

# WHY THE AKRON-CANTON METROPLEX?

A sense of place is important to all of us. One of the biggest questions we ask people we meet is “where are you from?” Depending on the context, our answers could vary from Cuyahoga Falls to North Canton to Akron, Canton, Cleveland or Northeast Ohio. As individuals, we associate with our sense of place.

As we focus on economic growth, and seek our share of resources and visibility, we believe that for external audiences and statewide decision makers, **looking at Akron-Canton as a region or a metroplex** to compete for funding, business opportunity and visitors **can “upsize” the opportunity for all of us.**

With more than **1.2 million people within those MSAs**; a number of related and connected assets like the Akron-Canton Airport and I-77; and common challenges, opportunities, businesses and workforce; we see an opportunity to go to market together as we compete as a region.

The Research Triangle, the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, the Twin Cities and Tampa/St. Petersburg are just a few examples of regions that have worked together to upsize their visibility and positioning while retaining their unique character, governmental infrastructure and local identity.

Many of our businesses have established Akron-Canton as a territory or business region for the purposes of geographic organization and market focus. We share a density of manufacturing capacity and common opportunity in industries like shale and polymers. We have **a common airport, interstate, and shared assets** like the Pro Football Hall of Fame, NEOMED, Stark State College’s Akron and Canton locations, and Akron Children’s Hospital in Akron and North Canton, to name a few.

In fact, every day, **our workforce crosses county borders** among Stark, Carroll, Summit, Portage and Medina Counties to get to their job.

As we talk to companies about opportunities to grow within or relocate to this region, they often look at choices in the broader geography of Akron-Canton as equal options. **Drawing from the wider, well-connected market area is a source of advantage for us.**

As metropolitan areas, Akron (#82) and Canton (#133) have fewer resources and smaller support ecosystems than some of our neighbors like Cincinnati (#29, 2.2 million people), Columbus (#32, 2.1 million), and Cleveland (#33; 2 million). **Working cooperatively helps us to compete and access a larger share of the state’s resource and attention.** Together, we would rival Buffalo, Grand Rapids, Rochester, and Tulsa, which have between 1-1.2 million people and sit at about #50 of the top 100.

We are already doing more work together. With new leadership for many of our region’s organizations, **there is a greater sense of opportunity for collaboration.** Our resources are finite and working more closely together allows us to leverage them.

As we begin to talk about the region’s overall assets and positioning, **the term “metroplex” has been described as a way of talking about our physical proximity and connectedness, while still retaining our unique sense of place and separate infrastructures.** We are still a region made up of individual cities, broad townships and unique county infrastructures. We believe we can retain that individuality while leveraging the positive experience of a well-connected, growing Akron-Canton region.

## SHARED REGIONAL ISSUES / RESOURCES / TALENT:

- With more than 1.2 million people, **Akron-Canton is Ohio's fourth most populous region. Just 23 miles separate downtown Akron from downtown Canton.**
- **40% of our population commutes across county borders** and is likely to consider work and play in any part of the region.
- One of our most significant shared assets is the **Akron-Canton Airport**. Economic Development professionals from both Akron and Canton are working with the Airport, Stark State and others to look at new opportunities to drive workforce preparation and an increased number of routes for the region at CAK.
- There is new shared staff arrangement for Akron-Canton with **Team NEO** to provide support for the region's economic development teams and drive further collaboration.
- Akron-Canton sits at the **gateway to the Utica and Marcellus Shale play**, teeming with abundant, low-cost natural gas. We're home to the nation's densest cluster of polymer and plastics companies. Our region's density of processors, manufacturers and supply side providers give us a unique national advantage that we can exploit together. The Chambers recently collaborated to create a presence for Akron-Canton at a key industry show in July.
- Early discussions between **Stark and Summit County to share best practices** and collaborate on some tools and research activity in support of economic development and to promote areas of shared opportunity like the job hub that surrounds Akron-Canton Airport and flows into both Summit and Stark Counties.
- Akron and Canton share prestigious **employers**, easy access to **I-77**, nationally-recognized institutions of **higher education**, a **national park** and **trail system**, and a tapestry of **food, nightlife and lifestyle amenities**.

## UPCOMING JOINT AKRON-CANTON EVENTS/EFFORTS:

- Work on a joint Economic Outlook event to take place Nov. 22 – focused on a regional forecast for 2020 and dialogue among leading companies in Stark, Summit and Medina Counties about their economic expectations. Produced by the Greater Akron and Canton Regional Chambers.

- Collaboration between the Akron and Canton Chambers on *Experience Akron-Canton*, a comprehensive regional guide that identifies assets, entertainment, lifestyle and business information for those relocating or newly established in the region. This is used by employers, the tourism industry, and others to provide a guide to the region's quality of life.

## KEY FACTS:

### GEOGRAPHY:

Distance between Akron and Canton: 23.5 miles

### POPULATION:

Summit County/Medina County/Portage County  
Population: 894,876

Stark County/Carroll County Population: 399,977

**Akron-Canton Metroplex Total Population: 1,294,853**

### EMPLOYEES:

Summit County/Medina County/Portage County  
Employment: 350,720

Stark County/Carroll County Employment: 148,429

**Akron-Canton Metroplex Total Employment: 499,149**

### EMPLOYERS:

Summit County/Medina County/Portage County  
Employers: 75,635

Stark County/Carroll County Employers: 31,805

**Akron-Canton Metroplex Total Employers: 107,440**

### DAILY TRANSFER OF EMPLOYEES:

**41% of Stark's labor force works outside of Stark.**  
For Stark commuters, the top destination (outside of Stark) is Summit County.

**44% of Summit's labor force works outside of Summit.**  
For Summit commuters, the top destination (outside of Summit) is Cuyahoga County; Stark County is the second top destination.

### BUSINESS DENSITY:

Within five miles of I-77, throughout Summit and Stark counties, there are **11,569 unique business locations**. These business locations include **159,201 employees** and **\$24,294,446,000 in annual sales**.

### UNIVERSITY ENROLLMENT:

Kent State University: 30,093

(Main and Stark Campuses)

University of Akron: 19,030

Stark State College: 13,600

Northeast Ohio Medical University: 942

Mount Union University: 2,300

Walsh University: 3,000

Malone University: 1,613

**Total Students : 70,578**

*\*sources: Greater Akron Chamber, TeamNEO, Akron-Canton Airport.*