



Strengthening Stark: A Movement

Thank you for joining the Strengthening Stark movement! Strengthening Stark is a collective effort to create alignment and coordination of the economic development efforts of more than two dozen entities working to advance economic growth and opportunity in Stark County.

Strengthening Stark is guided by a Governance Committee, which consists of volunteers, many of whom represent the entities that support or perform economic development activities. The Governance Committee supports the development of strategies, initiatives and projects to transform Stark County into a larger, younger and more prosperous community.



2019 Recap

Over the course of last year, Strengthening Stark narrowed its focus to three main objectives: develop strong businesses (**Business Growth**) , develop a strong talent pool (**Talent Development**) and develop a strong sense of place (**Quality Places**) . Narrowing our economic development efforts will generate better, more strategic results.

As we reflect on 2019's efforts to make Stark County more economically competitive, the following highlights come to mind:

Business Growth

Strategies to help grow and expand Stark County businesses

- Launched [Stark Business 911](#), a central portal for Stark County businesses to help them identify, understand and access services and resources for their business needs.
- Identified **five targeted industries** that have significant growth potential in Stark County: 1) Metals Manufacturing 2) Food Manufacturing 3) Petrochemicals 4) Hospitality and Tourism 5) Digital Technology

Talent Development

Strategies to bring awareness and preparation for jobs that offer a pathway to prosperity

- Unveiled a [Stark County Jobs Platform](#), an online, comprehensive database of job openings, educational requirements, wage ranges and more.
- Planned and piloted [Smart Stark 101](#), a program to talk with Stark County students about the benefits of higher education and why they should choose local for college
- **Convened area colleges and universities** to explore how we can work together to help reverse the troubling trends of our county becoming smaller, older and poorer. Read how [Aultman College](#), [Kent State University at Stark](#), [Malone University](#), [Northeast Ohio Medical University \(NEOMED\)](#), [Stark State College](#), [University of Akron](#), [University of Mount Union](#) and [Walsh University](#) are educating and training students for the jobs of today and tomorrow.
- Launched a **middle and high school entrepreneurship program**, teaching local students about innovative thinking, teamwork, problem-solving, idea generation and observational skills. A STARK TANK Entrepreneurship Challenge competition is scheduled in March 2020 at Walsh University. Winners will be awarded funding to be applied to further develop their concepts, ideas or learning.
- Worked collaboratively with Stark County schools and community partners to make **significant progress** toward achieving three high-level objectives: increase high school graduation rates, college-going rates and degree attainment rates.

Quality Places

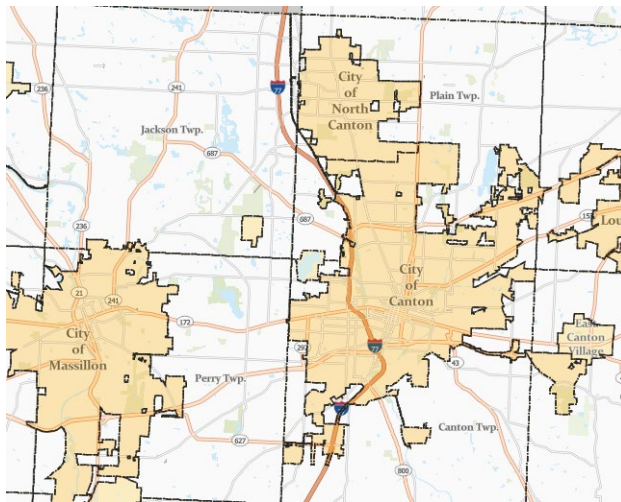
Strategies to make the county a more attractive place to live and visit

- Teamed up with Visit Canton to create a **series of videos** that highlight Stark County's vibrancy.
- Partnered with the Stark County Auditor's Office to pilot [Stark Strong Neighborhoods](#), an interactive, data-driven map that breaks down communities by varying layers of information such as bus routes and bus stops, child care facilities and open jobs. Viewing neighborhoods in this way can help local leaders identify their community's needs and opportunities.

2019 Strengthening Stark Week



From October 21-25, the Stark County community celebrated all things economic development during the inaugural Strengthening Stark Week. The week included a governance overview breakfast, [innovation panel discussion](#) , [job fair](#) , grant writing workshop, chamber consortium networking event and [community conversations](#) .



2020 Goals

As part of our 2020 [business retention and expansion plan](#) , we plan to meet with every township and village in Stark County because we want economic development to work for everyone in the county, not just those living in the most populated areas. Other [2020 goals](#) include securing federal funding to develop opportunity zones, upgrading major entrances into the county and more.



We're Hiring!

Strengthening Stark is seeking a project manager, preferably with experience working in community and economic development, to manage the day-to-day operation of Strengthening Stark. The deadline to apply is January 15.

[Learn more and apply](#)

Want to get involved? Let us know!

Contact us at (330) 453-562 8 or info@strengtheningstark.com if you want to get involved. We would love to chat about how you can play a role in Strengthening Stark County.

[Contact us](#)

Do you know others who would be interested in learning about Strengthening Stark?
Encourage them to [sign up](#) to receive our monthly email updates!

Need a crash course in Strengthening Stark? The Canton Repository has you covered! Visit the Rep's website for a quick and easy to access [page](#) with links to every Strengthening Stark story written by the paper since the initial report was published in 2017.

