



Property Valuation



Dog Licensing



Consumer Protection



Community Engagement



ANNUAL REPORT

AN UPDATE TO THE COMMUNITY

2020–2021



www.franklincountyauditor.com

UPDATE FROM YOUR FRANKLIN COUNTY AUDITOR

Our county, state, and country spent much of 2020 addressing many new and varied challenges as we navigated the realities of a pandemic affecting our daily lives. Despite such challenges, your Franklin County Auditor's office remains dedicated to offering the very best public service for residents and businesses throughout Franklin County.

Your Franklin County Auditor's office remained accessible, transparent, and accountable to Franklin County residents and businesses, including receiving the highest ranking for transparency in government by the state Auditor. We continue to protect taxpayer dollars and efficiently deliver services using reimagined functions of the office, making our community the best place to live, work, and start a business.

In 2020, the office completed the Triennial Property Update, a countywide effort required by state law to update the value of every parcel in the county. As part of the work and the Know Your Home Value campaign and process, we increased opportunities for homeowners to have their voices heard, expanding informal value review meetings and including virtual options. We also partnered with The Ohio State University's Kirwan Institute to help address racial disparities in the appraisal process.

Further innovation led the office to add, for the first time, the capability to e-file Board of Revision (BOR) complaints for homeowners who disagree with their property value, making the process more convenient for homeowners and more efficient for board staff.

In addition, in our commitment to serve our entire community, the office launched the new BOR Homeowner Assistance Program. This new program helps lower- and middle-income homeowners file complaints with the BOR through the March 31 deadline. The free program assists homeowners as they navigate the BOR process and can offer representation at the board hearing.



Though the pandemic has changed how we do business, the Auditor's office has continued to expand its outreach and presence, virtually attending dozens of meetings, festivals, and other events throughout the county.

COVID-19 certainly resulted in a shift to our commitment to outreach; however, the office now features a mobile office that visits neighborhoods throughout the county offering direct access to your Auditor's office. In addition, I am proud to have been able to continue to hold weekly community hours that included meetings in or highlighted every municipality in Franklin County — from townships to villages and cities. The meetings allow me to hear firsthand the thoughts and ideas of constituents,

UPDATE FROM YOUR FRANKLIN COUNTY AUDITOR

and to use their suggestions to improve the Auditor's office. To date, I have held more than 550 weekly community hours.

We have also made the dog license renewal process easier and more accessible, extending the renewal deadline through July 1 (for 2020 and 2021), offering renewal services via our mobile office, and increasing the services available via our revamped website.

County weights and measures inspectors, now masked, have been out in the community protecting consumers, testing 12,676 devices like price scanners and gas pumps in 2020. The certification stickers on the pumps and scanners feature QR codes that can be scanned if consumers want to file a concern or to find more information about this important consumer protection service.

2020 saw continued and unprecedented real estate activity in our community, as shown by the Auditor's office updates in our monthly Real Estate Dashboard. The Dashboard is an online initiative that uses GIS mapping to show residents' data like median sale price, number of sales, and total sales value in their neighborhoods. The data can be localized down to municipalities, area commissions, townships, and school districts.

One area we know our neighbors continue to seek information and guidance on is tax incentives and the role tax incentives have in our community. In 2020, the office released the first-ever Tax Incentive Review Council (TIRC) report, detailing the use of tax incentives by participating municipalities across the county. The report summarizes the findings of annual TIRC meetings that are required by law to evaluate tax incentives. As your Auditor, I chair TIRC meetings and know how important access to the reviewed information is to our neighborhoods.

In partnership with Franklin County farmers, the office continues to use a streamlined process with the Board of Revision that helps those affected by

catastrophic spring flooding a couple years ago stay on the tax-reducing CAUV program. The special docket expedites the use of the CAUV for fields that were unusable for a second year in 2019 or 2020.

2020–2021 was a busy year, with many changes and adaptations required, but your Franklin County Auditor's office continues to find ways to serve our community with innovative, modern initiatives that improve the lives of Franklin County residents. I look forward to building on our progress and reaching great achievements in the future.



MICHAEL STINZIANO
Franklin County Auditor



Presenting the December True Transaction Award to Winans's Chocolates + Coffees. This award recognizes an area business for outstanding accuracy in weights and measures.

The Franklin County Auditor's office is here to serve you. If you have any questions or concerns, please call (614) 525-HOME or email auditorstinziano@franklincountyohio.gov.

PROTECTING CONSUMERS

Auditor's office weights and measures inspectors are in the community checking for credit card skimmers, inspecting fuel pumps and price scanners, and ensuring you get what you pay for. The office is also responsible for licensing dogs and vendors in Franklin County, including retail cigarette dealers.



1054 inspections including gas pumps, cash registers, and scales.

122 establishments checked.

10,450 prices verified.

9 incorrect overcharges.

14 incorrect undercharges.

2,448 card readers checked for skimmers.



127 licenses issued to vendors.


40 small businesses highlighted through weekly community hours.


12 local businesses recognized for outstanding accuracy in weights and measures through the True Transaction award.

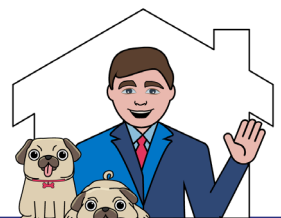


24 reports received in the first year of the Fraud Hotline (614-525-SCAM or consumerprotection@franklincountyohio.gov).

PROTECTING OUR PETS

 **99,795 dogs licensed** during the pandemic, utilizing a new website, digital outreach, and educational videos.

 Released the 2021 “Me & My Pal” calendar featuring art from K–6 students across Franklin County.





INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES

The Auditor's office has implemented several initiatives to streamline and modernize services for Franklin County residents and businesses. Using 21st century technology, the office promotes accessibility and provides outstanding customer service.

- ✓ Expanded dog license renewal period and revamped dog license website to offer more online services.
- ✓ Released first-ever TIRC report and accompanying GIS webtool detailing the use of tax incentives throughout Franklin County.
- ✓ Enhanced the accuracy and security of the Rental Registration online application process through new email verification system.
- ✓ Launched Homeowner Assistance Program to assist lower- and middle-income homeowners in filing with the Board of Revision.
- ✓ Created online record filing for transfers with Simplifile.
- ✓ Allowed electronic filing with the Board of Revision.
- ✓ Held virtual hearings, mediations, and informal reviews to make these processes more accessible.

DATA CENTER



The Data Center provides high-quality data and information technology services to more than 40 offices, agencies, and departments in Franklin County. It is responsible for acquiring, maintaining, and coordinating the use of IT equipment, software, and services for county agencies.

Received 3 awards from the Public Technology Institute for:

- 🏆 Customer Service related to COVID-19 Rapid Response
- 🏆 Cybersecurity Awareness and Preparedness
- 🏆 Collaboration of Modern Data Analytics and Data Visualization

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

As Franklin County's chief fiscal officer, Auditor Stinziano protects taxpayer funds through strong fiscal management and transparency. The office is responsible for maintaining accurate records of all money received by and paid out of the county treasury, and staff accurately process revenue, budgetary, accounts payable, and payroll transactions. The office also maintains the county's unclaimed funds and returns the funds to their proper owners.



returned to Franklin County schools and local governments because of Auditor Stinziano's strong fiscal management.



**4-STAR
RATING**

from the Auditor of State for transparency and accessibility.

4,433 real estate refunds issued in the amount of **\$25,603,205**.

28 manufactured homes refunds issued in the amount of **\$4,295**.

57,111 real estate special assessments issued in the amount of **\$66,454,703**.

Coordinated the distribution of CARES Act funds to local governments with educational sessions and state reporting for cities and townships.

TAX INCENTIVES

The County Auditor serves as the chair of Tax Incentive Review Councils (TIRCs), state-required councils that review tax incentives annually in every municipality that uses them. For the first time, the Auditor's office issued a **2020 TIRC Annual Report** detailing the use of tax incentives, produced an accompanying GIS web tool that showed where incentives are used, and provided source documentation on the incentives.

FRANKLIN COUNTY 2020 TIRC REPORTING	
Number of Municipalities Required to Hold a TIRC: 20	
Number of Abatements by Municipality (and Municipality Population*) Holding a TIRC:	
✦ Bexley — 3 (pop. 13,770)	
✦ Canal Winchester — 15 (pop. 8,818)	
✦ Columbus — 82 (pop. 898,553)	
✦ Dublin — 1 (pop. 49,037)	
✦ Franklin County Commissioners — 6 (county pop. 1,316,756)	
✦ Gahanna — 27 (pop. 35,483)	
✦ Grandview Heights — 3 (pop. 8,333)	
✦ Grove City — 85 (pop. 41,820)	
✦ Groveport — 33 (pop. 5,621)	
✦ Hilliard — 11 (pop. 36,534)	
✦ New Albany — 17 (pop. 10,933)	
✦ Obetz — 13 (pop. 5,196)	
✦ Upper Arlington — 1 (pop. 35,366)	
✦ Urbancrest — 18 (pop. 993)	
✦ Westerville — 4 (pop. 41,103)	
✦ Whitehall — 3 (pop. 18,926)	
✦ Worthington — 2 (pop. 14,692)	
Total Number of Abated Projects Reviewed: 324	
Total CRA Abated Parcels: 4,021	
Total EZ Abated Parcels: 49	
Total CRA Foregone Tax: \$101,000,621	
Total CRA Abated Value: \$3,524,601,100	
Total EZ Foregone Tax: \$7,072,639.11	
Total EZ Abated Value: \$242,455,400	
Total Reported Number of Jobs Created or Retained: 35,976	
Total Reported Payroll: \$1,864,514,834	
Total Reported Real Estate Investment: \$3,450,789,664	
Total Number of TIF Projects Reviewed: 208	
Total Number of TIF Parcels (as of Dec. 31, 2019): 21,068	

*All population figures are 2019 estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau. Under the Ohio Revised Code, counties can be eligible to create tax incentive programs in unincorporated areas. They do this via legislation utilizing the same process as other municipalities.



Released inaugural TIRC Report to create transparency and accountability surrounding tax incentives.

REAL ESTATE REVIEW

The Auditor's office maintains the most comprehensive and accurate real estate records in Franklin County and is responsible for appraising more than 434,001 parcels. Each month the office updates the Real Estate Dashboard, a highly localized web app that shows recent home sales on a GIS map. The tool can display sales data by municipality, school district, or area commission, giving homeowners key information on sales activity in their neighborhoods.



September 2020 Real Estate Sales Dashboard
Franklin County Auditor Michael Stinziano

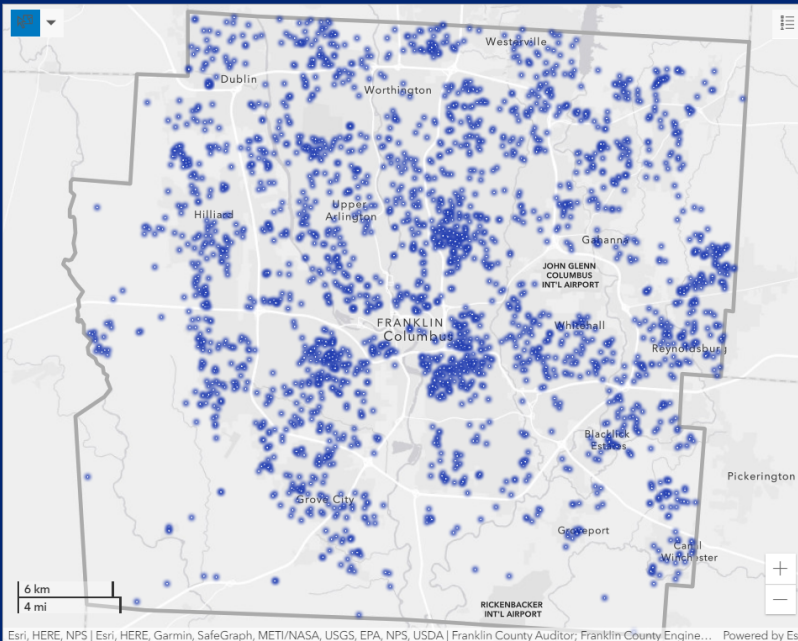
This dashboard shows residential, arm's-length transactions of two or less parcels for Franklin County during the month of September.

Use the drop-down menu below to select a municipality, school district, or area commission. When a selection is made, the map will zoom and the values will update for the selected area.

ALL OF FRANKLIN COUNTY

[Click here for the mobile version](#)

Disclaimer:
Users are notified that the public primary information sources should be considered for verification of the information contained in this map. The County and the mapping companies assume no legal responsibility for the information contained within this product. Please notify the Franklin County Auditor's GIS Division of any discrepancies.



Total Sales Amount



\$621.7M

Up 34% from last September

Median Sale Price



\$205,000

Up 14% from last September

Total Number of Sales



2,551

337 more than last September

881

real estate review
hearings held

158

real estate review
mediations held.

Implemented E-Filing

in January 2021 to allow
property owners to
file Board of Revision
complaints electronically.

Established an efficient
**virtual Board of
Revision** hearing
process.

3,738

calls processed regarding property values in newly
established property owner call center.

47,450

transfers and conveyances processed. Launched new
electronic recording program with national industry
leader, Simplifile. Franklin County now *leads the nation*
in electronic recording among Simplifile partners.

53,445

homestead exemption applications processed.

\$116,424

generated from 28 parcels sold at the virtual
Auditor's Sale.

*Updated rental registration procedures to improve compliance and
decrease fines for property owners.*

TRIENNIAL REVIEW

The Auditor's office just completed the Triennial Update, a process that updates values for every property in the county to keep them in line with the current real estate market. The office expanded opportunities for homeowners to have their voices heard through virtual informal value review meetings and Board of Revision complaints.



In 2020, the Franklin County Auditor's Office reviewed

434,001

properties valued at

\$142.4 billion,

an 18% increase from 2019.

Improved process and more precise data resulted in

42% decrease in resident-initiated property value reviews since 2017.



23% decrease in property value reductions since 2017.

Increased the number of identified neighborhoods from 1,491 in 2017 to 1,717 in 2020 to localize sales information and improve accuracy.

Implemented a new cultural competency training for all appraisal staff and contractors to decrease bias in assessments.

Created a virtual informal hearing process, produced materials in multiple languages, and partnered with the Urban League to make review more accessible for residents.

Continued partnership with The Ohio State University's Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity to make equitable changes for the 2023 appraisal process.

CONSTITUENT SERVICES



52,267 constituent calls received and handled through 525-HOME.

4,445 constituent emails received and responded to from March 2, 2020 to December 31, 2020.

Created the Community Resource Guide for residents to share programs from other agencies and organizations.



Continued commitment to affordable housing by holding virtual housing resource fairs with community partners across Franklin County.

Held **52** community hours meetings, with a total of **544** community hours meetings held since first taking elected office.

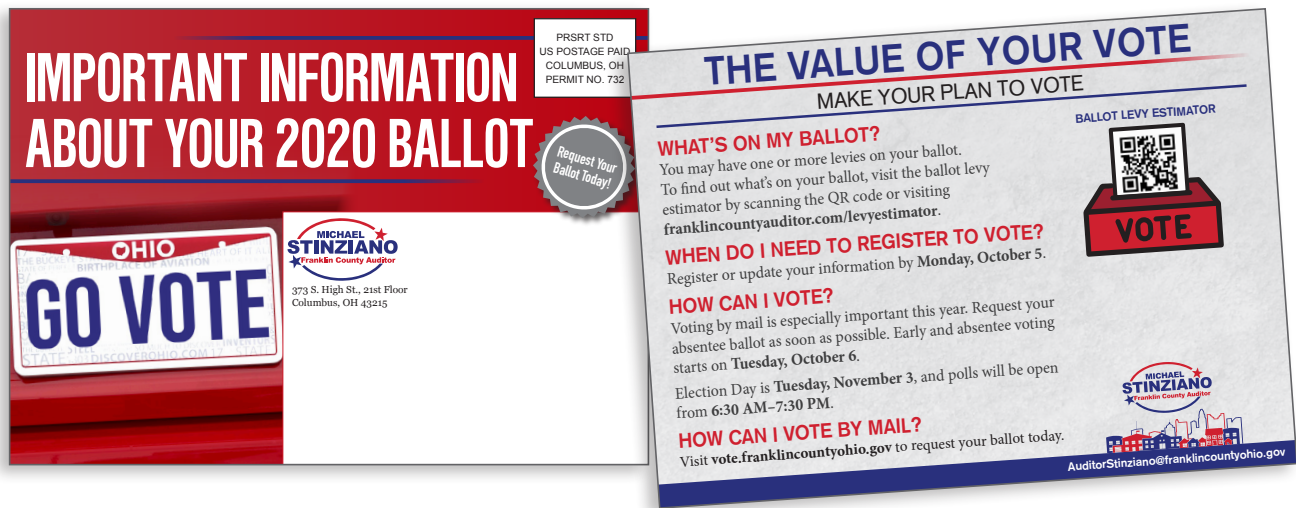


Participated in **214** community events across Franklin County.





Debuted a new mobile office to bring the services of the Auditor's office to neighborhoods across Franklin County.





ADVOCACY & EDUCATION

Launched the “Value of Your Vote” to educate Franklin county voters about levies and their impacts on property taxes. The “Value of Your Vote” also encourages electoral participation.



Auditor Stinziano provided legislative testimony on eight pieces of legislation to:

-  Expand the homestead exemption.
-  Declare racism a public health crisis.
-  Protect voters and election access.
-  Urge prompt property value relief for those affected by the pandemic and related restrictions.

-  Provided testimony to the Department of Taxation advocating for reforms to the process of agricultural land taxation to reflect the modern reality of farmers operating closer to urban centers.
-  Partnered with Senator Hearcel Craig to introduce S.B. 335. If passed, S.B. 335 would have limited property tax increases for homeowners to no more than 3% per year.
-  Moved a resolution to declare racism a public health crisis with the County Auditors' Association of Ohio.
-  Informed and educated residents and organizations of issues related to the pandemic response and ongoing work of the office.

FRANKLIN COUNTY AUDITOR MICHAEL STINZIANO is committed to continuing to pursue effective and innovative initiatives to lead your Franklin County Auditor's office into the 21st century.



TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

franklincountyauditor.com

✉ auditorstinziano@franklincountyohio.gov

☎ (614) 525-HOME

