



2024 Illinois  
Governor's Conference  
on Travel & Tourism



Peoria Skyline

**FUTURE**   
**FORWARD**

**TUESDAY**

**WEDNESDAY**

**THURSDAY**

**EVENTS**

**SPONSORS**

**SPEAKER BIOS**

**INNOVATION HALL**



# INTRODUCTION



2024 Illinois  
Governor's Conference  
on Travel & Tourism

## SEE & DO

*For more to see, do, and experience in Peoria, please check out Seeker's Explore page made specifically for this event!*

VISIT  
SITE

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# SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

[VIEW FULL  
SCHEDULE  
DETAILS  
HERE](#)

## TUESDAY, MARCH 19

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**10:00AM – 7:30PM**

### REGISTRATION OPEN

Welcome to ILGOV24! Check in to pick up your badge, grab a Pocket Schedule and plan out your week.

[Sponsor: Illinois Restaurant Association](#)

*Location: Peoria Civic Center*

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**10:00AM – 7:30PM**

### MEDIA AUCTION

Looking to spend some media budget? Why not snag some incredible media at an incredible price with our third annual ILGOV Media Market? Get your dollars ready!

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**12:00PM – 1:30PM**

### ILLINOIS DESTINATIONS ASSOCIATION (IDA) BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

IDA will have a working lunch Board Meeting at the Discover Peoria offices. This meeting is for board members of the association and lunch will be provided.

*Offsite Location: 465 Fulton St, Suite 300*



# SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

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SCHEDULE  
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## TUESDAY, MARCH 19 – CONT'D

**2:00PM – 2:45PM**

### TOURISM GRANT OPPORTUNITY WORKING SESSION

Back by popular demand! Join Greg Mihalich and the Illinois Office of Tourism as they recap the Grant Opportunities in FY24 and what's on the horizon for FY25. Processes have changed post-COVID19, and this working session will be an opportunity for our certified CVB partners to ask questions, give feedback and seek advice.

*\*\*\*strictly limited to CVB staff only\*\*\**

*Location: Room 401*

**2:45PM – 4:00PM**

### ILLINOIS OFFICE OF TOURISM MARKETING UPDATES

It all begins at ILGOVCONF24, as the Illinois Office of Tourism kicks off its inaugural “Enjoy Illinois Monthly Marketing Mashup” as we commence a monthly CVB/IOT marketing forum for us to share ideas so our certified CVB partners can learn what's happening in our world of marketing, campaigns, visitor trends and all things content. We will begin by giving an update from IOT on The Tourism Exchange, Illinois Visitors, Arrivalist Research Tool, and our upcoming plans for Spring/Summer.

*\*\*\*strictly limited to 3x CVB, IOT International Offices and TIC staff only\*\*\**

*Location: Room 401*



# SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

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SCHEDULE  
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HERE](#)

## TUESDAY, MARCH 19 – CONT'D

**5:30PM – 6:00PM**

### FIRST TIMERS' HAPPY HOUR

This is the official welcome for all of our first time attendees! You'll have the opportunity to network with the Illinois Office of Tourism along with other tourism professionals and industry leaders across the state. We'll also be welcoming our IL Made Makers who will be in attendance at the conference.

*Location: Exhibit Hall*

**6:00PM – 6:45PM**

### PRE-AWARDS COCKTAIL HOUR

Kick off awards night with a pre-dinner cocktail, where you can mingle and network with industry peers. Don't forget to wear festive Irish attire!

[Sponsor: World Wide Technology Raceway  
& NASCAR Chicago](#)

*Location: Exhibit Hall*

**7:00PM – 9:30PM**

### ILLINOIS EXCELLENCE IN TOURISM AWARDS DINNER

Get ready for all kinds of shenanigans! We'll have dinner, drinks and a wee bit of fun when we recognize the winners.

[Sponsor: Spurrier Group](#)

*Location: Grand Ballroom*

# SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

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## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20

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**8:00AM – 5:00PM**

### REGISTRATION OPEN

Check in to pick up your badge

[Sponsor: Illinois Restaurant Association](#)

*Location: Peoria Civic Center*

---

**8:00AM – 5:00PM**

### TRADESHOW OPEN

Stop into the Exhibitor area to explore all the great companies, products and offerings we have from this year's tradeshow participants. In an effort to be as green as possible, we encourage all attendees to BYOB – bring your own (re-usable) bag!

*Location: Exhibit Hall*

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**8:00AM – 5:45PM**

### MEDIA AUCTION

Here's your chance to get media at an incredible price with our ILGOV Media Auction. Get your dollars ready!

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**8:00AM – 8:45AM**

### BREAKFAST

Join your fellow attendees to fill your belly before a day full of insights

*Location: Grand Ballroom*



**Make  
some  
noise for  
Illinois,  
keep the  
s silent  
though.**

# SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

[VIEW FULL  
SCHEDULE  
DETAILS  
HERE](#)

## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20 – CONT'D

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**8:40AM – 8:45AM**

### **WELCOME FROM DANIEL THOMAS**

Hear some short remarks from Daniel Thomas, Deputy Director, Illinois Office of Tourism, who will kick off a great day of sharing, learning and collaborating.

*Location: Grand Ballroom*

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**8:45AM – 9:00AM**

### **WELCOME FROM RICHARD GAMBLE INTERIM PRESIDENT & CEO, CHOOSE CHICAGO**

Hear some short remarks from Daniel Thomas, Deputy Director, Illinois Office of Tourism, who will kick off a great day of sharing, learning and collaborating.

*Location: Grand Ballroom*



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## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20 – CONT'D

**9:00AM – 11:00AM**

### GENERAL SESSION

## FUTURE FORWARD: BUILDING THE WORKFORCE OF TOMORROW

*Speaker: Eric Termuende*

With unemployment rates still nearly historically low, and talent difficult to find, the future of tourism in Illinois is largely going to be based on how well we serve the people that visit the state. To do that, we must attract top talent, understand the next generation of work, and become a desired employment destination.

In this interactive session, industry leaders will not only discover how to differentiate their culture and attract top talent, they'll be able to roll up their sleeves and get to work together to understand what sets their workplace culture apart from others in the room and across the state. Those that understand their differentiators, articulate them effectively, and leverage their greatest recruiters (their people) are going to thrive in a wildly unpredictable future of work.

*Location: Grand Ballroom*

**11:15AM – 11:45AM**

## TRADESHOW NETWORKING BREAK

Take a break and stop into the Exhibitor area to learn, explore and network before lunch begins.

[Sponsor: Adara](#)

*Location: Exhibit Hall*

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## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20 – CONT'D

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**12:00PM – 1:00PM**

### LUNCH

Settle in with fellow attendees for a lunch break before we continue our day of tourism education.

*Location: Grand Ballroom*

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**1:15PM – 2:00PM**

### CONCURRENT BREAKOUT SESSIONS

#### 1. UNDERSTANDING THE TRAVELER PATH TO PURCHASE

*Speaker: Matt Hansen*

*Director of Business Development, Expedia Group Media Solutions*

Learn how the traveler journey has changed as it relates to inspiration, research, planning and booking. Diving into path-to-purchase research, this session will uncover what resources are utilized and where content consumption is taking place at each stage of the booking funnel.

**Sponsor: Expedia Group Media Solutions**

*Location: Room 402*



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**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20** – CONT'D

## 2. NAVIGATING THE AI LANDSCAPE IN TRAVEL & TOURISM

*Speakers:*

*AJ Kinney, Director of Partnerships, Matador Network*

*Greg Oates, SVP of Innovation, MMGY NextFactor*

*Matt Clement, Madden Media Managing Partner*

Delve into the intricate world of AI within the travel and tourism industry during this enlightening session. Explore practical strategies for harnessing AI technologies to personalize customer experiences, optimize operations, and stay ahead in a rapidly evolving market landscape. Gain invaluable insights on navigating the complexities and maximizing the potential of AI to propel your destination or business to new heights.

*Location: Room 403*

## 3. TOURISM EXCHANGE LEARNING LAB

*Speaker: Nate Huff, President, Tourism Exchange USA*

The Illinois Office of Tourism is partnering with Brand USA to bring Illinois' unique travel experiences to the world through Tourism Exchange USA. The Tourism Exchange democratizes the product development and distribution landscape, allowing attractions, experiences and accommodations of all sizes to connect their live product inventory to global OTAs and tour operators. Get a preview of the Exchange and how your destination or business can participate at this session.

*Location: Room 404*



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## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20 – CONT'D

**2:00PM – 2:30PM**

### **TRADESHOW NETWORKING BREAK**

Take a break to recharge, regroup and stop into the Exhibitor area before the next session begins.

[Sponsor: Ateema Media & Marketing](#)

*Location: Exhibit Hall*

**2:30PM – 3:00PM**

### **FIRESIDE CHAT TOURISM FORECASTING: STORMS AHEAD?**

*Speaker: Erik Evjen, Tourism Economics*

*Moderator: Daniel Thomas, IOT*

Both leisure and business travel have rebounded with impressive strength over the past two years. However, an economic slowdown tremors and persistent inflation loom large and threaten travel demand.

In this interactive fireside chat with our Deputy Director, Daniel Thomas, Erik will share Tourism Economics' perspective on national, regional and local travel trends, and their latest views on the economy, the mindset of travelers, and expectations for the evolution of travel, particularly in the Illinois market.

*Location: Grand Ballroom*

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## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20 – CONT'D

**3:00PM – 4:00PM**

### GENERAL SESSION

## UNLOCKING THE POTENTIAL OF AI IN TOURISM

*Speaker: Janette Roush, NYC Tourism*

Amidst the pervasive chatter surrounding AI, questions abound: Is the technology truly sentient? Could it tempt our children into academic dishonesty? And why does the blog post it produced for me fall so flat? Let's pause and redirect our focus towards how tourism marketers can leverage this technology to their advantage.

In this session, we'll explore practical applications that extend beyond content generation. Whether you're a newcomer or seasoned pro, prepare to be motivated to establish your account and delve into prompt engineering post-session. And in case you're wondering, yes, this session description was written with the help of AI.

[Sponsor: TimeZoneOne](#)

*Location: Grand Ballroom*

**4:00PM – 5:30PM**

## LAST CALL TRADESHOW RECEPTION

Close the day by mingling with exhibitors and industry peers over appetizers and cocktails.

[Sponsor: Illinois Tourist Information Centers](#)

*Location: Exhibit Hall*



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## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20 – CONT'D

6:30PM – 9:30PM

### A NIGHT ON THE TOWN

Here's your chance to discover Downtown Peoria with our exciting off-site event! Jump on a shuttle for a coordinated route from the Peoria Riverfront Museum to the door of downtown Peoria establishments. You'll be given an official passport for the circuit of four stops. Complete the stops for your chance to win a gift package valued at more than \$200!

Stop 1 – **Kelleher's Irish Pub:** Use your Kelleher's token to get one free domestic beer, glass of house wine or well mixed drink.

Stop 2 – **8 Bit Arcade Bar:** Use your 8 Bit token to get one free domestic beer or well mixed drink. Then get lost in the FREE arcade games.

Stop 3 – **Black Band Distillery:** Use your BLACK BAND token to get one free batch cocktail crafted with Peoria-made whiskey. Also, The Cigar Shack will be available curbside for those to enjoy.

Stop 4 – **Peoria Hotel Pere Marquette:** Wind down your night with a cheesecake from one of our Illinois Made Makers, Triple Dipple Treats + Delicacies.

Sponsor: [MMGY Global](#)





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# SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

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## THURSDAY, MARCH 21

**8:00AM – 11:00AM**

### REGISTRATION OPEN

Check in to pick up your badge

[Sponsor: Illinois Restaurant Association](#)

*Location: Peoria Civic Center*

**8:00AM – 9:00AM**

### MEDIA AUCTION

Here's your chance to get media at an incredible price with our ILGOV Media Auction. Get your dollars ready!

**8:00AM – 1:00PM**

### DESTINATION DAY

Today is Destination Day! Join us in celebrating the final day of the conference by teaming up with your co-workers and representing your organization with your attire. This can include your logo, your colors — or simply a creative expression of who you are. Not only is this a conversation starter, it's a great opportunity to represent your destination in a fun way on the last day of the conference.

**8:00AM – 8:30AM**

### BREAKFAST

Join your fellow attendees to fill your belly before a day full of insights

*Location: Grand Ballroom*

# SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

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## THURSDAY, MARCH 21 – CONT'D

**8:30AM – 9:00AM**

### **FIRESIDE CHAT SHAPING THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY'S NEXT CHAPTER: DRIVING GROWTH IN THE MONTHS AHEAD**

*Speaker; Ellen Davis, US Travel Association*

*Moderator: Daniel Thomas, IOT*

During this fireside chat with our Deputy Director Daniel Thomas, Ellen Davis, U.S. Travel's Executive Vice President of Business Strategy and Industry Engagement, will explore the current state of the industry from USTA's perspective—providing a look at the latest trends, opportunities and challenges facing travel at both the national and state level. Ellen will dive into the Association's focus on targeted efforts to facilitate long-term industry-wide growth—highlighting upcoming opportunities for engagement and advocacy alongside colleagues from diverse industry sectors.

*Location: Grand Ballroom*

**9:00AM – 9:15AM**

### **KRISTIN RICHARDS**

Remarks from Kristin A. Richards, Director of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO)

*Location: Grand Ballroom*



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# ROUTE

# 6

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## THURSDAY, MARCH 21 – CONT'D

**9:15AM – 10:15AM**

### GENERAL SESSION

## DEIA MATTERS: HOW DEIA INFLUENCES AND STRENGTHENS THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

Speakers:

Dr. Atiera Coleman, Chief Equity Officer, State of Illinois

Vanessa Harris, President and Founder, Strategy,  
Access Foundation

Dr. Warren R. Anderson, Vice President for Diversity,  
Equity, and Inclusion, Bradley University

Precious Brady-Davis, Associate Regional  
Communications Director, Sierra Club

Delve into the vital role of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) initiatives in propelling businesses towards their objectives. This session will offer an overview of the Governor's Office of Equity's approach to DEIA, encompassing its definitions, strategies and collaborative efforts to embed these principles into core functions. Gain insights from prominent industry leaders while we explore best practices, challenges, and successful case studies showcasing the impact of DEIA implementation.

*Location: Grand Ballroom*

**10:15AM – 10:30AM**

### MORNING NETWORKING BREAK

Take a moment to catch up on emails or catch up with friends before heading to the breakout session of your choice.

**Sponsor: Tripadvisor**

*Location: Foyer*

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## THURSDAY, MARCH 21 – CONT'D

**10:30AM – 11:15AM**

### CONCURRENT BREAKOUT SESSIONS

#### 1. SOCIAL 101: TAKE CONTROL OF YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

*Speakers:*

*Alex Stewart, Influencer*

*Jenny LeFlore, Influencer*

*Teddy Heidt, El Social Media Manager x Moderator*

Using social media in your marketing plans is one thing – doing it successfully is another. From the rapidly changing algorithms to the constant need for content, there is much to consider when managing strategy and messaging, and it can be overwhelming. This interactive panel will break down the dos and don'ts of managing social media marketing, from strategy and design to content creation and more.

*Location: Room 402*

#### 2. HOW YOU CAN WIN WITH SPORTS TOURISM

*Speaker; John David, President and CEO, Sports Events & Tourism Association*

Uncover how hosting sports events can be a catalyst for economic growth, community engagement, and lasting legacies. This session will share strategies to leverage sports tourism as a dynamic tool for branding your destination, fostering civic pride, and building collaborative partnerships. Learn the latest trends in this growing vertical as well as a sneak peek of the latest data from the Sports ETA State of the Industry Report.

**Sponsor: [Visit Springfield](#)**

*Location: Room 403*

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**THURSDAY, MARCH 21** – CONT'D

## 3. AGRITOURISM ON THE RISE — TIPS FOR GROWING VISITATION

*Speakers:*

*Neil Dahlstrom, John Deere Branded Properties*

*Dr. Renata Endres, University of Illinois Professor; Agritourism*

*Ken Myszka, Epiphany Farms Hospitality (Illinois Made Maker)*

*Rachel Coventry, Curtis Orchards (Illinois Made Maker)*

*Terri Reifsteck, VP Marketing & Community Engagement, Experience  
Champaign-Urbana*

Discover essential tactics for increasing visitation in agritourism, specifically tailored to the Illinois landscape. Key leaders representing the state's agritourism industry will discuss their innovative approaches to enhancing guest experiences, fostering collaborations, and driving foot traffic and engagement within the state's agricultural attractions.

*Location: Room 404*



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## THURSDAY, MARCH 21 – CONT'D

**11:30AM – 12:15PM**

### GENERAL SESSION

## TRENDS WITH BENEFITS: PROFITING FROM THE FUTURE OF TOURISM

*Speaker: Daniel Levine*

As an Illinois tourism professional, knowing what is now isn't enough—you also want to know what will be if you want to stay ahead. Tomorrow's world will look very different from today so get ready for an “advance preview” of the most amazing trends that are changing the way we work, play and travel. Global trends leader Daniel Levine will wrap up this year's conference with a visionary's perspective on everything that matters—including the future of food, technology, transportation, hospitality, communication and more. Plus, he will show you what it all means for your business to help you kickstart innovation and turbocharge growth.

*Location: Grand Ballroom*

**12:15PM – 1:00PM**

## STATE OF THE STATE TOURISM ADDRESS BY DANIEL THOMAS, DEPUTY DIRECTOR, ILLINOIS OFFICE OF TOURISM

Join us for the finale of ILGOV24 where Daniel Thomas, Deputy Director, Illinois Office of Tourism, will give us a glimpse into the future of Illinois tourism.

*Location: Grand Ballroom*



# 31

## UNEXPECTED ADVENTURES

Whether your ideal adventure is a leisurely stroll, a wild night of cabaret and comedy, a perfect playground, gourmet foodie specialty bites, eclectic art galleries and home decor shops, history buff tours, a fashionista paradise of high-end designs, or unique whiskey heritage. Discover these unexpected tailor-made adventures.



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# INNOVATION HALL

## EXHIBITORS

Many companies have come together to showcase and demonstrate their latest products and services.

Exhibition Hall Trade show will take place all day on Wednesday, March 20th, 2024.

## 2024 INNOVATION HALL TRADE SHOW

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**America Journal** *is the German travel magazine focused on the US with four emotional, opulent and innovative issues per year.* [www.americajournal.de](http://www.americajournal.de)

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**Ateema:** *Hospitality & Tourism Summit Chicago 2024: Trade show, learning sessions, and networking for 1,250+ industry professionals – Produced by Ateema Media & Marketing.*

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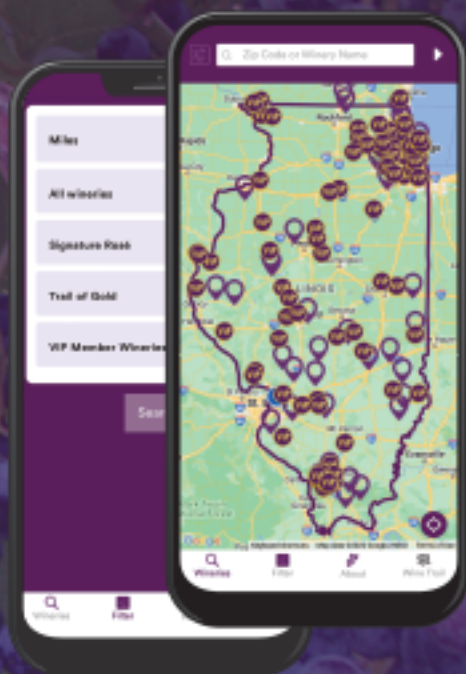


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# INNOVATION HALL

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**The Illinois Restaurant Association** *is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting, protecting, educating and improving the restaurant industry in Illinois. [www.illinoisrestaurants.org/](http://www.illinoisrestaurants.org/)*

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**The Illinois Tourist Information Centers** *offer visitors free one-on-one assistance on amazing things to see and do in Illinois, including your destinations. [www.greatriverroad-illinois.org](http://www.greatriverroad-illinois.org)*

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**Longwoods International** *is the leading survey market research consultancy specializing in tourism to help industry clients meet their objectives through groundbreaking research, thought-leading insights, and excellent counsel and service [www.longwoods-intl.com/](http://www.longwoods-intl.com/)*

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**Louisville Slugger Complex:** *The most innovative multi-sport complex in the midwest.*

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**Miles Partnership:** *Miles Partnership is a strategic marketing consultancy focused exclusively on travel and tourism.*

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**NASCAR** *returns to downtown Chicago for the 2024 Chicago Street Race Weekend, July 6-7 in Grant Park. Every ticket includes race admission plus festival shows including Keith Urban, The Chainsmokers, The Black Keys, and Lauren Alaina. Weekend, Single day, Premium and General Admission options now available at [www.nascarchicago.com](http://www.nascarchicago.com)*

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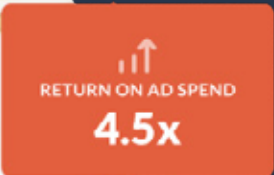
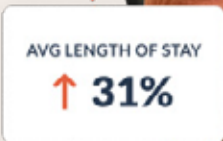


# Reach & Inspire Travelers Online

Sojern helps destination marketers find ideal travelers.



<https://sojern.cc/ILConf24>



# illinois

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**Ripe** provides white-label lodging e-commerce solutions that shift bookings away from generic sites directly to destination organizations that create demand. [www.bookripe.com](http://www.bookripe.com)

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**Seeker Explore** is an AI-powered Visitor Experience Platform, empowering tourism marketers and the visitors they serve with smart tools for trip planning and exploration.

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**The Sojern Travel Marketing Platform** helps destination marketers reach and inspire the right travelers throughout their planning journey. [www.sojern.com](http://www.sojern.com)

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**Steller:** A travel influencer marketing and tech company uniting human storytelling and innovative technology to drive bookings to your destination. [www.steller.co/](http://www.steller.co/)

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**Travel TV**, a WMVision Solution, unlocks the world through live-streaming cameras. Live-streaming video helps turn viewers into destination visitors. [www.wmvision.com/tourism/](http://www.wmvision.com/tourism/)

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**Tripadvisor**, the world's largest travel guidance platform, helps people become better travelers, from planning to booking to taking a trip. [www.Tripadvisor.com](http://www.Tripadvisor.com)

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**World Wide Technology Raceway (WWTR)** is the only track in the world to host the premier series of NASCAR, INDYCAR, and NHRA. [www.nascarchicago.com/wwtraceway.com](http://www.nascarchicago.com/wwtraceway.com)  
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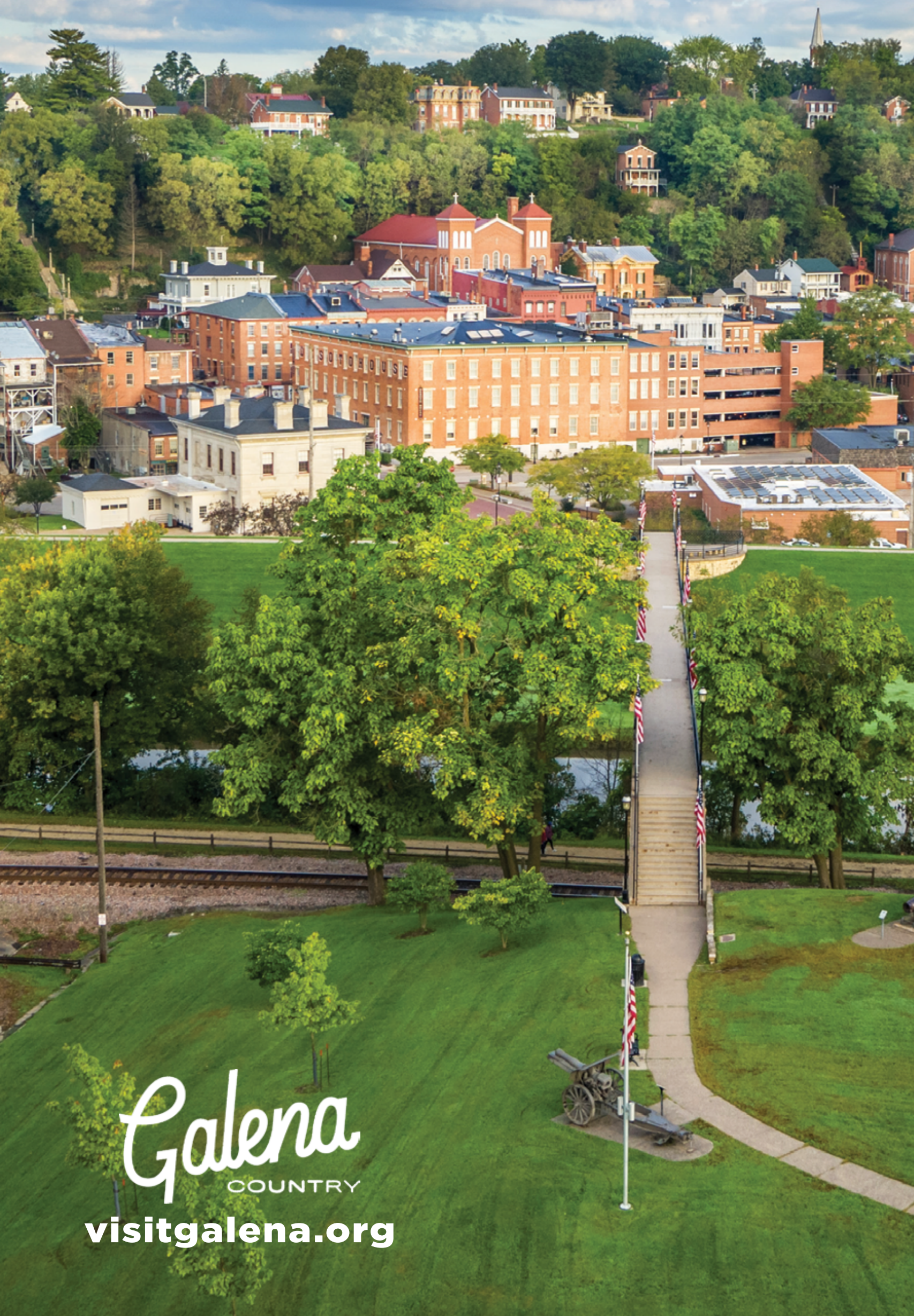
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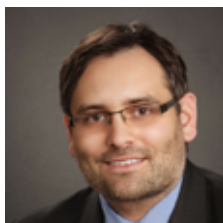
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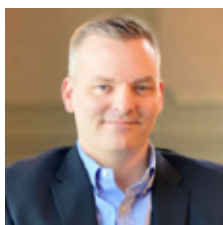
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University of Illinois Department of Recreation, Sport, and Tourism, Teaching Assistant Professor



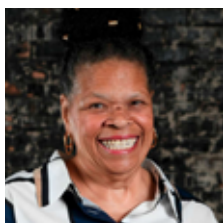
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EVP, Tourism Economics



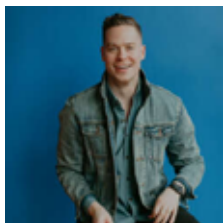
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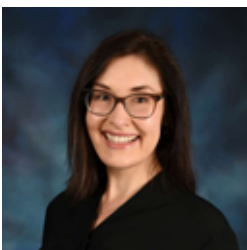
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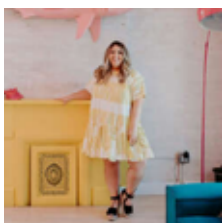
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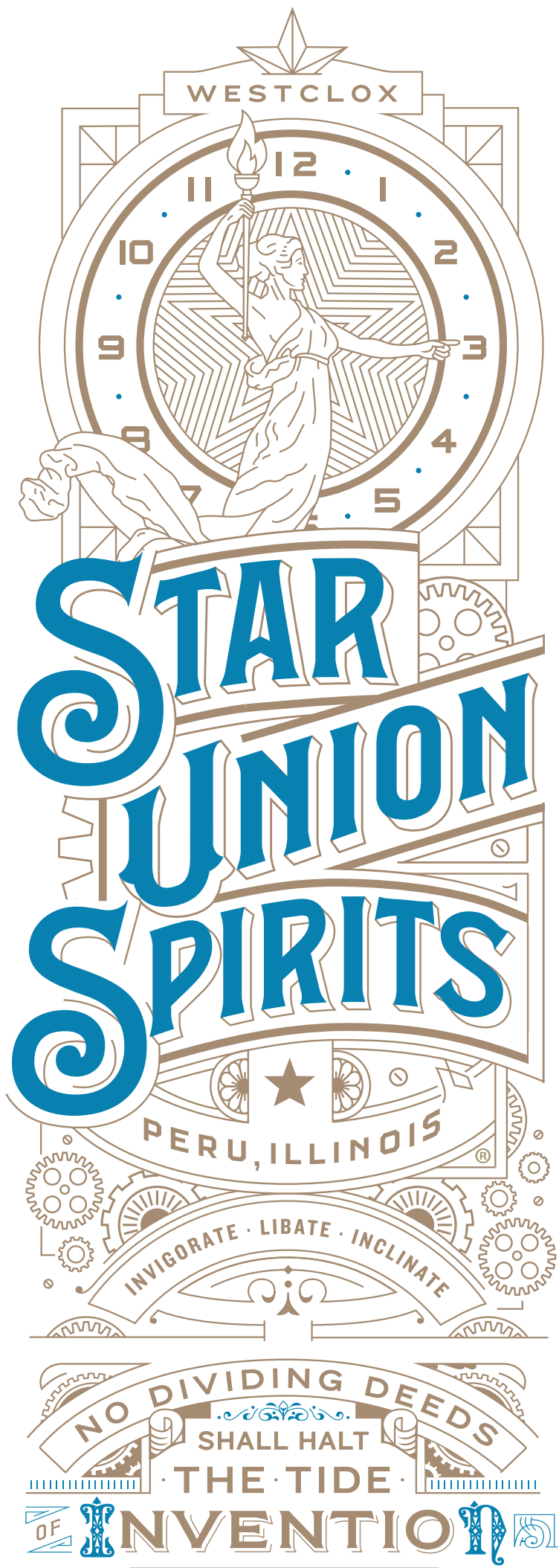
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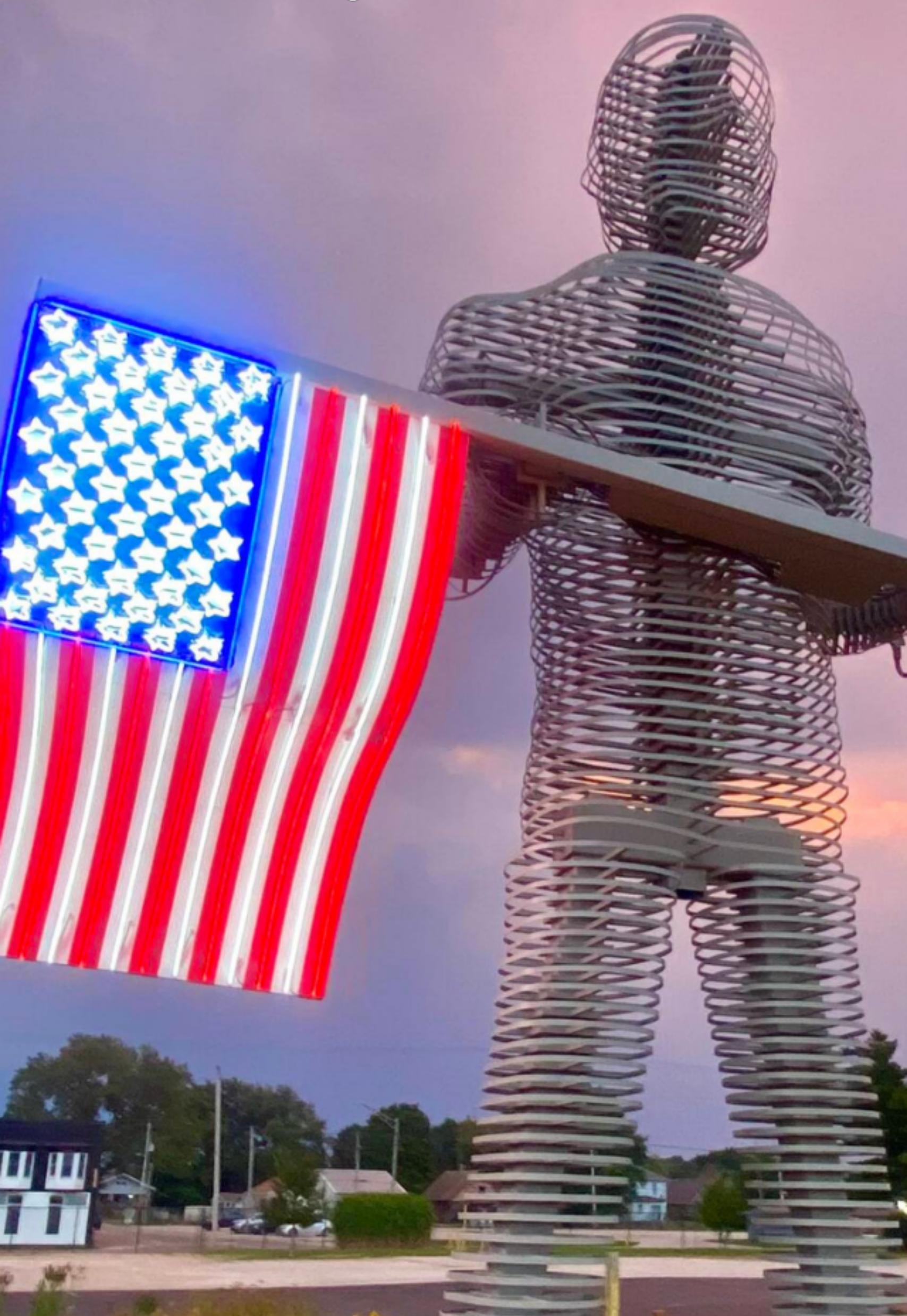
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