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Annual Report 2021

"Driving Erie County Forward"

MICHAEL P. KEARNS
Erie County Clerk

Your Business Office in Erie County

COUNTY OF ERIE

MICHAEL P. KEARNS

ERIE COUNTY CLERK

May 5, 2022

Honorable April N.M. Baskin
Chairwoman, Erie County Legislature
92 Franklin Street, 4th Floor
Buffalo, New York 14202

Re: Erie County Clerk's Office – Annual Report 2021

Dear Chairwoman Baskin:

I am proud to present this Honorable Body with the Erie County Clerk's Annual Report for 2021.

My top priority for the Erie County Clerk's Office is to continue to provide a safe and healthy workplace for our employees and customers. As an Office, we remain committed to ensuring that our services are accessible to all County residents and businesses and to finding ways to deliver our services more efficiently and cost-effectively.

It was a busy year for the County Clerk's Office. We processed $167 million worth of transactions and generated a $6.5 million surplus. Those surplus funds were transferred into the County's general fund to support vital services countywide. The Pistol Permits Office processed 41% more transactions and generated 7% more revenue than the previous year. The Land Records Office processed real estate and associated banking transactions valued at over $2 billion in 2021. The Actions and Proceedings Department, through timely filing of documents and processing of requests, assisted the Erie County Supreme and County Courts in their return to more expansive operations in 2021.

Looking forward, the Erie County Clerk's Office will face new challenges in 2022 and beyond. Residents and businesses can rest assured however that through strategic planning, willingness to embrace change and the unwavering dedication, hard work and professionalism of our employees, the County Clerk's Office remains well-positioned for success. We are always looking for ways to become more efficient and provide a better customer service experience and will continue to evaluate our internal processes and procedures in 2022.

On May 3, 2023, federal REAL ID requirements will take effect requiring all driver's licenses and non-driver identification cards to meet federal REAL ID standards for use in domestic air travel and entering certain federal facilities. Erie County Auto Bureaus are anticipating a significant spike in customer volume as the deadline to comply draws nearer. Servicing more customers than normal will be challenging but also provide an opportunity for generating increased revenues. The County Clerk's Office has been preparing for this by conducting an on-going campaign to educate the public about

REAL ID requirements and encourage people to obtain REAL ID compliant identification from one of our Erie County Auto Bureaus in advance of the deadline.

The New York State Department of Motor Vehicles (NYS DMV) continues to expand the number of online services available through their website, which could lead to more people transacting their business remotely with NYS DMV rather than in person at Erie County Auto Bureaus. In recognition of this, the Erie County Clerk's Office has been conducting a "Renew Local" campaign. The campaign aims to educate local residents and businesses that when they conduct their DMV business through an Erie County Auto Bureau they are also ensuring that 12.7% of the revenue from their transaction will remain here in Erie County. The County Clerk's Office has also implemented strategies designed to provide a better customer service experience at County Auto Bureaus such as extending business hours, streamlining transactions for high-volume customers, and ensuring employees are available to provide guidance, answer questions and, if necessary, contact NYS DMV for customers in-real time.

In closing, I want to thank all of our government partners for their continued support and once again commend the employees of the Clerk's Office for their professionalism and unwavering commitment to serving the residents and business of Erie County during difficult times.

Sincerely,

MICHAEL P. KEARNS
Erie County Clerk

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ERIE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE

The Erie County Clerk is an independently elected official responsible for recording, filing and maintaining a central repository of legal documents and records relating to property titles (including land and real estate transactions), corporate filings, assumed names, and, as Clerk of the Supreme and County Courts, all court pleadings and papers. Responsibility for maintaining all court records was transferred to the County Clerk from the State Court System in 1986 and responsibility for processing pistol permits and maintaining those records was transferred to the County Clerk from the State Court System in 1987. The County Clerk carries out his duties pursuant to the laws of the State of New York and the Erie County Charter and Administrative Code.

The County Clerk, as agent for the State Department of Motor Vehicles, also manages and staffs the Erie County Auto Bureau, which has a separate budget from the Registrar Division. The County Clerk oversees the operations of Erie County Auto Bureau branches and of a Mobile Unit that serves different locations on a weekly schedule.

The fees charged by the Erie County Clerk's Office are mandated by New York State and local laws. The Erie County Clerk's Office generates revenue primarily from recording, filing and processing legal documents, and by providing services that include copying and certifying public records maintained in the County Clerk's Office. As an agent of New York State, the County Clerk's Office collects mortgage and real estate transfer taxes that are later apportioned between the State, State agencies, Erie County and the cities, towns and villages located within the County. Recording fees, filing fees, licensing fees, criminal surcharges and fines paid to the County Clerk are later divided among State agencies including the NYS Department of Education, NYS Department of Finance, NYS Department of Motor Vehicles, the State of New York Mortgage Agency (SONYMA), the NYS Unified Court System and the Niagara Frontier Transportation Agency (NFTA). Expenses, administrative costs and costs of complying with New York State document and record retention requirements are paid for through the Erie County general fund, which is also where revenues collected by the Erie County Clerk's Office are deposited.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2021

FINANCIAL

In 2021, the Erie County Clerk's Office:

- Processed more than $167 million in transactions;
- Processed real estate and associated banking transaction valued at over $2 billion;
- Generated a $6.5 million revenue surplus, which was transferred into Erie County's general fund and supports county services;
- Generated $19.8 million for the County Road fund.

AUTO BUREAU

In 2021, the Erie County Clerk's Office:

- Moved forward with plans to relocate the Evans Auto Bureau branch to a larger location in Highland Plaza in the Town of Evans that will better accommodate transaction volumes and improve customer service;
- Implemented an appointment only system for all in-person Auto Bureau transactions and provided scheduling assistance to customers lacking internet access;
- Opened a new Dealer Division Center to streamline service for auto dealerships to ensure that the Erie County Auto Bureau keeps as much as $1.5 million in revenue generated from vehicle registration transactions in Erie County each year. The Dealer Division has enabled us to expedite registration transactions, offer business hours six days each week, and have County Auto Bureau employees available to provide real-time assistance to customers, including contacting NYS DMV on their behalf if necessary;
- Expanded hours of operation by opening Auto Bureau branches for business at 7AM on weekdays;
- Continued to invest in and upgrade our appointment system technology.

PISTOL PERMIT DEPARTMENT

In 2021, the Erie County Clerk's Office:

- Finalized plans to reopen the Elma Pistol Permit Satellite Office;
- Continued to streamline processes to better accommodate increased customer volumes while improving customer service;
- Examined ways to create a new "Dealer Portal" for the Pistol Permit Department and studied the feasibility of implementing this service;
- Continued to scan and digitize older paper-based documents to ensure these records are preserved and enable more efficient processing of requests involving these records.

VETERANS SERVICES

In 2021, the Erie County Clerk's Office continued our S.A.L.U.T.E.S. initiative (Showing Appreciation, Loyalty and Unity Towards Erie County Service Members) and:

- Continued our Thank-A-Vet Discount Card Program;
- Continued to offer S.A.L.U.T.E.S. services through the Clerk's Outreach Center;
- Planned our third annual Thank-a-Vet Day in partnership with the Buffalo Bisons;
- Continued to publicly display and collect new nominations for the County Clerk's William J. Donovan Purple Heart Book of Merit, which now honors over 500 Erie County veterans;
- Celebrated Purple Heart Day by holding a ceremony outside of Old County Hall and delivering Purple Heart themed lawn signs and commemorative pins to Erie County Purple Heart recipients and their families;
- Partnered with Veterans Post Restoration of Erie County NY, Inc. in support of their efforts to repair veterans posts, upgrade veterans posts so that they are Americans with Disabilities Act compliant, and preserve veterans posts for our next generation of armed service members.

TECHNOLOGY

In 2021, the Erie County Clerk's Office:

- Upgraded County Clerk's Office servers;
- Continued planning for and developing a new "Dealer Portal" for use in the Pistol Permit Department;
- Neared completion of a new Property Alert system;
- Continued to upgrade work stations and technology;
- Purchased new passport photo cameras for the Clerk's Outreach Center;
- Continued to scan and digitize older Deed Books and Pistol Permit Department documents so that those records can be accessed via the New Visions system.

ERIE COUNTY CLERK'S ZOMBIES INITIATIVE & TASK FORCE

Since being launched by the County Clerk:

- The Erie County ZOMBIES Task Force has met with and advised supervisors, mayors, code enforcement officers, clerks, municipal attorneys, and town and village boards from nearly every municipality in Erie County regarding New York State's zombie property and foreclosure laws;
- The ZOMBIES Task Force has conducted research into hundreds of vacant and abandoned properties, leading to at least one quarter of those properties being brought back into property code compliance and/or having their deed of title transferred to a new owner;

- The ZOMBIES Task Force has received hundreds of tips from concerned Erie County residents about problem properties in their communities and forwarded that information to the New York State Department of Financial Services (DFS), resulting in numerous properties being brought into property code compliance;
- The ZOMBIES Initiative has been widely covered by the media and the ZOMBIES Task Force has created a website and Facebook page to allow people to report specific vacant and abandoned properties that are problems in their neighborhoods;
- In addition to meeting with municipalities, the ZOMBIES Task Force has been meeting with individual homeowners who have fallen behind on their mortgages. These homeowners are being advised of their right to stay in their home until a foreclosure action has been completed and linked with free services to help them explore options for securing a forbearance, loan modification or repayment plan from their mortgage lender;
- The ZOMBIES Task Force has partnered with groups including Western New York Law Center, Belmont Housing Resources for WNY, the New York State Department of Financial Services, M&T Bank, Hunt Real Estate, Buffalo Urban League, OGWEN, the Center for Elder Law & Justice, Legal Aid Bureau of Buffalo, Inc., and numerous local municipalities;
- The ZOMBIES Task Force has held quarterly meetings as well as sub-committee meetings to provide a venue for representatives from municipalities, legislator's offices, nonprofits, real estate agencies, businesses and banks to discuss New York State's zombie property and foreclosure laws and work collaboratively to develop new enforcement strategies, policies and legislation for dealing with problem properties;
- The ZOMBIES Task Force has been holding roundtable discussions with municipal code enforcement officers;
- The ZOMBIES Task Force has been compiling documentation to assist homeowners threatened with foreclosure. Forbearances for many homeowners will expire in 2022 and so the Task Force is encouraging homeowners to stay in their homes to help prevent their financial issues from snowballing while the Task Force assists them in developing plans for getting current on their mortgage.

CONSTITUENT COMMUNICATION

In 2021, the Erie County Clerk's Office:

- Continued to film and air "Catching Up with the Clerk" episodes on a cable TV channel in the City of Buffalo;
- Continued to record and air "Catching Up with the Clerk" episodes on radio channel WUFO, 1080 AM:
- Continued to communicate with constituents through social media sites including Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. The County Clerk can be found at:
    - Instagram: @mickey.kearns
    - Twitter: @ErieCountyClerk
    - Facebook: @ErieCountyClerkMickeyKearns
    - YouTube: Erie County Clerk Michael P. Kearns

CLERK ON THE GO

In 2021, the Erie County Clerk's Office:

- Served approximately 15,000 constituents through Clerk on the Go;
- Brought Clerk on the Go to numerous outreach events, including the Taste of Orchard Park, a Veterans Appreciation event in Sloan, a Buffalo Stand Down event at the Buffalo and Erie County Naval & Military Park, Clarence and Irving's Health and Wellness events, the Erie County Fair, and events at the Amherst Senior Center, Lancaster Senior Center, and Springville Senior Center;
- Received Erie County Legislature approval to accept a donation from Lamar Advertising of two billboards through 2021 and into the beginning of 2022. These billboards are expected to create approximately 18,000 "impressions" per week while advertising Clerk on the Go services and advertising the upcoming May 3, 2023 deadline to comply with new Federal REAL ID requirements;
- Redesigned literature and banners to promote the services provided by the County Clerks Office at upcoming outreach events and at the Outreach Center.

COUNTY CLERK'S OUTREACH CENTER

In 2021, the Erie County Clerk's Office:

- Temporarily closed the Clerk's Outreach Center for the month of August and reopened in a new, larger location in September. Since opening in the new location, traffic to the Outreach Center has doubled and we have been able to increase the programing and staffing at the Outreach Center;
- Transitioned to the Clerk's Outreach Center becoming the only fully accessible point of contact by phone for the Erie County Auto Bureau. Employees of the Clerk's Outreach Center triage all Auto Bureau related calls and direct callers to personnel who can assist them. The Clerk's Outreach Center scheduled approximately 6,100 appointments, assisted 7,500 customers with making appointments, and provided an additional 2,100 customers with information by phone regarding Erie County Auto Bureaus in 2021;
- Processed 317 new passports, provided renewal assistance for 345 passports, and took 310 passport photos through the Clerk's Outreach Center;
- Administered the Clerk's Thank-A-Vet Program and processed 178 Thank-A-Vet Discount Card applications through the Clerk's Outreach Center;
- Provided in-person assistance for multiple services (including the Thank-A-Vet Program and passport services) to 739 customers through the Clerk's Outreach Center;
- Processed 305 pistol permit applications through the Clerk's Outreach Center;
- Took in $13,580 in fees for providing photo and passport services through the Clerk's Outreach Center;
- Offered expanded business hours at the Clerk's Outreach Center, including on Saturdays. For the first time, passport and Outreach Center services were provided on Saturdays without the need for customers to schedule an appointment.

REVENUES IN 2021

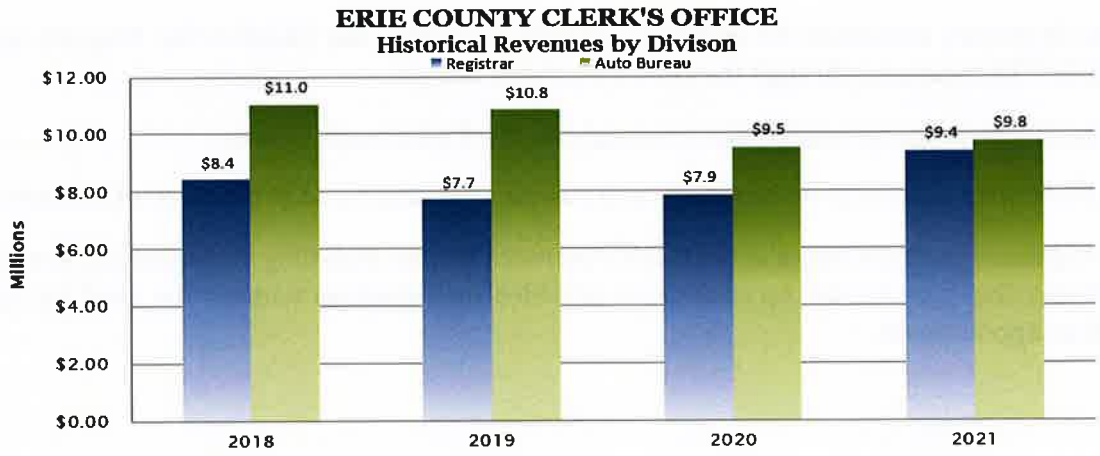
In 2021, the County Clerk's Office generated overall revenue of $19 million from the Registrar Division and the Auto Bureau, which allowed the Clerk's Office to provide $6.5 million dollars to the County's general fund and thus offset the need to seek funding from taxpayer contributions. Overall, the Clerk's Office spent less money than it was budgeted and generated $1.2 million more in revenue overall than anticipated.

ERIE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE
2021 Revenues Summary

Registrar	
Revenues	$ 9,397,559
Expenses	5,322,480
Surplus	$ 4,075,079
Auto Bureau	
Revenues	$ 9,751,727
Expenses	7,294,295
Surplus	$ 2,457,432
Clerk's Office Total	
Revenues	$19,149,285
Expenses	$12,616,774
Surplus	$ 6,532,511

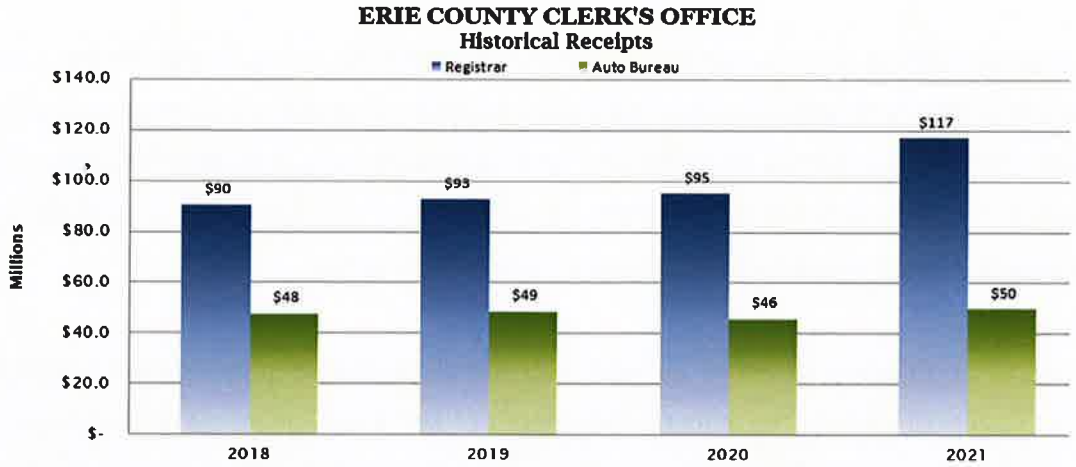
HISTORICAL REVENUES

The Registrar Division was able to significantly increase revenues in 2021 due to Erie County's recent real-estate market boom. Auto Bureau revenues also increased from 2020, with the County Clerk's Office opening a new Auto Bureau branch, launching a new Dealer Division, and expanding Auto Bureau service hours at all branches in 2021.



Historical Receipts

The $19 million in revenue generated by the Registrar Division and Auto Bureau represent only a portion of the total receipts of the County Clerk's Office in 2021. The Registrar Division handled $117 million in transactions and the Auto Bureau handled $50 million in transactions, for a total of $167 million in receipts in 2021. Those receipts are distributed monthly to agencies including the NYS Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), NYS Department of Taxation and Finance, Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority (NFTA) and various local towns and villages. The County Clerk's Office has generated $588 million in receipts during the last 4 years.



Employee Productivity in 2021

In 2021, the equivalent of 134.5 full-time employees worked in the County Clerk's Office, with 56 employees working in the Registrar Division and 78.5 employees in the Auto Bureau. Full-time employees of the County Clerk's Office completed over 605,000 transactions in 2021, which is an average of 4,499 transactions per full-time employee. Each full-time employee processed an average of $1,241,453 in receipts and $142,374 in revenue 2021.

ERIE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE
2021 Employee Production

	2021		
	Registrar	**Auto Bureau**	**Office**
Full Time Equivalents (FTE)	56	78.5	134.5
Transactions	165,931	439,165	605,096
Transactions per FTE	***2,963***	***5,594***	***4,499***
Receipts	$ 117,232,805	$ 49,742,564	$ 166,975,368
Receipts per FTE	***$ 2,093,443***	***$ 633,663***	***$ 1,241,453***
Revenues	$ 9,397,559	$ 9,751,727	$ 19,149,285
Revenues per FTE	***$ 167,814***	***$ 124,226***	***$ 142,374***

REGISTRAR DIVISION

The Registrar Division is responsible for recording, filing and maintaining records relating to land transactions or affecting title to real estate, corporations, assumed name certificates, court papers, and Uniform Commercial Code filings affecting title to real property. It provides a central repository for legal documents that require recording or filing, as well for those documents requested to be filed but which are not necessarily required to be filed with the County Clerks' Office. Once a document or record is accepted by the Registrar Division, the Registrar Division becomes responsible for maintaining that record as required by State and local laws.

As Clerk of the Supreme and County Courts in Erie County, the County Clerk is responsible for filing and maintaining all court records of the New York State Supreme and County Courts in accordance with State laws and regulations of the Administrative Office of the Unified Court System. This responsibility was transferred to the County from the State Court System in 1986. In addition, the County Clerk is responsible for certain duties set forth in the New York Civil Procedure Law and Rules, which include granting of default judgments.

Responsibility for the processing of pistol permits and administration of pistol permit application files was transferred to the County Clerk from the State Court System in 1987. The Registrar Division accepts and processes pistol permits as well as hunting and fishing licenses through the County Clerk's Pistol Permit Department.

All revenues connected with operations of the Registrar Division are derived from mandatory fees collected for recording, processing and filing legal documents and records and from issuance of licenses and permits. Mortgage and Real Property Transfer Taxes are also collected by the Registrar Division, which are then distributed to various State and local agencies.

Program and Service Objectives

The Erie County Clerk's Office's Registrar Division is responsible for:

- Recording and filing documents required or entitled to be filed under New York State law, including deeds, mortgages, powers of attorney, certificates of incorporation, certificates of partnership, doing business under an assumed name, liens, real estate brokers entitlements to commissions, bail bond liens, local laws, wage assignments and pistol permits;
- Providing efficient, effective customer service to taxpayers and residents of Erie County;
- Providing access and assistance to the public for inspection of all filings and recordings;
- Recording all judgments entered in Erie County and New York State Supreme Court and maintaining the current status of judgment records;
- Processing all court papers submitted for civil actions and proceedings, and for criminal cases on appeal;
- Administering the processing of pistol permit applications, issuing pistol permits upon the direction of an Erie County Court Judge and maintaining existing pistol permit files;
- Serving as an agent of State government by selling hunting and fishing licenses, collecting mortgage taxes, real property transfer taxes and capital gains taxes, and collecting court fees;
- Issuing certificates, exemplifications, certified copies, executions against real and personal property and notary public commissions;
- Serving as an agent of the federal government by administering declarations of intent for individuals seeking U.S. citizenship and accepting United States passport applications for the U.S. Department of State;
- Administering and filing oaths of public officials, notaries public and commissioners of deeds;
- Properly collecting, recording, depositing and monitoring all fees and taxes collected, and assuring they are distributed as required by law, regulations or agreements.

Corporation and DBA Filings

In 2021, there were approximately 6,000 Corporate and DBA filings with the County Clerk's Office, which was a 19% increase from the prior year. In 2020, business filings were significantly down, likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the last four years, there have been approximately 24,000 business filings in Erie County.

ERIE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE
DBA & Corporation Filings

	2018	2019	2020	2021
Corporations	2,773	2,631	2,011	1,817
DBA	3,409	3,335	2,760	3,900
DBA Discontinuance	344	277	210	209
Total	**6,526**	**6,243**	**4,981**	**5,926**
Annual Growth		*-4.3%*	*-20.2%*	*19.0%*

Index Numbers and Court Filings

ERIE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE

Actions & Proceedings

	Annual Case Filings			
	2018	2019	2020	2021
Small Claims	70	36	17	30
Paper Filings	141	167	87	61
Scanned Foreclosures	245	155	20	-
Mental Hygiene	339	334	775	-
Scannned Filings	424	458	249	421
E-File Foreclosure	962	787	301	182
Sealed Files	2,827	2,706	3,298	386
E-File	12,639	13,137	13,498	14,445
Total	**17,647**	**17,780**	**18,245**	**15,525**
Annual Growth		*0.8%*	*2.6%*	*-14.9%*

Judgments and Liens

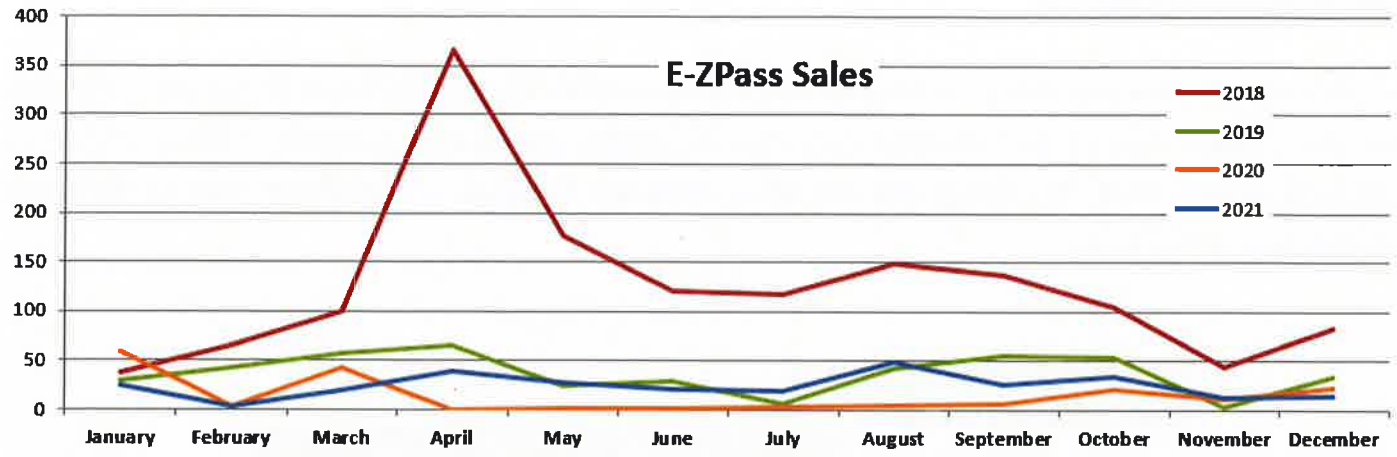
ERIE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE

Judgements & Liens

	2018	2019	2020	2021
Judgments	41,017	35,243	17,327	16,961
Liens	3,194	2,965	2,084	1,929
Satisfaction of Judgment	30,937	57,724	28,381	26,580
Total	**75,148**	**95,932**	**47,792**	**45,470**
Annual Growth		*27.7%*	*-50.2%*	*-4.9%*

E-ZPass

The Erie County Clerk's Office sells New York State E-ZPass units that can be used by vehicles on toll roads in New York and other participating states. The cost of an E-ZPass is $25 and the County Clerk's Office retains $4.00 from each unit sold. We sold 297 E-ZPass units in 2021, which is a 64% increase over the 181 units we sold in 2020. The County Clerk's Office sold significantly more E-ZPass units in 2021 than in 2020 due to sales in 2020 having been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.



Notary Public & Commissioner of Deeds

On behalf of New York State, the County Clerk's Office processes both new applications and renewal applications for Notaries Public and Commissioners of Deeds. Certification for a Commissioner of Deeds is valid for as long as two years, with all certifications expiring on December 31st of odd numbered years. Certification for a Notary Public is valid for four years, with all certifications expiring four years after the certification date.

ERIE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE

Notary Public & Commissioner of Deeds

	2018	2019	2020	2021
Notary	609	577	420	614
Notary Renewals	4,456	3,217	1,274	2,850
Commissioner of Deeds	1,356	347	1,078	360
Total	**6,421**	**4,141**	**2,772**	**3,824**
Annual Growth		*-35.5%*	*-33.1%*	*38.0%*

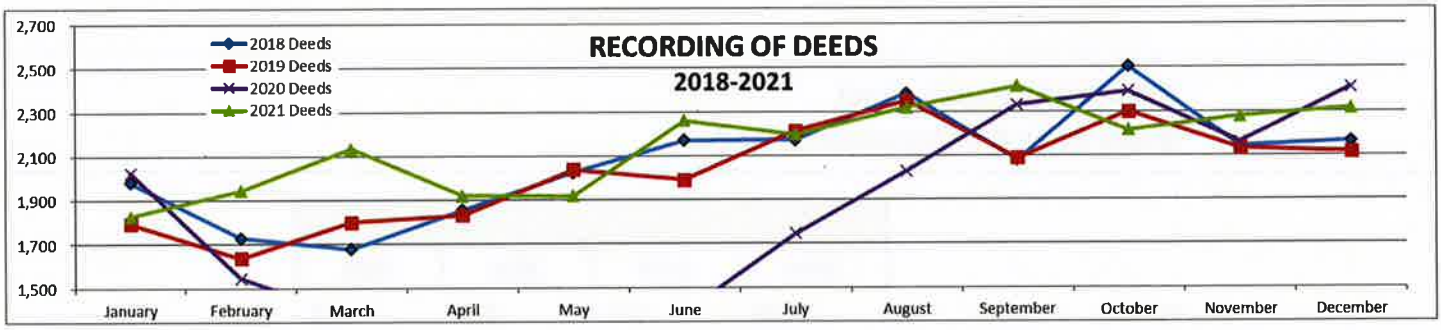
DEEDS & MORTGAGE FILINGS

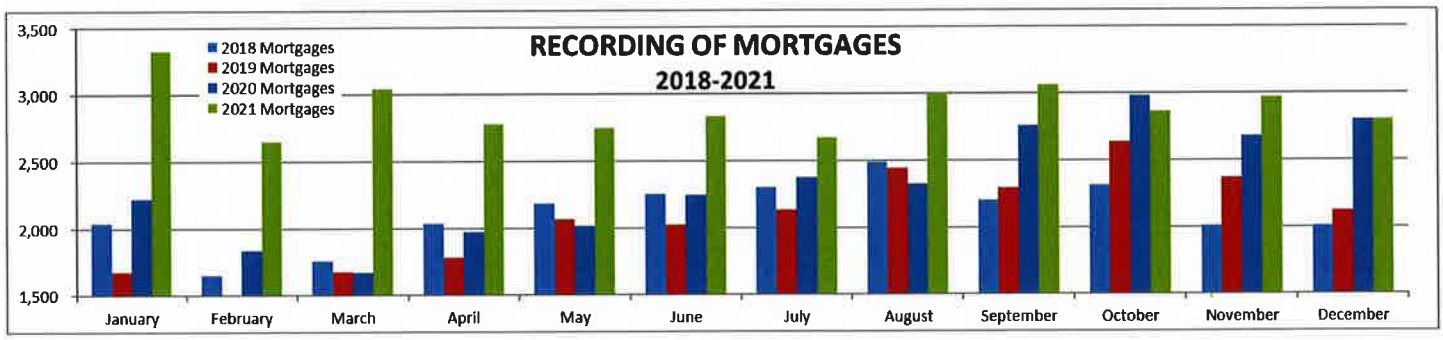
All real estate transactions, including deed and mortgage filings, are filed through the County Clerk's Office. The table below shows that the County Clerk recorded approximately 105,000 real estate transactions in 2021, which was a 23.3% increase from 2020. The two graphs that follow show new mortgages and deeds recorded by the County Clerk over the last four years.

ERIE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE

Deeds & Mortgage Filings

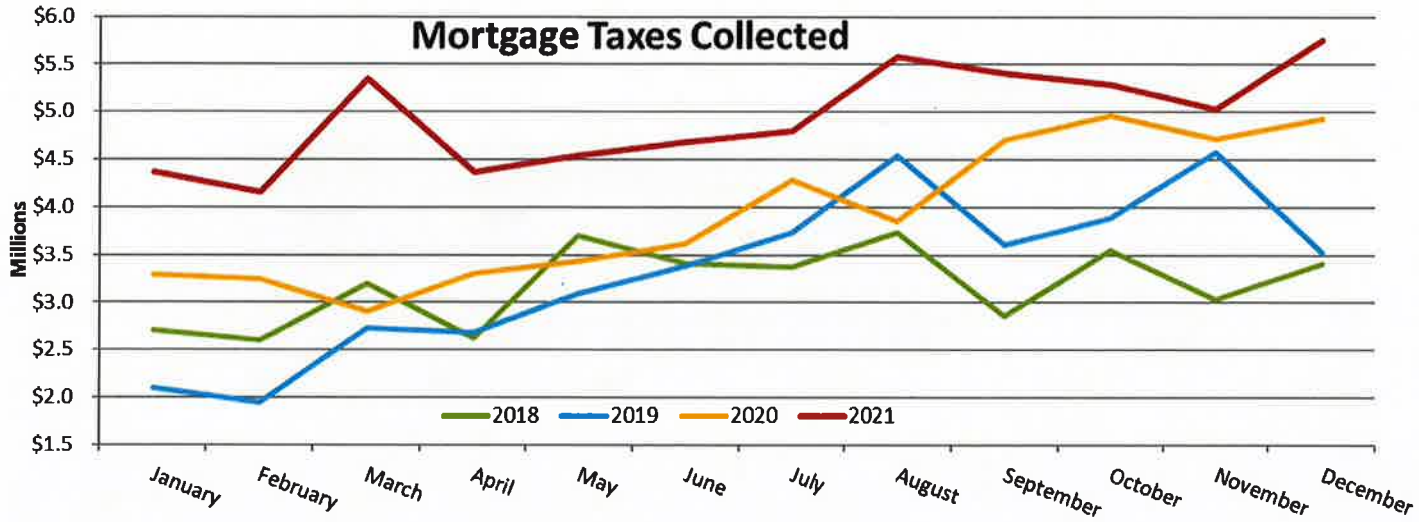
	2018	2019	2020	2021
Deeds	24,886	24,290	21,673	25,741
Mortgages	25,220	24,676	27,889	34,754
Mortgage Release & Discharge	27,527	25,809	29,499	36,779
Other Mortgage Filings	5,661	5,433	6,022	7,666
Total	**83,294**	**80,208**	**85,083**	**104,940**
Annual Growth		*-3.7%*	*6.1%*	*23.3%*





MORTGAGE TAX

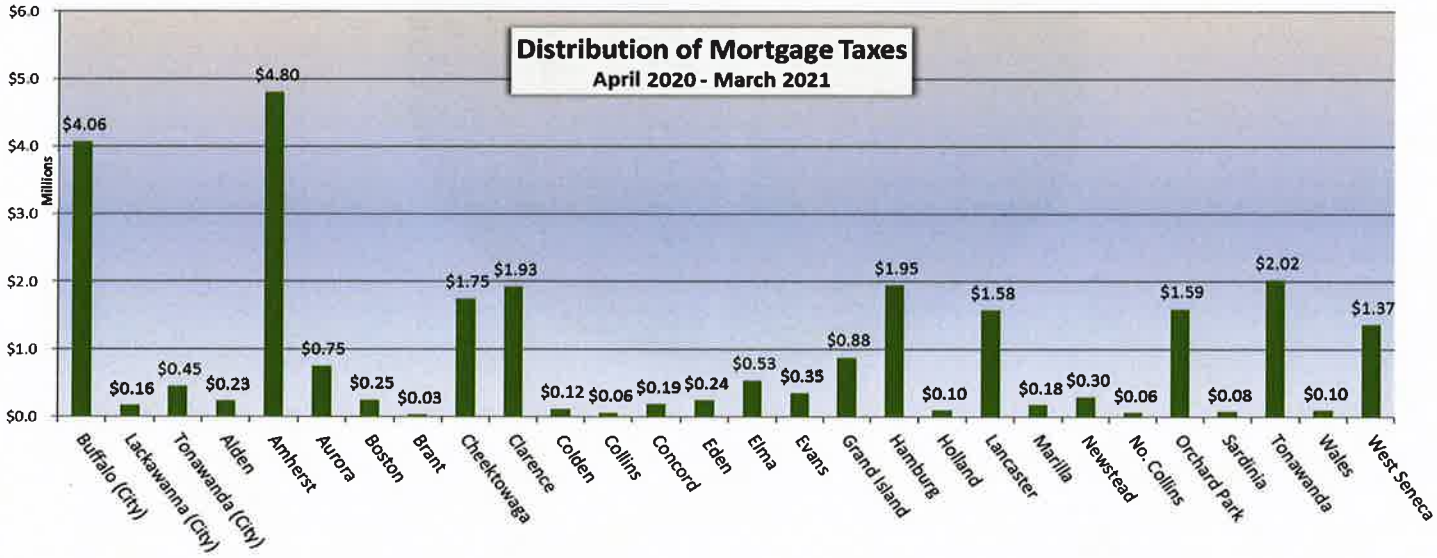
In 2021, $59.3 million in mortgage taxes were collected by the County Clerk's Office, which was a 26% increase from 2020. Of that $59.3 million, $30.3 million was distributed to local cities and towns, $26 million to the Niagara Frontier Transit Authority (NFTA) and $2.9 million to the State of New York Mortgage Agency (SONYMA).



Erie County Clerk's Office

Mortgage Tax Distribution

	Annual			
	2018	**2019**	**2020**	**2021**
Basic Tax	$ 19,311,000	$ 20,506,000	$ 24,063,000	$ 30,353,000
NFTA	$ 15,652,000	$ 16,733,000	$ 20,921,000	$ 26,069,000
SONYMA	$ 2,723,000	$ 2,560,000	$ 2,243,000	$ 2,889,000
Total	$ 37,686,000	$ 39,799,000	$ 47,227,000	$ 59,311,000
		6%	19%	26%



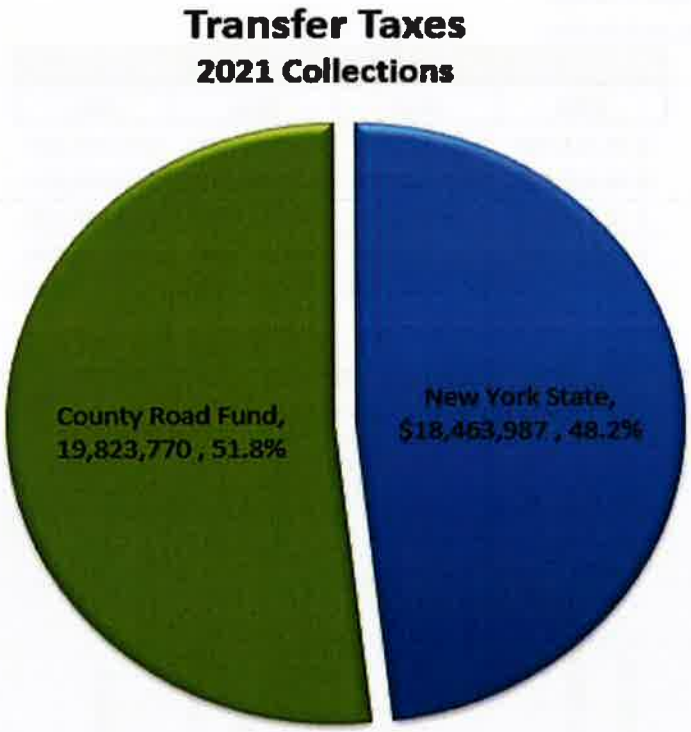
TRANSFER TAX

In 2021, the County Clerk collected 36% more in transfer taxes than in 2020. For every $500 of a property's recorded deed sale price, the County Clerk's Office collects $4.50, of which $2.00 is transferred to New York State and $2.50 is transferred to Erie County's Road Fund. Over the last four years, the County Clerk's Office has collected over $64.5 million for the County's Road Fund.

Erie County Clerk's Office

Transfer Taxes

	Annual			
	2018	2019	2020	2021
New York State	$ 13,414,590	$ 14,217,116	$ 13,666,473	$ 18,463,987
County Road Fund	14,951,863	15,344,460	14,427,229	19,823,770
Total	$ 28,366,000	$ 29,562,000	$ 28,094,000	$ 38,288,000
		4%	-5%	36%



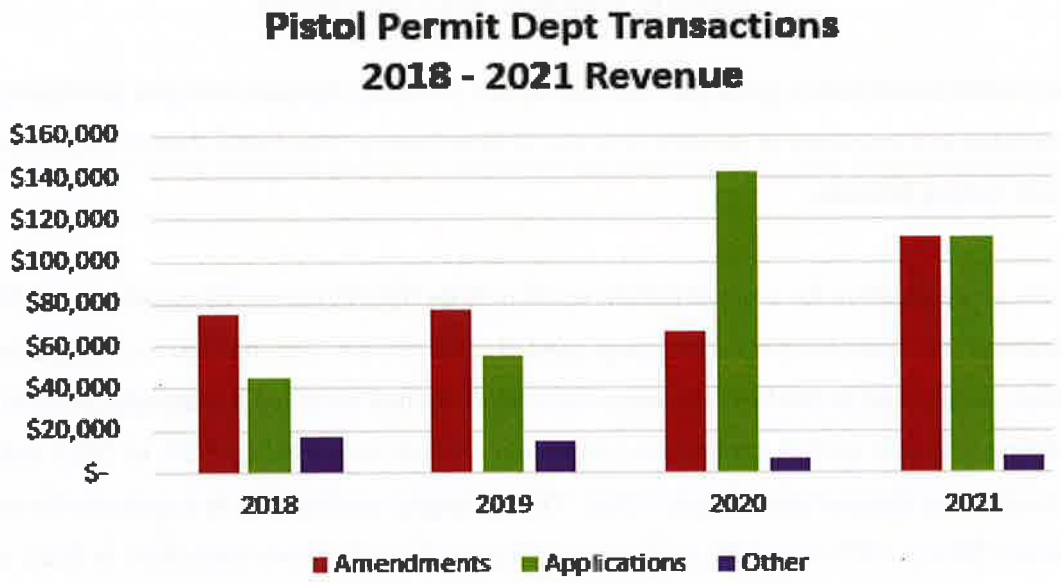
PISTOL PERMIT DEPARTMENT

The Pistol Permit Department issues pistol permits and dealer permits, registers new gun purchases, and processes transfers of ownership and transfers of permits in or out of Erie County. The Pistol Permit Department additionally issues hunting and fishing licenses.

Prior to COVID-19, an application for a pistol permit could only be filed in person by appointment. Since the COVID-19 pandemic however, we have been able to accept mailed applications. This has led to a larger number of pistol permit applications being filed in the last two years than what we had received historically prior to 2020. Overall, transactions relating to pistol permit applications and amendments increased by 41% in 2021 and more revenue was generated from these transactions than in 2020. This is largely attributable to a spike in the number of pistol permit amendments filed in 2021 however, as fewer pistol permit applications were filed in 2021 than in 2020. A fee of $5 or less is charged to amend a pistol permit, whereas a fee of $20 is charged to apply for a Pistol Permit.

	Annual Transactions			
	2018	2019	2020	2021
Pistol Permits				
Amendments	24,262	24,498	22,500	36,273
Applications	2,241	2,750	7,177	5,627
Other	1,570	1,318	591	763
Total	28,073	28,566	30,268	42,663
Annual Growth		*1.8%*	*6.0%*	*41.0%*

Annual Revenue			
2018	2019	2020	2021
$ 75,344	$ 77,334	$ 67,000	$111,881
$ 45,130	$ 55,420	$143,000	$111,875
$ 17,668	$ 14,688	$ 6,666	$ 8,114
$138,142	$147,442	$216,666	$231,870
	6.7%	*46.9%*	*7.0%*


Pistol Permit Dept Transactions
2018 - 2021 Revenue
$160,000
$140,000
$120,000
$100,000
$80,000
$60,000
$40,000
$20,000
$-
2018
2019
2020
2021
Amendments
Applications
Other

ERIE COUNTY AUTO BUREAU

The Erie County Auto Bureau acts as an agent for the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles to receive and process motor vehicle applications, to issue vehicle registrations, driver's licenses and enhanced driver's licenses, to handle financial security transactions, and to enforce Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) sanctions in accordance with the Vehicle and Traffic Laws of New York State. The County Auto Bureaus also issue NYS non-driver photo identification and issue registrations for boats, motorcycles, snowmobiles and trailers. Additional responsibilities of the County Bureaus include the collection and monitoring of all fees related to issuing auto registrations and driver's licenses and sales taxes collected from the private sale of automobiles.

Prior to COVID-19, the Erie County Auto Bureau had full-service offices in Buffalo, Cheektowaga, Tonawanda, Clarence, West Seneca and Evans in addition to a Mobile Unit that offered services in the Towns of Grand Island, Elma, Concord, West Seneca and Hamburg one day each week. In 2021, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Mobile Unit and Evans Auto Bureau branch were closed but a new Eastern Hills Mall location was opened.

REVENUES

ERIE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE
2021 Auto Bureau Revenues Summary

Revenues		
Vehicle Use Tax	$	5,695,669
Auto Fees	$	4,056,057
Total Revenues	$	9,751,727
Total Expenses	$	7,294,295
Auto Bureau Surplus		**$2,457,432**

The Auto Bureau retains a portion of transaction fees it collects and keeps 12.7% of fees collected from registering vehicles, issuing permits, issuing driver's licenses and non-driver identification cards, and processing miscellaneous transactions.

The Erie County Auto Bureau generated nearly $9.8 million in revenues for Erie County from processing over 439,000 transactions. Auto Fee revenues also include revenue shared by the State with Erie County for transactions completed online through the State's DMV website. Pursuant to the current revenue sharing agreement, Erie County retains 3.25% of all online revenues which exceed the threshold of $11,999,580.

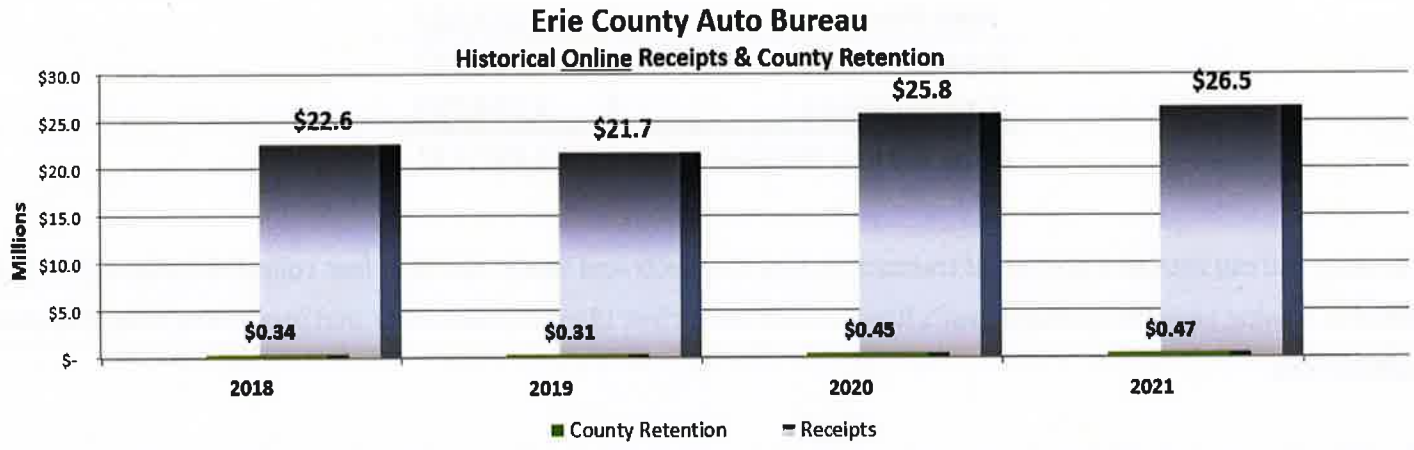
Between 2018 and 2021, the number of online transactions made through the NYS DMV website increased each year other than in 2019. Over the last four years, Erie County residents completed $97 million in transactions with NYS DMV on-line, which translates to potentially $11 million in lost revenue for Erie County.

In recognition of this, the Erie County Clerk's Office has been conducting a "Renew Local" campaign. The campaign aims to educate local residents and businesses that when they conduct their DMV business through an Erie County Auto Bureau they are also ensuring that 12.7% of the revenue from their transaction will remain in Erie County. The County Clerk's Office has also implemented strategies designed to provide a better customer service experience at County Auto Bureaus, such as extending business hours, streamlining transactions for high-volume customers, and ensuring employees are available to provide guidance, answer questions and, if necessary, contact NYS DMV for customers in-real time.

Erie County Auto Bureau

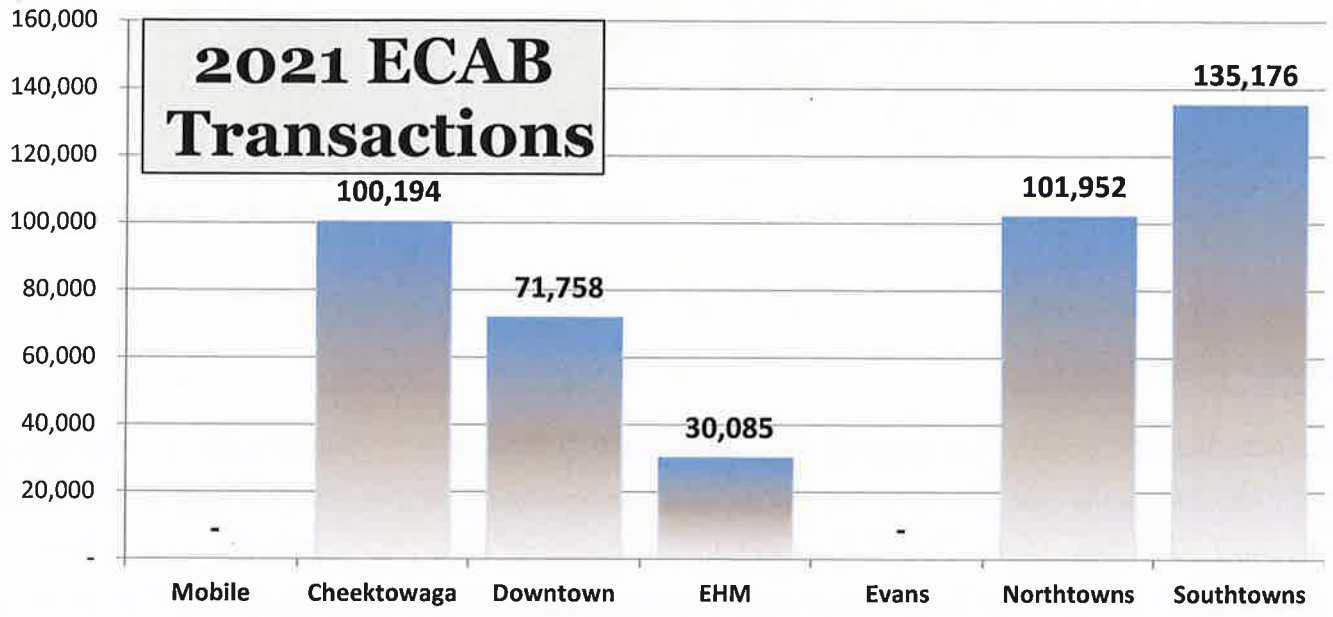
Historical Internet Shared Revenues

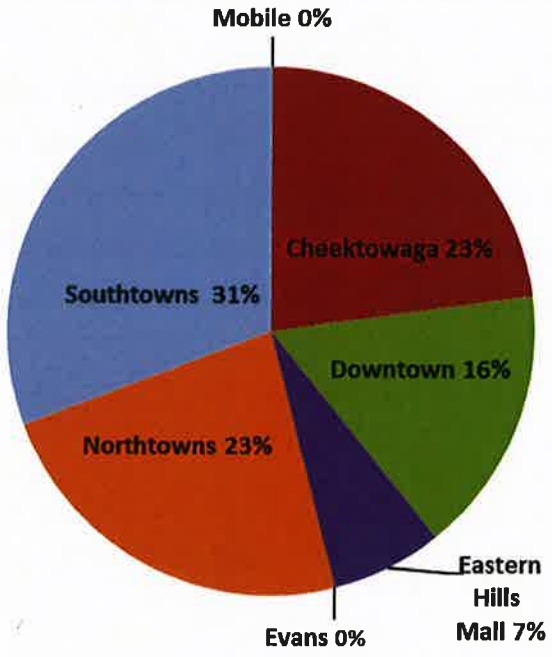
	2018	2019	2020	2021	4 Year Total
Threshold	$ 11,998,583	$ 11,998,583	$ 11,998,583	11,998,583	
Annual Receipts	22,613,766	21,687,667	25,779,534	26,504,178	96,585,145
Shared Revenues	344,993	314,895	447,881	471,431	1,579,200
Lost Opportunity	**$ 2,526,955**	**$ 2,439,438**	**$ 2,826,120**	**$ 2,894,599**	**10,687,112**
		-4.1%	18.9%	2.8%	

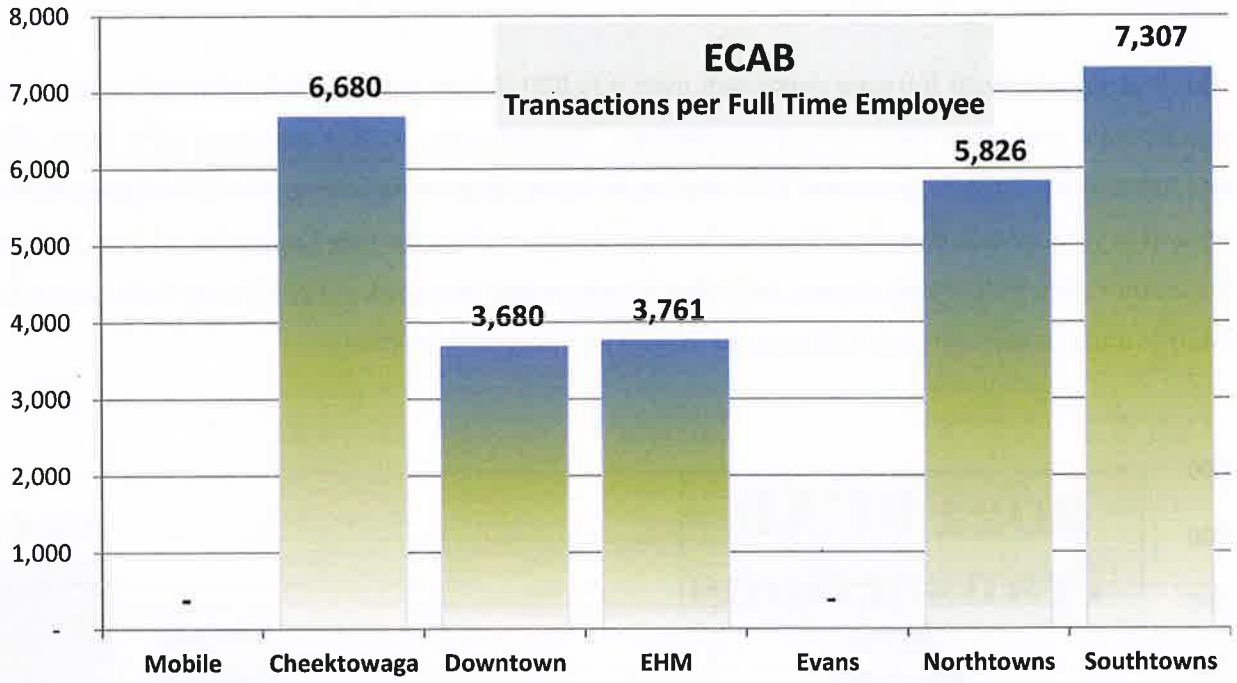


TRANSACTIONS

In 2021, the Erie County Auto Bureaus processed over 439,000 driver and non-driver identification documents, vehicle registrations, and other DMV related transactions. Transactions in 2021 increased 10% from 2020. The Southtowns Auto Bureau branch processed 31% of all such transactions completed by the Erie County Auto Bureau, in part due to that location offering expedited processing of registrations for Erie County based auto dealers. Of the 78.5 full-time equivalent ("FTE") employees, including management, that work at Erie County Auto bureau locations or in the Mobile unit, on average each FTE processed 6,594 transactions in 2021.







Customer Wait Times

County Auto Bureaus employ a queuing system called NEMO-Q. This system issues a ticket to each incoming customer based upon the type of service they are seeking. This system has helped ensure that appropriate staffing is maintained at all Auto Bureau locations in response to customer volumes as the system tracks how many customers have been served, average wait and service times, and other useful metrics. The NEMO-Q system has also improved customer service and minimized wait times by enabling customers to schedule reservations online.

To maximize safety for County Auto Bureau customers and employees as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2021 a policy was enacted requiring that all in-person County Auto Bureau transactions be handled on an appointment only basis. To facilitate this, the County Clerk's Office created a system for making reservations on the Erie County Auto Bureau website whereby customers can schedule their own appointments and Auto Bureau staff have been made available to provide scheduling assistance for customers that lack internet access or familiarity.

LOOKING FORWARD

Looking forward, the Erie County Clerk's Office will face new challenges in 2022 and beyond. Residents and businesses can rest assured however that through strategic planning, being willing to embrace change and the unwavering dedication, hard work and professionalism of our employees, the County Clerk's Office remains well-positioned for success. We are always looking for ways to become more efficient and provide a better customer service experience and will be continuing to evaluate our internal processes and procedures in 2022.

In closing, the Erie County Clerk's Office would like to thank all of our government partners for their continued support and commend our employees for their professionalism and commitment to serving the people of Erie County.