



ATHENS COUNTY, OHIO

QUALITY OF LIFE AND INCENTIVES PACKAGE

In Athens County, we know a strong business is only as good as the happiness of its employees! Athens offers an environment that makes it easy to foster work-life balance at a lower cost of living. Our community's unique character, outdoor recreational assets, and overall quality of life offer businesses and employees a wonderful place to work, live and play.

This Quality of Life and Incentives package covers several features of Athens County, from business climate to healthcare services, comprehensive childcare, our booming local food and beverage economy, and rich arts scene. Enjoy and welcome to Athens!



Welcome to the Neighborhood

Athens County is a patchwork of close-knit communities, each with its own flavor. The City of Athens and City of Nelsonville both offer rich uptown scenes with a variety of shops and restaurants, many of which started from “home-grown” talent like Jackie O's in Athens and FullBrooks Café in Nelsonville. Talk to any Athenian and they will tell you we have some of the best local food cantinas around. It's just a short drive to the beautiful countryside, which offers hiking trails and outdoor recreation activities throughout the rolling foothills of Appalachia. Athens is also home to Ohio University, which brings with it many cultural opportunities not only for students, but for Athens residents as well. We have big city perks with a small town sense of community.

Transportation

Hocking Athens Perry Community Action (HAPCAP) has a Transportation Division dedicated to providing safe, reliable, and affordable transportation to all community members in Athens County and beyond. Take the Go-Bus to get to the airport or larger Ohio metros, and take advantage of Athens Public Transit, our public bus system serving the City of Athens, Chauncey, the Plains, Nelsonville, and Albany.



Athens Cost of Living

As of February 2021, the Athens' cost of living index was 87, which is 13 points lower than the U.S. cost of living index (100). In the COVID-19 era, the housing market nationwide has experienced a boom, but home prices in Athens County remain below the US median home price with a median property value of \$122,000 (Data USA). Area realtors are dedicated to helping you find the right home at the right price. Here are a few recommended real estate companies:

COMPANY	PHONE NUMBER
<u>CLASSIC GOLD REAL ESTATE</u>	(740) 594-4211
<u>DAVE HOISINGTON REALTY</u>	(740) 249-4508
<u>HAYES REAL ESTATE</u>	(740) 593-8867
<u>HOPEWELL REALTY</u>	(740) 300-5009
<u>LCR REALTY</u>	(740) 592-3015
<u>OHIO REALTY</u>	(740) 594-6637
<u>OHIO REAL ESTATE AUCTIONS LLC</u>	(614) 233-1243
<u>SOLE & BLOOM REALTORS</u>	(740) 592-5263
<u>GRUESER REALTY</u>	(740) 593-5882
<u>THE ATHENS REAL ESTATE CO., LTD.</u>	(740) 589-4600



Healthcare in Athens County

In 2014, O'Bleness Hospital, which has served the region for nearly a century, became a full member hospital of OhioHealth. With more than \$50M of capital investment, membership has allowed O'Bleness to expand both services and facilities throughout the region, including a new OhioHealth Nelsonville Health Center, a new intensive care unit, and an MD Anderson accredited Cancer Care center, as well as expansive renovations in the emergency department. A strong network of providers at the OhioHealth Physician Group Heritage College offers a wide range of services from primary care, women's health and general surgery to pulmonology, orthopedics, and heart and vascular among other specialties. OhioHealth at Home provides world class home health services and hospice care. O'Bleness Medical Park is also home to Athens Surgery Center, Health Recovery Services, Appalachian Behavioral Health, and Hopewell Health Center.

The privately-owned Holzer Clinic also offers specialized care in over 40 areas of expertise including gastroenterology, orthopedics, cardiology, endocrinology, rehabilitation and more. At Holzer, caring for the health needs of the community goes beyond providing exceptional care to in-patients and out-patients.

Athens provides a well-rounded approach to healthcare and prides itself as a leader in the holistic health movement. It is home to the only osteopathic medicine program in Ohio. Ohio University's Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine is dedicated to research and services that improve healthcare in rural Appalachia. There are other holistic and alternative healthcare provider options in the area as well.



Comprehensive Childcare

One of the most common phrases you'll hear about Athens is that it is, "a great place to raise a family!" We agree. Every family is different, and every child is unique. Even from the youngest age, Athens County places a high value on education and offers a range of childcare options from home-based, to center-based, to faith-based or secular programs. Resources that publish childcare information include the [Ohio Dept. of Education](#), [Athens County JFS](#), and [CareLulu](#). Here you will find a comprehensive list of childcare programs and services including the [Ohio University Child Development Center](#) and [Blooming View Montessori Academy](#).

Public Education

Beyond the pre-school stage? Your child will be well equipped to continue their learning at one of Athens' five K-12 public school districts. Did you know Athens High School students consistently score higher on ACTs and SATs than the state's national average? This is in part due to the individual attention teachers give each student. The student-teacher ratio exceeds the state's requirement. Our teachers are dedicated to providing students with the best education possible, and these efforts are enhanced through partnerships with [Ohio University's Patton College of Education](#). [Tri-County Career Center](#) also offers students the opportunity to get a quality education while preparing them for careers in specific trades/industries or secondary education.

Athens County K-12 Public Schools

- [Alexander Local School District](#)
- [Athens City School District](#)
- [Federal Hocking Local School District](#)
- [Trimble Local School District](#)
- [Nelsonville-York City School District](#)
- [Tri-County Career Center](#)



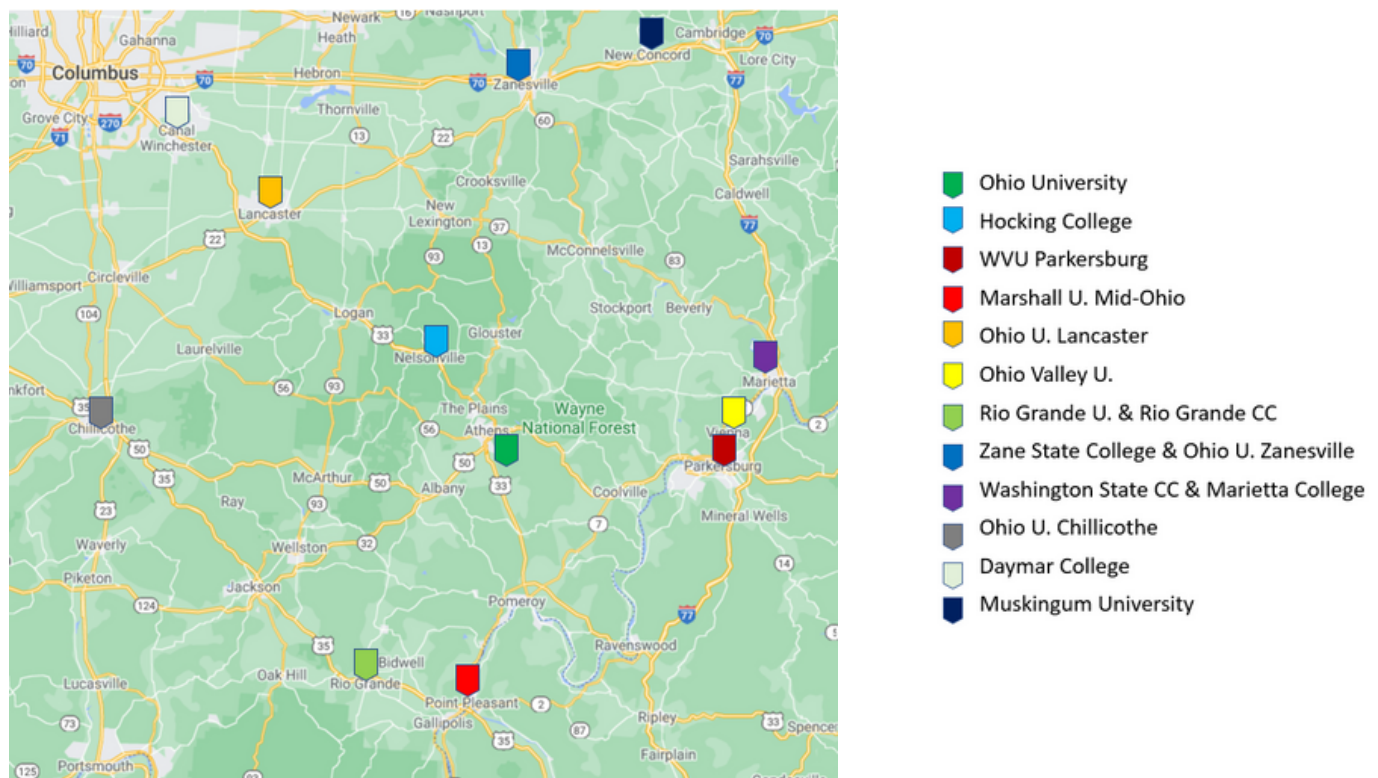
Home Schooling

Prefer home-school for your child? Join the community's robust network of families who opted in for home-schooling. Stay connected and engage in peer interaction by joining The [Athens Homeschool Community Group](#).



Higher Education

Athens is no stranger to higher education. It is home to Ohio University, which offers a number of prestigious undergraduate, graduate, doctorate and medical degree programs, while providing students with a transformative learning experience. There are also twelve two-year and four-year higher education institutions within a 45-minute drive time (shown below).



Distance from the Center of the City of Athens

Ohio University	0 mi	Zane State College	45 mi
Hocking College	13 mi	Washington State CC	47 mi
WVU Parkersburg	36 mi	Marietta College	48 mi
Marshall U. Mid-Ohio	38 mi	Ohio U. Chillicothe	48 mi
Ohio U. Lancaster	39 mi	Daymar College	48 mi
Ohio Valley U.	40 mi	Muskingum University	51 mi
Rio Grande U.	43 mi		

Commitment to Sustainability

Athens is a unique gem in the region and one that deviates from typical perceptions of Southeast Ohio. The community is very much committed to sustainability, prioritizing programs like the [Athens 30-Mile Meal Project \(30MM\)](#), which challenges the community to purchase and eat foods grown or raised within a 30-mile radius of Athens. Many of our area restaurants enact this approach to sourcing ingredients, including local favorites [Jackie O's](#) or [Casa Nueva!](#) This not only encourages us to support our local farmers in an area with deep agricultural roots, but is a way to strengthen our community culture and reduce our carbon footprint too.

Our devotion to sustainability runs deeper than just the local food movement. Athens is home to [Rural Action](#), a nonprofit focused on developing the region's assets in an economically sustainable way. The [Sustainable Ohio Public Energy Council](#) (SOPEC), a local electricity aggregator working to shift our community's energy economy, is another great example of our commitment to sustainability. The [Appalachian Center for Economic Networks](#) (ACENet) provides a variety of services to area entrepreneurs that support our local economy.

It's no surprise the [Athens Area Chamber of Commerce's](#) motto is, "Love Athens, Shop Local." Our commitment to all things local shows pride in our community and our desire to see it thrive.

Abundant Outdoor Recreation Options

Athens is a community where you can easily get from one side of town to the other all by way of bike trails and bike paths. Extensions to the [Hockhocking Adena Bikeway](#) take you all the way from Athens to Nelsonville, with several bike spurs in between that connect to local breweries and restaurants such as [Little Fish Brewing Company](#) and [Eclipse Company Store](#) (the latter being the former center of the century-old coal mining town of Hocking, now beautifully renovated with historic integrity).

Athens is also extremely close to a number of beautiful state parks and national forests, each with its own personality. [Strouds Run State Park](#) offers numerous outdoor activities such as hiking, swimming, paddle boarding or fishing. The newly formed Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia (ORCA) is also leading efforts around the [Baileys Trail System](#). Once complete, it will be the largest bike trail system east of the Mississippi River with over 88 miles of trail to explore.

Not a huge fan of the outdoors? That's alright. Athens has several community facilities offering indoor activities including the [Athens Community Center](#) and the [Ohio University Aquatic Center](#). An avid golfer? Look no further than the [Athens Country Club](#) or the [Ohio University Golf Course!](#)



PREPARED BY THE ATHENS COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Athens' Arts & Music Scene

Ohio University brings with it many opportunities for shows and concerts for students and community members alike. [The Ohio University School of Music](#) hosts a variety of concerts each year - many of them free.

For a quintessential Athens experience, visit [Stuart's Opera House](#) in Nelsonville. In the late 1800s, Stuart's Opera House was a hot spot on the Vaudeville circuit. Today it attracts musicians who thrive on playing live, from Richie Havens to Arcade Fire. And there's not a bad seat in the house. Stuart's also hosts the annual [Nelsonville Music Festival](#) - a three-day festival celebrating the region and the best up and coming artists. To hear weekly live entertainment that embodies these performances, look no further than a show at [The Union](#) in uptown Athens.

And where do rock legends settle down to build a home and a legacy? Jorma Kaukonen, lead guitarist for Jefferson Airplane and Hot Tuna, chose Southeast Ohio for his [Fur Peace Ranch](#). FPR raises world-class guitarists right down the road in Pomeroy, Ohio.

Performing Arts

The Ohio University [Performing Arts Series](#) brings artists from around the world to Athens' 2,000-seat Memorial Auditorium. Each season is an eclectic mix: Broadway plays, ballets, musical revues, comedians and international children's choirs. [Arts West: Athens Community Gateway to the Arts](#) is an arts center that provides the community with a variety of classes from yoga to square dancing. Last but not least is the [Ohio University School of Theater](#), which offers a variety of performance options in multiple theatrical disciplines, including the [Tantrum Theater](#), a resident professional theater company founded by Ohio University. Athens County has no fewer than 5 theater groups active throughout the community. In the summer months, students and faculty team up with community members for [Ohio Valley Summer Theater](#), a regional entertainment gem since 1951.

Visual Arts

The [Dairy Barn Arts Center](#) and [Kennedy Museum](#) are two museums with revolving exhibits. The Dairy Barn is a historic landmark and art gallery in one. The building itself dates back to 1914; with its slate roof and three cupolas that recall the days when it was a working dairy barn. The Dairy Barn's two staple exhibits are the Quilt National and Bead International shows. The Kennedy Museum, on the other hand, is tucked inside the former Athens Psychiatric Facility, a gothic edifice overlooking the Hocking River. It features exhibits that bring the world to Southeast Ohio.

If one image captures the spirit of Athens County, it is the Passion Flower, produced only by the [Passion Works Studio](#). Inspiring and liberating the human spirit through the arts, Passion Works is a studio for artists with and without developmental disabilities, and aims to strengthen community through expressions of art.

For more information on events and activities, see the [Athens County Convention and Visitor's Bureau!](#)



Utilities and Infrastructure

Electric Providers:

- Buckeye Rural Electric
- AEP Ohio
- SOPEC

Natural Gas Providers:

- Columbia Gas of Ohio
- Southeastern Natural Gas Company

Water/Sewer:

- Le-Ax Water
- Athens County Water & Sewer Department

Telephone Providers:

- AT&T Ohio
- UTO (dba CenturyLink)
- Frontier Communications – New Service
- Frontier Communications – Existing Service
- Horizon Telecom
- Intelliwave
- Spectrum

Internet Providers:

- AT&T Ohio
- UTO (dba CenturyLink)
- Frontier Communications – New Service
- Frontier Communications – Existing Service
- Horizon Telecom
- Intelliwave
- Spectrum

Broadband Expansion & Advocacy

The Athens County Economic Development Council, alongside several community partners and Tom Reid Consulting, has taken a role in advocating for rural broadband expansion in Athens County and neighboring communities over the past few years. We know that addressing the digital divide through accessible and affordable Internet services is critical to remaining competitive with the rest of the state and nation in the areas of business and economic development, healthcare, education and overall quality of life.

In 2020, Hocking Athens Perry Community Action Program (HAPCAP) hired a Broadband Coordinator to help improve communication with Internet service providers and to align community messaging around broadband expansion efforts at local, state and federal levels. Paul Isherwood is available to answer any questions around Internet and broadband service: paul.isherwood@hapcap.org



Why Ohio?

Ohio offers a business environment that attracts global investment and fosters growth. Ohio's simplified tax structure, central location and affordable cost of doing business are catalysts for past and future economic diversification and prosperity. JobsOhio is the state's economic development entity and offers several grants, loans and tax incentives that support business growth, workforce and talent, innovation, and critical infrastructure.

OHIO WON'T TAX YOUR PROFITS.

We've eliminated corporate profit and franchise taxes. Zero tax on corporate profit means reduced operating costs and enhanced profit margins for your business.

NO TAXES ON NEW MACHINERY AND EQUIPMENT.

We want your profits to soar, so when you invest in greater productivity, your business will have zero tax liability surrounding that investment.

ZERO TAX BURDEN ON INVENTORY.

Operating costs can drop significantly as a result of Ohio's inventory tax policy. If your business holds inventory in Ohio, it's completely tax free.

DON'T PAY TAX ON OUT-OF-STATE SALES.

Ohio doesn't impose a tax on goods or services sold outside of our state. If you ship 100% of your product outside of Ohio, your Commercial Activities Tax (CAT) is zero.

START A BUSINESS, GET HUGE BENEFITS.

Entrepreneurs will love this: Your first \$1 million in gross receipts can be tax-free in Ohio.

OUR FLAT TAX IS EASIER.

Simply pay the flat CAT corresponding to your taxable gross receipts; flat tax amounts increase at each level of \$150,000, \$1 million, \$2 million, or more.

Why Athens County?

Athens County is uniquely poised to offer lower costs to start-ups alongside a highly skilled workforce. Athens also offers numerous advantages for both existing and new businesses including a growing economy, development of regional energy sources, and a large pool of advanced services and technology graduates from Ohio University and Hocking College.

Need help recruiting employees? The Area 14 Workforce Development Board procures, monitors and assists local providers of workforce development services to align human resources in our area with the needs of employers. They work closely with the Ohio Means Jobs Center and offer on-the-job training, career fairs and incumbent workforce training among other services to connect businesses with top talent.



State & Local Incentives

ENTERPRISE ZONE AGREEMENTS

The Ohio Enterprise Zone Program is an economic development tool that provides tax abatements on a portion of the value of new real and personal property for businesses making investment in Ohio that fall in conjunction with job creation.

NEW MARKETS TAX CREDITS

The Ohio New Market Tax Credit Program provides investors incentives to fund businesses in low-income communities by awarding tax credit allocation authority to the economic or community development entity serving as the project's intermediary (Investor gives 39% of investment claimed over 7 years).

JOB CREATION TAX CREDITS

The Local JCTC is a payroll tax incentive that reduces business tax obligations for companies that commit to job creation and a certain payroll threshold in the form of refundable tax credits.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION TAX CREDIT

The HPTC provides a tax credit to owners and long-term lessees of historically designated buildings who undertake a rehabilitation project in order to leverage the private redevelopment of historic buildings.

COMMUNITY REINVESTMENT AREAS

CRAs are areas of land in which property owners can receive tax incentives for investing in real property improvements. The program is administered by municipal and county government and provides real property tax exemptions for property owners who renovate existing or construct new buildings.

TAX INCREMENT FINANCING

An economic development tool that incentivizes redevelopment through a tax abatement on the increased assessed property value due to improvements. This captured tax can then be reinvested in the district for infrastructure improvements.

DOWNTOWN REDEVELOPMENT DISTRICTS

Similar to the TIF, but more flexible in how service payments can be spent within the district for economic development purposes.



Lending Programs

ATHENS CITY & COUNTY RLFs

The City of Athens and Athens County Revolving Loan Funds provide minimum “gap” financing of the portion of the project required to complement conventional financing resources. These funding sources will provide only the amount necessary, in the form of a loan at favorable rates and fixed terms, to induce other financial institutions to complete the financing package.

SMALL BUSINESS MICRO RLF

The Micro Revolving Loan Fund that provides funding in the form of small loan amounts ranging from \$10,000-\$50,000 at favorable rates and fixed terms to assist rural business development in Athens County.

REGIONAL 166 DIRECT LOAN

The Regional 166 Direct Loan Program promotes economic development, business expansion and job creation by providing financial assistance for allowable costs of eligible projects in the form of low-interest loans to businesses creating new jobs or preserving existing employment opportunities in the state.

OHIO STATEWIDE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION 504 LOAN PROGRAM

OSDC is a private, non-profit corporation that offers the 504 loan program, which provides funding for up to 40% of the total cost of commercial real estate and equipment for longer loan terms at fixed, below-market interest rates.

Business Spotlight: Stewart MacDonald

The Shafer Grocery Store Building, originally built in 1906, has been home to the Stewart MacDonald Manufacturing Company since the 1980s. To accommodate continued growth of the business, including significant capital investments and job creation, the ACEDC worked with state and local partners to put together an incentive package that included a JobsOhio Rehabilitation grant, state historic preservation tax credits, state and local job creation tax credits, and an enterprise zone agreement, which grants a 60% property tax abatement on improvements to the facility over 10 years. Without this support, the company likely would have relocated outside the City of Athens.



Partner & Community Organizations

- ACENet
740-592-3854
- Alexander Local School District
740-698-8831
- Area 14 Workforce Development Board
740-566-4395
- Athens Area Chamber of Commerce
740-593-9353
- Athens City County Health Department
740-592-4431
- Athens City School District
740-797-4544
- Athens County Convention and Visitor's Bureau
740-592-1819
- Athens County Foundation
(740) 594-6061
- Federal Hocking Local School District
740-662-6691
- HAPCAP
740-767-4500
- Holzer Clinic
740-589-3100
- Nelsonville-York City School District
740-753-4441
- O'Bleness Hospital
740-593-5551
- OhioHealth Nelsonville Health Center
740-753-1931
- OhioHealth Physician Group Heritage College
740-331-7160
- Ohio Means Jobs
740-797-1405
- Ohio University Innovation Center
740-593-1818
- Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia
740-592-3219
- Passion Works Studio
740-592-3673
- Rural Action
740-677-4047
- Small Business Development Center
740-593-1797
- Sustainable Ohio Public Energy Council
740-597-7955
- Trimble Local School District
740-767-4444
- Tri-County Career Center
740-753-3511

