



# NEFCO

2023-2028

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy



**NEFCO**

Northeast Ohio Four County  
Regional Planning and  
Development Organization



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# Acknowledgements



On behalf of the General Policy Board, the Northeast Ohio Four County Regional Planning and Development Organization (NEFCO) staff would like to thank the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) for its support. Without the generous support of EDA, NEFCO would not be able to fulfill its mission as a regional economic development planning organization. Support from the EDA has helped NEFCO facilitate regional economic development planning and provide technical assistance to the communities and organizations in Portage, Stark, Summit, and Wayne Counties since 1978. Since 1980, more than \$38 million in EDA grants have been secured for the NEFCO Region.



NEFCO staff also thanks the General Policy Board for its leadership and guidance with the economic development planning workplan and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee for its contributions to the development of the 2023-2028 CEDS Plan.

Funding for the NEFCO 2023-2028 CEDS Plan is through the EDA Partnership Planning Grant ED22CHI3020026.



# Executive Summary

The 2023-2028 NEFCO Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) represents a full update to the last CEDS Plan, which was published in 2018. Since the publication of the 2018 NEFCO CEDS Plan, the region and the world have been upended by the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>1</sup> The public health and economic impacts from the pandemic have been devastating, and it will likely take years to fully understand the consequences. Though the pandemic is by no means over, the region has made significant recovery efforts.

A principal theme of the 2023-2028 CEDS Plan is resiliency, as it follows closely behind the publication of the NEFCO Economic Recovery and Resiliency (ER&R) Plan.<sup>2</sup> The ER&R Plan is a comprehensive document that recommends both short-term recovery projects and programs and long-term strategies promoting regional resilience. Elements from the ER&R Plan are incorporated into the CEDS Plan, including the proposed strategies and tactics of the three ER&R subcommittees. Strategies for recovery and resiliency continue to be paramount, as the region (and world) continues to be affected by the economic and public health impacts of the pandemic. Though unemployment levels have recovered from the more-than-15-percent high in the Spring of 2020, other issues like inflation, supply chain disruptions, the climate crisis, and international conflicts have seriously impacted the world's economy.

Another major theme of the 2023-2028 CEDS Plan is workforce development. Workforce development has emerged as a major economic development challenge. Workforce numbers are down, affecting production and economic output. The labor force has been dramatically impacted by the pandemic; issues like work flexibility, childcare, and transportation access all became exacerbated, especially for lower income and underserved populations. Those in the workforce often lack the necessary skills to succeed and thrive in today's economy.

The next five years will be defined by our region's collaborative spirit and innovative solutions. It will take a region to effectively address economic challenges like workforce development and localized supply chains. Community and business leaders will need to be nimble and responsive. A resilient, dynamic, and inclusive regional economy depends on strategies that develop, attract, and retain talent and quality jobs, promote sound infrastructure investments, invest in quality-of-life enhancements, and protect valuable natural resources.

The 2023-2028 CEDS Plan is intended to be dynamic, and it will be updated as needed over the next five years. The Plan includes a comprehensive collection of demographic and socio-economic data for community leaders to make informed decisions; a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats analysis to identify the region’s competitive advantages and areas requiring improvement; an analysis of trends that have emerged in the last few years and anticipated patterns over the next five years; an economic resiliency strategy; and an Action Plan, including seven key goals with corresponding subgoals, partners and resources, timeframe for implementation, measurable performance metrics, and NEFCO-specific strategies. The region’s prosperity and resiliency will depend on the ability to address the following goals:

## 2023-2028 CEDS PLAN GOALS

- 1 Address the supply chain and promote domestic production
- 2 Support programs that build human capital
- 3 Encourage development of industries that support Northeast Ohio’s economic clusters
- 4 Promote redevelopment of blighted, underused, vacant, and environmentally challenged sites
- 5 Encourage investment in infrastructure and affordable housing
- 6 Support programs that diversify and build strong, resilient local and regional economies
- 7 Develop benchmarking to evaluate region’s progress and competitiveness





The Northeast Ohio Four County Regional Planning and Development Organization (NEFCO) was established in 1974 as a regional council of governments by the elected officials within the counties of Portage, Stark, Summit and Wayne in Northeast Ohio. NEFCO was created as a voluntary organization to enable local officials to discuss problems facing the region and to develop strategies to manage them. NEFCO also serves as a forum through which local, state, and federal planning programs can be more effectively coordinated.

NEFCO was designated as an Economic Development District (EDD) by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration (EDA) in 1978. NEFCO is one of 393 EDA-designated EDDs in the United States, and one of only six EDDs in Ohio. As the EDD for the region, NEFCO is responsible for managing a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The CEDS is a strategy-driven planning process and document for regional economic development. The CEDS is the result of a regionally owned planning process designed to build capacity and guide the economic prosperity and resiliency of an area or region.

The National Association of Development Organizations Research Foundation defines the CEDS as a locally based, regionally driven economic development planning process and document, which identifies regional strengths and weaknesses and promotes collaboration among a diverse set of partners to generate regional prosperity and resiliency.<sup>3</sup> A robust and inclusive CEDS planning process can help a region maximize its economic development potential by promoting cooperative and innovative solutions to achieving regional goals and objectives. The CEDS Plan inspires local community leaders to partner with economic development organizations, funding agencies, and the private sector on infrastructure and other projects to create jobs and stimulate investment. Preparation and maintenance of the CEDS maintains NEFCO's status as an EDA-designated EDD and the region's eligibility for EDA grant funding.



# Regional CEDS Committee

The NEFCO Regional CEDS Committee helps drive the organization’s economic development work program and is instrumental in the CEDS planning process and CEDS Plan document development. The Regional CEDS Committee includes experts in economic development and planning in both the public and private sectors. The Committee includes members from each of the eight NEFCO dues-paying members and represents the economic development interests of the region.

| Name            | Representing  | EDA Category     |
|-----------------|---|------------------|
| Betty Aylsworth | Program Coord., Ohio Agricultural Research & Development Center   | Higher Education |
| Gregg Cramer    | VP Economic Development, Greater Akron Chamber                    | Private Sector   |
| Brad Ehrhart    | President, Portage Development Board                              | Private Sector   |
| Haley Burk      | Senior Project & Operations Manager, Advancement, JumpStart, Inc. | Private Sector   |
| Ray Hexamer     | President, Stark Economic Development Board                       | Private Sector   |
| Jonathan Millea | Development Coordinator, City of Wooster                          | Public Sector    |
| Robert Nau      | Executive Director, Stark County Regional Planning Commission     | Public Sector    |
| Maribeth Burns  | President, Wayne Economic Development Council                     | Private Sector   |
| Dennis Tubbs    | Asst. Director, Summit Co. Dept. of Community and Economic Dev.   | Public Sector    |
| Scott Wagner    | Executive Director, Barberton Community Development Corp.         | Private Sector   |
| Jenn Kiper      | Director, Wayne County Planning Department                        | Public Sector    |
| David Messner   | Development Manager, City of Akron                                | Public Sector    |
| Tom Wilke       | Economic Development Director, City of Kent                       | Public Sector    |
| Todd Peetz      | Director, Portage County Regional Planning Commission             | Public Sector    |
| Chris Hardesty  | Economic Development Director, City of Canton                     | Public Sector    |





# General Policy Board

The General Policy Board is the governing body of NEFCO. The General Policy Board approves the annual economic development planning work program and provides guidance and direction on all planning initiatives. The composition of the Board is determined by the NEFCO organizational bylaws and includes representation from the eight dues-paying members: Portage County, Stark County, Summit County, Wayne County, and the cities of Akron, Canton, Kent, and Wooster.

| Portage County   |   |                 |
|------------------|---|-----------------|
| Daniel Blakely   | Director, Portage County Water Resources  | Public Official |
| Joe Diorio       | Portage County Health Commissioner  | Public Official |
| Tony Badalamenti | Portage County Commissioner   | Public Official |
| Todd Peetz       | Director, Portage County Regional Planning Commission                           | Public Official |
| Amos Sarfo       | Storm Water Program Supervisor, Portage County Combined General Health District | Public Official |
| John Zizka       | Portage County Appointee  | Private Sector  |
| City of Kent     |   |                 |
| Kathleen Petsko  | City of Kent Grants and Neighborhood Programs Coordinator                       | Public Official |
| Stark County     |   |                 |
| Keith Bennett    | Stark County Engineer   | Public Official |
| David Maley      | City of Massillon Economic Development Director                                 | Public Official |
| Keri Burick      | President, North Canton Area Chamber of Commerce                                | Private Sector  |
| Joe Mazzola      | City of Alliance Planning Director  | Public Official |
| Richard Regula   | Stark County Commissioner   | Public Official |
| Jim Troike       | Stark County Sanitary Engineer  | Public Official |
| Bob Nau          | Director, Stark County Regional Planning Commission                             | Public Official |
| Athena Ebersole  | Project Manager for Site Strategy, Stark Economic Development Board             | Private Sector  |
| Alfredo Carranza | Stark County Appointee  | Private Sector  |

|                              |   |                 |
|------------------------------|---|-----------------|
| Dan Moeglin<br>Vacant (1)    | Executive Director, Stark Parks                       | Public Official |
| <b>City of Canton</b>        |   |                 |
| James Benekos                | City of Canton Engineer                               | Public Official |
| <b>Summit County</b>         |   |                 |
| Alan Brubaker                | Summit County Engineer                                | Public Official |
| James Balogh                 | Twinsburg Township Trustee                            | Public Official |
| Sam Scaffide                 | City of Twinsburg Mayor                               | Public Official |
| David Kohlmeier              | CTI Engineering                                       | Private Sector  |
| David Lukas                  | 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 |
| Elizabeth Walters            | Summit County Council                                 | Public Official |
| <b>City of Akron</b>         |   |                 |
| Ginger Baylor                | 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 |
| Linda Omobien                | City of Akron Council member                          | Public Official |
| Shammas Malik                | City of Akron Council member                          | Public Official |
| Thomas Tatum                 | City of Akron Housing & Community Services Manager    | Public Official |
| Helen Tomic                  | City of Akron Comprehensive Planning Manager          | Public Official |
| <b>Wayne County</b>          |   |                 |
| Jonathan Hofstetter          | Wayne County Commissioner                             | Public Official |
| Jenn Kiper                   | 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 |
| <b>Ohio EPA (Ex Officio)</b> |   |                 |
| Vacant                       | Ohio EPA – Northeast District Office Chief            | Public Official |

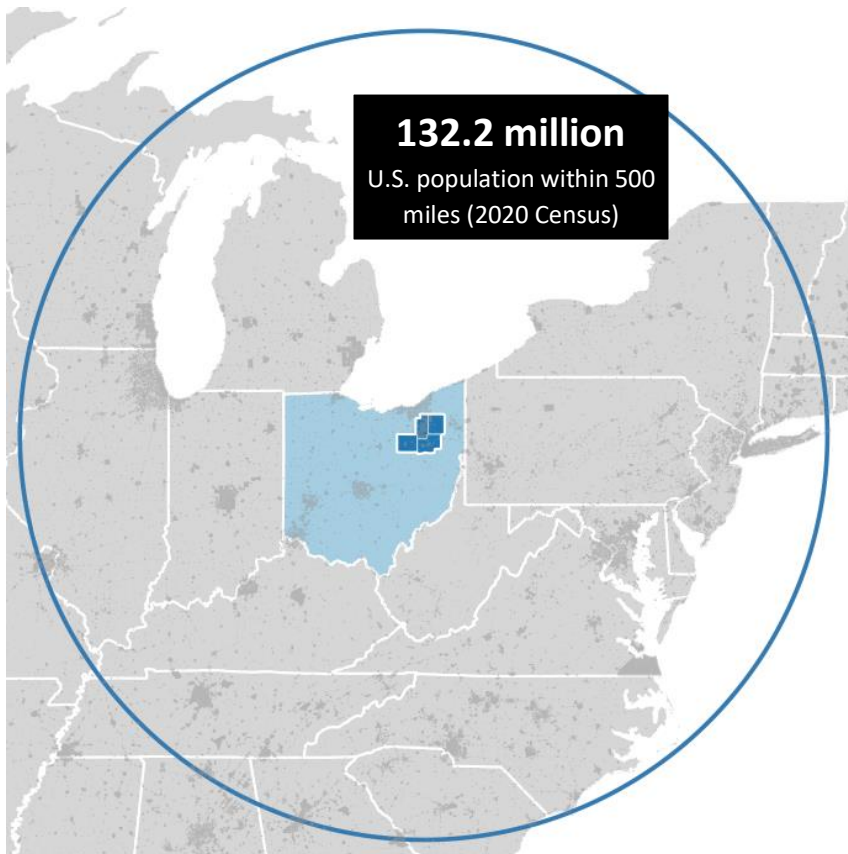
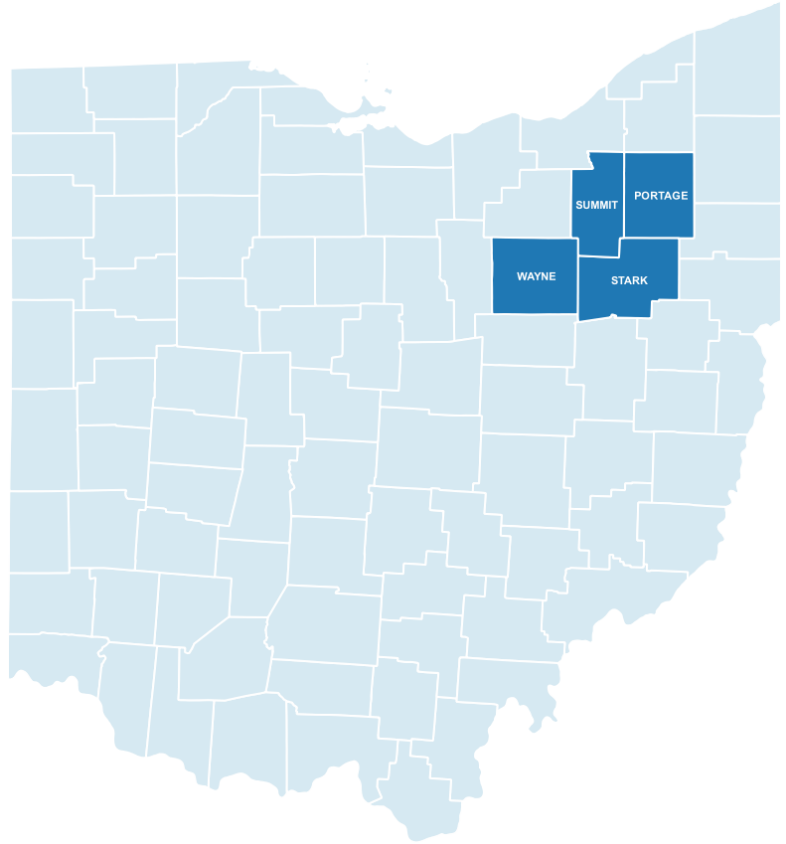


# Regional Overview

## Regional Geography

The NEFCO Region includes Portage, Stark, Summit, and Wayne Counties in Northeast Ohio. The region is strategically positioned, with nearly 40-percent of the U.S. population (132,215,203) within 500 miles of the geographic center of the region.<sup>4</sup> The region encompasses 2,064 square miles. The region contains 124 different local governments, including 27 cities, 37 villages, and 60 townships (see Map 1). The four county seats include Ravenna (Portage), Canton (Stark), Akron (Summit), and Wooster (Wayne). The NEFCO Region includes two metropolitan areas: the Akron Metropolitan Area and the Canton-Massillon Metropolitan Area.

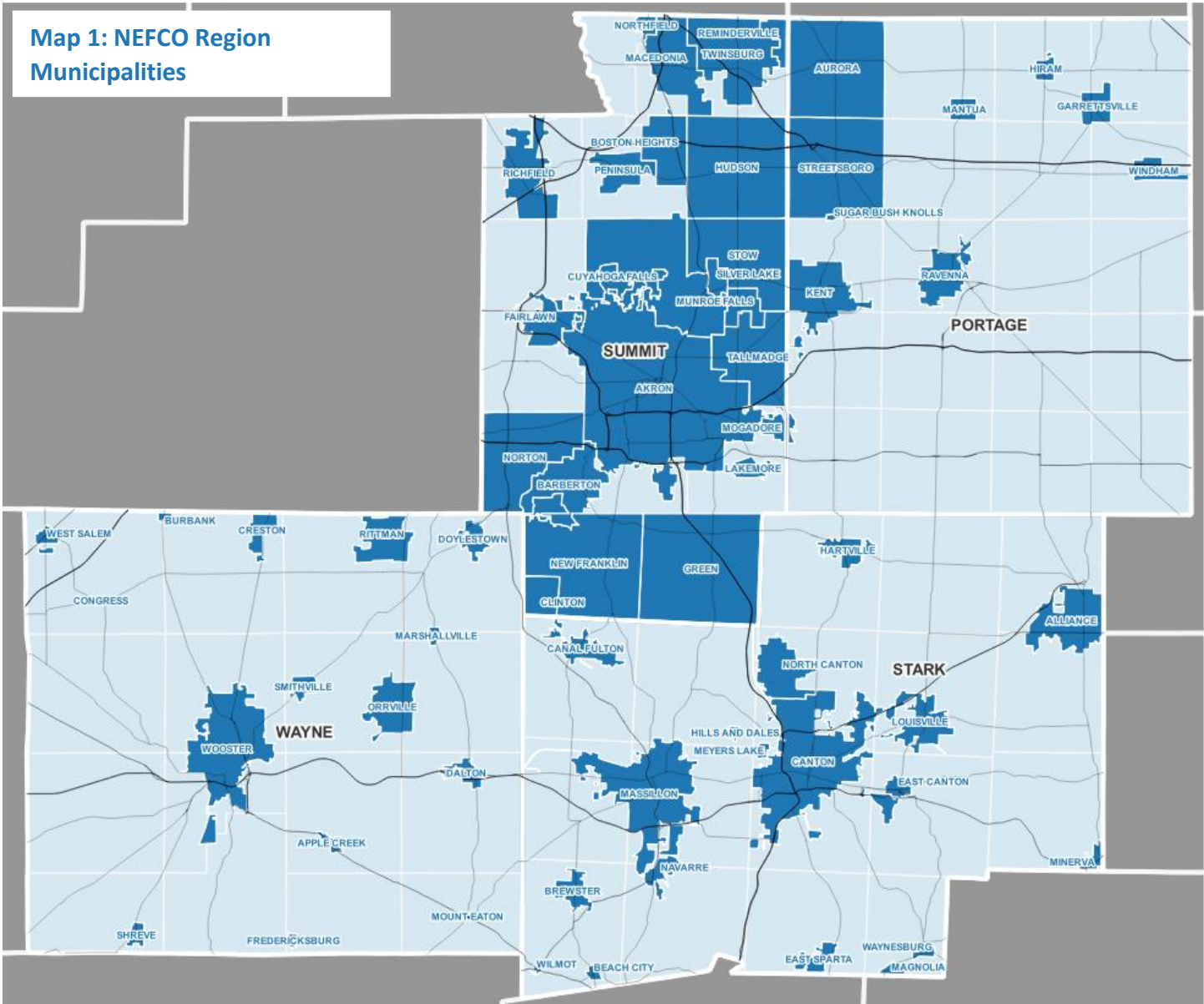
The region varies greatly from highly urbanized Summit County to primarily rural Wayne County. Both Stark and Summit County have a great deal of suburbanization.



## Transportation Access

The NEFCO region has an extensive transportation network. The region is served by a robust highway network, including several interstate highways (I-71, I-76, I-77, I-80, I-271, I-277, I-480), federal highways (US-30, US-42, US-62, US-224, US-250), and many state highways. The two metropolitan planning areas in the region – Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS) and the Stark County Area Transportation Study (SCATS) – maintain comprehensive plans for their respective areas. The AMATS Transportation Outlook 2045<sup>5</sup> and the SCATS Moving Stark Forward 2050<sup>6</sup> are long-range plans that analyze future transportation needs, including highway planning, congestion mitigation, crash analysis, transit planning, and bicycle and pedestrian facility planning. Three of

the four NEFCO counties have regional transit authorities: the Portage Area Regional Transportation Authority in Portage County; the Stark Area Regional Transportation Authority (SARTA) in Stark County; and the METRO Regional Transit Authority in Summit County. Wayne County Transit is a joint project of Community Action Wayne/Medina and SARTA. The region is served by one major commercial airport, the Akron-Canton Regional Airport, in Green. Additionally, the region has an extensive network of trails and bikeways, particularly in Portage, Stark, and Summit Counties. Each county has a park district, which maintains trails.



Source: Ohio Department of Transportation

### Notable Employers

The NEFCO Region is home to a number of major national corporations. The region includes three Fortune 500 companies (2022): The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company in Akron, FirstEnergy in Akron, and The J.M. Smucker Company in Orrville.<sup>7</sup> Notable Portage County employers include Kent State University, University Hospitals Portage Medical Center, Davey Tree Expert Company, and East Manufacturing.<sup>8</sup> Notable Stark County employers include The Timken Company, TimkenSteel, Diebold Nixdorf Corporation, The Kenan Advantage Group, and Shearer’s Foods.<sup>9</sup> Notable Summit County employers include Goodyear Tire & Rubber



Company, Bridgestone, GOJO Industries, FirstEnergy, and PPG Inc.<sup>10</sup> Notable Wayne County employers include The J.M. Smucker Company, Daisy Brand, Schaeffler Group, PepsiCo, and Will-Burt.<sup>11</sup>

### Colleges and Universities

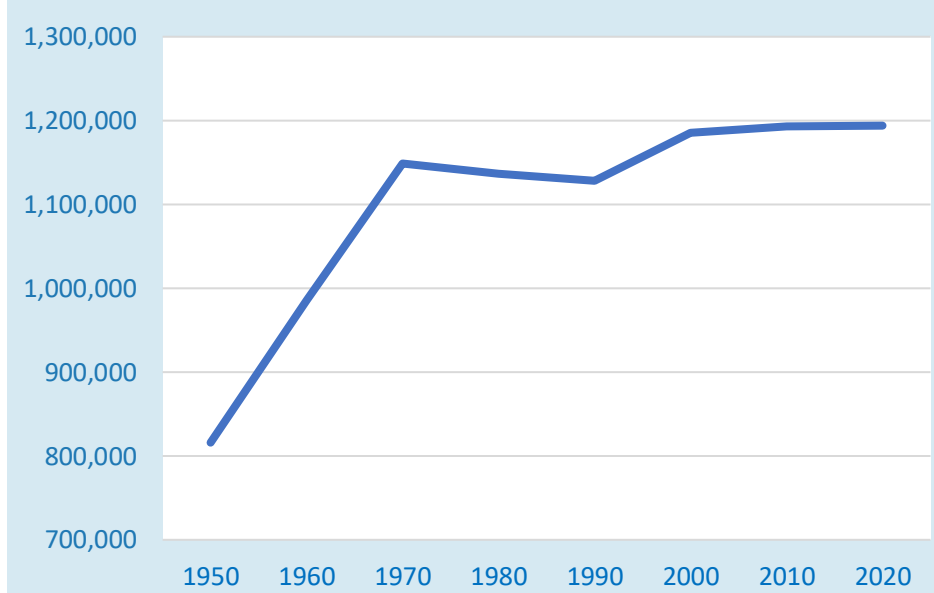
The NEFCO Region is home to many colleges and universities. Kent State University in Kent and the University of Akron in Akron are the largest in the region. Other universities include Malone University and the Aultman College of Nursing and Health Sciences in Canton, Stark State University and Walsh University in North Canton, University of Mount Union in Alliance, the College of Wooster in Wooster, Hiram College in Hiram, and the Northeast Ohio Medical University in Rootstown Township. Branch campuses include the University of Akron-Wayne College in Orrville, Kent State University at Stark in North Canton, and The Ohio State University-Wooster Campus.

### Population (1950-2020)

Chart 1 shows the NEFCO region’s population pattern since 1950. There was significant growth between 1950 and 1970. A slight decline in population that occurred between 1970 and 1990 was followed by a rebound the following decade. Since 2000, the region’s population has remained relatively static. In 2000 there were 1,185,706 residents; 2020’s population was 1,193,966.

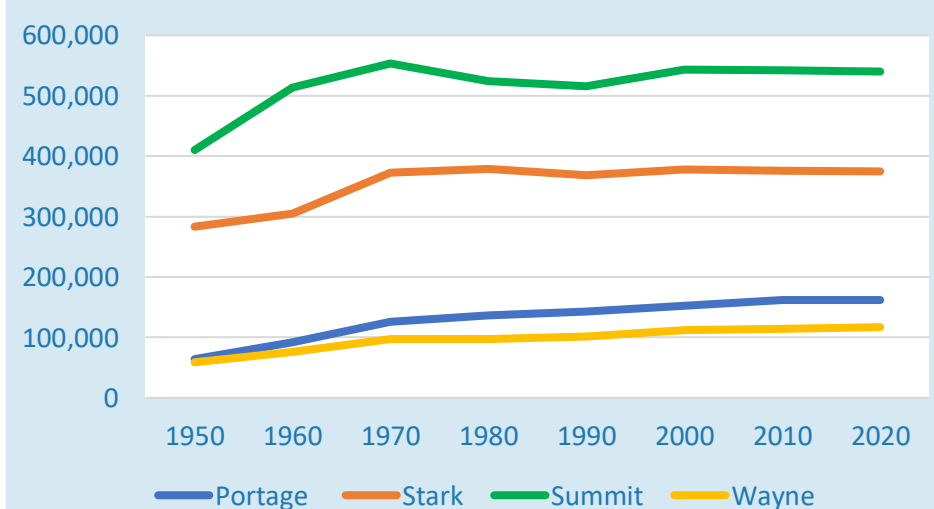
From a county perspective, Wayne County and Portage County continue to grow, while Stark and Summit County have experienced slight population decreases (see Chart 2). Both Portage County and Wayne County have had population increases for every census between 1950 and 2020. Stark County’s population peaked in 1980 with 378,823, decreased to 367,934 in 1990, then increased back to 378,089 in 2020. Since then, the county’s population has steadily declined. Summit County’s population peaked in 2000. Since then, the county’s population has incrementally decreased.

Chart 1: NEFCO Region Population (1950-2020)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Chart 2: County Populations (1950-2020)



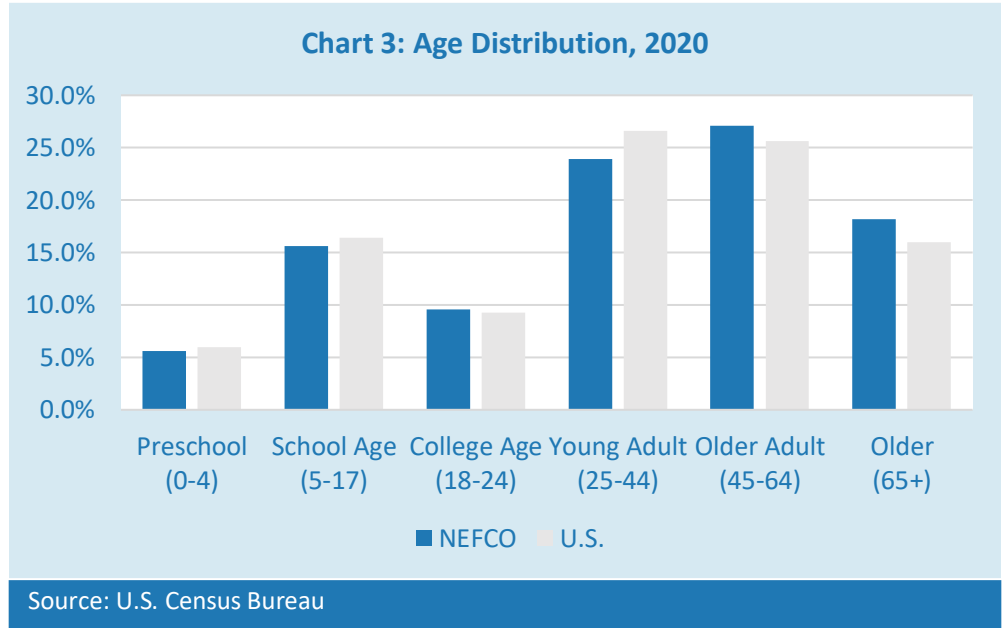
Source: U.S. Census Bureau



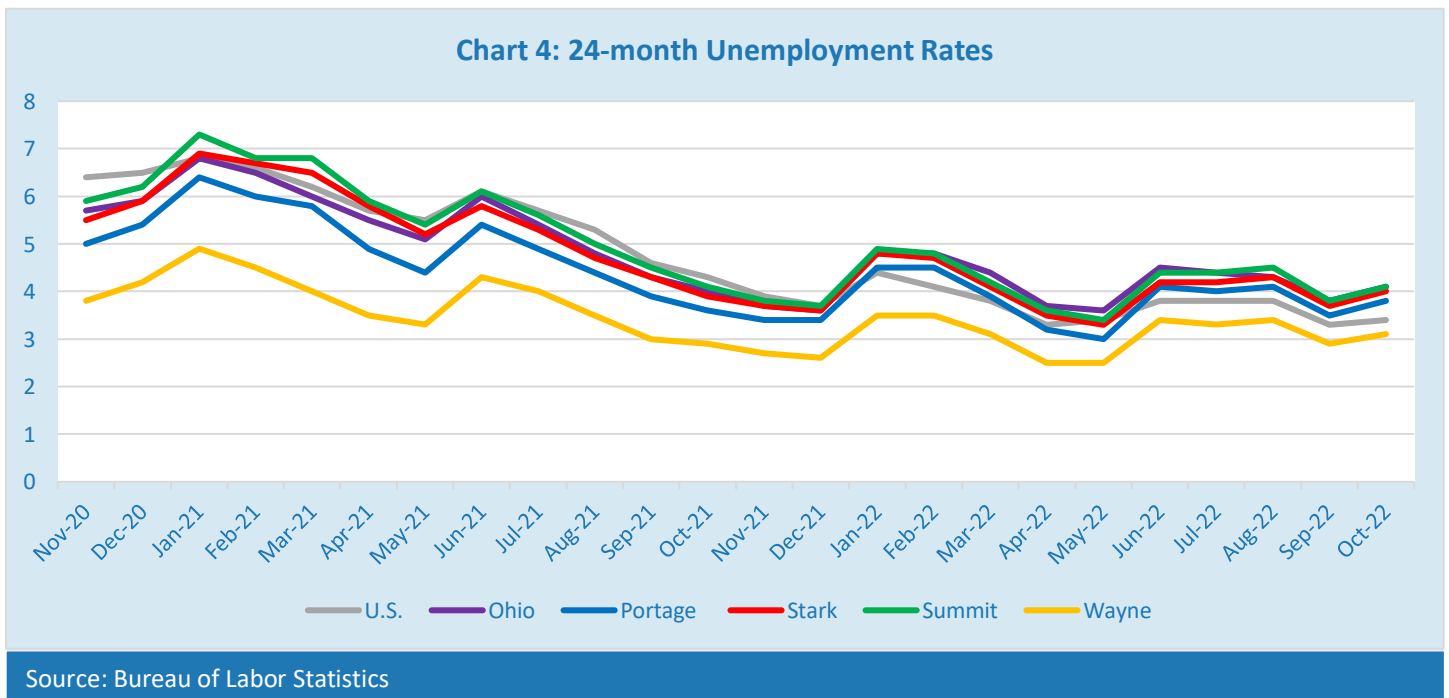
Population projections from the Ohio Department of Development (ODOD) indicate each county and the NEFCO Region will experience population declines in 2030 and 2040.<sup>12</sup> Per ODOD, the NEFCO Region population is expected to decline by more than 50,000 residents, from 1,193,966 in 2020 to 1,143,650 in 2040. The region must proactively address workforce and quality of life improvements to help retain residents and jobs, while developing ways to attract new residents and jobs.

### Age Distribution

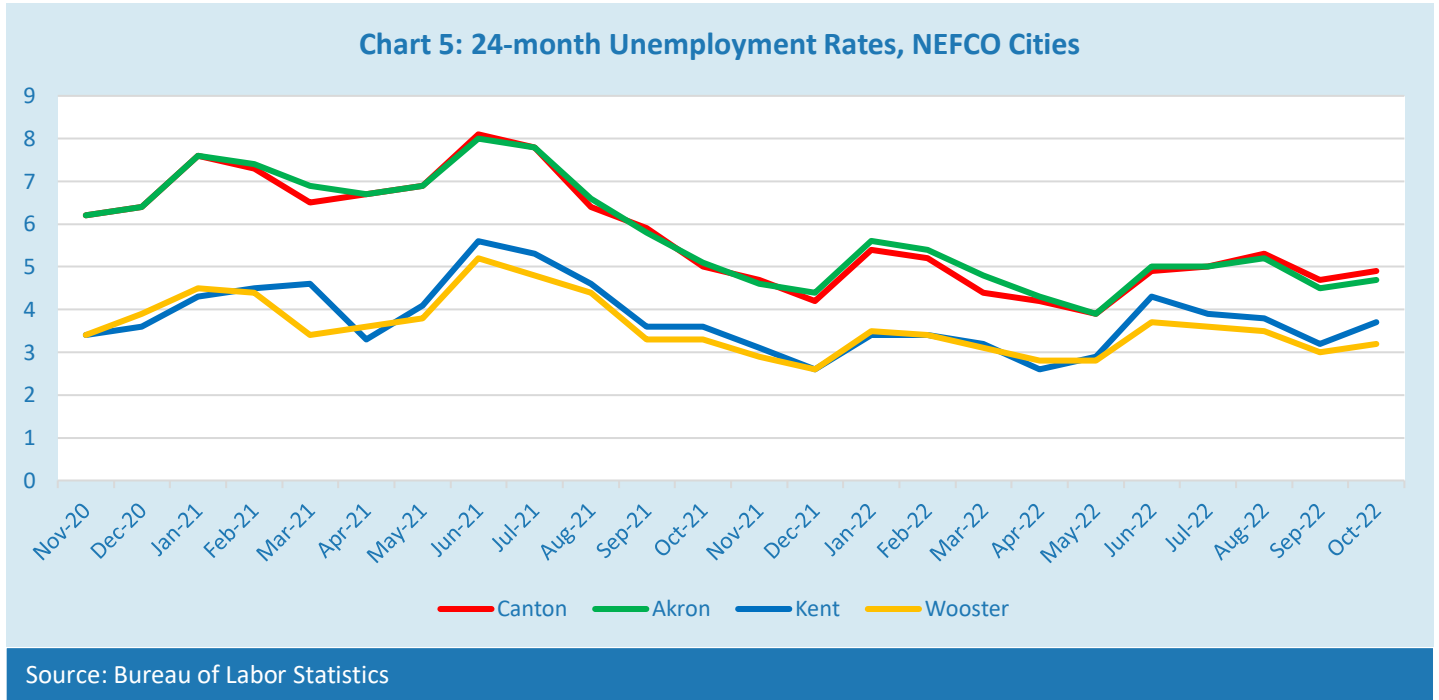
The NEFCO Region is generally older than the U.S. (see Chart 3). There are proportionately more older adults (ages 45 and over) than the U.S., while there are fewer preschool (ages 0-4) and school age children (ages 5-17). There are slightly more college age adults (18-24) than the U.S., though this is likely due to the concentration of large colleges and universities in the NEFCO Region. The region continues to lose young adults to other areas of the country. Concerted efforts must be employed to retain high school and college graduates. The region will also need to consider its growing older adult population.



### 24-month Unemployment Rate



The unemployment rate trends for the NEFCO counties generally mirrored that of the U.S. and Ohio over the last 24 months (see Chart 4). The 24-month average unemployment rate for the U.S. and Ohio was 4.8-percent (for the period ending October 2022). Unemployment rates in Wayne County (3.4-percent) and Portage County (4.4-percent) were lower than the state and U.S. rates, Stark County had an equivalent average of 4.8-percent, and Summit County was higher than the state and U.S. average at 5.0-percent. The unemployment rates for the



major regional cities mirrored the rates of each city’s respective county (see Chart 5). Kent and Wooster had significantly lower unemployment rates than Canton and Akron throughout the last 24 months. Wooster and Kent had average unemployment rates of 3.6 and 3.8-percent, respectively, while Canton and Akron had rates of 5.7 and 5.8-percent over the past 24 months.

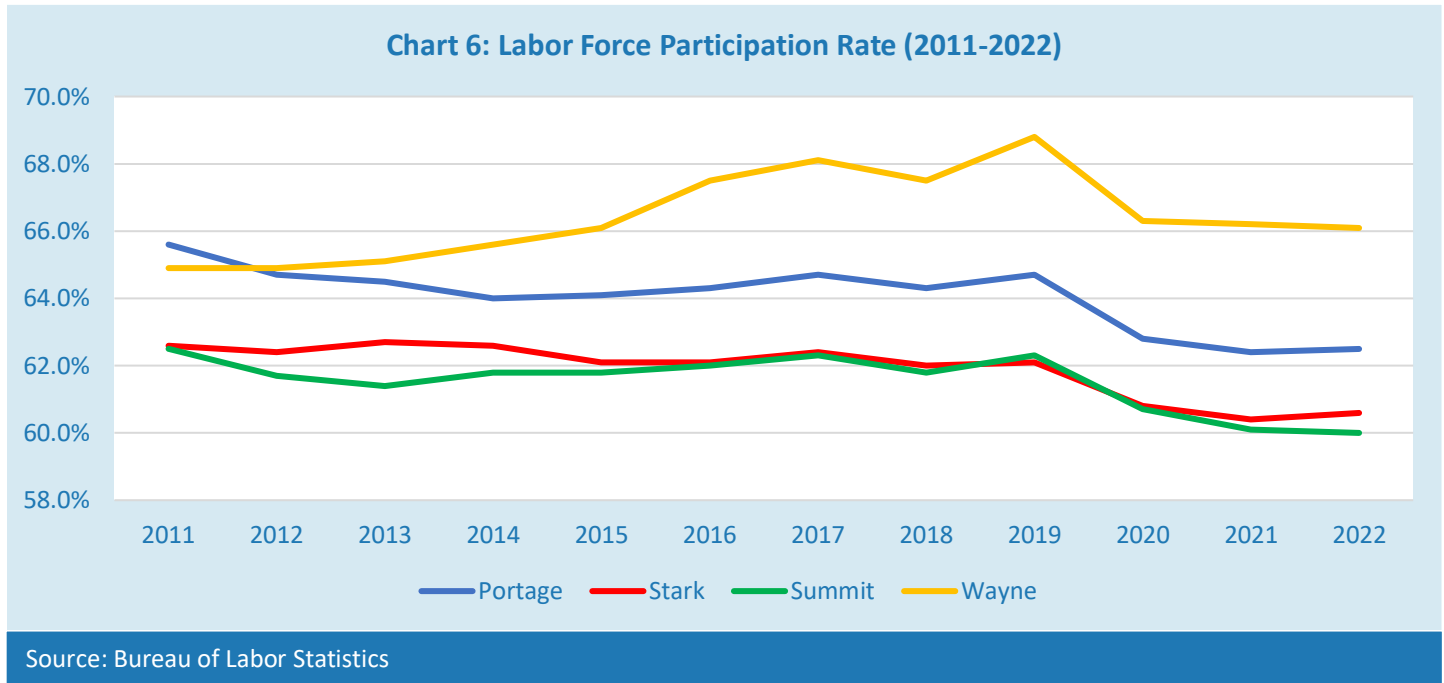
**Regional Economic Development Challenges**

The region faces many economic development challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented economic hardship for the world and the NEFCO Region. Some challenges had existed previously but have been exacerbated by the pandemic, particularly workforce development, the global supply chain, and inflation.

Workforce development issues continue to plague the NEFCO region. Labor shortages continue to hamper the region’s manufacturing base, as well as many other sectors. Current labor force participation rates for Portage, Stark, and Summit County are still below levels from 2011 (see Chart 6). Only Wayne County has a higher workforce participation rate in 2022 than 2011, though the rate is much lower than the high of 68.8-percent it had in 2019. Talent and skills are also lacking for many skilled trades. Employer demand is not often met with degreed or certified applicants. The region is also challenged with retaining recent high school and college graduates. Other factors affecting the workforce include access to childcare and transportation, which disproportionately impact lower income individuals, women, and historically underserved populations.

Global supply chain disruptions have greatly impacted the region. These disruptions have created shortages in key goods, price inflation, factory closures, unloaded shipping containers, and negative impacts on the nation’s

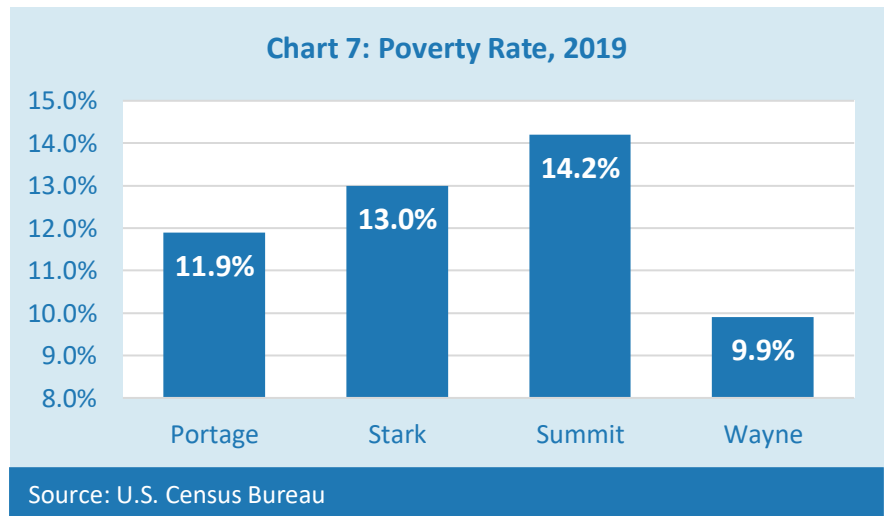
economic wellbeing. The supply chain has meant higher prices and shortages on high-end consumer goods, increased costs for commodities, energy, and basic needs, and has increased the cost of living and the provision of basic needs. The supply chain has been worsened by the reduced workforce. Inflation has also impacted all aspects of the economy.



International conflict, the global pandemic, and the climate crisis also continue to affect economic conditions. Although out of the region’s control, these crises have a significant impact on the region’s economic wellbeing.

**Poverty and Food Insecurity**

The region still has a large portion of the population living in poverty. Per the U.S. Census, 12.6-percent of the region lives in poverty. From a county perspective, Summit County had the highest poverty rate at 14.2-percent; Wayne County had the lowest at 9.9-percent. Perhaps, a more alarming statistic is the child poverty rate. Summit County had a child poverty rate of 21.0-percent, the highest for any NEFCO county. Stark County closely followed with a rate of 18.7-percent. Portage County had the fewest children living in poverty at 13.4-percent.



Another measure of poverty is food insecurity. Food insecurity is defined by the United States Department of Agriculture as the lack of access, at times, to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food insecurity is associated with numerous adverse social and health outcomes and is increasingly considered a critical public health issue. Key drivers of food insecurity include unemployment, poverty, and income shocks, which can prevent adequate



access to food. Structural and systemic racism has also contributed to a higher percentage of food insecurity among persons of color.<sup>13</sup> According to Feeding America, which has developed an interactive mapping application for food insecurity in the U.S., nearly 12.4-percent of the NEFCO Region’s population is considered food insecure. Stark County had the highest food insecurity rate at 12.9-percent.

### EDA Grant Eligibility and Special Need Indicators

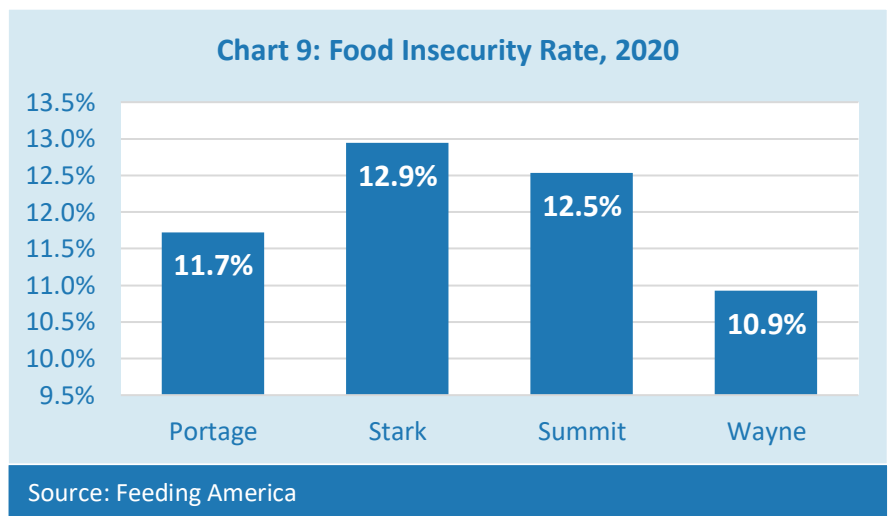
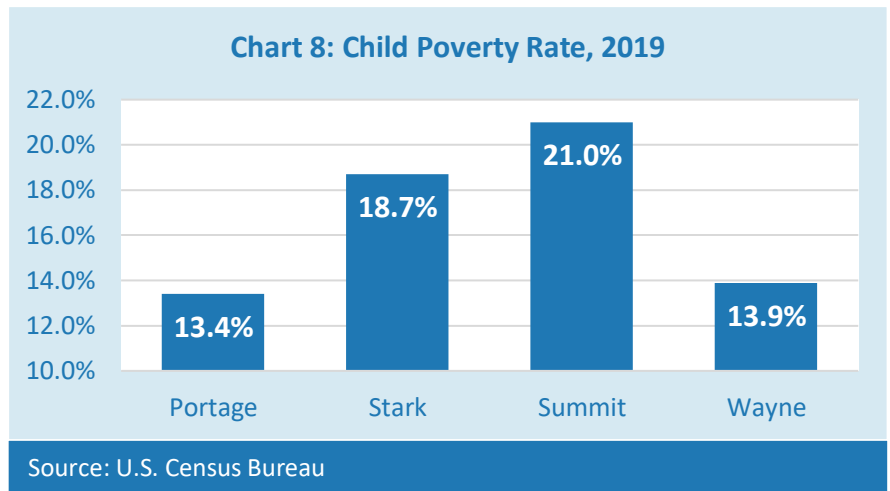
The EDA generally awards grants to locations considered “distressed.” EDA considers areas distressed if the unemployment rate averaged over a 24-month period is one percent or higher than the national average or the per capita median income is 80-percent or lower than the national average. The EDA also considers other economic factors or special needs, such as recent plant closures, major layoffs, natural disasters, and other events or situations that create a distressed economic environment.

According to the Argonne National Laboratory’s National Economic Resilience Data Explorer, the NEFCO Region has a low concentration of coal sector jobs, and there are no nuclear power plants located in any of the NEFCO region counties. No counties are in a state of persistent poverty. Urban areas account for 84.6-percent of the region’s area, while 15.4-percent is considered rural. Portage, Stark, and Summit are considered urban, and Wayne is considered rural. No counties are adjacent to any Federally Recognized Tribal Land.<sup>14</sup>

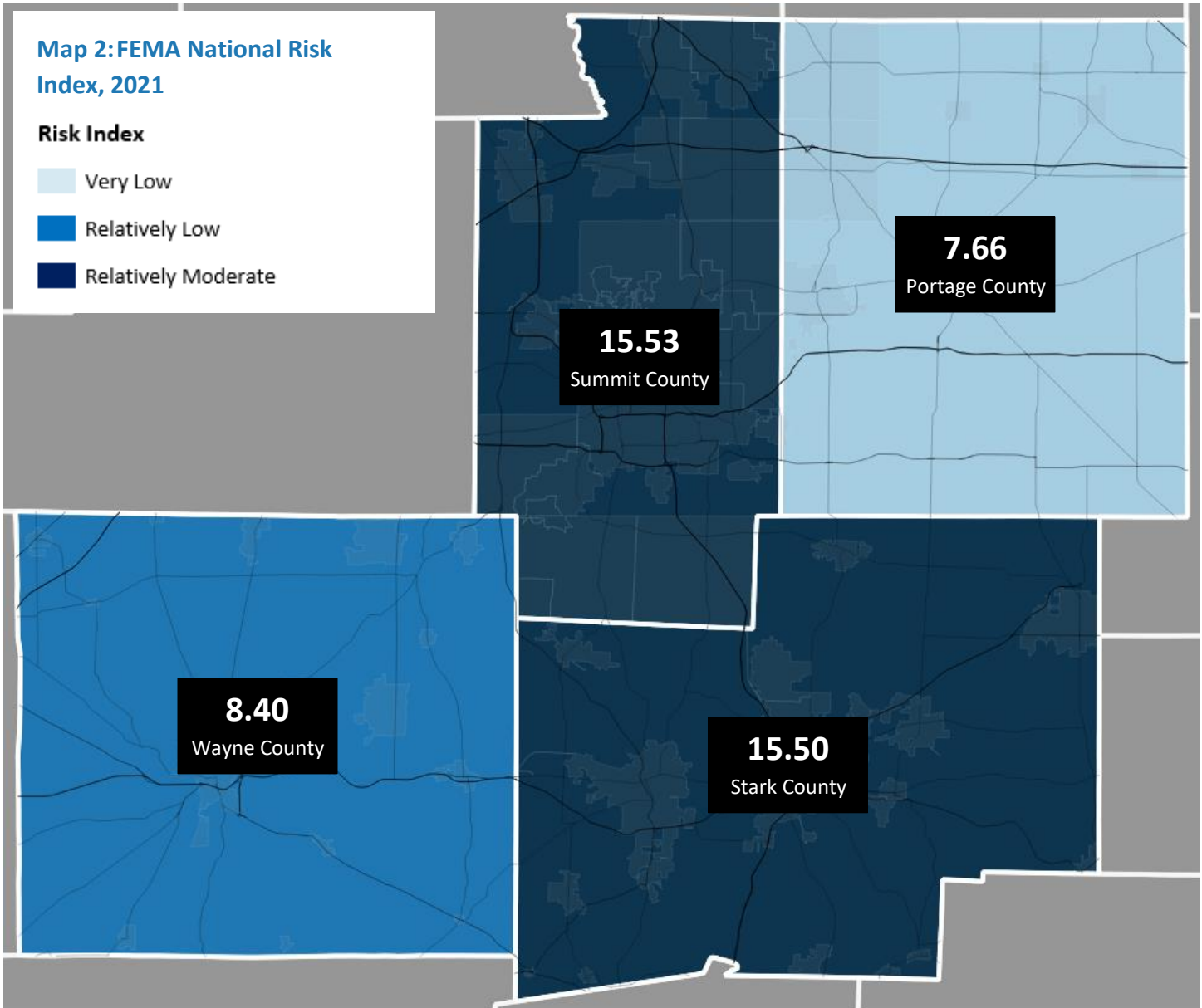
### Natural Hazards

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) National Risk Index identifies relative risk for 18 natural hazards.<sup>15</sup> The index can be used to help the region prioritize resilience efforts, which can assist in updating emergency operations plans, enhancing hazard mitigation plans, prioritizing, and allocating resources, identifying the need for more refined risk assessments, encouraging community-level risk communication and engagement, educating residents, supporting the development and adoption of enhanced standards, and informing long-term community recovery.

According to FEMA data, the NEFCO Region has a relatively low risk of natural disasters (see Map 2). Portage County has a very low risk index of 7.66. It has relatively moderate risks for hail and winter weather. Stark County has a relatively moderate risk index of 15.50. It has relatively moderate risks for cold waves, heat waves,



lightning, and tornados, and relatively high risks for hail, riverine flooding, and winter weather. Summit County has a relatively moderate risk index of 15.53. It has relatively moderate risks for cold waves, heat waves, lightning, strong winds, and tornados, and relatively high risks for hail, riverine flooding, and winter weather. Wayne County has a relatively low risk index of 8.40. It has relatively moderate risk for ice storms and a relatively high risk for winter weather.

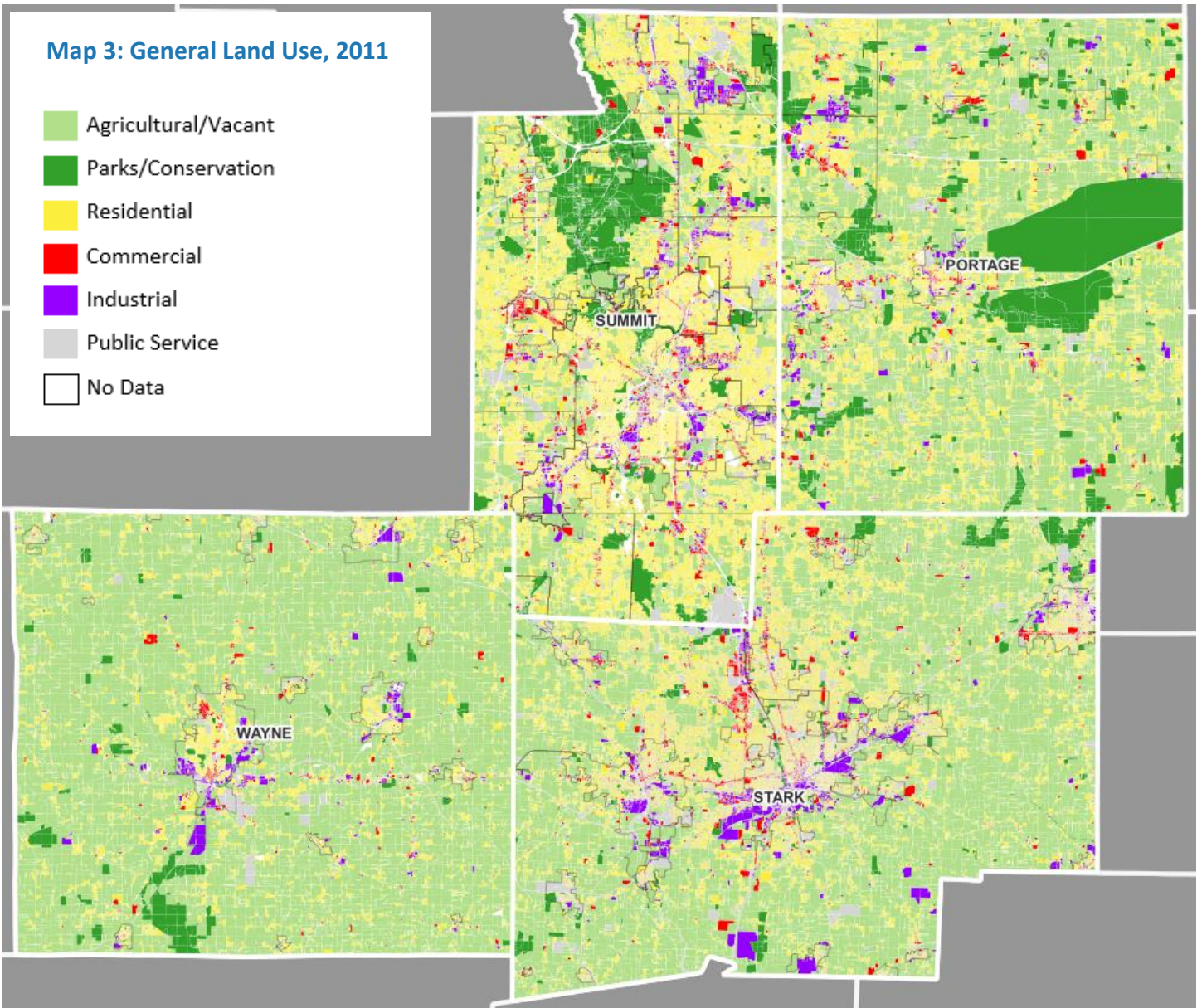


Source: Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2021

### Brownfields

Brownfield redevelopment is a major interest to the NEFCO Region. All four NEFCO counties have active land banks tasked with reclaiming, rehabilitating, and reutilizing nonproductive land. County land banks play an instrumental role in repurposing vacant and derelict properties into productive reuse. The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency’s brownfields inventory lists 27 documented brownfields sites in Summit County, 12 sites in Stark County, four sites in Portage County, and one in Wayne County.<sup>16</sup> There are hundreds more sites than are listed in this inventory, as those listed are only properties that have received state or federal funds for

assessment or clean-up work. Vacant brownfields pose risks to human and environmental health. They represent idle resources that have been taken out of productive use, but their proximity to infrastructure can be seen as a development advantage. NEFCO’s members are supportive of brownfields redevelopment, which represents an efficient use of resources and preserves open space. NEFCO has received two \$600,000 USEPA brownfield assessment grants. The region has also received millions in funding from the Ohio Department of Development through its Brownfield Remediation and Building Demolition and Site Revitalization programs. The Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (NOACA) and Vibrant NEO are working on developing a comprehensive brownfields inventory and redevelopment strategy plan for Northeast Ohio. NEFCO is active with Vibrant NEO, and the NEFCO Executive Director serves as a Board member. The NOACA-Vibrant NEO Brownfields Coalition was awarded a \$1 million USEPA Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) grant in 2022. The RLF will provide loans for brownfields assessments and cleanups in Vibrant NEO’s 12-county region, which includes the NEFCO counties.



Sources: 2011 County Auditors’ Data; Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency

## Land Use and Land Cover

The land use patterns of the NEFCO Region counties are quite different (see Map 3). Summit County is the most urbanized, with a large portion of the land developed for residential, commercial, and industrial use. Stark County is characterized by suburbanization, with much of the residential, commercial, and industrial development clustered around Canton, Massillon, and Alliance. Most of Portage County's development is concentrated on the western portion, particularly in the cities of Kent, Streetsboro, and Aurora. The remainder of the county is primarily rural. Wayne County is largely rural, except for Wooster, Orrville, and Rittman. Agriculture and low-density residential development are the predominant land uses in Wayne County.

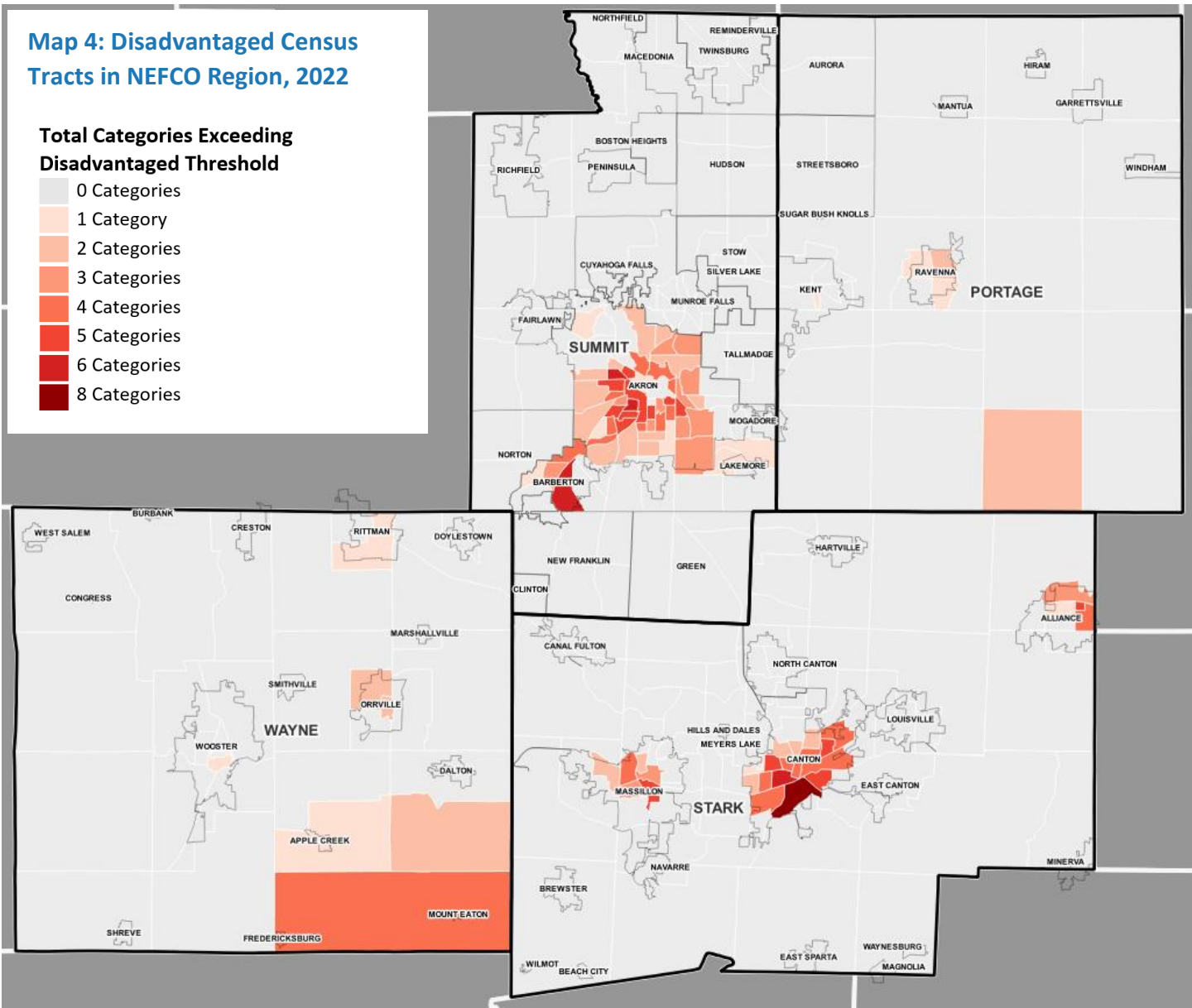
## Environment

The region is diverse in its landscape. All but the southeastern corner of Stark County was impacted by glacial activity. The region is defined by its abundant water resources. Streams, rivers, and lakes provide recreational activities and shape the region's highly valued park systems. Major rivers include the Cuyahoga River and Tuscarawas River. The Ohio River-Lake Erie Basin Divide runs through the NEFCO Region; Wayne County, most of Stark County, Southern Summit County, and Eastern Portage County drain to the Ohio River, while Northern Summit County, Western Portage County, and a small portion of Northern Stark County drain to Lake Erie. The region is susceptible to flooding, which may be increasing due to the impacts of climate change. Most of the region is governed by USEPA's Phase II Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) regulations, which in part, require communities to control the stormwater runoff due to its pollution impacts on water quality. Because many communities historically built their infrastructure with easy access to water, their centers of commerce are now more vulnerable to flood damage with the increase in impervious surfaces and urban runoff. Stormwater continues to be a regional challenge, with the most effective solutions being those done regionally.

## Climate and Environmental Justice

The White House Council on Environmental Quality has produced an analytical tool, which identifies Census tracts that have been disproportionately overburdened by pollution or have experienced historic underinvestment.<sup>17</sup> The Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) analyzes dozens of factors in eight categories of burdens: climate change factors, including agricultural loss rate, flood risk, etc.; energy factors, including energy cost and particulate matter; health factors, including high rates of asthmas, diabetes, heart disease, and low life expectancy; housing factors, including historic underinvestment, housing cost, lack of greenspace, lack of indoor plumbing, and lead paint; legacy pollution factors, including abandoned mine land, former defense sites, and proximity to hazardous waste and superfund sites; transportation factors, including exposure to diesel particulate matter, transportation barriers, and traffic proximity and volume; water and wastewater factors, including underground storage tanks and wastewater discharge; and workforce development factors, including linguistic isolation, low median income, poverty, and unemployment.<sup>18</sup> Per the CEJST, a tract qualifies as "disadvantaged" if it is at or above the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile for a particular burden in seven of the categories and is at or above the 65<sup>th</sup> percentile for low income. For the workforce development category, tracts are identified as disadvantaged if they are at or above the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile for a particular burden and fewer than 10-percent of adults have a high school education.

The NEFCO Region has clear disparities when analyzing climate and environmental justice (see Map 4). The disadvantaged communities are primarily census tracts in the region's central cities: Canton, Akron, Barberton, Alliance, and Massillon. Southeast Canton has a census tract that exceeds the threshold of "disadvantaged" in eight categories. Two tracts in West Akron and Southern Barberton exceed the threshold in six categories.



Source: White House Council on Environmental Quality, Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool, 2022

NEFCO Region jurisdictions should utilize the tool when seeking federal grants, as it identifies the factors contributing to disadvantaged communities and helps make a case for funding. Community leaders should use the resource to effectively address equity and environmental justice issues.

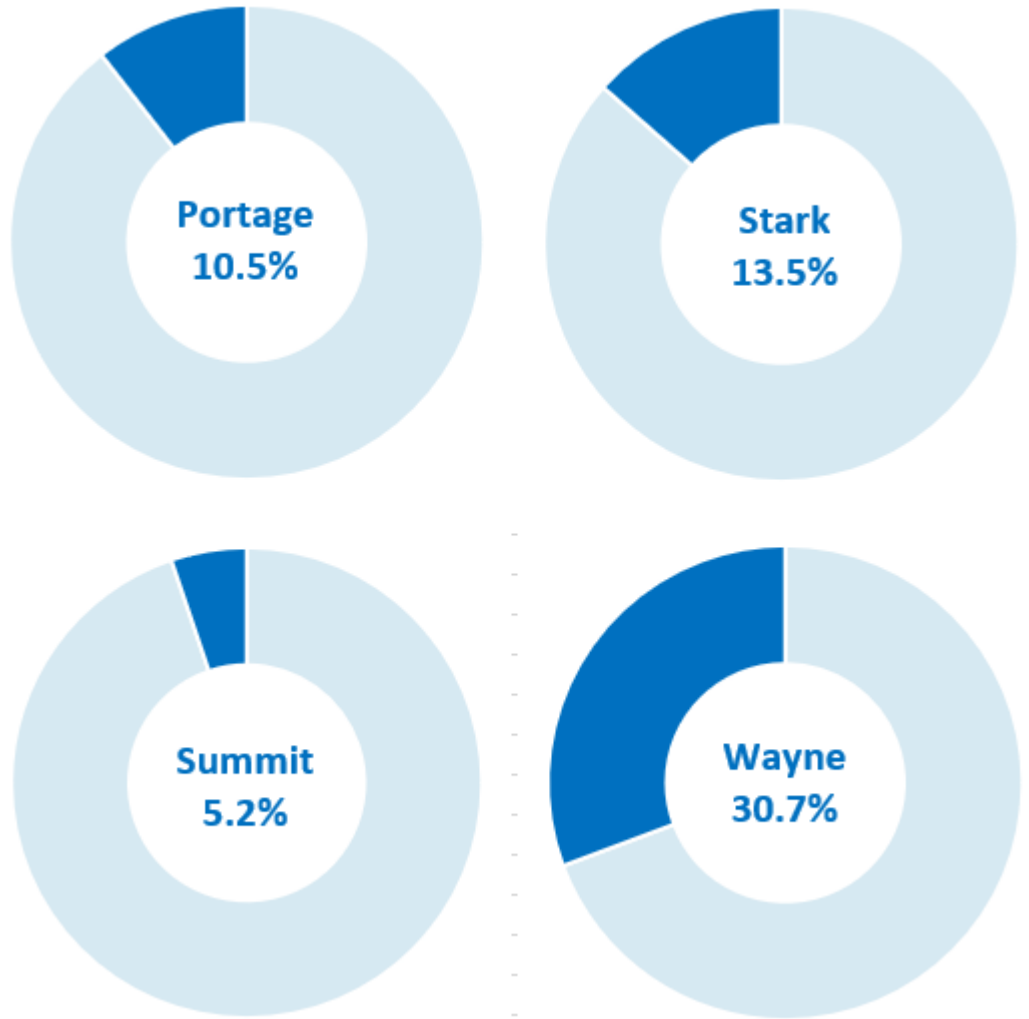
### Broadband and High-Speed Internet

High-speed internet access is a necessity for participation in the modern economy. Broadband accessibility is necessary for both individuals and businesses, as well as education, employment, and health care. Areas with excellent broadband access are at an advantage economically; unserved locations have difficulty competing for economic development projects, jobs, and new residents. BroadbandOhio has developed a mapping resource identifying areas served and unserved. The maps use on-the-ground Ookla Speedtest Intelligence records, categorizing speeds in four categories.<sup>19</sup> An area is considered “served” if it meets the minimum of 25 Mbps download speed and 3 Mbps upload speed. The 25/3 Mbps speed is the federal standard, as defined by the

Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in 2015.<sup>20</sup> The FCC has proposed raising the minimum broadband speeds to 100 Mbps for downloads and 20 Mbps for uploads.<sup>21</sup>

The NEFCO region varies greatly in areas served and underserved. Generally, the more urbanized areas surrounding Akron and Canton have full accessibility. Rural areas of the region, including much of Wayne County, northeast Portage County, and southern, eastern, and western Stark County are unserved. Per BroadbandOhio, Summit County has the highest broadband accessibility with 94.8-percent of households having access to minimum speeds of 25/3 Mbps. Only 5.2-percent of households in Summit County are considered “unserved” (see Chart 10). In Portage County, 10.5-percent of households are unserved. In Stark County, 13.5-percent of households are unserved. Wayne County has the highest percent of unserved households, at 30.7-percent

**Chart 10: Percent of Households without Access to Minimum 25/3 Mbps**



Source: BroadbandOhio, 2021

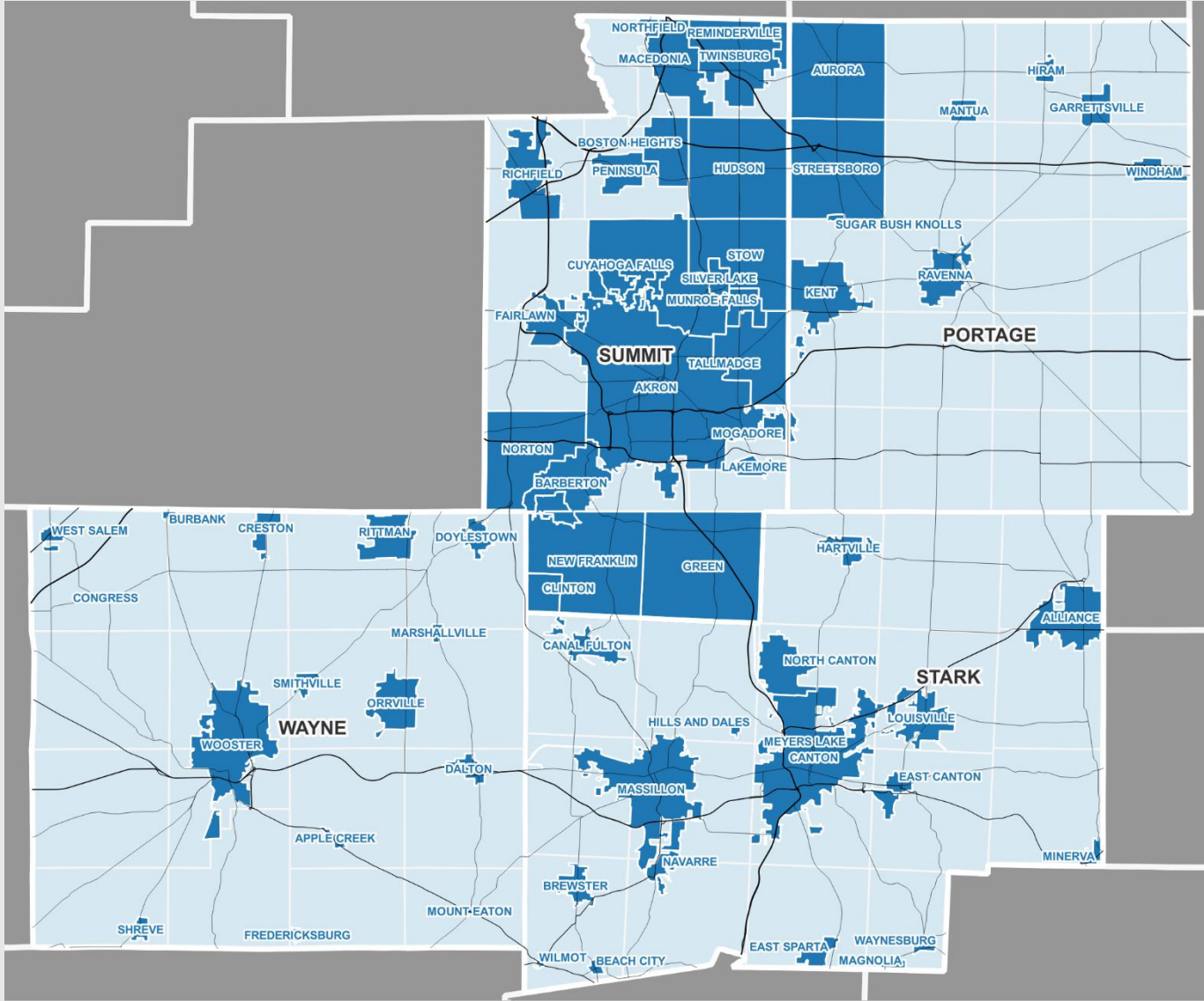


# NEFCO Region

Member Counties: Portage, Stark, Summit, Wayne

Member Cities: Akron, Canton, Kent, Wooster

Established: 1974 Area: 2,036.8 sq. mi.



## DEMOGRAPHICS



**Population (2020)**  
**1,193,966**

| 2030 Proj. | 2040 Proj. |
|------------|------------|
| 1,162,450  | 1,143,650  |

| Chg. '10-'20 | Chg. '00-'20 |
|--------------|--------------|
| 0.00%        | 0.7%         |

| Hhlds. (2020) | % Minority |
|---------------|------------|
| 488,066       | 15.5%      |

## EDUCATION/BROADBD.



**Bachelor Deg. or Higher**  
**28.0%**

| % HS Graduate | % Associate |
|---------------|-------------|
| 34.4%         | 8.3%        |

| % Bachelor's | % Grad./Prof. |
|--------------|---------------|
| 17.6%        | 10.4%         |

| HH Unsrvd (BB) <sup>22</sup> | Area Unsrvd (BB) <sup>23</sup> |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 11.0%                        | 35.4%                          |

## WORKFORCE/ECONOMICS



**Labor Force (2020)**  
**600,907**

| LF Part. Rate | Per Cap. \$ |
|---------------|-------------|
| 63.9%         | \$52,725    |

| Chg. LF ('10-'20) | Poverty ('19) |
|-------------------|---------------|
| -3.87%            | 12.6%         |

| 24mo. Unemp. <sup>24</sup> | Food Insecurity |
|----------------------------|-----------------|
| 4.76%                      | 12.4%           |

# Portage County

County Seat: Ravenna Largest City: Kent (28,215)  
 Established: 1807 Area: 492.4 sq. mi.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

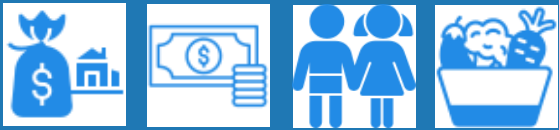


### Population (2020)

**161,791**

| 2030 Projection    | 2040 Projection    |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 158,930            | 151,720            |
| % Change ('10-'20) | % Change ('00-'20) |
| 0.23%              | 6.0%               |
| Median Age         | % Minority         |
| 38.3               | 9.0%               |

## ECONOMICS



### Median Household Income

**\$57,439**

| Per Capita Income | Food Insecurity <sup>25</sup> |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| \$48,285          | 11.7%                         |
| Poverty (2019)    | Child Poverty ('19)           |
| 11.9%             | 13.4%                         |

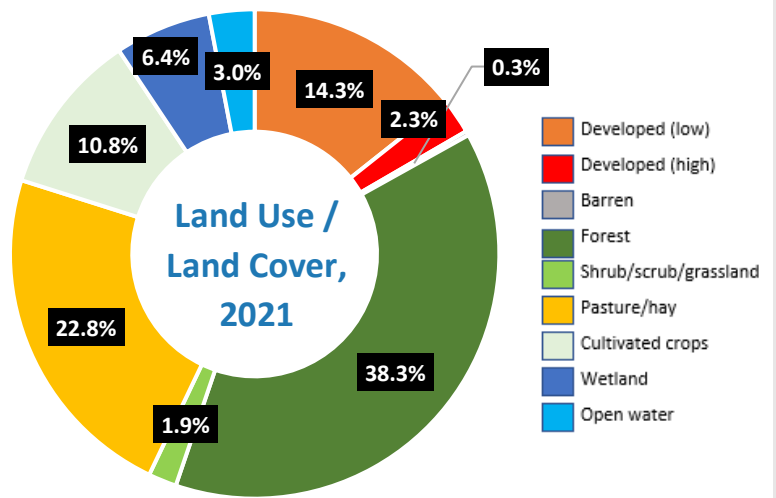
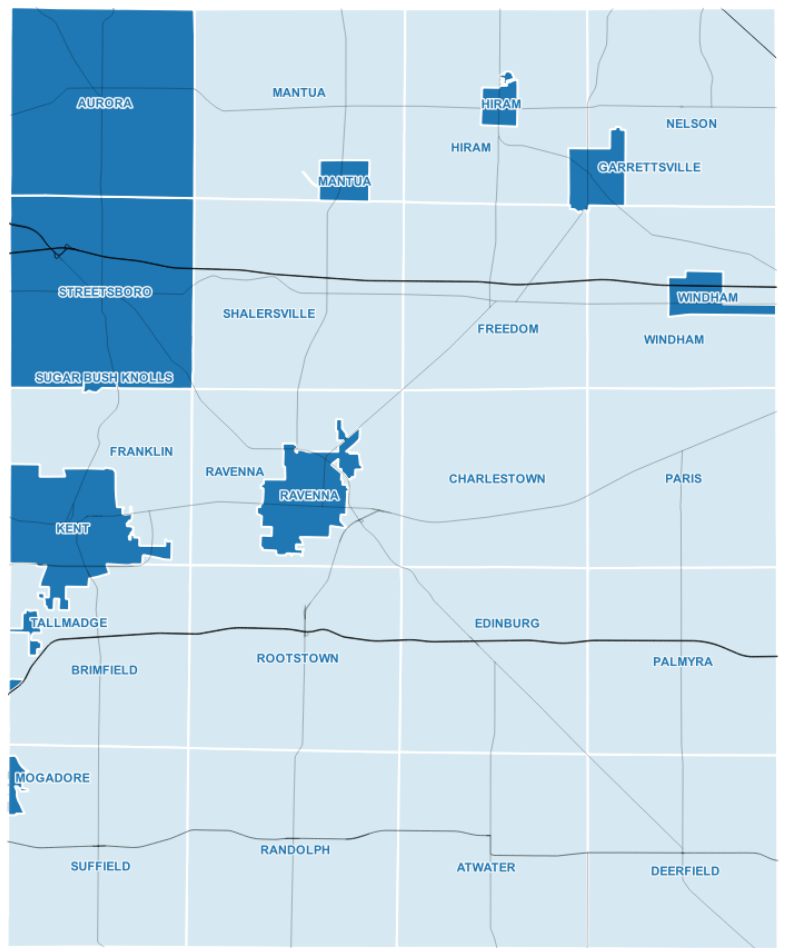
## HOUSING/BROADBAND<sup>26</sup>



### Median Home Value

**\$159,200**

| Med. Year Built  | Vacancy Rate     |
|------------------|------------------|
| 1975             | 10.6%            |
| Ownership Rate   | Med. Gross Rent  |
| 69.5%            | \$860            |
| Hhds Unsrvd (BB) | Area Unsrvd (BB) |
| 10.5%            | 25.6%            |





# Portage County

County Seat: Ravenna    Largest City: Kent (28,215)  
 Established: 1807    Area: 492.4 sq. mi.

## WORKFORCE



Labor force (2020)

**85,783**

| % Change ('10-'20) | Average Wage |
|--------------------|--------------|
| -5.6%              | \$48,285     |
| 24-mo. Unemploy.   | Mean Commute |
| 7.3%               | 25.7 min.    |

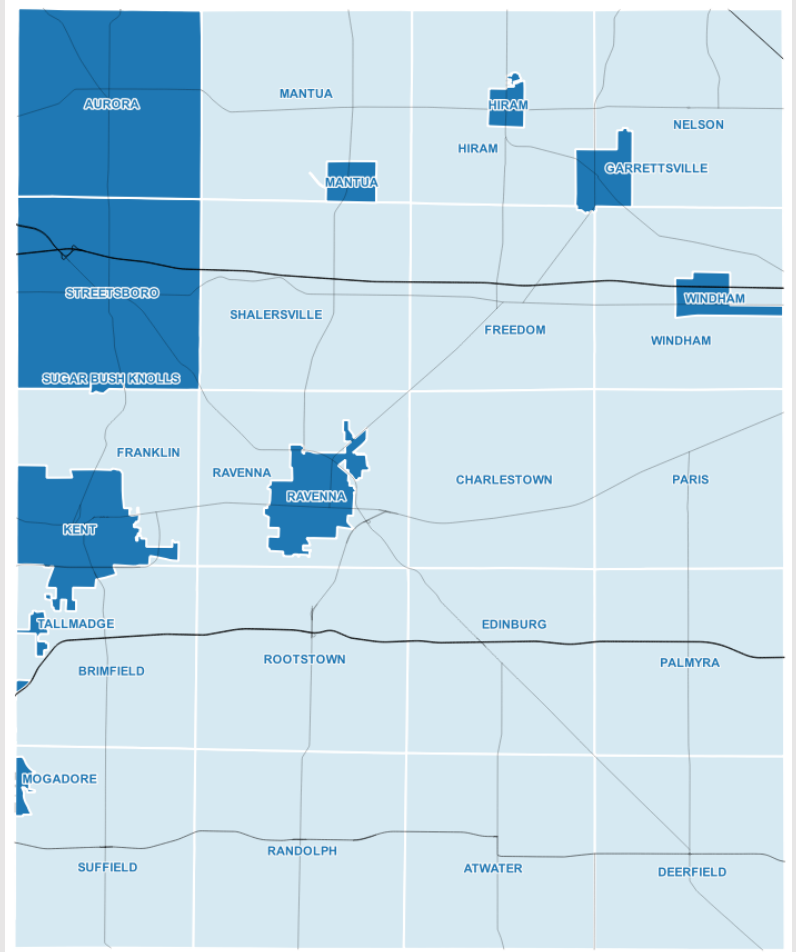
## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



% Bachelor's Degree or Higher

**29.0%**

| % HS Graduate | % Associate      |
|---------------|------------------|
| 36.6%         | 7.5%             |
| % Bachelor's  | % Graduate/Prof. |
| 17.6%         | 11.4%            |



## LARGEST INDUSTRIES (2021 NAICS)<sup>27</sup>

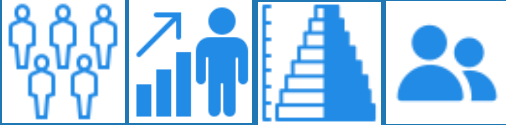
| Industry                              | Jobs   | %     | Average Annual Wage |
|---------------------------------------|--------|-------|---------------------|
| Manufacturing                         | 10,072 | 19.2% | \$62,763            |
| Retail Trade                          | 6,833  | 13.1% | \$34,362            |
| Health Care and Social Services       | 5,477  | 10.5% | \$40,407            |
| Accommodation and Food Services       | 5,118  | 9.8%  | \$18,547            |
| Educational Services                  | 3,504  | 6.7%  | \$51,534            |
| Wholesale Trade                       | 2,979  | 5.7%  | \$86,971            |
| Construction                          | 2,199  | 4.2%  | \$63,318            |
| Professional, Scientific, Tech. Svcs. | 1,886  | 3.6%  | \$74,100            |
| Public Administration                 | 1,830  | 3.5%  | \$52,572            |
| Other Services                        | 1,403  | 2.7%  | \$32,798            |

# Stark County

County Seat: Canton Largest City: Canton (70,872)

Established: 1808 Area: 576.2 sq. mi.

## DEMOGRAPHICS



### Population (2020)

**374,853**

| 2030 Projection | 2040 Projection |
|-----------------|-----------------|
|-----------------|-----------------|

361,130

355,500

| % Chg. ('10-'20) | % Chg. ('00-'20) |
|------------------|------------------|
|------------------|------------------|

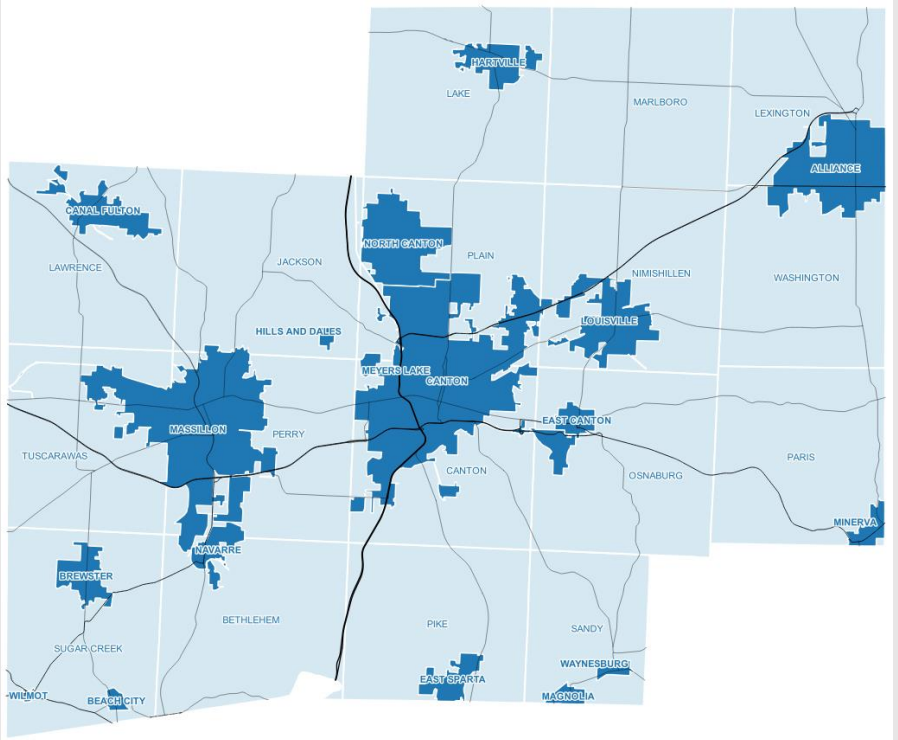
-0.20%

-0.90%

| Median Age | % Minority |
|------------|------------|
|------------|------------|

42.1

12.8%



## ECONOMICS



### Median Household Income

**\$55,623**

| Per Cap. Income | Food Insec. <sup>28</sup> |
|-----------------|---------------------------|
|-----------------|---------------------------|

49,592

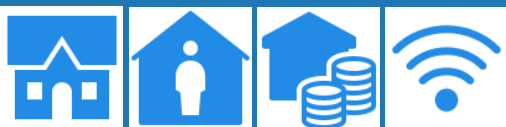
13.1%

| Poverty (2019) | Child Pov. ('19) |
|----------------|------------------|
|----------------|------------------|

13.0%

18.7%

## HOUSING/BROADBAND<sup>29</sup>



### Median Home Value

**\$134,300**

| Med. Year Built | Vacancy Rate |
|-----------------|--------------|
|-----------------|--------------|

1964

8.0%

| Ownership Rate | Med. Gross Rent |
|----------------|-----------------|
|----------------|-----------------|

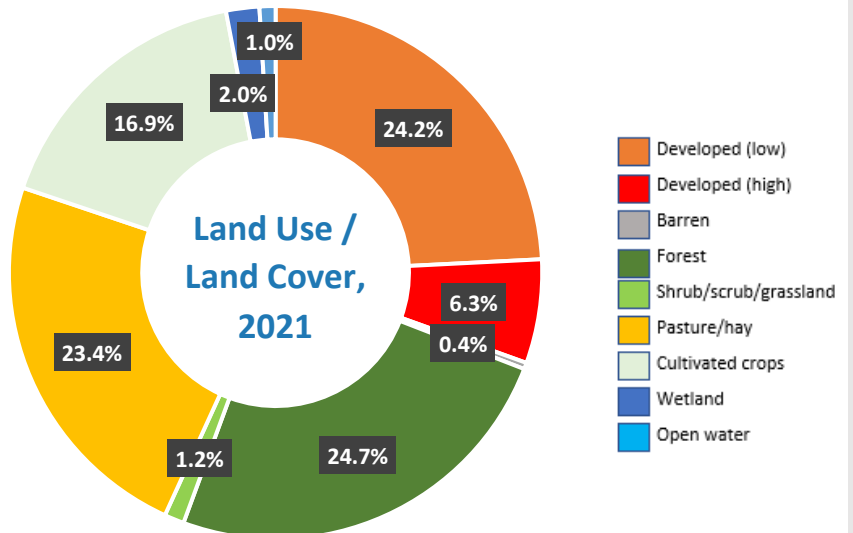
68.2%

\$741

| Hhds Unsrvd (BB) | Area Unsrvd (BB) |
|------------------|------------------|
|------------------|------------------|

13.5%

39.0%



# Stark County

County Seat: Canton Largest City: Canton (70,872)  
 Established: 1808 Area: 576.2 sq. mi.

## WORKFORCE



### Labor force (2020)

**184,149**

**% Chg. ('10-'20)**      **Average Wage**

-4.2%      \$4

**Unemployment**      **Mean Commute**

8.1%      22.1 min.

## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



### % Bachelor's Deg. or Higher

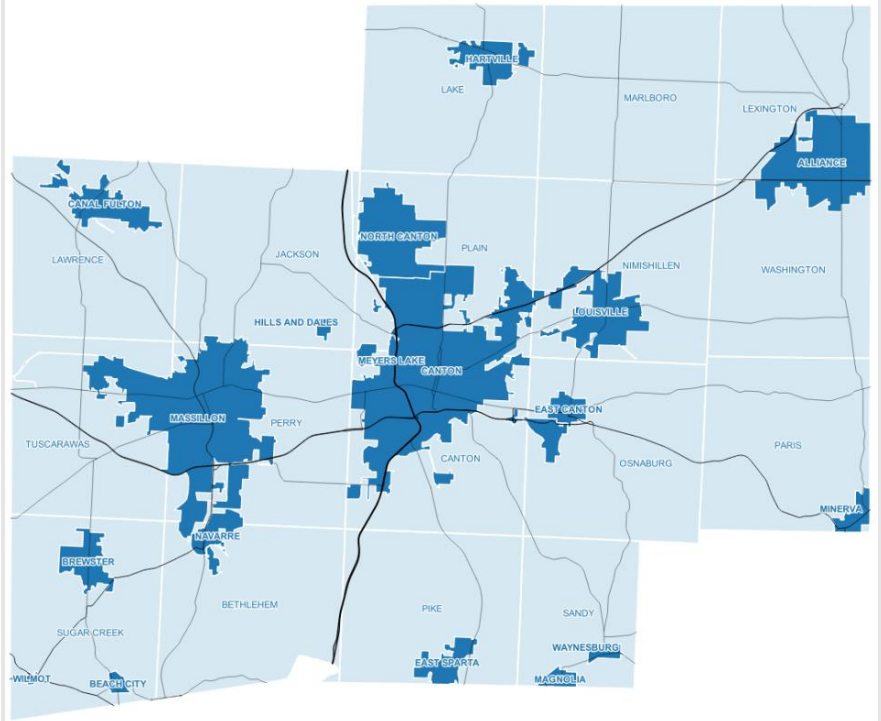
**22.8%**

**% HS Graduate**      **% Associate**

38.2%      8.6%

**% Bachelor's**      **% Graduate/Prof.**

14.5%      8.3%



## LARGEST INDUSTRIES (2021 NAICS)

| Industry                        | Jobs   | %     | Average Annual Wage |
|---------------------------------|--------|-------|---------------------|
| Health Care and Social Services | 27,758 | 18.2% | \$48,667            |
| Manufacturing                   | 24,088 | 15.8% | \$62,389            |
| Retail Trade                    | 18,505 | 12.1% | \$32,670            |
| Accommodation and Food Services | 15,221 | 10.0% | \$18,802            |
| Educational Services            | 12,561 | 8.2%  | \$44,197            |
| Admin & Sup/Waste Mgt/Rem Svcs  | 8,619  | 5.6%  | \$37,949            |
| Construction                    | 7,241  | 4.7%  | \$64,556            |
| Wholesale Trade                 | 5,756  | 3.8%  | \$63,182            |
| Other Services                  | 5,404  | 3.5%  | \$32,030            |
| Finance and Insurance           | 5,288  | 3.5%  | \$70,115            |

# Summit County

County Seat: Akron Largest City: Akron (190,469)  
 Established: 1840 Area: 412.8 sq. mi.

## DEMOGRAPHICS



### Population (2020)

**540,428**

| 2030 Projection    | 2040 Projection    |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 528,990            | 523,190            |
| % Change ('10-'20) | % Change ('00-'20) |
| -0.25%             | -0.60%             |
| Median Age         | % Minority         |
| 38.3               | 9.0%               |

## ECONOMICS

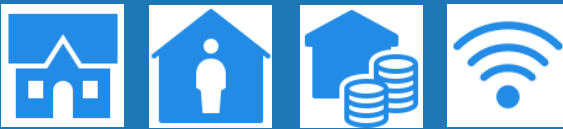


### Median Household Income

**\$57,753**

| Per Capita Income | Food Insecurity <sup>30</sup> |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| \$56,821          | 11.7%                         |
| Poverty (2019)    | Child Poverty ('19)           |
| 14.2%             | 21.0%                         |

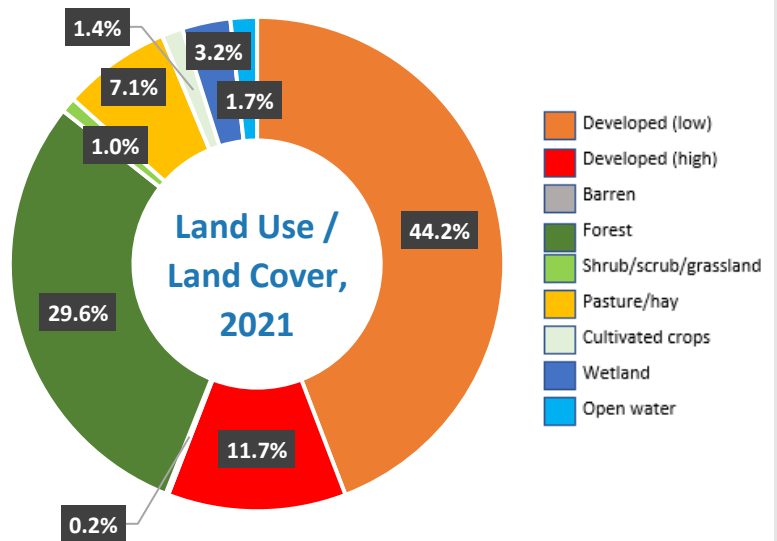
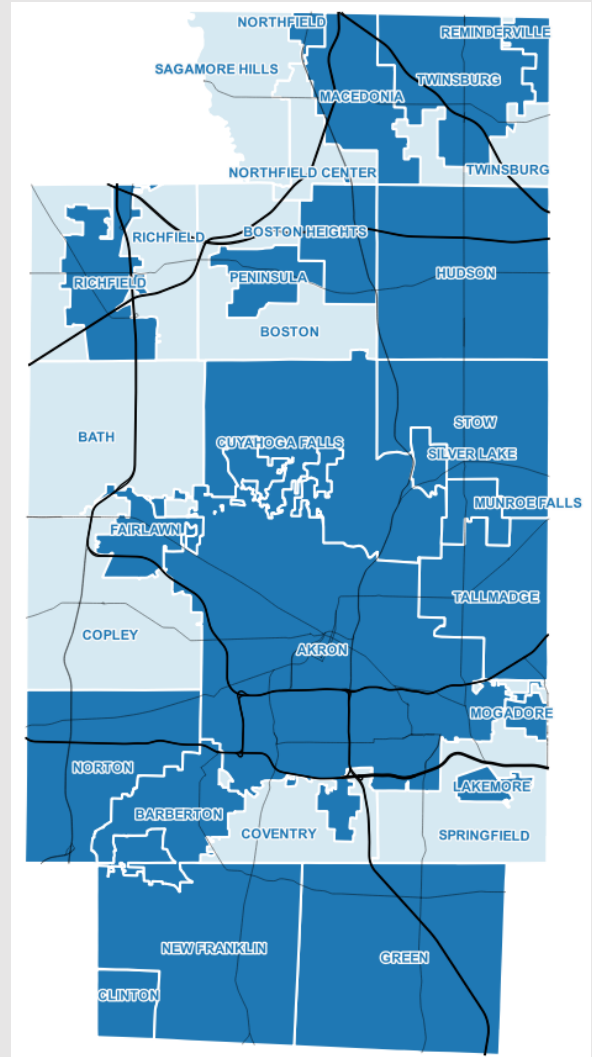
## HOUSING/BROADBAND<sup>31</sup>



### Median Home Value

**\$146,800**

| Med. Year Built  | Vacancy Rate     |
|------------------|------------------|
| 1965             | 10.6%            |
| Ownership Rate   | Med. Gross Rent  |
| 69.5%            | \$823            |
| Hhds Unsrvd (BB) | Area Unsrvd (BB) |
| 5.2%             | 10.7%            |



# Summit County

County Seat: Akron Largest City: Akron (190,469)  
 Established: 1840 Area: 412.8 sq. mi.

## WORKFORCE



### Labor force (2020)

**270,407**

|                           |                     |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>% Change ('10-'20)</b> | <b>Average Wage</b> |
| -4.1%                     | \$48,285            |
| <b>Unemployment</b>       | <b>Mean Commute</b> |
| 8.2%                      | 25.7 min.           |

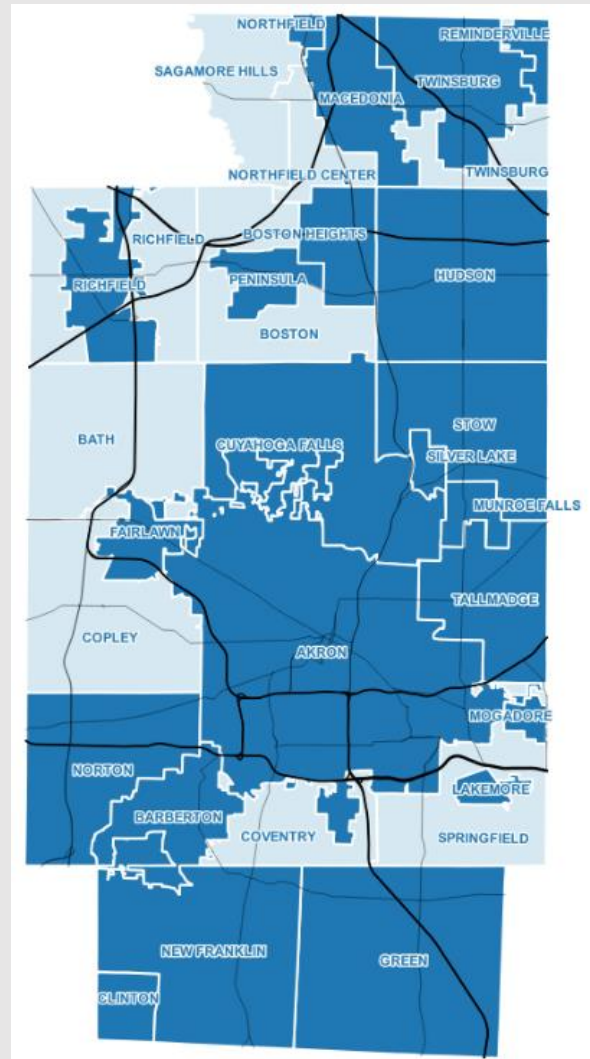
## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



### % Bachelor's Degree or Higher

**32.5%**

|                      |                         |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>% HS Graduate</b> | <b>% Associate</b>      |
| 30.2%                | 8.5%                    |
| <b>% Bachelor's</b>  | <b>% Graduate/Prof.</b> |
| 20.6%                | 11.9%                   |



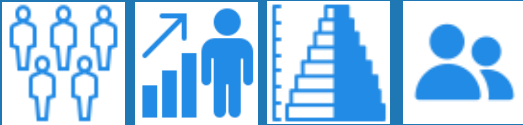
## LARGEST INDUSTRIES (2021 NAICS)

| Industry                               | Jobs   | %     | Average Annual Wage |
|--|--------|-------|---------------------|
| Health Care and Social Services        | 44,927 | 17.6% | \$55,640            |
| Retail Trade                           | 28,051 | 11.0% | \$38,170            |
| Manufacturing                          | 26,932 | 10.6% | \$61,792            |
| Accommodation and Food Services        | 19,880 | 7.8%  | \$19,611            |
| Admin/Supp/Waste Mgt./Rem Srvcs        | 14,775 | 5.8%  | \$37,729            |
| Educational Services                   | 14,701 | 5.8%  | \$51,482            |
| Transportation and Warehousing         | 13,752 | 5.4%  | \$48,185            |
| Professional, Scientific, Tech. Srvcs. | 13,723 | 5.4%  | \$78,150            |
| Management of Companies                | 13,035 | 5.1%  | \$115,162           |
| Wholesale Trade                        | 12,339 | 4.8%  | \$74,436            |

# Wayne County

County Seat: Wooster Largest City: Wooster (27,232)  
 Established: 1796 Area: 555.4 sq. mi.

## DEMOGRAPHICS



### Population (2020)

**116,894**

| 2030 Projection  | 2040 Projection  |
|------------------|------------------|
| 113,400          | 113,240          |
| % Chg. ('10-'20) | % Chg. ('00-'20) |
| 2.07%            | 4.40%            |
| Median Age       | % Minority       |
| 38.3             | 9.0%             |

## ECONOMICS



### Median Household Income

**\$58,747**

|                   |                               |
|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| Per Capita Income | Food Insecurity <sup>32</sup> |
| \$49,901          | 11.0%                         |
| Poverty (2019)    | Child Poverty ('19)           |
| 9.9%              | 13.9%                         |

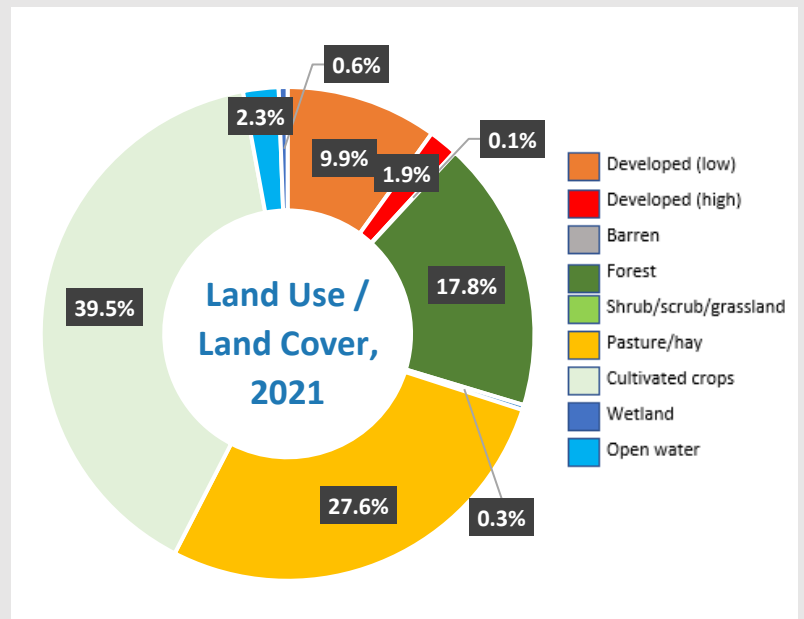
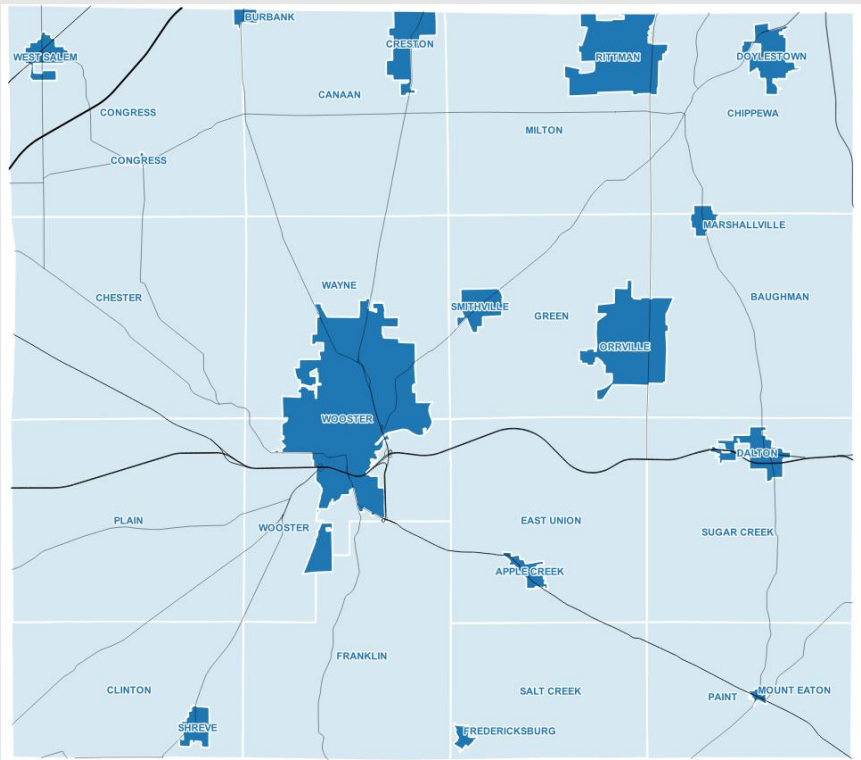
## HOUSING/BROADBAND<sup>33</sup>



### Median Home Value

**\$148,900**

|                  |                  |
|------------------|------------------|
| Med. Year Built  | Vacancy Rate     |
| 1974             | 6.1%             |
| Ownership Rate   | Med. Gross Rent  |
| 73.0%            | \$735            |
| Hhds Unsrvd (BB) | Area Unsrvd (BB) |
| 30.7%            | 58.3%            |



# Wayne County

County Seat: Wooster Largest City: Wooster (27,232)  
 Established: 1796 Area: 555.4 sq. mi.

## WORKFORCE



### Labor force (2020)

**60,568**

|                         |                     |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>% Chg. ('10-'20)</b> | <b>Average Wage</b> |
|-------------------------|---------------------|

|      |          |
|------|----------|
| 0.6% | \$48,285 |
|------|----------|

|                     |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Unemployment</b> | <b>Mean Commute</b> |
|---------------------|---------------------|

|      |           |
|------|-----------|
| 5.9% | 20.5 min. |
|------|-----------|

## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT



### % Bachelor's Deg. or Higher

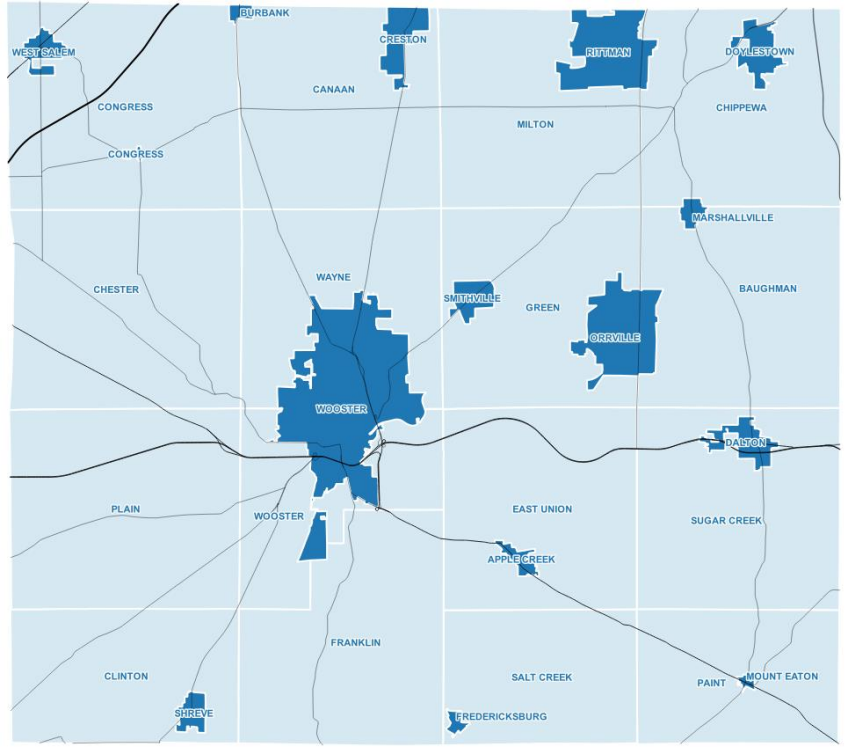
**22.2%**

|                      |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| <b>% HS Graduate</b> | <b>% Associate</b> |
|----------------------|--------------------|

|       |      |
|-------|------|
| 39.0% | 7.2% |
|-------|------|

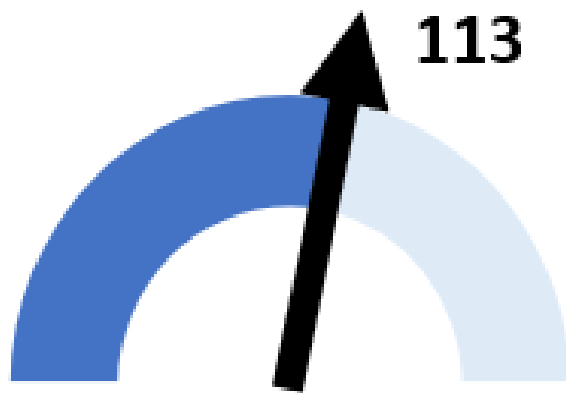
|                     |                         |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>% Bachelor's</b> | <b>% Graduate/Prof.</b> |
|---------------------|-------------------------|

|       |      |
|-------|------|
| 13.6% | 8.6% |
|-------|------|



## LARGEST INDUSTRIES (2021 NAICS)

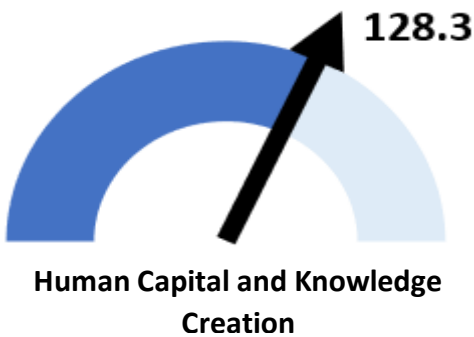
| Industry                        | Jobs   | %     | Average Annual Wage |
|---------------------------------|--------|-------|---------------------|
| Manufacturing                   | 14,555 | 31.3% | \$67,634            |
| Health Care and Social Services | 6,321  | 13.6% | \$46,569            |
| Retail Trade                    | 4,886  | 10.5% | \$33,292            |
| Educational Services            | 3,851  | 8.3%  | \$43,470            |
| Accommodation and Food Svcs.    | 2,941  | 6.3%  | \$17,854            |
| Construction                    | 2,453  | 5.3%  | \$56,359            |
| Wholesale Trade                 | 1,741  | 3.7%  | \$65,187            |
| Transportation and Warehousing  | 1,373  | 3.0%  | \$51,483            |
| Finance and Insurance           | 1,141  | 2.5%  | \$70,408            |
| Public Administration           | 1,129  | 2.4%  | \$48,900            |



**Overall Innovation Intelligence**

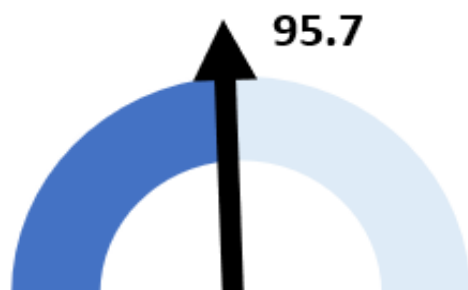
StatsAmerica developed the Innovation Index<sup>34</sup> as an analytic tool to help community leaders understand a region’s weaknesses, strengths, and potential and help formulate strategic direction. The overall Innovation Intelligence Index is calculated from five core indices: three based on innovation inputs (Human Capital and Knowledge Creation; Business Dynamics; Business Profile) and two based on innovation outputs (Employment and Productivity; Economic Wellbeing). Each of these five core indices is equally weighted to calculate an overall composite index; additionally, each core index includes rankings on several subcategories. The average index value for a given Economic Development District (EDD) is 100. Values greater than 100 indicate the region is doing better than the average EDD; values lower than 100 indicate the region is

behind others in any given category. The composite Innovation Intelligence index for the NEFCO Region is 113. Nationally, the NEFCO Region ranks 140<sup>th</sup> out of 393 EDDs in overall Innovation Intelligence.



**Human Capital and Knowledge Creation**

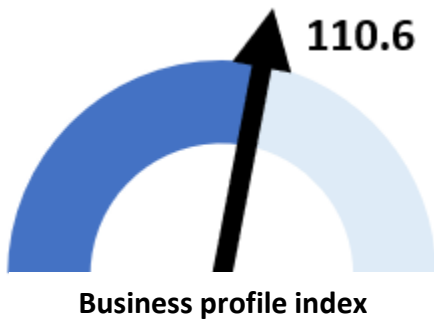
The NEFCO Region ranks 74<sup>th</sup> in the Human Capital and Knowledge Creation Index. Of the five core indices, this is the strongest and highest ranking for the NEFCO Region. Patterns of establishment formation and composition indicate a moderate level of business competitiveness. Subcategory strengths include average high-tech industry employment share and university-based knowledge spillovers, which earn the NEFCO Region rankings of 46<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> nationally in these disciplines, respectively.



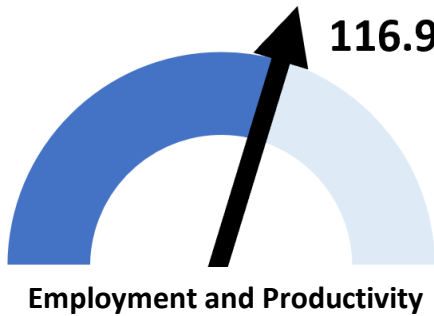
**Business Dynamics**

The NEFCO Region ranks 286<sup>th</sup> in the Business Dynamics Index. Of the five core indices, this is NEFCO’s weakest, and lowest ranking. This indicates there’s room for improvement in business competitiveness, jobs attributed to business establishment, change in establishment births to all establishments, and the establishment births-to-deaths ratio. For the average high-tech, early-in-life-cycle establishment ratio, the region ranks 78<sup>th</sup>. For the traded sector establishment births to all establishment ratio, the NEFCO Region ranks 199<sup>th</sup>.

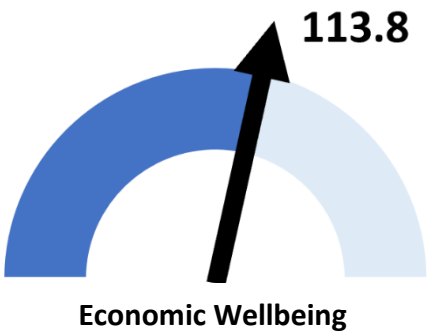




The NEFCO Region ranks 90<sup>th</sup> in the Business Profile Index. This indicates the region has a moderate availability of resources for entrepreneurs and businesses. Subcategory strengths include latent innovation, and industry diversity, which are ranked 19<sup>th</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> nationally, respectively.



The NEFCO Region is ranked 139<sup>th</sup> in the Employment and Productivity Index. Industry performance in the NEFCO Region indicates a moderate level of positive outcomes from existing economic activity. The region is particularly strong in patent diversity (ranked 79<sup>th</sup> nationally), while weaker in the job growth-to-population growth ratio (ranked 178<sup>th</sup> nationally).



The NEFCO Region is ranked 190<sup>th</sup> in Economic Wellbeing. This is the second-weakest area for the region. This index measures residential internet connectivity and income. Although the region is strong in broadband infrastructure and adoption (ranked 59<sup>th</sup> nationally), it is behind other regions in change in annual wage and salary earnings, per capita personal income growth, average unemployment, and average net migration.

The table below includes all the Innovation Intelligence subcategory values for the NEFCO Region.

| <b>INNOVATION INTELLIGENCE 113</b>                 |              |                                       |              |
|--|--------------|---------------------------------------|--------------|
| <b>Human Capital and Knowledge Creation 128.3</b>  |              |                                       |              |
| <b>Educational Attainment</b>                      | <b>115.5</b> | <b>STEM Education and Occupations</b> | <b>151.2</b> |
| High School Attainment                             | 152.2        | Tech.-Based Know. Occup. Clusters     | 157.3        |
| Some College Attainment                            | 83.6         | Avg. Hi-Tech Indust. Employmt. Share  | 171.2        |
| Associate Degree Attainment                        | 80.5         | Avg. Prime Working-Age Pop. Growth    | 120.5        |
| Bachelor's Degree Attainment                       | 132.1        |                                       |              |
| Graduate Degree Attainment                         | 129          |                                       |              |
| <b>Knowledge Creation and Technology Diffusion</b> | <b>126</b>   |                                       |              |
| Patent Technology Diffusion                        | 81.1         |                                       |              |
| University-Based Knowledge Spillovers              | 171          |                                       |              |



**Business Dynamics 95.6**

| <b>Establishment Formation</b>                                    |       | <b>97.7</b> | <b>Establishment Dynamics</b>  |  | <b>93.4</b> |
|---|-------|-------------|--|--|-------------|
| Establishment Births to All Establishments Ratio                  | N/A   |             | Establishment Expansion to Contractions Ratio                        |  | 98.1        |
| Traded Sector Establishment Births to All Establishment Ratio     | 120.7 |             | Establishment Births to Deaths Ratio                                 |  | 70.9        |
| Jobs Attributed to Establishment Births to Total Employment Ratio | 76.1  |             | Traded Sector Births and Expansions to Deaths and Contractions Ratio |  | 111.4       |
| Change in Estab. Births to All Estab. Ratio                       | 79    |             |  |  |             |
| Avg. High-Tech, Early-in-Life-Cycle Estab. Ratio                  | 149.3 |             |  |  |             |

**Business Profile 110.6**

| <b>Venture Capital Dollar Measures</b>          |       | <b>106.2</b> | <b>Proprietorship</b>                               |  | <b>90</b> |
|---|-------|--------------|---|--|-----------|
| Change in Average Venture Capital               | 144.6 |              | Farm Operators with Internet Access                 |  | 105.2     |
| <b>Venture Capital Count Measures</b>           |       | <b>127</b>   | Proprietorship Rate                                 |  | 80.3      |
| Change in Average Venture Capital Deals         | 119.2 |              | Change in Proprietorship Rate                       |  | 84.3      |
| <b>Foreign Direct Investment Attractiveness</b> |       | <b>119</b>   | Proprietor Income to Total Wages and Salaries Ratio |  | 90.4      |
| FDI Employment Ratio, Foreign Source            | 119.6 |              |   |  |           |
| FDI Investment Ratio, Foreign Source            | 116.8 |              |   |  |           |
| FDI Employment Ratio, Domestic Source           | 117.2 |              |   |  |           |
| FDI Investment Ratio, Domestic Source           | 122.4 |              |   |  |           |

**Employment and Productivity 116.9**

| <b>Industry Performance</b>         |       | <b>186</b>  | <b>Patents</b>                                   |  | <b>132.8</b> |
|-------------------------------------|-------|-------------|--|--|--------------|
| Latent Innovation                   | 188.7 |             | Change in Average Patenting Rate                 |  | 89.2         |
| Industry Diversity                  | 183.4 |             | Patent Diversity                                 |  | 176.3        |
| <b>Industry Cluster Performance</b> |       | <b>67</b>   | <b>Job Growth to Population Growth Ratio</b>     |  | <b>126.1</b> |
| Industry Cluster Growth Factor      | 69.5  |             | Change in Share of High-Tech Industry Employment |  | 98           |
| Industry Cluster Strength           | 64.5  |             |  |  |              |
| <b>GDP</b>                          |       | <b>91.6</b> |  |  |              |

**Economic Wellbeing 113.8**

| <b>Compensation</b>                                  |       | <b>100.1</b> | <b>Residential Internet Connectivity</b> |  | <b>179.3</b> |
|--|-------|--------------|--|--|--------------|
| Change in Annual Wage and Salary Earnings per Worker | 83.4  |              | Broadband Infrastructure and Adoption    |  | 178.3        |
| Per Capita Personal Income Growth                    | 96.9  |              | Broadband Adoption Barriers              |  | 172.8        |
| Average Poverty Rate                                 | 141.7 |              |  |  |              |
| Average Unemployment Rate                            | 96.8  |              |  |  |              |
| Government Transfers to Total Personal Income Ratio  | 142.8 |              |  |  |              |
| Average Net Migration                                | 50    |              |  |  |              |



# Strengths

A strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis is an important assessment that identifies the NEFCO region’s competitive advantages, as well as the multiple internal and external factors that impact the ability of the region to achieve its full potential.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>GEOGRAPHY</b></p>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location in state, region, nation</li> <li>• Access to Midwest production belt; gateway to East Coast</li> <li>• Utility infrastructure</li> <li>• Transportation access (rail, interstate highways, waterways)</li> <li>• Abundant water supply</li> <li>• No major storms/outside disaster zones</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>WORKFORCE</b></p>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rich education partners for workforce development</li> <li>• Access to higher education and job training</li> <li>• Good public schools and world-class colleges/universities</li> <li>• Support organizations and opportunities for entrepreneurs</li> <li>• Proximity to working age population</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>INDUSTRY</b></p>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong manufacturing sector; diverse manufacturing base</li> <li>• Diversity of economic base</li> <li>• Development of clusters/districts/zones for focused industries</li> <li>• Long-term business loyalty</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>ED ENVIRONMENT</b></p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborative economic development ecosystem</li> <li>• Business friendly governments</li> <li>• Strong public-private partnerships</li> <li>• Strong efforts to support manufacturing and technology</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>QUALITY OF LIFE</b></p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High quality of life</li> <li>• Low cost of living; affordable housing</li> <li>• Access to quality medical care</li> <li>• Access to parks, recreation, community amenities</li> </ul>   |



# Weaknesses





|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>WORKFORCE</b></p>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of workforce; labor pool shrinking</li> <li>• Lack of skilled employees</li> <li>• Inability to attract younger generation</li> <li>• Lack of structured trade school training at middle and high school level</li> <li>• Lack of consistent quality of education within region</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>INFRASTRUCTURE</b></p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of industrial building inventory</li> <li>• Lack of large/mega sites</li> <li>• Old housing stock in urban areas</li> <li>• Lack of accessible public transportation outside of larger cities</li> <li>• Transportation improvements to support workforce and residents</li> <li>• No hub airport, lack of international flights</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>GEOGRAPHY</b></p>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weather</li> <li>• Image, both inside and outside of region</li> <li>• Poverty</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>ED ENVIRONMENT</b></p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of cooperation between larger cities/counties; intergovernmental relations</li> <li>• Factious and complicated political boundaries and govt structures</li> <li>• Lack of harmonized/unbalanced tax structures</li> <li>• Over-utilization and under-utilization of tax incentives; lack of strategic approach with tax incentives</li> <li>• Public subsidy lacking transparency and accountability and creating disincentive for individual upward economic mobility</li> <li>• Lack of benchmarking and analysis on true regional prosperity, costs</li> </ul> |



|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>INDUSTRY</b></p>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growth in leading manufacturing technologies</li> <li>• Rubber/plastics/polymer cluster: maximizing what is already here</li> <li>• Strength in health care sector</li> <li>• Take advantage of electric vehicle industry; harness/strengthen industry in region with established companies by creating programs and funding support</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>WORKFORCE</b></p>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attracting/retaining talent from universities</li> <li>• Trades training available; could be introduced in middle school</li> <li>• Work with schools and companies to invest in future workforce to create sustainable working environment and keep up with progressive skills</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>INFRASTRUCTURE</b></p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of new buildings and sites</li> <li>• Potential for public-private partnerships to build more housing and mass - transportation options for young adults</li> <li>• Bring/attract air service to Akron-Canton Airport</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>GEOGRAPHY</b></p>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic geographic location</li> <li>• Intel supply chain/proximity to Intel site</li> <li>• Ability to capitalize on rail/intermodal served areas</li> <li>• Geographic access to “new mobility”</li> <li>• Opportunity to market/brand region as a whole</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>ED ENVIRONMENT</b></p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate on initiatives</li> <li>• Ability to strengthen partnerships</li> <li>• Create strong and cohesive economic development strategy</li> <li>• Creation of clearinghouse of info on economic development tools; how these tools work and when it is, and not, appropriate to use and create economic benefit</li> </ul>                |



# Threats

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>INDUSTRY</b></p>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of innovation</li> <li>• Continue to compete with the South and Texas for attraction in manufacturing and advanced materials</li> <li>• Remaining aspects of “old” economy</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>WORKFORCE</b></p>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of talent/workforce</li> <li>• Stagnant/declining, and aging population</li> <li>• Retention of college grads/youth</li> <li>• Impact of Intel site, out-migration of workforce; migration of talent to Columbus area</li> <li>• Lack of consistent, high-quality K-12 workforce preparation</li> <li>• Remote work and income tax revenue implications</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>INFRASTRUCTURE</b></p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Available, developable land</li> <li>• Old infrastructure</li> <li>• Lack of buildings, sites (affects retention and attraction). Almost no inventory over 50,000 square feet</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>ED ENVIRONMENT</b></p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inability for public and private sectors to work concurrently and collaboratively</li> <li>• Fractious political environment (township, city, county, special districts) offering different levels of service</li> <li>• Relative apathy</li> </ul>   |










In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, our region’s families, workers, businesses, and institutions continue to grapple with the numerous ways in which our economy has been impacted. The direct, and indirect, effects of the pandemic can be felt in every sector of our economy including manufacturing, agriculture, hospitality, and local government, and the recovery from these challenges has been uneven and mixed across communities and populations.

To address these challenges, NEFCO initiated the development of the Economic Recovery and Resiliency (ER&R) Plan<sup>35</sup>. The ER&R Plan includes a comprehensive set of strategies and tactics to support the continued recovery and long-term resilience of our region. The ER&R Plan seeks to understand the impacts on our local economy and develop tools that support both short and long-term regional prosperity in the three key focus areas of **Community Development**, **Regional Business**, and **Workforce Development and Entrepreneurship**.

The ER&R Plan also serves as the resiliency component of the CEDS Plan. The strategies and tactics identified in the three focus areas will help drive regional recovery and resiliency over the next five years. NEFCO’s role and vision following the completion of the plan will be to engage with the identified partners across the region to collaboratively promote the implementation of the ER&R Plan strategies and tactics and to continually assess and refine the recommendations as our regional recovery progresses. By working closely with our communities, businesses, and stakeholders throughout the planning process, the ER&R Plan is poised to guide our region forward by strategically addressing our most pressing needs and challenges, while leveraging our strengths and successes to promote a prosperous and equitable future.



# Community Development Strategies

|   |   |
|---|---|
|    | <p>Strengthen access to employment centers and job hubs by expanding transit service and developing innovative partnerships</p>                                     |
|   | <p>Encourage Transit Oriented Developments that improve workers' access to both affordable housing and walkable transit connectivity</p>                            |
|  | <p>Promote the planning and development of multimodal transportation infrastructure that supports employment access for carless residents</p>                       |
|  | <p>Develop partnerships to improve access and awareness of housing assistance programs and resources to those in need</p>   |
|  | <p>Evaluate modifications to local ordinances, processes, and standards that support the development, or redevelopment, of 'missing middle' market rate housing</p> |
|  | <p>Increase awareness of low-income eligible broadband internet programs to improve households' ability to work and learn remotely</p>                              |
|  | <p>Continue the planning and development of fiber broadband networks through innovative public-private partnerships</p>   |





# Workforce Development and Entrepreneurship Strategies

|   |  |
|---|--|
|   | <p>Expand and promote childcare programs so workers are not forced to choose between employment or quality childcare</p>   |
|  | <p>Encourage workplace flexibility that meets the changing needs of the workforce, including hybrid work environments, flexible schedules, and paid training</p> |
|  | <p>Build and replicate successful high school and vocational school training programs that target in-demand, high-quality careers</p>                            |
|  | <p>Leverage resources and available funding to enhance private-sector workforce training programs and partnerships</p>   |
|  | <p>Expand outreach efforts to non-traditional entrepreneur sources, including community organizations, religious institutions, and others</p>                    |
|  | <p>Focus training and mentorship programming to support the development of “loan-ready” entrepreneurs and small businesses</p>                                   |



# Regional Business Strategies



Expand and connect business owners to training resources that increase their financial literacy



Enhance coaching and mentoring programs to allow business owners to benefit from operational and strategic planning assistance



Expand regional dialogue and coordination of resources, including SBDCs, commercial real estate, and economic development entities



Promote the planning and implementation of business-facing fiber broadband infrastructure to offer a competitive advantage for businesses to expand their footprint or relocate to the region



Develop incentives that leverage the region’s low cost-of-living to attract remote workers



Encourage flexibility and innovation in private employee benefit packages that enable and incentivize employee retention



NEFCO has identified the following target industrial sectors, which represent the region’s top economic strengths. These sectors also represent emerging industries, which will define the region’s economic health and growth for the next five years. The NEFCO General Policy Board and Regional CEDS Committee will support projects that further develop these primary and secondary industrial sectors.

### Primary Industrial Sectors

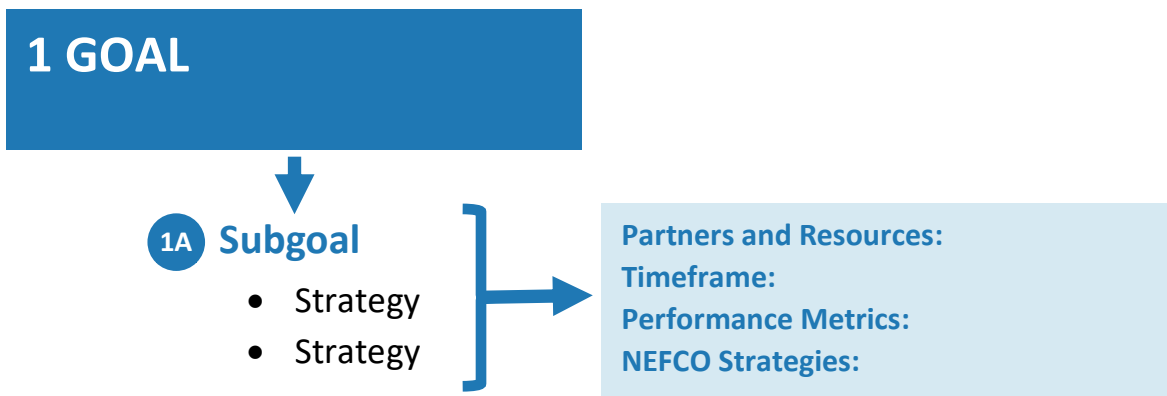
|   |  |  |             |
|---|--|--|-------------|
|   |  |  |             |
| Advanced Manufacturing; Manufacturing 4.0 | Advanced Materials (including polymers, chemicals, plastics, etc.) | Autonomous and Electric Vehicles; E-Mobility; Automotive | Health Care |

### Secondary Industrial Sectors

|   |        |                        |           |               |                          |
|---|--------|------------------------|-----------|---------------|--------------------------|
|   |        |                        |           |               |                          |
| Agriculture; Agribusiness; Food-based Manufacturing, Products, and Processing | Energy | Information Technology | Logistics | Manufacturing | Research and Development |



The CEDS Action Plan includes goals, subgoals, and strategies. Each subgoal includes a listing of partners and resources, timeframe for implementation, performance metrics, and applicable strategies NEFCO can employ to attain the subgoals. The organization of the Action Plan is illustrated below.



The Action Plan will guide the NEFCO regional economic development planning program over the next five years. The 2023-2028 CEDS Plan is intended to be a dynamic document and adapt to the needs of the region. Each year, NEFCO will evaluate the progress of the seven goals in the Annual Performance Report, which will be completed in 2024, 2025, 2026, and 2027. As conditions or regional priorities change, the Regional CEDS Committee may recommend additional goals or modifications to existing goals. New or modified goals will be added in the respective Annual Performance Report. The General Policy Board will approve the Annual Performance Reports, including any modified or new goals. A key to the successful attainment of these seven goals will require collaboration and engagement by both NEFCO and its partners.



|   |  |
|---|--|
|    | <p><b>Address the supply chain and promote domestic production</b></p>                                   |
|    | <p><b>Support programs that build human capital</b></p>  |
|   | <p><b>Encourage development of industries that support Northeast Ohio's economic clusters</b></p>        |
|  | <p><b>Promote redevelopment of blighted, underused, vacant, and environmentally challenged sites</b></p> |
|  | <p><b>Encourage investment in infrastructure and affordable housing</b></p>                              |
|  | <p><b>Support programs that diversify and build strong, resilient local and regional economies</b></p>   |
|  | <p><b>Develop benchmarking to evaluate region's progress and competitiveness</b></p>                     |



**Goal 1: Address the supply chain and promote domestic production**

**SUBGOALS**

- 1A** Analyze supply chain issues and opportunities for the region’s target industrial sectors
- 1B** Support policies and programs that encourage domestic/regional production
- 1C** Support programming and partnerships designed to support small businesses engaged in supply chain and production
- 1D** Support tech and tech-enabled startups that support and/or enhance supply chain and domestic production

- 1A** Analyze supply chain issues and opportunities for the region’s target industrial sectors
  - Complete a review of supply chain risks, specific to NEFCO region, that are most important economically (i.e., health, safety, etc.).
  - Create inventory of products most affected by supply chain deficiencies
  - Create a list of local manufacturers that already produce identified products and share information with consumers.
  - Prepare list of products not manufactured regionally, and determine how to create relationships with those producers
  - Work with regional partners to create a list of Ohio companies with specific materials and services to support the supply chain needs

**Partners and Resources:** Local and regional economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, local governments, businesses

**Timeframe:** 2023-2025

**Performance Metrics:** Completed review of supply chain risks

**NEFCO Strategies:** Better understand supply chain deficiencies

### 1B Support policies and programs that encourage domestic/regional production

- Work with regional partners by utilizing federal, state, and local grants to improve local companies' production to combat the supply chain delay
- Encourage collaboration between businesses and regional universities
- Encourage use of the Foreign Trade Zone by middle or larger companies

**Partners and Resources:** Local governments, universities, businesses, local and regional economic development organizations

**Timeframe:** Ongoing

**Performance Metrics:** New programs or policies; growth in existing programs

**NEFCO Strategies:** Connect local governments to available resources

### 1C Support programming and partnerships designed to support small businesses engaged in supply chain and production

- Ensure programs are designed to ensure diversity, equity, inclusion, and access across small businesses and startups

**Partners and Resources:** Local and regional economic development organizations, local governments, businesses

**Timeframe:** Ongoing

**Performance Metrics:** New or improved programs and partnerships

**NEFCO Strategies:** Connect local governments to available resources

### 1D Support tech and tech-enabled startups that support and/or enhance supply chain and domestic production

- Ensure programs are designed to ensure diversity, equity, inclusion, and access across small businesses and startups

**Partners and Resources:** Business incubators and accelerators, local and regional economic development organizations

**Timeframe:** Ongoing

**Performance Metrics:** Number of supported startups and entrepreneurs

**NEFCO Strategies:** Provide technical assistance and support for EDA and other grant applications



**Goal 2: Support programs that build human capital**

**SUBGOALS**

- 2A Support the continued growth and success of programs that train or develop workers and entrepreneurs
- 2B Support programs and initiatives to improve upskilling and employee retention
- 2C Support efforts and programs aimed at retaining local college and high school graduates within the NEFCO region
- 2D Expand technical and vocational training opportunities and ensure youth enter workforce prepared
- 2E Support programs that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion

- 2A **Support the continued growth and success of programs that train/develop workers and entrepreneurs**
  - Support business incubators and accelerators
  - Increase awareness of services available at incubators and accelerators
  - Encourage growth of successful workforce development programs; replicate where necessary
  - Check into training programs and solicit trainers to come and regionally work with volunteer companies; track progress and outcomes

**Partners and Resources:** Local businesses, business incubators and accelerators, local and regional economic development organizations

**Timeframe:** Ongoing

**Performance Metrics:** Growth in startups and entrepreneurs; new training programs

**NEFCO Strategies:** Connect local governments and economic development organizations to available resources; provide technical assistance and support for EDA and other grant applications



**2B Support programs and initiatives to improve upskilling and employee retention**

- Provide paid training and other workforce development opportunities to employees
- Consider flexible schedules and other incentives to retain employees (i.e., childcare expense allowances, remote/hybrid work schedule, longevity bonuses, etc.)
- Continue to create a work-life environment to attract families to the region
- Encourage businesses to provide reduced/free transit fares for employees

**Partners and Resources:** Local and regional economic development organizations, transit authorities, regional businesses

**Timeframe:** 2023-2025

**Performance Metrics:** Number of participating businesses; new programs or incentives

**NEFCO Strategies:** Connect local governments to available resources; direct communities to NEFCO ER&R Plan strategies; ER&R Plan Implementation Committee

**2C Support efforts and programs aimed at retaining local college and high school graduates within the NEFCO region**

- Work to educate local high school and college students about the different industries in the region
- Support programming and partnerships designed to ensure more high school and collegiate students are entering STEM fields
- Work with business and industry leaders to recruit regional college and high school talent

**Partners and Resources:** High schools, vocational schools, local and regional economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, colleges, businesses

**Timeframe:** 2023-2025

**Performance Metrics:** Number of participating schools and students; new programs or initiatives

**NEFCO Strategies:** Connect local governments to available resources; direct communities to NEFCO ER&R Plan strategies; ER&R Plan Implementation Committee

**2D Expand technical and vocational training opportunities**

- Support existing programs at high schools, career centers, colleges, and community colleges that develop workforce and ensure youth enter workforce prepared
- Ensure students in STEM fields are connected to internship and early employment opportunities in tech fields and at tech companies of all sizes and shapes
- Work with regional universities and colleges to develop certificate and associate degree programs for in-demand trades and specializations
- Expand vocational and adult education opportunities and programs

**Partners and Resources:** High schools, vocational schools, technical schools, and colleges

**Timeframe:** 2023-2025

**Performance Metrics:** Additional programs and students, additional certification programs, job placement opportunities; growth in existing programs

**NEFCO Strategies:** Better understand high school and vocational school offerings around region; engage high school and vocational personnel in CEDS planning; ER&R Plan Implementation Committee

**2E Support programs that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion**

- Improve workforce development programs targeting underserved populations
- Work with local organizations that support re-entry, veterans, and immigrant populations to help improve the challenge they face entering workforce (including affordable housing)
- Provide companies with lists of organizations that support diverse populations (most organizations will allow companies to post job descriptions)
- Work with local governments to create cultural events, grocery stores, etc. to encourage various cultures to be attracted to the area.
- Work to have the appropriate support organizations in place to help specific populations thrive in the community and local companies

**Partners and Resources:** Local and regional workforce development organizations, economic development organizations, local governments

**Timeframe:** 2023-2025

**Performance Metrics:** new contacts reached; new organizations engaged

**NEFCO Strategies:** Provide technical assistance and support for EDA and other grant applications; ER&R Plan Implementation Committee





## Goal 3: Encourage development of industries that support Northeast Ohio's economic clusters

### SUBGOALS

- 3A Support projects that contribute toward strengthening the region's targeted industries
- 3B Support activities that complement targeted and other existing industries in the region
- 3C Capitalize on and expand existing regional industrial clusters (i.e., polymers, chemicals, plastics, etc.)
- 3D Encourage and support the development of speculative industrial buildings and properties
- 3E Provide support and funding to the local universities for development and research for the identified industry clusters
- 3F Support programming and partnerships focused on ensuring innovation and inclusion across NE Ohio's economic clusters, resulting in diversified, future-proof industries

#### 3A Support projects that contribute toward strengthening the region's targeted industries

- Support projects that strengthen primary target industrial sectors (advanced manufacturing, advanced materials, autonomous and electric vehicles, and health care)
- Support projects that strengthen secondary target industrial sectors (agriculture and food products, energy, information technology, logistics, manufacturing, and research and development)

**Partners and Resources:** Local governments, economic development organizations, NEFCO

**Timeframe:** Ongoing

**Performance Metrics:** New projects, created or retained jobs, new private investment

**NEFCO Strategies:** Provide technical assistance and support for EDA and other grant applications

**3B Support activities that complement targeted and other existing industries in the region**

- Work with local governments to offer incentives to targeted industries

**Partners and Resources:** Local governments, local and regional economic development organizations

**Timeframe:** Ongoing

**Performance Metrics:** Jobs created and retained, new private investment

**NEFCO Strategies:** Provide technical assistance and support for EDA and other grant applications; Connect local governments to available resources

**3C Capitalize on and expand existing regional industrial clusters (i.e., polymers, chemicals, plastics, etc.)**

- Work with current local companies of the cluster to gauge needs for thriving in region
- Bring attention to clusters at national and international trade shows to entice more companies into the cluster
- Encourage local governments in the cluster to create list of available incentives for companies and residents

**Partners and Resources:** Local and regional economic development organizations, local governments

**Timeframe:** 2023-2025

**Performance Metrics:** Development of incentives list; new contacts created

**NEFCO Strategies:** Better understand clusters geographically through GIS

**3D Encourage and support the development of speculative industrial buildings and properties**

- Support development of speculative industrial buildings on vacant urban parcels
- Identify areas for future industrial building development

**Partners and Resources:** Local governments, local and regional economic development organizations, county land banks

**Timeframe:** Ongoing

**Performance Metrics:** Development of plan, speculative buildings constructed

**NEFCO Strategies:** Connect local governments to available resources

**3E Provide support and funding to the local universities for development and research for the identified industry clusters**

- Encourage collaboration between local governments, universities, and businesses on research and development

**Partners and Resources:** Universities, local and regional economic development organizations

**Timeframe:** Ongoing

**Performance Metrics:** New collaborations; new or expanded programs

**NEFCO Strategies:** Connect local governments, universities, and businesses to available resources

**3F Support programming and partnerships focused on ensuring innovation and inclusion across NE Ohio’s economic clusters, resulting in diversified, future-proof industries**

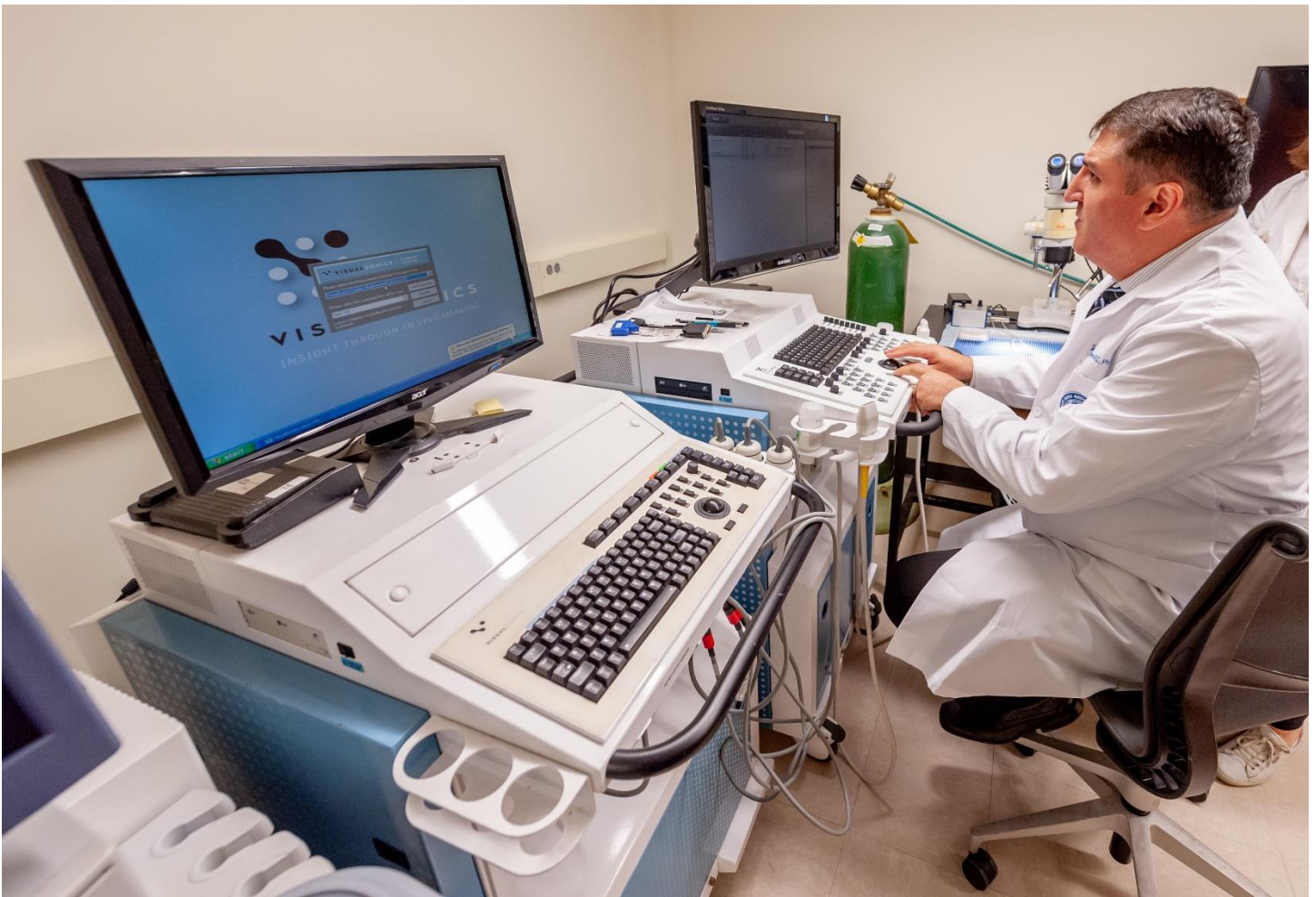
- Encourage collaboration between local governments, universities, and businesses on research and development

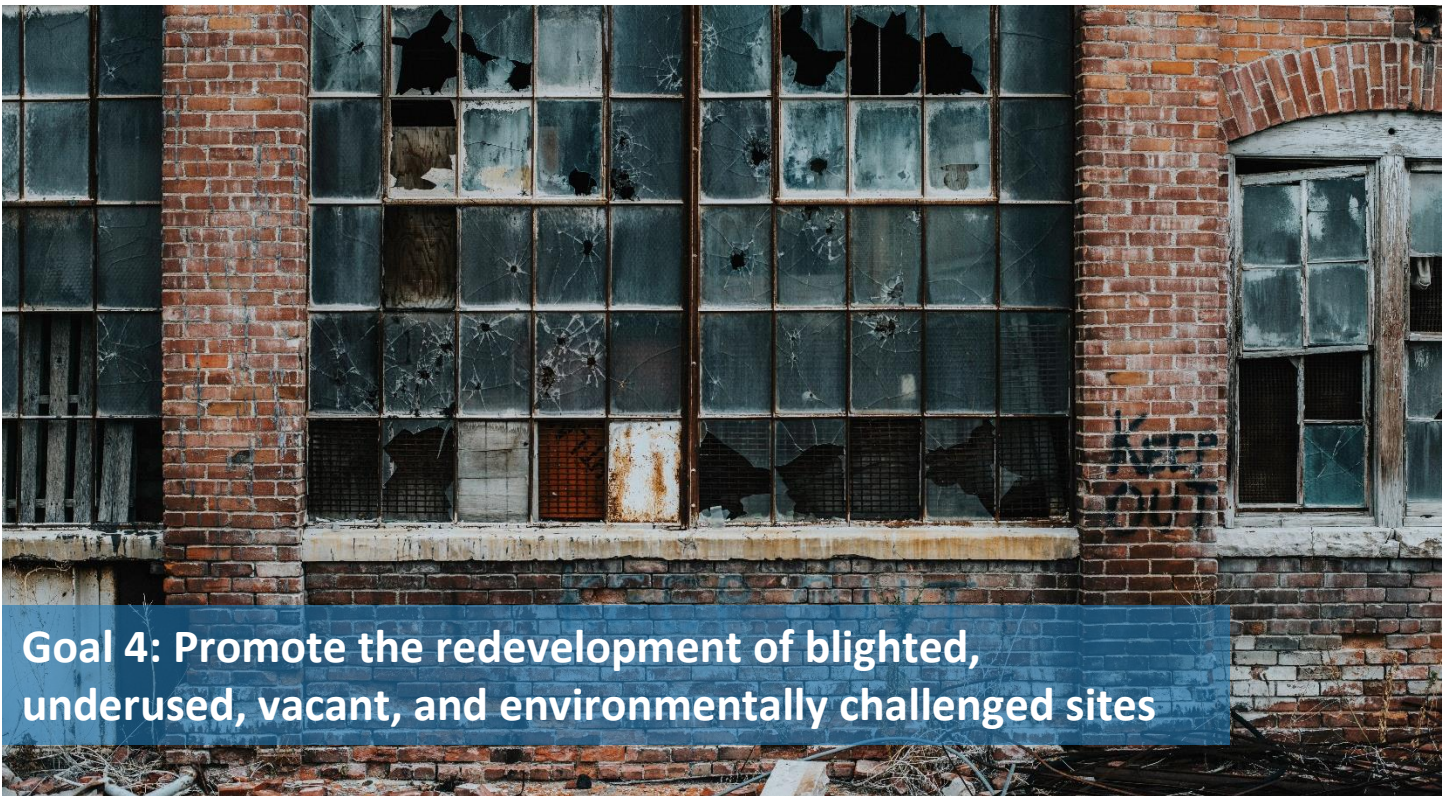
**Partners and Resources:** Local governments, local and regional economic development organizations, colleges and universities

**Timeframe:** Ongoing

**Performance Metrics:** New and expanded programs and partnerships

**NEFCO Strategies:** Provide technical assistance and support for EDA and other grant applications





**Goal 4: Promote the redevelopment of blighted, underused, vacant, and environmentally challenged sites**

**SUBGOALS**

- 4A Encourage counties and local governments to identify sites for brownfields assessments and cleanups
- 4B Redevelop/reuse vacant industrial sites for economic use
- 4C Encourage programs that support and pursue state and federal brownfields grant program
- 4D Work with county land banks to divest of vacant properties that have not been utilized within a certain timeframe
- 4E Designate priority areas for development

- 4A Encourage counties and local governments to identify sites for brownfields assessments and cleanups
  - Support local and regional brownfields redevelopment initiatives

**Partners and Resources:** Local governments, county land banks, NEFCO

**Timeframe:** Ongoing

**Performance Metrics:** Properties identified; list or strategic action plan developed

**NEFCO Strategies:** Provide technical assistance and support on Ohio Department of Development (ODOD) and USEPA brownfields grant applications; connect local governments to available resources; participate and support Vibrant NEO brownfields initiatives

- 4B Redevelop/reuse vacant industrial sites for economic use
  - Encourage brownfield grant and writing workshops
  - Pursue grant opportunities for brownfield assessment and cleanup



- Work with regional partners to create the appropriate marketing information on specific sites (to create awareness of additional needs to redevelop the space)
- Work to get federal, EPA, or local funds to improve the identified spaces
- Create a public-private partnership to redevelop older spaces

**Partners and Resources:** Local governments, county land banks, NEFCO

**Timeframe:** Ongoing

**Performance Metrics:** Grant workshops conducted, grant applications submitted and awarded, public-private partnerships developed

**NEFCO Strategies:** Organize brownfield grant and writing workshops; invite representatives from USEPA, ODOD, and other organizations to General Policy Board meetings to discuss competitive brownfields grant programs

#### 4C Encourage programs that support and pursue state and federal brownfields grant programs

- Provide information to regional contacts on available brownfields grant programs via email
- Publish grants information on NEFCO website

**Partners and Resources:** NEFCO, local governments, county land banks

**Timeframe:** 2023-2024

**Performance Metrics:** Creation of grants webpage

**NEFCO Strategies:** Website grants information; NEFCO newsletters; email communications to contacts

#### 4D Work with county land banks to divest of vacant properties that have not been used within a certain timeframe

- Develop inventory of vacant properties, including date of vacancy
- Adopt strategy for acquiring vacant properties

**Partners and Resources:** County and community land banks, local governments

**Timeframe:** 2023-2025

**Performance Metrics:** Completion of vacant property inventory and development of acquisition strategy

**NEFCO Strategies:** Better engage with county land banks to understand long-term strategies

#### 4E Designate priority areas for development

- Support programs and partnerships providing incentives for small and middle-size businesses and startups to locate businesses in targeted priority areas; ensure incentives account for systemic inequity

**Partners and Resources:** Local governments, local and regional economic development organizations, businesses

**Timeframe:** Ongoing

**Performance Metrics:** New programs and partnerships; increased participation in existing programs

**NEFCO Strategies:** Better engage with county land banks to understand long-term strategies



## Goal 5: Encourage investment in infrastructure and affordable housing

### SUBGOALS

- 5A Support efforts to bring affordable, high-speed, reliable broadband to unserved and underserved areas of the NEFCO region
- 5B Expand transportation options that enhance employment and educational opportunities, particularly for economically disadvantaged populations (Equity)
- 5C Support projects and encourage land use policies that improve and promote bike, pedestrian, and transit infrastructure
- 5D Support projects and encourage land use policies that promote affordable housing
- 5E Invest in sustainable, multimodal transportation infrastructure
- 5F Invest in efforts to build new, affordable housing

#### 5A Support efforts to bring affordable, high-speed, reliable broadband to unserved and underserved areas of the NEFCO region

- Support development of municipal and countywide efforts to expand broadband internet
- Encourage development of municipal broadband utilities
- Work with private internet service providers (ISPs) to provide affordable, reliable, high-speed internet with focus on underserved and unserved communities and the low-to moderate income census tracts
- Support digital equity that ensures all individuals and communities have the information technology capacity needed for full participation in modern economy
- Increase awareness of low-income eligible broadband internet programs



**Partners and Resources:** Local governments, ISPs, Ohio Association of Regional Councils, BroadbandOhio

**Timeframe:** Ongoing

**Performance Metrics:** Households contacted, additional households/areas served

**NEFCO Strategies:** Better engage internet service providers in CEDS planning; connect local governments to available resources; provide technical assistance and support for EDA and other grant applications; participate in Ohio Association of Regional Councils (OARC) Broadband Working Group; provide updates to local governments on BroadbandOhio funding opportunities

**5B Expand transportation options that enhance employment and educational opportunities, particularly for economically disadvantaged populations**

- Increase access to employment concentrations and job hubs by expanding transit services
- Explore innovative collaborative partnerships between employers and transit agencies

**Partners and Resources:** Regional transit authorities, local businesses

**Timeframe:** 2023-2025

**Performance Metrics:** Additional programs, transit ridership, and participating businesses

**NEFCO Strategies:** Better engage regional metropolitan planning organizations and transit authorities in CEDS planning; ER&R Implementation Committee

**5C Support projects and encourage land use policies that improve and promote bike, pedestrian, and transit infrastructure**

- Promote modifications to local building and subdivision regulations to encouraging bike and pedestrian facilities as well as connections to existing trails and parks
- Encourage transit-oriented development
- Encourage local businesses and industries to provide connections to sidewalks and trails through commercial site plan review process

**Partners and Resources:** Municipal and county planning commissions, AMATS, SCATS, local businesses, regional transit authorities

**Timeframe:** 2023-2025

**Performance Metrics:** Modified land use policies

**NEFCO Strategies:** Better engage regional metropolitan planning organizations and transit authorities in CEDS planning; ER&R Implementation Committee

**5D Support projects and encourage land use policies that promote affordable housing**

- Facilitate redevelopment of vacant buildings into affordable housing units
- Permit higher density residential development
- Modify local building and subdivision regulations to require certain affordability for percentage of developments

**Partners and Resources:** Municipal and county building departments and planning commissions

**Timeframe:** 2023-2025

**Performance Metrics:** Modified ordinances/resolutions

**NEFCO Strategies:** Better engage metropolitan housing authorities in CEDS planning; ER&R Implementation Committee; help connect communities and nonprofit organizations to grant opportunities

#### **5E Invest in sustainable, multimodal transportation infrastructure**

- Encourage development of trails and sidewalks
- Identify carpooling parking lots
- Identify and secure funding for heated bus shelters in populated areas

**Partners and Resources:** Local governments, AMATS, SCATS, municipal and county planning commissions

**Timeframe:** 2023-2025

**Performance Metrics:** Additional miles of trails and sidewalks

**NEFCO Strategies:** Better engage county and regional planning commissions in CEDS planning; participate on AMATS Connecting Communities Committee; ER&R Implementation Committee; help connect communities and nonprofit organizations to grant opportunities

#### **5F Invest in efforts to build new, affordable housing**

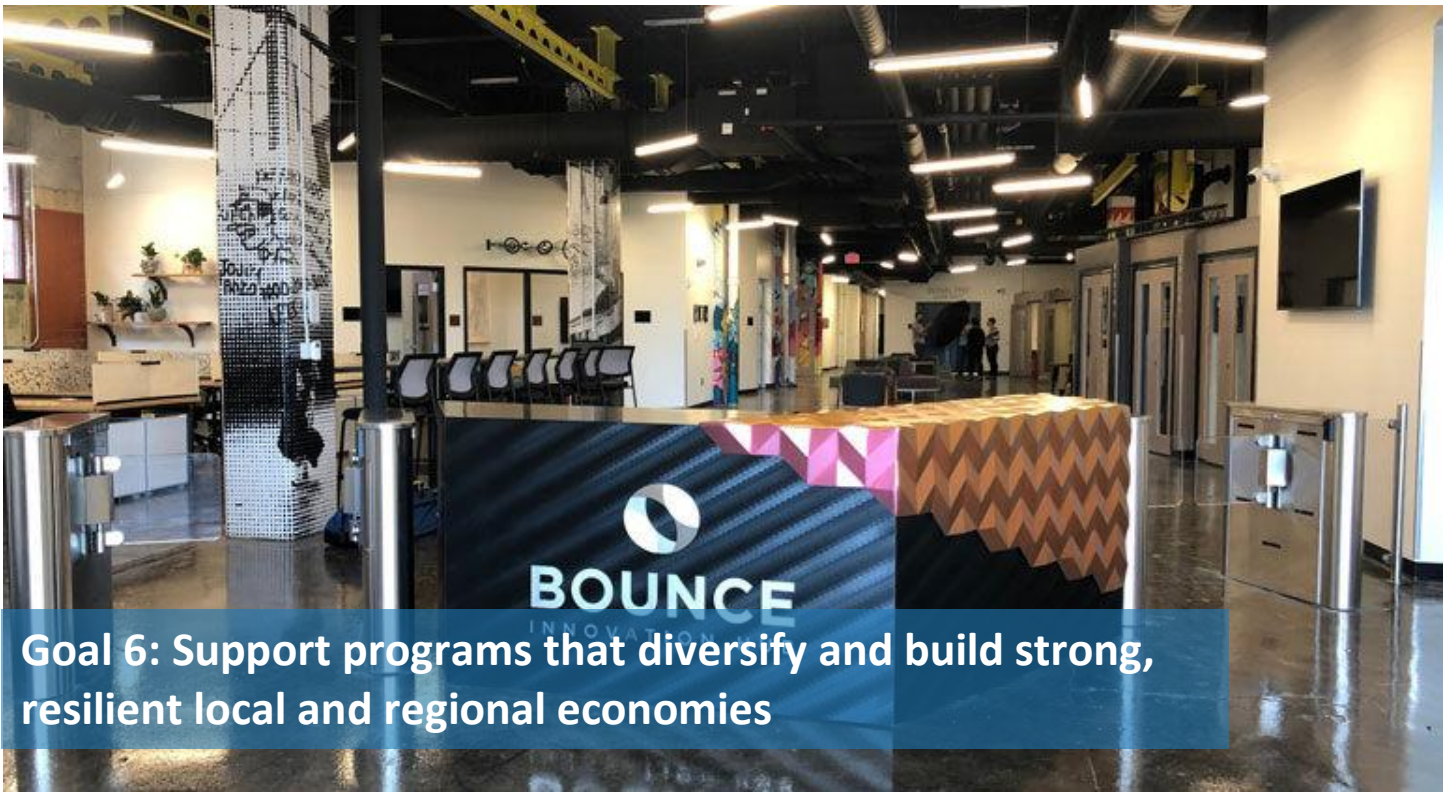
- Collaborate with metropolitan housing authorities, nonprofit housing organizations and developers
- Encourage communities to create mixed-income housing options

**Partners and Resources:** Local governments, municipal and county planning commissions, metropolitan housing authorities

**Timeframe:** 2023-2025

**Performance Metrics:** New housing units

**NEFCO Strategies:** Better engage metropolitan housing authorities in CEDS planning; ER&R implementation Committee; help connect communities and nonprofit organizations to grant



**Goal 6: Support programs that diversify and build strong, resilient local and regional economies**

**SUBGOALS**

- 6A Encourage programs and projects that create and retain jobs
- 6B Support efforts that will make the region more globally competitive
- 6C Support entrepreneurial and technological development
- 6D Improve access to capital for regional businesses in equitable manner

**6A Encourage programs and projects that create and retain jobs**

- Maintain regular business retention and expansion visits with companies
- Provide assistance and support to minority and women-owned businesses

**Partners and Resources:** Local and regional economic development organizations, local governments

**Timeframe:** Ongoing

**Performance Metrics:** Total number of created and retained jobs

**NEFCO Strategies:** Provide technical assistance and support for EDA and other grant applications; connect local governments to available resources

**6B Support efforts that will make the region more globally competitive**

- Support programming and partnerships focused on supporting all community members to fulfill their economic potential through business creation and growth
- Support programs and partnerships focused on ensuring all community members have access to the knowledge, tools, and resources needed to connect with opportunities in established and growing sectors

**Partners and Resources:** Workforce development organizations, local and regional economic development organizations, local governments

**Timeframe:** Ongoing

**Performance Metrics:** Total number of created and retained jobs

**NEFCO Strategies:** Encourage collaboration between community groups, workforce development organizations, and businesses; provide technical assistance and support for EDA and other grant applications

### 6C Support entrepreneurial and technological development

- Support entrepreneurs pursuing Main Street small businesses and tech and tech-enabled startup ventures
- Support efforts to encourage technology development and innovation in technology for regional companies

**Partners and Resources:** Business incubators and accelerators, venture development organizations, local and regional economic development organizations, local governments

**Timeframe:** Ongoing

**Performance Metrics:** Total startups and entrepreneurs supported

**NEFCO Strategies:** Help connect local governments to entrepreneurial resources; provide technical assistance and support for EDA and other grant applications

### 6D Improve access to capital for regional businesses in equitable manner

- Support efforts to address systemic inequities in lending practices to minority business loan applicants
- Improve financial literacy for business owners

**Partners and Resources:** Community development financial institutions (CDFIs), Small Business Administration

**Timeframe:** Ongoing

**Performance Metrics:** New loans to minority-owned businesses; new programs implemented

**NEFCO Strategies:** Better understand challenges faced by minority-owned businesses



## Goal 7: Develop benchmarking to evaluate region's progress and competitiveness

### SUBGOALS

- 7A Analyze data to establish benchmark
- 7B Review and adopt best practices from other regions
- 7C Better understand positive and negative factors impacting region's competitiveness
- 7D Assess regional equity
- 7E Develop metrics to evaluate regional progress

#### 7A Analyze data to establish benchmark

- Compare affordability of housing to similar markets in U.S.
- Compare population growth to similar communities in U.S.
- Compare efforts for increasing human capital of similar communities/regions
- Continually meet with companies to gauge if programs, efforts, and funds are helping improve the community, region, and company's economic standing

**Partners and Resources:** Local and regional economic development organizations, local governments, NEFCO Regional CEDS Committee

**Timeframe:** 2023-2025

**Performance Metrics:** Development of benchmarking report

**NEFCO Strategies:** Convene Regional CEDS Committee quarterly; compile demographic and market data; develop summary report

**7B Review and adopt best practices from other regions**

- Research examples of successful methods and projects that have improved regional competitiveness

**Partners and Resources:** Local and regional economic development organizations, local governments, NEFCO Regional CEDS Committee

**Timeframe:** 2023-2025

**Performance Metrics:** Development of list of best practices

**NEFCO Strategies:** Convene Regional CEDS Committee quarterly; compile list of best practices

**7C Better understand positive and negative factors impacting region's competitiveness**

- Analyze socio-economic factors and other demographics
- Identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats

**Partners and Resources:** Local and regional economic development organizations, local governments, NEFCO Regional CEDS Committee

**Timeframe:** 2023-2025

**Performance Metrics:** Development of list of positive and negative factors

**NEFCO Strategies:** Convene Regional CEDS Committee quarterly; compile list of positive and negative factors

**7D Assess regional equity**

- Support programs and partnerships addressing equity
- Analyze/research food deserts in NEFCO Region

**Partners and Resources:** Local and regional economic development organizations, local governments, NEFCO Regional CEDS Committee

**Timeframe:** 2023-2025

**Performance Metrics:** New programs or partnerships started/created

**NEFCO Strategies:** Better engage organizations addressing regional equity in CEDS planning

**7E Develop metrics to evaluate regional progress**

- Number of site searches and wins increases each year
- Identify opportunities for new programs and partnerships focused on regional collaboration and efficient leveraging of resources
- Identify and develop programs and partnerships measuring economic impact and outcomes

**Partners and Resources:** Local governments, economic development agencies

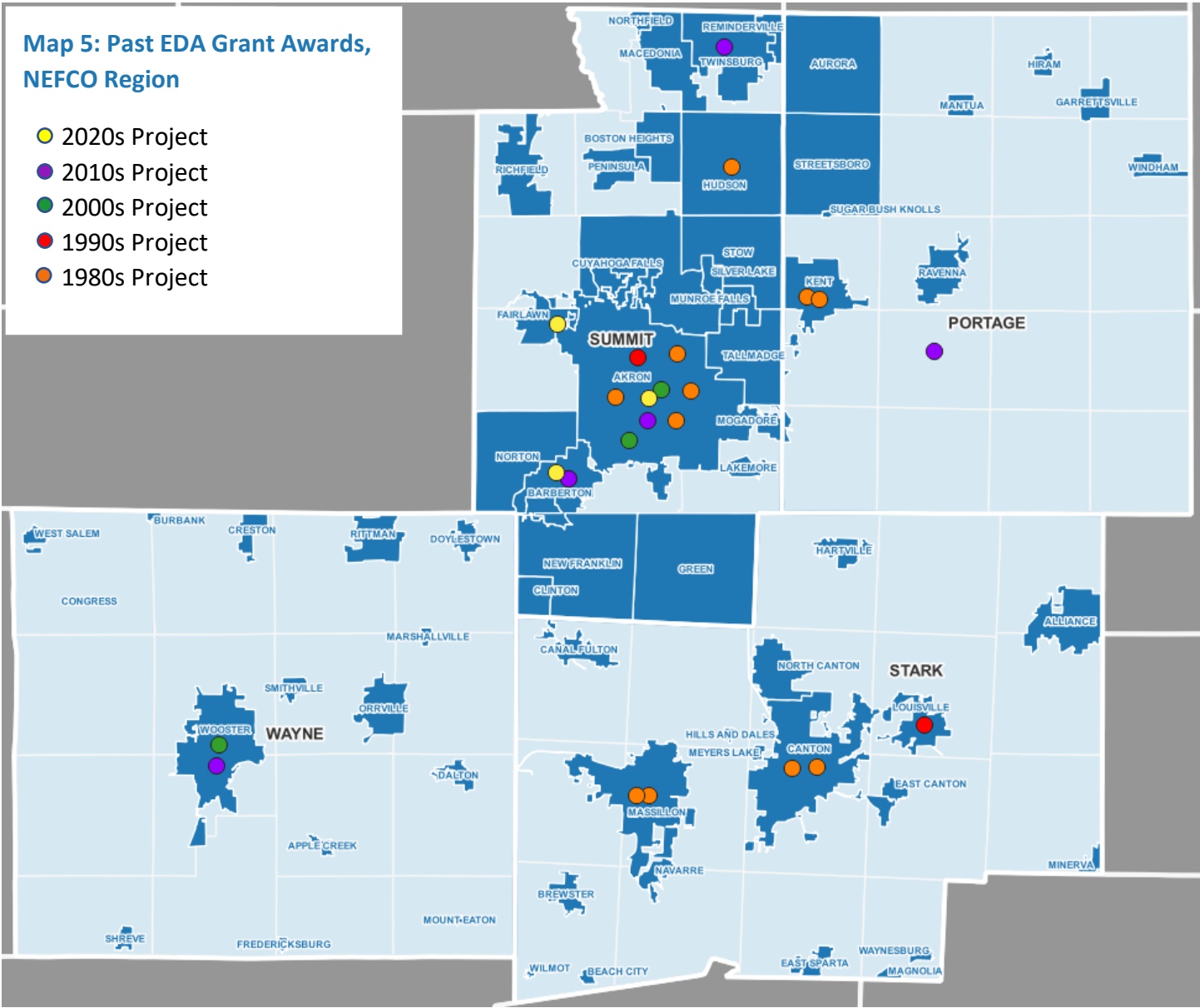
**Timeframe:** 2023-2028

**Performance Metrics:** New programs started/created; new collaborative programs developed

**NEFCO Strategies:** Convene Regional CEDS Committee quarterly; development of regional evaluation metrics



# Past EDA Grant Awards



Source: Ohio Department of Transportation



**Past EDA Grant Awards (1980-Present)**

**PORTAGE COUNTY**

| <b>Project</b>                    | <b>Lead organization</b> | <b>Year</b> | <b>EDA investment</b> |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Northeast Ohio Medical University | Rootstown Township       | 2016        | \$498,282             |
| Kent Revolving Loan Fund          | City of Kent             | 1988        | \$148,800             |
| Kent Infrastructure Improvements  | City of Kent             | 1983        | \$310,375             |

**STARK COUNTY**

| <b>Project</b>                               | <b>Lead organization</b> | <b>Year</b> | <b>EDA investment</b> |
|--|--------------------------|-------------|-----------------------|
| Canton Discharge Pipeline                    | City of Canton           | 1999        | \$1,000,000           |
| Stark Development Board Revolving Loan Fund  | Stark Development Board  | 1996        | \$200,000             |
| City of Louisville Water System Improvements | City of Louisville       | 1993        | \$695,500             |
| NOVA Technology Industrial Park              | City of Massillon        | 1988        | \$331,369             |
| Stark Development Board Revolving Loan Fund  | Stark Development Board  | 1987        | \$480,000             |
| Timken Faircrest Steel Mill Road Extension   | City of Canton           | 1984        | \$1,345,000           |
| Finefrock Industrial Park                    | City of Massillon        | 1980        | \$296,126             |

**SUMMIT COUNTY**

| <b>Project</b>   | <b>Lead organization</b>   | <b>Year</b> | <b>EDA investment</b> |
|--|--|-------------|-----------------------|
| Bounce Innovation Hub Expansion and Renovation Project | City of Akron  | 2022        | \$2,000,000           |
| FairlawnGIG Expansion Planning Project                 | Summit County  | 2021        | \$125,000             |
| Barberton Revolving Loan Fund                          | Barberton Community Development Corporation                                      | 2020        | \$1,045,000           |
| Bounce Innovation Hub Regional Innovation Strategies   | Bounce Innovation Hub  | 2019        | \$300,000             |
| Bounce Innovation Hub*                                 | City of Akron  | 2016        | \$2,520,000           |
| Bounce Innovation Hub*                                 | City of Akron  | 2014        | \$2,520,000           |
| Chrysler Twinsburg Stamping Plant Recovery Action Plan | City of Twinsburg, Summit County, NEFCO  | 2010        | \$134,675             |
| i6 Challenge Grant                                     | Austen BioInnovation Institute in Akron, University of Akron Research Foundation | 2010        | \$1,000,000           |
| Lakeside Innovation Business Park                      | Barberton Community Development Corporation                                      | 2010        | \$1,598,250           |
| Akron Industrial Incubator                             | City of Akron  | 2003        | \$1,750,000           |
| Massillon Road Industrial Park                         | City of Akron  | 2000        | \$1,250,000           |
| Akron Industrial Incubator                             | City of Akron  | 1993        | \$1,177,500           |
| Barberton Revolving Loan Fund                          | Barberton Community Development Corporation                                      | 1990        | \$300,000             |
| Roadway Sewer Development                              | City of Akron  | 1985        | \$1,100,000           |
| Ohio Bell Telephone Computer Center                    | City of Akron  | 1983        | \$693,000             |





| Project   | Lead organization | Year | EDA investment |
|---|-------------------|------|----------------|
| Sweitzer Avenue Industrial Improvements               | City of Akron     | 1980 | \$1,900,000    |
| Goodyear Technical Center Infrastructure Improvements | City of Akron     | 1980 | \$1,000,000    |

**WAYNE COUNTY**

| Project            | Lead organization                                       | Year | EDA investment |
|--------------------|---|------|----------------|
| BioHio Master Plan | Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Organization | 2013 | \$71,321       |
| Pounden Hall       | OARDC/OSU   | 2006 | \$744,091      |

**NEFCO REGION**

| Project  | Lead organization   | Year      | EDA investment |
|--|---|-----------|----------------|
| MAGNET Build Back Better Regional Challenge, Phase 1 | MAGNET  | 2021      | \$500,000      |
| Resilient NEO Sprint Challenge                       | MAGNET, JumpStart, Youngstown Business Incubator, TeamNEO | 2021      | \$703,378      |
| NEFCO Economic Recovery and Resiliency Planning      | NEFCO   | 2020      | \$400,000      |
| JumpStart, Inc.; Regional Innovation Program         | JumpStart, Inc.   | 2017      | \$300,000      |
| TeamNEO; Economic Adjustment Implementation          | TeamNEO   | 2013      | \$499,954      |
| Speed-to-Market Accelerator                          | NorTech, JumpStart, MAGNET, Lorain Community College      | 2011      | \$2,062,945    |
| NorTech  | NorTech   | 2011      | \$913,000      |
| NorTech Advanced Energy Cluster Development          | NorTech   | 2010      | \$300,000      |
| JumpStart, Inc.; Economic Adjustment Investments     | JumpStart, Inc.   | 2010      | \$1,500,000    |
| JumpStart, Inc.; Economic Adjustment Investments     | JumpStart, Inc.   | 2008      | \$1,500,000    |
| JumpStart, Inc.; Economic Adjustment Investments     | JumpStart, Inc.   | 2006      | \$735,000      |
| Partnership Planning Grants                          | NEFCO   | 1980-2025 | \$2,250,000    |

|              |  |  |                     |
|--------------|--|--|---------------------|
| <b>TOTAL</b> |  |  | <b>\$38,324,566</b> |
|--------------|--|--|---------------------|

\*Grant returned to EDA

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## Charts:

1. NEFCO Region Population (1950-2020)
2. County Populations (1950-2020)
3. Age Distribution, 2020
4. 24-month Unemployment Rates
5. 24-month Unemployment Rates, NEFCO Cities
6. Labor Force Participation Rate (2011-2022)
7. Poverty Rate, 2019
8. Child Poverty Rate, 2019
9. Food Insecurity Rate, 2020
10. Percent of Households without Access to Minimum 25/3 Mbps

## Maps:

1. NEFCO Region Municipalities
2. FEMA National Risk Index, 2021
3. General Land Use, 2011
4. Disadvantaged Census Tracts in NEFCO Region, 2022
5. Past EDA Grant Awards, NEFCO Region



# NEFCO Board Resolution

Resolution No. FY2023-005

**RESOLUTION OF THE NORTHEAST OHIO FOUR COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION (NEFCO) GENERAL POLICY BOARD ADOPTING THE 2023-2028 COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND AUTHORIZING ITS SUBMITTAL TO THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION**

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**WHEREAS**, the NEFCO region continues to undergo significant changes in the structure of its economy; and

**WHEREAS**, the NEFCO General Policy Board in conjunction with its 127 local units of government has formulated a regional economic development strategy entitled the *2023-2028 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)*; and

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

**WHEREAS**, NEFCO receives funding from the EDA under the Partnership Planning Grant program to provide comprehensive economic development planning services to the region; and

**WHEREAS**, under the EDA Partnership Planning Grant, NEFCO is required to submit a new CEDS, in accordance with 13 C.F.R. §§ 303.6 and 303.7, at least every five years, to maintain its EDD designation and the region's eligibility for EDA funding; and

**WHEREAS**, all counties within the region have contributed to the formulation of the *2023-2028 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy*; and

**WHEREAS**, the Regional CEDS Committee has provided significant input in the development of the *2023-2028 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy*; and

**WHEREAS**, the *2023-2028 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy* includes goals, implementation strategies, and performance metrics for regional prosperity and resiliency; and

**WHEREAS**, a draft of the *2023-2028 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)* has been posted on NEFCO's website for a 30-day public review period; and

**WHEREAS**, NEFCO General Policy Board approval of the *2023-2028 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy* is required by the EDA.

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the NEFCO General Policy Board adopts the *2023-2028 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy*, its goals and strategies, 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 18, 2023



Todd Peetz, Secretary  
NEFCO General Policy Board

# References

- <sup>1</sup> NEFCO 2018 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, <https://www.nefcoplanning.org/documents/2018-ceds/>, Northeast Ohio Four County Regional Planning and Development Organization, 2018
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- <sup>4</sup> StatsAmerica, Big Radius Tool, <https://www.statsamerica.org/radius/big.aspx>
- <sup>5</sup> Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study, Transportation Outlook 2045, <http://amatsplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/DRAFT-Transportation-Outlook-2045-v0.2.pdf>
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- <sup>10</sup> Team NEO, <https://northeastohioregion.com/county/summit/>
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- <sup>12</sup> Ohio Department of Development, [https://devresearch.ohio.gov/reports\\_countytrends\\_map.htm](https://devresearch.ohio.gov/reports_countytrends_map.htm)
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- <sup>14</sup> National Economic Resilience Data Explorer, Economic Development District Edition, Argonne National Laboratory, <https://www.anl.gov/dis/nerde-economic-development-district-dashboard>
- <sup>15</sup> National Risk Index, Federal Emergency Management Agency, <https://www.fema.gov/flood-maps/products-tools/national-risk-index>
- <sup>16</sup> Ohio Brownfield Inventory Database, Ohio Environmental Protection Agency, <http://epawwwextp01.epa.ohio.gov:8080/ords/epaxp/f?p=109:1:0>
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- <sup>19</sup> BroadbandOhio, <https://broadband.ohio.gov/view-maps/ohios-broadband-availability-gaps/ohios-broadband-availability-gaps>
- <sup>20</sup> Broadband Speed Guide, Federal Communications Commission, <https://www.fcc.gov/consumers/guides/broadband-speed-guide>
- <sup>21</sup> FCC calls 25 Mbps 'broadband' speed. The push is on to up it to 100, *The Washington Post*, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2022/07/19/fcc-broadband-new-definition-100mbps/>
- <sup>22</sup> Households unserved by broadband (25/3 Mbps), Broadband Ohio, <https://broadband.ohio.gov/view-maps/ohios-broadband-availability-gaps/ohios-broadband-availability-gaps>
- <sup>23</sup> Area unserved by broadband (25/3 Mbps), Broadband Ohio, <https://broadband.ohio.gov/view-maps/ohios-broadband-availability-gaps/ohios-broadband-availability-gaps>
- <sup>24</sup> 24-month average unemployment rate ending September 2022, Bureau of Labor Statistics
- <sup>25</sup> Feeding America, 2021 Overall Food Insecurity, <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2020/overall/ohio>
- <sup>26</sup> Broadband Ohio, Broadband Profile, [https://broadband.ohio.gov/static/countyprofiles/Portage%20County\\_BBOH.pdf](https://broadband.ohio.gov/static/countyprofiles/Portage%20County_BBOH.pdf)
- <sup>27</sup> North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), U.S. Census Bureau, <https://www.census.gov/naics/>
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