



# Annual Report

## 2023 In Review



Oakland County's legislative body, the Board of Commissioners, brings a variety of programs and special initiatives to residents, businesses and organizations each year. From approving the budget to establishing regional partnerships to funding improvement projects, the Board's 19 commissioners serve as a bridge between county government and the communities they are elected to serve.

This annual report provides highlights of the Board's work in 2023, which included efforts to lower living costs for families, improve outdoor recreation opportunities and help get people where they need to go through better public transportation options.

### Reshaping Local Communities Through ARPA Funding

In 2021, Oakland County received funding from President Joe Biden's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) to support the response to and recovery from the COVID-19 public health emergency. The Board has put these funds to use through programs that are making a lasting impact on residents.

By the end of 2023, commissioners had assigned all ARPA funds. Here are a few highlights of how commissioners and county administration worked together to support ongoing programs and start new ones.

**Medical Debt Relief for Oakland County Families:** [To erase up to \\$200 million in hospital medical debt held by Oakland County residents](#), the Board approved a partnership with the nonprofit RIP Medical Debt in October. The program purchases medical debt from hospitals at a fraction of its cost, wiping it clean for up to 80,000 residents. Those eligible will be contacted by letter in 2024 and notified that some or all of their medical debt has been canceled and cleared from their credit reports.

\$2 million



\$5 million

**Oakland SAVES Residential Grant Program:** Oakland SAVES home energy efficiency program, [which has fully committed funds to nearly 1,100 households](#), was announced last year in partnership with Michigan Saves. The Board-allocated funding is helping residents at every income level make permanent energy efficient updates to their homes and lower their energy costs for years to come.

**Oakland County Housing Trust Fund:** The Board of Commissioners created the Oakland Together Housing Trust Fund in 2022 to increase the availability of affordable and attainable housing throughout the county. By investing in housing construction projects in 2023, the county has helped support the development of 174 units in Royal Oak Township, Rochester Hills and Southfield, with more to be approved soon.

\$13 million



In addition to these 2023 initiatives, the Board has used ARPA funding to support programs that increased support for older residents, expanded access to workforce training programs, created new mental health programming, supported local infrastructure projects and helped cities, villages and townships offer more to residents.

# COMMISSIONERS in the *Community*

With 19 unique districts, commissioners are engaged in their communities and participate in events outside of the auditorium to ensure residents' needs are being heard and met. Here are a few snapshots of what they accomplished in 2023.



Expanded access to green spaces and park improvements are being made in all corners of the county. Four municipal parks are now under the management of Oakland County Parks and Recreation as approved by the Board, including Hawthorne Park (to become Pontiac Oaks County Park); Beech Woods golf course (to become Southfield Oaks County Park); 17 acres of David H. Shepherd Park in Oak Park; and the former Ambassador Park, which will be incorporated into Red Oaks County Park in Madison Heights.

The Board's adoption of the annual county budget also included funding for revitalization projects at four additional county parks as well as at Green Acres Park in Hazel Park, Crystal Lake Park in Pontiac, Mack-Rowe Park in Royal Oak Township, the Oak Park Farmers Market and local parks in Southfield.

Commissioners attended the [15th Tri-County Summit in September at the Grosse Pointe War Memorial](#) to discuss broadband issues, behavioral health and vehicle electrification.



The Board dedicated a marker to honor Elizabeth Dension Forth, a freed slave and Pontiac's first Black property owner, at the county's Juneteenth celebration. [A plaque memorializing recipients of the Board's Black Excellence Award was also unveiled](#) during the summertime event.

## YOUTH in *Government* DAY

In March, the Board welcomed 60 high school students from across the county for its annual Youth in Government Day. The event returned to its traditional in-person format after being held virtually for the previous two years.



Participants engaged in Q & A sessions with elected county officials to learn more about their roles. In addition, the students witnessed a K-9 demonstration from the Oakland County Sheriff's Office, participated in a mock trial in the county courtrooms and problem-solved hypothetical scenarios as if they were a legislative body.

# COMMISSIONERS in the Auditorium

The Board passed nearly 400 resolutions authorizing a variety of actions that included appropriating funds for county projects, accepting grants that bring millions of dollars to Oakland County, approving supplier contracts, establishing policies for county employees, honoring local residents, businesses and organizations, recognizing special observations and more.

Nearly as soon as voters approved the Oakland County Public Transportation millage, the Board was finding ways to bring better transit solutions to residents. Last year, commissioners took actions that resulted in expanded service areas, new routes, 68 more SMART bus stops, additional weekend hours and much more. For more information about transit for residents, visit [oakgov.com/OaklandTransit](http://oakgov.com/OaklandTransit).



More than \$41 million in road projects were completed thanks in part to the Board's two road project funding initiatives, the Local Road Improvement Program (LRIP) and the Tri-Party Road Improvement Program (TRIP).

The Board adopted a series of resolutions that secured funding to complete more than \$24 million in new projects through the annual LRIP, which makes investments in local roads that are not under the jurisdiction of the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) and requires local communities to match funding. For 2023, the Board appropriated more than \$2 million that supported 37 LRIP projects across the county. In 2023, the Board also awarded \$2.8 million through the TRIP. This, combined with funds from the RCOC and matched by 27 communities, created another estimated \$17.7 million investment in local roads.



The Board joined legislative leaders from Macomb and Wayne counties to deploy a regional survey of residents and businesses. The survey aimed to help leaders understand access to broadband, or high-speed internet, and identify gaps in service and affordability. Merit Network, a Michigan-based nonprofit, administered the survey and will deliver results in 2024 to help guide decision making for Oakland County communities.



Commissioners upheld support of residents' mental health needs in 2023. More than \$40 million continued to help thousands of children and adults access mental health services. Through community partnerships, 41 organizations reached more than 55,000 individuals across Oakland County over 18 months. Schools also continued to receive funding from the Out of School grant, which supports social-emotional learning and academic tutoring during the summer and combats the pandemic's negative impact on students through additional enrichment opportunities.



One of the Board's most important responsibilities is approving the triennial county budget during every fiscal year. [The 2024-2026 budget](#), including \$1.08 billion for fiscal year 2024, prioritizes a strong economy, healthy and safe residents and communities, and opportunities for residents to live their best lives.

22  
county  
departments



3  
year  
budget



\$539.8M  
general  
fund



6  
Finance Committee  
meetings



The budget process began in July with Oakland County Executive David Coulter's presentation to the Board. Nearly two dozen county departments presented their budget priorities to the Board's Finance Committee throughout the summer, culminating in the final approval by the full Board in September.



Youth in Government Day is facilitated by county staff and educators with the Oakland County and Genesee County 4-H Civic Engagement team through the Michigan State University Extension. These leaders challenged students to think critically about complex legislative issues and the role of local government in their lives.





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