

Delaware County Economic  
Development Department

# Annual Report

## 2020





# Executive Summary

Delaware County saw continued residential growth in 2020, despite the COVID-19 pandemic. The population increased from 209,177 in 2019 to 213,263 in 2020 and average household income stayed the same compared to last year at \$104,322. We anticipate continued growth as building continues, especially as people seek to escape larger cities due to the virus. In 2020, our office took the initiative on several key items.

## **COVID-19 Response**

- o Creation of COVID recovery task force
- o Small Business Assistance Program (Helped 21 businesses)
- o Small Business Protection Program (130 businesses received grants, \$1,950,000 total)
- o DelCommunity (12 businesses created videos, 47,370 total views on those videos)
- o Webinars (29 businesses attended)
- o RLF (12 businesses received loans, \$289,750 total)
- o 5.75 million and funds disbursed to the community

## **U.S. 23 Corridor**

- o Completed the Branding Project, Delaware Connection 23
- o Finished the first part of the Overlay project in Orange Township which covers approximately 1,600 acres of land in the Township

## **Creekside Business Park**

- o Addition of 200,000 sq ft of flex office space

## **Berlin Business Park**

- o Township Trustees adopted both zoning overlays that made up the Berlin Business Park
- o Our office began work to implement utilities and incentives packaging for development in the area.
- o Implementation of a comprehensive Business Attraction Plan

## **CDBG 2020/Kilbourne**

- o Approval of CDBG PY 2020 Application to assist the redevelopment effort in Kilbourne
- o Creation of the Kilbourne TIF to help pay for infrastructure costs

# Executive Summary

## Housing Policy and Goals

- o Continued work with the Delaware County Housing Alliance to create more opportunities for obtainable housing
- o Working with *Pathways to Hope* to fund emergency rental assistance to assist those most vulnerable in our community

## Trails

- o Adjustments made to the funding structure of the grant and are preparing to assist in creating additional trails in Delaware County

## Cellular/Fiber

- o Finished the Cellular/Fiber Connectivity plan to address the challenges the County faces in the digital divide

## Business Retention and Expansion (BRE)

- o Engaged top businesses and small businesses to gauge their response to the COVID-19 pandemic and other challenges this year. This year we were able to reach out to a total of 282 businesses through our various COVID-19 programs and non-COVID-19 programs including meeting with top employers with OneColumbus.

## Delaware County Finance Authority (DCFA)

- o Acquisition of property – Format
- o Morrow & Pickaway Agreement
- o Liberty, Orange and Ostrander
- o Big Walnut Growth Plan
- o PACE – Orange Expansion
- o One Delaware Agreement

# Delaware County Finance Authority



The Delaware County Finance Authority thrived in 2020 and was able to move forward on several key agreements and partnerships that will be built upon in 2021 to further assist economic development efforts in Delaware County. This year was all about partnerships for the Finance Authority. It was able to secure agreements for services with Berkshire Township, Liberty Township, and Orange Township to provide economic development services. A similar agreement with the Village of Ostrander are also in the works for early 2021. The Finance Authority expanded its partnerships outside of the County by securing agreements with Morrow County and Pickaway County to aid with development projects. The Finance Authority hopes to expand its services to additional counties in 2021 to support Delaware County through a regional approach to economic development. Partnerships continue with the launch of the Strategic Partnership program. The goal of this program is to support local community organizations whose missions align with Delaware County's Smart Growth initiatives.

The Delaware County Regional Energy Improvement District or the Regional ESID, which is used to administer the County's PACE program, another initiative in 2020 that saw expansion. The district expanded to Orange Township this year and has the ability to expand to other townships. Since the completion of the Ostrander Economic Development Action Plan, the village engaged the Delaware County Finance Authority to provide support services similar to other townships. This would include assisting them in creating a zoning overlay and doing some basic financial analysis as the village continues to grow.

# DelCo Ready Programs

## **Berlin Business Park**

As 2020 came to a close, the western and eastern zoning overlays, collectively known as the Berlin Business Park, were approved in November and December, respectively, by the Berlin Township Trustees. These approvals were the first step in repositioning nearly 1,750 acres along the US36/SR37 corridor for commercial, retail, office, and light industrial uses. Economic Development and the DCFA have worked with local officials and stakeholders for nearly two years on this project, and the resulting product will set the stage for new development in not only this corridor but throughout Delaware County for years to come. Smart Growth tools such as the overlays allow officials to guide the development toward that which utilizes design guidelines and attracts end-users desired by the community. Additionally, the new development will help fund the needed infrastructure improvements in and around the BBP. The recipients of local property tax dollars, such as schools and safety services, will see revenues generated at a higher rate than otherwise would have been with single-family residential development. The repositioning also significantly decreases the number of new students that would have been generated had the land been developed as single-family residential. Interest in the BBP continues to increase and our office is fielding calls almost daily. The focus next will be the implementation of financing structures to extend the needed utilities.

## **Orange Route 23 Commercial Overlay District**

Delaware Connection 23 enjoyed major success in 2020 with the adoption of the Orange Route 23 Commercial Overlay District (RCOD) in October. The Orange Township trustees hired the Delaware County Finance Authority staff to assist in the creation of a 1,825-acre commercial overlay zone from Shanahan Road to Lazelle Road. This project helps reposition land along the corridor for more commercial-oriented uses that make sense for around the area and creates a more efficient development and redevelopment process diversifies taxes and increases the ability to provide much-needed infrastructure improvements. The area can expect to see more commercial, advanced manufacturing, and R&D, mixed-use developments for more walkable areas, as well as better connected bike paths and more green space.

# DelCo Ready Programs

## County-wide Fiber and Cellular Plan

In 2020, we finalized the plan for county-wide improvements to the fiber and cellular service. We look forward to presenting this plan to the County Commissioners in 2021 and bringing forward a financing plan to aid in the expansion of fiber/cellular services throughout the county, focused on serving local communities and resident needs. This plan will be focused on structuring public/private partnerships. This year, we were also able to finalize a marketing agreement with Delaware County and Cell Site Capital to provide services to market potential areas for cellular towers and more. We expect this to bridge the divide and generate revenues for the County.

# DelCo Invest Programs

## **COVID-19 Programs**

In March, we were made aware of the full effects of COVID-19 and the subsequent state-wide shut down of non-essential businesses. It was at that time the COVID-19 Recovery Task Force was created, which was led by the County Administrator and economic development. Through this, several programs with great impact were created.

### **Small Business Assistance Program**

The Small Business Assistance Program was created to help businesses access expert consultants to assist them to navigate the initial wave of COVID-19 problems. Our office had access to specialists to help businesses with topics such as Human Resources, accessing PPP loans and other financial assistance, general account assistance, and general legal assistance. Through this, we also hosted several webinars to provide more targeted information to businesses such as liability concerns with COVID-19, and long term planning for exiting the pandemic economy. Through this program, we were able to assist 21 businesses through the program and had 29 businesses attend the webinars.

### **DelCommunity**

Our office assisted Destination Delaware in launching the DelCommunity campaign. This was a marketing program consisting of short videos by the owners of local businesses to promote themselves as lockdown restrictions were lifted. The program had 12 businesses participate. Destination Delaware posted these videos to social media and had a positive response.

### **Small Business Protection Program**

The Small Business Protection Program was a grant program that was authorized by the Commissioners and administered by our office. The program offered up to \$15,000 grants to eligible businesses. This program was administered to 129 businesses, with a total of \$1,935,000 in grants given.

# DelCo Invest Programs

## **Business Advocacy Grant Program**

The Businesses Advocacy Grant Program was created to assist organizations that directly assist our business communities such as local chamber groups and other business associations. The program was designed to fund new marketing initiatives that would highlight each association's business membership. This program offered up to \$25,000 for this new marketing program.

## **Revolving Loan Fund**

The Delaware County Revolving Loan Fund was created to bridge a financial gap for businesses. The fund provided up to a \$25,000 loan at a 4% interest rate. The RLF has loaned out \$289,750 to 12 businesses.

## **Liberty Township**

Our office worked closely with Liberty Township on several initiatives in 2020. They were a crucial part of the creation of the County's RLF fund as a main financial contributor. In the later part of the year, our office helped to produce a more robust outreach strategy to the business community to engage industries most affected by the pandemic. In addition, we established a contractual arrangement with the Township and the DCFA to provide economic development, planning and facility management services that will lead into 2021. We are excited to continue with our partnership with Liberty Township.

## **Kilbourne Redevelopment**

Our office has worked closely with the developer involved in the redevelopment of the Kilbourne downtown commercial area. Through our CDBG grant we awarded \$244,000 in infrastructure funding needed in the Kilbourne area. We are also making progress in applying for the critical infrastructure grant through the CDBG program as well to further assist with sewer infrastructure that will be needed in Brown Township. The implementation of a TIF to aid long-term infrastructure needs was also introduced this year.



# DelCo Smart Programs

## U.S. Route 23 Branding Initiative

Another major success this year was the formal branding of US23 in Delaware County. *Delaware Connection 23* was established to create a unified marketing strategy for the U.S. Route 23 Corridor. Branding the highway was a recommendation from the U.S. Route 23 Corridor Study, a planning study conducted by One Delaware, a private economic development organization. Planning consultant MKSK recognized that communities along the corridor lacked a sense of place, particularly in Southern Delaware County. The brand is meant to acknowledge the diversity of communities and landscapes, giving each community a better sense of identity, while highlighting connectivity.

Currently, U.S. Route 23 has a reputation for being congested but is projected to be a high growth area for the next several years. DC23 will give existing businesses more pride as well as make the area more attractive for smart growth development.

This would lead to opportunities for infrastructure improvements to help with current and future congestion.

Here are some notable points about the brand and our target audience:

**Theme:** Green and Growing

**Positioning Statement:** The U.S. Route 23 Corridor Plan is a shared vision for the main transportation artery in Delaware County that leverages its central location, connectivity, and prime real estate to transform the corridor into a well-planned, attractive, and vibrant boulevard with right-fit development to support residents and businesses.

**Logo:** This mark speaks to DC23 as the main transportation artery and gives the road to progress. The trajectory of the road gives the logo a sense of activity and momentum. The 2 and 3 come together as a symbol of connectivity. The primary colors of green and blue speak to being sustainable, grounded and growing.

## Target Audiences:

- Residents
- Prospective Businesses
- Elected Officials
- Young Professionals
- Current Businesses
- Developers

# DelCo Smart Programs

## Housing Initiatives

Delaware County had the opportunity to partner with United Way of Delaware County several times on an initiative called Pathways to Hope in 2020. This was an emergency rental and utility assistance program that scaled up massively due to the pandemic and the state-wide shutdown. Throughout the year, the County granted United Way \$339,000 to assist with rental and utility payments. We will apply for a CDBG grant that would also assist United Way to expand capacity to assist more of our community moving forward.

The *Housing Alliance* was also active in 2020. With the release of the MORPC report for Affordable Housing and discussion with local leaders on the issue, the steering group will create recommendations for housing portions of comprehensive plans to further the conversation of affordable housing or obtainable housing. We are looking to reposition the group to better reach this goal in 2021.

## Delaware Entrepreneurial Center

We had a strong year regarding expanding programming at the center: we were able to move forward with online seminars for entrepreneurs and maintain capacity in the center for resident businesses. The group was also engaged in a strategic plan to elevate the programming of the center in 2021. Finally, the entrepreneurial center took a massive step in securing an agreement with the DOD to allow entrepreneurs at the center to take advantage of DOD programs focused on allowing emerging businesses to secure government contracts. The entrepreneurial center is the first of its kind in the state to establish this relationship. This relationship also brings the potential for new funding sources to the center.

## Workforce Initiatives

This year has been a great year for building partnerships for workforce initiatives. Our office engaged Dawson Careers on job fair opportunities, JFS on marketing their workforce programs, and Delaware Area Career Center as well as Columbus State on TechCred opportunities to upskill workers looking to go to the next level of employment. Transportation was another focus in our office. We look forward to working with Delaware County Transit and COTA more in 2021 to launch a transportation plan that caters to the business community.

# DelCo Engage Programs

## **Business Retention and Expansion**

2020 was a difficult year for many of our businesses in Delaware County. As we all know, local economies have been hit hard by the effects of the pandemic. Economic Development really focused on the small business community. This year, we were able to reach out to 254 businesses from a variety of different sectors. Our Small Business Protection Program allowed us to assist up to 135 businesses with \$15,000 grants. Through this program, we were able to fund 129 business. We assisted approximately 21 businesses through our Small Business Assistance Program which helped bring free consultation to our small business partners. The webinars we were able to offer through our SBAP program assisted 29 businesses, and we had 49 businesses apply to be on a mailing list for additional opportunities and information. This was a huge increase from previous years, and this does not include the several business conversations our office was involved in with One Columbus targeting some of the larger employers. Our office is dedicated to being a resource for all businesses in Delaware County and will continue to reach out as the full economic effects of COVID-19 unfold.

## **Speaking Opportunities**

Despite conferences moving to an online format, our office had plenty of opportunities to speak about our projects. Bob, Rob, and Kelsey all had a chance to present at the Ohio Economic Development Association's State Conference; Bob also had the opportunity to speak at an OEDA Economic Development and Planner conference in the second half of the year and spoke at the Department of Education's Annual State Conference to discuss Incentives and Partnerships with local school districts.

# Just the Numbers

Population: 210,384

Med. Age: 38.4

Per Capita Income: \$50,106

56.6% have a college degree

Businesses: 6,477

Total Employees: 76,770

White Collar: 80%

Blue Collar: 11%

Services: 9%

Unemployment rate: 11.2%

Households: 76,190

Avg. Size: 2.73

Med. Income: \$102,053

Med. Home Value: \$306,176

## Additional Information

- 1 new TIF created this year (Kilbourne TIF)
- Approximately 3,325 acres put into zoning overlays (~1,725 Berlin Business Park, ~1,600 Orange Township)



# 2021 Project Focus and Photos

## Infrastructure Fund

- Develop key infrastructure targets
- Develop financial and investment plan
- Develop Fiber/Cellular financial plan

## Liberty Township Comprehensive Plan, Design Standards and Overlay

- Establish Design Standards
- Create and implement a Comprehensive Plan and Overlay

## Business Attraction and Infrastructure program for Berlin Business Park

- Develop a plan for engagement
- Engage not less than 50 targeted organizations (developers, businesses, and site selectors)
- Develop sewer, water, gas and fiber plan

## New Investment along US 23

- At least \$20M in new TIF funds

## Improvement to Workforce Issues

- Enhance Coordination between employers and institutions
- Develop Transportation oriented plans

## Marketing and Engagement

- Shop Delaware Campaign
- Feasibility study for Hospitality Industry
- Powell Road Marketing