



MICHAEL ★
STINZIANO
★ Franklin County Auditor

ANNUAL REPORT

AN UPDATE TO THE COMMUNITY

2019–2020



www.franklincountyauditor.com

LETTER FROM YOUR FRANKLIN COUNTY AUDITOR



When I took office on March 11 as your Franklin County Auditor I set a variety of goals that would build an office that offers the very best public service for residents and businesses throughout Franklin County.

I am happy to report that we have made progress in making the office accessible, transparent, and accountable to Franklin County residents and businesses. The office is protecting taxpayer dollars and efficiently delivering services to help make our community the best place to live and work.

Your Auditor's office is out in the community more than ever, listening to and helping constituents. I am excited to say that in the past year I have held community hours meetings in every municipality in Franklin County, from townships to villages and cities. The meetings allow me to hear firsthand the thoughts and ideas of constituents, and work on their suggestions to improve the Auditor's office.

The Auditor's office has amplified its outreach and presence at events, attending dozens of fairs, festivals, and other events throughout the county. In addition, the office has expanded the number of informal review sessions for residents who want to challenge their property values. The office has also hosted two Affordable Housing Fairs with resources and information for residents seeking affordable housing.

Modernization efforts continue to bring the office into the 21st century with easy and accessible services. Forms are electronically fillable. Transfer and conveyance standards have been updated to allow e-filing. Gas pump stickers and informational brochures feature QR codes that can be scanned for more information and options.

We unveiled a totally redesigned mobile app in 2019 that features searches of properties based on your device's GPS location. On the website, we launched the brand-new Real Estate Dashboard, using GIS mapping to show property sales localized down to municipalities, area commissions, townships, and school districts.

To address a downward trend in the rate of dog licensing in recent years, the office worked with county commissioners to find creative ways to increase renewals by expanding the license renewal period by two months, through March 31.

In addition, the office is protecting consumers with the launch of a new fraud hotline where residents can call **614-525-SCAM** or email consumerprotection@franklincountyohio.gov to report instances of fraud. The weights and measures inspectors also continue to check for credit card skimmers at gas pumps across the county.

In partnership with Franklin County farmers, the office created a streamlined process with the Board of Revision that helped those affected by catastrophic spring flooding to stay on the tax-reducing CAUV program. The special docket expedited the use of the CAUV for fields that were unusable for a second year in 2019 or 2020.

In short, the Auditor's office has kept promises in leading an office that serves our community with innovative, modern ideas and initiatives. While the past year has been busy, your Franklin County Auditor's office looks to build upon the progress made, with the goal of further achievements on the horizon.

MICHAEL STINZIANO
FRANKLIN COUNTY AUDITOR

INTRODUCTION

FRANKLIN COUNTY AUDITOR MICHAEL STINZIANO took office on March 11, 2019, committed to creating a new relationship between the Auditor's office and the residents and businesses of Franklin County. Priorities included setting aggressive goals for reform and improvements based on feedback from residents. This report supports Auditor Stinziano's commitment to transparency and accountability in serving the community.

The office remains busy with day-to-day operations, continuing work on initial goals, and long-term planning. This report highlights the achievements of the office in the first year of the administration. As always, your Franklin County Auditor's office welcomes comments and suggestions from all at **614-525-HOME** or **auditorstinziano@franklincountyohio.gov**.

YOUR AUDITOR'S OFFICE REACHED GOALS IN THE FOLLOWING KEY AREAS:

Protecting Consumers

Saving Taxpayer Dollars & Promoting Fiscal Responsibility

Promoting Transparency in Government

Supporting Affordable Housing Initiatives



PROTECTING CONSUMERS



Inspected **2,094** scales

Inspected **4,162** gas meters

Issued **259** vendor licenses

- 🏠 Launched informative Weights & Measures stickers.
 - New Weights and Measures information stickers include the Auditor's website and QR code to provide consumers more information and contact options for any Weights & Measures questions or concerns.
 - The consumer complaint form can be found [here](#).

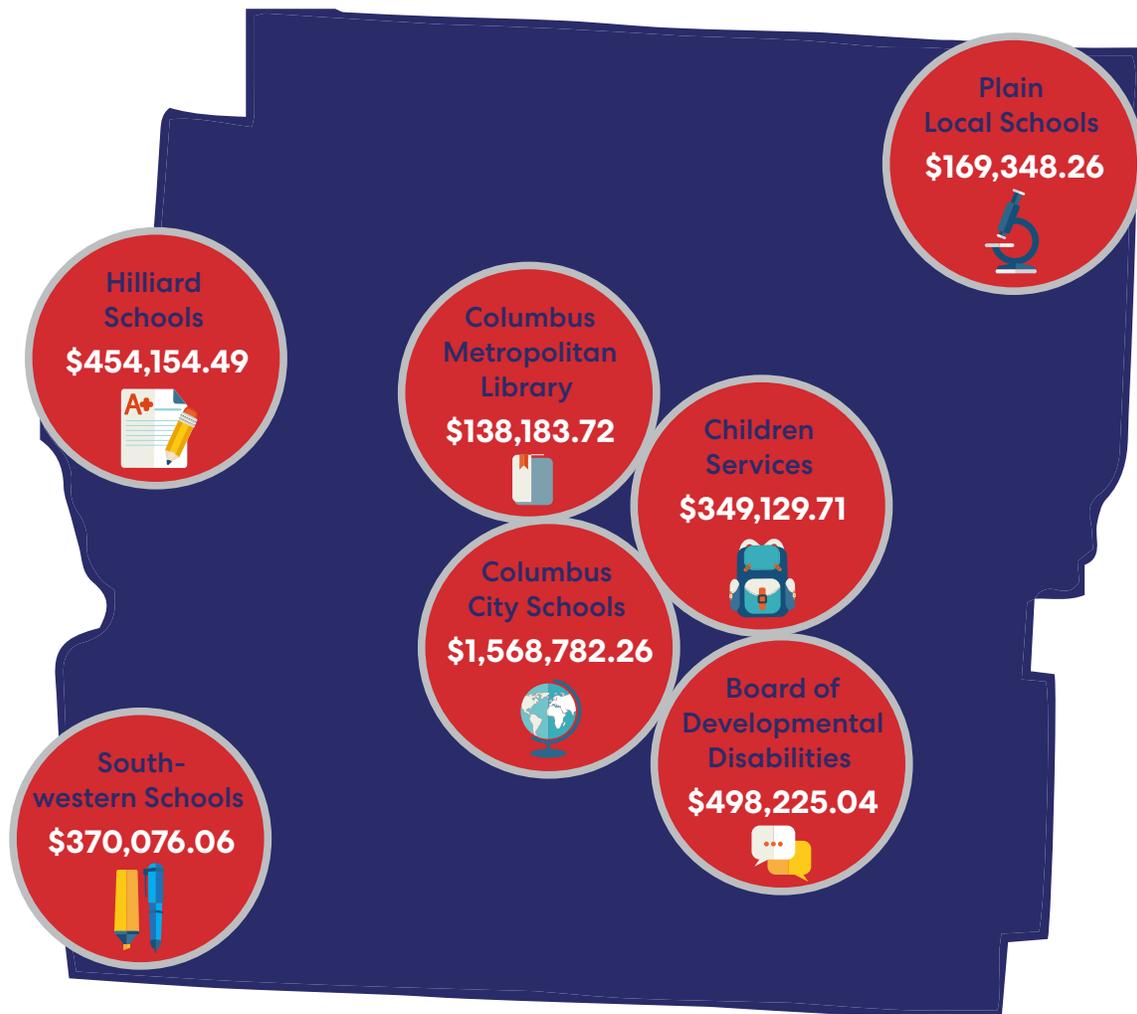


- 🏠 Launched a fraud hotline to protect Franklin County residents from county, state, and national scams. To report an instance of fraud, call **614-525-SCAM** or email consumerprotection@franklincountyohio.gov.
- 🏠 In partnership with the FBI, the Auditor's staff participated in a coordinated effort to ensure there were no skimmers on Franklin County gas pumps. Every gas station pump was checked for credit card skimmers. Auditor Stinziano created a sticker to put on fuel pumps to signify these pumps passed inspection.

TRANSPARENCY, ACCESSIBILITY & ACCOUNTABILITY

- 🏠 Conducted a performance audit of the 2017 reappraisal process to improve future outcomes, including assessing vendors and implementing several key recommendations.
- 🏠 Created the position of Open Government and Legal Services Manager to provide accessible public records and streamline a comprehensive response plan.
- 🏠 Directed all staff to participate in ethics training provided online by the Ohio Ethics Commission.
- 🏠 Banned office employees from making campaign contributions to the Auditor.
- 🏠 Updated public records policy and engaged in staff training on streamlined responses.

SAVING TAXPAYER DOLLARS, PROMOTING FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

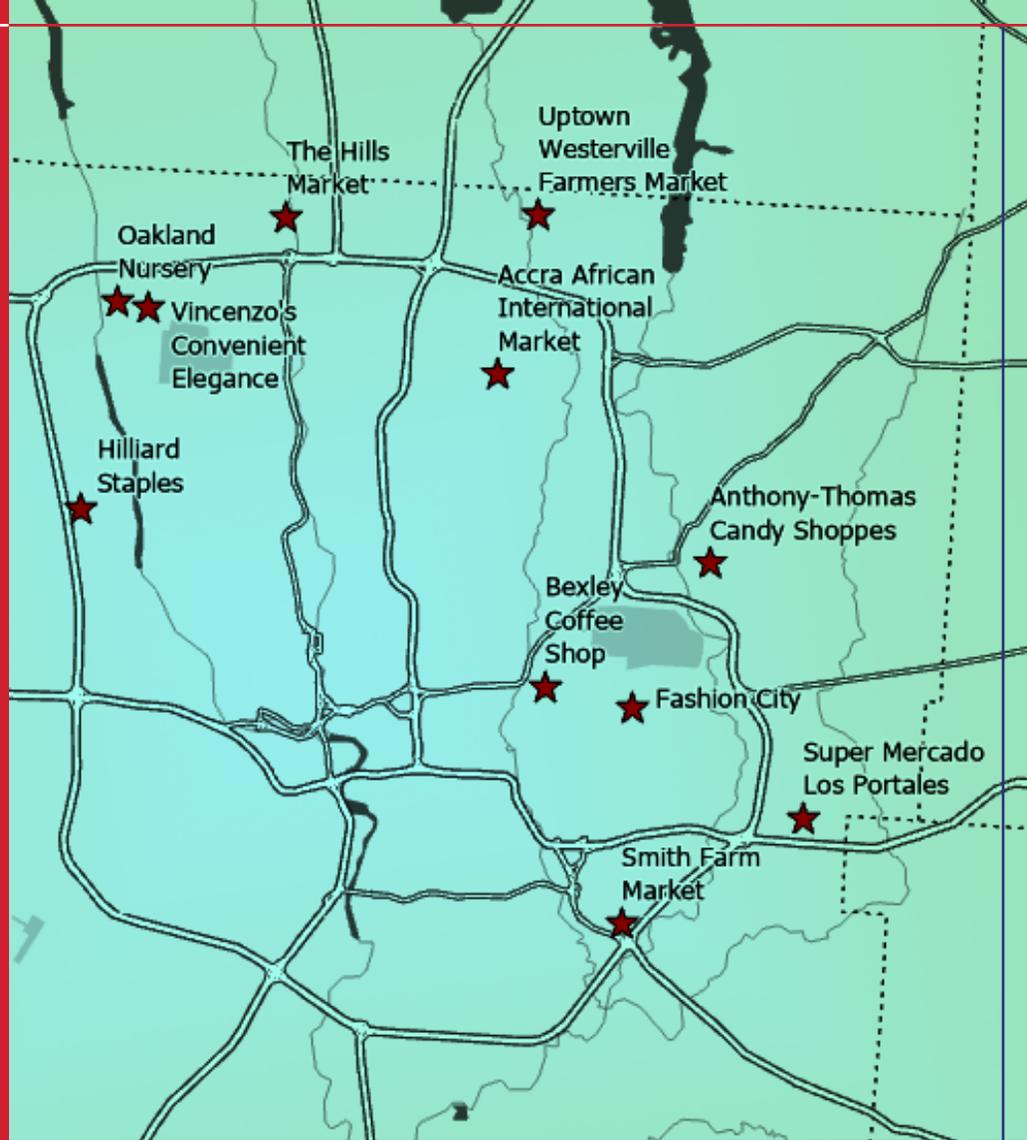


AFTER PRUDENT FISCAL MANAGEMENT, YOUR FRANKLIN COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE WAS ABLE TO RETURN \$7 MILLION TO SCHOOLS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS FROM THE REAL ESTATE ASSESSMENT FUND.

-  Eliminated or did not renew underutilized contracts, saving more than \$782,534.
-  Eliminated a transfer fee that predominantly impacted women.
-  As Chief Fiscal Officer for the county, the office received an award of excellence from the Auditor of State for the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR), as well as a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association.
-  Moved to digital and email communication, improving taxpayer experience and decreased costs.

**DEVELOPED
THE TRUE
TRANSACTION
AWARD TO
RECOGNIZE
OUTSTANDING
LOCAL
BUSINESSES.**

**ISSUED 11
AWARDS
ACROSS
FRANKLIN
COUNTY.**



CREATED AN INCLUSIVE AND ACCOUNTABLE EMPLOYEE CULTURE

-  Auditor Stinziano worked with Innovation Ohio, Ohio Women's Public Policy Network, and Paid Leave for the United States (PL+US) to develop one of the most comprehensive paid leave policies in the state. The policy is gender-neutral and provides six weeks of paid leave for families with new children and employees taking care of family members.
-  Recognized AFSCME Council 8 as the bargaining representative for eligible Franklin County Auditor's office employees.
-  Reorganized office to maximize efficiency across all departments.



PRIORITIZED CONSTITUENT SERVICE

Answering questions regarding real estate, property taxes, licensing, and much more. The goal is for your Franklin County Auditor's office to be a one-stop shop for constituent needs across Franklin County.

- 🏠 The office's public information specialists handled 41,911 calls for the year.
 - Average time call was answered — **12 seconds**
 - Average time per call — **3 minutes, 16 seconds**

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS IN EDUCATION



- 🏠 Co-sponsored homebuyer education courses working with Homes on the Hill, Columbus Urban League, and Homeport.
- 🏠 Created a partnership with Beechwood Elementary, creating a yearlong commitment to staff tutoring and mentorship.
- 🏠 Supported career day events focused on GIS, Weights & Measures, and technology.
- 🏠 Partnered with COSI for the first-ever Science Fest.

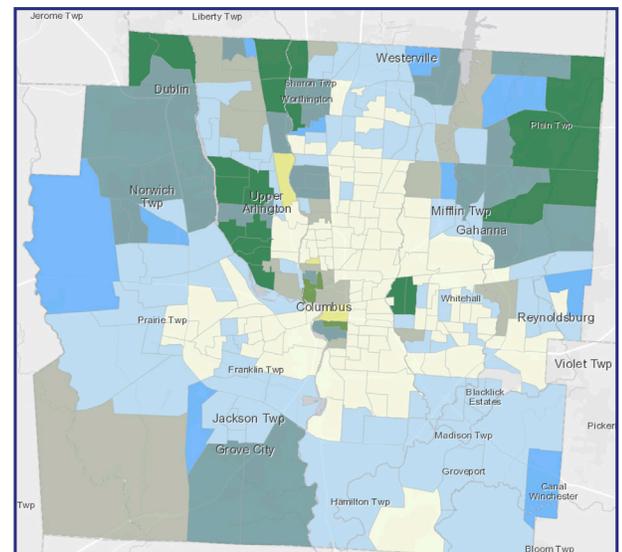
LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

- 🏠 Submitted testimony on behalf of the CAAO in support of H.B. 439, which would increase the value of the homestead property tax to keep pace with inflation to help maintain the benefit to older Ohioans and those with disabilities.
- 🏠 Joined the CAAO in supporting: H.B. 47 to increase the time by which property tax complaints must be decided; H.B. 99 to increase the income threshold for the homestead exemption and to increase and index the value of the exemption; and H.B. 255 to require the department of taxation to issue reports on the cost of tax exemptions, including property tax exemptions.
- 🏠 Joined the CAAO in opposing: H.B. 149, which would exempt from property tax certain developments without any local control or input.
- 🏠 Announced Property Tax Relief and Local Government Support Act, partnering with Sen. Hearcel Craig and Congresswoman Joyce Beatty.



AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- 🏠 Provided housing data related to rental registration, homestead exemption, and owner-occupied credit that has been leveraged as part of the broader housing conversation in Franklin County.
- 🏠 The office hosted two Affordable Housing Fairs with over 30 community partners and government organizations.
- 🏠 Assumed oversight of the Property Tax Assistance Program (PTAP). The program provides emergency property tax assistance to qualifying homeowners age 60 years or older, and relies on donations solely to fund the program.
- 🏠 Implemented ability to provide an email address with rental registrations to streamline provision of information regarding updates and renewals. The rental registration form will also be available as a fillable PDF for the first time to improve both the user experience and accuracy of the information.
- 🏠 Increasing the integration of GIS service into the work of the Auditor's office and partnership is ongoing. In partnership with other agencies, provided a visual representation of data related to housing, health, and economic well-being.
 - GIS personnel contributed to the ongoing census tract updating project coordinated by Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC).
- 🏠 Joined with other government agencies and advocacy groups to form the Landlord Partnership Collaborative to identify and advocate for support for those with barriers to housing.
- 🏠 There are approximately 54,000 homestead recipients, 277,000 owner-occupied homes, and 82,000 rental buildings registered within Franklin County.



Housing Affordability Map available at
franklincountyauditor.com

2019 REAL ESTATE REVIEW

- 🏠 Worked in partnership with the Franklin Farm Bureau to help farmers by streamlining the process for continuing Current Agricultural Use Value (CAUV) status if they were unable to plant fields due to weather. This helps farmers keep their farmland tax breaks even if weather did not permit them to plant crops.
- 🏠 In conjunction with OSU Real Estate Department, issued first Year in Review summary of property sales, building on the Real Estate Dashboard.
- 🏠 Resolved 2,390 of the 2,430 (98.4%) Board of Revision cases.
- 🏠 Updated Transfer & Conveyance standards, and processed 50,404 transfers in 2019.
- 🏠 Updated the Board of Revision rules to make it easier for homeowners to engage in the BOR process.
- 🏠 Worked with the Supreme Court of Ohio's Office on Mediation to better align the BOR Mediation program with the standards and rules in the Model Mediation Act.

REAL ESTATE

Your Franklin County Auditor's office maintains the most comprehensive set of real estate records available in Franklin County. The real estate division oversees the appraisal of 432,388 parcels.

In tax year 2019, Franklin County reached a record high of \$120.1 billion in total real estate market value. 2019's number of \$120.1 billion is a 2.3 percent increase on last year's previous high (\$117.3 billion). The next announcement of the county's total value will come in November 2020.



TAX ACCOUNTING

Tax accounting processed 20,550 value certificates in 2019. This work changes the value of a parcel and resulted in:

🏠 **\$26,448,711.44** in refunds issued

🏠 **\$42,097,846.20** in charges removed

In addition, we assisted political subdivisions in providing additional services such as street lighting, sewer construction, and nuisance abatements by placing \$183,674,928.51 in special assessment charges on 53,385 parcels.

BRINGING THE OFFICE TO *You*



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

-  Auditor Stinziano has held **497 Community Hours** meetings since first holding elected office, **65** since taking office as your Franklin County Auditor.
-  Developed joint community hours with other county officeholders for residents of Franklin County.
-  Distributed a monthly e-newsletter to keep the public informed of upcoming activities of the office and updated the Frequently Asked Questions [sections](#) of the website to aid constituents in finding information quickly.
-  Developed plans for both a more accessible satellite office and a mobile office to be finalized by summer 2020.
-  Held **31 mobile dog licensing events** throughout Franklin County.
-  Developed the True Transaction Award to recognize outstanding local businesses. Issued **11 awards**, with emphasis on minority-owned businesses.
-  Participated in over **100 community events, including 24 National Night Out** neighborhood events.

Community Hours Meetings Held
Since First Taking Elected Office

497

65

Community Hours Meetings Held, Including Every
Village, City, and Township Across Franklin County

EXPANDED DOG LICENSE ACCESSIBILITY

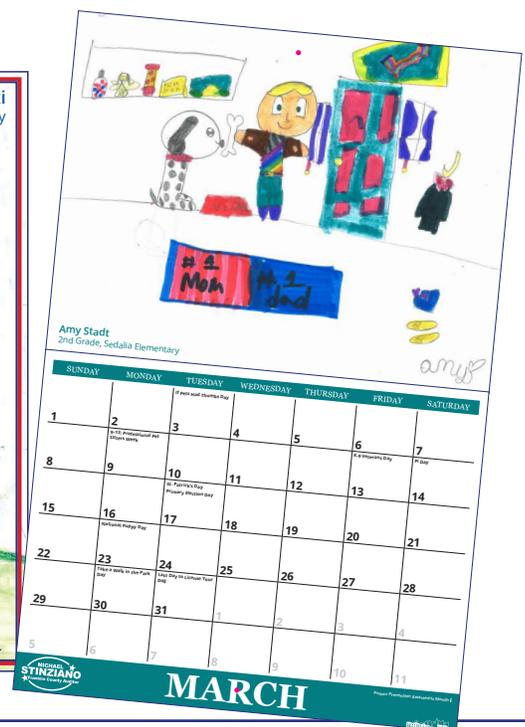
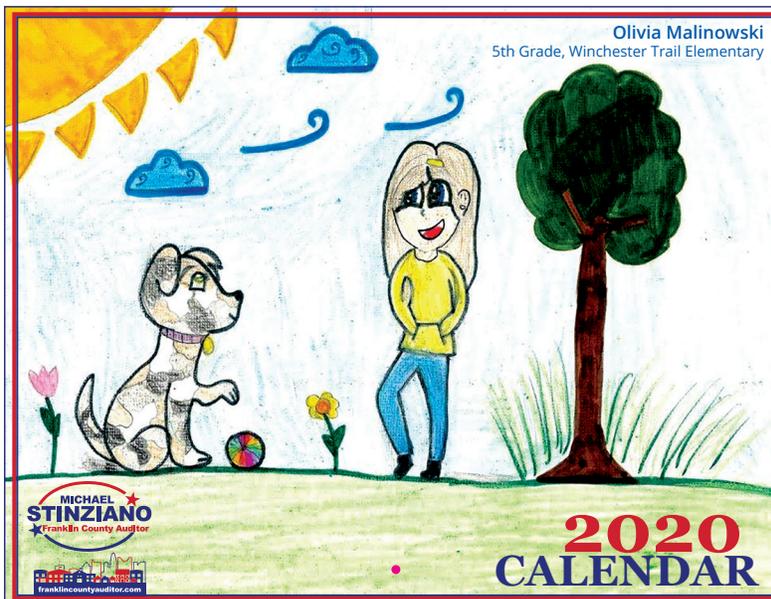
7.91% INCREASE

Auditor Stinziano worked with the Franklin County Commissioners on a pilot program to extend the dog licensing deadline from January 31 to March 31. This extension, along with new partnerships with area rescue groups, veterinarians, and nonprofit groups, has led to an increase in the number of permanent dog licenses issued.



DOG LICENSING

- Established a working group between the Auditor's office and the Franklin County Dog Shelter & Adoption Center that is focused on how to jointly improve dog licensing.
- Extended the deadline to register a dog to March 31.
- Built relationships with dog businesses and advocacy/rescue groups.
- Issued a record number of permanent dog licenses.
- Conducted extensive outreach with veterinarians to determine best practices in licensing.
- Held annual Me & My Pal drawing contest to promote responsible dog ownership and licensing, with participation from 27 elementary schools across Franklin County.



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

