Description	Transactions	Balance
<b>Floyd County new bond issue 8/19/2021</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jeffersonville Depot - \$500,000</li> <li>Clarksville South, parklets &amp; arts district study - \$500,000</li> <li>Floyd County Novaparke Whistlestop \$200,000</li> <li>Vintage Fire Museum roof - \$125,000</li> <li>River Heritage Conservancy design \$75,000</li> </ul>	Beginning Balance 1/1/2023	\$ 1,460,000
	Payment on Principal	\$ 60,000
	Interest Payment	\$ 42,757
	Ending Principal 12/31/2023	\$ 1,400,000





# SoIN Tourism Personnel

## 2023 Board of Managers

### Officers

Mark Bliss, President Floyd County	Carlene Bottorff, Treasurer Jeffersonville
Eric Ballenger, Vice-President Jeffersonville	Courtney Lewis, Secretary New Albany

### Board Members

Fannie Broxon Clark County	Pat Harrison New Albany	Connie Sipes New Albany
Dylan Fisher Clarksville	Dana Huber Clark County	Jill Stock Floyd County
John Gilkey Clarksville	Rick Lovan Jeffersonville	Ed Zastawny Clark County

### Board Attorney Michael Gillenwater

## SoIN Staff

Jim Epperson, CDME Executive Director	Clint Bryant Digital Marketing Manager	Kia Black Research and Data Manager	Travel Counselors Cheryl Neal Glenn Haven Mike Johnson Rebecca Risley Megan Paz Kelly Duch
Luanne Mattson Chief Marketing Officer	Nicole Kraemer Operations Manager	Marissa Murphy Marketing Coordinator	
Katerina Koehler Visual Content Manager	Anna Rosales-Crone Communications Manager		
Todd Read Trade & Consumer Sales Manager	Seth Lieber Visitor Services Coordinator		

## Appointing Authorities

Five authorities appoint SoIN Tourism’s Board of Managers.

- Clark County Commissioners
- Floyd County Commissioners
- Clarksville Town Council
- Jeffersonville Mayor
- New Albany Mayor

# The New Home of SoIN Tourism



228 Spring Street, Suite 106, Jeffersonville

