



**2021
Annual Report**

VisitFortWayne®
INDIANA



Kelly Updike

Embassy Theatre
Chair, *Visit Fort Wayne* Board of Directors

Visit Fort Wayne, dba the Fort Wayne/Allen County Convention and Visitors Bureau, is a community and economic development organization. We are governed by a board of civic leaders, staffed by 14 professionals, and financed by both public entities and more than 350 businesses, all working together to attract more visitors to our destination.

Our mission is to promote our city as a destination for conventions, trade shows, leisure visitors, and sports tournaments. We do this so that every business and resident can enjoy the economic and social benefits of a prosperous tourism industry.

Tourism enhances our quality of life by generating new customers for places that residents enjoy, like attractions, arenas, ballparks, malls, restaurants, and festivals. Thank you for your interest in learning more about our accomplishments and plans for the future.



**Thank you to Dan O'Connell for 33 years
at the helm of Visit Fort Wayne.**

2021 Board of Directors **Staff**

Kelly Updike, Embassy Theatre
Board Chair

Rob Evans, Blue Flame Hospitality
Vice Chair

Mike Mushett, Turnstone
Treasurer

Melissa Schenkel, STAR Financial
Secretary

Board Members

Tim Beere, DeBrand Fine Chocolates

Therese Brown, Allen County Commissioner

Danette Fitzgerald, Parkview Health

Tim Hall, Fort Wayne Outfitters

Russ Jehl, Fort Wayne City Council

Mark Luttik, Hilton Fort Wayne at
the Grand Wayne Convention Center

Paris McFarthing, Hop River Brewing Co.

Mike Nutter, Fort Wayne TinCaps

Mac Parker, Olive B. Cole Foundation

John Perlich, City of Fort Wayne

Rick Schuiteman, Fort Wayne Children's Zoo

Bart Shaw, Grand Wayne Convention Center

Lisa Starks, Barnes & Thornburg

Irene Walters, Civic Leader

Curt Witcher, The Genealogy Center at the
Allen County Public Library

Management & Finance

Dan O'Connell, President/CEO

Beth Monn, Bookkeeper/Administrative Assistant

Marketing

Kristen Guthrie, Vice President of Marketing and
Communications

Tom Boyer, Digital Marketing Manager

Erin Okeson, Digital Content Manager

Jessa Campbell, Marketing and
Communications Manager

Emily Hill, Marketing Coordinator

Group Sales

Nicolle Campbell, Director of Sales

Josie O'Donnell, Senior Sales Manager

Jazmin Zavala, Group Sales Manager, Sports

Bethany Sutherland, Group Services Manager

Visitor Services/Visitors Center

Emily Stuck, Director of Visitor and
Partner Services

Carolyn Shelton, Visitor Services Specialist

Nancy Niemann, Visitor Services Specialist

Our Vision

Fort Wayne is recognized nationally as a welcoming visitor destination offering unique experiences in an inclusive and hospitable community.

Our Mission

Visit Fort Wayne promotes the community as an exceptional destination, and advocates for the growth and development of its visitor industry.

Our Goals

- Advocate for destination developments to enhance the visitor experience
- Increase the effectiveness and impact of *Visit Fort Wayne*
- Communicate the importance of the visitor economy to the community



Who We Are

VISIT FORT WAYNE IS

- A nonprofit 501 (c) 6 organization
- Committed to marketing Fort Wayne as a premier destination for conventions, meetings, sporting events and leisure travel
- Directed by a board of 21-23 and staff of 14

Why It's Important

ECONOMIC IMPACT

- Visitors (and their spend) enhance our quality of life, boost our economy, and sustain jobs in our city and county
- Visitors infuse new money for our economy - spending \$741 million in Fort Wayne each year
- The visitor industry provides more than 14,000 jobs in our community
- Visitors save residents money. Visitors pay \$40 million in state taxes annually

What We Do

SELL FORT WAYNE

- Our destination branding positions Fort Wayne as a world-class, family-friendly leisure destination
- Our group sales efforts attract conventions, meetings and sporting events to Fort Wayne
- Our integrated marketing campaigns drive visitors to Fort Wayne through advertising, PR and social media

WELCOME AND CONNECT VISITORS

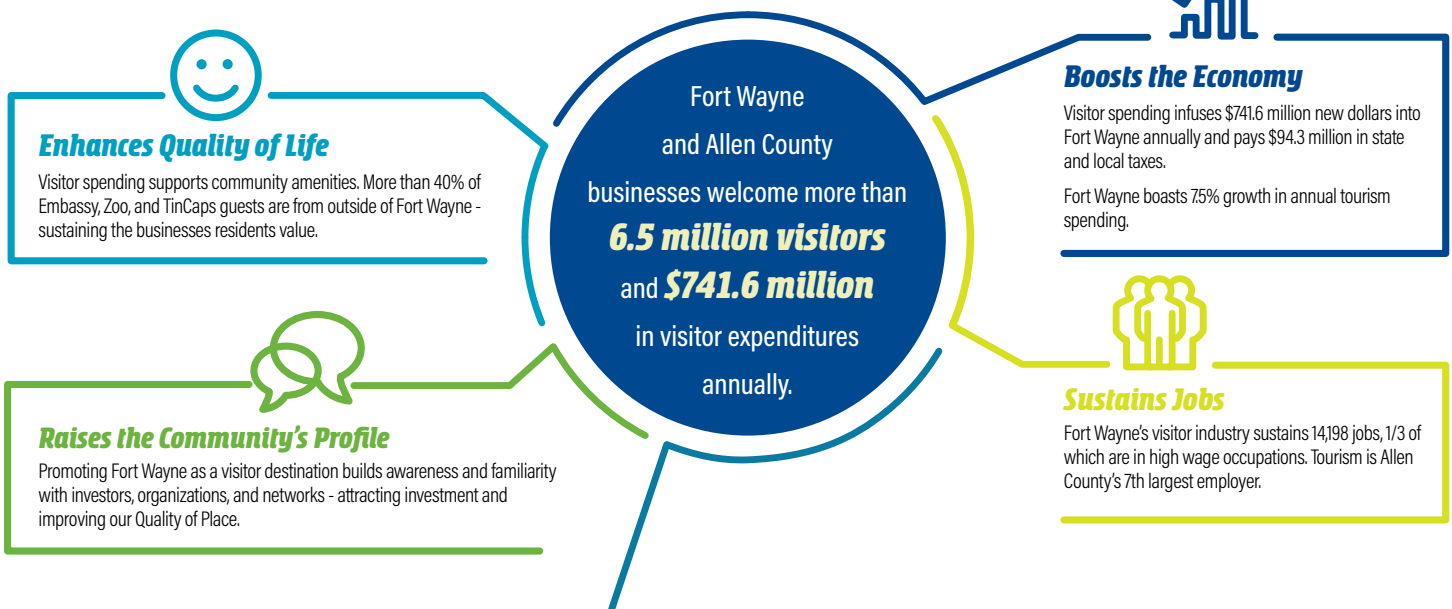
- We assist with the execution of more than 70 meetings and events each year
- Our staff runs a friendly, helpful Visitors Center
- We produce maps, guides and visitor resources to help visitors discover Fort Wayne

PRODUCE LOCAL EVENTS

We are proud to showcase our attractions and restaurants during events like *Be a Tourist in Your Own Hometown* and *Savor Fort Wayne*.

The Value Of Tourism In Fort Wayne, Indiana

Investments in Fort Wayne's visitor economy drive broader economic growth.



Investment in Fort Wayne's tourism marketing generates dividends by attracting groups and leisure visitors.

Tourism promotion improves our quality of life, raises the profile of our city, and attracts business decision makers and organizations - all while fundamentally benefiting economic development.

GROUP SALES DEPARTMENT

In 2021, our sales team helped book **25 future conventions and tournaments** that will bring more than **23,512 visitors** to Fort Wayne, resulting in an economic impact estimated at **\$7 million dollars**.

In 2021, Fort Wayne **hosted more than 179** conventions, conferences, meetings, sports tournaments and trade/consumer shows in **24 different venues**, bringing more than **248,341 attendees** to our community.

Key Achievements in 2021

- Hired and filled two sales positions
- Recognized as one of the recipients for a Rise Up Award at Sports ETA for assisting the State Wars Championship in their last minute relocation to Indiana.
- Hosted 179 events including:
 - 2021 Indiana USA Gymnastics Compulsory
 - 2021 Meeting Planners International, Great Lakes Education Summit
 - 2021 US Figure Skating Championship Series presented by Toyota
 - 2021 National Association for Campus Activities, Mid America Regional Conference
 - 2021 Lutheran Education Association, Tri-District Connections Conference
 - 2021 Indiana Holiday Youth Conference, United Pentecostal Church International
- Booked 25 events including:
 - Indiana Dental Association – 2022 Midwest Dental Assembly
Economic Impact: \$540,000 – Estimated Attendance: 1,250
 - Indiana Amusement & Music Operators Association Pool & Dart Tournament
Economic Impact: \$765,000 – Estimated Attendance: 3,000
 - 2021 & 2022 Indiana Holiday Youth Conference, United Pentecostal Church International
Economic Impact: \$1,124,000 – Estimated Attendance: 5,000
 - 2022 MEA Energy Association, 2022 MEA Electric Operations Technical & Leadership Summit
Economic Impact: \$227,000 – Estimated Attendance: 350



In 2021, our sales team **hosted 20 site tours**, and **booked 25 future groups**. We also **serviced 59 different meetings** with event assistance during their events in Fort Wayne.



The *Visit Fort Wayne* sales team looks for new events to add to the sales funnel – in order to bring new business to our community!

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

The *Visit Fort Wayne* Marketing Department produces marketing and advertising campaigns to invite leisure visitors to enjoy our city's hotels, restaurants, attractions, and entertainment venues.

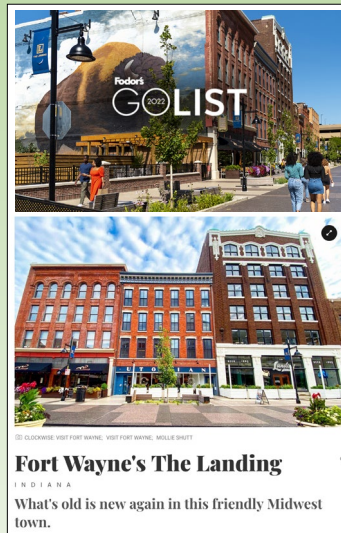
In 2021, we advertised Fort Wayne getaways in **30 cities** between 50-200 miles from Fort Wayne, to encourage family travel. We produced more than **30 million exposures** using digital, TV, radio, and print advertising.

Media Relations

We hosted **21 travel writers and bloggers** in Fort Wayne (and 17 virtually) in 2021, resulting in **48 articles** and more than **65 million media impressions**.

Top 5 articles –

- **2022 Go List – Fodor's**
Fort Wayne and The Landing have been recognized as a destination to visit by Fodor's, a recognized leader in the travel media space.
- **6 Scenic Midwest Road Trips for Outdoorsy Families – FamilyVacationist.com + USA Today**
Highlighting Fort Wayne's wonderful outdoor activities including our riverfront, this article helped position Fort Wayne with other outdoor destinations as places to visit within the Midwest.
- **Barbara Bradley Baekgaard's Fort Wayne, Ind. – USA Today, Go Escape Magazine**
Fort Wayne's very own, Barbara Bradley Baekgaard, was featured in a My Town interview highlighting her favorite activities in Fort Wayne and her new collaborative project with Provenance Hotels – The Bradley.
- **Now Streaming: Indiana Rivertowns (feature + front cover) – Indianapolis Monthly**
Fort Wayne was featured on the cover, and the article features key Fort Wayne messages we are sharing, including outdoor, family, and urban.
- **Road Trip to Fort Wayne – HomeTown Living WSBT**
This TV segment highlights why Fort Wayne is great road trip destination for the South Bend audience and how they can take advantage of Savor Fort Wayne.



Key Achievements in 2021

- Our leisure advertising campaign helped hotels stay busy during this summer's critical need period. Leisure travelers came in record numbers in 2021, thanks to our increased regional advertising efforts.
- Our Genealogy Marketing campaign saw a 49% increase in clicks, as we continue to promote this incredible attraction nationwide.
- We won the bid to host the Midwest Travel Journalists Association Conference in 2022 - an event that will bring 50 writers to our community for an extensive 5-day site tour!



Social Media

Visit Fort Wayne used social media as one of our primary means of communicating with visitors and sharing our trip ideas with them.

- Total **social media impressions** in 2021: **14 million**
- **Average Daily Reach** on social media: **30,000 people daily**
- In 2021, **Facebook ads** resulted in **96,500 landing page views** on VisitFortWayne.com

Impressions

Facebook: 11,634,168
Instagram: 2,155,339
Twitter: 489,063
TOTAL: 14,278,579



Engagements

Facebook: 352,544
Instagram: 70,235
Twitter: 11,207
TOTAL: 433,986



Average Daily Reach

Facebook: 26,262
Instagram: 4,134
Twitter: (unavailable)
TOTAL: More than 30,396

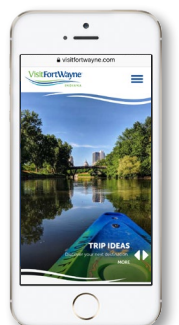


VisitFortWayne.com

Visits to Website: **1.49 Million**

Unique Users: **1.06 Million**

Pageviews: **2.9 Million**



* 77% of website visits are from mobile devices!

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Be A Tourist In Your Own Hometown

On Sunday, September 12, Visit Fort Wayne celebrated our 22nd annual *Be A Tourist In Your Own Hometown* with 20 participating museums and attractions!



Each year participating museums and attractions open their doors for free from 12pm-5pm to Fort Wayne residents – in a celebration of Fort Wayne's amazing visitor industry. 94% of those who participate in *Be A Tourist in Your Own Hometown* plan to return to the participating attractions as a paying customer.



Savor Fort Wayne

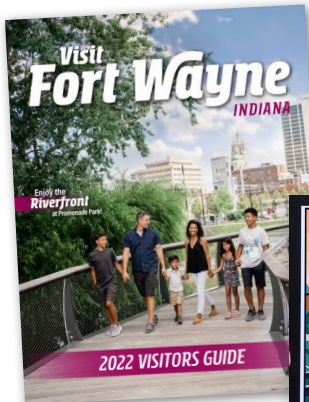
Visit Fort Wayne produced the 8th annual Savor Fort Wayne in January 2021 - our most successful restaurant week yet. 56 participating restaurants provided residents with value-priced, three-course menus over 12 days!

VISITORS CENTER AND INDUSTRY PARTNERS

In 2021, the Visitors Center welcomed more than **5,535 people in person** and assisted almost **14,000 more via phone and email requests**.

We distributed more than **42,715 total print pieces** from the Visitors Center.

Our Visitors Center sold more than **2,228 postcards** in 2021, in addition to a wide variety of new Fort Wayne merchandise.

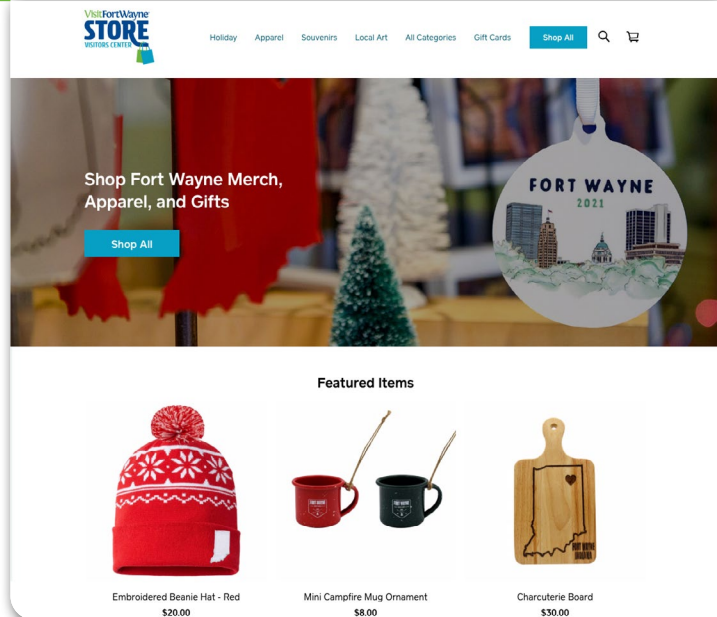


Who visits Fort Wayne?

Our Visitors Center welcomed visitors from 40 different states and 7 different countries!



"Savor Fort Wayne is such a great event! We live 1 hour away, so it was hard to choose which restaurants we wanted to visit - we loved all 3 that we tried!"



Key Achievements in 2021

- Launched an online store, featuring 294 different products from 40 local and regional vendors.
- Created dozens of specialized brochures including a "Shop Downtown" map, "Free Things to Do," "Park Downtown," and more.
- Hosted numerous school groups and talked to several college classes about the importance of tourism and vibrancy of our industry.

VISITOR AND TRAVEL CHARACTERISTICS

Number of Annual Visitors

Fort Wayne Visitors6.5 million

Visitor Expenditures

Visitor Expenditures in
Allen County\$741.6 million
Represents an annual growth of 3.6%.

Total Employment

Direct Jobs (sustained by visitors)14,198
More than 1/3 of jobs were in high wage occupations, 5.8% of all Allen County jobs.

Wages and Salaries

Direct Wages and Salaries\$376 million
Represents a 7.3% increase over previous study.

Where Visitors Come From

According to VisitFortWayne.com visits, Visitors Center inquiries and ad responses, visitors come to Fort Wayne from the following states:

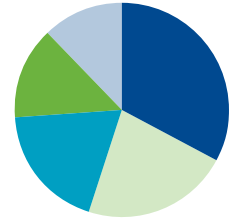
Indiana 54%
Ohio 9%
Illinois 8%
Michigan 7.5%
Other 21.5%

Local Taxes Generated

State Tax\$39.6 million
Local Hospitality Taxes\$31.9 million

Expenditures by Type

Food & Beverage34%
Shopping23%
Transportation17%
Lodging14%
Attractions/Entertainment12%



Statewide Annual Growth in Tourism Spending

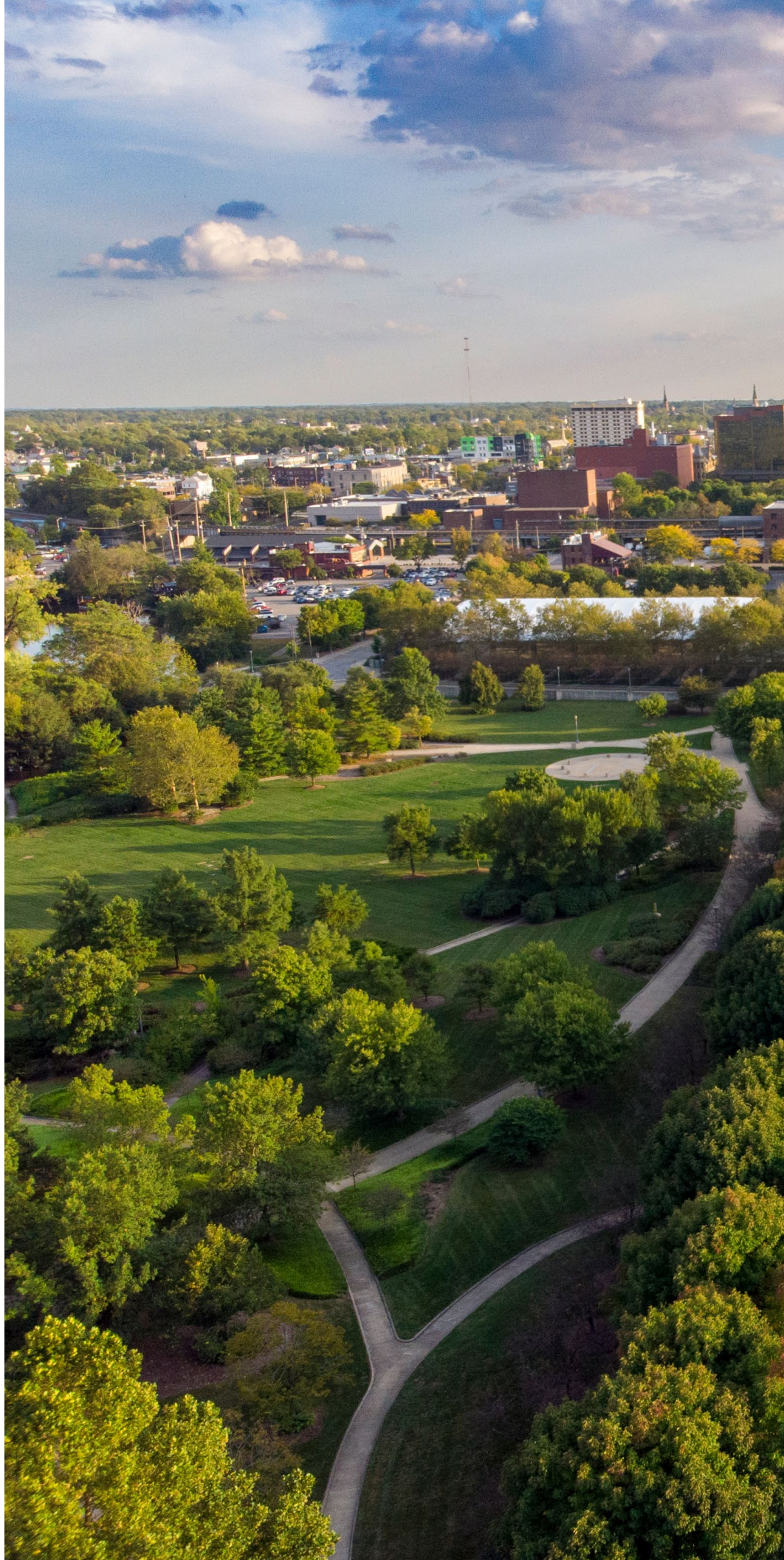


Ranking

- Allen County ranks #4 of 92 Indiana counties in tourism spending.
- Tourism is Allen County's 7th largest employer.

Source: Rockport Analytics 2016 Economic Impact of Tourism on Allen County





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VisitFortWayne.com