

OHIO'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES CURRENT



Southeast Ohio Business Park Scales New Heights, Breaks New Ground

The Caldwell East of I-77 Business Park in Noble County, Ohio, checks all the boxes for the top 10 site selection factors identified in a recent national survey¹ of site selection consultants, including:

- ☑ Low labor costs (ranked #1) and availability of skilled labor (#3)
- ☑ Available land (#10) and available buildings (#15)
- ☑ Outstanding quality of life (#2) with abundant recreational opportunities
- ☑ Energy availability (#4) and favorable energy costs (#8)
- ☑ Broadband connectivity (#6)
- ☑ And much more!

¹ Area Development Magazine 2022 Site Selection Factors Annual Corporate Survey

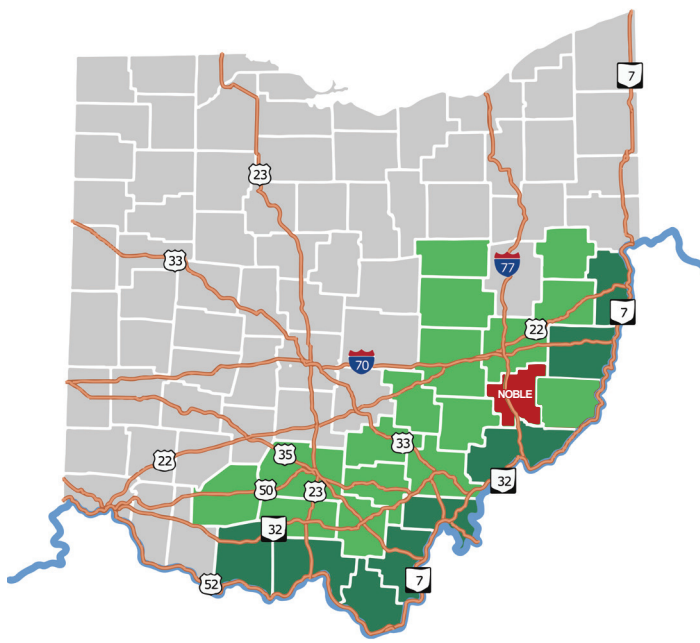
Located in the heart of the Utica shale region, the new Caldwell sites and spec building are ideally suited for light manufacturing, energy sector-related projects, and logistics.

1. Low labor costs (#1) and availability of skilled labor (#3)

Noble County's low-cost business environment translates into very competitive wage rates and a lower cost of living.



"The math is pretty simple," said Ohio Southeast (OhioSE) President Mike Jacoby. "It costs less to live here, and it costs less to do business here. For a resident, the cost of living is below national and regional indexes. For a business, a lower cost of living, means lower wages."



- Noble County's average hourly earnings are 28% lower than the national average and 20% lower than the state average.
- "Noble County's labor shed is a 10-county area," said Gwynn Stewart, M.S., Community Development Educator with Ohio State University Extension, Noble County. "Seventy-five percent of that labor is in four contiguous counties: Noble, Guernsey, Monroe and Washington. The interstate highway makes for quick worker commutes."
- A workforce of 52,000 people live within a 45-minute radius of Noble County. Approximately 25% of Noble County workers commute out to nearby counties for employment, so closer-to-home jobs are especially desirable for workers.

Ohio Southeast Economic Development is the JobsOhio Network Partner for 25 rural counties including Noble County.

A local history of employment in diverse manufacturing sectors including auto parts, magnetic products, and food packaging; coal mining and oil and gas extraction; and transportation, plus a work ethic honed from tending the area's nearly 600 farms, has developed desirable workforce skillsets and a hard-working attitude.

Workforce training opportunities abound to train workers in high-demand skills.

- County school districts provide career apprenticeship options, College Credit Plus, and a regional career center.
- Continuing education options in the region include universities, community colleges, and career centers.

"Our labor surplus, favorable tax climate, and low operating costs as well as abundant and affordable energy make the Ohio Southeast region an ideal location to grow a business," said Jacoby.

2. Available land (#10) and available buildings (#15)

New building sites are ready for immediate construction; first spec building is underway.

The Appalachian topography that gives southeastern Ohio its breathtaking beauty makes it especially challenging to construct an industrial park.

Noble County was formed in 1851, the last of Ohio's 88 counties. About a century later, Noble County's last industrial park was developed—until five years ago when a local collaboration of public and private partners began to coalesce around the Caldwell East of I-77 Business Park.

“We believed that we were well suited to compete for and win smaller projects, particularly manufacturing and energy sector related projects—if we had ready sites,” said Stewart. “Previously, Noble County had to turn away projects. Now, we have available sites and a spec building due to be completed by year-end.”

- A series of tiered pads cut into the hillside at different elevations honors the local geography while developing six building sites in the Caldwell East of I-77 Business Park.
- The \$4.8 million investment includes construction of a new access road, site work, full utilities, extension of water and sewer to six sites, and construction of a 10,000-square-foot speculative building.
- Water, sewer and three-phase electric are available for each building site.
- The developer is committed to a second spec building as soon as the first one is occupied.



The new sites are especially well-suited for light manufacturing, energy and chemicals, food and agribusiness, logistics and metals fabrication.

“Noble County is located in the heart of Ohio’s Utica Shale oil and gas production region and petrochemical industry,” said Stewart.

- Ohio has attracted over \$97.8 billion of cumulative investment in Ohio’s Shale Energy Sector through Dec. 2021 (Source: JobsOhio)
- MarkWest Energy Partners has three major gas processing plants in Noble County.
- Two natural gas transmission pipelines bisect the county.
- Natural gas is readily available with over 150 operating shale wells.
- Ohio’s shale formations, which contain large amounts of natural gas, natural gas liquids, and crude oils, account for 85 percent of U.S. shale gas production growth since 2011. (Source: JobsOhio)

Logistics operators in Noble County benefit from two exits on I-77 and access to major markets and more than half of U.S. consumers within a day's drive.

- Noble County is bisected by north-south I-77 which connects Cleveland to southern Ohio.
 - East-west I-70, one of the nation's busiest interstates, is less than thirty minutes north of the county's center.
 - The Ohio River, with the ability to provide low-cost bulk transportation, is 25 miles to the south of the county.
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3. Outstanding quality of life (#2) with abundant recreational opportunities

Noble County and Caldwell, its county seat, provide picturesque rural and small town living in the heart of Ohio's Appalachian region.

The scenic rural area is a recreational wonderland with beautiful lakes, rolling hills, parks, and hardwood forests.



- Hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, and boating draw many to the area's thousands of acres of national forest and a state park with 34,000 acres of public recreational area.
 - Noble County boasts the largest manmade lake in the state, Seneca Lake, covering over 3,500 acres with 45 miles of shoreline.
 - Weekend cabins and second homes are popular destinations for residents from the large metropolitan areas within easy driving distance.
 - The 25 counties served by JobsOhio Network Partner Ohio Southeast make up almost one-third of Ohio's land mass and have a population of just over one million people.
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4. Energy availability (#4) and favorable costs (#8)

Washington Electric Cooperative is well positioned to serve with reliable power and abundant capacity.

Over the past five years, Washington Electric Cooperative replaced its older substations with new facilities that have three-to-four times the capacity and improved reliability.



**Washington Electric
Cooperative, Inc.**

A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

- "We're in a very strong position with the ability to serve a lot of load with very reliable power," said Jeff Triplett, general manager and CEO of Washington Electric Cooperative.
- Washington Electric serves a rural, mostly residential co-op membership of 10,500 accounts. "We'd love to serve more commercial loads, as that lowers the cost for everyone," said Triplett. "And we're always looking for employment opportunities that keep youth in this area."

Abundant, low-cost natural gas is available in southeast Ohio.

The Ohio Southeast region is home to an abundance of low-cost natural gas and natural gas liquids for energy and chemical feedstocks.

The Marcellus and Utica Shales overlap in Pennsylvania, eastern Ohio, and West Virginia and combine to create the largest gas producing formation in the U.S. By 2030, Appalachia is projected to supply about 40% of the North American Market. (Source: OhioSE)

5. Broadband connectivity (#6)

Washington Electric Cooperative is working aggressively to give cooperative members broadband.



- “We always consider the value to our members and the broader community when making investment decisions,” said Triplett. “We’re not in the business of broadband, but we approached regional broadband providers and asked them to use our power poles so broadband can be expanded as quickly as possible.”
- Washington Electric secured a \$1.5 million grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) to prepare the cooperative’s poles for broadband providers’ fiber at no cost to the provider.

Washington Electric and ARC’s investment made the area more financially attractive for providers to initiate broadband service.

6. Public/private partnership achieved award-winning results.

Caldwell East of I-77 Business Park earned 2022 Best Site or Building Project Award.

The Noble County business park was among the best of the best projects recognized at the Appalachian Partnership, Inc. and OhioSE’s 2023 Annual Summit in mid-March.

- “We were excited to be recognized by our peers with the 2022 Best Site or Building Award,” said Stewart. “Appalachia is holding its own in economic development. There are a lot of great resources in Southeast Ohio.”
- OhioSE had a near-record year in 2022 with 46 economic development projects.
- Those projects represent 1,238 new jobs in the region and more than \$265 million in capital investment.



Developer Brandon Crock, Crock Construction and Gwynn Stewart, M.S. Ohio State University Extension, Noble County, accept the 2022 Best Site or Building Award for Caldwell East of I-77 Business Park

Public, private, local, regional and statewide partners contributed to the creation of Caldwell East of I-77 Business Park.

Partners and contributors included:

- **Ohio State University Extension Noble County Community Development** led project development and management; coordinated feasibility engineering studies; spearheaded legal work for JEDD and TID creation; wrote grant applications; supported community engagement; and coordinated with local, regional and state agencies and economic development teams.
- **JobsOhio Site Improvement Program and Ohio Southeast Economic Development Due Diligence Program** contributed over \$2.4 million in grants toward infrastructure and site preparation.
- **Ohio Department of Development Roadwork Development Grant 629 Program** provided a \$250,000 grant for access roads off the state highway.
- **Washington Electric Cooperative and Ohio's Electric Cooperatives** contributed \$8,000 through their Site and Community Development Program towards the initial engineering work and site feasibility studies for Caldwell East of I-77 Business Park.
- The **Ohio Rural Industrial Park Loan (RIPL)** program provided \$1.2 million of funding for the spec building. RIPL promotes economic development in eligible rural areas by providing low-interest direct loans to assist in financing the development and improvement of industrial parks and related off-site public infrastructure improvements. At least 50% of the outstanding loan balance will be forgiven upon successful completion of the project.
- **Belmont County Port Authority** provided best-practice technical and regional guidance.
- **Village of Caldwell, Olive Township, and Noble County Commissioners** assisted with the planning and funding for water, sewer, gas, and fiber infrastructure.
- A **Joint Economic Development District (JEDD)** was developed by Olive Township and the Village of Caldwell with assistance from OSU Extension to repay the village for sewer and water extensions and facilitate sharing of tax revenue.
- The **Noble Transportation Improvement District (TID)** was established by Noble County and Olive Township and registered with ODOT to apply for \$500,000 of competitive grant funding to help pay for access roads.
- **Noble County Community Improvement Corporation (CIC)** is partnering as a fiscal agent.
- **Crock Construction Company**, local developer, landowner, business owner, and entrepreneurs, had the vision to utilize the park location to better serve the greater Noble County community by providing ready sites for job growth.

“JobsOhio has now invested in all 88 counties in Ohio, and we are optimistic that the Caldwell Business Park will establish Noble County as a magnet for businesses looking to succeed here.”

– J.P. Nauseef
President and
CEO, JobsOhio

Look for Us:

Industrial Asset Management Council (IAMC) Fall Forum

September 9-13, 2023
Boise, Idaho

Site Selectors Guild 2023 Fall Forum

October 16-18, 2023
New Orleans, Louisiana

National Rural Economic Developers Association (NREDA)

2023 Annual Conference
November 8-10, 2023
Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

Buckeye Power and Ohio's Electric Cooperatives can help with:

- Comprehensive site and building portfolios
- Preliminary site studies
- Site search tours
- Assistance in identifying financial incentives
- Electric rate analyses
- Community profiles
- State and local government contacts
- Contractor introductions

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