



Press Release: For Immediate Release

Four Southeast Ohio Communities Chosen for Prepared Communities Program

Southeast Ohio: March 28, 2022 — Ohio Southeast Economic Development (OhioSE), in partnership with Bricker and Eckler LLP, today announced four communities in Southeast Ohio have been selected to participate in the Prepared Communities Program. Participating communities include Chillicothe in Ross County, Logan in Hocking County, Ironton in Lawrence County, and Athens in Athens County.

Facilitated by Bricker and Eckler LLP, the OhioSE Prepared Communities Program recognizes the unique challenges faced within the Southeast Ohio region and acknowledges that there is no blanket approach that will work across the region's diverse economic landscape. Through engaging with local communities, listening to their challenges, and providing resources and economic development tools, the program aims to equip each community with a strategic action set that addresses those unique needs.

Communities in southeast Ohio must face the challenges of meeting the demands of operating city services, including water, sewer, infrastructure, governance, and safety. Those challenges include keeping a workforce trained and equipped to handle the day to operations, all within a budget created by taxpayer dollars. When opportunities exist to leverage excess funds, new federal programs or grants, communities must be prepared to act quickly to move forward on projects that can make a long-term impact on the health of the city. The Prepared Communities program is designed to create a short-term, action plan, to position the city to be ready to act when such opportunities arise.

"The Prepared Communities Program is designed to be the catalyst for moving forward," said Katy Farber, OhioSE Vice President. "OhioSE recognizes that a community strategy or a common vision is necessary in order to achieve economic development success. With a vision that becomes an actionable plan, you have direction. We want to help communities in this region create a vision and develop an actionable plan."

Bricker & Eckler, LLP, a leading Midwestern law firm based in Columbus with offices in Marietta and Barnesville, has partnered with OhioSE to provide technical expertise in local economic development finance and programming.

"With a deep level of experience across many decades in Ohio's state and local economic development efforts, Bricker is an ideal fit to pair with the four selected communities," said Farber. Attorneys with Bricker will work alongside OhioSE's own program experts to develop for each community a specific, laser-focused economic development plan for quick action in the next year or two.

"We're excited to continue the momentum in Chillicothe with this new partnership with OhioSE and Bricker and Eckler LLP," said Luke Feeney, Mayor of the City of Chillicothe. "This project is a perfect complement to our Choose Chillicothe comprehensive planning process and will help us put in place actionable strategies to continue our community's economic and community development momentum.

Partnering with experts in the field like Bricker and Eckler will lead to great project outcomes and help us to grow local technical and subject matter expertise that will benefit the community for years to come.”

Leaders in Athens see this opportunity as a path forward as the region begins to recover from the pandemic. “As our city ventures into 2022 and beyond, many of our residents see opportunity, and possibly a paradigm shift, in how business will be conducted post COVID-19,” said Athens City Mayor Steve Patterson. “From the promotion of sustainable industries to a redefining of what people want from the communities where they live, economic development must adapt and respond to these changes. Coupling the identification of these opportunities with the implementation of a workable plan will enable Athens to continue to define its trajectory to renewed economic growth and prosperity.”

The Prepared Communities program will provide each participating city with technical assistance from the professional team at Bricker and Eckler LLP and OhioSE designed to provide the framework for developing a workable plan for future economic development strategy.

“Since I began my service as mayor, it was known our water infrastructure was in dire need of improvement,” said City of Logan Mayor Fraunfelder. “From the water treatment plant and service lines to meter pits and major inflow and infiltration issues, we continue to deal with these ongoing challenges.” The mayor said the Prepared Communities Program will help the community continue this momentum. “My problem is a lack of 'know-how' in order to keep things moving forward, but we aren't afraid to ask for help,” he said. “That's the reason we applied for this terrific opportunity.”

Sam Cramblit, Mayor of Ironton, said he was excited to work with both OhioSE and Bricker and Eckler to create the building blocks to a vibrant economy that is able to attract and retain youth, talent, and professionals. “Ironton has many sought after characteristics and benefits of a small community that will give us the ability to compete for new investment and talent pool,” he said. “With this program, we hope to unlock the path forward to potential industrial, residential and downtown development projects, that will shape the trajectory of our Ohio River community.”

Contact: Destiny Bryson, Engagement, Ohio Southeast: 614.440.1885 or destiny@ohiose.com; Matt Englehart, JobsOhio Communications Manager: 614.300.1152 and englehart@jobsohio.com; or Sarah Arnold, OhioSE Director of Marketing: sarah@ohiose.com.

JobsOhio is a private nonprofit economic development corporation designed to drive job creation and new capital investment in Ohio through business attraction, retention and expansion. The organization also works to seed talent production in its targeted industries and to attract talent to Ohio through [Find Your Ohio](#). JobsOhio works with six regional partners across Ohio: [Dayton Development Coalition](#), [Ohio Southeast Economic Development](#), [One Columbus](#), [REDI Cincinnati](#), [Regional Growth Partnership](#) and [Team NEO](#). Learn more at www.jobsohio.com. Follow us on [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

Ohio Southeast Economic Development (OhioSE) is the JobsOhio Network Partner for southern, eastern, and southeastern Ohio, providing economic development work and resources in 25 rural counties; they are the newest and geographically the largest of the six regions across the state. OhioSE partners closely with regional development districts, local economic development offices, state

agencies, and other entities to expand, retain, and attract businesses in the counties they serve. Learn more at OhioSE.com.

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