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For Immediate Release

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## **Fairfield County and Ohio University collaborate to improve service to the community**

(Lancaster, OH) Fairfield County is partnering with Ohio University to increase access to public services. In a new agreement, contingent upon approval from the OHIO Board of Trustees and Fairfield County Board of County Commissioners, the County will purchase property located on Stonecreek Drive NW in Violet Township from Ohio University.

The property, which will be renovated to improve the provision of public services and provide a positive physical presence in the Northwestern portion of the county, will become the Fairfield County Government Services Center Northwest.

Ohio University will collaborate with Pickerington Local School District to identify space for expanded service to the area.

### ***There is excitement about providing public services at the Government Services Center Northwest.***

Commissioner Dave Levacy, Board President, stated, "Fairfield County plans to use the space for meetings, conferences, and satellite offices. All offices will be able to reserve space and be accessible to the public."

First occupants of the Center will be the Fairfield County Sheriff. The Clerk of Courts Title Office will follow in 2022. Renovations will begin in 2022. The county hopes to house the state BMV at the same site when the state office is able to change locations.

Commissioner Jeff Fix, Board Vice-President, added, "It makes a lot of sense to own an accessible Government Services Center in the Pickerington and Violet Township area because one-third of the county's population lives there – and the area continues to be growing."

Branden Meyer, Clerk of Courts, will be operating Title Offices at the new location as soon as it is renovated. "We plan to dedicate surplus Certificate of Title funds to the project because it will make a positive difference for the public seeking to obtain vehicle or boat titles in the area," stated Meyer.

County Sheriff Alex Lape will locate a substation early in 2022. "We are excited to be a part of this collaboration. At the substation, we will be able to conduct investigations and provide law enforcement services more efficiently," stated Sheriff Lape.

### ***Renovation for the Government Services Center Northwest will occur in two phases.***

The purchase price of the building is estimated at \$2.2 M. This is for 30,000 square feet of space. The renovation will occur in two phases.

The cost of the renovation for the first phase of improvements (to house the Sheriff's substation, the Clerk of Courts Title Office, and general office and conference space) is estimated at \$1.5 M, including furniture, fixture, and equipment.



The cost of the renovation for the second phase of improvements to prepare space (that is intended to be leased) will be about \$800,000. This second renovation is not expected to begin until the latter part of 2022.

Renovating an existing building will cost about half of the estimated cost of new construction.

Commissioner Steve Davis commented, "Fairfield County prefers to own buildings, as opposed to leasing them, because service provision and maintenance activities are more stable and controlled with ownership, and there are long-term cost savings."

From a county perspective, about \$30,000 is spent annually on leased space for the Clerk of Court Title office now. With the renovation project, over a period of 30 years, the reduction in leasing costs is \$900,000. Those funds can be used for other purposes. In addition, with the planned contribution from the Clerk of Courts at \$750,000 annually, the first phase of the project will be reimbursed within five years.

***The public will have improved services with an effective facility that will be well-maintained.***

Ohio University, Fairfield County, Pickerington Local School District, the City of Pickerington, and Violet Township have a strong partnership to support multiple public services.

"Ohio University will be able to use the space through the current academic year and will maintain quality higher education for the area," Ohio University Lancaster Dean of Campus and Community Relations Jarrod Tudor said.

In addition, the Fairfield County Workforce Center will continue in partnership with Ohio University to prepare citizens for jobs in manufacturing and skilled trades.

"We are pursuing an exciting new collaboration with the Pickerington Local School District for Ohio University to expand its degree courses at the high school," Tudor said.

"Pickerington Local School District is excited to continue our partnership with Ohio University Lancaster and enrich our students' opportunities through continuing education," stated Dr. Chris Briggs, Superintendent of Pickerington Local School District.

Meyer stated the project will include a drive-thru for convenience, social distancing, and health safeguarding to support responses to the pandemic. This will be a new service for the residents.

Dr. Carri Brown, County Administrator, added, "Multiple county services will be available on a pre-scheduled basis at the Center beginning in 2022." For example, the Board of Elections and Veteran Services Commission will be able to use the Center.

For more information about the project, please contact Carri Brown, County Administrator, 740-652-7096, or via email at [carri.brown@fairfieldcountyohio.gov](mailto:carri.brown@fairfieldcountyohio.gov).

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