OHIO MAYORS ALLIANCE

MAYORS' RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT

Statewide Policy Agenda & Core Cities Strategy for Ohio

OHIOMAYORSALLIANCE.ORG

OHIO MAYORS ALLIANCE

The Ohio Mayors Alliance is a bipartisan coalition of mayors in Ohio's 30 largest cities, as well as a representative from a coalition of mayors from Southeast Ohio. In addition to advocating for issues that impact Ohio's cities, the Ohio Mayors Alliance promotes bipartisanship and improved state and local collaboration.

MEMBER CITIES

Mayor | *Population*

AKRON
Shammas Malik
189,691

BEAVERCREEK
Don Adams
48,134

CANTON
William Sherer
69,001

CINCINNATI
Aftab Pureval
314,367

CLEVELAND
Justin Bibb
363,608

CLEVELAND HEIGHTS
Jim Petras
43,750

COLUMBUS
Andrew Ginther
938,396

CUYAHOGA FALLS
Don Walters
50,975

DAYTON
Shenise Turner-Sloss
136,688

DUBLIN
Chris Amorose Groomes
49,094

ELYRIA
Kevin Brubaker
53,634

EUCLID
Kirsten Holzheimer Gail
47,962

FAIRFIELD
Steve Miller
44,682

FINDLAY
Christina Muryn
40,139

GROVE CITY
Richard "Ike" Stage
45,180

HUBER HEIGHTS
Jeff Gore
43,905

KETTERING
Bryan Suddith
57,396

LAKEWOOD
Meghan George
49,027

LANCASTER
Don McDaniel
41,422

LIMA
Sharetta Smith
34,794

LORAIN
Jack Bradley
65,366

MANSFIELD
Jodie Perry
47,381

MIDDLETOWN
Elizabeth Slamka
52,146

PARMA
Tim DeGeeter
78,581

REYNOLDSBURG
Joe Begeny
43,350

SPRINGFIELD
Rob Rue
58,281

STRONGSVILLE
Thomas Perciak
45,629

TOLEDO
Wade Kapszukiewicz
263,423

VILLAGE OF SOUTH POINT
Jeff Gaskin*
3,836

WARREN
William D. Franklin
38,751

YOUNGSTOWN
Derrick McDowell
58,832

For more information on the Ohio Mayors Alliance please visit: OhioMayorsAlliance.org

* Chair of Mayors' Partnership for Progress

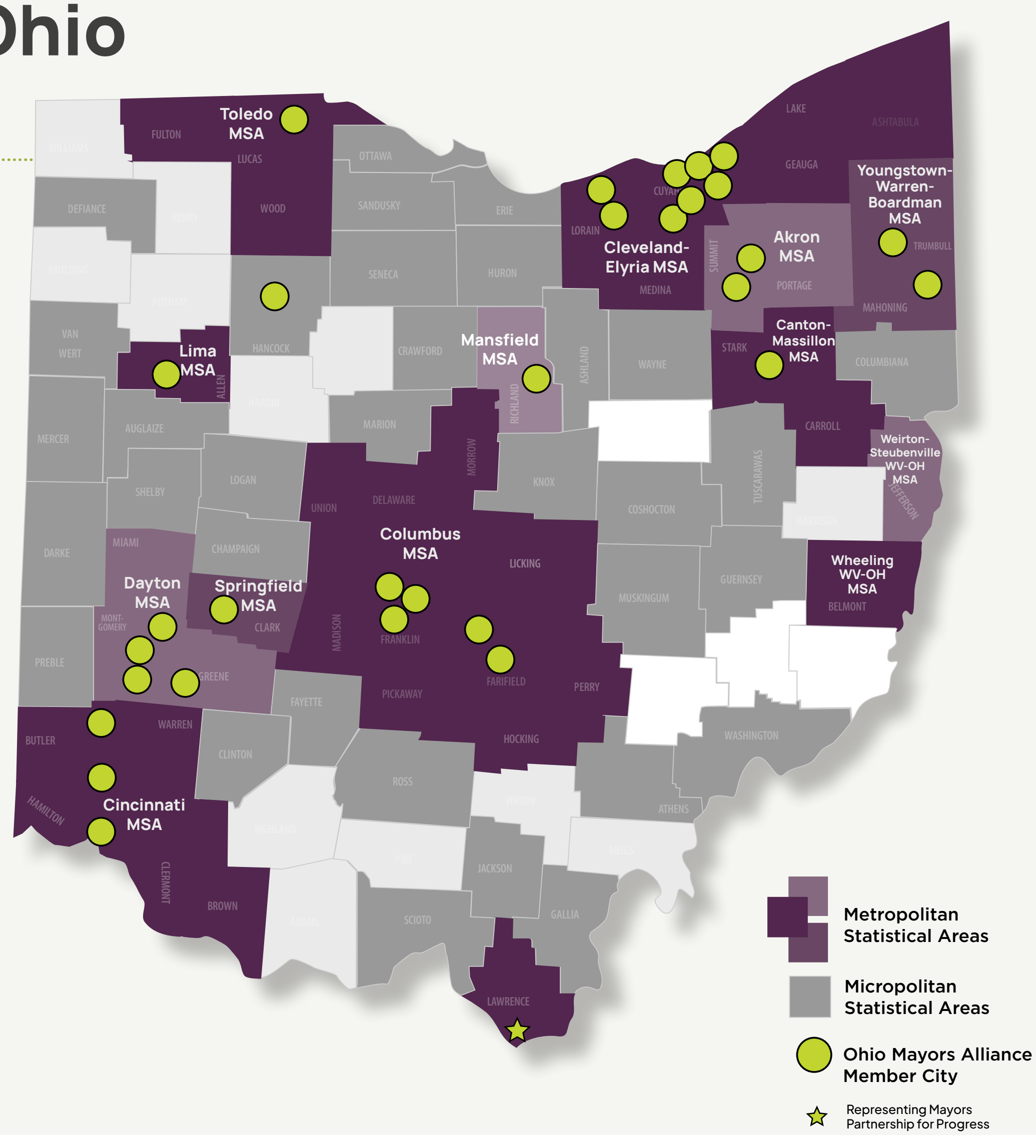
Statewide Policy Agenda & Core Cities Strategy for Ohio

Powering a Resurgence for Ohio

Compared to most states, Ohio's economy is balanced across numerous cities and metro regions. These core cities are the central nodes of economic activity that can power an economic resurgence for Ohio.

This is a unique advantage that makes Ohio more regionally balanced, less dependent on a single urban hub, and better positioned for economic growth across the state. Incentivizing growth in cities also protects small towns from unwanted development and preserves Ohio's vital farmland.

As the following report outlines, cities drive regional growth and support Ohio's statewide economic success by driving GDP output and generating state tax revenues. **Through a targeted strategy to reinvest in the areas of the state driving economic growth, Ohio's cities can power a population and economic resurgence for Ohio.**



Cities drive regional growth and power Ohio's economy

Cities are job centers and engines of opportunity

Cities are the economic centers of Ohio's 12 largest metro regions, which generate over 90 percent of state GDP and are home to over two dozen Fortune 500 companies.

Cities are hubs for entertainment and innovation

Ohio cities are home to professional sports teams, famous museums, thriving entertainment districts, as well as colleges, world-renowned hospitals, and innovation districts.

Cities deliver critical front-line services for Ohioans

Ohio cities provide public services that directly impact the daily lives of Ohioans. This includes infrastructure, housing, and public safety, which is the largest expense for most cities and makes up between half and two-thirds of most city budgets.

Revitalizing Cities Helps Preserve Ohio Farmland

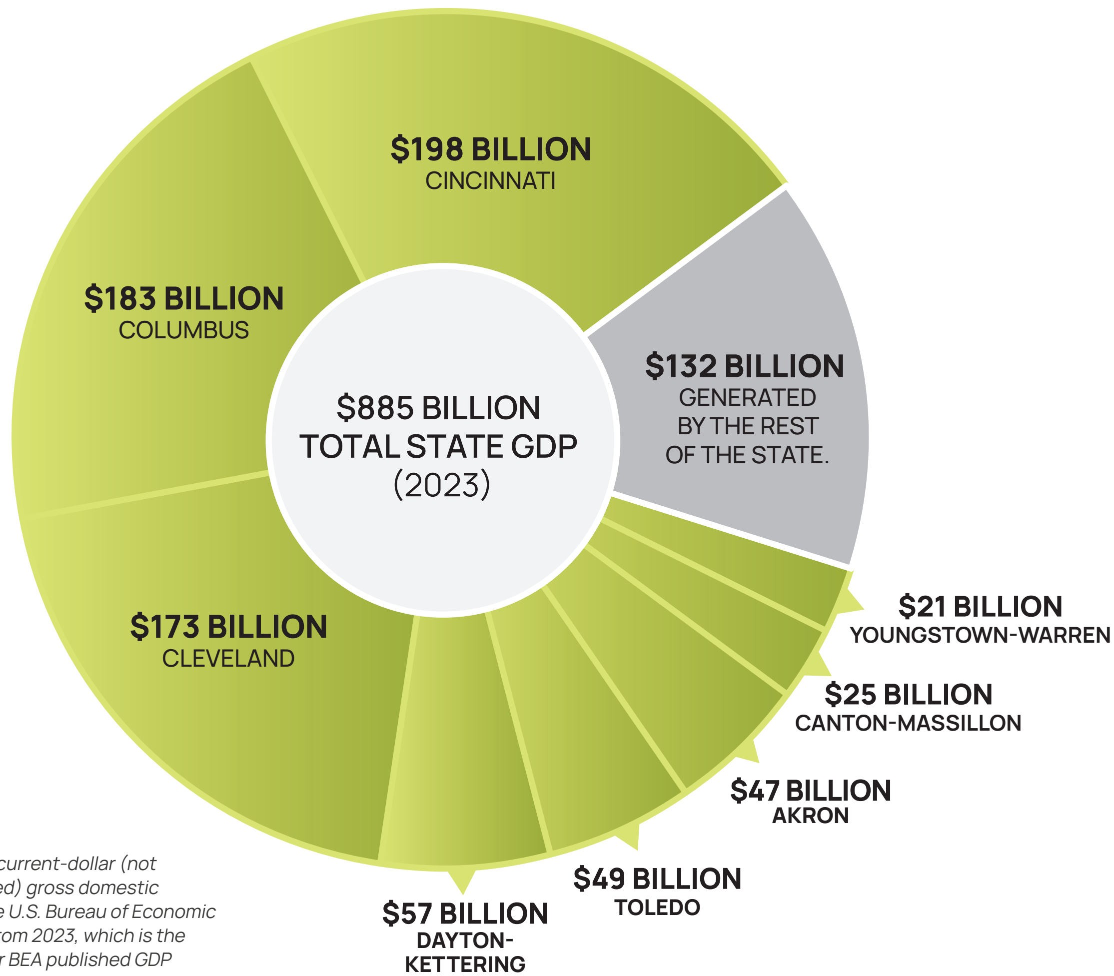
A core cities strategy for Ohio will incentivize development in areas that have the infrastructure and capacity, while also preserving small towns and protecting farmland.

Cities drive regional growth and power Ohio's economy

Cities anchor the metro regions that power Ohio's economy.

The 12 metro regions containing OMA cities

GENERATE 90% OF OHIO'S GDP

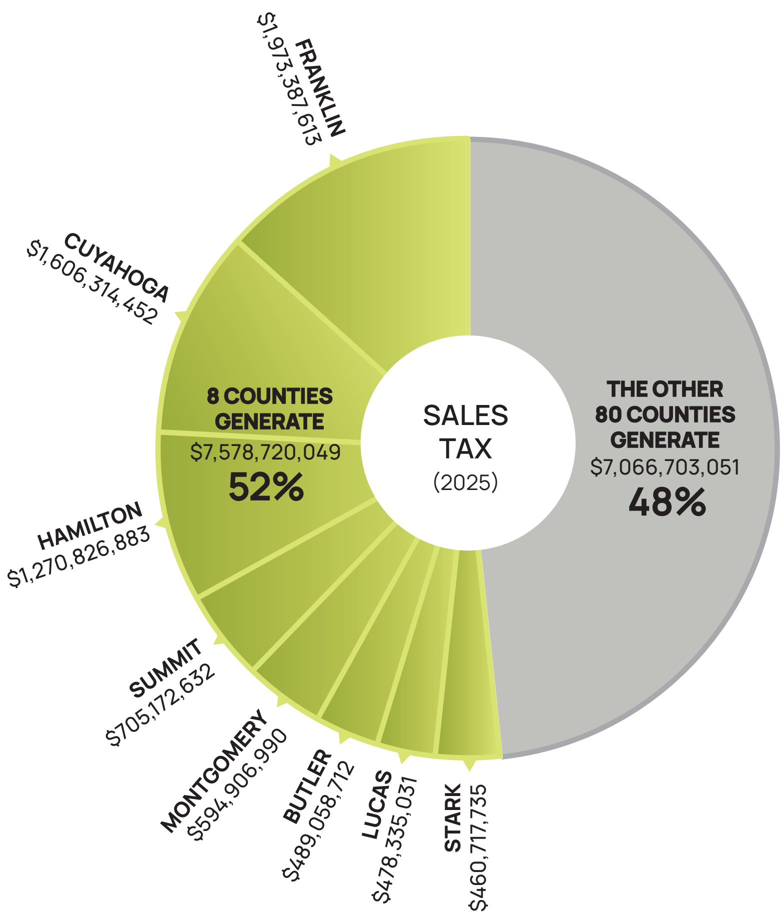


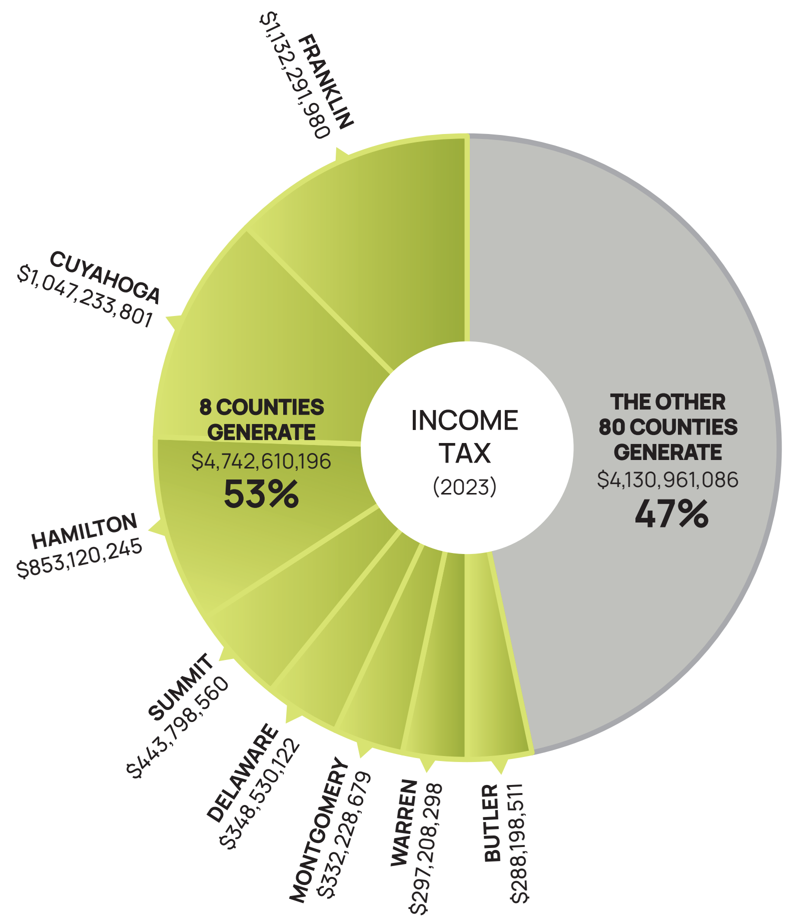
GDP figures are current-dollar (not inflation-adjusted) gross domestic product from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) from 2023, which is the most recent year BEA published GDP directly at the metro-area level.

Cities and metro regions fund Ohio's budget

The state of Ohio's two largest revenue sources are sales and use tax and state income tax. More than half of those tax dollars come from just 8 counties in Ohio. As the charts below indicate, these 8 counties generate more tax revenue for the state than Ohio's other 80 counties combined.

Over half (52%) of state sales tax revenue and over half of state income tax revenue (53%) comes from just 8 counties in Ohio.





State sales and use tax data by county provided by the Ohio Department of Taxation for tax year 2025, and state income tax data by county for 2023 based publicly available data on ODT website.

MAKING THE CASE FOR

A Core Cities Strategy for Ohio

If Ohio wants to grow its population, it must grow the places where people choose to live, growth is welcome, and capacity and infrastructure exist. A coordinated strategy to support and revitalize Ohio's core cities will also benefit the interconnected suburban and rural communities within a metro region.

Ohio cities have benefited from state policies like funding for brownfield remediation, renewal of the Ohio Public Works State Capital Improvement Bond program, the historic building preservation tax credit, the Transformational Mixed Use Tax Credit, and others.

However, a comprehensive and coordinated strategy to support smart growth in Ohio cities is critically needed if the state is to grow its population and power an economic resurgence across the state.

TARGETED GROWTH IN COMMUNITIES THAT ARE BUILT FOR IT.

Reversing population trends and rebuilding Ohio's economic might

In every decade since 1960, Ohio has lost a congressional representative in Congress, which means that Ohio is not growing as fast as other states and it is losing national political influence. It's also a sign that Ohio risks losing economic strength if this trend continues.

Revitalizing core cities and preserving Ohio farmland

Through a core cities strategy, Ohio can rebuild and revitalize the communities that are built for growth and bolster Ohio's long-term population trends. Targeted growth in core cities also prevents unwanted growth in small towns, protects valuable farmland, and preserves Ohio's agricultural industry.

OHIO MAYORS ALLIANCE

Policy Recommendations

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Policy Recommendations

The Ohio Mayors Alliance, a bipartisan coalition of mayors in Ohio's 30 largest cities, recommends the following policy and legislative solutions for 2027-28. Together, these four recommendations will align state and local priorities, better leverage Ohio's cities and geographically balanced regional economies, and drive an economic and population resurgence for all of Ohio.

Embracing Ohio's multiple metro regions as a competitive advantage and investing in our core cities that are built for growth and evenly distributed across the state.

The Ohio Core Cities Transformation Fund (OCCTF)

01

Establish a new state fund to support revitalization efforts in Ohio's core cities and to power an economic resurgence across Ohio.

Targeted Housing Needs

02

Extend the Residential Economic Development District model to core cities and add a housing-infrastructure set-aside within OCCTF.

Public Safety Enhancement Fund

03

A dedicated fund to help pay competitive wages, retain quality personnel, and hire more first responders.

Reset the State-Local Partnership

04

Local governments deliver services while the state sets direction — a partnership in need of a reset.

RECOMMENDATION #1

Establish the Ohio Core Cities Transformation Fund

Ohio's numerous cities and multi-metro economies create a competitive advantage that must be better utilized if Ohio is to increase its population growth and generate balanced economic prosperity in all corners of the state.

Ohio's core cities hold the state's greatest opportunities for redevelopment — historic downtowns, aging commercial corridors, former industrial sites, and underutilized neighborhoods. Existing state programs address specific needs but do not add up to a comprehensive, long-term investment strategy.

The Ohio Mayors Alliance is proposing a bold new strategy that reinvests in the communities that are driving regional growth and powering economic activity for the entire state. This new fund – the Ohio Core Cities Transformation Fund (OCCTF) – is a dedicated investment program providing competitive planning grants, implementation grants, and zero-interest loans to help communities prepare sites, modernize infrastructure, leverage private investment, and complete catalytic redevelopment projects.

The OCCTF would leverage a portion of future state sales tax revenue growth – no new state taxes or fees – to make transformative economic development investments in the core communities that drive regional growth. It would be administered by the Ohio Department of Development and available to communities that are core to the economic activity in various regions across Ohio, which includes cities larger than 35,000 in population and account for more than 20 percent of the county population share.

RECOMMENDATION #1

Establish the Ohio Core Cities Transformation Fund

ELIGIBLE USES OF OCCTF FUNDS

Like the Appalachian Community Grant Program, the OCCTF is designed to bring about transformational change and catalyze future private-sector development. It is intended for place-based, infill, physical projects:

CATEGORY	EXAMPLES OF ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES
PLANNING ACTIVITIES	Master planning, site planning, and retail strategies.
PRE-DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES	Market studies, needs assessments, soil testing, strategic property acquisition, and zoning adjustments.
RESIDENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT	Environmental remediation, demolition, renovation, gap funding, construction loans, and housing trust funds.
DOWNTOWN & COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS	Same activities as residential redevelopment, as well as facade improvements, small business grants, development loan funds, and safety and lighting improvements.
INDUSTRIAL & MANUFACTURING	Same as downtown projects, plus workforce training.
INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS	Sewer/water replacement and upgrades, active transportation and traffic calming, roadway paving tied to a redevelopment project, and lighting.

OCCTF PROGRAM GUIDELINES

OCCTF grant and zero-interest loan applications will be evaluated based on the following guidelines:

Plan: A clear, written plan with documented, multi-sector local support and endorsement.

Professional staff: A professionally staffed project manager leads the work — a city employee, community development corporation, land bank, port authority, or nonprofit/for-profit partner.

Strategy: The investment fits into a larger strategic effort or community priority, not a standalone project.

Targeted: Funding is prioritized for a specific geographic target area — a neighborhood, corridor, or large parcel — with existing road and utility access.

“But-for” test: Priority goes to projects that are costlier, riskier for traditional lenders, or involve complex capital stacks — projects unlikely to happen without this funding.

No greenfields, no stadiums: Greenfield development and professional sports stadiums are not eligible uses.

GREATER OHIO POLICY CENTER Revitalizing Ohio.

The Ohio Core Cities Transformation Fund was designed with the support and partnership of the Greater Ohio Policy Center.

RECOMMENDATION #1

Establish the Ohio Core Cities Transformation Fund

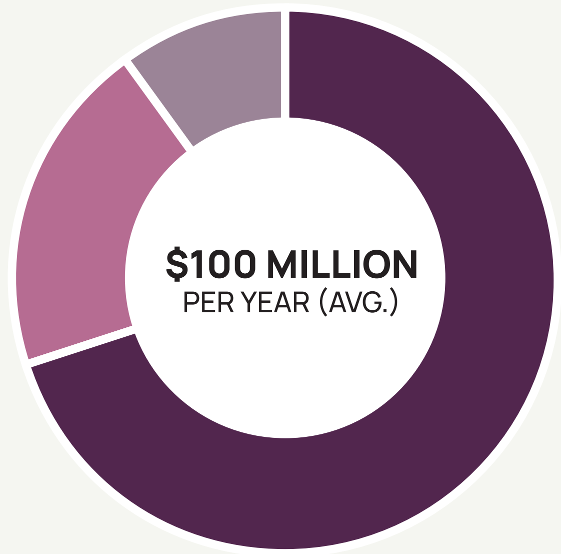
CORE CITY ELIGIBILITY

Applications earn priority points for projects located in communities that:

- Represent 20% or more of the county's population
- Have housing stock at or older than the state's median age (built in 1971 or earlier)
- Have a population of at least 35,000 residents
- Have 50%+ of commercial/mixed-use buildings that are at least 40 years old
- Have a notable share of countywide jobs, ideally near housing and transit
- Have 50%+ of industrial buildings that are at least 40 years old

ALLOCATION OF OCCTF DOLLARS

Estimated annual allocation of $100 million in new-growth sales and use tax revenue.



IMPLEMENTATION GRANTS
$70M PER YEAR • 70% OF THE FUND
Competitive grants for redevelopment/new-development projects; up to $6M per applicant annually.

LOAN FUND (0%)
$20M PER YEAR • 20% OF THE FUND
Zero-percent loans for redevelopment projects; up to $10M per applicant, repaid within 10 years.

PLANNING & PRE-DEVELOPMENT
$3M-$10M PER YEAR • 3-10% OF THE FUND
Master plans, market studies, site and needs assessments; up to $500K per applicant.

RECOMMENDATION #1

Establish the Ohio Core Cities Transformation Fund

HOW OCCTF IS FUNDED

This fund would NOT be funded with a request for new taxes or fees, nor would it require the legislature to displace current GRF allocations. Instead, OCCTF would be funded by a percentage of new state sales tax growth, as this graph illustrates.

Based on the last 4 years of growth, a scenario was built for the next 10 years of growth using this funding process of putting 20% of STU growth into the OCCTF.

Source: ODT annual reports. Just state collection, no local/permissive.

IF OCCTF TAKES 20% OF GROWTH

	FY	Sales Use Tax collected per FY	Growth from previous year in %	Growth from previous year in dollars	20% of growth goes to OCCTF	80% of growth goes to GRF
	FY 2021	12,112,046,216				
	FY 2022	13,107,525,831	8.2%	$995,479,615	199,095,923	796,383,692
	FY 2023	13,623,902,698	3.9%	$516,376,867	103,275,373	413,101,494
	FY 2024	13,891,087,002	2.0%	$267,184,304	53,436,861	213,747,443
	FY 2025	14,988,588,659	7.9%	$1,097,501,657	219,500,331	878,001,326
	FY 2026	TBD				
SCENARIO	FY 2027	15,438,246,319	3.0%	$449,657,660	89,931,532	359,726,128
SCENARIO	FY 2028	15,901,393,708	3.0%	$463,147,390	92,629,478	370,517,912
SCENARIO	FY 2029	16,378,435,520	3.0%	$477,041,811	95,408,362	381,633,449
SCENARIO	FY 2030	16,869,788,585	3.0%	$491,353,066	98,270,613	393,082,452
SCENARIO	FY 2031	17,375,882,243	3.0%	$506,093,658	101,218,732	404,874,926
SCENARIO	FY 2032	17,897,158,710	3.0%	$521,276,467	104,255,293	417,021,174
SCENARIO	FY 2033	18,434,073,471	3.0%	$536,914,761	107,382,952	429,531,809
SCENARIO	FY 2034	18,987,095,675	3.0%	$553,022,204	110,604,441	442,417,763
SCENARIO	FY 2035	19,556,708,546	3.0%	$569,612,870	113,922,574	455,690,296
SCENARIO	FY 2036	20,143,409,802	3.0%	$586,701,256	117,340,251	469,361,005
				Total collected in OCCTF over 10 years	**1,030,964,229**	
				Average collected in OCCTF per year	**103,096,423**	

Analysis of Sales and Use Tax (state portion only) performance from 2021-2026 and projections of 3% annual growth for 2027-2036 done by the Greater Ohio Policy Center.

RECOMMENDATION #2

Targeted Housing Needs to Support Workers & New Ohioans

Ohio's continued economic growth depends on expanding housing opportunities for current residents while attracting the workers employers need to grow. Ohio's core cities have significant potential to add new housing through redevelopment and infill, but many face barriers that existing state programs were not designed to address. OMA is advancing two complementary recommendations.

- **Extend the Residential Economic Development District (REDD) Model to the Core Cities Redevelopment District (CCRD) Program**
- **Designate a Housing Infrastructure Set-Aside**

80% of municipal leaders say infrastructure needs are limiting housing production.

National League of Cities' 2025 Survey

	REDD (EXISTING PROGRAM)	CCRD (PROPOSED PROGRAM)
Eligibility trigger	**Proximity to a Major Economic Development Project:** A $700M project or 700 new jobs, paired with a 100+ unit workforce housing project.	**OCCTF's priority factors:** 20%+ of county population, population of 35,000+, a notable share of county jobs, aging real estate, a median housing age at or older than the state's median, etc.
Best fit	Growth corridors near a major employer's investment.	Infill housing in core cities facing vacancy and disinvestment.
Funding	Dedicated General Revenue Fund appropriation (~$15M available FY2027).	Within the OCCTF pool — no new GRF appropriation required.

RECOMMENDATION #3

Create the Public Safety Enhancement Fund

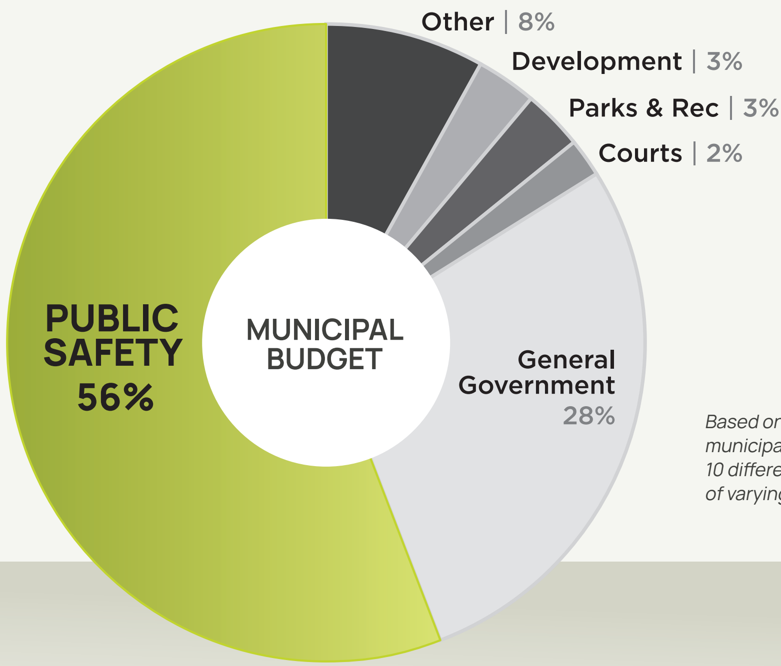
Public safety is an essential service provided by Ohio's local communities. It is foundational for the health, wellbeing, and economic vibrancy of our cities and our entire state. It is also the biggest municipal expenditure and the costs to ensure high-quality police and fire services are increasing.

Cities, villages, and townships across Ohio employ over 30,000 police and fire personnel and invest over $3 billion annually for public safety services. A new state **Public Safety Enhancement Fund** would allocate state funding to support the sizable investments that communities already make into local public safety. This new fund would provide supplemental state dollars (10 percent of municipalities total police and fire payroll) to help communities train, attract, hire, and retain high-quality law enforcement and fire personnel across Ohio.

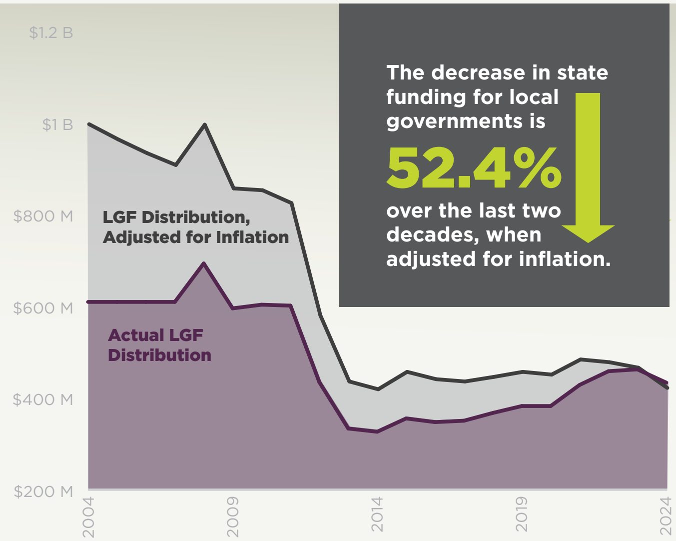
RECOMMENDATION #3

Create the Public Safety Enhancement Fund

Public safety is already the largest budget expense for most Ohio municipalities. In many cities, it accounts for between 55 and 65 percent of the general revenue fund budget, and those costs are rising faster than local revenue can keep pace. In 2025, Ohio municipalities and other local governments paid over $3.2 billion in total police and fire payroll alone.



Based on a summary of municipal budgets from 10 different OMA cities of varying sizes.

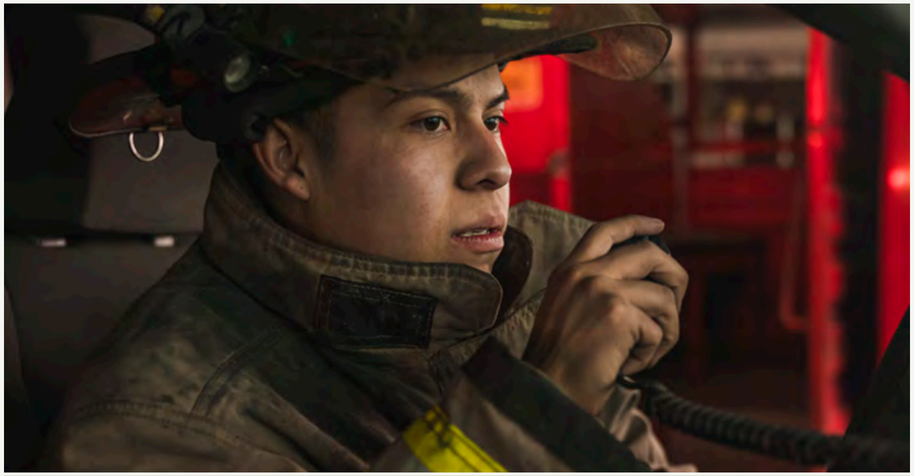


The decrease in state funding for local governments is 52.4% over the last two decades, when adjusted for inflation.

Recent state grants and one-time state investments for training funds and grants for body-worn cameras, officer wellness, and violence reduction have been significant for Ohio's local law enforcement agencies. This support has also helped to offset other revenue losses from the previous 50 percent reduction in the Local Government Fund that began in 2011 and remained in place, relatively unchanged, for over a decade. However, cities and local public safety agencies need consistent, dedicated funding support.

RECOMMENDATION #3

Create the Public Safety Enhancement Fund



State Fund to Support Local First Responders

Municipal police and fire departments need consistent funding to address long-term costs and ongoing needs. Specifically, communities need dedicated funding assistance to help pay competitive wages, retain high-quality personnel, and hire and support police officers and first responders. To address these long-term needs, the Ohio Mayors Alliance is proposing the creation of a new, state-based Public Safety Enhancement Fund.

How the Public Safety Enhancement Fund would work

This new fund would allocate state GRF funding directly to a city, village, or township an amount equal to 10 percent of that entity's total annual police and fire payroll. Eligible entities include political subdivisions that pay into the Ohio Police & Fire Pension Fund. Eligible entities would register to receive these funds (either through OBM or DPS) on an annual basis and may be required to meet certain best-practices or professional policing standards.

RECOMMENDATION #4

Reset the State-Local Partnership Framework

The state sets policy direction and holds broad taxing authority, while local governments deliver the services Ohioans rely on every day.

That division of responsibility has served Ohio for decades, but the framework surrounding it has changed: the state's share of local government funding has narrowed since 2011, municipalities have become increasingly reliant on the municipal income tax, home rule disputes are more often resolved through litigation, and there is no standing forum for state and local leaders to work through these issues together.

The state-local relationship is fundamental to Ohio's success, and the framework that governs it is overdue for modernization. To strengthen the state and local partnership framework and improve collaboration, the Ohio Mayors Alliance proposes the following:

Create a State Technical Assistance Team

Empower local governments through a dedicated state team providing expertise in designing shared-service agreements, mutual-aid pacts, and feasibility studies. This proactive support will help communities overcome capacity barriers to successful regional collaboration.

Establish a Home Rule Commission

Convene a bipartisan commission of state and local leaders to resolve jurisdictional disputes and develop a modern "Home Rule Compact for Ohio." This framework will prioritize collaboration over costly litigation, saving taxpayer resources.

Convene a Bipartisan Revenue-Sharing Task Force

Establish a geographically and politically balanced task force to evaluate restoring the Local Government Fund. This effort would aim to create a predictable, indexed funding floor tied to state revenue growth, ensuring long-term fiscal stability for Ohio's communities.

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