

# Annual Report

## 2022 - 2023



AN UPDATE TO  
THE COMMUNITY

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*True Transactions Award Winner Linworth Animal Hospital*

Your Franklin County Auditor's Office strives to be a leader in public service and to provide quality information and services to all Franklin County residents.

The Auditor serves as the county's chief fiscal officer, safeguarding county money with innovative ideas and initiatives that protect the residents of Franklin County. Your Auditor's office oversees all of the county's weights and measures, ensuring consumers get what they pay for at gas pumps and retail store scanners.

Your Auditor's office handles a wide variety of important responsibilities that affect all of Franklin County's residents and businesses. The office licenses our dogs; assesses property values; and helps older adults, veterans, and people with disabilities get tax relief.

The office strives to be accessible, transparent, and accountable to the people of Franklin County.



# LETTER FROM YOUR FRANKLIN COUNTY AUDITOR

2022 was a year of accomplishments and preparation at your Franklin County Auditor's Office, and we continue to connect, protect, and reassess on behalf of the businesses and residents of Franklin County. As Auditor, I remain proud to lead an office that protects consumers and strives to deliver unparalleled service to the residents and businesses of Franklin County.

Your Auditor office continues to remain vigilant in protecting consumers from fraud. When price scanners at area stores failed inspection in a significant and unparalleled manner, the office Weights and Measures team ensured consumers knew of our commitment to protecting their dollars and placed notification stickers on the scanners until they passed inspection. Those failed inspections, and others around the state, led to a statewide lawsuit and, later, an agreement that protects consumers from inaccurate pricing.

The Property Tax Assistance Program continues to expand in serving residents while allocating more funding due to the support of the Franklin County Commissioners. The

Board of Commissioners' strong support allowed the program to help more eligible homeowners than ever before afford their property taxes through one-time emergency payments. Based on ongoing feedback, your Auditor office updated the award-winning Tax Incentive HUB, which was first launched in 2021. The HUB serves as an intuitive, all-in-one online app that uses GIS mapping technology to show detailed information on every tax incentive in use in Franklin County. It also shows the financial impact of incentives on agencies that depend on taxes for their funding.

There have been many other significant accomplishments. Due to sound fiscal budgeting, the Auditor's office redistributed more than \$5 million in 2022 to Franklin County schools, libraries, parks, municipalities, and public agencies. Two very successful Affordable Housing Resource Fairs, in partnership with more than 40 area agencies, were held that



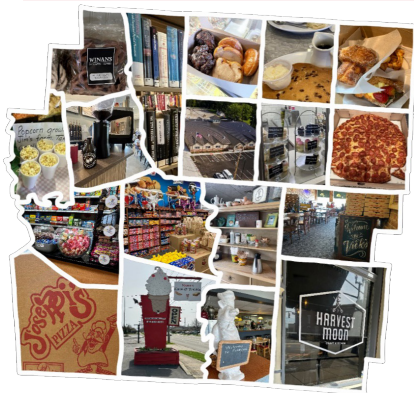
*Franklin County Auditor's office staff members march in the Columbus Veterans Day Parade.*

saw more than 1000 attendees. Further successful Shred Hunger events were held to help community members shred sensitive documents and dispose of electronics.

Throughout 2022, your Auditor office was preparing for the mass reappraisal year functions that are now occurring in 2023. As part of this preparation, a first-of-its-kind Neighborhood Survey was introduced, which gives residents a voice in how their neighborhoods and homes should be valued. No one knows your neighborhood better than you, and the Neighborhood Survey is a new tool that will help inform Auditor's office appraisers as they work to establish the most fair, equitable, and accurate home values possible for you and your neighborhood.

Throughout 2022, your Auditor office made constant progress toward serving all Franklin County residents and businesses with efficient, high-quality services. Knowing that 2023 will be a big year for all property owners across Franklin County, I look forward to new initiatives and your feedback on how we can best serve you.

Michael Stinziano  
Franklin County Auditor



*The cover graphic is composed of photos from a bevy of Franklin County local businesses and government entities that the Auditor's office has featured during community hours. They are listed from left to right, from top to bottom.*

Washington Twp. – **Winans Chocolates + Coffees**  
Perry Twp. – **Upper Arlington Library, Tremont Branch**  
Sharon Twp. – **Schneider's Bakery**  
Blendon Twp. – **Delaney's Diner**  
Plain Twp. – **Fox in the Snow Bakery**  
Brown Twp. – **Kuhlwein's Farm Market and Deli**  
Norwich Twp. – **New Grounds Coffee House**  
Clinton Twp. – **Clinton Township Hall**  
Mifflin Twp. – **Smallcakes Cupcakery and Creamery**  
Jefferson Twp. – **Stadz Pizzeria**  
Prairie Twp. – **Mi Casita Venezolana**  
Franklin Twp. – **La Palza Tapatia**  
Montgomery Twp. – **Bexley Coffee Shop**  
Truro Twp. – **Vick's Gourmet Pizza**  
Pleasant Twp. – **Joseppi's Pizza**  
Jackson Twp. – **Mona's Eats and Treats**  
Hamilton Twp. – **Portside Café**  
Madison Twp. – **Harvest Moon Craft Kitchen**

***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](mailto:auditorstinziano@franklincountyohio.gov).***

# CONNECTING RESIDENTS WITH SERVICES

## Affordable Housing Resource Fairs

Your Franklin County Auditor's Office, in collaboration with more than 40 government, nonprofit, and social service organizations, held resource fairs across the county. More than 800 residents participated.



**Affordable Housing Resource Fair**  
Everything You Need To Know About Affordable, Accessible, and High Quality Housing and Social Services  
**Saturday, May 14, 2022**  
**1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.**  
**Westgate Community Center**  
455 S Westgate Ave, Columbus, OH 43204

**MICHAEL STINZIANO**  
Franklin County Auditor

Presented by your Franklin County Auditor in partnership with organizations serving residents across Central Ohio

Logos of partner organizations: LASC, ywca, Homes for the 2020s, COCLT, NCCC, Star House, Home for Families, FIFTH THIRD BANK, Huntington, Action for Children, OHIO HOUSING FINANCE AGENCY, homeport, AFFORDABLE HOUSING, Community Mediation Services, cpo management, MORPC, and others.

## Constituent Engagement



- ✓ **648 COMMUNITY HOURS MEETINGS** held in every city, township, and village in Franklin County since Auditor Stinziano took public office.  
**208 COMMUNITY MEETINGS** held as your Franklin County Auditor.  
**51 SMALL BUSINESSES** highlighted during community hours.
- ✓ **43,077 CONSTITUENT CALLS** received and handled through 525-HOME.  
Average hold time of only **18 SECONDS**.  
Average call length of **2 MINUTES AND 45 SECONDS**.
- ✓ **KEY ISSUES ADDRESSED:**  
Property ownership, property transfer, tax exemptions, tax accounting, and how to file with the Board of Revision.



## Public Records



Your Franklin County Auditor's Office holds transparency as one of its core values. To that end, upon taking office in 2019, Auditor Stinziano created a position at the office called the Open Government Officer to facilitate the release of public records maintained by the office. In 2022, the Franklin County Auditor's Office received and completed 978 public records requests.



# PROTECTING CONSUMERS

## Chief Fiscal Officer

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Revenue Budget</b><br><b>\$1.81 Billion</b><br>2023 Projected Revenues<br><br>Revenue Budget provides the detailed revenue estimates used to fund the County's operating budget.<br><a href="#">Explore</a>   | <b>Operating Budget</b><br><b>\$2.07 Billion</b><br>2023 Approved Budget<br><br>Operating Budget allows visitors to review Franklin County's priorities and impacts on their lives and neighborhoods.<br><a href="#">Explore</a> |
| <b>Total Vendor Payments</b><br><b>\$176.71 Million</b><br>Fiscal Year 2023<br><br>This Vendor Payments section allow the public and internal stakeholders to easily understand and explore checkbook-level detail of spending.<br><a href="#">Explore</a> | <b>Total Payroll</b><br><b>\$88.42 Million</b><br>Payroll<br><br>The total spent on payroll in 2023.<br><a href="#">Explore</a>  |

The Franklin County Auditor serves as the Chief Fiscal Officer of the county and is responsible for maintaining accurate records of all money received by and paid out of the county treasury. The auditor's fiscal staff processes revenue, budgetary, accounts payable, and payroll transactions. The sufficiency of cash balances to cover expenditures is closely monitored. Franklin County's financial transparency site provides the public with easy access to Franklin County's expenditure, revenue, and budget information for the current fiscal year and the previous four fiscal years.

## Ensuring Price Accuracy

In September 2022, the Franklin County Auditor's Office became aware that some Dollar General stores in other jurisdictions across the state and country were charging consumers incorrect prices for products.

As part of the office's mission to protect consumers, the Auditor's office Weights and Measures inspectors checked all Dollar General stores in Franklin County (outside the city of Columbus) and found that 8 out of 10 failed inspections because they were charging incorrect prices. In most cases, inspectors found that the scanned price was more expensive than the item's listed sale price. Many of the stores also failed a follow-up inspection.

To warn consumers, the office developed stickers to affix to the scanners that cautioned they had failed inspection. The failed inspections both here and in Butler County, Ohio, led the Ohio Attorney General to file suit against Dollar General in November. The Attorney General and Dollar General came to an agreement that requires charging correct prices in February 2023.



## Weights and Measures

Auditor Stinziano serves as the Sealer of Weights and Measures for businesses in Franklin County, excluding those located in the City of Columbus, and is responsible for the enforcement of all Ohio laws relating to weights and measures. Weights and Measures inspectors protect consumers by checking any weighing or measuring device that is used in commercial transactions at least once annually, including gas station pumps, grocery store scanners and scales, taxi meters, firewood, and more.

Across Franklin County, Weights and Measures staff members were inspecting scales, scanners, and gas pumps to ensure accuracy for consumers. In 2022, Weights and Measures inspected 9,690 gas meters and 3,448 gas pumps, cash registers, and scales and verified more than 22,000 prices. Inspectors also checked 1,689 credit card readers at gas pumps for card skimmers to prevent fraud. No skimmers were found in Franklin County.



**1,741 SCALES INSPECTED.**

**9,690 GAS METERS INSPECTED.**

**3,448 GAS PUMPS, CASH REGISTERS, AND SCALES INSPECTED.**

**1,246 ESTABLISHMENTS CHECKED.**

**22,043 PRICES VERIFIED**, including:

307 incorrect overcharges.

24 incorrect undercharges.

**1,689 CARD READERS CHECKED** for skimmers.



# TRANSPARENCY & ACCOUNTABILITY

## True Transactions Awards

The True Transactions Award is a recognition presented by the Franklin County Auditor's Office to businesses in Franklin County that have a flawless record of using accurate scanners and scales and have been verified by the Auditor's office Weights and Measures inspectors. Since taking office in March 2019, Auditor Stinziano has given out 37 True Transactions Awards to businesses throughout the county.



**Columbus Asia Market (CAM) located in Hilliard**  
(January 2022)



**Green Earth Recycling located in Brice** (April 2022)



**Happy Hostess House Cake Decorators located in Mifflin Township** (September 2022)



*My Community Café in Columbus was one of several small businesses highlighted by the Franklin County Auditor's Office in 2022.*

## Consumer Services

The Consumer Services Division is responsible for licensing dogs and vendors in Franklin County, including retail cigarette dealers.

**187 LICENSES ISSUED**  
to vendors.

**30 SMALL BUSINESSES HIGHLIGHTED**  
through weekly community hours.

**12 LOCAL BUSINESSES RECOGNIZED**  
for outstanding accuracy in weights and measures through the True Transaction Award.

## Protecting Our Pets

**88,753 TOTAL DOGS LICENSED** utilizing website, digital outreach, direct mail program, and educational videos.

**2023 "ME & MY PAL" CALENDAR RELEASE**  
featuring art from K–6 students representing 27 elementary schools across Franklin County.

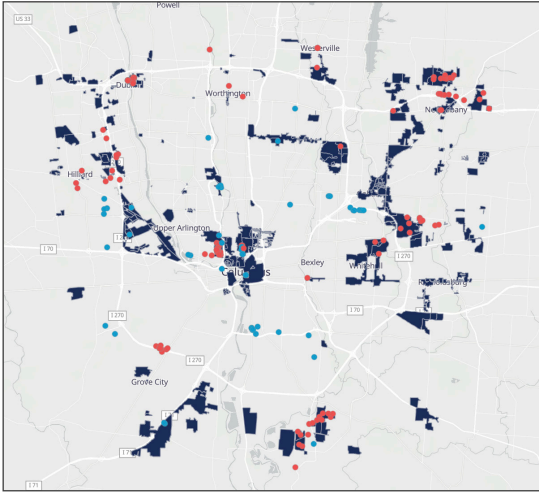
**13 MOBILE DOG-LICENSING EVENTS**  
held throughout Franklin County.





# PROTECTING PROPERTY OWNERS

## Tax Incentive Review Council

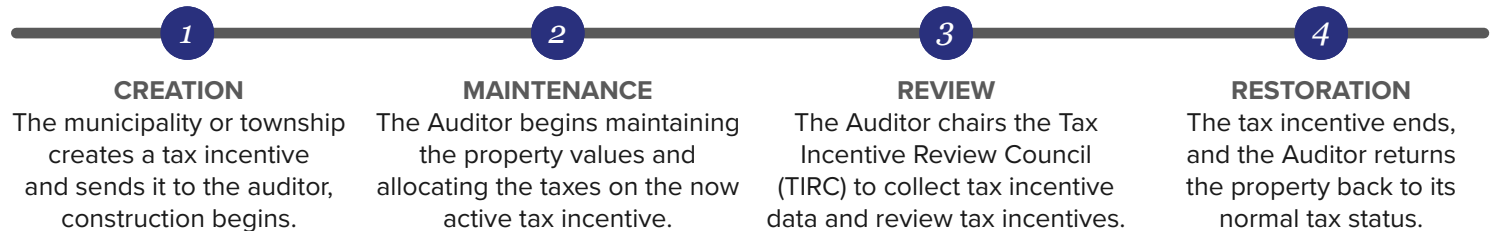


The Tax Incentive Review Council (TIRC) is a way to make tax incentives more transparent to taxpayers. Auditor Michael Stinziano serves as chair of the Tax Incentive Review Council.

- ✓ **294** projects reviewed
- ✓ **242** TIF projects reviewed
- ✓ **41,391** jobs created or retained
- ✓ **\$1,838,580,379** reported payroll
- ✓ **\$2,033,998,821** reported real estate investment
- ✓ **\$64,824,352** forgone tax
- ✓ **\$108,441,057** diverted TIF tax

## Tax Incentive Hub

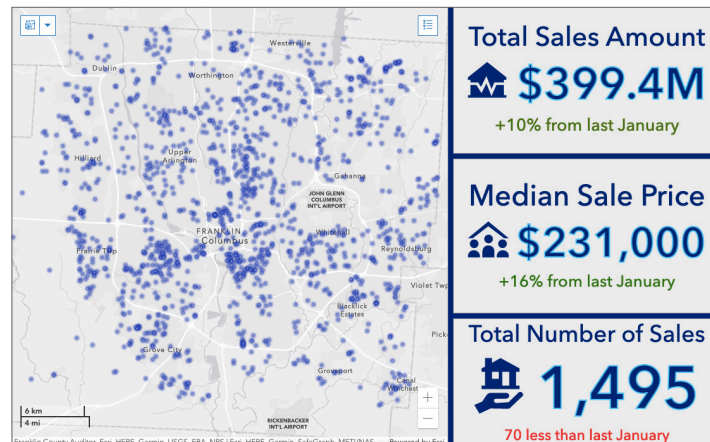
Your Franklin County Auditor's Office administers the tax incentives created by municipalities and townships and chairs the Tax Incentive Review Council (TIRC) that monitors the tax incentives each year. The goal of the Franklin County Auditor is to ensure each incentive and its ongoing status is transparent and provides the benefits promised to our communities — and if not, having a record of why.



## Real Estate Review

The Auditor's office maintains the most comprehensive real estate records in Franklin County and is responsible for appraising more than 435,777 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.

- ✓ **60,539** property transfers, splits, and combinations processed.
- ✓ **19,915** rental registration applications processed.
- ✓ **3,450** homestead exemption applications processed.
- ✓ **\$54,300** generated from 9 parcels sold at the Auditor's Sale.



*The Franklin Auditor's Office updated rental registration procedures to improve compliance and decrease fines for property owners.*

# REASSESSING PROPERTY VALUE

## Know Your Home Value

The Auditor's office is responsible for updating values for every property in the county to keep them in line with the current real estate market.

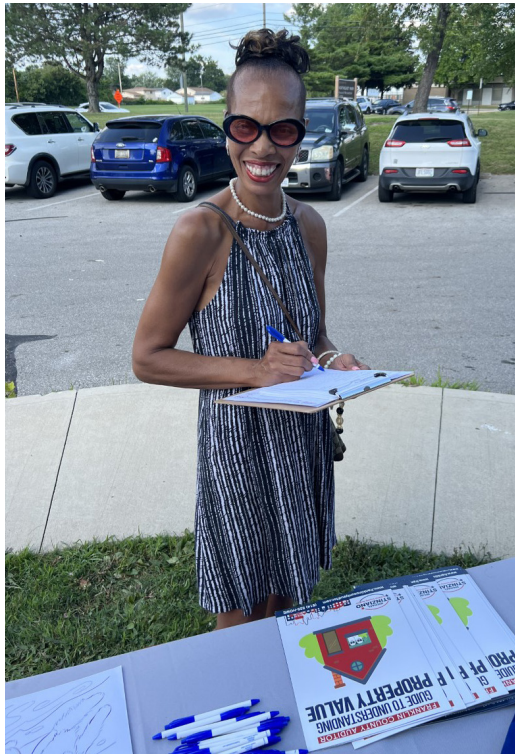
- ✓ **281,608** properties receive the owner-occupancy tax exemption.
- ✓ **44,900** properties receive the homestead exemption.
- ✓ **71,587** properties registered as rentals.
- ✓ **1,436** owner-occupancy tax exemption applications processed.
- ✓ **\$41,633,322.14** in property tax refunded, including:
  - \$5,968.97 for 47 manufactured homes, and
  - \$41,627,353.17 for 6,809 parcels.
- ✓ **\$34,579,506.47** in special assessment charges on 65,000 parcels.



There are **440,245** parcels in Franklin County with a total real estate market value of **\$148,202,341,590**.

In 2022, **79** properties were granted valuation deduction for damage or destroyed property, and **8,761** value certificates were processed.

## Neighborhood Survey



Your Franklin County Auditor's Office launched the first-ever Neighborhood Survey in 2022 for residents to share feedback on how they view their neighborhoods ahead of the 2023 mass reappraisal. This is one of the many ways the office has continued to prepare for the 2023 reappraisal and has worked to implement Kirwin Report recommendations.



## Board of Revision

The Franklin County Board of Revision (BOR) hears complaints on the market value of your property and can adjust the value based on presented evidence.

**2,639**

REAL ESTATE REVIEW  
HEARINGS HELD

**280**

REAL ESTATE REVIEW  
MEDIATIONS HELD



# LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

Your Auditor's office frequently advocates on behalf of residents and businesses of Franklin County to local, state, and federal elected officials about important issues that impact their lives.

## 2023–2024 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES



### PROPERTY TAX RELIEF

- ✓ Property tax is an important revenue stream but can be an excessive burden on residents.
- ✓ Value changes and new levies can cause spikes in property tax that are difficult, particularly for those with fixed incomes.
- ✓ The FCAO seeks legislation that provides relief for burdened homeowners and residents while maintaining critical support for local government.
- ✓ Action for property tax relief can also include expanding the homestead exemption to help older adults age in the right place.



### CONSUMER PROTECTION

- ✓ DTE does not have the resources and tools to timely and accurately analyze property values for residential and, particularly, commercial and industrial properties.
- ✓ The division's over-reliance on hard copies of records and out-of-date technology undermines confidence in its approval or disapproval of county-appraised values.
- ✓ Current appropriation levels are at approximately 50% of just a few years ago. The operating budget is the best opportunity to address this issue.



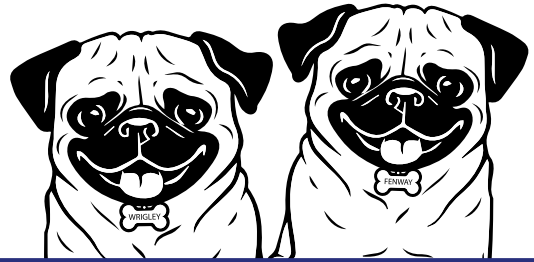
### PROPERTY PROTECTION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- ✓ Abatements and tax increment financing can be useful for economic development when targeted well and not simply used as a means to avoid taxation or fund projects that would occur regardless.
- ✓ The FCAO joins the County Commissioners Association of Ohio in its request for more local control for approval of larger incentives, including at the county level.
- ✓ Maintain and support incentives that actually contribute to the community as promised.
- ✓ Tax Incentive Review Committees need better tools and enforcement options to hold accountable those who benefit from incentives.



### DOG LICENSING LAWS

- ✓ Counties should have the flexibility to create alternate licensing fees and license issuing for lower-income pet owners.
- ✓ Updates and clarifications are warranted regarding the licensure of service and rescue group animals.



### PROPERTY TAX ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (PTAP)

Franklin County Commissioners partnered with Auditor Stinziano to approve \$80,000 in additional funding for the Property Tax Assistance Program (PTAP), which provides emergency one-time property tax assistance to low-income homeowners ages 60 and older. This was previously a nonprofit entity funded solely through donations.

PTAP applications are reviewed by a board that includes the Franklin County Auditor's Office, Franklin County Treasurer's Office, Franklin County Office on Aging, and Central Ohio Area Agency on Aging.

### HOMEOWNERS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (HAP)

As part of Auditor Stinziano's efforts to increase the accessibility of the Board of Revision (BOR) complaint-filing process, the office is partnering with the Legal Aid Society of Columbus for a second year to present the Homeowner Assistance Program, which is designed to assist low- to moderate-income homeowners in filing a complaint about the appraised value of their owner-occupied home through the Franklin County Board of Revision. This program is available to Franklin County homeowners with gross annual incomes below \$75,000 and involves connecting homeowners with volunteer legal and real estate experts who will assist them in navigating the BOR process.

# VISION, MISSION, AND CORE COMPETENCIES

## *Vision Statement*

The Franklin County Auditor's Office will serve the residents and businesses of Franklin County by protecting consumers, providing fair and equitable real estate assessments, and ensuring fiscal integrity.

## *Mission Statement*

Our mission is to deliver superior 21st-century services to the residents and businesses of Franklin County, serve as the principal monitor of county funds, and be a primary resource for information regarding Franklin County.

## *Core Competencies*

**ACCESSIBILITY:** Ensure all our functions are available to all residents and businesses, both digitally and physically.

**ACCOUNTABILITY:** Take responsibility for the quality and timeliness of providing information and results to the residents and businesses.

**CONSTITUENT SERVICE:** Respond in an accurate and timely manner to residents and businesses, and anticipate their needs.

**COMMUNICATION:** Inform and educate regarding the responsibilities and functions of county government and, specifically, of the County Auditor.

**INNOVATION:** Remain proactive in implementing new technologies to provide 21st-century services.

**PROFESSIONALISM:** Perform our work with integrity, compassion, and empathy.

