



KnoxCountyIndiana.com

2021 – End of Year Report

Summary.

The Knox County Development Corporation (KCDC) experienced a number of significant adjustments in 2021, including a name change to Knox County Indiana Economic Development, an updated brand + website launch, and navigating the state’s new Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Initiative (READI). KCIED also facilitated multiple business and community development initiatives, while juggling the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. While not every organizational goal was fully accomplished in 2021, much progress was made.

Primary objectives included Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) engagements, initiating and advancing local projects, expanding the number of sites and buildings in our database, and completing the rebranding process.

Brand and Marketing.

The organization rebranded itself this year, resulting in updates to our name, logo, web presence, and promotional materials. Working with TD Advertising, the marketing committee conducted a comprehensive analysis of how best to represent the corporation to our target audiences, resulting in the adoption of a doing business as (DBA) name – Knox County Indiana Economic Development (KCIED) - and an updated brand presence. The changes have been well received, both locally and throughout the state, and help further differentiate us from other cities and counties which include Knox in their names.

Next steps in our process to better market and promote the community include; designing and erecting a monument sign for the industrial park, hiring an intern to assist with marketing and communications, and seeking additional earned media opportunities.

Partnerships.

Among the strategic partners who are important to our collective success, the following organizations have worked closely with Knox Economic Development this year to advance our respective missions:

City of Vincennes
CenterPoint Energy
Duke Energy
First Indiana Region (READI partners)

Good Samaritan Hospital
Hoosier Energy
Indiana Economic Development Association (IEDA)
Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC) – specifically the regional office and READI staff
Indiana Power Partnership (IPP)
Indiana Small Business Development Center (ISBDC)
Knox County
Knox Rural Broadband Task Force
Knox County CEO
Knox County and Vincennes Redevelopment Commissions (RDC)
Knox County Chamber of Commerce
The Pantheon
Purdue Center for Regional Development (PCRD)
Region 11 Workforce Development Board
Southern Indiana Development Commission (SIDC)
Southwest Indiana Development Council (SWIDC)
Vincennes/Knox County Visitors and Tourism Bureau (VTB)
Vincennes University
Vincennes Water Utilities
Wabash River Regional Development Authority (RDA)
WIN Energy

Partnership Highlights:

First Indiana Region – the state’s READI program sparked a new relationship in 2021, seeing Knox Co. partner with Pike, Perry, Spencer, and Harrison Counties to compete for a state matching grant, which was announced in December. The First Indiana Region was awarded \$15M from Indiana’s allocation of America Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, and will work with the IEDC to determine how best to deploy these resources in support of regional projects and programs. Vincennes University also competed in multiple READI regions, including Indiana First, and the Wabash River Regional Development Authority (RDA), among others.

PCRD – the Purdue Center for Regional Development collaborated with KCIED on two projects this year; the Rural Broadband Task Force, and our Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) program. PCRD, working closely with the Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA), was instrumental in drafting and hosting the broadband survey for Knox County, which helped identify gaps in high-speed internet coverage. This data is being used to attract additional funding and service providers to the community. The PCRD team is also facilitating our BRE – Phase 2 program, which kicked off in December and will organize outreach efforts to local companies.

SIDC – through its Economic Recovery project, the Southern Indiana Development Commission is working regionally to launch a planning process to deliver a short-term and long-term Economic Recovery Strategy for the COVID-19 Pandemic. Input from Knox Co. businesses, governments, organizations, consumers, and employees was collected through an online survey, and the resiliency

plan will propose successful strategies to be implemented with federal funding. KCIED is participating on the steering committee for this project, which should be delivered by early 2022.

BRE.

Five (5) local businesses initiated or completed expansion projects in 2021, with locations in Bicknell, Sandborn, and Vincennes. These collectively represent more than \$12.5 M in capital investment, and up to 293 new jobs to be created. L3RK, commonly known as Blue Jay Supplies, is the one company having completed the public abatement process, intending to add an additional 28 new positions to the 104 current jobs employed in Sandborn. The other four company names will be released once these projects have completed the local incentive process, and are positioned for public announcement in early 2022.

Phase 2 of our BRE program with PCRD was initiated the last quarter of 2021, and will be implemented over the coming year. Existing business surveys, site visits, and identifying challenges to ongoing operations will be key to understanding how KCIED can better serve local companies.

New Business Attraction.

KCIED responded to more than twelve (12) site selection projects in 2021, and subsequently provided an analysis on our competitive position related to each search. Though no site visits have been scheduled from these regional or statewide searches, many of them are still active projects.

Origis Energy was added to the list of solar companies having an interest in Knox County, and successfully negotiated an abatement agreement in August, clearing the way to develop a 150 megawatt, 1,200 acre solar farm near Wheatland. This is the first of two solar farm projects the company intends to make in the county.

Project Node continues to be an active attraction project, with additional state support requested in our recent READI proposal. We will continue to work with the company and the IEDC to land this investment.

Shell Building Exploration – recognizing the majority of attraction projects are seeking an existing building, the Site Development Committee continued its discussion of potentially recommending that KCIED invest in a “shell building” to better attract new companies to the county. A shell structure consists of the basic minimum enclosure of a building, including the foundation, structural framework, roof coverings, exterior walls + doors + windows, basic fire sprinkler systems, etc., but excludes all tenant improvements. These types of buildings are typically sought by companies needing to quickly locate and operationalize a project, and the large majority of attraction projects considering Indiana are seeking existing buildings. The committee will determine in 2022 whether it recommends moving forward on such an investment.

Projects and Initiatives.

- Opportunity Zone (OZ) Prospectus – an OZ task force was organized in 2019, facilitated by the Purdue Center for Regional Development (PCRD), and completed its work in December 2020 to publish an investment prospectus for Vincennes. It is intended to bring attention to downtown Vincennes, and help attract potential investors. The next phase of the program includes with Boiler Communications to help with branding and promoting the community.
- Elkhorn Road Sanitary Sewer – KCIED contracted with Wabash Utilities to extend sewer infrastructure along Elkhorn Road to serve future companies locating in the business park. The project was bid at a firm, fixed price, and although the dewatering process took much longer than anticipated, the contractor was able to find solutions and completed the work by fourth quarter of 2021.
- Knox Housing Study: KCIED organized, facilitated, and identified funding to conduct a county-wide study of the current and needed housing market. A steering committee was formed to work with our consultants from Thomas P. Miller & Associates (TPMA), based in Indianapolis, to conduct the study, which was completed by July, 2021. Partners who helped fund the project included the City of Vincennes, Knox County, Good Samaritan Hospital, Vincennes University, and the Vincennes RDC. A public presentation of the findings was conducted on July 22nd, and the study provides a number of recommendations, chief among them being we need to develop hundreds more single and multi-family housing units if the community intends to increase population.
- Rural Broadband Task Force: working in concert with local and state leaders, KCIED reorganized the Knox Broadband Task Force, and launched a county-wide survey of households to identify gaps in broadband access and affordability. This data will help determine how best to leverage state and federal funding for better broadband infrastructure.
- Knox Life – Community Improvement Team (CIT): this new standing committee of KCIED was formed in 2021 with the intent of identifying and recommending quality of place projects and initiatives the organization may find worthy of supporting in some way. The team was recruited from a diverse mix of community stakeholders, intending to bring fresh perspectives to the task. A county-wide survey was launched and completed in 2021, and the CIT will review and prioritize these community generated recommendations.
- Indiana Defense Network (IDN) + Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC): KCIED served as host to the IEDC and PTAC's regional engagement session in July, attracting a group of economic development professionals from across Southwest Indiana to discuss state and local programs to assist small and large businesses.