



EXPLORE
LICKING COUNTY
FIND YOUR WAY

ANNUAL REPORT



HARTFORD

HOME OF THE HARTFORD FAIR

UTICA

ST. LOUISVILLE

JOHNSTOWN

MASTODON SITE

ALEXANDRIA

GRANVILLE

NEWARK

HANOVER

PATASKALA

OCEANON & GREAT CIRCLE
WORLD HERITAGE SITES

HEATH

BLACK LINDY GORGE

ETNA

DAWES ARBORETTUM

HEBRON

FLINT RIDGE

BUCKEYE LAKE

*“This community is a little bit
different, and it embraces the
unusual & creative.”*

*-Mike Fornataro
Executive Director
Buckeye Lake Region Corporation*



County Tourism Impact

Reported by Ohio Department of Development

- \$524 million in annual visitor spending
- 1 in 12 jobs are tourism related (8.7% of the private sector)
- 6241 people currently employed in the Tourism Industry
- Generates \$152 million in wages
- \$72 million in tax generation
- 3rd largest producer of travel revenue in Central Ohio

In the absence of Licking County tourism dollars, every house would need to contribute an additional \$557 annually to match the compensation provided by the tourism industry.

A Year in Review

Letters From Our Leadership

2023 found the Explore Licking County Board of Directors busy. In the year's first quarter, we created a comprehensive, board-driven strategic plan for the organization that set the course for staff and the board itself. The plan, in its execution, will drive decision-making over the next several years and be instrumental as our communities continue to grow and the travel market finds its way to Licking County. As Board Chair, I am so proud of this work and the effort my board colleagues contributed to the final plan.

In the summer of 2023, we collaborated with our friends in Ross and Warren Counties around the potential UNESCO World Heritage vote. This ongoing work will eventually create an Ohio "roadmap" for the visitor seeking a World Heritage experience. UNESCO didn't disappoint, and on September 19, 2023, the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks of Ohio were unanimously inscribed to the World Heritage List, making it Ohio's first site and the Nation's 25th.

In addition to strategic marketing and planning, we were thrilled to see our lodging partners doing so well this year and recording record numbers. These same numbers allow the Explore Licking County team the ability to do good work, tell the fantastic Licking County story on a much larger scale, and reach further with that story than ever before. With new Licking County lodging choices in development, it stands to reason that with increased funding, our drawing board will need to be bigger in the coming years, and that's a great problem to think about.

Serving the community for the last two years as Board Chair has been my pleasure. I will always be proud of my service and welcome Brittany to carry on the tradition of leadership as she joins a long list of Board Presidents. She'll be in good company.

Best

Kendra Proudfit

2022/23 Explore Licking County Board Chair



Travel economics is working in Licking County, and according to the Ohio Department of Development, it is growing at an unprecedented rate not only in the county but also in the state. With 219 million visitors annually, generating nearly 61 billion dollars in revenue, Ohio most definitely is the *heart of it all* when it comes to visitor engagement, and Licking County is a huge contributor to Ohio's success. In 2022/2023, we reported a record 524 million in spending and a whopping 152 million dollars in associated wages. Some may argue that this impact isn't legitimate because we're not selling a thing but rather an experience. It is hard to deny, though, that the "experience" economy is real and thriving in our borders when half a billion dollars is realized annually.

What's happening here is not by coincidence; it's by design. Every day, our nearly 500 tourism partners make a difference in Licking County's market share, which shows in our year-over-year numbers. Their collective spirit of success, hospitality, and creativity makes Licking County a steady contributor to Ohio, the nation, and, in some respects, global economic well-being. We should all be proud of our accomplishments and celebrate the unique perspective that Licking County brings to travel and visitation - we've earned the right to brag a bit.

Go...Explore

Dan Moder

Executive Director



Ancient Earthworks

Ohio's only UNESCO World Heritage sites

FIND MORE INFO ON OUR WEBSITE - On September 19, 2023 UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) unanimously inscribed the Hopewell Ceremonial Earthworks of Ohio to the World Heritage List. This inscription is the twenty-fifth in the Nation and the first in Ohio. This serial inscription not only includes the Great Circle Earthworks of Newark and Heath, the Octagon Earthworks of Newark, but also five sites in Ross County and one in Warren County. Nearly twenty years in the making, this recognition is a testament to Licking County's commitment to historic preservation, global goodwill and collaboration across the state and nation.

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[EXPLOREL.C.ORG/UNESCO](https://explorelc.org/unesco)



Ruby Awards

Presented by Ohio Travel Association

Explore Licking County received a RUBY award in 2023 for their excellence in marketing for their Find the Glass campaign in collaboration with The Works: Ohio Center for History, Art & Technology, as well as a Citation of Excellence for their Radio Promotions with Kool 101.7. The RUBY Awards are presented by the Ohio Travel Association at their annual statewide conference on travel. RUBY is an acronym for Recognizing Uncommon Brilliance Yearly.

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Organizational Funding

2023 Income & Lodging Tax Paid by Visitors

Funded solely by Licking County lodging tax revenues as directed by Ohio Revised Code and County Administration, Explore Licking County recognized a banner year of revenue. Thanks to the dedicated and creative lodging community, funding revenue increased year over year by \$55,000. With increased financial support, Explore Licking County had the ability to be more pro-active in the direct marketing of the county and secure new channels of consumer engagement. New hotel development in 2023 and into 2024 will continue to secure the needed funding to increase and broaden the forward facing message of Licking County being a place of interest and visitor choice.

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[EXPLORELIC.ORG/OVERNIGHT](https://explorelic.org/overnight)

EXPLORE
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LICKING
COUNTY
1808
FIND YOUR WAY



Dawes Arboretum





Event Sponsorship

Helping Local Events Be Seen

Explore Licking County has the most extensive event calendar locally. It is free to submit any event to our website. Each year, 1/3 of our annual web traffic goes to our event page. We are also proud to have been able to fund nearly **\$20,000.00** in sponsorship dollars awarded to local organizations that created and managed county-wide events further extending the county's notoriety for having engaging, educational and fun events throughout the year. The list of recipients was long, but several of them included:

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EXPLORELC.ORG/EVENTS

Winterfest - [Buckeye Lake](#)

The Bryn Du Art Show - [Granville](#)

The Midland Theatre - Our Planet Live - [Newark](#)

Downtown Newark Association - Final Fridays - [Newark](#)

The Ohio Women's Inter-City Bowling Tournament - [Heath](#)

The Licking County Players - It's a Wonderful Life - [Newark](#)

Weatherwane Playhouse - Barefoot in the Park and Elf the Musical - [Newark](#)

CRAFTED
IN LICKING OH
COUNTY

Partner Collaboration

Find the Glass

NON TRADITIONAL MARKETING CAMPAIGNS - Explore Licking County takes great pride in collaborating with community partners in creating experiences that are second to none and specific to our Land of Legend. The Find the Glass project is a perfect example of this collaborative community spirit. It started simply enough; an email with a thought. That idea grabbed the imagination of the Explore Licking County team and the powerhouse team from Newark-based The Works: Ohio Center for History, Art & Technology. The Works would lend their glass artist and studio curator, Larry Tuber, to the project to craft the glass that would live around the replicated Hopewell era flint point. Explore Licking County would take the lead in promotion, creative capital, and storytelling.

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FINDTHEGLASS.COM



2023 Staff

Dan Moder

Executive Director

Carol Thress

Director of Partner Engagement

Garrett Martin

Creative Director

Alex Trujillo

Director of Content Marketing

Noel Zarnosky

COTC Intern

Community Involvement

Local Staff Appointments and Volunteering

It's important to Explore Licking County to give back to the community that supports our work, and the industry that has given us so much. 2023 found us contributing in many ways.

- Executive Board Leadership - The Ohio Travel Association
- Executive Board Leadership - The Ohio Humanities Council
- Executive Board Leadership - Newark Organization for the Creative Arts
- Governor Appointed Leadership - TourismOhio Advisory Board
- Board Leadership - East Central Chapter of the American Red Cross
- Board Leadership - Newark Organization for the Creative Arts
- Advisory Leadership - The Works: Ohio Center for History, Art & Technology
- Advisory Leadership - Team Sullivan
- Advisory Leadership - COTC Programming and Curriculum Development
- Advisory Leadership - COTC Alumni Council
- Marketing Leadership - The Licking County Humane Society
- Marketing Leadership - Granville Area Chamber of Commerce
- Volunteer Leadership - Newark High School, Call to College
- Volunteer Leadership - Licking County Foundation Scholarship Program
- Volunteer Leadership - Skills USA



New Strategic Plan

Development Overview

2023 found Explore Licking County and its Board of Directors completing a new three to five-year strategic plan. This comprehensive work was completed during the first quarter of the year and creates a road map not only for the internal team, but also the board of directors to realize the completion of existing projects, create new programming, explore board governance and set the stage for continued growth and success. The planning was administered by the Ohio Travel Association.

New Mission Statement

Explore Licking County enhances the economic vitality of local businesses and communities through increasing visitor spending, enhancing quality of life assets and raising awareness of the County as a place to be in the world.

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[EXPLOREELC.ORG/LEADERSHIP](https://exploreelc.org/leadership)

New Belief Statement

- VISIONARY** We believe in greatness. We believe in strategy and proactive marketing.
- LEADERSHIP** We believe in listening first and acting in the best interest of the communities we serve.
- LOYAL** We believe in honoring the stories that make Licking County great, allowing us to differentiate ourselves in a crowded field of other destinations.
- CREATIVE** We believe in the power of innovation.
- WELCOMING** We believe Licking County is a place of hospitality, acceptance and kindness.
- TEAMWORK** We believe great things happen when we work together.



Engagement Analytics

How Users Interact With Explore Licking County

All data provided is available in greater detail on the Explore Licking County Report Page. This gives a comprehensive breakdown of year to year digital marketing initiatives and the data gathered from those who engage in our content. The report page also helps identify where we are driving guests once they arrive to the website, as well as marketing trends year over year that we deliver back to our partnership. These initiatives include our Annual Travel Magazine, print marketing, digital display ads, search engine ads, email marketing, radio, and social media.

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REPORT.EXPLORELC.ORG

GENDER



DEVICES USED



VISITORS



Ohio - 65,000
 New York - 6,500
 Kentucky - 4,600
 Michigan - 2,800
 Virginia - 2,600
 Indiana - 2,600

PAGEVIEWS



Directory - 47,000
 Guides - 42,000
 Events - 26,000
 Home - 16,000

BEHAVIOR



DISPLAY ADS & SEARCH ADS



CLICKS
44k

IMPRESSIONS
7.81M

CTR
.56%

EMAIL MARKETING



147k E-Mails Sent
 36.6% Open Rate
 4.1% Click Through Rate

TRAVEL MAGAZINE

15,000
 Ohio Travel Information
 Centers (11 locations)

3,000
 Statewide tourism
 offices & CVB partners



12,000
 Redistribution for
 carry over stock

5,000
 Distributed locally and
 by individual request



Kendra Proudfit
Board Chair



Suzanne Bressoud
Past Board Chair



Brittany Misner
Board Treasurer



Janice LoRasso
Board Secretary



Tim Bubb



Annette Linn



Megan Ernest



Anne Balogh



Tyler Hampshire



Kim Wilhelm



Cheri Nelson



Kim Keethler Ball



Jay Livingston



Mark Van Buren



Chis Harkness



Amy Treciak



Bill Weaver



Alex Athan