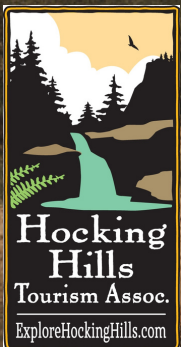


HOCKING HILLS TOURISM ASSOCIATION 2023 ANNUAL REPORT



[ExploreHockingHills.com](https://www.explorehockinghills.com)

Your HHTA Leadership Board of Trustees:

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Brent Bendele, Hocking Hills State Park

Karen Raymore, Executive Director

Bailey Venzin, Hocking Hills Chamber of Commerce

The Mission of the Hocking Hills Tourism Association is to promote the growth of responsible tourism through marketing strategies and programs that balance economic growth with the need to preserve the natural and cultural heritage in the Hocking Hills region.

Your HHTA Staff:

Karen Raymore, CDME Executive Director

Audrey Martin, Deputy Director

James Martin, Community Communications Director

Megan Myers, Digital Media Director

Sandra Hall, Finance Director

Cindy Coss, Stewardship Coordinator

Rose Arthur, Welcome Center Manager

Diane Welch, Homegrown on Main Manager

Rick Jones, Laurelville Visitor Center Manager

Judy Delong, Laurelville Visitor Center Manager

Carolyn Swank, Visitor Services–Logan

Helen Bratka, Visitor Services–Logan

Tonya Powell, Visitor Services–Logan

Sandra March, Visitor Services–Logan

Heather McKinley, Visitor Services–Logan



The Mission of the Hocking Hills Tourism Association is to promote the growth of responsible tourism through marketing strategies and programs that balance economic growth with the need to preserve the natural and cultural heritage in the Hocking Hills region.

To accomplish this mission, HHTA markets the destination strategically. The surge of visitation experienced since the pandemic has resulted in risks to our natural resources. A significant number of visitors come to the Hocking Hills to enjoy the parks but do not stay overnight. Consequently, they have far less economic impact on the benefit of local businesses and county sales tax revenues.

The destination marketing strategy has changed to attract visitors who will stay longer and spend more dollars in Hocking County. Marketing campaigns were deployed in the market three to eight hours from Hocking County. The farther a traveler goes to reach the destination, the longer they will remain there and spend money.

In addition to marketing strategies, HHTA engaged Clarity of Place's services to develop a Stewardship Plan to ensure tourism is aligned with the needs of the community. Hocking County's tourism industry should serve the residents while providing economic benefits that reduce the tax burden on residents. The Plan will be presented to the community in early May '24.

The current sales tax exemption for certain lodging properties has been an issue of parity and lost revenue for Hocking County. Legislation has been drafted to eliminate the exemption. Sponsors for the draft legislation will be solicited after the March primary election. If passed, this change will not only create a level playing field for all lodging businesses; it will provide significant additional sales tax revenue to the county.

Supporters of this proposed change include the Ohio Association of Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Ohio Hotel & Lodging Association. The County Commissioners Association of Ohio has also had this issue on its legislative agenda. The proliferation of short-term rentals across the state has made this a broader issue. The Hocking County Lodging Tax Administrator estimates more than 30% of Hocking County vacation rentals are currently not required to collect sales tax.

Through a partnership with Logan Transit and ODNR, HHTA funded shuttle service on Saturdays and Sundays. The route ran from Logan to Hocking Hills State Park with continuous loops between Old Man's Cave, Cedar Falls, Ash Cave, and Hocking Hills State Park Lodge.

After a soft launch in July 2023, all have agreed to continue the service in 2024. It will begin on May 25 and continue every Saturday and Sunday through October 26. In addition to providing transportation from downtown Logan to the Hocking Hills State Park, the shuttles should help alleviate some congestion when the parks are the busiest.

The Love Hocking Hills initiative continues to grow. A Stewardship Coordinator position was added to the HHTA staff. The Stewardship Coordinator is establishing a volunteer databank and setting up a booth at the parks to invite park guests to take a pledge to visit responsibly. Volunteer trail clean-up opportunities are going to be offered in 2024.

The Destination Investment Fund, established in 2021, continues to fund programs and projects that enhance the quality of life for residents and provide new experiences for visitors.

In 2023, grants were awarded to the following:

- Hocking Hills Children’s Museum
- Logan Theater
- LHSD Chieftain Center
- Hocking County Historical Society
- Logan in Bloom
- The Bowen House
- Friends of Hocking Hills State Park

Event Marketing Grants were awarded to the following:

- Hocking County Children’s Chorus
- Lilyfest
- Hocking Hills Artists & Craftsmen Association Fall Show and Sale

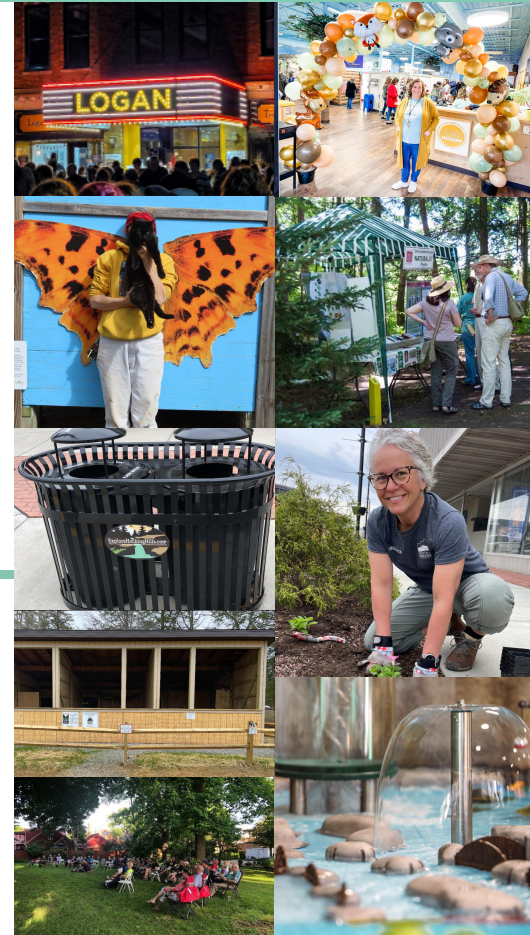
Stewardship Plan:

The Clarity of Place consultants conducted interviews and surveys in the fall. There were two town hall-style meetings where residents expressed their concerns. Meetings were held with representatives from government services, education, nonprofit organizations, and business owners. Their findings will determine the recommendations in the Stewardship Plan.

The Stewardship Plan will likely contain recommendations beyond the scope of HHTA. The county is already working on countywide land use regulations which was a topic of discussion during the town hall meetings in November. Clarity of Place will provide a plan for measures the whole community can take to guarantee tourism works for everyone.

HHTA will continue to host town hall meetings to ensure the Association and the county's tourism industry listen to the residents and respond with strategies to align the work of HHTA with the values of the community.

There is a lot of work ahead. There are challenges and opportunities. The Hocking Hills Tourism Association is committed to advocating for our tourism industry to benefit our community and our guests

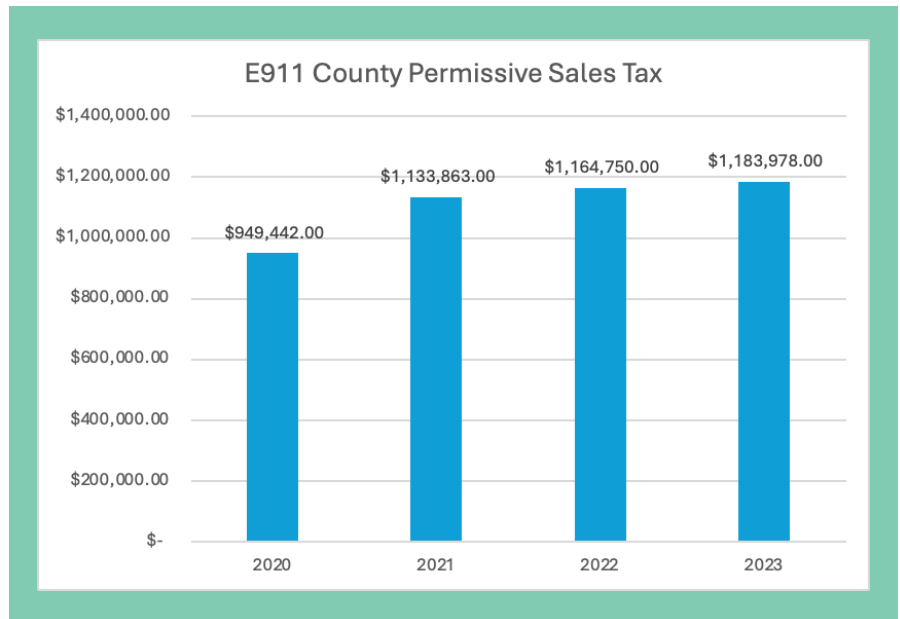
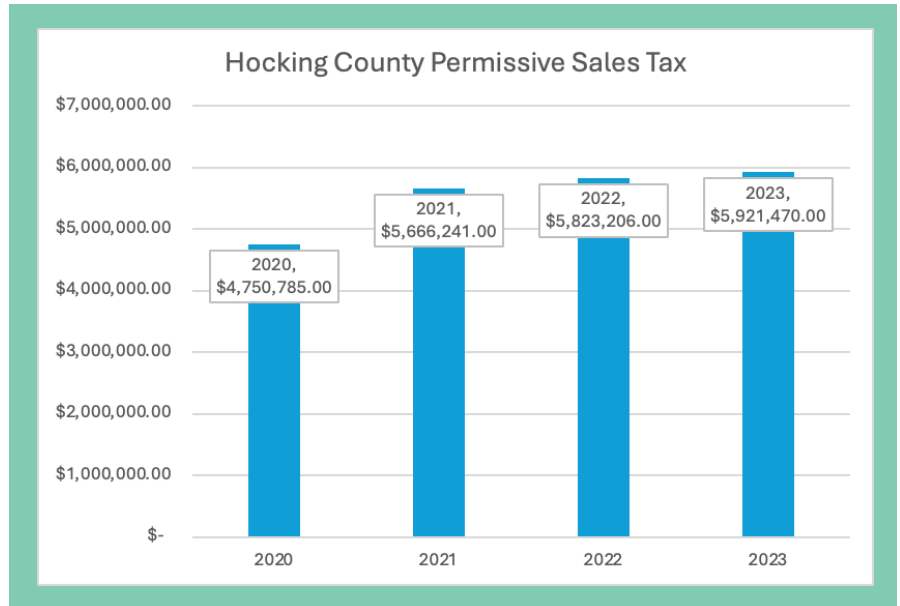


Community and Stakeholder roll out of the Stewardship Plan will begin the first week of May.

In 2023 the Hocking County Permissive Sales Tax collections increased by more than \$1 million in comparison to 2020.

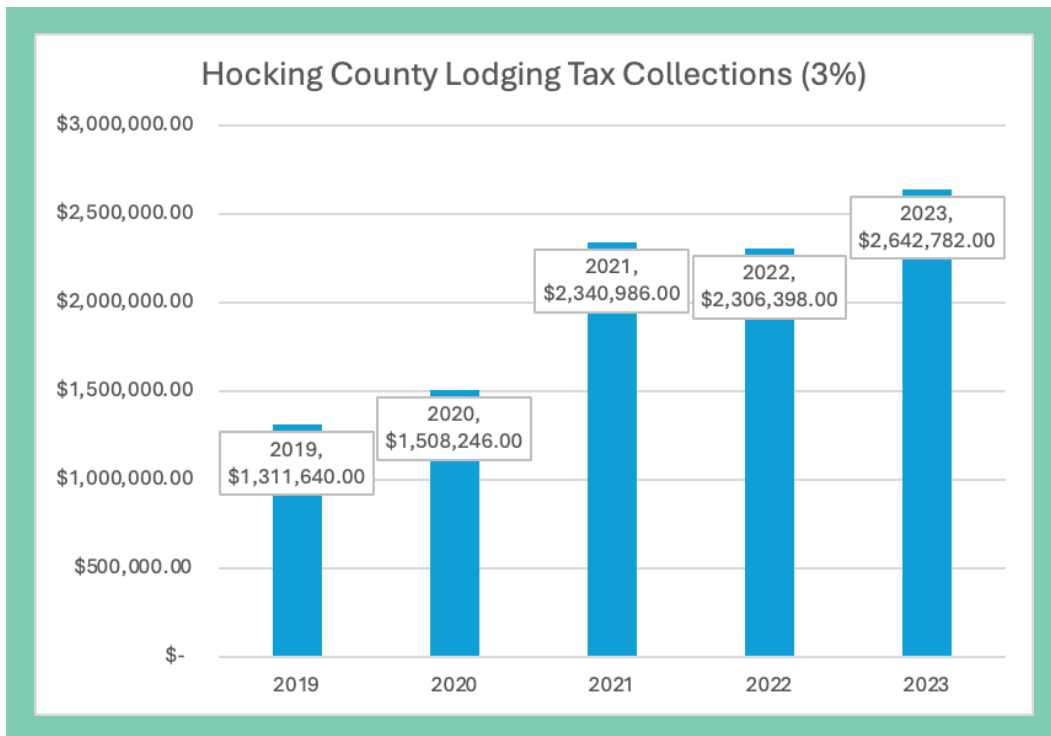
The E911 Hocking County Permissive Sales Tax collections grew by more than \$200,000 since 2020.

These funds pay for services provided to residents and visitors. Since Hocking County has declining population growth and, therefore, less sales tax is being paid by residents, the growth in these revenues is due to increased tourism sales.



In accordance with the Ohio Revised Code, the Hocking Hills Tourism Association is funded by the Hocking County Lodging Tax (3%). Hocking County retains 5% of the County lodging taxes collected for administrative expenses.

An additional 3% lodging tax is assessed for all transient lodging rentals in all Hocking County townships with transient rental properties. All townships retain 100% of the Lodging Tax they collect.



Property Taxes:

The recent re-evaluation of real estate values in Hocking County has resulted in dramatic property tax increases, which will also increase the Hocking County General Fund. According to the Hocking County Auditor’s Office, “Real estate taxes support local services and facilities such as schools, roads, fire departments, park districts, and county, city, village, and township governments.”

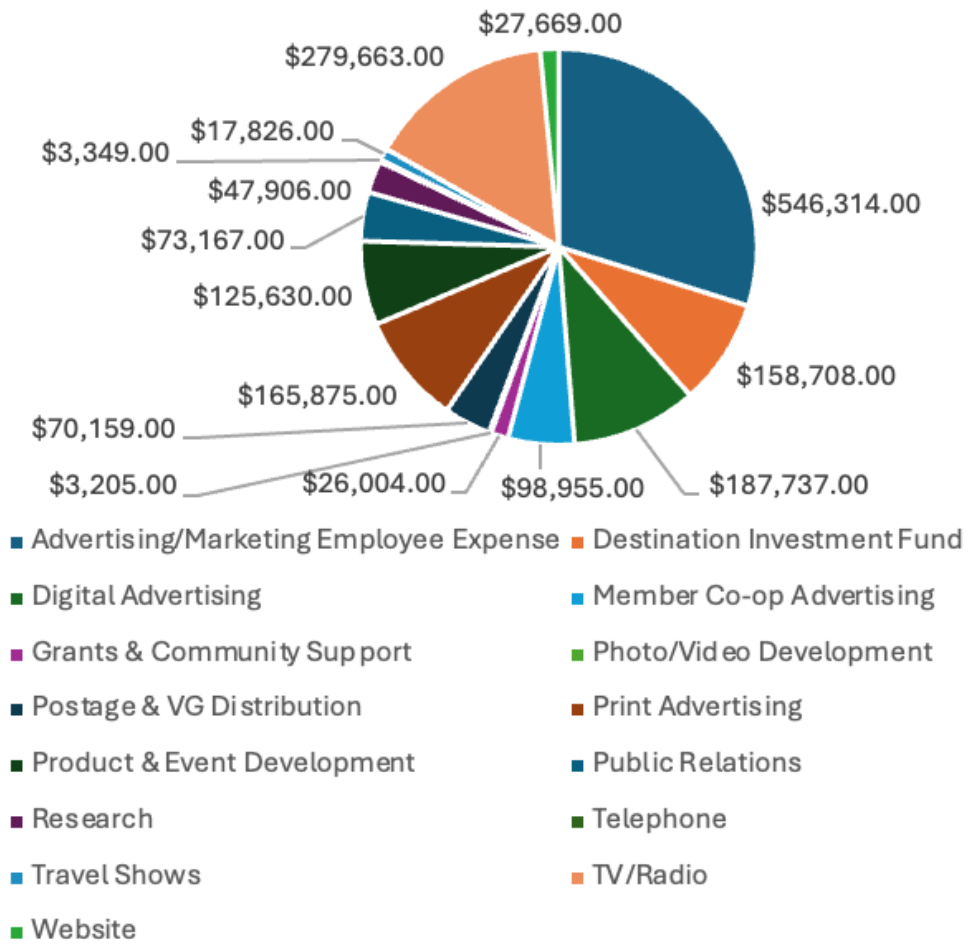
Hocking County’s robust tourism industry supports our schools and many services for the residents of Hocking County. Thanks to tourism, Hocking County is a “transitional” Ohio Appalachian County instead of “distressed” or “at risk” like most of our neighboring Appalachian counties.

The primary source of revenue is Hocking County Lodging Tax (3%). All Hocking County townships also collect Lodging Tax (3%) and retain 100% of those funds for their respective operating budgets.

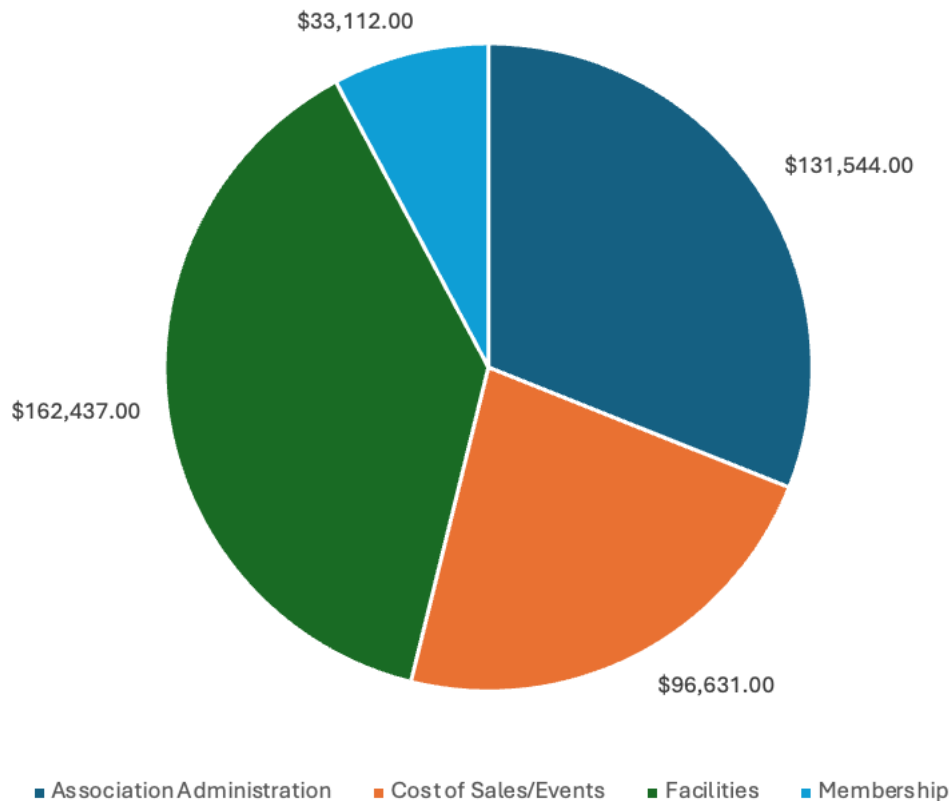
Advertising/Marketing Employee Expenses include salaries for all facilities staff: Regional Welcome Center, Laurelville Visitor Center and Main Street Information Center, as well as a portion of the Executive Director and Deputy Director salaries. HHTA employs 8 full-time and 7 part-time people. Administration/Operating Employee Expenses include the Finance Director and a portion of the Executive Director and Deputy Director salaries.



Advertising/Marketing Expenses



Administration/Operation Expenses



| Cash Basis | | Hocking Hills Tourism Association | | | | |
|----------------------|----------------------------------|--|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| | | Budget Overview Year 2024 | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | Jan-Mar 2024 | Apr-Jun 2024 | Jul-Sep 2024 | Oct-Dec 2024 | Total 2024 |
| Revenue | | | | | | |
| | Donations | 250.00 | 850.00 | 800.00 | 500.00 | 2,400.00 |
| | Event/Fund Raising Revenue | 16,000.00 | 8,650.00 | 16,900.00 | 0.00 | 41,550.00 |
| | Interest Income | 17,500.00 | 17,500.00 | 17,500.00 | 17,500.00 | 70,000.00 |
| | Lodging Tax | 513,200.00 | 458,300.00 | 761,400.00 | 767,000.00 | 2,499,900.00 |
| | Membership Revenue | 1,100.00 | 2,000.00 | 22,000.00 | 31,000.00 | 56,100.00 |
| | Other Income | 10.00 | 10.00 | 10.00 | 10.00 | 40.00 |
| | Sales Revenue | 14,500.00 | 21,930.00 | 25,950.00 | 28,350.00 | 90,730.00 |
| Total Income | | 562,560.00 | 509,240.00 | 844,560.00 | 844,360.00 | 2,760,720.00 |
| Expense | | | | | | |
| | Advertising/Marketing Investment | 767,679.00 | 660,179.00 | 582,627.00 | 651,864.00 | 2,662,349.00 |
| | Association Administration | 81,846.00 | 40,496.00 | 41,831.00 | 39,812.00 | 203,985.00 |
| | Cost of Sales & Events | 30,320.00 | 22,620.00 | 27,100.00 | 27,800.00 | 107,840.00 |
| | Facilities | 94,478.00 | 34,790.00 | 26,455.00 | 21,505.00 | 177,228.00 |
| | Membership | 11,603.00 | 11,068.00 | 18,951.00 | 14,097.00 | 55,719.00 |
| Total Expense | | 985,926.00 | 769,153.00 | 698,964.00 | 755,078.00 | 3,207,121.00 |
| Net Revenue | | (423,366.00) | (259,913.00) | 147,596.00 | 89,282.00 | (446,401.00) |

Upcoming Events

(Visit ExploreHockingHills.com for even more events)

April 22 – 27: Week of Spring Wildflowers Hike – Hocking Hills State Park

May 2 – 5: Urban Air – Downtown Logan

May 3 – 5: Glass Garden Art Festival – Jack Pine Studios, Laurelville

June 7 & 8: Starbrick Music Festival – Nelsonville

June 13 – 15: Washboard Music Festival – Downtown Logan

July 12 – 14: Lilyfest – Bishop Educational Gardens, Laurelville

July 26 – 28: Nelsonville Music Festival, Snow Fork Event Center, Buchtel

August 2 & 3: Hocking Hills Bigfoot Festival, Downtown Logan

September 21: Hocking Hills Trail Run, Hocking Hills State Park

September 20 – 22: Glass Pumpkin Festival – Jack Pine Studios, Laurelville

September 27 & 28: Fireman’s Fun Day & Car Show, Laurelville

September 28 & 29: Hocking Hills Artist & Craftsmen Assoc. Fall Show & Sale, HHSP Lodge

October 12: Grandma Gatewood Fall Color Hike – Hocking Hills State Park

October 25: Halloween Night Hike Ash Cave – Hocking Hills State Park

November 1 to December 12: Holiday Treasure Hunt – Various locations in Hocking Hills

December 14: Christmas in Ash Cave – Hocking Hills State Park

Take the Pledge:

- I will do my homework and visit prepared.
- I will dress for the trail and not the catwalk.
- I will stay on the trails at ALL times.
- I will etch my memory, not the trees or caves.
- I will take only pictures and leave only footprints.
- I will remain in one piece by leaving wildlife in peace.
- I will scoop the poop, pick up after my pooch, and carry it out.
- I will play nice with fellow visitors.
- I will camp only on permitted surfaces and be responsible with my campfire.
- I will be part of the solution, not the pollution.

For Your Consideration:

- **All accidental fatalities at the Hocking Hills State Park are the result of hikers leaving the designated trails. These events, unfortunately, happen every year. Choose safety by staying on designated trails and by following the signage.**
- The most common litter hikers leave include coins in the water, diapers, water bottles, and more. Be a great hiker by taking everything you bring in, out with you.

Learn more at www.LoveHockingHills.com or with the QR code here.

Get a FREE sticker when you take the pledge online.

