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**Economy and Business**

Tuesday, September 29, 2015

**Canton: another Northeast Ohio city is planning its comeback**

*City now trying to move forward on plan prepared by consulting firm*  
by WKSU's **TIM RUDELL**



Reporter  
Tim Rudell



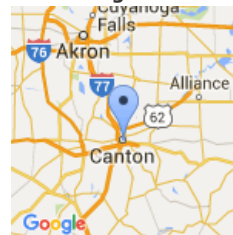
A master plan for Canton connects the downtown in a triangle to the Hall of Fame.

Courtesy of TIM RUDELL

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Ohio is a state of many "cities"...250 according to the Census Bureau--fourth most in the country. But, many of them are struggling: losing population; and relevance. WKSU's Tim Rudell takes a look at what one city is hoping to do to change that.

**In The Region:**



**LISTEN: Master plans of the past and future**



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Master Plans for mastering a new future are in the news, especially in northeastern Ohio.

In Canton, they're addressing both the past and future in search of new and sustainable 'purposes' for the city.

Jack Wollitz is with **Innis Maggiore**, a national public relations firm based in Canton and a company with a vested interest in the future of the community.

"We need to have a place where we can live, and we can learn, and here we can work, and places where our children can base their future -- the place we're going to be building from when we achieve new development and new growth. I think the master plan that Canton is looking is the way to pave the way for that."

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(WKSU Media Kit )



### The city triangle

The quarter-of-a-billion-dollar idea is for a triangle of re-development centered on Canton's Monument Park and tying together downtown, the city's stronger employment districts around its major hospitals and the NFL's proposed half-a-billion-dollar **Hall of Fame Village**.

### Residents say it's sketchy

Marcia and Martin Zawacky were at one of the four public-input sessions held this summer by the planners.

The Zawackys live in **Harrison Hills**, a neighborhood in the plan area. They say they liked what they heard, but didn't hear enough.

"We have been working at improving Harrison Hills since 2007. And what happens is, sometimes the very thing that we need — houses there that need demolition — we don't get."



"I don't know where we're going with this. You heard her, we've been at this a long time. What I'm looking forward to hearing (is) what are we going to get for what we're giving?"

### Missing messages from the past and future

Walter Moss, long-time Canton pastor and director of the Stark County Community Initiative to Reduce Violence likes what he's heard, too.

But he's concerned that the plan isn't taking a broad enough view of the city's neighborhoods -- and didn't include critical input.

"One of the mistakes we all make as adults is we don't engage our youth, bringing them to the table. They're the future of Canton. A pool of people who have a lot of energy, who could buy in, who could be a part of the planning, and the marketing of it. And we missed them."

Moss also remembers the last Canton Master Plan.

It was urban renewal in the 1960s, when he was in elementary school.

He says it isolated minority neighborhoods deepening poverty and racial division and hastening the city's decline.

He wants today's planners to loosen their focus on the core of their strategy long enough to avoid mistakes of the past.

"If they could go back and do some more meetings, they could use the community centers and churches. How is it going to affect, you know, 'my



### corrosion problem

● **Ohio EPA will hold a hearing on the NEXUS compressor station**

● **A conversation with the new president of Akron City Council**

### Stories with Recent Comments

● **Pluto: The Browns split from Manziel is long overdue**

Get Brock Osweiler from the Denver Broncos! He's fantastic and seems like a great person.

● **Democratic Senate hopeful P.G. Sittenfeld pushes for local gun control**

That makes no sense at all... why not let cities determine driving codes as well? Maybe Cincy want's folks to drive on the left side of the road. What could go ...

● **Exploradio: Autism in the workplace**

I would love to get more information re: Autism on The Town and other such programs in Northeast Ohio. Thanks!!

● **Human trafficking cases rise in Ohio**

It is about time this is presented to proceed with a plan of prevention..to protect our youth.And very necessary to inform communities through school, churches ...

● **Fermented food company aims to preserve Cleveland's farm-to-table movement**

This is terrific! I make my own sauerkraut and consider it vital to good health. Well done, I wish you all success.

● **Ohio doctors get new guidelines for prescribing certain painkillers**

I would gladly smoke pot to get off pain killers but its not legal.It would save the hassle of doctor visits for pill counts,pee tests,blood tests,driving to pi...

● **Ohio unemployment cuts are nearing a Statehouse vote**

What about those that are laid off seasonally? My husband has been employed by the same company for 26 years and has been laid off (for the last 17) mid-Januar...

● **Ban on microbeads is a big step in fighting plastic pollution**

What a bunch of liberal "so open minded their brains fell out" tree huggin yuppies. Professing to be wise they became fools.

● **Who's on -- and left off -- Ohio's medical marijuana task force?**

Biggest joke everm these people are evil they know marijuana is harmless they rigged the polls last nov everypne knows it

neighborhood?'

"They say it's going to bring jobs. Well, what type of jobs? And what is the future? Even educationally? Sometimes we plan, but folk who should be at the table, we don't get their input. And then I think people feel disenfranchised."

### Reality required

Jack Wollitz of Innis Maggiore, the experts on selling ideas, says this one will only fly locally if it does genuinely benefit all of the community. And it will be effective outside the community -- drawing investors, tourists, and businesses -- only if it genuinely is a new story for Canton.

"If the public doesn't embrace it, it's never going to be authentic. We're at a magnificent opportunity to really sort of seize the moment, and make the best of this opportunity that is in front of us. As long as it's authentic. And, the public agrees that this is the way it's going to be."

The "opportunity" is actually two: To make the new Canton attractive to businesses wanting to locate near the Utica Shale and to maximize visitors at



the half-a-billion-dollar "tourist destination" the NFL wants to make of its Hall of Fame in the city.

### Next steps

For Canton's plan to go forward, organizational

elements must be put in place. including:

A city planning office for demolitions, and a public-private entity to deal with real estate; and boards to oversee projects and spending.

City Council must approve those. For now, Deputy Mayor Fonda Williams is the informal lead coordinating early steps, including efforts of volunteers from businesses and neighborhood groups to get things ready across the city.

And, there's fund raising, which the city hopes will involve sources from federal and state grants, local taxes and business and philanthropic investments.

### Here's are links to master plans that have been part of Canton's goals:

- [Downtown master plan](#)
- [City of Canton comprehensive plan](#)
- [Parks master plan](#)

### Listener Comments:

Historic Ridgewood and the Stark Metropolitan Housing Authority have no seats at the table. Very flawed right out of the gate. Ridgewood pays a huge percentage of the property taxes and SMHA represents 10% of Cantons population.

*Posted by: Dan McMasters (Canton) on September 29, 2015 10:09AM*

Dan, I'm pretty sure its because Ridgewood isn't inside of the City Triangle that they describe. Also, instead of complaining and making a position for yourself to champion perhaps you could contact them and see how you could get things moving in a direction that seems better to you.

*Posted by: Jason (West Park, Canton) on September 29, 2015 2:09AM*

• [Dayton 'Black Lives Matter' protesters to appear in court today](#)

Police to fast with the trigger finger and not the brain. A lot of police officers out here judge by color first instead of accessing the situation first. If a p...