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For Immediate Release

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FAIRFIELD COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE OPENS NEW OFFICE IN ICONIC, HISTORIC LANCASTER BUILDING

LANCASTER, OHIO - Fairfield County Auditor Jon Slater announced the opening of an office at 108 N. High St., marking the completion of another historic building preservation project downtown.

The office's construction began in March 2019 under a \$2.3 million contract with architectural firm DLZ and general contractor Gutknecht Construction. The project's intent was to improve service to the public, expand work spaces for current and future operations while maintaining historic features in the building.

The auditor's office received occupancy of the now 8,100-square-foot building — commonly referred to as the Beery House — in April. The property has a long history of serving the public in both the private and public sectors, and for the last three decades, served as the civil division for the Fairfield County Sheriff's Office.

Slater saw a great need to save the iconic building after the sheriff's office moved in 2017. It's history dates back to the 1830s with ties to multiple prominent residents, including Thomas Ewing and Dr. George Beery, who was one of the city's most promising physicians of his time. Dr. Beery was also instrumental in seeing the construction of the city's first municipal hospital.

"As I walked by the building on a daily basis, I kept asking myself if there was a way that the property could thoughtfully be repurposed to continue to provide good public service for another

60 years,” Slater said. “It seemed a shame to me to see all that service to the community that building represents be lost to a potential parking lot.”

Aside from preserving the building, Slater said the Beery House property offered many opportunities the previous space could not accommodate.

“The footprint of the existing auditor’s office has not changed since the 1960s,” Slater said. “Both the number of employees and code compliance has changed over time. The new space will allow us to comply with ADA accommodations as well as provide our employees work space appropriate to serve the public into the future.”

The office features a new conference room that allows for tax appeal hearings in addition to modern information technology and communications to provide better data access to the auditor’s staff and the public. The project included upgrades for ADA compliance, a new addition to the building’s north side to allow for an elevator, modern bathrooms on both floors, new LED lighting and HVAC system.

While there were many upgrades, there was an effort to keep some of the home’s historical integrity and craftsmanship intact including fine wood trim detail, hardware and fireplaces.

“We in Fairfield County have been pleased with the progress of the construction at the historical Beery House at 108 N. High Street,” said Commissioner Steve Davis, Board of Commissioners President. “The project is a good example of collaboration, and we are appreciative of the contributions made by the Real Estate Assessment Fund for the Real Estate Offices which will be housed there. People will have a great appreciation for the design of the building and for how it will improve Real Estate Assessment services once they are able to visit the building. We thank County Auditor Jon Slater for his vision for the project.”

There will be a ribbon cutting and public reveal of a mural and historic building timeline that acknowledges and celebrates the building’s storied history. The event will likely be scheduled later this summer. The office is currently open by appointment only.

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