



# COLUMBIA CITY CONNECT



# IMPACT REPORT

[www.columbiacityconnect.com](http://www.columbiacityconnect.com)



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# We are Columbia City Connect

## Meet Our 2025 Board

**MATT SHIPMAN**, PRESIDENT  
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CITY OF COLUMBIA CITY

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WHITLEY COUNTY EDC

**HANK WORKMAN**  
THE MERCANTILE

**MICHELLE SLAVICEK**  
VINTAGE BLESSED GENERAL STORE

## COMMUNITY LEADER,

As I enter my fourth year leading Columbia City Connect, I'm incredibly proud of our growth and success—made possible by the passion and dedication of our leadership, partners, businesses, volunteers, and staff.

This past year, our Organization Committee secured vital donor support, allowing us to expand our team and redesign our website.

The Design Committee launched initiatives like the Historic Interior Tour, preserving our heritage and enriching downtown.

The Promotions Committee hosted engaging events like Ladies Night Out and Shop Small Saturday, drawing visitors and supporting local businesses. Our six-part summer event series, First Fridays, continued to be a community favorite.

Economic Vitality efforts, including business seminars and enhanced online listings on the new website, have strengthened connections and highlighted downtown opportunities.

Our progress is driven by the incredible efforts of our volunteers, board members, staff, and partners. Thank you for your support—we look forward to seeing you downtown!



**NIKI KEISTER**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



# 2024 Impact Report

## ELEVATING AND ENERGIZING OUR COMMUNITY

Columbia City Connect works to **improve the downtown and quality of life** within its boundaries by supporting existing businesses, attracting new businesses, promoting the downtown through events, and working to beautify our downtown.

## COLUMBIA CITY CONNECT IN ACTION

### COLUMBIA CITY CONNECT COMMUNITY EVENTS

- Cabin Fever
- Sip & Shop
- Six (6) First Fridays
- Movie on the Square
- Ladies Night Out
- Holiday Open House
- Shop Small
- Walk of Trees

### COLUMBIA CITY CONNECT PLACEMAKING

- Thomas Marshall Plaza
- Downtown Clean-up Day
- Historic Interior Tour
- Historic Downtown Walking Tour
- Where are We Wednesday

### COLUMBIA CITY CONNECT PARTNERSHIPS

- City of Columbia City
- Whitley County EDC
- Whitley County Historical Museum
- Columbia City Arts Commission
- Columbia City RDC
- Brightpoint
- Indiana Landmarks
- Indiana Humanities
- WJHS The Eagle
- WEOC

### COLUMBIA CITY CONNECT BUSINESS SUPPORT

- Five (5) Business Seminars
- Shopping & Dining Downtown Map
- Eight (8) Business Hot Spots

### IMPACT SNAPSHOT

# 28

Events held in 2024

# 1,398

Volunteer hours

# \$46,819

Financial Value of  
Volunteer Hours



# At A Glance 2024 Economic Impact



15,500 people engaged through Columbia City Connect Programming



28

Events Held by Columbia City Connect



173

Businesses Served by Columbia City Connect



2

New Businesses in Downtown



\$4,031,441

Private Investment Dollars in the Main Street District since 2022



1,398

Volunteer Hours

\$474,654

Public Investment Dollars in the Main Street District since 2022



8

Rehab Projects Completed within Main Street District



137% Increase in public awareness\*

\*stat taken from Facebook Meta Business



\$46,819

Financial Value of Volunteer Hours Contributed\*



664

Employees/Jobs in the Main Street District



90 Downtown Businesses and 97 Commercial Spaces



1,600

Columbia City Connect is one of 1,600 Main Streets nationwide dedicated to preserving historic downtowns as vibrant economic hubs.

# Columbia City Connect 2024 Favorites



## FIRST FRIDAYS

Every First Friday from May to October you'll find downtown Columbia City filled with people enjoying food, live music, pop-up shops, car cruise-in, Oktoberfest, a BMX stunt show, and more. Bring your chairs to set up and listen to the band, do some shopping, have some drinks, or stroll with some friends.

## WALK OF TREES

With thousands of attendees, Columbia City Connect's Walk of Trees continues to grow and has become a holiday tradition for many community members and families. For two weeks, the lobby of the beautifully renovated Clugston is filled with decorated trees in an array of sizes and themes.

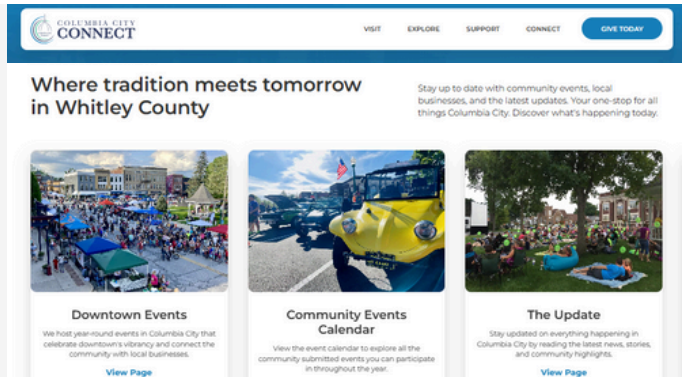


## LADIES NIGHT OUT

Columbia City is thriving with unique shops and restaurants, making it the perfect place to gather with friends. Downtown streets come alive with laughter and community during events like Ladies Night Out, Shop Small Saturday, and Cabin Fever, drawing shoppers and diners to local businesses.

## REDESIGNED WEBSITE WITH COMMUNITY CALENDAR

The newly redesigned website serves as a central hub for local events, business resources, and real estate opportunities. It features a dynamic community calendar, a comprehensive business directory, and a resource portal for entrepreneurs.



Downtown Columbia City is *a gathering place for friends.*

# Columbia City Connect 2024 Favorites

## CLEAN-UP DAY

The Downtown Clean-Up Day serves as an invitation to residents and downtown business owners to take an active role in our community. Volunteers clean up alleys, pocket parks, and tree grates. Everyone's efforts give our downtown a fresh and inviting feel right before the summer season kicks off.



## HISTORIC INTERIOR TOUR

This rare tour allowed unique access to downtown buildings' interiors. Selected building owners opened their buildings for this public tour which was an exciting way to get an up-close look at both the lovingly-restored and possibility-filled buildings at the heart of our historic downtown district.

## DOWNTOWN OPEN FLAGS

As part of our initiative to enhance the vibrancy of downtown and encourage participation in local events, Columbia City Connect provided OPEN flags to downtown businesses. These flags draw attention to local businesses during special events and foster a sense of community.



## THOMAS MARSHALL PLAZA

With its shade tree and winding path, Thomas Marshall Plaza is a beautiful place to relax and enjoy the afternoon with a friend. Thanks to sponsors and key community volunteers, Thomas Marshall Plaza is an accessible, people-centered public space in downtown Columbia City.

Downtown Columbia City is

*full of history and beauty.*

# Columbia City Downtown Voices

## *The Kitchen & Company*



“We’re a full-service catering company with a retail space offering fresh salads, wraps, dips, and kitchen essentials. One of our biggest components is charcuterie, from small grazing boxes to large-scale spreads for up to 500 people.

Since moving downtown, Columbia City Connect has made a big impact on our business. Events like Ladies Night Out, Cabin Fever, and First Fridays bring in new visitors and give locals a reason to explore downtown.

We knew being downtown would increase foot traffic and awareness, and it has been incredibly beneficial.” - Jennifer Krider, Owner of The Kitchen & Company

“We’ve been in the furniture business for nearly 90 years, originally starting in Knox, Indiana, in 1936. Since opening in Columbia City in July, each month has brought new experiences and new customers. Just this morning, someone came in for the first time since Ball Furniture closed. Many customers recognize familiar furniture lines like Lazy Boy and England, and we offer an even wider selection of mattresses.

Columbia City Connect events have been instrumental in bringing foot traffic to our store. First Fridays, in particular, have been incredible, with so many people coming through that we realized we need more staff on those nights. We truly appreciate the time and effort Columbia City Connect volunteers put into making these events successful.” -Andy McCleary, Manager of Reinholt’s Furniture & Mattresses

## *Reinholt’s Furniture & Mattresses*



Downtown Columbia City is *a great place to grow a business.*

# Thank You to Our Partners and Sponsors

We wouldn't be where we are at today without our generous partners and sponsors. Thank you to all of our 2024 Partners and Sponsors!

Generous Amount  
Donated

**\$43,000**

Generous Amount of  
Sponsorships Given

**\$33,500**

Generous Amount of  
In-Kind Donations Given

**\$8,957**

## Thank you to our donors



Brightpoint  
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