

Dick Maggiore: It's time to think outside the 'big box'

By [Dick Maggiore Special](#) to The Canton Repository

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According to a recent report, Stark County's population will continue to decrease, get older and have fewer dollars if our community stays on its current trajectory.

The report, "Strengthening Stark: A Call for Economic Transformation," isn't all bad news, however, as it cites the areas where we can make progress.

For example, our area's economic development organizations, governments, foundations, nonprofits, businesses and community leaders are coalescing around large-scale, transformational activities.

They range from workforce development to infrastructure improvements.

In one recent column, we advocated for the value of supporting businesses that make a product or service so different and special that companies and people from outside our area spend their money here. Companies that succeed in selling to people outside our area help grow our community's economic pie.

But there is more each of us can do to boost Stark County

We are more than 375,000 strong. The power is in our collective hands. In the effort to strengthen Stark County, we can be a mighty force.

Here's how.

Altogether, Stark County residents have a few billion dollars to spend each year. That's with a "B."

Studies show that for every dollar we spend at an independent, local business, three times more money is returned here through taxes, payroll and other expenditures than is returned on that same dollar spent at a national chain.

If we had spent that same dollar online, the return to our local economy is near zero.

Money is the lifeblood of a community. Additionally, money spent with locally owned, independent businesses circulates two to four times. That is, the money passes through more hands — multiplying the effects.

Out-of-town-owned companies' profits are sucked from our local economy.

Our local elected leaders no longer should be seduced by the appeal of the “big box” coming to town. No more tax rebates or other inducements for the big boxers. Studies have shown that there is a net loss of jobs and tax revenue.

There's no way we can or will buy absolutely everything from a Stark County-owned business. Some of us (guilty!) won't give up our Starbucks. But many find satisfaction at one of our locally owned coffee shops, such as Muggswigz.

We don't make TVs in Stark County. But we can buy our next appliance at a locally owned appliance store. We have good, local choices. Personal customer service alone might make local buying worth it, especially if you have installation, operation or warranty issues.

Next time you're buying pasta sauce, consider Stark County-owned and -made Mid's. Sugardale bacon, ham and hot dogs are made here in Stark County. Dick's horseradish sauce. Local. Nickles breads, buns and pastries. Local. Shearer's chips. Local. Biery's cheeses. Local.

You can multiply the effect by buying all these local products at our only Stark County-owned and independent grocery chain: Fishers Foods.

Harrison Paint makes and sells paint here. MCTV cable, phone and internet. Local. Marathon BellStores. Local. Aultman Hospital. Local. Local companies invest more in their employees and the community. Their decision-making heavily weighs the concerns and needs of the community.

Nearly 40 percent of working Stark Countians are employed outside of Stark County. Many work at Goodyear, for example. Add to that the many companies that supply Goodyear. Our company is proud to be one. Supporting companies in and around Stark County is good business for all of us.

There are many more consumer products companies just outside of Stark County that employ our residents and buy from our local businesses. They include such popular brands as Smith's Dairy, Smuckers and Purell.

Local companies donate more locally. How many health insurance companies do you know that contribute their employees' time and the organization's money to our local community? AultCare does. The return to our community is enormous.

Local, independent companies employ more local people per dollar of revenue. They also purchase more from other local businesses, such as printers, accountants, law firms, ad agencies, farmers, insurance agents, banks, architects, sign makers, construction contractors and many more. Huge effect.

Think outside the "big box." You might find lower prices at national chains and online, but you must consider the longer-term benefits of buying from locally owned, independent businesses. They are worth paying a few more cents. The payback to you, your family, your neighbors and your community is far greater.

Think outside the national restaurant chains. Think Sylvestor's, Baker's, Old Carolina and Lucia's. Local. Local. Local. Local. There are too many more to name all of them. Support them while supporting yourself and your community.

We encourage Stark County-owned businesses to work together to spread their powerful economic impact story. It's about a better quality of life for all of us.

Stark County-owned businesses could launch a formal business coalition. Building a movement to push this cause.

This group could create a Stark Shopping List, a guide to choosing Stark County-owned businesses by business category. There could be a link to the listing for download or on your phone using an app. The group might initiate the StarkPower Challenge, encouraging everyone to replace one out-of-town purchase with a local one every week. This would really add up fast.

Buying from a Stark County-owned businesses is good for our community. This effort would help to reverse the trend resulting with a more populous, prosperous and younger Stark County.

You have the power to change our trajectory by choosing where you spend your money.

Dick Maggiore is president and CEO of [Innis Maggiore](#), founded in Canton in 1974 and today the nation's leading positioning ad agency, building strong brands for companies in competitive markets here and across the country.