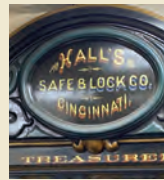


2023

ANNUAL REPORT

LICKING COUNTY COMMISSIONERS



Message from the Commissioners



Timothy E. Bubb
President



Duane H. Flowers
Vice President



Rick Black

Greetings and thank you for taking the time to read the 2023 Annual Report from your Licking County Government. It is a great snapshot using photos, text and graphs to summarize a year of accomplishments and achievements countywide.

2023 was a year to both look back and ahead. Looking back thousands of years, we have come to further appreciate the past civilizations of indigenous people who inhabited Licking County and the United States. Here in Ohio they are recognized in Licking, Warren and Ross Counties through the *Ohio Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks UNESCO World Heritage Site*. Most recently, Licking County and central Ohio began transitioning into the “Silicon Heartland” with the arrival of Intel and a range of high-tech businesses and data centers.

In response to new development and change, your county government joined in the Framework process to create guidance and tools for growth and thoughtful land use decisions. Framework is a public-private voluntary partnership that engaged with thousands of residents to create a guide and a set of best practices with recommended policies to better plan and manage the future.

In 2023, your Licking County Commissioners led a multi-million dollar expansion and renovation of the County’s Regional Airport in Heath; completed a major renovation of the exterior of the historic 1876 County Courthouse; acquired additional capacity for providing workforce development services by purchasing the Eastland Center in Newark; led the way in expanding and improving the local highway system to accommodate growth; and in tribute to the rich history of Licking County, installed and dedicated a large brick sculpture on the County Administration Building featuring Licking County’s 215 years of growth and development.

As with any annual report, we have provided a detailed summary of significant accomplishments in 2023, as well as our income and expenses.

On behalf of fellow County Commissioners Duane Flowers and Rick Black, it is an honor both leading and serving in one of Ohio’s great growing counties. We are all on a journey moving Licking County forward and the ride is exciting.

Very best—

Tim Bubb

Licking County Board of Commissioners President



Ohio's Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks Officially Recognized as UNESCO Site

The culmination of nearly a quarter century of effort resulted in UNESCO voting unanimously in September of 2023 to include Ohio's ancient Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks on the list of officially recognized World Heritage sites. This regional Ohio collection of eight newly inscribed sites, constructed by the Hopewell Culture in the Ohio Valley between 1,600 and 2,000 years ago, are geometrically designed earthen enclosures in Licking, Warren and Ross Counties. The complexity and precision of the designs also feature some alignments with the cycles of the sun and the moon. The Licking County sites include The Great Circle Earthworks in Heath, and The Octagon Earthworks in Newark.

RECOGNITION



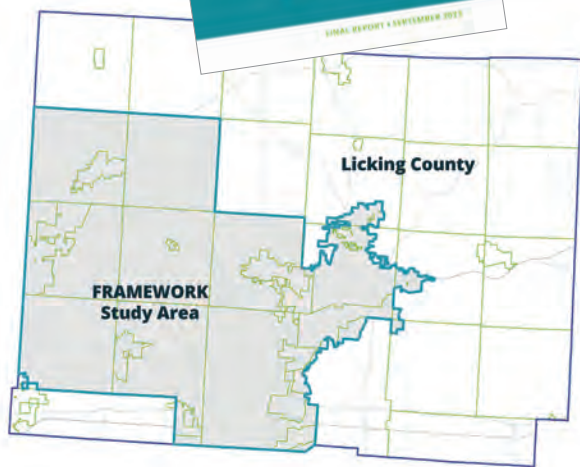
State Invests in High-Tech Corridor Roadway Improvements

In July, Governor Mike DeWine and ODOT officials announced a major investment in the rapidly developing corridor of western Licking County and parts of adjoining Delaware and Franklin counties. The State of Ohio committed some \$90-million dollars including \$20-million directly to the county and its Transportation District (TID) for both western Licking County roadway improvements and the evolving Thornwood Drive corridor project. This is in addition to the widening of State Route 161 currently underway.



Framework Report Issued

In March of 2022, within 2 months of Intel's construction announcement, the Thomas J. Evans Foundation stepped forward to serve as a neutral convener for a planning initiative, appropriately named FRAMEWORK, in preparation for this massive development and the extraordinary growth already taking place in the western part of the county. Launched to produce a collaborative vision among all stakeholders, FRAMEWORK is a public-private all-voluntary partnership that brought together six local businesses, 14 local jurisdictions, the county government, and thousands of residents. After approximately a year and a half of meetings, three rounds of public input, and extensive research, the report was issued in September of 2023. The FRAMEWORK report is beneficial to all townships, villages and cities in the county, and serves as a guide and a set of best practices, with recommended policies to better plan and manage the future. This is a toolkit that can be leveraged by each community.



While the FRAMEWORK study area reflects 38% of the land in Licking County, it includes 65% of the total population, housing and jobs in Licking County.

Source: FRAMEWORK, www.frameworklc.org

Licking County Airport Improvements

A \$5 million upgrade was completed of the county airport in Heath. This regional airport received new hangers, a new terminal headquarters, and extensive maintenance facilities to accommodate growing demand by public and business jets. Currently more than 90 aircraft of all types are based at the site.

In addition, a historic directional tower at the airport was renovated. The 51-foot yellow and black (original colors from the 1920s) tower with a beacon was part of the National Airmail Route; it was Airway Beacon #34 from Philadelphia to Columbus. Built in the early 1920s and 1930s, more than a thousand of these towers stretched across the United States on routes with beacons spaced at approximately 10 mile intervals. At the base of each tower was a concrete, yellow arrow pointing the pilot in the direction of the route. The arrow at the Licking County airport points eastward towards Pennsylvania.

County Purchases Eastland Shopping Center

Eastland Shopping Center, located on Main Street in east Newark, was purchased by the county in 2023. The county has been leasing 1/3 of the space in the former retail center for the Ohio Means Jobs Workforce Center. The cost for the five-acre site and the 40-thousand square foot building was \$2.4 million. This investment will help serve a growing need for workforce recruitment and training and will likely mean expansion at the site. It has great potential for an expanded government service center.



The new terminal headquarters



The historic directional tower, beacon, and utility shed at the Licking County Airport was recently renovated. Note the brightly painted concrete arrow – it provided directions to U.S. Airmail pilots in the 1920s.



Ohio Means Jobs Workforce Center is located at 998 East Main Street in Newark.



RENOVATION



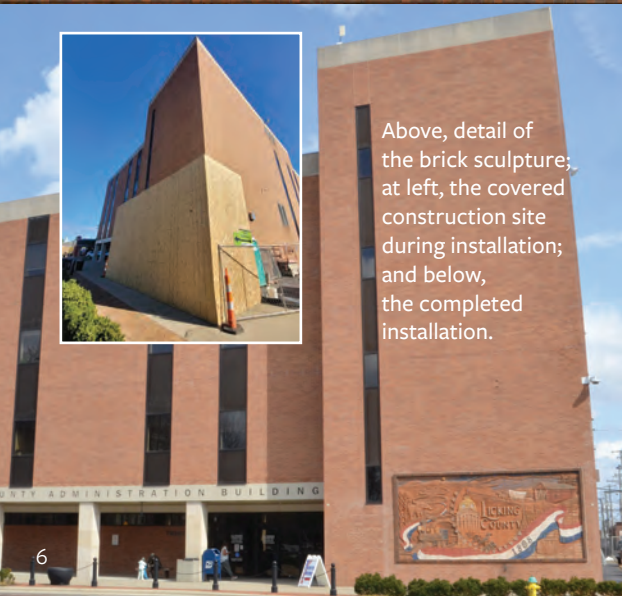
1876 Historic Courthouse Exterior Renovation Completed

In the late summer of 2023, the exterior renovation of the historic 1876 County Courthouse in Newark was completed. The project included replacing 100 windows with custom-made energy-saving units that replicated the original windows. In addition, four (two-door) sets of entrance doors on each of the four sides were replaced with beautiful 12-foot-high wood replicas of the originals. The stone building exterior was repaired and the four iconic porches were restored.

The final Courthouse project, scheduled for 2024, is an interior restoration of the historic West Courtroom.

Brick Sculpture Unveiled

On November 15th, after weeks of “mystery” surrounding the hidden construction area on the corner of the county administration building, the surprise was revealed to a large noon-day crowd! Area residents joined the Licking County Commissioners on Newark’s Square for the unveiling of a stunning, detailed brick sculpture embedded in the facade of the building. This beautiful 10’ x 20’ foot three-dimensional sculpture was designed and carved by sculptor Allen Moran, artist for local brick manufacturer Bowerston-Shale, and was done as his final project before retirement. Attending the unveiling ceremony were special guests Don Hill (former County Commissioner) and Orville Varasso (original architect, now 103!), who re-enacted the passing of the “key to the building” from Orville to Don, just as they had done in 1976 when the building was first dedicated. The Administration Building was rededicated and is undergoing a \$2-million renovation project.



Above, detail of the brick sculpture; at left, the covered construction site during installation; and below, the completed installation.

AWARDS & GRANTS

County Receives Age-Friendly Community Designation

Licking County has been recognized as the 769th community to join AARP's Network of Age-Friendly Communities, joining 25 other cities and counties in Ohio for this designation. The effort to pledge support towards this effort was led by the Licking County Aging Partners. Priority items include creating safer and more walkable streets, improved housing and transportation options, better access to key services, opportunities to participate in community activities, and to ultimately create happier, healthier residents of all ages. To learn more, visit www.AARP.org/Livable



Licking County Aging Partners located at 1058 East Main Street in Newark.



County Recycling Department Awarded Ohio EPA Grant

Licking County Recycling was awarded over \$37,000 in grant funding from the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to purchase a new pickup truck. The grant is part of the overall Recycle Ohio Grant program administered by the Ohio EPA. It replaces an older truck, and will be mainly used to haul recyclable materials collected and picked up in county government buildings.



Recycling bins located behind the Heath Municipal Building on SR 79. There are 23 public drop off sites throughout the county.

2023 Recycling By the Numbers

Over 5 million lbs.

of recyclable material collected

35,000 lbs.

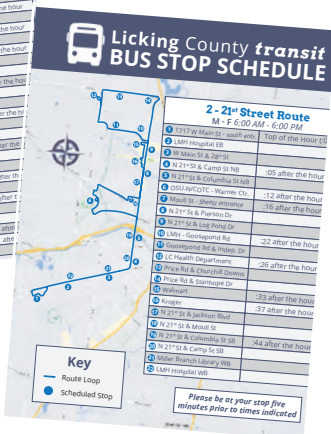
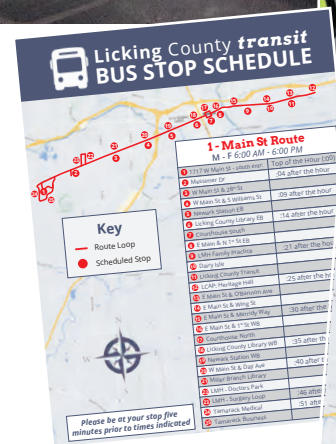
of recyclable material
from 22 Government Buildings

23 public drop-off sites

for recycling county-wide

Visit www.lickingcounty.gov to find a drop-off site near you!

COMMUNITY SERVICES



See the most up-to-date route guides and times at www.lickingcounty.gov.

Licking County Transit Expands Services

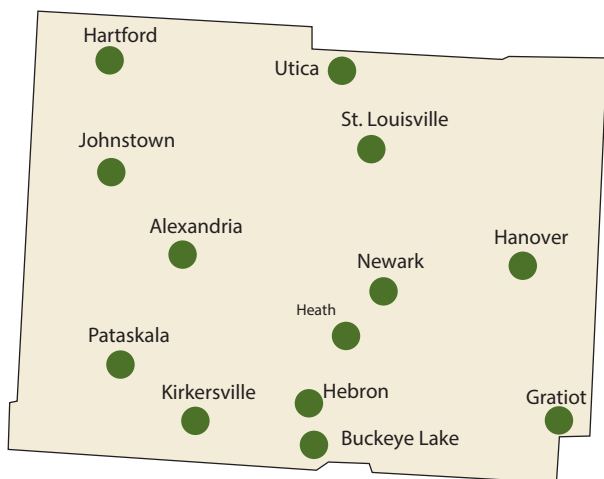
For several years, Licking County Transit (LCT) has provided a “demand response” public transportation system (call in advance for a ride) for Licking County residents, providing origin-to-destination services.

In an effort to serve greater demand in Newark, LCT added two new fixed bus routes in Newark in conjunction with community partners Licking Memorial Hospital, the Newark Campus and the Licking County Health Department. The first fixed route, “Red Route #1” was established in July of 2023 and runs across Newark via Main Street, from east to west with multiple stops/pick-up points between 6 am and 6 pm. A “Blue Line Route #2” was added in the fall, traveling from the hub on West Main to North Newark via 21st Street with various stops along the route.

In 2024 there are plans for additional fixed route transit bus services planned in partnership with COTA to serve western Licking County.

Aggregation Provides Cost Savings on Electric Utilities

In 2022 the voters of Newark, Heath, Johnstown, Hanover, Saint Louisville, Gratiot and Alexandria approved ballot issues to implement aggregation of electric and natural gas. This group purchasing of natural gas and electricity saves local residents on their utility bills. In 2023, voters in Pataskala City, and the Villages of Utica, Hartford, Kirkersville, Hebron and Buckeye Lake also voted to join the county aggregation utility cost savings program. It is estimated to save more than one-third of monthly electric bills.



Commissioners Appoint Apiarist (Bee Expert)

Local bee expert Steven Moody was appointed as the county's official Apiarist in conjunction with the Ohio Department of Agriculture. Honey bees play a vital role in agriculture, providing pollination for many of the fruit and vegetable crops grown nationwide. In Ohio, they are pollinators for apples, melons, cucumbers, pumpkins, and more. Moody inspects over 315 registered beehives in the county for diseases/pests, helps mitigate issues, and connects the community with solutions.

For more information email lcohapiary@gmail.com or call 740-260-9019.



Clockwise from top left: Steven Moody, a beeper tending hives, a bee collecting pollen from a flower.

In the Company of Heroes

Licking County Veterans Documents Archived at Library

In an effort to collect and document information on all Licking County Veterans, the Licking County Library has been spearheading a project that now has 8,666 veterans documented with more being added every day. There are more than 80,000 digital records of photos, newspaper articles, documents, letters, and diaries. Doug Stout, Project Coordinator, says over 1,000 service members have died from the Civil War to present day. Yet to be added are veterans of the War of 1812, the Mexican War, and the Spanish American War.

If you have information you'd like to share on a veteran, please contact the library to add to the veteran records.

You can view the County Veterans database at <http://lclibrary.pastperfectonline.com/>

Below, top, Licking County WWI officers from Battery B, 324th Field Artillery. Bottom: female veterans featured in main library exhibit.



Historic 1870s-Era County Safe Opened

For almost half a century, an antique 1870s-era five-ton “burglar-proof” safe sat on the first floor of the courthouse in a steel-lined vault



room, its contents locked and sealed – the combination to open the safe lost to history. Originally used for many years to keep the county’s cash payments safe, its last use was in the 1970s, when



the Treasurer moved to the current County Administration Building in 1976.

Curiosity finally won out and in 2023, expert locksmith Billy Perrigan, recognized nationally

for his ability to open and repair vintage safes, was called in to “crack” the safe! After multiple attempts to manipulate the dial, Perrigan drilled through several layers of steel to align the lock wheels and open it. While there was no “treasure” to be found, some 1970s contents remained: a 38-caliber revolver and related evidence, all of which was turned over to the Sheriff’s office for historical research.

The safe will receive a cleaning and polishing for display purposes. Fifty years later, the mystery has been solved!



COMMISSIONERS’ ACTIONS

Resolutions Processed	1,523
Bids Processed	25
Approved Contracts	406
Brine Hearings	2
Subdivision Plat Approvals	15

Road Petitions Approved

Vacate portion Norris Road NE (TR) 219
Establish Buttonbush Place (TR1179), Bucrush Drive (TR1180), Andrew Court (TR1181), Carthage Court (TR1182), Villas of Cumberland Sec. 2. Etna Twp.
Establish Global Way (TR1178) Etna Corporate Park West
Vacate portion of Edgewater Beach Blvd. in Licking Twp.
Vacate ROW on Firehouse Drive in Newton Twp.
Establish Schuster Way West (TR1177)
Establish extension of Venture Drive (TR1095) in Etna Twp.
Vacate portion of Simeone Drive – Union Twp.

Road Petition Denied

Vacate portion of Grand Pointe Drive SW in Etna Twp.
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Expedited I Annexations (3) Approved	Acres
Jersey Twp. to City of New Albany	24.362
Jersey Twp. to City of New Albany	60.410
Licking Twp. to City of Heath	143.000

Expedited II Annexations (9) Approved	
Etna Twp. to Village of Kirkersville	6.180
(2) Newark Twp. to City of Newark	2.906
(2) Union Twp. to Village of Hebron	93.630
Union Twp. to City of Heath	228.270
Granville Twp. to Village of Granville	31.370
(2) Monroe Twp. to City of Johnstown	290.930

Senior Levy Funds Allocated:	\$	6,331,883.00
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GovDeals®		
Total Sales in 2023	\$	362,179.83
Total Sales from 2005 – 2023	\$	2,211,406.61

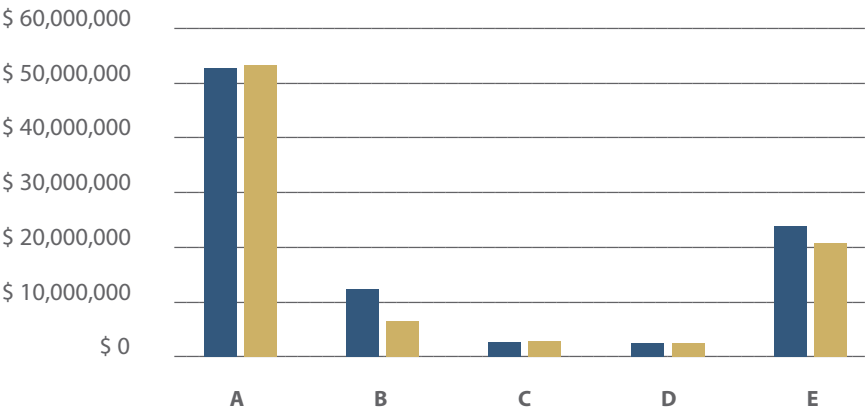
GovDeals® – online county surplus sales at www.lickingcounty.gov
Auctions on GovDeals® are run every month from 1st–15th.

General Fund Financials

REVENUE BY SOURCE

2022

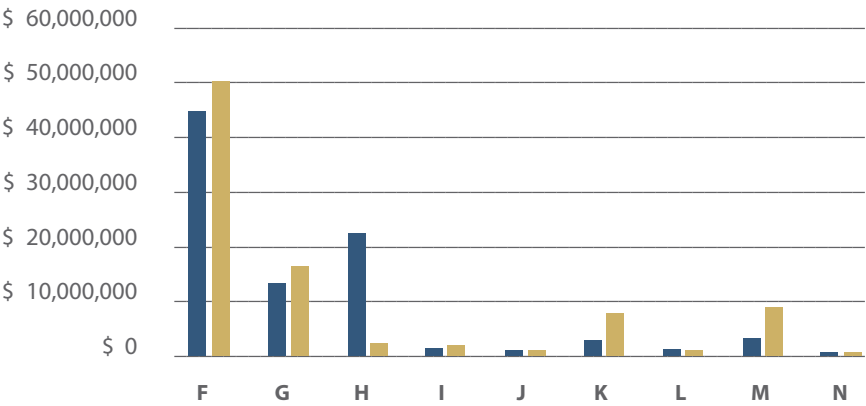
2023



		2022	2023
A	Sales Tax	\$ 52,743,946	\$ 53,265,778
B	Property Tax	12,236,184	6,547,561
C	Local Government	2,493,916	2,553,684
D	Casino	2,580,850	2,605,381
E	Other Funds	23,630,476	20,619,613
Total Revenues		\$ 93,685,372	\$ 85,592,017

Expenditures

BY SERVICE AREA



		2022	2023
F	Law Enforcement/ Judicial	\$ 44,911,276	\$ 50,287,096
G	Administration	13,636,557	16,686,718
H	Transfers	22,426,198	2,334,567
I	Veterans	1,530,236	1,991,702
J	Human Services	1,076,242	1,054,416
K	Bond Obligations	2,971,000	7,894,361
L	Elections	1,213,666	1,257,003
M	Capital Improvement	3,425,646	9,012,430
N	Agriculture	510,934	621,619
Total Expenses		\$ 91,701,755	\$ 91,139,912



MISSION STATEMENT

*Our goal is to provide efficient, effective and quality public services
in an open, honest, and fiscally responsible manner
through innovation, leadership and accountability.*

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www.lickingcounty.gov



YouTube:
[LickingCountyGovernment](https://www.youtube.com/LickingCountyGovernment)

