

# 2024 ANNUAL REPORT





**Julie Brandle**

Chair, GAC Board of Directors  
President, Metis Construction  
Services, LLC



**Steve Millard**

President and CEO

## Investing in Growth: Strengthening Our Region's Future

Our work is about mutual benefit—supporting businesses, employees, and the region as a whole. Five years ago, we set out to rethink our approach, focusing on key partnerships and collaborations to drive meaningful progress.

While progress is often incremental, 2024 marked major milestones that prove collaboration, shared priorities, and strong partnerships can change the trajectory of our region. Elevate Greater Akron continues to align economic development priorities, and our partnership with ConxusNEO strengthens workforce efforts. The newly launched Akron-Canton Advocacy Alliance unites the voices of 4,500+ businesses to advocate for policies that support growth, while our collaboration with the Cuyahoga Falls Chamber Business Gateway reinforces the power of local relationships in driving regional success.

A key achievement this year was the Sustainable Polymers Tech Hub and Ohio Innovation Hub awards for the Polymer Industry Cluster. With over \$100 million in federal, state, local, and private investment, we are advancing innovation and cementing Greater Akron's leadership in sustainable materials.

Membership growth reflects the value of our work. Through expanded benefits, strategic partnerships, and advocacy, we are strengthening business competitiveness and economic prosperity.

None of this is possible without you—our business leaders and partners. Your investment fuels our success. As we look ahead, we remain committed to serving you and driving progress.

Thank you for your support, vision, and belief in the Greater Akron Chamber. Together, we are building a future of strength, innovation, and prosperity.

# EXPANDING OUR REACH AND VALUE TO BUSINESSES



**Created opportunities** for nearly 4,500 attendees to connect, learn, and engage at 60 events

Convened 39 business leaders for GAC's InterCity Leadership Visit to Durham, NC to learn about the success, learnings, and best practices around developing their regional narrative as the Research Triangle.



**Highlighted Greater Akron leaders** and key initiatives on the [Dreamers, Drivers, Doers podcast series](#)

Employee health, retirement, and workers' compensation benefits reached more than

**1,250** companies  
and

**12,000+** employees and dependents.

Introduced a new health benefit captive for mid-market companies with

**25+** employees to join together to reduce the cost of their medical benefit spend.

[Learn More about the APEX Alternative Funding Captive](#)



## ONE MEMBERSHIP. DOUBLE THE BENEFITS, PROGRAMS, AND RESOURCES.



CUYAHOGA FALLS CHAMBER  
**BUSINESS GATEWAY**  
Powered by the Greater Akron Chamber

Increased access to resources, services, and support at a local and regional level for both the Greater Akron Chamber and Cuyahoga Falls Chamber members under one membership structure.



**2,441 members**  
(8% increase from 2023)



**Retained 90% of members**



**Welcomed 7 new Chair's Circle members,**  
GAC's top level of membership

# BUILDING ON LEGACY, BETTING ON OUR FUTURE IN POLYMERS



**\$51M** awarded in federal funding plus **\$7M** of partner investment to support the creation of the Sustainable Polymers Tech Hub.

**7** technology innovation, workforce, and cluster coordination projects as part of the Sustainable Polymers Tech Hub's work

Organized a site visit with the U.S. Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) that highlighted the work of four of the seven Tech Hub project awardees, including University of Akron's Polymer Innovation Center, Bounce Innovation Hub, Flexsys, and The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company.



// EDA looks forward to strengthening its partnership with the Akron Hub as it scales up sustainable polymer manufacturing, tackles the climate and environmental impacts of fossil fuel-derived polymers, and accelerates economic growth. //

- **Eric Smith**  
*Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy,  
U.S. Department of Commerce Economic  
Development Administration.*

## CONNECTING OUR CURRENT AND FUTURE WORKFORCE TO OPPORTUNITIES

Reaching our future workforce through the **Polymer Pathway**, a new K-12 career pathway exclusively in the Barberton City School District, supported by the Barberton Community Foundation and ConxusNEO, with an opportunity to drive the model to all Summit County students.

**116**  
Barberton High  
School students



**101**  
industry attendees at our third annual  
Polymer Cluster Connectivity Conference.



# \$31.25M

**awarded** by the State of Ohio, **matched with \$11M** of private and local partner investment, to fund the Greater Akron Polymer Innovation Hub as part of the Ohio Department of Development's Innovation Hubs Program.



**46 industry companies** + **70 regional stakeholders**

are driving the Polymer Industry Cluster's work in industry-driven R&D priorities, research commercialization, startup support, workforce development, business attraction, and industry relationship building.

## \$1M

**successfully advocated** in congressional appropriations for the Polymer Scale-Up Facility, a project within the Greater Akron Polymer Innovation Hub.



## \$785K

**secured** to support workforce development activities to drive industry growth in healthcare, manufacturing, and polymers.



## 340

**targeted individuals** to be trained for entry-level positions or upskilled for job advancement opportunities in Summit and Portage counties through Good Jobs Challenge.

## 81

**interns** engaged in our Interns in Greater Akron events series

Introduced the [Internship Accelerator](#) as a resource to help businesses and employers develop, implement, and maintain a successful internship program.

# CONXUSNEO

# DRIVING REGIONAL COLLABORATION

## ElevateGreaterAkron

Elevate Greater Akron continues to drive collaboration among business, government, and civic leaders working together to advance *shared priorities for shared prosperity in our region*. The collaborative launched its EGA 3.0 shared priorities and strategies:

- 1. Global Polymer Capital**  
Capture growth opportunities in sustainability, mobility, health care, and electronics
- 2. Opportunity Akron**  
Prioritize inclusive economic growth
- 3. Strong Downtown, Strong Region**  
Build a thriving, connected downtown Akron
- 4. The New Fundamentals**  
Coordinate economic development intentionally focused on those already in the region

 [elevategreaterakron.org](http://elevategreaterakron.org) 

*GreaterAkronBusinessNavigator.org*



**5,600** users

top searched resources included access to grants, loans, and networking & membership organizations.

# ATTRACTING, RETAINING AND EXPANDING COMPANIES, JOBS AND INVESTMENT

## KEEPING A PULSE ON THE NEEDS OF THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY

**314**

BRE visits with companies

**132**

BRE visits with MBE/WBE owned companies

In partnership with Team NEO and JobsOhio partners, economic development activity in Greater Akron resulted in:



**27**

closed projects



**400**

new jobs



**\$25M+**

new payroll



**\$43M+**

investment Greater Akron



**8**

JobsOhio Small Business Grants

"Akron, USA" and private company partners engaged with **more than 50** domestic/international companies looking to expand/invest in the United States at the nation's largest plastics trade show. The group was one of **2,100 exhibitors** and **55,000 attendees** from over 120 countries at the NPE Show in Orlando, Florida.



# AMPLIFYING OUR VOICE FOR REGIONAL PROSPERITY

## AKRON-CANTON ADVOCACY ALLIANCE



AKRON-CANTON ADVOCACY ALLIANCE

Representing the needs of 4,500 collective members of the Greater Akron Chamber and Canton Regional Chamber of Commerce on key policy issues. Our joint Public Policy Agenda informs elected officials and policymakers of the actions required to drive jobs, investment, and regional growth.

[akroncantonadvocacy.org](http://akroncantonadvocacy.org)

**\$17.5M**  
allocated in the State Capital Budget for regional priority projects through the Community Projects Task Force.

**50+**  
direct meetings and discussions between members and elected officials.



## SUPPORTING THE WOMEN WHO LEAD AND SHAPE OUR REGION'S SUCCESS



**600+**

**participants** through Women's Network Leadership Institute programming, including the Women's Network Leadership Dialogue and Leading with Strength program, designed to empower and elevate women leaders across Greater Akron.

**285**

**women seeking board service opportunities** listed on the [WNLI Board Leadership Directory](#), a product of the Women's Board Leadership Initiative.

**Increasing the visibility of women** interested in board service and connecting women with companies/organizations looking for board member through the **Women's Board Leadership Initiative**.



# GAC

GREATER AKRON CHAMBER

