

February 16, 2007

Looking At The Week

Voices & Choices Meeting

Join the next Voices & Choices public meeting to help the Fund for Our Economic Future translate the identified priorities into an action plan: Wednesday, Feb. 21, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Akron-Summit County Public Library (60 South High Street, Akron).



¹ Visit: <http://www.voiceschoices.org/node/6> for a list of meeting locations and times

² The full Report On The Public's Priorities For Northeast Ohio's Future may be downloaded at: <http://www.voiceschoices.org/node>

Looking At The ISSUES

Moving Towards a Regional Action Plan

What some have called one of the largest efforts in history to obtain public input still continues. Between February 20th and March 1st¹ the next in a unique series of public meetings on the future of Northeast Ohio will take place under the Voices and Choices initiative.

If you haven't yet heard about Voices and Choices, you may be in an ever increasing minority. For the last year and a half, nearly 21,000 citizens in a 16 county area (including Stark) have played a role in identifying both our regional strengths and challenges.

Participants have also been asked to identify priority goals and propose solutions to help maintain and increase the economic viability of the region. Not surprisingly, many deal with education. The three top priority goals are:

1. Plan for the future development and growth of the region
2. Ensure that students have the financial resources they need to succeed
3. Improve workforce training programs

Top solutions were identified as the need to:

1. Shift how the state funds public schools
2. Invest in internship and mentoring programs
3. Increase funding for higher education²

Participants also supported reducing the burden of health care costs on businesses, investing in a region-wide association of planning agencies, creating a regional land use plan, helping high school students take college courses, and supporting incubators for small businesses. The new round of meetings will ask participants to prioritize actual actions to move forward on the solutions.

Voices and Choices is an initiative of the Fund for our Economic Future, an unprecedented collaboration of over 80 philanthropic organizations from across Northeast Ohio. The Fund's goal is to encourage and advance an agenda for regional economic transformation. Locally, the Stark Community Foundation and Sisters of Charity Foundation of Canton are Fund members.