

*Hamilton County, Indiana*  
**TOURISM WORKS 2017**



*We message.  
We move.  
We make it fun.*





## VISION:

*Hamilton County will be nationally known as an innovative, diverse, vibrant and attractive tourism destination.*

The Hamilton County Tourism Vision 2025 Plan provided a compass in six target areas: groups and the visitor experience, tourism development, marketing intelligence, fiscal responsibility, digital marketing and connectivity and nightlife activation.

### *In 2017, we will focus on:*

- ★ Developing a countywide shared vision for new tourism products
- ★ Understanding and broadening what defines “group sales”
- ★ Visioning a new work and office structure for the future
- ★ Implementing visitor tools to create two-way conversations
- ★ Expanding strategic marketing in digital and traditional channels
- ★ Enhancing, messaging and growing evening entertainment options

# 2017 Hamilton County, Indiana PRODUCT GROWTH

- ★ Another 300+ hotel rooms to open in Carmel and Westfield
- ★ Federal Hill Park and Amphitheater to open in Noblesville
- ★ Grand Park Event Center enters first full year of operation
- ★ Sun King Distillery development in under way in Carmel
- ★ Creation of the Big Hoffa's Bar-B-Que destination restaurant, suitable for group markets
- ★ Horseback riding added to Strawtown Koteewi Park's amenities
- ★ IKEA and Topgolf to open in Fishers

## And preparing for the future:

- ★ Finch Creek Park and the Fieldhouse in development in Noblesville
- ★ Conference Center and Embassy Suites Hotel under construction in Noblesville
- ★ Grand Junction development under way in Westfield
- ★ The Yard culinary development under way in Fishers
- ★ Another 500+ hotel rooms to open throughout the county

When Hamilton County Tourism (HCT) adopted its Vision 2025 plan, it was a first.

Previous planning efforts stuck to strategies and tactics; this document would breathe.

Much groundwork was laid in 2016 for 2017 and it shows in this year's plan of work. This will be a year of action, especially in the visitor experience, office and marketing arenas.

Focusing on the six compass points found in the Vision 2025 plan, HCT

plans to expand its visitor experience program and re-enter the marketplace with a new and responsive website and comprehensive marketing program that includes cooperative opportunities. HCT will continue to refine its office work plan, technology and work environment for the future, focus on group sales and what that means, and elevate its community development consultations to new levels utilizing sophisticated research and evaluation.



SUN KING BREWERY, FISHERS



GRAND PARK, WESTFIELD



BIG HOFFA'S BAR-B-QUE, WESTFIELD



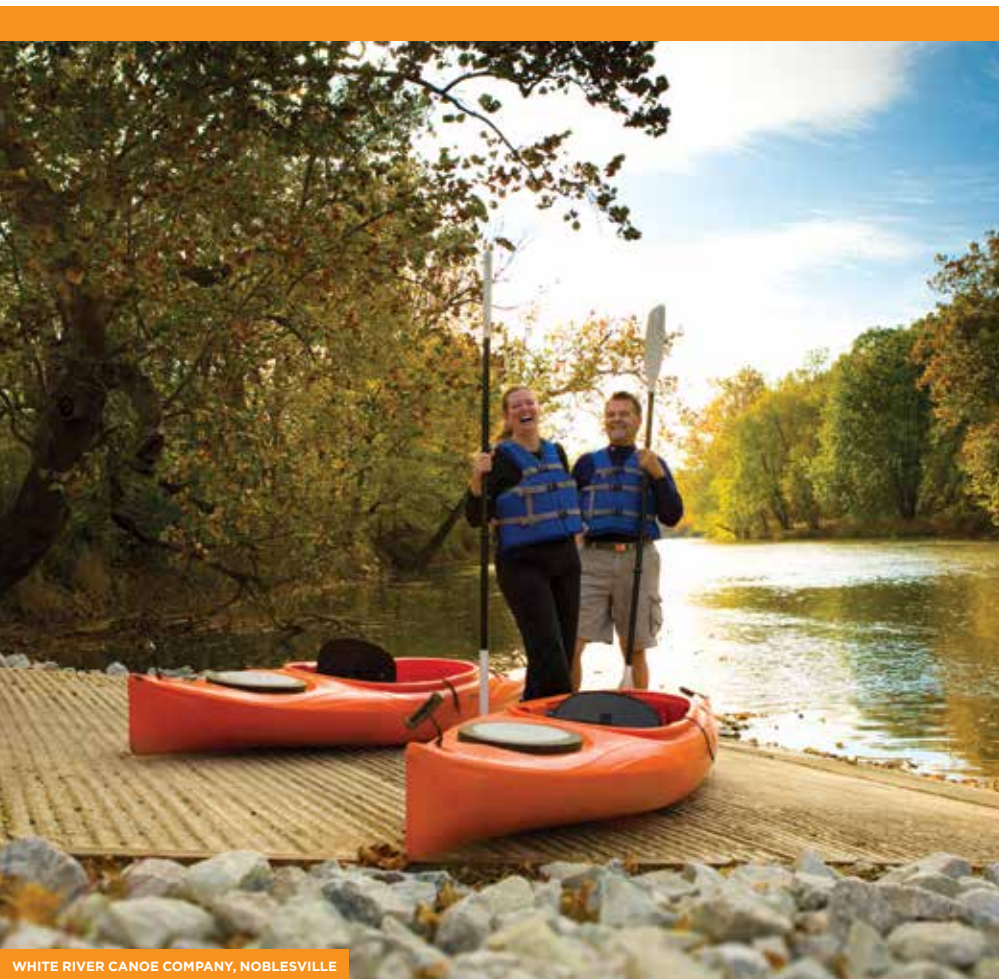
STRAWTOWN KOTEEWI PARK, NOBLESVILLE



IKEA, COMING TO FISHERS

# Community impact through **BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE**

- ★ Expand market demand dashboards and reporting
- ★ Develop interactive intelligence modeling
- ★ Expansion of *Tourism Gives*
- ★ Continue qualitative research for “what’s next”
- ★ Create a *Percent for Progress Program* for visionary investments



Every year, HCT grows what it knows and learns more about what it needs to know. A new internal and on-demand dashboard provides check-ins on key performance indicators ranging from traditional metrics, such as unique web visits and hotel room demand, to lead generation and room production pipelines. This business intelligence provides unbelievably detailed knowledge in return on investment for marketing investments.

The regional future events calendar has always been key to assist with hotel room demand generation, and a partnership with Visit Indy and our sports partners now enables HCT to truly understand market dynamics for the next 18 months.

In 2017, we will implement, full-force, our new adaptive intelligence model: real-time, multi-directional sharing of data to drive contextually appropriate, authoritative knowledge to maximize our marketing efforts. Traffic and conversion reports for advertising effectiveness will immediately tell us what is working and what is not and enable us to adapt swiftly.

But not all business intelligence is purely quantitative. Qualitative analysis also is vital, especially in product development. Several behind-the-scenes research projects initiated in 2016 go full speed in 2017, including understanding how the White River can be better connected to residents and visitors. This significant historical waterway already has many access points—how can we make those better? Also under review is how the county’s agricultural life sciences critical mass can be leveraged for students, workforce and business development and provide additional community assets. Investigating how existing and potential evening entertainment options can enhance both residence

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and visitor experiences is under way, as is positioning Hamilton County as a destination in two market segments: bicycle tourism and soft adventure. Also in the pipeline is collaborating on creation of a train-themed destination in northeastern Hamilton County.

HCT also will expand *Tourism Gives* to include strategic marketing intelligence offered as consultation services for community development projects. Expanded will be the *Tourism Gives* and *Hamilton County Sports Gives* grant programs, as well as cooperative marketing programs.

A new initiative, *Grow Hamilton County*, will explore how a *Percent for Progress Program* can create additional investment opportunities throughout the community.

# Group sales create **GREATER RETURNS**

- ★ Explore new non-sports group segments
- ★ Plan for new available gathering spaces
- ★ Expand face-to-face sales opportunities
- ★ Develop weekday room demand



GRAND PARK, WESTFIELD

*The growth of youth sports in Hamilton County has driven weekend room demand to record levels.*

The growth of youth sports in Hamilton County, not only with Grand Park but with other existing clubs and facilities, has driven weekend room demand to record levels. But few understand how dynamic the “other” group market is. Whether it’s a wedding

party or family reunion (social market), trainings and meetings (corporate market) or conferences (associations market), Hamilton County serves as an existing destination but has room for additional weekday group capacity. Through face-to-face selling, on-the-road sales blitzes and data mining, HCT will take its group sales focus to an even greater level to drive weekday demand and help fill the new inventory of hotel rooms coming into market.

The goal: support sales for new hotel and meeting/showcase space inventory six days a week. Business intelligence will continue to reveal new market segments to attract small quality, affordable meetings, social gatherings, group and consumer events. Unlike some destination managers, Hamilton County does not “own” any of the conference space it sells. How HCT can influence those markets in other ways will be key in supporting community success.



BLACK IRIS ESTATE, CARMEL

# Smart work equals SMART RESULTS

- ★ Explore HCT's structure for the next decade
- ★ Create new opportunities for hospitality workforce development
- ★ Finalize plans for HCT offices for future growth
- ★ Be active and out in every community



INTERNATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL, CARMEL

*Now, the explosive growth of hotels in the Hamilton County market will require an even more sophisticated understanding of the regional marketplace.*

Every company strives to understand how technology, mobility and communications channels can make for a more productive workforce. Because HCT also relies on collaboration as a critical element for its success, it always looks for ways to improve its work flow in order to accommodate a critical element in the tourism industry—much needed face time.

In the past two years, HCT introduced transformative new accounting and robust customer relationship and content management systems. This year will focus even more on moving cloud-based systems to enhance staff's ability to be mobile throughout the county and the country. In 2018, HCT desires to continue its work through a Grow Hamilton County concept that will create new, more efficient work space as well as develop satellite offices in three other communities to enable us to literally have boots on the ground throughout the county.

To help our community partners face a critical hospitality workforce shortage, HCT also has laid the groundwork for new initiatives in 2017 that partner with local schools and employment-focused organizations—some of which will immediately be put into place and other projects that will not create impact until 2018.

Additional focus on Hamilton County's lodging supply will continue as we try to understand market demand patterns with our partners at Visit Indy and throughout the region. Successful tourism development in recent years coupled with slow inventory growth in the hotel side has created an interesting dynamic. Now, the explosive growth of hotels in the Hamilton County market will require an even more sophisticated understanding of the regional marketplace.



HILTON GARDEN INN NORTHEAST, FISHERS

# An engaged visitor is A HAPPY VISITOR

- ★ Raise the bar on the group visitor welcome experience
- ★ Create efficiencies in distribution and welcome programs
- ★ Implement two-way communications with visitors
- ★ Test digital interactive (all experiences)



MULDOON'S, CARMEL

As Hamilton County grows as a group destination, shaping that group visitor experience is critical. From the welcome sign on the hotel's front door and the information a guest receives upon check-in, to the face who recommends a great place to eat—every visitor encounter is critical. For 2017, HCT will be involved in some way in supporting more than 40 local events. Understanding how to provide services for that many groups, small and large, in an efficient manner was a 2016 focus that will expand in 2017.

Integrating tourism development, marketing and visitor experience channels will be key to destination management in the future. Technology now enables us to—in aggregate—understand everything from “look” to “book” to “brick,” or how a visitor engages with a destination from first interest to final arrival. This helps us to provide the best experience possible.

Customer service training for our growing hospitality industry will be key to supporting visitor experience. This will be expanded in 2017. But so will digital messaging of “discovery” opportunities such as evening entertainment to those visitors while in our market.

For the individual traveler—whether for business, leisure or sports—digital

*As Hamilton County grows as a group destination, shaping that group visitor experience is critical.*

is the most efficient way to provide visitor support beyond the smartphone. HCT will implement digital walls in 2017 that pull in content from geo-fenced zones throughout the county into a digital aggregator. This sharable content will help visitors all over the county know and understand what others are doing while they visit the community. HCT helps the visitors and residents become our ambassadors, and these ambassadors tell the story in a truly authentic way.



ROSIE'S PLACE, NOBLESVILLE

# Telling our story with SMART MARKETING

- ★ Launch a new and expanded website
- ★ Layer digital and traditional marketing in new ways
- ★ Continue to improve quality content creation
- ★ Use digital analysis to develop strategic models



STRAWTOWN KOTEEWI PARK, NOBLESVILLE

Nowhere is change in destination management more evident than in the world of tourism marketing and communications. Whereas destinations once built beautiful advertisements for print and radio and relied on “response cards” for visitor leads, now they layer messaging through digitally tracked ads on a variety of platforms, through enhancement opportunities via online travel agencies, in social media platforms and with dynamic video clips—while also creating awareness via radio, television and/or print.

Hamilton County will launch a year-round digital advertising program and then layer additional marketing channels in the shoulder seasons of spring and the holidays, when hotel room demand is slightly lower. It will continue using digital channels to “niche market” foodies, outdoor soft adventurers, shoppers, explorers and others. This will include an amped-up Facebook targeted strategy.

The print travel guide is still a critical component of any marketing program, and in 2017 HCT reverses a multi-year decision to produce a combined travel and golf guide due to calendar constraints. The golf guide is taken to leisure golf shows throughout the Midwest in the winter months, while the travel guide, issued in early 2017, is distributed via direct mail and is where visitors tend to be. Seasonal print calendars remain popular as well.

But nothing is more important than a destination’s website, where all marketing channels point a future visitor. In 2017, after a year of tedious structural and content re-development, HCT launches a responsive website that will allow it to grow and develop as the technology and products do. Behind-the-scenes of this new and beautiful site is an amazingly complex structure of content management, digital analysis and opportunity to dramatically improve how the user understands what Hamilton County offers to potential visitors.



K1 SPEED, FISHERS



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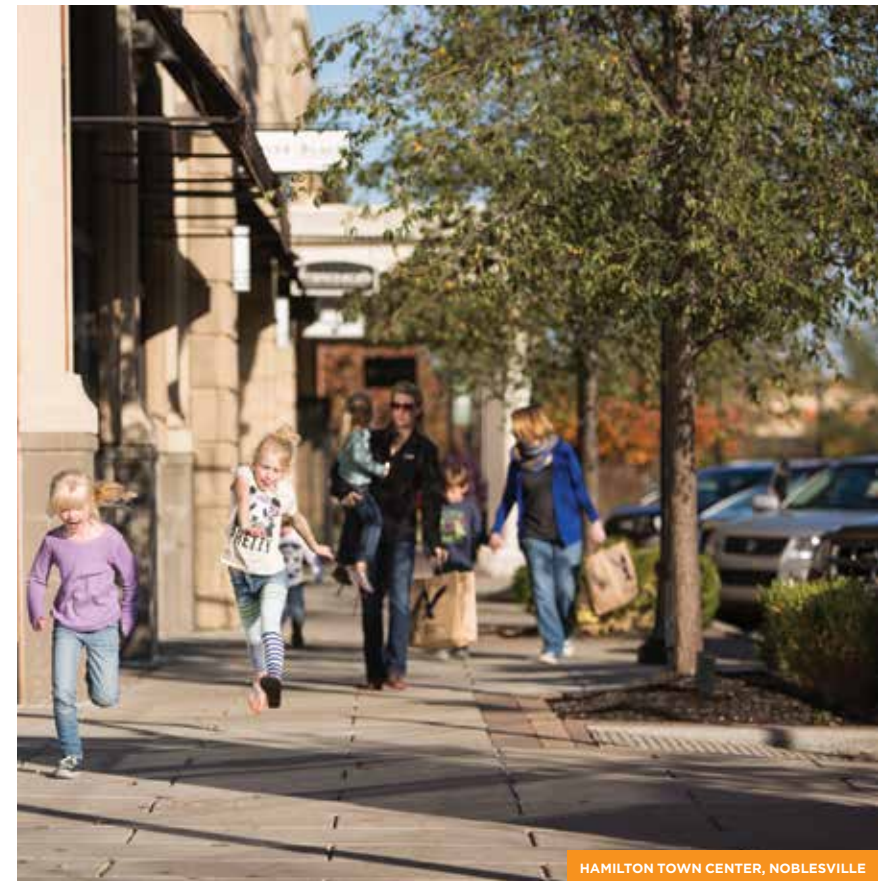
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Casey Wilson, Carmel

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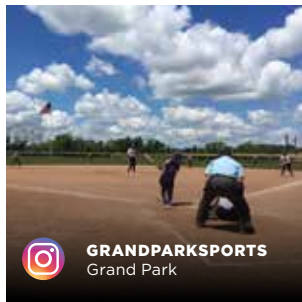
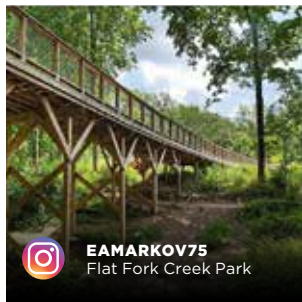
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HAMILTON TOWN CENTER, NOBLESVILLE



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