

# **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2021 Annual Performance Report**



**Northeast Ohio Four County Regional  
Planning and Development Organization**

January 2021

RESOLUTION NUMBER FY2021-002

**RESOLUTION OF THE NORTHEAST OHIO FOUR COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION (NEFCO) GENERAL POLICY BOARD ADOPTING AND AUTHORIZING THE SUBMISSION OF THE *COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS) 2021 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT* TO THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION**

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**WHEREAS**, the NEFCO region is undergoing significant changes in the structure of its economy; and

**WHEREAS**, the Economic Development Administration (EDA), U.S. Department of Commerce, has designated the NEFCO region as an Economic Development District (EDD) based on the incidence of unemployment rates and the existence of the CEDS; and

**WHEREAS**, the NEFCO General Policy Board in conjunction with its 126 local units of government has formulated a regional economic development strategy and incident local place strategies entitled the *CEDS 2021 Annual Performance Report*; and

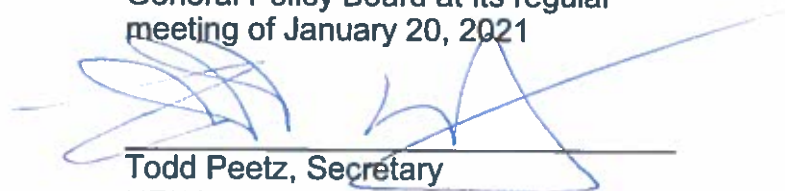
**WHEREAS**, the EDA requires the submittal of the *CEDS 2021 Annual Performance Report* by January 31, 2021 to maintain Economic Development District designation and eligibility for EDA funding; and

**WHEREAS**, communities in the Counties of Portage, Stark, Summit, and Wayne have participated in the formulation of the CEDS; and

**WHEREAS**, the Regional CEDS Committee has reviewed and commented on the *CEDS 2021 Annual Performance Report*;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the NEFCO General Policy Board adopts the *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2021 Annual Performance Report*, its goals, strategies, and action items, and authorizes the submission of the report to the Economic Development Administration.

Certified as action taken by the NEFCO  
General Policy Board at its regular  
meeting of January 20, 2021



Todd Peetz, Secretary  
NEFCO General Policy Board

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
Introduction	3
Adjustments to NEFCO’s Strategy	4
Opportunity Zones	9
A Regional Approach	10
Report on Economic Development Activities	13
Evaluation of Progress on Action Plan and Goals	15
Schedule of Goals for 2021 and Program of Activities	23
2021 Timeline for Goals and Action Items	24
Regional Economic Development News	26
<b>Figures</b>	
Figure 1: 24-Month Unemployment Rates	4
Figure 2: 24-Month Unemployment Rates for NEFCO Counties	5
Figure 3: Opportunity Zones in the NEFCO Region	9
Figure 4: Economic Development Administration Investments in NEFCO Region	12
<b>Tables</b>	
Table 1: Economic Distress in the NEFCO Region	6
Table 2: 2021 Regional CEDS Committee	7
Table 3: 2021 NEFCO General Policy Board	8

### **NEFCO Economic Development Staff**

Joseph Hadley, Jr., Executive Director

Nick Lautzenheiser, Economic Development Planner

Diane Sheridan, Economic Recovery and Resiliency Coordinator

### **Acknowledgements**

NEFCO staff thanks the NEFCO General Policy Board and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee for their assistance in the completion of this report.

This report was prepared in part with Federal funds under award number ED19CHI3020021 from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, and with funds provided by NEFCO’s dues-paying members. The statements, findings, conclusions, and recommendations are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the view of the EDA or the U.S. Department of Commerce.

## INTRODUCTION

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Annual Performance Report is updated annually by the Northeast Ohio Four County Regional Planning and Development Organization (NEFCO). This update reports recent trends observed between the issuance of the 2020 CEDS Annual Performance Report and the present time. The 2018 CEDS Plan can be found at NEFCO's website, [www.nefcoplanning.org](http://www.nefcoplanning.org). Preparation of the CEDS and the Annual Performance Report maintains eligibility of the NEFCO region's communities to receive grants from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA).

The CEDS and the annual performance reports describe the region's economic conditions, as well as the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. In 2021, NEFCO continues to analyze the economic health of the region by addressing the following questions: (1) Where are we going? (2) Where do we want to be? and, (3) How do we get there?

The 2021 Annual Performance Report spans the period between February 2020 and January 2021. It describes changing economic conditions in the region, including Portage, Stark, Summit, and Wayne Counties. The report details significant events and issues that have occurred over the past year, which have shaped NEFCO's regional economic development planning work plan.

2020 was dominated by the coronavirus pandemic and its impact around the world. COVID-19 has created unprecedented public health and economic impacts. Local governments saw reduced tax revenues, businesses were severely impacted, and unemployment skyrocketed – especially during the state's stay-at-home orders. For the NEFCO region, small businesses, such as restaurants, bars, hospitality, and other services were hit the hardest. As the pandemic continues, more and more small businesses are at risk of closure.

It is too premature to fully understand the economic impacts of the pandemic. It will likely take years to recover. Despite a few closures, the region's core economic industries have weathered the pandemic. The health care, information technology, and manufacturing sectors have remained relatively stable. Food suppliers and those industries that were able to adapt and produce personal protective equipment have performed well during this period. Companies like Smucker's in Orrville and GOJO (which produces products like Purell) in Akron flourished. Amazon opened a new fulfillment center at the former Rolling Acres Mall in Akron, adding 1,500 jobs to the region. The Johnson Controls Hall of Fame Village continues to develop and be a major focus, not only for the City of Canton, but for the entire NEFCO region. The Hall of Fame Village officially became a publicly traded company in July after completing its merger with Gordon Pointe Acquisition. The Hall of Fame Resort and Entertainment Co. is positioned to grow substantially. The other principal cities of Kent and Wooster continue to invest in the revitalization of their respective downtowns, while collaborating with their local universities.

The major challenge going into 2021 will be recovery from the pandemic, particularly for small businesses throughout the region. The counties and cities across the region have shown an extraordinary collaborative spirit, which has been instrumental in limiting the economic loss. Local governments have utilized portions of their respective Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act revenues to provide recovery grants to small businesses and nonprofit organizations around the region, which has helped provide much-needed relief. Other challenges include racial and gender equity and inclusion, access to broadband, workforce development, and developing economic resilience. The region must continue to address these issues to be prosperous, resilient, and economically competitive.

There are numerous opportunities for economic growth and prosperity in the region. The 27 Opportunity Zones offer attractive incentives for development and investment. The region has numerous universities

and medical facilities, which continue to anchor economic growth. Regional community and economic development partnerships such as the Elevate Greater Akron and Strengthening Stark illustrate the region's strong cooperative spirit and holistic approach to planning. Officials in Stark County continue to promote the expansion of U.S. Route 30, which will place the region at an economic advantage for businesses supporting the petrochemical industry.

The future economic strength and resiliency of the region will be dependent on collaboration, public-private partnerships, equity and inclusion, workforce development, and quality of life enhancements. The region is poised to continue in a positive trajectory as it progresses into 2021.

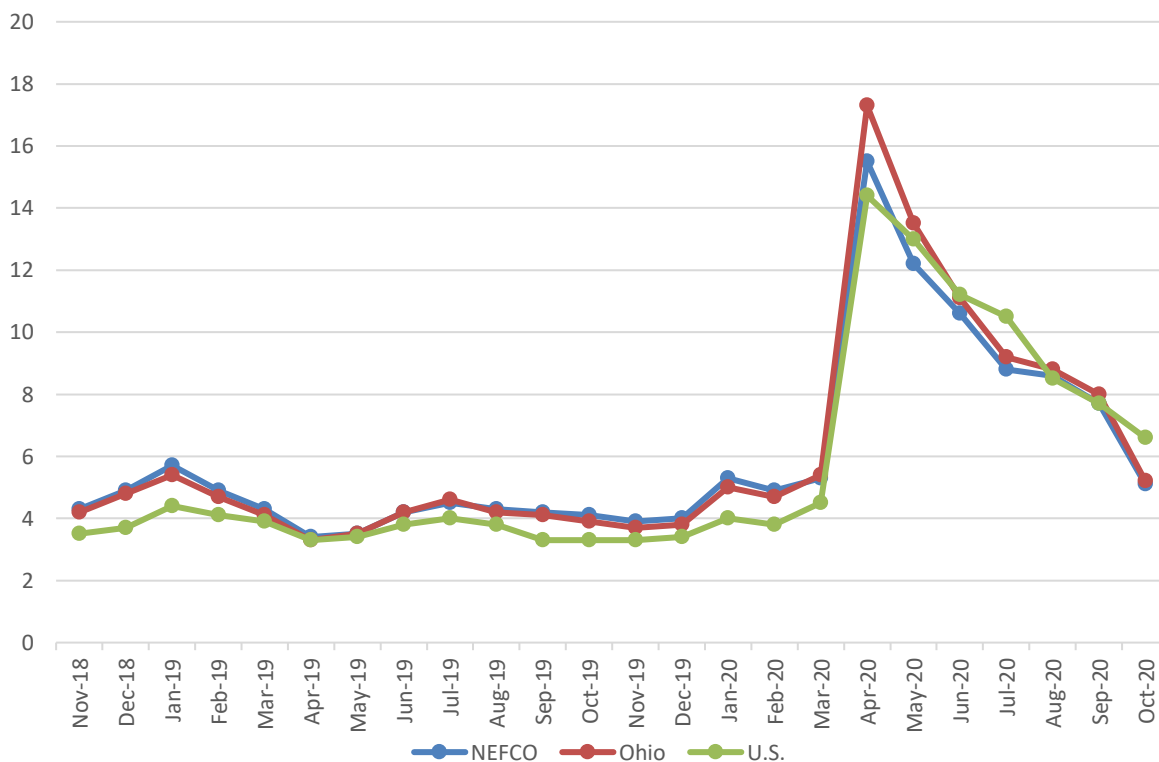
## ADJUSTMENTS TO NEFCO'S STRATEGY

### Report on Changing Economic Conditions and Adjustments

#### 24-month Unemployment and Per Capita Income in the NEFCO Region

The unemployment pattern over the past two years is dominated by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic (see Figure 1). The massive spike in unemployment occurred between March and April 2020, when the region's unemployment rate grew by more than 10 points from 5.3% to 15.5%. Stay-at-home mandates shuttered businesses and forced many to lay off workers. The region's unemployment rates match the trend experienced by the state of Ohio and the U.S. As the economy reopened, the unemployment has continued to drop. However, the current unemployment rate is still nearly twice as high as in 2019.

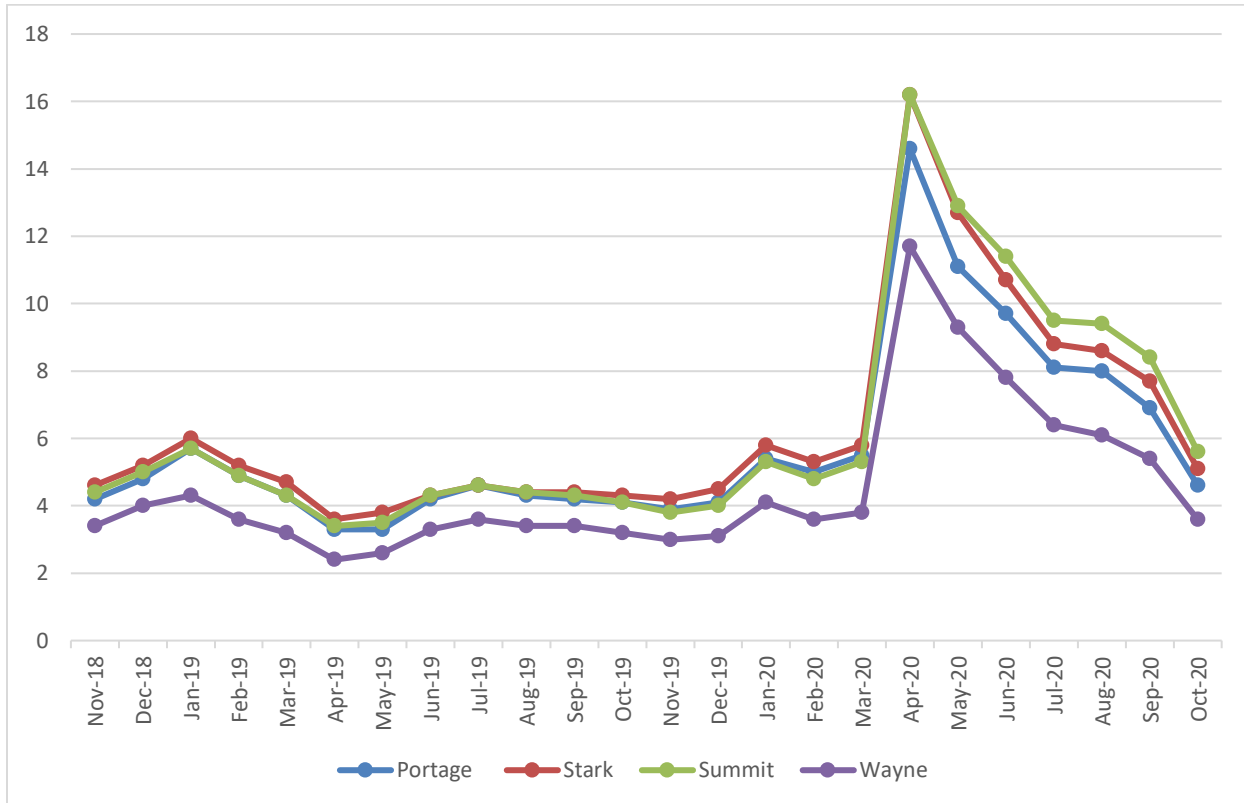
**Figure 1: 24-Month Unemployment Rates**



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, January 2021

Figure 2 illustrates the unemployment rates over the last 24 months by county in the NEFCO region. The patterns are consistent with Figure 1; however, this chart reveals how the pandemic has affected the four counties differently. Wayne County was not as severely impacted by the pandemic as the other three counties in the NEFCO region and had lower unemployment rates in each of the 24 months, particularly after March 2020. Of NEFCO’s four counties, Wayne has the lowest percentage of retail and service-related jobs, which were impacted most severely. All four counties have shown progressive recovery, but Summit County has consistently trailed the other three counties in the region.

**Figure 2: 24-Month Unemployment Rates for NEFCO Counties**



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, January 2021

Table 1 displays calculations of economic distress for counties and select cities and villages in the NEFCO region. Local governments may qualify for EDA assistance based on the economic distress of a census tract or a community’s per capita income. Following the publication of EDA’s notice of funding opportunity for its Public Works/Economic Adjustment Assistance program including the CARES addendum, all areas of the country, regardless of unemployment rate or per capita income level became eligible for EDA funding. The pandemic constituted a “special need,” whereby all areas of the country were impacted. It is not known how long this special need will continue; as of the publication of this document, the criterion was still in effect. The data shown in Table 1 were obtained from the Bureau of Labor Statistics data available in January 2020 and the American Community Survey’s estimates of per capita income for a single point in time between 2015 and 2019.

City names in bold denote economically distressed communities per EDA metrics. A community can qualify as economically distressed either by its per capita income or unemployment rate. A community’s per capita income must be less than 80% of the U.S. per capita income (\$27,282) or have a 24-month unemployment rate 1% or greater than the national average (5.6%). Cells without data indicate that

statistics are not provided at this geographic level by the U.S. Census Bureau. In Portage County, the villages of Hiram and Windham and the cities of Kent and Ravenna have per capita income levels less than 80% of the national average. In Stark County, the cities of Alliance, Canton, and Massillon have per capita income levels less than 80% of the U.S.; Canton and Massillon have 24-month unemployment rates of 7.5% and 6.7%, respectively. In Summit County, the cities of Akron and Barberton and the village of Mogadore have per capita income levels less than 80% of the U.S.; Akron and Barberton have 24-month unemployment rates of 7.3% and 7.0%, respectively. In Wayne County, the City of Rittman has a per capita income level 76.0% of the national average.

**Table 1: Economic Distress in the NEFCO Region**

Unit of Government	24-month Unemployment % (BLS)	ACS PCMI 5-yr. est. (2015-2019)	Percentage of U.S. PCMI
<i>Portage County</i>	5.8	\$30,054	88.1%
<b>Village of Hiram</b>	N/A	\$16,541	<b>48.5%</b>
<b>City of Kent</b>	5.1	\$21,485	<b>63.0%</b>
<b>City of Ravenna</b>	N/A	\$23,861	<b>70.0%</b>
<b>Village of Windham</b>	N/A	\$18,527	<b>54.3%</b>
<i>Stark County</i>	6.3	\$29,495	86.5%
<b>City of Alliance</b>	N/A	\$21,094	<b>61.9%</b>
<b>City of Canton</b>	<b>7.5</b>	\$19,967	<b>58.5%</b>
<b>City of Massillon</b>	<b>6.7</b>	\$24,721	<b>72.5%</b>
<i>Summit County</i>	6.2	\$33,606	98.5%
<b>City of Akron</b>	<b>7.3</b>	\$24,688	<b>72.4%</b>
<b>City of Barberton</b>	<b>7.0</b>	\$22,448	<b>65.8%</b>
<b>Village of Mogadore</b>	N/A	\$26,838	<b>78.7%</b>
<i>Wayne County</i>	4.5	\$27,884	81.8%
<b>City of Rittman</b>	N/A	\$21,914	<b>76.0%</b>
<b>Ohio</b>	6.1	\$31,552	92.5%
<b>United States</b>	5.6	\$34,103	-

Sources: American Community Survey; Bureau of Labor Statistics, December 2020

N/A – not available; statistics not provided at this geographic level

### Organizational Changes

In October 2020, NEFCO hired a new, full-time Economic Recovery and Resiliency (ER&R) Coordinator to manage the agency's ER&R planning process. This position was made possible through the EDA's CARES Act Supplemental Assistance grant. The ER&R Coordinator will work with NEFCO's Economic Development Planner and Executive Director, as well as communities and organizations throughout the NEFCO region to help respond to the impacts of the pandemic and develop a regional economic recovery and resiliency plan.

The Regional CEDS Committee includes representatives from the NEFCO's four counties and major cities, private sector representatives from the various county economic development boards, a university representative, and a network development specialist from a nonprofit entrepreneurial company (see

Table 2). The Regional CEDS Committee is representative of the region's principal economic interests and drives the CEDS planning process.

NEFCO's Regional CEDS Committee and General Policy Board participate in the agency's regional economic development planning program, directing the planning strategy, providing economic development updates, and assessing the progress of the region in implementing the CEDS. The Regional CEDS Committee and General Policy Board will also drive the development of the ER&R Plan, which will have a major focus in 2021.

**Table 2: 2021 Regional CEDS Committee**

Name	Representing	Title	EDA Category
Betty Aylsworth	Ohio Agricultural Research & Development Center	Program Coordinator	Higher Education
Gregg Cramer	Greater Akron Chamber	Vice President, Economic Development	Private Sector
Brad Ehrhart	Portage Development Board	President	Private Sector
Patricia Grospron	JumpStart, Inc.	Senior Partner, Network Management	Private Sector
Ray Hexamer	Stark Economic Development Board	President	Private Sector
Jonathan Millea	City of Wooster	Economic Development Director	Public Sector
Robert Nau	Stark County Regional Planning Commission	Executive Director	Public Sector
Tom Pukys	Wayne Economic Development Council	President	Private Sector
Dennis Tubbs	Summit County Department of Community and Economic Development	Assistant Director	Public Sector
Scott Wagner	Barberton Community Development Corp.	Executive Director	Private Sector
Pete Wearstler	Wayne County Planning Department	Director	Public Sector
Abraham Wescott	City of Akron	Manager, Development	Public Sector
Tom Wilke	City of Kent	Economic Development Director	Public Sector
Fonda Williams	City of Canton	Deputy Mayor	Public Sector
Total members = 13. Private sector/Higher Education Representatives = 7 (54%)			

This roster of the 2021 Regional CEDS Committee represents the principal economic interests of the NEFCO region. Note: some updates or changes to this list may occur.

Table 3 shows the composition and affiliations of NEFCO's General Policy Board for 2021. NEFCO's governing board is the decision-making body for the organization. The General Policy Board is broadly representative of the principal environmental and economic interests of the region. There are 37 members from the counties of Portage, Stark, Summit, and Wayne and the cities of Akron, Canton, Kent, and Wooster. Membership composition is determined by the organization's bylaws.



**Table 3: 2021 NEFCO General Policy Board**

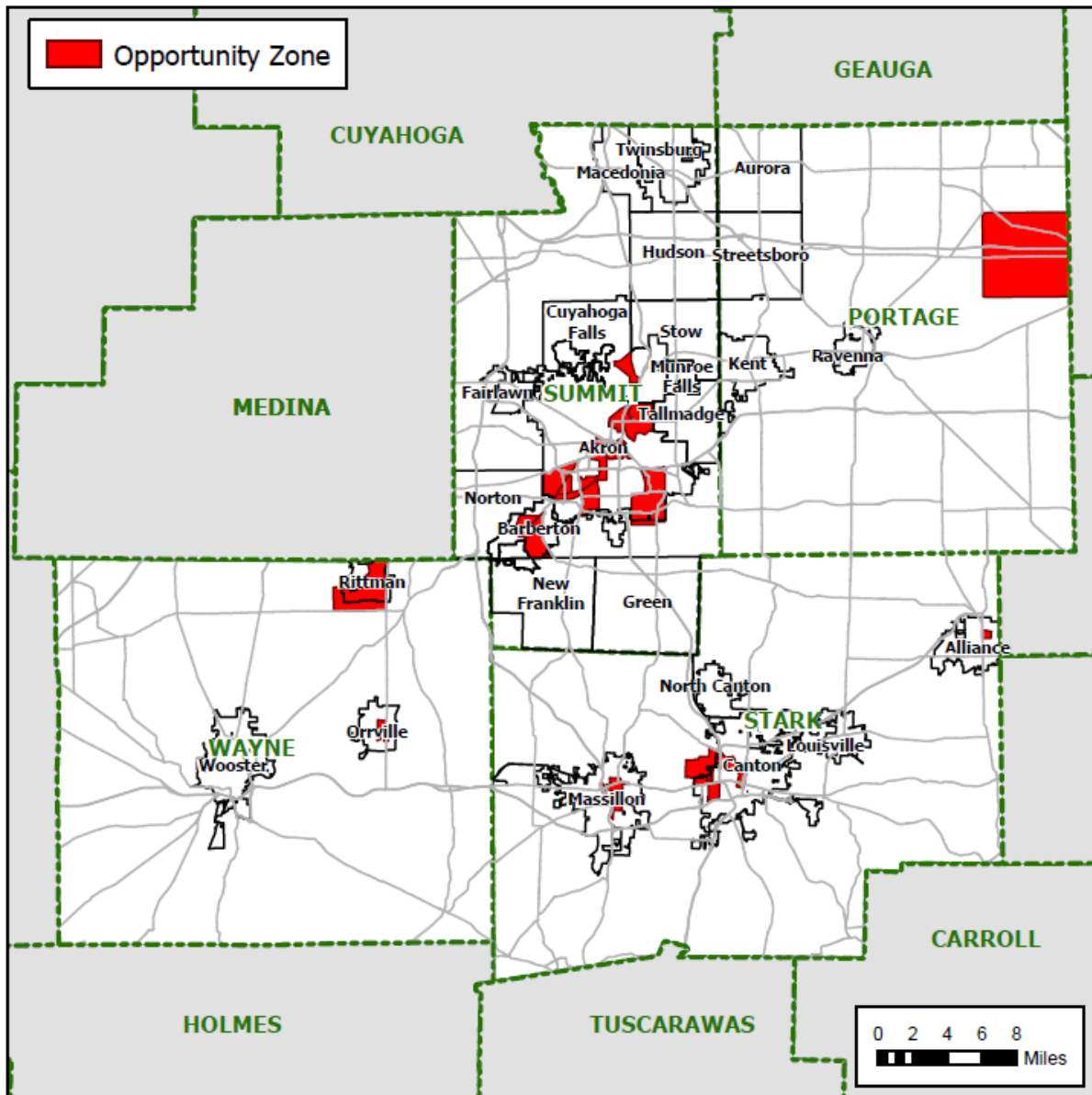
<b>Name</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>	<b>Type</b>
<b>Portage County*</b>		
James Bierlair	Portage Soil and Water Conservation District	Public Official
Joe Diorio	Portage County Health Commissioner	Public Official
Vicki Kline	Portage County Commissioner	Public Official
Todd Peetz	Portage County Regional Planning Commission	Public Official
Gene Roberts	Portage County Administrator	Public Official
John Zizka	Freedom Township Trustee	Public Official
<b>City of Kent</b>		
Kathleen Petsko	City of Kent Grants and Neighborhood Programs Coordinator	Public Official
<b>Stark County</b>		
Keith Bennett	Stark County Engineer	Public Official
David Maley	City of Massillon Economic Development Director	Public Official
Vince Marion	City of Louisville Planning Director	Public Official
Joe Mazzola	City of Alliance Planning Director	Public Official
Richard Regula	Stark County Commissioner	Public Official
Jim Troike	Stark County Sanitary Engineer	Public Official
Joe Underwood	Stark County Regional Planning Commission	Public Official
John Weedon	Stark Soil and Water Conservation District	Public Official
Vacant (4)		
<b>City of Canton</b>		
Dan Moeglin	City of Canton Engineer	Public Official
<b>Summit County</b>		
Alan Brubaker	Summit County Engineer	Public Official
James Balogh	Twinsburg Township Trustee	Public Official
William Judge	City of Barberton Mayor	Public Official
David Kohlmeier	CTI Engineering	Private Sector
Olivia Helander	Summit County Department of Community & Economic Dev.	Public Official
Ilene Shapiro	Summit County Executive	Public Official
Dianne Sumego	dms water solutions, llc.	Private Sector
Michael Vinay	Summit County Sanitary Sewer Services Director	Public Official
Jeff Wilhite	Summit County Council President	Public Official
<b>City of Akron*</b>		
Sharon Connor	City of Akron Council member	Public Official
Daniel Horrigan	City of Akron Mayor	Public Official
Chris Ludle	City of Akron Deputy Director Public Service	Public Official
Brad McKittrick	City of Akron Council member	Public Official
Rich Swirsky	City of Akron Council member	Public Official
Thomas Tatum	City of Akron Housing & Community Services Administrator	Public Official
Helen Tomic	City of Akron Comprehensive Planning Manager	Public Official
<b>Wayne County</b>		
Becky Foster	Wayne County Commissioner	Public Official
Pete Wearstler	Wayne County Planning Director	Public Official
Steve Wheeler	City of Orrville Safety/Service Director	Public Official
<b>City of Wooster</b>		
Bob Breneman	City of Wooster Mayor	Public Official

Name	Affiliation	Type
<b>Ohio EPA (Ex Officio)</b>		
Kurt Princic	Ohio EPA – Northeast District Office Chief	Public Official

\*Appointment pending

**OPPORTUNITY ZONES**

**Figure 3: Opportunity Zones in NEFCO Region**



Sources: U.S. Department of the Treasury, 2019; Portage County GIS; Stark County GIS; Summit County GIS; Wayne County GIS; Ohio Department of Transportation; Ohio Department of Natural Resources GIS

Opportunity Zones (OZ) continued to be a major focus for the Federal administration in 2020. OZs are also one of EDA’s investment priorities. Community leaders in the NEFCO region have targeting these areas for development and job creation. There are 27 OZs in the NEFCO region: 16 in Summit County,

eight in Stark County, two in Wayne County, and one in Portage County (see Figure 3). Of the 27 OZs, 13 are in the City of Akron and five in the City of Canton. As a result, economic development professionals in these areas have developed materials to help promote these OZs as preferred investment areas.

Summit County has developed a prospectus, which promotes its 16 OZs. The prospectus is tailored to market the OZs through the use of an ESRI geographic information systems story map on a designated website.<sup>1</sup> The City of Canton has partnered with the Stark Economic Development Board and the Canton Regional Chamber of Commerce to develop an OZ booklet, which markets its five OZs, each clustered around major economic hubs of the city.<sup>2</sup>

NEFCO staff continues to work with area leaders to investigate project development within these zones, particularly relative to EDA grant funding. Staff also keeps the NEFCO General Policy Board updated on developments and OZ program information.

## A REGIONAL APPROACH

As the four-county region's Economic Development District, Areawide Planning Agency (water quality planning organization), and regional council of governments, NEFCO strives to address issues that cross county and watershed boundary lines. Member communities value the regional approach and understand the region is stronger when the counties and cities work together. NEFCO's economic development program is guided by the following questions: Where are we going? Where do we want to be? And, how do we get there?

### Where are we going?

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the regional economy was relatively stable. The pandemic created unprecedented economic hardship throughout the country and the NEFCO region. Sales and income tax revenues were reduced. The cancellation of the Pro Football Hall of Fame festival and game, including the Centennial Celebration, had a serious impact on the City of Canton, Stark County, and the NEFCO region. The full depth of the economic impact is not known. It will likely take years to recover. Despite the pandemic, community leaders are continuing to work to expand the economic base and improve the region's resiliency. The region's core industries – manufacturing, health care, and information technology – continue to drive the economy and have buoyed the region during the pandemic. The southeastern part of the region continues to focus on the shale energy industry. With pipeline infrastructure and large ethane cracker plants under construction or proposed along the Ohio River Valley, the region is poised to support petrochemical industries such as plastics manufacturing. The Regional Transportation Improvement Project continues to work to extend U.S. Route 30 eastward to connect the NEFCO region with these facilities. The northern parts of Summit and Portage Counties continue to be attractive to logistics and transportation companies, given their superior highway accessibility. The region's principal cities – Akron and Canton – are making substantial investments in their downtowns. Akron and Canton have also invested in targeted city planning efforts. Akron's reorganized Office of Integrated Development (OID) combines the planning and economic development divisions, streamlining its development processes. The OID recently issued its five-year strategic framework, which aims to create an equitable, prosperous Akron.<sup>3</sup> Canton continues to focus on augmenting its six major community asset

<sup>1</sup> County of Summit, Opportunity Zones Prospectus, <https://sway.office.com/QEymAn7Dn4ssVpEb>

<sup>2</sup> City of Canton, Canton Regional Chamber of Commerce, Qualified Opportunity Zones: Investment Overview and Opportunities, <https://www.cantonchamber.org/Content/uploads/CantonDevelopmentOpportunity.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> City of Akron, Office of Integrated Development, Five-Year Strategic Framework 2019-2024, [https://www.akronohio.gov/cms/resource\\_library/files/be43396d8e913bd0/ocd\\_akron\\_book\\_111119\\_full\\_lowres\\_pages.pdf](https://www.akronohio.gov/cms/resource_library/files/be43396d8e913bd0/ocd_akron_book_111119_full_lowres_pages.pdf)

regions identified in the city's Comprehensive Plan, including the Pro Football Hall of Fame, Mercy Medical Center, Aultman Hospital, Downtown, Shorb neighborhood, and Timken.<sup>4</sup> The completion of Canton's downtown centerpiece, Centennial Plaza, highlights the city's commitment to revitalizing its downtown, while connecting the core to the Pro Football Hall of Fame Village development. Major new projects are continuing around Aultman Hospital, including the Timken Family Cancer Center. Kent and Wooster continue to revitalize their downtowns to attract investment, while collaborating with their respective universities.

### **Where do we want to be?**

The NEFCO region strives to be globally competitive and economically resilient. The region envisions vibrant downtowns; inclusive and equitable opportunities for employment, education, broadband, and transportation; a robust and skilled workforce; excellent quality of life assets, including superior health care facilities, good schools and universities, extensive parks and trails, and numerous cultural and entertainment opportunities; and targeted investment in infrastructure to create living-wage jobs.

### **How do we get there?**

The NEFCO region is poised to effectively address the challenges and capitalize on its numerous strengths and opportunities. The key to future prosperity for the region – especially in the short-term – will be its ability to assess the impacts of the pandemic and effectively plan and develop solutions to foster recovery. The post-COVID economy will demand a skilled workforce, with a particular focus on technology and innovation. The region must work together to boost educational attainment, and employers must effectively educate and train employees to respond to new innovations and challenges. The region is fortunate to have strong leadership not only in its local governments, but also in its private sector economic development organizations and nonprofit organizations who are working to create a strong economic ecosystem. In order to maintain the positive momentum and meet the goals of the CEDS, the region must continue the following:

- Continue regional collaborative efforts to foster economic development
- Continue investing in strategic economic development and planning initiatives
- Work on developing a regional economic recovery and resiliency plan that assesses impacts, identifies short-term recovery projects, and formulates long-term resilience strategies
- Focus on regional strengths and target industries
- Identify and address regional economic development deficiencies
- Improve workforce development and training programs
- Facilitate collaboration between regional employers and universities and vocational schools to develop curricula and career programs to meet industry demand
- Remove barriers for underserved populations
- Address racial and gender inequality and improve access to jobs, education, transportation, and childcare
- Improve transportation accessibility for lower income and carless households to employment centers
- Continue to assess and remediate brownfields and other environmentally-challenges sites to create economic reuse
- Invest in parks, trails, and other recreational amenities to improve regional quality of life

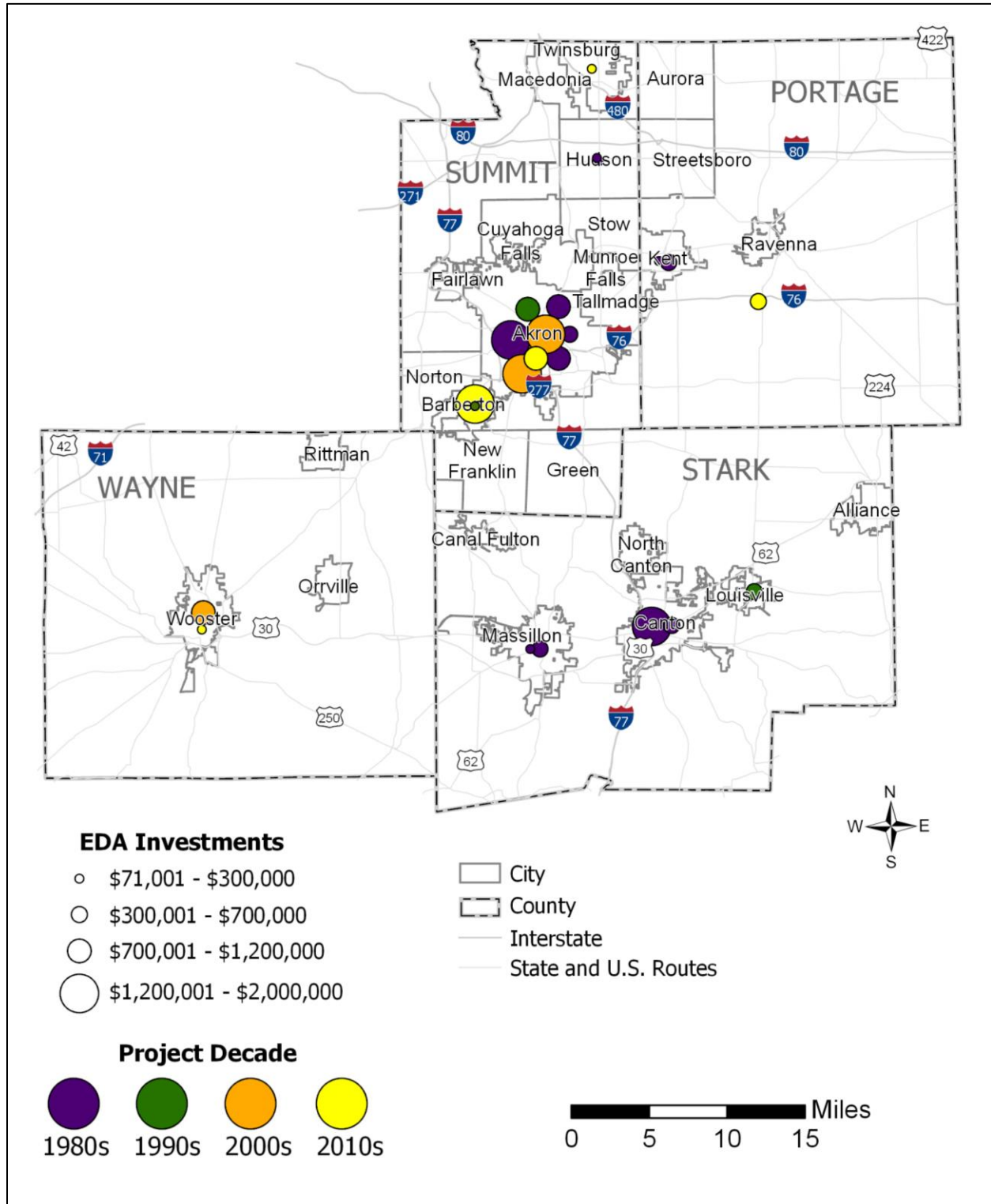
### **Capacity of Economic Development District to support the CEDS**

NEFCO's Economic Development Planner manages the agency's economic development planning program and CEDS planning process. Through the EDA CARES Act Supplemental Assistance grant,

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<sup>4</sup> City of Canton Comprehensive Plan, <http://cantonohio.gov/pdf/CantonFinal%20Draft-03.07.16.pdf>

Figure 4: Economic Development Administration Investments in NEFCO Region



Sources: Portage County GIS; Stark County GIS; Summit County GIS; Wayne County GIS; Ohio Department of Transportation; Ohio Department of Natural Resources GIS



NEFCO hired a full-time ER&R Coordinator in October 2020 to manage the ER&R planning process. In addition, two other full-time staff members assist with the economic development program, including the NEFCO Executive Director and Administrative Assistant. The economic development program focuses on the CEDS planning process, working collaboratively with communities in the four-county region, and assisting members with potential projects for EDA grant consideration. The map on page 12 illustrates the distribution of EDA grant monies invested in the NEFCO region since 1980 (see Figure 4).

The ER&R planning process will focus on helping the region respond to the economic impacts of the pandemic. The proposed ER&R Plan will assess impacts, identify short-term recovery projects, and develop long-term resilience strategies.

The NEFCO General Policy Board has committed matching funds to support the economic development program for the current fiscal year through June 2021. The Board has already passed a resolution committing the organization to providing the necessary matching funds as required under the three-year Partnership Planning Grant.

## REPORT ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

The following activities were undertaken to support and implement NEFCO's 2018 CEDS Update:

### **Economic Resilience**

The NEFCO CEDS 2018 Update addresses economic and environmental resilience; however, the region could never have anticipated a crisis with the magnitude of the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact of the pandemic on the nation and the NEFCO region has been severe. NEFCO and other EDA-designated Economic Development Districts across the country were fortunate to receive supplemental assistance from the EDA to lead regional economic recovery planning efforts through CARES Act funding. NEFCO is currently working with communities and organizations around the region on the development of an Economic Recovery and Resiliency (ER&R) Plan, which will be incorporated into the NEFCO CEDS Plan. The ER&R Plan will include an assessment of the economic impacts of the pandemic, short-term recovery projects and programs, and long-term resilience strategies. The ER&R Plan will include subcommittees and possibly county-level subplans to address the unique recovery needs of the four counties in the NEFCO region.

NEFCO's Environmental Resources Technical Advisory Committee holds ongoing discussions on various environmental issues. NEFCO is also a member of Summit County's District 8 Technical Advisory Committee, which reviews and recommends projects for funding by the Ohio Public Works Commission. Climate change and its impact on existing and planned infrastructure has been a discussion among the county's city engineers.

### **Performance Evaluation by EDA**

It is anticipated that the requisite agency evaluation by the EDA will occur during the last quarter of the grant.

### **NEFCO Region Economic Development Conditions**

Staff reviews five area newspapers on a daily basis to stay current with economic development news and changes in the region. Significant closures (generally job losses of 100 or greater) are reported to the Economic Development Representative, and, when appropriate, meetings are requested to discuss projects that will assist a community with efforts to address economic challenges. Significant positive economic development stories are also noted.

### **Involvement on Regional Committees**

During 2021 NEFCO's Executive Director will continue to serve as a member of the Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS) Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). NEFCO's Economic Development Planner serves on the AMATS Connecting Communities Committee, which evaluates bicycle, pedestrian, and transit facility projects and plans. Additionally, the Executive Director serves as a TAC member of Summit County's District 8 Public Works Integrating Committee, which recommends public infrastructure projects for funding through the Ohio Public Works Commission.

In 2010, NEFCO became part of a 12-county study to examine the effects of various future land use development patterns. A vision framework and list of recommendations were adopted in 2014 by the Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium Board of Directors. Since that time, a Launch Board was formed and convenes quarterly meetings to advance the plan, Vibrant NEO 2040.<sup>5</sup> NEFCO's Executive Director serves as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chairman. 2020 marked the third year of the Vibrant NEO Champions awards. These awards were given to organizations and individuals demonstrating exceptional leadership in the advancement of the Vibrant NEO Vision. NEFCO served on the award selection committee.

### **Updates and Communication**

Each month, NEFCO staff communicates opportunities and provides updates to its members on issues that affect the region. NEFCO's monthly General Policy Board meetings provide a forum for this communication. Time-sensitive information on new initiatives and other information are e-mailed to economic development professionals. NEFCO utilizes its website to communicate public events, important meetings, and dates of the public General Policy Board, Environmental Resources Technical Advisory Committee and Regional CEDS Committee meetings. NEFCO's General Policy Board meetings also occasionally feature speakers on topics selected by staff and/or requested by Board members. The NEFCO *Forum* newsletter provides additional information and key updates on regional environmental and economic development planning activities.

### **Planning Assistance**

NEFCO staff assisted area officials, community leaders, and professionals with various projects of importance to local communities. In 2020, NEFCO met with or assisted the following communities and organizations with projects: the cities of Akron, Alliance, Barberton, Canton, Hudson, Kent, Massillon, Orrville, Ravenna, Rittman, Tallmadge, Twinsburg, and Wooster; Portage County Regional Planning Commission; Summit County; Wayne Economic Development Council; Portage Development Board; Strengthening Stark; Barberton Community Development Corporation; Neighborhood Development Services; NEFCO members; and other communities and organizations seeking EDA grant assistance.

### **Implementation Assistance**

NEFCO has provided letters of support to communities and organizations around the region for projects that further the goals and objectives of the NEFCO CEDS Plan. In 2020, the NEFCO General Policy Board provided letters of support to Summit County, JumpStart, and the Center for Economic Development at Cleveland State University for EDA grant project applications. NEFCO also provided a letter of support to the RTIP U.S.-30 for its U.S. Department of Transportation Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development Discretionary Grant Program application.

Staff continues to assist local governments with the implementation of infrastructure investments and programs. In 2020, NEFCO participated in the Ohio Public Works Commission infrastructure project program (Program Year 35) as a member of the six-person Technical Advisory Committee of Summit County's District 8 Public Works Integrating Committee.

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<sup>5</sup> Northeast Ohio Sustainable Communities Consortium, Vibrant NEO 2040, <http://vibrantneo.org/vibrantneo-2040/vneo-2040-full-report/>

### Technical Assistance

NEFCO staff provides information to the public and private sectors on critical issues affecting the region, including Census data updates, federal and state legislative updates, and funding notices. NEFCO's administration of two U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-funded brownfields assessment grants has made the agency a critical resource for brownfields redevelopment planning. Additionally, staff's close relationship with the U.S. EPA and the Ohio EPA allows NEFCO to assist its members in obtaining quick answers to questions on environmental issues.

## EVALUATION OF PROGRESS ON ACTION PLAN AND GOALS

### 1. Support programs that diversify local and regional economies and which build a strong regional economy capable of recovering from natural disasters and economic setbacks.

The COVID-19 pandemic created unprecedented economic hardship to the nation and the NEFCO region. Communities and organizations throughout the region provided a number of great resources to help respond to the impacts of the pandemic. Many organizations, including all four county private nonprofit economic development organizations hosted online COVID-19 resource centers to assist businesses and organizations. Communities across the region utilized federal CARES Act allocations to provide small business recovery grants. Most notably, Summit County's COVID-19 Small Business Emergency Relief Grant Program, which was administered by the Greater Akron Chamber, provided nearly \$13 million in grants to over 3,000 small businesses in Summit County impacted by the pandemic. The Stark Economic Development Board collaborated with local churches to distribute grants to small businesses. Portage County's COVID-19 Small Business Emergency Relief grant program – administered by the Neighborhood Development Services – provided nearly \$5.4 million in grants to assist 71 businesses in Portage County. Wayne County's Small Business Relief Program, which was administered by the Wayne Economic Development Council, provided nearly \$500,000 in grants to 100 small businesses in Wayne County.

#### Encourage programs and projects that create and retain jobs

The City of Akron and its partners have developed numerous programs that have helped create and retain jobs. Through the Elevate Greater Akron program, the City of Akron works closely with Summit County and the Greater Akron Chamber on business retention and expansion (BR&E). Elevate Greater Akron targets mid-sized business growth through a five-tier strategy: economic inclusion and opportunity; talent and skill development; downtown and job hub development; innovation and high potential start-ups; and connect and leverage resources to support business growth.<sup>6</sup> The City of Akron's Rubber City Match program<sup>7</sup> aims to lower the barrier to entry for small businesses, creating a more inclusive economy and continues to activate Akron's neighborhood districts. Rubber City Match pairs new and expanding businesses with Akron's top real estate opportunities, providing funding and technical assistance. Entrepreneurs, with a new or expanding business, may apply for grant funding for technical assistance, design and architectural services as well as capital.

The Portage Development Board (PDB) hosts monthly meetings with economic development professionals around Portage County to review updates on project and programs. The PDB aids industrial realtors, builders, local industries and local communities in an effort to maintain and improve the economic base in Portage County. In 2020, the PDB conducted over 170 BR&E visits with Portage County businesses. The Small Business Development Center (SBDC), which is managed under the Ohio Development Services Agency, provides seminars, workshops, and one-on-

<sup>6</sup> Greater Akron Chamber, Elevate Great Akron, <https://greaterakronchamber.org/about-the-chamber/elevate-greater-akron>

<sup>7</sup> City of Akron, Rubber City Match, <https://www.rubbercitymatch.com/>



one consulting with businesses. Ohio Means Jobs (OMJ) Portage County, a division of the Portage County Job and Family Services, supports economic expansion and workforce development. OMJ Portage County conducts a Manufacturing Internship Program, workshops, job fairs, re-entry programs, and provides free services to Portage County employers.

The Wayne Economic Development Council (WEDC) works with communities in Wayne County to stimulate new capital investment and job growth through business expansion and attraction initiatives. The WEDC's priorities include attracting quality businesses, pursuing sustainable and balanced new business growth, coordinating and collaborating with community and regional partners, delivering progressive product offerings and incentives and delivering high-quality professional economic development services. The WEDC has a robust BR&E Program focusing on strengthening and retaining existing businesses. In 2020, the WEDC visited 160 businesses. In 2021, the WEDC will launch new programs targeting small businesses.

The Stark Economic Development Board (SEDB) has developed an extensive BR&E program with its local government partners. In 2020, the SEDB visited 205 companies. Through these visits, the SEDB and its partners were able to commit 987 new jobs, \$45 million in new annual payroll, and over \$185 million in capital expenditures.

### **Support entrepreneurial, innovative and technological development**

NEFCO provided technical assistance and authoritative recommendations to Summit County for its EDA CARES grant application, FairlawnGig Expansion Planning Project (FEPP). The FEPP is a feasibility study on the potential expansion of the region's existing FairlawnGig high-speed fiber-optic network to new Opportunity Zones and Job Hubs in Akron and Barberton. The FairlawnGig is a municipally owned broadband utility, which offers wireless and gigabit fiber optic internet services. The FEPP – a collaboration between the County of Summit, the City of Akron, the City of Fairlawn, and the Greater Akron Chamber – aims to analyze the viability of expanding fiber infrastructure to expand economic opportunity, spur job growth, and foster private investment, particularly in areas of economic distress.

NEFCO provided technical assistance to JumpStart in the development of the Resilient Together EDA SPRINT Challenge grant application. Resilient Together is a collaboration between Manufacturing Advocacy and Growth Network (MAGNET), Team NEO, JumpStart, and the Youngstown Business Incubator, which aims to improve our region's economic viability, resilience, and innovation by strengthening connectivity between economic development leadership, government agencies, manufacturing industry leaders, startups, tech businesses, healthcare systems, academic institutions, and investors.

## **STATUS: MAKING PROGRESS**

### **2. Encourage the development of industries that support Northeast Ohio's economic clusters**

The NEFCO region's three main industries include health care, information technology, and manufacturing. Hospitals throughout the region continue to make significant investments. Aultman Hospital in Canton will begin construction of its \$28 million Cancer Center on its campus in 2021. The 77,600-square-foot center, which includes a 45,000-square-foot addition to Aultman Hospital, is designed to transform cancer care in the region. Canton's Mercy Medical Center will become a member of the Cleveland Clinic health system in 2021. There have been major construction additions at Akron Children's Hospital and Summa Health Center in Akron. Summa Health announced it will vacate St. Thomas Hospital and construct a new \$60 million, 60-bed behavioral health facility on its Akron City Hospital campus by 2022. Akron Children's Hospital and Crystal Clinic have expanded in several locations this year as the demand for quality healthcare grows in the region.

Manufacturing continues to be a focus for the region. Despite the pandemic, there was significant investment in manufacturing throughout the NEFCO region in 2020. Menards will construct a new \$51.7 million, 260,000-square-foot distribution and manufacturing center on a 62-acre site in Ravenna next year. The facility will employ 90 people with an estimated payroll of \$3.49 million. Bulten will create 35 new jobs and generate \$2.7 million in new annual payroll when it moves into its new building in Streetsboro. Bulten supplies fasteners to the automotive industry. RoviSys, a control system integrator and product development company, is expanding its facility in Aurora. RoviSys will invest about \$5.67 million, create 88 new jobs, and add \$6.2 million in annual payroll. The Davey Tree Expert Company announced plans for a \$14 million, 54,000-square-foot addition to its corporate headquarters in Kent. Davey has committed to creating 35 new full-time jobs over the next three years and is projected to add 120 employees over the next 10 years.

In Stark County, Tractor Supply Company will build a new 895,000-square-foot distribution center in the Prospect Industrial Park in Navarre next year. The project will create 375 new jobs and generate \$14 million in new annual payroll. GOJO is expanding and will occupy a 430,000-square-foot warehouse in Massillon to operate as a shipping and storage center. The expansion will help the company prepare for the significant increase in demand of its Purell product, as a result of the coronavirus. Polytech America – which produces film metal lamination for food, beverage, and aerosol cans – will expand to an existing 100,000-square-foot industrial building in Perry Township, creating \$15 million in investment and 30 new jobs. Howmet Aerospace, which manufactures engines and transportation components, will add 75 new jobs and invest \$9.1 million in new equipment at its facility in Canton. Shearer’s Foods is completing a \$4 million, 41,000 square-foot expansion at its manufacturing and distribution hub in Massillon. Superior Dairy announced plans to invest \$25 million and add 123 jobs at its Perry Township facility.

In Summit County, Athersys Inc., a biomedical technology firm that develops therapeutic products, plans to expand in Stow and create 400 new jobs and \$34.8 million in new annual payroll over the next five years. Frozen foods manufacturer Arlington Valley Farms announced it will invest \$4.9 million in capital improvements and create 97 new jobs at its production facility in Hudson. Additionally, they plan to launch several new innovative, “ready-to-eat” frozen/packaged food brands. Hitachi Healthcare Americas announced that it will create a new dedicated research and development facility within its North American headquarters facility in Twinsburg, creating 40 new jobs. The Hitachi Healthcare Innovation Center of Excellence will help advance medical imaging devices and technology.

In Wayne County, E-Pak Manufacturing, which manufactures steel roll-off containers, trailers, and hoppers, will add 20-40 jobs and expand its product lines at its Wooster plant. The City of Wooster purchased nearly 140 acres of land in the northeastern corner of the city for the development of a new industrial park. The cost for the land is approximately \$2 million. A portion of the land is outside of the city limits; if purchased, the city would pursue annexation of this piece. The industrial park would provide shovel-ready industrial sites and spur economic development for the city.

The substantial demand for personal protective equipment (PPE) in 2020 encouraged many businesses in the region to pivot their operations and manufacture PPE such as masks, gloves, gowns and sanitizer very quickly. Businesses that manufacture products for the food industry and passive recreation also saw an increase in demand. It was reported by the Portage Development Board that two toy manufacturers in Streetsboro saw a sharp increase in demand as families were isolated at home during the pandemic. Businesses will have to continue to adapt and respond to the pressures of the pandemic.

## **STATUS: MAKING PROGRESS**

### 3. Build intergovernmental and public-private partnerships that place a high value on working cooperatively to address the region's needs

NEFCO's General Policy Board and Regional CEDS Committee represent the collaboration between public and private sectors within the region as they make decisions affecting the regional economy. The majority of the 13-member committee is employed in the private sector. Both the Board and the Regional CEDS Committee drive the economic development strategy and work plan of NEFCO.

Strong public-private partnerships have helped the region respond to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Summit County and the Greater Akron Chamber provided approximately \$13 million in CARES Act relief grants to over 3,000 small businesses in Summit County. Similar small business recovery grant programs were implemented in Portage, Stark, and Wayne Counties, as well as in many of the municipalities and townships across the region.

There are a number of strong public-private partnerships throughout the NEFCO region. All counties work closely with their respective private economic development board: Portage Development Board, Stark Economic Development Board, Greater Akron Chamber, Wayne Economic Development Council. Elevate Greater Akron is a strategic and inclusive economic development partnership between the City of Akron, Summit County and the Greater Akron Chamber. Elevate Greater Akron is a regional economic development plan that involves collaboration and support from business, community, non-profit and civic leaders. Elevate Greater Akron focuses on supporting small and mid-sized business growth, inclusion and opportunity, workforce talent development, downtown and job hub development, innovation and high potential start-ups, and leveraging resources to support business growth. The Wayne Economic Development Council collaborates with Wayne County and the cities of Wooster, Orrville, and Rittman to attract business growth. Strengthening Stark – a collaboration between the Stark Economic Development Board, the Canton Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Stark Community Foundation, and communities in Stark County – is a community, economic, and social development plan for Stark County.<sup>8</sup>

The Ohio State University, Wooster Campus has aggressively pursued partnerships with business and industry. Industry contributed equipment, products and services are used extensively to enhance student hands-on experience. In turn, these strategic partners leverage the extensive land base and modern facilities towards lifespan learning activities such as corporate employee and dealer trainings and/or targeted customer engagement events. Corporate partners such as CNHi, John Deere, Kubota and Trimble are now sponsoring research or conducting prototype evaluations on campus.

The Ag Success Team of Wayne County is a networked group of local government, nongovernmental organizations, education institutions, and businesses, which meets monthly to foster collaboration on issues of common concern. Over the last 15 years, the group has addressed industrial infrastructure, processing plant attraction, and farmland preservation.

There are several multi-county collaborative efforts afoot in the NEFCO region. Community leaders in both Summit and Stark Counties are working to support the continued success of the Akron-Canton Regional Airport. Both chambers and Strengthening Stark are also working to market the Akron-Canton region to the petrochemical and plastics industries. This effort is strengthened by the region's efforts to expand the US-30 expressway in Stark County, which will spur economic development and connect the NEFCO region to the shale energy region in the Ohio River Valley.

#### **STATUS: SUCCESSFULLY MET GOAL**

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<sup>8</sup> Stark Community Foundation, Strengthening Stark, <https://www.starkcf.org/files/publications/strengtheningstark2017-lowres.pdf>

#### **4. Promote the redevelopment of blighted, underused, or vacant, and environmentally-challenged sites with high market potential**

NEFCO has been involved in a number of activities that directly address this goal. Vibrant NEO identified the remediation and reuse of vacant industrial sites as one of its priorities. NEFCO has completed two U.S. EPA Brownfields Assessment grants. Several assessed properties have been redeveloped, including the former Rolling Acres Mall site in Akron, which has become a new Amazon Fulfillment Center employing 1,500. Staff also provides technical assistance to its members and to others in Northeast Ohio, informing the public and private sector of how these EPA grants can help foster redevelopment. To date, no projects have led to applications for EDA grants; however, it is still relatively early since NEFCO's involvement precedes remediation. NEFCO will continue outreach efforts to inform Summit County communities of the opportunity to consider brownfields redevelopment and the promotion of sustainable development through the reuse of existing underused properties and facilities. To date, NEFCO has been actively involved in the environmental assessment of over 30 properties, leading to the generation of over \$141 million in private investment and the creation of nearly 2,000 jobs. The Amazon Fulfillment Center alone created over \$100 million in investment and 1,500 jobs.

The city of Akron continues to actively redevelop its downtown. Major projects include the Bowery redevelopment, CitiCenter, Former Cascade Hotel, Law Building, and Mayflower Building. The city is revitalizing these vacant and underused buildings into luxury apartments, offices, and retail space. Akron is promoting downtown living to complement its \$31 million Main Street Promenade project, which will include a cycle track, widened pedestrian pathways, green infrastructure, storm water management, and public transit improvements.

Portage, Stark, and Summit Counties all have active land banks that work to eliminate blight and prepare properties for reuse. Wayne County is actively working on developing a county land bank for addressing blight. The Stark County Regional Planning Commission is administering a \$250,000 brownfield cleanup grant on behalf of the Stark County Land Reutilization Corporation. This program includes the assessment and remediation of an abandoned gas station for redevelopment. The remediation activities have begun and include asbestos abatement, building and canopy removal, underground storage tank removal and soil and water remediation activities. The Stark County Land Reutilization Corporation and NEFCO both submitted USEPA Assessment grant applications in October 2020 to address brownfield sites in Stark County and Summit County, respectively.

#### **STATUS: SUCCESSFULLY MET GOAL**

#### **5. Support existing programs that build human capital**

NEFCO continues to assist its communities with obtaining assistance to create and retain jobs and strengthen the regional economy through diversification and innovation. During 2020, NEFCO provided technical assistance to several communities exploring potential EDA grant opportunities.

NEFCO is meeting with its members to better understand how the various communities in the region work with public workforce entities and private development agencies on training and retaining its workforce for current and future job demands. NEFCO will need to continue to gain a better understanding of how the region's programs and resources for workforce development are addressing the needs of the area's companies.

A number of challenges still remain. Addressing the workforce skills gap continues to be one of region's chief economic weaknesses. Community officials and employers will need to continue to collaborate with high schools, vocational schools, and colleges. Summit County is aggressively pushing its jobs hubs as employment centers. Transportation deficiencies continue to be a problem for

the workforce, especially lower-income residents and carless households. Public transportation options are limited and hamper the ability of some residents to secure employment. The City of Wooster and Wayne County are starting a new program to provide transit passes for qualified lower-income residents who reside or work up to three miles beyond the City of Wooster corporate limits.

Stark State College is working to address the workforce development needs of the region. Through Stark State's Workforce Training program, employers are offered the opportunity to customize courses and curricula to effectively train employees. Stark State College initiated a new commercial driver's license (CDL) program, which addresses the need for more commercial truck drivers. City of Akron employees are eligible for the CDL program, tuition-free.

The RAISE Good Jobs for Greater Akron program helps employers come into neighborhoods with information, so individuals have access to good jobs and career opportunities.<sup>9</sup> The RAISE program is a collaboration involving the Akron Chapter NAACP, Akron Public Schools, Akron Urban League, Summit County Public Library, Barberton Public Library, City of Akron, City of Barberton, ConxusNEO, County of Summit, Greater Akron Chamber, House of the Lord, Kenmore Neighborhood Alliance, METRO RTA, Ohio Means Jobs, Progressive Alliance CDC, Stark State College and Summit Board of Developmental Disabilities.

The Maplewood Career Center (MCC) in Portage County provides career and technical skills education for secondary and adult education. The adult education program assists individuals and companies in the efforts to develop leadership, build new skills, upgrade skills, keep abreast of technologies and to develop competencies in areas of need and workforce development and personal interest. The MCC develops programs and curricula based on the needs of employers in the region. In-demand skilled labor program include precision machining, industrial maintenance, module industrial maintenance, medical billing and coding, welding technologies, modulated welding and dental assistance.

Since October 2020, Paris Healthcare Linens in Ravenna has been employing non-violent offender inmates of the Portage County Jail to help them gain skills and successfully re-enter the workforce. While many local companies have hired felons after they are released from jail, this was the first time in Portage County that a company hired incarcerated individuals. To assist with removing barriers to employment, the County utilized a federal opioid crisis grant to help inmates acquire needed documentation, work attire, transportation, and lunch. Inmates earn between \$11 and \$12 dollars per hour for a 40-hour work week.

METRO FlexRide is a demand response transportation service offered by METRO RTA providing door-to-door work trips for employees to designated employers in regional job hubs. The FlexRide program is geared toward meeting needs of employees whose shift times or locations are not easily accommodated with traditional bus service. This pilot program is a collaboration between METRO and ConxusNEO to address the needs of employers and to build human capital.

ConxusNEO partners with businesses in our region to identify the skills they need to fill positions and build a talent pipeline by bringing together business partners, educators, workforce programs, economic development organization and government agencies. Unlike traditional workforce programs, which often start with the needs of a specific population and focus on helping that group overcome the obstacles they face in finding gainful employment, ConxusNEO's talent development

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<sup>9</sup> ConxusNEO, RAISE Good Jobs for Greater Akron, <https://www.raisegoodjobs.org/>



system starts with the needs of companies. ConxusNEO has a strong presence in Summit and Portage Counties and has recently teamed up with Stark County.

ConxusNEO piloted the Women in Sustainable Employment (WISE) Pathways initiative, a program designed to introduce women to careers in high demand, technical fields. WISE provides exposure for women to traditionally male-dominated fields to help females understand available opportunities in sustainable occupations with career pathways. The program assists participants in determining next steps to reach goals, prepares participants for testing, application process, interviews and/or further training, assists participants in identifying core life skills essential to success in a variety of fields and includes education and coaching on financial literacy.

The Greater Akron Chamber works closely with its employment and workforce training partners to respond to workforce needs by identifying and creating new educational programs dedicated to the new technologies being created. The Greater Akron Chamber partners with Kent State University, Northeast Ohio Medical University, Stark State College, Stark State College Akron, The University of Akron, Akron Public Schools, Summit Education Initiative (SEI), National Inventors Hall of Fame School Center for STEM Learning, Northeast Ohio Council on Higher Education, ConxusNEO, and MAGNET.

The Greater Akron Chamber has also partnered with the Greater Cleveland Partnership Equity & Inclusion to develop the Inclusion Marketplace, an online portal connecting minority-owned businesses (MBEs) with opportunities for growth.<sup>10</sup> The Inclusion Marketplace includes a searchable database of MBEs allowing buyers and suppliers to accelerate each of their respective activities. The portal provides MBE suppliers with direct connections to business opportunities, business growth services and access to capital. The Greater Akron Chamber also launched the Greater Akron Inclusion Challenge in October 2020. The Greater Akron Inclusion Challenge is designed to drive action around diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts within companies.<sup>11</sup>

Strengthening Stark is a county-wide community and economic development initiative of residents, businesses, local governments, nonprofit organizations, and philanthropic partners. Strengthening Stark's Stark Career Connect program collaborates with partners, such as Goodwill and the Stark County Urban League to help individuals navigate through the process of seeking employment and training opportunities.

## **STATUS: MAKING PROGRESS**

### **6. To the extent possible, promote the integration of the CEDS with other regional plans**

NEFCO enjoys an excellent working relationship with its two metropolitan planning organizations in the region: the Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS) and the Stark County Area Transportation Study (SCATS). These agencies are responsible for transportation planning and are required to produce transportation plans every four years. Covering similar geographic areas, NEFCO, AMATS, and SCATS share population, land use, and other data for planning purposes and report production. AMATS and SCATS share their transportation plans with NEFCO, and NEFCO shares its water quality management plan (208 Clean Water Plan) and economic development plan (CEDS). NEFCO is a member of the AMATS Technical Advisory Committee, which provides technical recommendations to the AMATS governing board.

<sup>10</sup> Greater Cleveland Partnership Equity & Inclusion, Inclusion Marketplace, <https://inclusionmarketplace.com/>

<sup>11</sup> Greater Akron Chamber, Greater Akron Inclusion Challenge, <https://greaterakronchamber.org/economic-inclusion>

NEFCO is also focused on ensuring its 208 Plan and CEDS Plan are consistent with other regional plans, including county and community comprehensive plans, Strengthening Stark, and other local plans. The Portage County Regional Planning Commission and the City of Wooster will be completing new comprehensive plans in 2021. NEFCO will work with these communities to ensure that the CEDS and the 208 Water Quality Management Plan are integrated into these comprehensive plans to the greatest extent feasible.

### **STATUS: MAKING PROGRESS**

#### **7. Promote programs that support sustainability and quality of life for the region**

The NEFCO Executive Director serves as a Board officer for the Vibrant NEO Launch Board, which aims to plan for a sustainable, resilient region. NEFCO staff sits on the AMATS and Summit County District 8 technical advisory committees, recommending transportation and public infrastructure projects. NEFCO is also an active member of the Cuyahoga River Area of Concern Advisory Committee, which has developed a remedial action plan to improve water quality. NEFCO and its partners removed the Canal Diversion Dam on the Cuyahoga River in part through an \$800,000 grant awarded to NEFCO by the U.S. EPA. The dam removal improves water quality, habitat, and recreational accessibility.

The region is embracing active transportation and recreational amenities. AMATS has published its Active Transportation Plan, which aims to enhance safety and transportation options for pedestrians and bicyclists.<sup>12</sup> The City of Canton has also completed an Active Transportation Plan.<sup>13</sup> Kent State University and the University of Akron have developed bike share programs. The Portage Park District, Stark Parks, Summit Metro Parks, and numerous cities around the region continue to expand trails and parks. These quality-of-life improvements are important for regional economic growth.

The City of Akron has continued to invest in neighborhood improvements and its downtown. In 2020, Akron invested \$1.5 million in its Great Streets program, supporting Akron neighborhood business districts, façade grants, beautification, new lighting.<sup>14</sup> The ongoing redevelopment of downtown Akron includes several residential and commercial projects. Akron has been aggressive with residential development and housing projects. Over 1,000 units of housing are currently in development or under construction. Akron completed Phase I of its \$31 million Main Street Promenade. The city also received \$2 million in grant funding from the Knight Foundation for the redevelopment of Lock 3 Park in downtown and recreational amenities at Summit Lake.

The City of Canton has also aggressively redeveloped its downtown. The \$12.3 million Centennial Plaza, which was completed in December 2020, features a café, public event space for 5,000 guests, stage, pavilion, high-definition video screen, and monuments recognizing National Football League players over the last 100 years. The Hall of Fame Resort & Entertainment Company completed a \$20 million renovation of the former McKinley Grand Hotel into the new DoubleTree by Hilton. Stark Fresh – a nonprofit, community-led organization – opened a supermarket in downtown. The Stark Fresh Grocery Store helped reduce a grocery store desert, which had existed in downtown Canton.

### **STATUS: SUCCESSFULLY MET GOAL**

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<sup>12</sup> Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study, Active Transportation Plan, <http://amatsplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2019-Active-Transportation-Plan-Final.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> City of Canton Active Transportation Map, <https://www.cantonohio.gov/DocumentCenter/View/2261/Canton-Active-Transportation-Map-PDF>

<sup>14</sup> City of Akron, Great Streets Program, <https://www.greatstreetsakron.com/>

**SCHEDULE OF GOALS FOR 2021 AND PROGRAM OF ACTIVITIES****2021 Goals and Objectives**

The following goals and objectives have been reviewed and approved by the NEFCO General Policy Board.

**Support programs that diversify local and regional economies and which build a strong regional economy capable of recovering from natural disasters and economic setbacks.**Objectives:

- Encourage programs and projects that create and retain jobs
- Support entrepreneurial, innovative and technological development
- Support efforts that will make the region more globally competitive

**Encourage the development of industries that support Northeast Ohio's economic clusters**Objectives:

- Support projects that contribute toward strengthening the region's targeted industries, including those in manufacturing, health care, and information technology
- Support activities that complement the targeted as well as other existing industries in the region

**Build intergovernmental and public-private partnerships that place a high value on collaboration by working cooperatively to address the region's needs.**Objectives:

- Support projects that are consistent with the general plan of the appropriate unit of government
- Encourage collaborative efforts in order to reduce duplication in government services and resources
- Explore opportunities to collaborate with private economic development entities

**Promote the redevelopment of blighted, underused, or vacant and environmentally-challenged sites with high market potential.**Objectives:

- Encourage programs that support and pursue state and federal brownfields grant programs
- Encourage counties and local governments to identify potential sites for brownfield assessments and cleanups
- Support projects that preserve greenspace, either through innovative design or through measures taken to ensure more compact development

**Support existing programs that build human capital**Objectives:

- Gain an understanding of how the region's programs and resources for workforce development are addressing the needs of the area's companies
- Support the continued growth and success of programs that train or develop workers and entrepreneurs

**To the extent possible, promote the integration of the CEDS with other regional plans**Objectives:

- Identify existing regional plans
- Identify common themes, goals, aspects, etc. that the plans share
- Hold for discussion major aspects of the plans that appear to be inconsistent or in conflict

**Promote programs that support sustainability and quality of life in the region**Objectives:



- Support economic development possibilities tied to the local food industry and activities that improve the local food infrastructure
- Explore regional solutions for identified problems/challenges impeding the success of local food efforts
- Continue involvement with Vibrant NEO and assist, as resources allow, in implementing measures recommended by Vibrant NEO to move toward a more sustainable region

**Develop an economic recovery and resiliency plan to help region respond to the impacts of the pandemic**

Objectives:

- Understand impacts of pandemic on communities and organizations in NEFCO region
- Identify short-term recovery projects and programs
- Develop long-term resilience strategies

**Supporting efforts to bring affordable, high-speed, reliable broadband to unserved and underserved areas of NEFCO region**

Objectives:

- Participate in OARC Broadband Working Group
- Support federal, state, and regional initiatives aimed at expanding broadband access
- Support local efforts to extend fiber and create municipal fiber utilities

**2021 TIMELINE FOR GOALS AND ACTION ITEMS**

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
<b>Goal 1: Support programs that diversify local and regional economies and which build a strong regional economy capable of recovering from natural disasters and economic setbacks.</b>												
Vibrant NEO participation												
Monitor changes in regional economy												
Assist communities responding to economic restructuring and layoffs												
Identify communities facing economic distress and notify those eligible for EDA assistance												
<b>Goal 2: Encourage the development of industries that support Northeast Ohio’s economic clusters</b>												
Attend meetings that support technology/entrepreneurial development												
Identify communities facing economic distress and notify those eligible for EDA assistance												
Share Census Bureau information and updates												
<b>Goal 3: Build intergovernmental and public-private partnerships that place a high value on collaboration by working cooperatively to address the region’s needs</b>												
Identify communities facing economic distress and notify those eligible for EDA and other grant assistance												

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Convene Regional CEDS Committee meetings												
Meet with community and regional economic development partners												
Publish NEFCO Forum Newsletters												
<b>Goal 4: Promote the redevelopment of blighted, underused, or vacant and environmentally-challenged sites with high market potential.</b>												
Pursue grant opportunities for brownfield assessment and cleanup												
Support local and regional brownfields redevelopment initiatives												
Identify communities facing economic distress and notify those eligible for EDA and other grant assistance												
<b>Goal 5: Support existing programs that build human capital</b>												
Meet and network with region's workforce development agencies and colleges/universities												
Notify communities, universities, and organizations of EDA and other grant opportunities												
<b>Goal 6: To the extent possible, promote the integration of the CEDS with other regional plans</b>												
Support community comprehensive planning efforts in NEFCO region												
Participate in Summit County's District 8 Technical Advisory Committee												
Participate in AMATS Technical Advisory Committee												
Identify/notify communities and organizations eligible for EDA and other grant assistance												
<b>Goal 7: Promote programs that support sustainability and quality of life in the region</b>												
Vibrant NEO participation												
Support economic development initiatives for local foods and related infrastructure												
Identify/notify communities and organizations eligible for local food program development grant assistance												

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Support local and regional bicycle and pedestrian planning initiatives												
Support recreational and open space planning and development												
<b>Goal 8: Develop an economic recovery and resiliency plan to help region respond to the impacts of the pandemic</b>												
Meet with communities and organizations to understand impacts of pandemic												
Develop Economic Recovery and Resiliency (ER&R) Plan												
Convene Regional CEDS Committee												
Develop and convene subcommittees/task forces to address ER&R Plan components												
Develop and foster collaborative partnerships around the NEFCO region												
<b>Goal 9: Support efforts to bring affordable, high-speed, reliable broadband to unserved and underserved areas of NEFCO region</b>												
Participate in OARC Broadband Working Group												
Support federal, state, and regional initiatives aimed at expanding broadband access												
Support local efforts to extend fiber and create municipal fiber utilities												

### REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NEWS

The following regional economic development news items were reported and distributed to NEFCO communities and General Policy Board members in 2020. Dates of the news items are provided in parentheses.

#### **E-Pak Manufacturing to add 20-40 jobs in Wooster** (January 2020)

E-Pak Manufacturing plans to add 20-40 jobs to its Wooster plant, as it has secured new investment from an outside firm. Advantage Capital has invested into E-Pak, which manufactures steel roll-off containers, trailers, and hoppers, to help expand the company's product lines and promote further growth. E-Pak currently employs 140 employees.

#### **Health care key to Northeast Ohio economy** (January 2020)

The latest quarterly report from Team NEO highlights the importance of the health care industry to Northeast Ohio. According to the report, more than 270,000 in Team NEO's 18-county region (which includes all four counties of NEFCO) are employed in health care operations or businesses. The health care sector gross domestic product has grown by nearly 40% since 2000, with a current value of \$22 billion. Jobs in health care have grown by over 20% over the same period.

**Strengthening Stark sets 2020 goals** (January 2020)

Strengthening Stark has outlined its goals for 2020 through its four subcommittees: talent development, quality places, business growth, and community commitment. The Talent Development Subcommittee aims to employ its jobs pilot program to match hiring employers with talented job seekers. The Quality Places Subcommittee is focusing on improving community aesthetics and securing funding for Opportunity Zone investment. The Business Growth Subcommittee is looking to improve its business resource guide and connect with middle and high-school students with manufacturing and entrepreneurial programs. The Community Commitment Committee aims to improve committee inclusivity and Strengthening Stark's social media presence.

**Orrville's Opportunity Zone encourages business development** (January 2020)

The Orrville Development Foundation (ODF) hosted a presentation on the city's Opportunity Zone. The advisory group inSITE had conducted a market study to analyze the zone's potential. Although large-scale investments are generally made in Opportunity Zones in large metro areas, inSITE found that investments are made by investors with ties to smaller communities. The ODF and other community stakeholders have identified the Market West neighborhood as a prime development area.

**Summa, Beaumont Health enter agreement over Akron hospital system** (January 2020)

Summa Health and Beaumont Health have signed an agreement whereby Summa will become a subsidiary of Beaumont, which is Michigan's largest health care system. Summa will maintain its local identity, board of directors, and president. The two will pool resources to buy out Summa's current minority partner, Mercy Health. Organizational leaders believe the deal will improve the quality of care, overall health of the community, and potentially create additional jobs.

**Hall of Fame Village, Constellation expand partnership** (January 2020)

Johnson Controls Hall of Fame Village announced it has expanded its partnership with energy company Constellation and has secured financing for the final design and construction of the Constellation Center for Excellence. The funding will be provided through Constellation's Efficiency Made Easy program and will also be used to implement Village-wide energy efficiency measures. The Constellation Center for Excellence will be a 75,000-square-foot office, medical, and retail structure offering wellness and sports-themed programming. The Center is a key piece of the estimated \$268 million Phase II of the Hall of Fame Village.

**B&W starts anew in Akron** (February 2020)

Babcock & Wilcox (B&W) has completed its move from Barberton to its new headquarters in Akron last month. B&W now occupies the sixth and seventh floors of the former Goodyear corporate headquarters at 1200 E. Market Street. The fully renovated, 175,000-square-foot headquarters houses 600 employees.

**Akron leaders pledge \$3 million to revitalize Summit Lake** (February 2020)

Akron City Council endorsed a \$10 million redevelopment plan to equitably revitalize the Summit Lake area. The city verbally committed \$3 million over the next three years to complete a series of projects, including an outdoor amphitheater, art installation, boat launch, fountain, and loop trail around Summit Lake. The Summit Lake Vision Plan is being driven largely by local community advocates and residents. The project is also one of five nationally that aims to revitalize neighborhoods and reactivate community assets through Reimagining the Civic Commons, a network of national funders and large foundations. The redevelopment follows the completion of a series of environmental site assessments completed in 2017 and 2018 as part of NEFCO's Summit Brownfields Revitalization Program.

**Toro Co. buys Orrville-based Venture Products for \$167.5 million** (February 2020)

The Toro Co. announced it will acquire Venture Products Inc., the manufacturer of Ventrac products, for \$167.5 million. Based in Orrville, Ventrac Products manufactures articulating turf, landscape, and snow

and ice management equipment. In 2019, Ventrac generated approximately \$100 million in sales. Toro's resources are expected to help Ventrac grow worldwide. Venture Products currently employs 300; additional job growth is anticipated with the acquisition.

**Wooster considering land purchase for industrial park** (February 2020)

The City of Wooster is considering purchasing nearly 140 acres of land in the northeastern corner of the city for the development of a new industrial park. The cost for the land is approximately \$2 million. A portion of the land is outside of the city limits; if purchased, the city would pursue annexation of this piece. The industrial park would provide shovel-ready industrial sites and spur economic development for the city.

**Akron Children's opens new health center in Wooster** (February 2020)

Akron Children's Health Center opened late last month on Friendsville Road on the north end of Wooster. The center will offer pediatric primary care, as well as office space for pediatric cardiology and gastroenterology practices. The center will provide a variety of pediatric care from preventative checkups to treatment for chronic health conditions. Akron Children's is leasing the land for the health center from Wooster Community Hospital.

**Worthington Industries to close Wooster Plant** (February 2020)

Worthington Industries announced last week it will close its Wooster plant this spring, laying off more than 100 employees. The company will consolidate its oil and gas equipment manufacturing operation in Wooster into its facility in Bremen, Ohio. The closure is expected to be completed by May 31. Over half of Wooster's Worthington employees reportedly will have an opportunity to transfer to the Bremen facility. Officials at OhioMeansJobs in Wayne County are assisting those affected in finding new employment. NEFCO has notified the EDA of the plant closure and loss of jobs.

**Employment needs at Akron's Amazon Fulfillment Center could exceed 1,500** (March 2020)

Amazon confirmed employment at Akron's Fulfillment Center could exceed 1,500, especially during peak times. Additional part-time seasonal employees will likely be needed.

**Alliance hopeful of Carnation Mall sale** (March 2020)

A sale of the Carnation City Mall in Alliance is being proposed. The prospective buyer is reportedly intending to complete a major renovation of the facility, including the addition of two new anchor tenants, additional retail, and a new theater. The large mall currently has numerous vacant retail spots.

**Wooster Council approves \$2 million land purchase for industrial park** (March 2020)

Wooster City Council approved the \$2 million purchase of nearly 140 acres for the development of a new industrial park. The land is located between Melrose Drive and Geyers Chapel Road, just north of the Daisy Brand facility. The site already has access to city water and sewer; it will be accessible by industrial grade roads following the completion of Daisy Way.

**TimkenSteel plans more cuts** (March 2020)

TimkenSteel plans to continue trimming its budget and restructuring to stem corporate losses. The news follows a 2019 that saw the company eliminate 125 salaried and 18 hourly employees. TimkenSteel will continue to implement cost-saving measures, including selling and closing non-core operations.

**Akron offers new grants for startups in empty neighborhood storefronts** (March 2020)

The City of Akron has started a new grant program to support startups looking to fill empty storefronts in key neighborhood business districts. The Rubber City Match program can help property owners and startup companies create business plans, find commercial real estate, procure architectural services,

and/or assist with construction and renovation costs. The city has budgeted \$160,000 for the program, which complements Akron's Great Streets initiative.

**Bounce receives \$475,000 in city support** (March 2020)

The City of Akron will provide \$475,000 to support the Bounce Innovation Hub over the next three years. The assistance will strengthen the partnership between the city and the business incubator. Established in 2018, Bounce has supported the launch and growth of many tech and non-tech startups. Last year, Akron donated the office building Bounce occupies through a 10-year, forgivable loan valued at over \$6 million.

**SB 204 could offer economic development tool in Airport Development Districts** (March 2020)

Proposed Ohio Senate Bill 204 would permit the establishment of Airport Development Districts (ADD). Sponsored by State Senators Schuring and Sykes, these special districts would have the ability to collect assessments from properties within the ADD to fund infrastructure projects and attract and retain airlines. The economic development tool would benefit several airports, including the Akron-Canton Airport.

**Former Sancap plant gets new life** (March 2020)

Massillon-based International Enterprises will occupy the former Sancap Abrasives plant in Lexington Township, just north of Alliance. The 480,000-square-foot structure – which once produced airplanes (as Taylorcraft Aviation) and sealing liners for food and liquid containers (as Sancap Abrasives and Sancap Linear Technology) – will become a warehouse and distribution center for surplus merchandise. The wholesaler is expected to create jobs and hire locally.

**Stark County Commissioners cut 2020 budget** (April 2020)

The Stark County Commissioners preemptively cut \$1.74 million from the county's \$74.07 million 2020 general fund/criminal justice budget in anticipation of reduced tax revenues as a result of the coronavirus pandemic. The Commissioners also requested county agencies and departments to freeze hiring and pay.

**Timken Co. cuts April salaries, suspends some operations** (April 2020)

Timken Co. has cut salaries for some workers and suspended some of its factories in response to the COVID-29 pandemic. The staffing and compensation level adjustments are in response to reductions in demand. Staffing will return to normal levels when demand for increased production resumes.

**Hudson downtown project to continue without Testa** (April 2020)

Hudson's Downtown Phase II project is expected to continue, but without the developer who had worked with the city on the project the last three years. The city has parted with Testa Companies on the development of a residential and commercial project adjacent to First & Main. City Council approved a plan in 2019 for the construction of 82 residential units; Testa had also planned to submit plans for 20 condominiums, 93,950 square feet of office/commercial space, and 16,500 square feet of retail/service.

**Area food producers ramp up production to meet demand** (April 2020)

Food producers throughout the region are reporting a spike in demand as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The state's stay-at-home order has caused demand from grocery stores to increase, while demand from restaurants has declined. Companies like Fresh Mark in Canton, Frito-Lay in Canton Township and Wooster, and J.M. Smucker in Orrville have ramped up production and have, in some cases, increase employment levels to meet the increased demand.

**P. Graham Dunn shifts to producing face shields** (April 2020)

P. Graham Dunn in Dalton – known for making art, gifts, and home décor products – has shifted its production to manufacture infection control shields to combat the spread of COVID-19. The company hopes to produce more than 400,000 face shields in the coming weeks for distribution to hospitals nationwide.



**Barberton Community Foundation establishes \$200,000 Emergency Loan Fund (April 2020)**

The Barberton Community Foundation (BCF) has established a \$200,000 emergency loan fund to help small businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The fund will provide up to \$10,000 in 0% loans to small businesses located in Barberton. Eligible businesses must employ three to 25 employees, have principal operations in Barberton, and demonstrate financial need. The Barberton Community Development Corporation will administer the fund.

**2 Wayne County manufacturers announce temporary layoffs (April 2020)**

Two manufacturers in Wayne County have notified the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services that they have temporarily laid off about 100 total employees as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Rayco Manufacturing in Wooster furloughed 60 employees, and Bekaert Corp. in Orrville temporarily laid off 40 employees. Rayco produces equipment such as stump cutters, crawler trucks, forestry mulchers, and aerial trimmers. Bekaert specializes in steel wire transformation and makes products for a variety of industries, including automotive components. Nearly 100 companies in Ohio have filed Worker Adjustment Retraining Notification (WARN) notices with the state, with layoffs affecting over 18,000 workers.

**Strengthening Stark wins \$100,000 Paradox Prize (May 2020)**

Strengthening Stark was awarded a \$100,000 Paradox Prize from the Fund for Our Economic Future. The Paradox Prize is a competitive grant program, which aims to connect workers with reliable transportation. Strengthening Stark will work with several local agencies, including SARTA, to provide workforce mobility solutions, wraparound services, and job training.

**UH temporarily closes Streetsboro Urgent Care Center (May 2020)**

University Hospitals has temporarily closed its Streetsboro Urgent Care Center as it focuses resources on responding to the pandemic. The closure is a result of declining volume in urgent care patient visits and the reallocation of medical staff to COVID-19 hotspots.

**Wooster moving forward on several construction projects (May 2020)**

The City of Wooster is proceeding on several construction projects, including a \$1 million extension of Daisy Way to connect with Old Airport Road. Other projects include additional road, water, and storm water improvements.

**North Canton approves funds for Kmart land purchase (May 2020)**

North Canton City Council approved borrowing \$4.4 million to purchase 27 acres of land at the site of the former Kmart at North Main Street and Applegrove Street. The purchase is part of an economic development project that is expected to bring at least 200 jobs to the city. A planned corporate headquarters of a non-disclosed company is planned for the site.

**Summa-Beaumont Health merger delayed due to COVID-19 (May 2020)**

The planned merger between Summa Health and Beaumont Health will be postponed until after the COVID-19 crisis. Both hospital systems are focusing their efforts on responding to the pandemic.

**UH suspends operations at freestanding emergency departments (May 2020)**

University Hospitals is temporarily suspending operations for freestanding emergency departments at five locations, including its Kent and Twinsburg facilities, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Urgent care facilities will continue to operate.

**COVID-19 Small Business Emergency Relief program awards \$1.5 million in grants to 311 Summit County small businesses (May 2020)**

Summit County and the Greater Akron Chamber (GAC) announced that 311 small businesses in the county will receive funding through the COVID-19 Small Business Emergency Relief Grant Program. The GAC will distribute \$1.546 million in grants to these small businesses affected by the coronavirus. Recipient businesses employ three to 25 employees, 50-percent or more of which reside in Summit County.

**NFL Alumni Association to locate headquarters in Canton** (May 2020)

A national headquarters for the NFL Alumni Association will be built at the Johnson Controls Hall of Fame Village in Canton. No timeline was given for when construction of the NFL Alumni Association facilities would begin, but it will be built in conjunction with construction of the Village.

**Cuyahoga Falls approves tax break for Falls Towne Centre** (May 2020)

Cuyahoga Falls City Council approved a 15-year tax abatement to Legacy 2020 LLC to transform the Falls Towne Center building located at 2020 Front Street and redevelop the site into a mixed-use facility. Legacy will convert the building into 38 apartment units and 7,000 square feet of retail space.

**Howmet Aerospace to create up to 75 new jobs** (May 2020)

Howmet Aerospace is expected to hire as many as 75 new employees in exchange for an income tax break. Howmet, which manufactures engines and transportation components, is looking to make a large expansion and will invest \$9.1 million in new equipment at its Warner Road facility. Canton City Council approved a ten-year, one-percent income tax abatement applicable to full-time positions paying at least 150% of the state minimum wage.

**NOACA launches regional discussion on merging Metropolitan Statistical Areas to boost NEO in national rankings** (May 2020)

The Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) is launching a discussion about merging three metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) to elevate Northeast Ohio in national rankings. NOACA's proposed idea of combining the Cleveland-Elyria, Akron, and Canton MSAs would move Cleveland from 33rd largest MSA in the U.S. with a population of 2.1 million, to the 18th largest, with more than 3.1 million residents. NOACA believes that merging the MSAs would more accurately reflect Northeast Ohio as a region. The Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study and the City of Akron have voiced strong opposition to the concept.

**RestartStark page designed to help business resume** (May 2020)

The Stark County Health Department, the County Auditor, County Commissioners, and the Stark Economic Development Board have collaborated to create the RestartStark website to support local small businesses as they resume operations during the COVID-19 pandemic. RestartStark provides guidance and recommendations to help businesses work and interact safely and responsibly during the pandemic. Visit [coronavirus-response-stark-county-resources-starkcountyohio.hub.arcgis.com](https://coronavirus-response-stark-county-resources-starkcountyohio.hub.arcgis.com) for more information.

**GOJO plans expansion to Massillon** (May 2020)

GOJO is finalizing a deal to lease a warehouse in southern Massillon. The 430,000-square-foot warehouse will operate as a shipping and storage center. The expansion will help the company prepare for the significant increase in demand of its Purell product, as a result of the coronavirus. No details are available on job numbers.

**Ravenna Council Oks Menards plan for distribution center** (May 2020)

Ravenna City Council approved a 15-year, 100% tax abatement for a Menards distribution center along State Route 88 in northeastern Ravenna. The 62-acre site would include approximately 200,000 square feet of new construction, which will be used for distribution, warehousing, storage, and concrete block manufacturing. Menards would invest \$34.7 million with the project and employ about 90 people. The company could start construction next year and open in 2022.



**Northfield Park says coronavirus shutdown threatens more than 900 jobs** (May 2020)

MGM Northfield Park indicated if it cannot reopen soon, the 900 furloughed workers are in danger of permanently losing their jobs. In its official WARN notice with the state, MGM stated it intends for the furloughs to be temporary, but it cannot guarantee that it will be able to open Northfield Park.

**Summit County, Greater Akron Chamber award an additional \$5 million in COVID-19 Small Business Emergency Relief Grants to 1,274 small businesses** (June 2020)

Summit County and the Greater Akron Chamber have awarded an additional \$5 million in COVID-19 Small Business Emergency Relief Grants to 1,274 small businesses. Businesses were awarded up to \$5,000 for coronavirus relief. Awardees included businesses with up to 30 employees, with at least 50-percent of which residing in Summit County. The first round of the program provided \$1.5 million in grants to 300 businesses in Summit County. Summit County financed the grant program through its CARES Act allocation.

**GOJO finalizes lease for Massillon Warehouse** (June 2020)

GOJO Industries has finalized a deal to lease a warehouse in southern Massillon. The approximately 430,000-square-foot facility will operate as a shipping and storage center. The facility was last occupied by Shearer's Foods. No details were provided on the length of the lease or when operations could start. GOJO also announced the purchase of a 325,000-square-foot facility in Maple Heights to manufacture Purell surface spray. At least 200 new jobs will be created among the new facilities in Maple Heights and Massillon.

**Portage County to get 123 new jobs as part of state tax credit package** (June 2020)

Portage County will add 123 jobs from two projects approved for state tax incentives. Bulten North America, a company that supplies fasteners to the automotive industry, was granted a 1.816%, seven-year job creation tax credit for its project in Streetsboro. Bulten is consolidating two of its operations and will move into a new building under construction on Wellman Road. The company expects to create 35 jobs at the new plant, generating \$2.7 million in new annual payroll and retaining \$1.5 million in existing payroll. RoviSys, a control system integrator and product development company, was granted a 1.52%, eight-year job creation tax credit for an expansion to its facility in Aurora. RoviSys expects to add 88 employees, and invest about \$5.67 million. The company expects to add \$6.2 million in new annual payroll and retain \$52.9 million in existing annual payroll.

**Tax credits to help Canton's Howmet Aerospace add jobs** (June 2020)

The Ohio Tax Credit Authority approved a 1.374%, eight-year Job Creation Tax Credit for a plan to add equipment and create jobs at Howmet's RMI Titanium ingot operation in Canton. The city approved a 1% tax credit in April. Howmet expects to create 108 full-time jobs and \$5.1 million of new annual payroll, while retaining 103 jobs and \$6.9 million in payroll. RMI Titanium has three facilities in the Canton area that are part of Howmet Structure Systems. The Warner Road facility makes and distributes titanium and specialty mill products, extruded shapes, and engineered systems for the aerospace, industrial and consumer industries.

**North Canton City Council discusses new Community Reinvestment Area** (June 2020)

North Canton City Council is considering making the entire city a Community Reinvestment Area (CRA). The CRA would provide tax incentives to encourage developers to demolish old homes with stagnant values and replace them with high-value homes. The proposed CRA would provide up to 100% property tax abatements on improvements for up to 15 years, depending on the construction costs. North Canton City Schools would have to approve any abatement above 50%.

**Summa Health plans 100 million in new buildings** (June 2020)

Summa Health will invest more than \$100 million to build a behavioral health center and expand its network of urgent care and outpatient clinics. Summa plans to build urgent care facilities in Tallmadge and Rootstown, as well as a standalone \$22 million outpatient center with physician offices, testing and radiology. Summa is also working to transform a vacant building into a 60-bed inpatient and outpatient behavioral health facility, which Summa expects to be completed in 2022. When complete, Summa will move its behavioral health services out of St. Thomas Hospital.

**Smuckers sales thrive, profits climb amid pandemic** (June 2020)

Profits for J.M. Smucker Company jumped in the fourth quarter amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Smuckers reported net income of \$226.3 million, up from \$71.5 million for the fourth quarter of 2019. Sales are up 10 percent from a year ago, with most of the company's categories and brands reporting a sales increase.

**Stark County, Canton jobless rates spike to highest level in 30 years** (June 2020)

Jobless rates in Stark County are the highest in 30 years. Stark County's jobless rate was 16.2% in April, up from 5.8% in March and 3.9% last year. Canton's jobless rate was estimated at 17.5%, compared with 6.5% in March and 4.6% a year ago. Massillon also reached 17.5%, compared with 6.2% in March and 4.1% last year. The last time local unemployment rates came close to April 2020 levels was during the period following the Great Recession in 2009-2010. During that period, Stark County's jobless rate hit an annual high of 11.4% during 2009, with monthly highs of 13.5% in January 2010 and 12.3% in December 2009. Canton's unemployment rate peaked at 15.4% in January 2010, while the rate averaged 13.1% that year. Massillon hit a monthly high of 14% in January 2010, while the highest full year average was 12% in 2009. The local rates are consistent with state and national unemployment numbers, which have skyrocketed because of the pandemic. Elsewhere in the NEFCO region, Summit County's jobless rate is at 16.4%, Portage is at 14.7%, and Wayne is at 11.8%.

**Barberton Council rejects CIC, clears way for primary vote** (June 2020)

Barberton City Council narrowly rejected a proposal to establish a Community Investment Corporation (CIC). The CIC would help the city attract new business and could apply for economic development grants and funding not available to the city. Barberton officials will return to Council with a modified proposal.

**As Summit County unemployment soars, consumers tiptoe toward revival** (June 2020)

Business shutdowns imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to nearly one in five working-age people jobless last month in Akron. Summit County had 42,500 unemployed people in April. This figure is 28,200 more unemployed people than in March and 32,500 more than April 2019, according to state data. Hopes are riding on consumers returning to reopening stores and restaurants to help reinvigorate the economy and reduce unemployment.

**Pandemic blamed as Timken Co. makes additional cuts** (July 2020)

The Timken Co. has made additional cuts, including reductions in leadership and salaried positions across the company, attributable to reduced revenues from the pandemic. Timken is making reductions in various regions based on proportionate impacts from the coronavirus.

**Deal complete: HOF Village becomes public company** (July 2020)

The Hall of Fame Village has officially become a publicly traded company after completing its merger with Gordon Pointe Acquisition. The Hall of Fame Resort and Entertainment Co. began trading on July 2. Corporate officials believe the new company is positioned to grow substantially.

**Few Downtown Kent and Ravenna businesses succumbing to COVID-19** (July 2020)

Most businesses in downtown Ravenna and Kent are surviving the recession, which has been caused by the coronavirus pandemic. Only a handful of businesses have closed in the two cities, combined. Local officials indicate fewer downtown workers has impacted restaurants. A second shutdown – which some fear is possible – would make it difficult for some businesses to endure. Kent’s Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area is expected to help the 31 liquor permit holders in Kent, while keeping patrons safe.

**Hall of Fame game, enshrinement postponed until 2021** (July 2020)

The Pro Football Hall of Fame Game and 2020 Enshrinement, originally scheduled for August 6 and 8, respectively, have been postponed until 2021, due to the coronavirus pandemic. The 2020 Enshrinement – the Centennial Class – will be combined with the Class of 2021 next August.

**Hall of Fame Festival loss felt by Greater Canton Community** (July 2020)

The postponement of the annual Pro Football Hall of Fame (HOF) Enshrinement Festival is a huge economic blow to the region. The HOF Festival is arguably the biggest annual event for the City of Canton and Stark County. According to the Canton Regional Chamber of Commerce, consumer spending during HOF Week generates about \$40 million annually for Stark County. For the state of Ohio, HOF Week generates \$65 million in revenue. The loss of the festival will be a major hit to hotels, restaurants and retail; local sales and lodging tax will be particularly affected.

**Plaza at Chapel Hill sells for \$46 million to private equity partnership** (July 2020)

A private equity partnership purchased the Plaza at Chapel Hill in Cuyahoga Falls for \$46 million. The new owner is a partnership made up of America’s Realty in Baltimore, Borough Equities in New York, and Dragonfly Investments in Miami, all private equity groups. The 458,935-square-foot shopping center currently has 26 tenants, including Giant Eagle and Marc’s supermarkets, Dick’s Sporting Goods, T.J. Maxx and Burlington.

**1,600 Summit County small businesses have received \$6.35M through grant program** (July 2020)

The County of Summit, in partnership with the Greater Akron Chamber, has provided over \$6.35 million in grants to approximately 1,600 small businesses through the Summit County COVID-19 Small Business Emergency Relief Grant Program. The first round of these grants was offered in March and provided \$1.546 million in grants to 311 businesses. The second round was offered in May and provided an additional \$5 million to 1,274 businesses. Funding for the second round of the grant program was provided by Summit County’s allocation from the CARES Act. Businesses with up to 30 employees, 50% or more of which being Summit County residents, were eligible for up to \$5,000 in grant monies; self-employed sole proprietors were eligible for up to \$2,000. The County is considering contributing another \$1.2 million to \$1.5 million in CARES Act money to wrap up the program and fund all remaining eligible applicants.

**Ravenna Menards moving forward** (July 2020)

The Portage County Commissioners recently granted a 15-year, 100% tax abatement for a Menards distribution and manufacturing center for a 62-acre site in northeastern Ravenna. The abatement has also been approved by Ravenna City Council and the Ravenna Board of Education. Plans will next be presented to the Ravenna City Planning Commission. The project is a \$51.7 million investment. The facility will employ 90 people with an estimated payroll of \$3.49 million. Menards will renovate the Astra building to construct trusses and for truck repair. It will construct a new 200,000-square-foot facility, which will be used for concrete block manufacturing, distribution, warehousing, and storage. Construction is planned for 2021 and will take a year to build. The adjacent Akron Barberton Cluster rail line (owned by the Wheeling and Lake Erie Railroad) will be used to transport products.

**Wayne County works to establish land bank** (August 2020)

The Wayne County Commissioners are collaborating with the cities of Orrville, Rittman and Wooster to establish a Land Reutilization Corporation, or county land bank. Land banks allow communities to return vacant, abandoned and tax-foreclosed properties to productive economic use. County land banks can take ownership of properties and clear the title, assemble parcels for development, and manage properties until redevelopment can begin. Future steps in this process include establishing a board and creating a funding mechanism for operating the land bank. Wayne County is consulting with the Western Reserve Land Conservancy through this process, which has been delayed because of the pandemic.

**NFL Centennial Celebration events postponed** (August 2020)

The City of Canton has postponed its Centennial Celebration due to public health concerns. The events – including a gala, dedication of the \$12.3 million Centennial Plaza, and musical performances – were to celebrate the 100th anniversary of professional football, founded in Canton. The cancellation follows the postponement of the Pro Football Hall of Fame enshrinement and game. The city plans to celebrate the plaza's grand opening and the NFL centennial in 2021.

**Airtex-ASC to close Green plant, eliminate 161 jobs** (August 2020)

Airtex-ASC announced it is closing its facility in Green later this year, eliminating 161 jobs. Airtex-ASC, a division of Cleveland-based Trico Group, will move its production to other Trico Group facilities in Kentucky, Texas, and Ohio. Airtex-ASC manufactures water pumps and fuel systems for the automotive industry.

**Demolition work set for HOF Village project** (August 2020)

Demolition has begun at the Hall of Fame Village. 84 structures will be removed through the end of November to prepare for the construction of several buildings as part of the second phase of the Hall of Fame Village development. The Hall of Fame Resort and Entertainment Company is collaborating with the Stark County Land Bank on the demolition; the SCLB has committed 50% of the financing, or up to \$400,332. The second phase of construction, which includes the Constellation Center of Excellence, water park, hotels, and retail, is expected to be completed by the end of 2023.

**Akron area, Ohio hospitals working to recover from coronavirus financial losses** (August 2020)

Ohio hospitals have lost over \$3 billion in revenue between March 9 and July 1 as a result of temporary shutdowns related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Hospitals have received nearly \$2 billion in CARES Act monies to help ameliorate the damage, but there's still a huge gap. Akron Children's Hospital reported a \$91 million impact through the end of June because of reductions in surgeries, physician and outpatient visits, and increased personal protective equipment expenses. Summa reportedly had revenue reductions of \$11 million and \$16 million in March and April, respectively. The Cleveland Clinic health system had \$600 million in revenue decreases through April. The Cleveland Clinic received \$199 million in CARES Act money, Akron Children's received \$16.6 million, and Summa received \$32.8 million. Reductions in revenue have forced some hospitals to delay construction projects. Most of Akron Children's capital investments are expected to move forward. Summa intends to move forward with \$100 million in construction projects over the next several years.

**Akron-Canton Airport receives \$1.13M FAA grant** (August 2020)

The Akron-Canton Airport received a \$1.13 million Federal Aviation Administration grant for infrastructure improvements and a new snow plow. The airport will be constructing a service road, paving runways and taxiways, and installing a wind cone.

**Canton approves tax deal for downtown hotel** (August 2020)

Canton City County approved a tax-exemption agreement with the HOF Village Hotel II. The agreement applies to the taxable value of the physical improvements to the former McKinley Grand Hotel in downtown, which will now be the Hall of Fame Village Doubletree Canton. The corporation will make

service payments rather than pay real estate taxes. The payments are projected to total over \$6 million over a 30-year period. The Development Finance Authority of Summit County is financing the cost of the hotel renovations by issuing bonds. The bonds will be repaid through the special assessments paid by operators of the hotel.

**Aultman Urgent Care makes changes, adds North Canton location** (August 2020)

The Aultman Health Foundation has opened a new urgent care center in North Canton. The AHF has other urgent care facilities in Plain Township and Jackson Township.

**Amazon to begin hiring of 1,500 for Akron fulfillment center** (September 2020)

Amazon will begin hiring for about 1,500 jobs at the new fulfillment center in Akron. The facility is expected to be operational by late October or early November.

**Ohio Tax Credit Authority approves credits for proposed Menards facility** (September 2020)

The Ohio Tax Credit Authority recently approved a request from Menards to delay a tax credit for its mini manufacturing and distribution center off Route 88 in Ravenna until January 1, 2023. Menards has three years to create the jobs outlined in the tax credit. The project is still moving forward with construction expected to begin in late spring or early summer 2021. The facility is expected to be completed in late 2022. The proposed \$51.7 million project is expected to create 90 jobs, with an estimated payroll of \$3.49 million. The facility will manufacture trusses and concrete blocks, prepare bag concrete, recycle wood scraps, and warehouse and ship products to stores in Northeast Ohio.

**270 employees at MGM Northfield to remain jobless due to pandemic** (September 2020)

MGM Resorts announced the 270 furloughed workers at the MGM Northfield Park will remain laid off. These employees will be recalled when MGM is able to bring back additional employees.

**Huntington announces 5-year, \$20B lending, investment, and philanthropic commitment**

(September 2020)

Huntington Bank has announced a \$20 billion, five-year lending, investment, and philanthropic commitment to improve financial opportunities for consumers, businesses, and communities in Ohio and six other states. Huntington representatives expect the new plan to provide more benefit to the Greater Akron area. Over the past four years, the Huntington-Akron Foundation has donated approximately \$8 million to Akron-area nonprofits. The 2020 Community Plan includes \$7.6 billion in capital for small businesses, with emphasis on minority, women, and veteran-owned businesses; \$7.5 billion for affordable housing and home ownership to support minority and low and moderate-income borrowers; and \$4.9 billion for community lending and investment related to affordable housing, food security, workforce development, and social equity.

**Massillon to begin \$1.3 million upgrade to Duncan Plaza** (September 2020)

Massillon will begin a \$1.3 million construction project this month on upgrades to Duncan Plaza. The project will include a covered amphitheater, solar-powered lighting, a new picnic area, and walking trail. The city has received \$1.16 million in grants from the state of Ohio and local foundations to help finance the project. The Duncan Plaza improvements represent phase 2 of the city's Imagine Massillon project; phase 1 included streetscape improvements to Lincoln Way.

**Rocket Jewelry Packaging and Displays to locate to Massillon** (September 2020)

Rocket Jewelry Packaging and Displays is the newest tenant in the former Eaton Steel building in Massillon. Rocket supplies retail jewelers with packaging and materials used to display jewelry in stores. The company will utilize 43,000 square feet of warehouse space.

**New small business loans available in Akron** (October 2020)



The City of Akron is offering a new line of small business loans to help with the economic impacts of the pandemic. The Akron Resiliency Fund provides \$10,000 to \$70,000 loans for businesses in low- to moderate-income areas, which includes all of Akron with the exception of Ellet and most of Northwest Akron. Eligible businesses must have gross revenues of less than \$3 million and fewer than 50 employees, including 25% who live in Akron. Nonprofits and certain businesses are not eligible. This new program is being administered by the Development Finance Authority of Summit County's Western Reserve Community Fund and was seeded by City of Akron HUD funding.

**Massillon's Affinity hospital auction set for Nov. 18** (October 2020)

The former Affinity Medical Center in Massillon will be auctioned on November 18. The City of Massillon transferred the property to the city's Community Improvement Corporation, which will act as the sales agent for the city. The city will have contingencies on approving a final bid price. The medical center closed in February 2018 and was acquired by the city in mid-2018.

**Plain Township offers business grants** (October 2020)

The Plain Township Board of Trustees will offer \$60,000 of its federal CARES Act monies to provide relief to local businesses impacted by the pandemic. Plain will provide grants of up to \$5,000 to reimburse businesses for COVID-19-related expenses.

**Summit County offering more rent, mortgage, utility assistance** (October 2020)

Summit County Council has approved an additional round of funding of the Summit County CARES program to assist residents with rent, mortgage, and utility payments during the pandemic. The county will provide \$5 million for rent and mortgage assistance and \$1 million for utility payments. The first round of the Summit County CARES program, which was approved by Council in June, authorized \$7.5 million for local assistance. The assistance is being provided as part of Summit County's \$94.4 million federal CARES Act allocation.

**Wayne County secures \$1.4 million grant to expand rural transportation** (October 2020)

Wayne County has received a \$1.4 million grant from the Ohio Department of Transportation to pilot a transportation program in 2021 to extend ride-sharing and other transit services outside the City of Wooster. Community Action Wayne/Medina and the Stark Area Regional Transit Authority (SARTA) will administer and coordinate the pilot program. Private transportation providers will be given the opportunity to submit proposals to provide the service. SARTA applied on behalf of Wayne County, as it continues to expand its investment in rural transportation services. Local officials hope the project will improve mobility and job accessibility and lead to economic growth.

**Stark County jobless rate at 8.6% for August** (October 2020)

Unemployment rates fell slightly around the NEFCO region from July to August, according to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. Stark County dropped from 8.8% in July to 8.6% in August. By comparison, the unemployment rate in August 2019 was 4.4%. The jobless rate in Canton increased to 11.8% in August, up from July's rate of 11.6%. Massillon dropped slightly from 9.6% in July to 9.5% in August. Canton and Massillon's unemployment rates were 5.1% and 4.4%, respectively, in August 2019. Elsewhere around the NEFCO region, Portage County dropped slightly from 8.1% in July to 8.0% in August, Summit County decreased from 9.5% to 9.4%, and Wayne County dropped from 6.4% to 6.1%.

**Summit County jobless rate at 9.4% for August** (October 2020)

Summit County's jobless rate fell decreased from 9.5% in July to 9.4% in August, according to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services. By comparison, the unemployment rate in August 2019 was 4.4%. Akron's unemployment rate increased from 11.8% in July to 11.9% in August. Cuyahoga Falls's jobless rate dropped from 8.6% in July to 8.3% in August. The unemployment rates for Akron and

Cuyahoga Falls were 4.4% and 4.1%, respectively, in August 2019. Ohio's unemployment rate was 8.8% in August, and the U.S. was at 8.5%.

**Knight Foundation invests \$8 million in Akron** (October 2020)

The Knight Foundation recently announced \$8 million in grant awards for projects in the City of Akron. \$4 million was awarded towards a \$10 million Summit Lake project, including a new boat launch, pavilion, boardwalk, northern shoreline, and connector path for the Towpath Trail. \$2 million was awarded towards an \$8 million renovation project of the Lock 3 outdoor event space. The Downtown Akron Partnership was awarded \$1.25 million to support downtown businesses and entertainment. \$637,500 was awarded for the restoration of the John Knight House, which will serve as the new headquarters of the Summit County Land Bank.

**University of Akron enrollment drops by 7.2%** (October 2020)

Fall enrollment at the University of Akron fell 7.2% to 17,829, attributable to the pandemic. Enrollment was 19,217 last year and as high as 30,000 in 2011. The decrease in enrollment will result in a loss of \$10.8 million in revenue for UA. While UA is encouraged that the enrollment and revenue losses were not greater, they have acknowledged a future shutdown could be triggered by a spike in COVID cases.

**Amazon now accepting job applications for Akron fulfillment center** (October 2020)

Amazon has begun accepting online applications for its new fulfillment center in Akron on Romig Road. Amazon expects to hire 1,500 employees for the 2.7 million-square-foot facility.

**Fewer students attending college in Stark County** (November 2020)

College enrollment is down by 5% in Stark County from 2019. Enrollment at Mount Union and Walsh both declined by 2%. Malone dropped by 4%. Stark State dropped by 8.7%. Aultman College was the only local institution to increase enrollment.

**Polytech America opening facility in Perry Township** (November 2020)

Japanese-based Polytech America will expand to an existing 100,000-SF industrial building in Perry Twp. The project represents a \$15M investment and is expected to create 30 jobs. Polytech produces film metal lamination for food, beverage, and aerosol cans.

**Diebold Nixdorf eyes move out of Green with offices going to Hudson, R&D to North Canton**  
(November 2020)

Diebold Nixdorf is considering moving its R&D, engineering, manufacturing, logistics and supply chain operations from Green to the Hoover District facility in North Canton and relocate its headquarters to a 63,000-SF building in Hudson. Hudson is expected to gain 314 jobs and \$31.4M in payroll. Diebold would sell its current 260,000-SF office building in Green. The company employs 1,200 in the region.

**Canton City Council creates Centennial Plaza tourism district** (November 2020)

Canton City Council created the Centennial Plaza tourism development district. This is Canton's 4th TDD and it includes the downtown plaza and nearby Renkert Building. City Council also established a special fund for the taxes to be collected in the district, including a 5% admissions tax on tickets and parking, a 2% sales tax, and reallocation of the city's existing 3% lodging tax. Revenues must be used for developing tourism within the TDD. The other 3 TDDs include the HOF Village, the future DoubleTree by Hilton, and the HOF Fitness Center.

**Alliance moves forward with Carnation Mall redevelopment plan** (November 2020)

Alliance City Council approved a deal with Fairmount Properties – the developers of the 1st & Main project in Hudson and the downtown Kent revitalization– to redevelop the Carnation Mall into "a super

center retail facility. The City will temporarily own the mall and establish a TIF, which will provide certain tax exemptions to the owner of the mall on the new construction and help finance the project.

**Stark Port Authority provides another assist on HOF Village development** (November 2020)

The Stark County Port Authority approved agreements to waive sales tax on materials purchased by contractors needed for projects planned at the HOF Village in Canton. The agreements cover the \$30M, 75,000-SF Constellation Center for Excellence and the \$10M youth sports fields south. Similar agreements have been utilized in the past to support projects such as the Hendrickson USA facility in Navarre.

**Shearer's working on \$4 million expansion project in southeast Massillon** (December 2020)

Shearer's Foods is expanding its manufacturing and distribution hub in Massillon. The \$4 million, 41,000 square-foot expansion project is expected to be completed in early 2021.

**Developer eyes piece of Firestone Business Park** (December 2020)

Medina-based Pleasant Valley Corp. is closing in on an agreement with the city of Akron to purchase 4.4 acres of land in the Firestone Business Park. The additional property is supplemental to an adjacent 80,000-square-foot spec building PVC is building on the site of the former Firestone campus. The spec building could house one large or multiple small businesses. The acreage is behind APV Engineered Coatings (formerly Akron Paint & Varnish). The industrial site is being developed as part of a public-private partnership between the city, APV, Summit County, and PVC. Ground broke on the project in December 2018, with initial work focused on infrastructure improvements and select demolition.

**Tractor Supply set to break ground on new distribution center next year** (December 2020)

Tractor Supply Company will build a new 895,000-square-foot distribution center in the Prospect Park Industrial Park in Navarre next year. The project will create 375 new jobs and generate \$14 million in new annual payroll. Tractor Supply will join Hendrickson USA as the second company to locate in the industrial park, which was formerly the Stark County Farm. The Stark County Port Authority will construct the facility and lease it to Tractor Supply. Construction will begin in April 2021 and be complete in the fall of 2022. The Port Authority will issue \$63 million in bonds for the construction. The Ohio Tax Credit Authority approved a 10-year, 1.246% job creation tax credit for the project. Last month, the Ohio Controlling Board approved \$1,705,115 in grant funding to Navarre for public roadwork improvements at the site, which would extend Sterilite Street south to Fohl Road SW.

**Mercy Medical Center to become part of Cleveland Clinic next year** (December 2020)

Mercy Medical Center will join the Cleveland Clinic health system next year. The Sisters of Charity Health System and the Cleveland Clinic signed the agreement on December 7, following a letter of intent signed last September. The partnership is expected to become official February 1, subject to regulatory approval. All services at Mercy, including its COVID-19 response, will continue uninterrupted. Mercy is a 476-bed hospital, primarily serving patients from Stark, Carroll, Wayne, Holmes and Tuscarawas counties. It has 2,700 employees and 620 people on its medical staff.

**Biotech company expects to expand in Stow, add 400 jobs** (December 2020)

Athersys Inc. plans to expand in Stow and create 400 new jobs over the next five years. The Cleveland-based biomedical technology firm develops therapeutic products, including products using adult stem cells, aimed at helping treat neurological, inflammatory, cardiovascular and other conditions. The expansion will create \$34.8 million in new annual payroll while retaining \$10.8 million in current payroll.

**Plant closure bringing more than 100 layoffs at Amcor Flexibles in Akron** (December 2020)



Amcor Flexibles has announced it will close its Akron facility next year, eliminating 108 jobs. The layoffs will begin in January and be completed in May 2021. Amcor develops and produces packaging for food, pharmaceutical, medical, and other products.

**Report: child poverty in Stark County, Canton at 'crisis level'** (December 2020)

A new report published by the United Way of Greater Stark County, the Stark Community Foundation, and the Center for Community Solutions has indicated child poverty in Stark County, especially in Canton, is at a crisis level. Protecting Stark's Future: A Call to Coordinate Child Poverty Strategies indicates child poverty is concentrated in Canton, Alliance, and Massillon and disproportionately affects black children and single-parent households. Of the approximately 20,000 children living in poverty in Stark County, 53% live in Canton. Canton's child poverty rate was 56.9% in 2019. The city is tied with Youngstown for the second-worst child poverty rate in the United States for a city of more than 65,000 people. According to the report, strategies for combating childhood poverty must address three key areas: breaking the cycle of poverty, increasing the earnings of families, and addressing immediate needs. The report provides seven recommendations on how to combat childhood poverty.

**Timken acquires Illinois-based Aurora Bearing** (December 2020)

The Timken Co. has acquired Aurora Bearing Co., a Montgomery, Alabama-based company that manufactures rod ends and spherical plain bearings. Aurora Bearing has about 220 employees. The acquisition expands Timken's product diversity in engineered bearings.

**Alliance Area Development incubator to boost new businesses** (December 2020)

Alliance Area Development (AAD) plans to create a small business incubator in its new building on East Main Street. The incubator will contain five offices that can be utilized by startup businesses looking to develop in the Alliance area. AAD hopes to partner with other business development organizations to provide mentorship and coaching opportunities to entrepreneurs. AAD also hopes to partner with the University of Mount Union's entrepreneurship program. The incubator's proximity to the Alliance Area Chamber of Commerce and the city of Alliance will provide entrepreneurs additional resources.

**Aultman seeks donations for Timken Family Cancer Center** (December 2020)

The Aultman Foundation is asking the public to join its capital campaign to complete its new \$28 million Timken Family Cancer Center. The 77,600-square-foot center, which includes a 45,000-square-foot addition to Aultman Hospital, is designed to transform cancer care in the region. More than \$25 million has already been raised for the center. Aultman plans to begin renovations in December and break ground on new construction in late spring or early summer of 2021. The center is expected to open in 2022. The new cancer center is designed to offer modern, patient-centered care in one location, which officials say will improve the patient and caregiver experience and advance comprehensive care. The foundation is accepting donations through 2022.

**Former Massillon Affinity Medical Center auctioned for \$467,500** (December 2020)

The former Affinity Medical Center in Massillon sold to Daniel Beers and Brandon Fabris for \$467,500 at the November 18 auction. The sale is expected to close within 30 days. Beers and Fabris plan to reopen the facility and provide medical services at the site. Their ownership group, MediShield Solutions, is reaching out to area medical professionals about opening some clinics, including surgical procedures. The ownership team currently has no plans to demolish any part of the Affinity site.