

RESIDENTS' GUIDE 2026



Franklin County
**BOARD OF
COMMISSIONERS**

Service. Progress. Excellence.



Board of Commissioners



JOHN O'GRADY



KEVIN L. BOYCE



ERICA C. CRAWLEY

Welcome Message

I am pleased to present to the residents of Franklin County the 2026 Residents' Guide to the Approved Budget. For the first time in over a decade, reductions were required due to the end of pandemic support, concerns about an economic downturn, and uncertainty over the upcoming federal and state budgets. Despite these challenges, we have been able to put together budget recommendations that align with the Commissioners' strategic priorities. By following our Core Principles, the 2026 Approved Budget will enable us to maintain the County's strong financial position while providing innovative programming that allows all residents to share in the community's progress and growth. Perseverance and the continued dedication of our employees to every resident, every day will keep this county strong.



KENNETH WILSON
COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

About Franklin County

Franklin County is one of the region's most diverse in socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, and educational attainment. Home to the City of Columbus, which serves as the County seat, Franklin County benefits from a broad base of industries, including trade & logistics, finance, education, healthcare, and government. The Franklin County Board of Commissioners governs in an environment of continual growth and must consider this impact while developing the annual budget.

As Ohio's most populous County, one of every nine residents in the State of Ohio calls Franklin County home. The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission estimates that the 15-County Central Ohio region will see growth of 726,000 people by 2050, which equates to 272,000 additional households and 357,000 additional workers. Almost half of that growth expected to be absorbed by Franklin County, resulting in a 26% increase over the current population.

While Franklin County has seen population growth and increasing opportunities, not everyone in the community has benefited. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the poverty rate for all people in Franklin County was 15.0% last year, slightly higher than the 13.5% before the pandemic. Even more distressing are the racial and other disparities—almost one in four African Americans and one in five children in Franklin County are living in poverty.

Franklin County

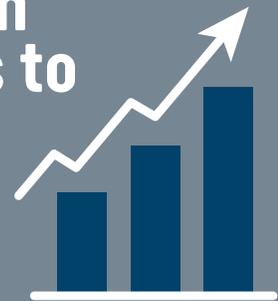
Centrally located

Home to the City of Columbus

Franklin County residents have diverse backgrounds

Population Continues to Grow

Central Ohio will grow by an estimated 726,000 people by 2050.



Nearly

50%

Of this growth will be in Franklin County



Franklin County Governance

The Board of Commissioners is Franklin County's taxing, budgeting, and purchasing authority. While the Commissioners establish the County budget, the independent agencies largely determine how they will spend it. The Commissioners have oversight of departments that provide building and zoning, human services, employment services, economic development and planning, water and sewer services, and environmental services.

Franklin County is governed by a complex organization of elected officials and independently appointed boards. Executive and fiduciary powers rest with a three-member Board of Commissioners. Eight other elected officials perform Ohio Revised Code mandated administrative functions as leaders of their respective offices, while other elected officials serve on the judiciary. An appointed County Administrator runs the County's daily operations, administers board directives, and prepares the County's operating and capital budgets with the support of the Office of Management & Budget. In addition, Administration is responsible for leading agency directors, coordinating county entities, and ensuring the Board's contractual obligations are properly performed.

[County Agencies Org Chart](#) →

Every resident, every day.

People of Franklin County



BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Animal Care & Control
Child Support Enforcement
Community Partnerships
Economic Development & Planning
General Services*
Human Resources
Job & Family Services
Office of Justice Policy & Programs
Office on Aging
Public Facilities Management
Sanitary Engineer



ELECTED OFFICIALS

Auditor
Coroner
Engineer
Prosecuting Attorney
Recorder
Sheriff
Treasurer



COURTS & CLERK OF COURTS

Appeals Court
Clerk of Courts
Court of Common Pleas
Domestic & Juvenile Court
Municipal Court
Municipal Court Clerk
Probate Court



BOARDS & COMMISSIONS

Alcohol, Drug & Mental Health Board
Board of Developmental Disabilities
Board of Elections
Children Services Board
Data Center
Emergency Management & Homeland Security
Law Library
Public Defender Commission
Veterans Service Commission



*General Services includes the Purchasing Department, Fleet Management, and the Office of Economic Engagement & Community Development

Every resident, every day.

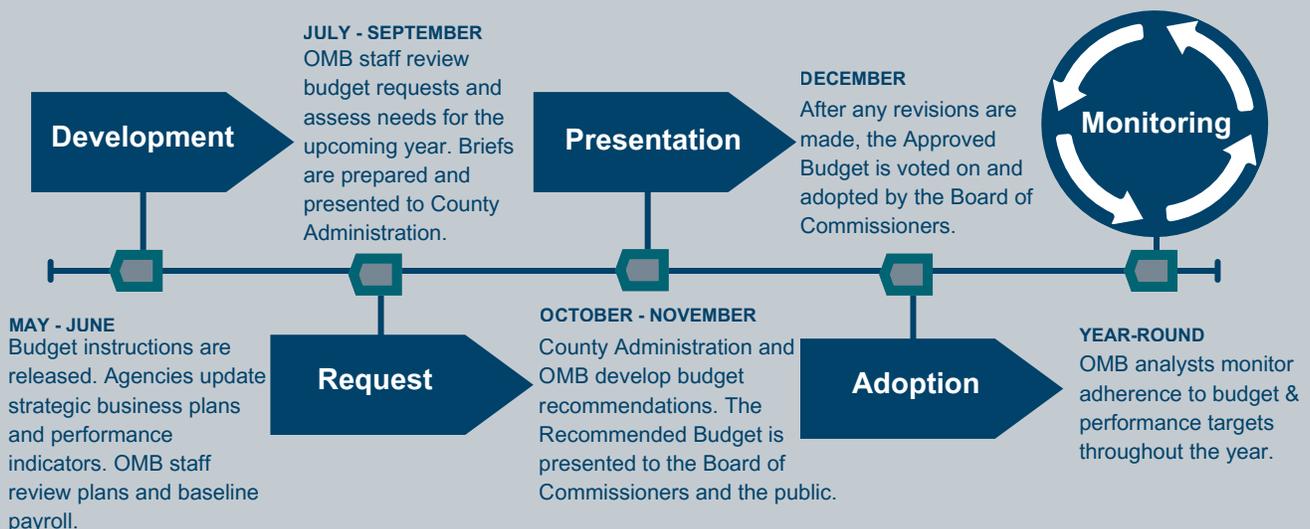
Franklin County Budgeting

Structure

Budgets are organized by funds. Funds can incorporate one or many programs across one or more agencies. There are 95 funds with appropriations in the 2026 Approved Budget. The General Fund is the chief operating fund for the County and includes all revenues unless they are required to be accounted for in another fund. Special Revenue Funds receive revenues from tax levies, grants, and federal and state social service programs – the largest of which are the Board of Developmental Disabilities Fund, the Children Services Levy Fund, the Public Assistance Fund (Job and Family Services), and the Alcohol, Drug and Mental Health Levy Fund. Other Funds include Capital Project Funds (which pay for the acquisition or construction of major capital items), Debt Service Funds (which pay the principal and interest on County-issued bonds), and Internal Service & Enterprise Funds (which support business-like activities for internal and external customers).

Budgets are further separated by 35 agencies and divided into programs, which group together the revenues and expenses to provide a particular service or type of service. Line items (object codes) are grouped into roll-up categories with other similar expenses, such as Personal Services, Fringe Benefits, and Materials & Services. Appropriations, or the authority to make expenditures for specified purposes, are made at the fund/agency/roll-up level, which means that an agency has some flexibility in spending across programs to meet changing needs during the year, as well as between the line items within the category. Additions to or transfers between the categories require the approval of the Board of Commissioners.

Process



General Fund Revenue

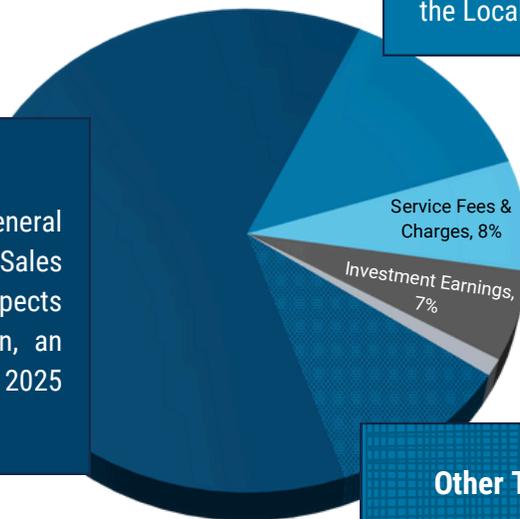
2026 General Fund Budget
\$676 million

Intergovernmental Revenue | 10%

Includes \$28 million for reimbursement from the State Public Defender's Office and \$18 million in reimbursements from the Local Government Fund.

Sales Tax | 64%

The largest portion of General Fund revenue remains the Sales Tax. The 2026 Budget expects collections of \$430.6 million, an increase of 2.4% from the 2025 projection.



Other Revenue Sources, 1%

Other Taxes | 10%

Other Taxes are estimated at \$67 million in 2026.

About Sales Tax Revenue

The total sales tax charged in Franklin County is 8.0% on all eligible purchases. The county portion of the sales tax is only 1.25%. The majority of the revenue is received by the state (5.75%), while the remaining 1.0% is allocated to the Central Ohio Transit Authority (COTA).

Every resident, every day.

General Fund Appropriations

General Fund Expenditures
\$687 million

How is My Dollar Used?



Justice & Public Safety,
62% ↑

Reserves & Debt,
12% ↑



→ Facility & Capital Projects,
1%

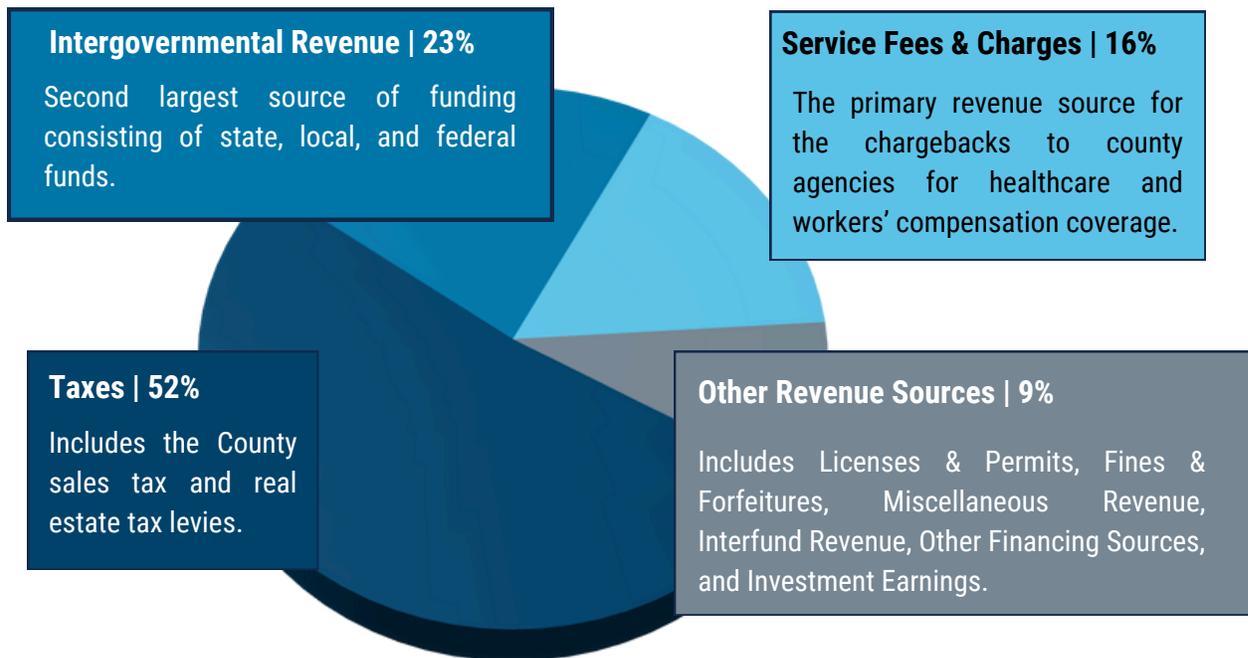
↓
General Government & Economic Development,
20%

↓
Social & Human Services, 5%

Every resident, every day.

All Funds Revenue

2026 All Funds Budget
\$2.0 billion



About Property Tax Revenue

Property taxes are assessed on residential, agricultural, commercial, and industrial properties. Current Franklin County property tax levies provide services related to mental health and substance use disorder, senior care, child welfare, and people with developmental disabilities. In 2025, the funding for these services, many of which are mandated by the Ohio Revised Code, represent approximately one-fourth of the average property tax bill in Franklin County.

Every resident, every day.

All Funds Appropriations

All Funds Expenditures
\$2.2 Billion

How is My Dollar Used?


Dog shelter & adoption center operation


Country road, bridge & path maintenance and construction


Property record maintenance, land use planning & permits


Foster care system, child welfare & child support enforcement


Vehicle and watercraft title issuance and management


Mental health and substance use disorder treatment

Social & Human Services, 42%

General Government & Economic Development, 22%



Facility & Capital Projects, 8%

Justice & Public Safety, 20%

Reserves & Debt, 6%

Every resident, every day.

Franklin County's Core Principles

The county's priorities are embodied through six core principles. These were established to provide more clarity about why the programs the County offers exist, what value they offer to residents, and how they benefit the community. The county has worked to optimize the budget process to streamline format, spotlight performance, and identify primary services within each agency's programs. By providing direction and intention to day-to-day operations, this strategic direction ensures that the county will uphold the mission to serve every resident, every day.

- ▶ **Fiscally Responsible Operations**
- ▶ **Community Safety & Security**
- ▶ **Health and Human Services**
- ▶ **Racial Equity**
- ▶ **Job Creation & Economic Development**
- ▶ **Environmental Sustainability**

Fiscally Responsible Operations

The 2026 Budget keeps the cash balance above the median levels of other counties rated triple-A by Moody's and Standard & Poor's. When including the County's Economic Stabilization Reserve or Rainy Day Fund, which remains untouched at \$92 million, along with certain reserve and pledge funds, the projected General Fund ending cash balance would be at 34% of expenditures.

In recent years, the County has been able to maintain its General Fund cash balance with the help of nearly \$430 million in Covid-19 related federal support. Through the end of 2025, the County fully utilized all of this funding, providing rental, food, employment, and other assistance throughout the community, including support for our employees who deliver County services.

Due to stagnating revenue and increasing costs, the 2026 budget guidance agencies to reduce their budgets by 2.5%. This reduction excluded appointed counsel, debt service, and social services, and was applied after any increases associated with healthcare and collective bargaining agreements. In addition, discretionary General Fund grants were reduced by approximately 25% and any new initiatives or positions were only considered if they could be fully funded from outside sources or other budgetary savings.

Every resident, every day.

Community Safety & Security

The 2026 Budget for Community Safety, Security, and Effective Justice is \$485 million or 20% of the all-funds budget. The Sheriff's Office budget is the largest portion at \$257 million, followed by court operations at \$140 million and non-court agencies (such as the Coroner and Animal Control) at \$76 million.

Key Investments

James A. Karnes Correctional Center

Includes funding to fully implement the philosophy of Strategic Inmate Management and Direct Supervision, which will create a safer community for everyone, as well as funding for an electronic records system for inmate care.

Franklin County Courts

Includes support for various specialty dockets, the Probate Court Resource Center, which helps residents with small estate or guardianship matters, and the Common Pleas Court Reentry Pilot Program to address the needs of offenders released from prison.



Health & Human Services

The 2026 budget continues to invest in supportive Health & Human Services that are designed to reduce barriers and streamline access. The one door case management services continue to improve and enhance residents' ability to connect with the services they need.

Crisis Care Center

Opened in September 2025, the center provides a complete crisis care continuum for adults that will offer a no-wrong-door philosophy to ensure that all residents receive or get connected to services. ADAMH reports that the center has already helped more than 1,600 residents get the help they need. When fully operational in 2027, the center is projected to have a capacity of up to 34,000 encounters per year.



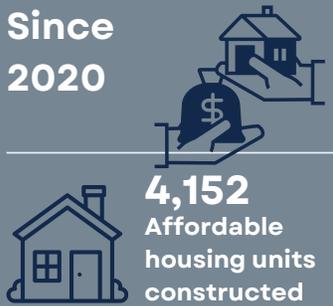
Every resident, every day.

Job Creation, Economic Development, & Racial Equity

Affordable Housing Investment

\$63 Million Disbursed

Since
2020



4,152
Affordable
housing units
constructed

Investing in Workforce and Businesses

Franklin County invests in the workforce by supporting programs that assist residents in earning a livable wage. County agencies engage younger adults to invest in their futures with programs like Achieve More & Prosper and grant-supported efforts like Charting a Course for Economic Mobility & Responsible Parenting through the Child Support Enforcement Agency. In addition, County programming prepares residents for in-demand technology careers through programs such as Broadband Futures, Ready 2 Earn, and Tech Women of Color.

Franklin County invests in minority-owned, small, and emerging businesses to support a thriving economy. In 2026, the Purchasing Department and the Office of Economic Engagement & Community Development will continue to diversify suppliers who support the County and make resources available to small and emerging businesses to promote their growth and success.

Environmental Sustainability & Civic Engagement



Early Voting Center Expansion

Franklin County Public Facilities Management will continue to work on the Poll Worker Training expansion at the Morse Road location in 2026. Renovations will provide training classrooms, storage rooms, break rooms, a multi-purpose space, and a board room.

Eliminating Pockets of Pollution

In 2026, the Sanitary Engineering Department will work on projects including the construction of the Village Park, and Timberbrook Pump Stations, the Ferris Road sanitary sewer improvement project, the Mifflin Lining and repairs project, as well as 93 connections across the Kanawha-Rosslyn, Gladys Road-Inah Avenue, North Hague Avenue, and Ferris Road communities.



“

If you can't fly, then run, if you can't run, then walk, if you can't walk, then crawl, but whatever you do, you have to keep moving forward.

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



County Administrator

Kenneth N. Wilson

Deputy Administrators

Kris Long

Joy Bivens

Damika Withers

Office of Management & Budget

Zak Talarek, Director

LaGrieta Acheampong

Curtis Brown

Rachel Buske

Bob Byrne

Gary Collins

Madeline Gresham

Mary Jane Harper

Ashley Harris

Lorie Hedges

Derick Sorrell

Brittany Stricklen-Hillyard

Juan Torres