

DOWNTOWN AKRON PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT 2018



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A LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Author George Eliot coined the idiom, “don’t judge a book by its cover.” This idea rings true in the Special Improvement District today as downtown transforms beneath a veil of orange barrels. As stated in last year’s letter: Close your eyes; envision what Akron looked like in years past; Akron is moving closer to having a vibrant and revitalized downtown landscape where businesses, visitors and residents – yes residents! – will enjoy the neighborhood. The investment being made in our infrastructure and in our historic buildings is necessary to bring downtown Akron to life in its next phase of evolution, complementing the district that entertains more than 3.7 million people annually with 24 hour/seven-day-a-week residential activation. As we move closer to the opening of our new Main Street, we are proud of the accomplishments and achievements of Downtown Akron Partnership over the past 23 years, and look forward to building on these successes in the future.

Guided by the DAP Strategic Plan and Downtown Vision and Redevelopment Plan, 2018 targeted efforts to improve the experience of stakeholders in the Special Improvement District. The pop up retail program continued in 2018 bringing new retail and service destinations to downtown and the Northside Marketplace. In July 2017, Downtown Akron Partnership was awarded the largest philanthropic support in its history with a two-year, \$1.5 million grant from The John S. and

James L. Knight Foundation for the improvement of public spaces throughout the district. I am proud to report that funding has been deployed throughout the district helping to expand programming, continuing to support the Northside Marketplace, creating space improvements in North High, Northside and The Link. Support has also been provided for the Main St. Promenade project with promotional initiatives to assist small businesses, activations along Main, valet support and project design assistance. Many of these activities play a part in supporting the growth of a 24/7, live, work, play downtown by creating active, welcoming spaces adjacent to residential projects like The Bowery, Ascend and the former Law Building. Also worth noting is the ongoing collaboration with Akron Civic Commons that expanded ambassador service to seven days a week, helped to maintain public spaces and the cycle track, and assisted with communications and signage in the Main St. Promenade project.

As we participate in the evolution of downtown, we evolve ourselves. In 2018 we bid a fond farewell to First Night Akron, and a legacy of large annual event planning in order to shift focus and resources to economic development, consistent activation and programming, and ongoing volunteer and stakeholder engagement.

As we look back on Downtown Akron Partnership’s accomplishments in this annual report, we acknowledge and are

grateful for the roles that city and county government have played in making downtown a safe and vibrant community. We value our recognition and inclusion in the Elevate Akron strategy as a critical component in the growth of the city and region. We truly appreciate the property owners in the Special Improvement District and know without their recognition of and contribution to collective action, we would not be positioned for the growth and opportunities of the coming years. We know that your support goes beyond financial, including ideas, hard work and patience. We have come a long way, and there remains much to do.

Please accept my gratitude for your past support and my request for your continued support, input and participation. Through our work together, we can continue to build downtown Akron and, by doing so, continue to improve the health of our entire region.



**Donald J.
Pavlik**



VIBRANCY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Business Development

DAP continues to support business growth, attraction and retention downtown through our work in business development. The director of business development is supported by GAR and Burton D. Morgan Foundations. In alignment with the 2016 DAP strategic plan, the 2020 SID renewal will make the director of business development a full-time position.

With the guidance of the Business Development committee, DAP meets with retailers quarterly and professional services no less than bi-annually to understand the needs of each business, determine where DAP can be helpful, provide referrals and connections to assistance providers, bring attention to issues with local government, and determine how best to help keep each business downtown.

We are honored to integrate this work into the BRE (Business Retention and Expansion) strategy of Elevate Akron, and are committed to aligning our work with the established priorities of Elevate to accelerate the growth of downtown as a job hub and a driver of the regional economy.

The LOIS (LocationOne Information System) is now up and running and embedded on downtownakron.com. This system provides a searchable map of available information for new or expanding businesses interested in locating downtown. A salesforce account will be added to DAP's business development systems to be used as directed by the city and county to continue comprehensive business efforts downtown.

As part of a two-year partnership with the Northside Marketplace, Knight Foundation support funded the position of marketplace coordinator, Jane Douglas. Jane provides support to vendors through merchandising services, coordination of marketing, POS maintenance and scheduling for the central checkout. In 2018 the number of vendors grew to 66 and the market celebrated the opening of the Sunday Countryside Conservancy public market.

SID Renewal

Work began on the SID renewal in Feb. 2018, which ensures SID funding from 2020-2024. Petitions were circulated in early summer reflecting a \$100,000 increase to \$850,000. This increase will provide for seven-day-a-week ambassador services, close the funding gap that DAP experiences annually to maintain our fiscal health,

and support the creation of the director of business development position.

The SID board approved the SID services portfolio with the increase. A new services plan was created by Full Spectrum Marketing to aid in efforts for the petition of property owner signatures. Support for the renewal far surpassed the required 60 percent with more than 72 percent of property ownership approval for the renewal.

Pop Up Retail

With the support of Burton D. Morgan Foundation, the DAP Pop Up Retail program continued to assist in the location and expansion of downtown business throughout 2018. Cumulatively, the Pop Up Retail effort has introduced 70 new businesses to downtown Akron since 2015, with 60 of those businesses still in operation. Our Pop Up business cohort reflects 47 percent women-owned business and 16 percent minority-owned business. A total of 23 full time and 54 part time employees were added to the downtown workforce through this investment.

As of Dec. 2018, the total program investment of \$81,970 in operating businesses has positioned downtown properties to gain a projected total of \$1,015,983 in lease revenue over the terms of the leases signed.

In 2018, the program expanded to help place new business into any available space in the SID, not just storefront locations. This year we welcomed Eartha Vision, Rising Star Center for the Arts, Seberg, Sweet Modern and Trust Books to the downtown neighborhood.

New Businesses

In addition to the pop up clients, downtown Akron welcomed 18 new businesses and organizations in 2018: Akronym Brewing, Allegorithmic, Inc., Boiling House, CommuniCare Health Services, IgnitionOne, Liberty Labor, MAGNET, Northside Cellar, OHM Advisors, Playground Sessions, Rubber City McDonald's, Sky Fit Studios, SYLC Consulting, United Way of Summit County, Victims Assistance and Wells Fargo. In addition, business member Canal Place welcomed Life Equity and Missing Falls Brewery.

Outreach to existing businesses is quantified in Member Outreach & Support on page 10.

STAKEHOLDER LEADERSHIP & ENGAGEMENT

In alignment with the 2016 strategic plan, DAP is committed to serving as a convener of stakeholders around issues that are important to the health and growth of downtown Akron. We serve in this capacity to ensure consistent understanding and flow of information among stakeholders and facilitate collaborative efforts that benefit the district.

District Meetings

Quarterly meetings for each of the downtown districts (Northside, Historic Arts, Canal) continued on a rotating basis. The meetings, held on the 2nd Thursday of the month, are used to keep stakeholders informed about city projects, construction, general information, events and updates. Outcomes from these meetings include communication of expectations of the Main St. Promenade project, mitigation of parking and traffic flow concerns, design of the Northside Green and communication of downtown events.

In 2018, DAP hosted 12 meetings with an average attendance of 25 people per meeting, including representatives from city engineering and the design build team of the Main St. Promenade.

Advocacy

DAP staff members attend meetings of the city and various organizations to continue to advocate for downtown and provide information to the public. Meetings include Akron Civic Commons, Downtown Operations Group, Main Street Promenade, Main Street PR committee, iTowpath, Elevate Akron BRE, Refocus on the Urban Core and Opportunity Zone committees, Akron Waterways Renewed! and UA Safety Task Force.

Investing In Public Space

With support from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and Akron Civic Commons, DAP has made strategic investments in improving public space in order to drive private investment, develop a more walkable district, improve perceptions of safety, attract talent and build our sense of place. These investments are guided by research, analysis and recommendations from Gehl Studio.

Inspired by the Downtown Akron Vision and Redevelopment Plan, the Northside Green emerged in

Northside with the guidance of district stakeholders and more than 150 hours of volunteer service. The project has proven the value of testing to learn, involving neighborhood and city stakeholders to the design process, and following plan recommendations. This project added value to the neighborhood, created safe public social space, engaged local artists and craftspeople, slowed traffic and improved walkability.

At North High, DAP engaged district stakeholders in a public space lift to showcase the Historic Arts district. The project demonstrated Akron's first parklet, improved pedestrian level lighting, installed a place making mural with Art Bomb Brigade, the Never Turn Back installation with Boa Mistura, and improved walkability with added seating elements.

DAP began a series of investments to improve the connection between The University of Akron and through downtown and to Akron Children's Hospital along University Avenue and State Street, otherwise known as "The Link." Identified as an opportunity for inviting visitors to come for one experience and stay for another, Lock Next provided a public space experiment to make the Lock 3 fence line more permeable, activate the sidewalk, and complement adjacent event programming at the Akron Civic Theatre.

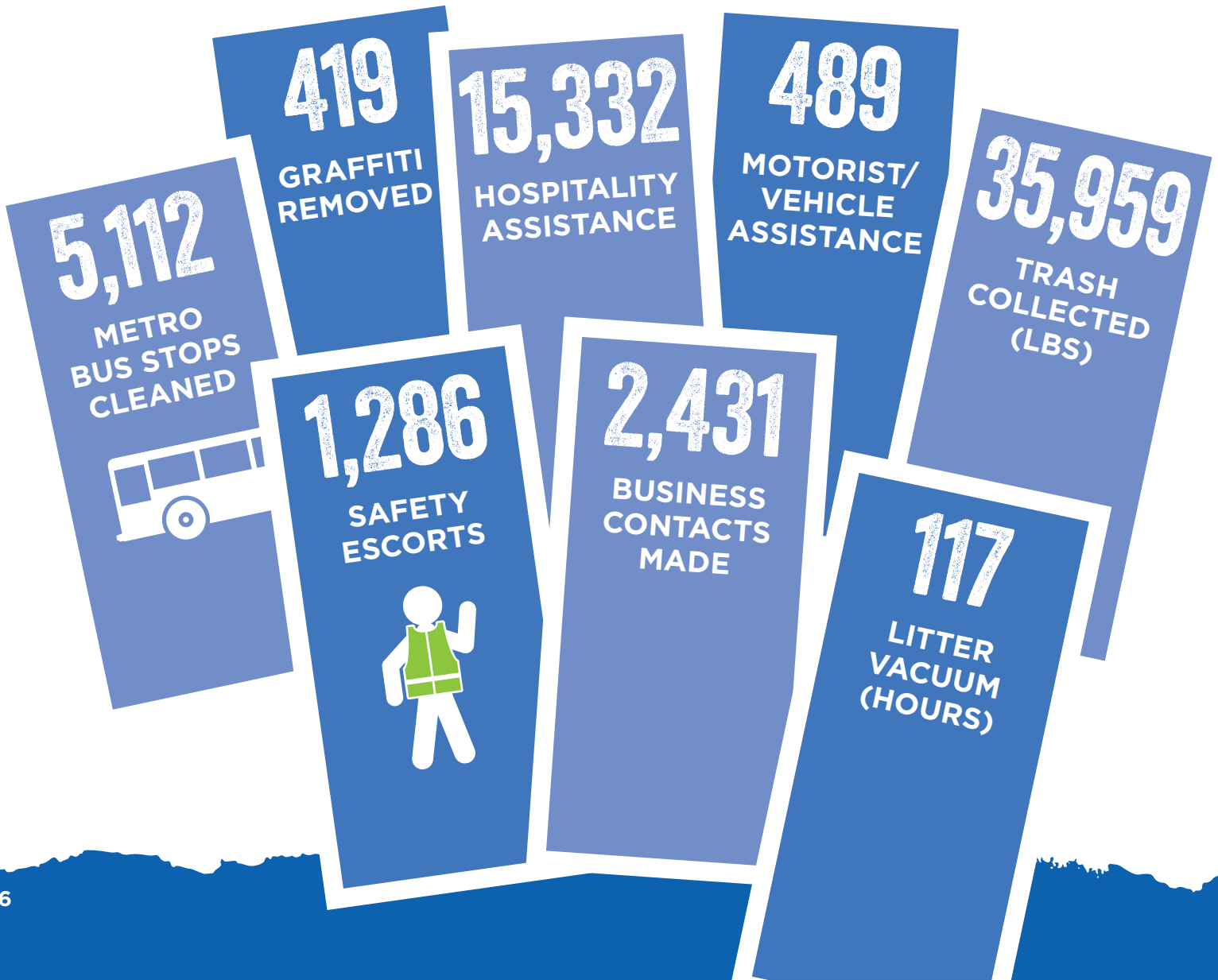
The once-in-a-generation Main St. Promenade project is underway, rebuilding Main Street from building face to building face and from Cedar to Perkins Streets. The newly renovated Main Street will feature a bi-directional protected cycle lane, wide sidewalks to facilitate café seating, a road diet to calm traffic, a roundabout, upgraded infrastructure and utilities, and a completely new approach to downtown's landscape design. Knight Foundation funding has served as a critical resource to help improve the planning, communication and implementation of this project. Both Gehl and MKSK have proven valuable resources in making recommendations for design and materials for the project. Knight resources have also been used to complement communication provided by the Design Build Team with additional signage to meet the needs of pedestrians, businesses and visitors. DAP has been able to invest in promotional efforts to reinforce that "downtown is open" in the minds of our community.

CLEAN, SAFE & WELCOMING

Clean

Clean and safe initiatives continue to be a priority of the district. In 2018 the team implemented the use of the Smart System – a smart phone program allowing ambassadors to enter tasks as completed with geolocation and time stamps from nearby cell towers.

Through the dedication of 10 Clean & Safe Ambassadors, now working seven days a week with support from Akron Civic Commons, the following achievements were made in 2018.



Green and Clean

The 11th annual Green and Clean was held May 11-June 1 and engaged employees, residents and students to undertake projects to spruce up several areas of downtown Akron.

During this time, DAP engaged 200 STEM middle school students, more than 60 downtown employees and more than 30 Goodyear associates to work on beautification projects like trash removal, mulching and planting, painting and more. In 2019 Green and Clean will shift from a May/June initiative to a year-round volunteer program called the Urban Corps.

The purpose of the Urban Corps is to build a team of Akronites dedicated to the vibrancy and growth of downtown Akron. Volunteers will sign up through a platform called GiveGauge® to receive opportunities throughout the year and earn prizes for their time. Opportunities may include painting, mulching, flower planting, surveying and event assistance.



**35
BLOCKS**

WEEDING/
MULCHING
FLOWER
BEDS

9

DAYS
WORKED

10

COMPANIES
REPRESENTED

80

FLOWER
PLANTERS
PLANTED

200+

STEM MIDDLE
SCHOOL
STUDENT
VOLUNTEERS

LOVE LETTERS TO OUR AMBASSADORS

“I wanted to reach out any thank you for the lock out service I received yesterday. Rhonda came to my aid and was so wonderful and helpful. She turned around my bad situation and had me back in my car in no time. She was just a life saver. Thank you for everything.”

“I’d like to take a minute to say how amazing and friendly every single person I see on Main Street that works for Downtown Akron Partnership. They always have a smile, say good morning and give a positive boost to my days. Keep up the great work; your organization rocks!”

“Got off work and locked my keys in my truck on a cold morning at Akron Children’s homecare office. It had not been my day until I was given the number to DAP and Marcus came and quickly got them out for me. He was so helpful and friendly. I cannot tell you how happy I was with this service and all at no charge. Marcus’s positive and friendly personality made my day brighter. Give him five stars!”



Safe

DAP’s 10 Clean & Safe Ambassadors enhance downtown safety with foot and bike patrols every day covering the 42-block district and adjacent business member properties. DAP staff collects crime data within the district from weekly APD reports and the online Lexis Nexis© Community Crime Mapping system and follows up on issues of concern or incidents requiring immediate attention. Email safety alerts and traffic advisories are sent to businesses and individuals when emergency situations and traffic concerns warrant.

DAP funds an APD nighttime shift supervisor Thursday-Saturday in the Canal District (Main/Exchange area) to coordinate police presence at nightlife venues, communicate concerns to DAP staff and provide dedicated service to the district. This program, in conjunction with our ambassador program, is our most significant investment in safety in the district.

Welcoming

Through a grant from the Corbin Foundation, DAP ambassadors placed and maintained hanging baskets, planter boxes and sidewalk planters throughout the district. Downtown businesses participated in DAP’s Adopt-a-Planter program and played an active role in beautification efforts by designing and planting a sidewalk planter near their business or building.

Additional flowers brightened the Northside District and the North High Street parklet as part of the public space enhancement efforts funded by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.



Cigarette Litter Prevention Program

After successfully expanding the campaign to prevent cigarette litter, DAP evaluated signs and urns for durability and usage. More than 60 sidewalk ash urns are placed in the district. A supply of ash urns that require sidewalk installation are in storage to be installed after Main Street construction is complete.

Posters and window clings continue to be distributed among businesses providing education about the environmental hazards of cigarette litter along with pocket ashtrays provided by Keep America Beautiful.



55 PLANTER BOXES



54 HANGING BASKETS



60 SIDEWALK PLANTERS (CONCRETE/PORTABLE)



51 CYCLE TRACK PLANTERS



MEMBER OUTREACH & SUPPORT

QUARTERLY RETAIL OUTREACH	309
BUSINESS OUTREACH	195
PROPERTY OWNER/BROKER OUTREACH	115
RESIDENTIAL OUTREACH	10 events
.and 4 property visits	
RESIDENT WELCOME PACKETS. . . .	1,000
BUSINESS INFORMATION PACKETS .	1,643

Business Marketing

Through a partnership with JLL, DAP launched Making it Happen in Feb. 2018 to promote business location, expansion and retention in downtown Akron. The goal is to keep downtown top of mind for businesses to consider when searching for new or expanded office space. Downtown companies are spotlighted with Q&A and photos appearing in the Akron Beacon Journal and Ohio.com. Round one ran through July 2018. Round two started in Oct. 2018 and is scheduled through March 2019.

Restaurant Marketing

DAP worked with AMP Strategies and the Akron/Summit Convention & Visitors Bureau (ASCVB) to develop "Eating Downtown." This three month program encouraged the community to explore downtown Akron's 50 dining destinations. The program ran June through August and provided a map with punch card for participants to earn "punches" for every restaurant visited. Diners submitted completed punch cards to win \$25 gift cards to downtown restaurants. Those who filled two or more cards were entered into a grand prize drawing of \$100 in downtown gift cards, an overnight

stay at the Courtyard Marriott Downtown and a basket of Akron-centric items. A total of 115 completed punch cards were submitted.

Main Street Promenade

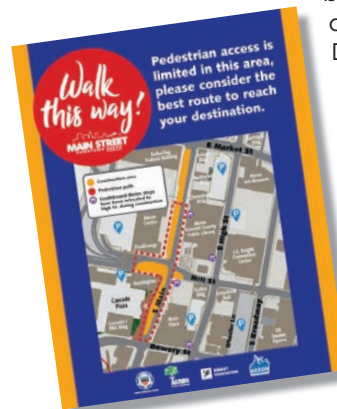
The reconstruction of Main Street is one of downtown Akron's most significant events in a generation. DAP is committed to assisting businesses and property owners through this progress at many levels.

As needed, DAP also facilitates individual meetings

between downtown businesses and the city for more personalized discussions. DAP also worked with the city to provide project information banners, renderings and pedestrian maps to stakeholders, including display boards, easels for office building lobbies and banners for construction fencing. To aid in pedestrian wayfinding, DAP implemented sandwich boards, maps and sidewalk decals to outline routes for foot traffic. These efforts are funded through the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and Akron Civic Commons.

Quarterly Report

DAP continues to produce quarterly reports in alignment with the strategic plan. Issues feature new businesses, pop up retail, marketing achievements, business news, economic development stories and more. Issues are emailed to a subscriber list and housed on the publications page of downtownakron.com.



MARKETING, BRANDING & PROMOTIONS



FACEBOOK
(DAP)
6,539 fans



FACEBOOK
(High Arts)
667 fans



FACEBOOK
(3rd Thursday)
571 fans



TWITTER
8,587 followers



INSTAGRAM
3,403 followers



CONSTANT
CONTACT
15,238
subscribers



DOWNTOWNAKRON.COM

222,137
unique visitors

Website and branding

Traffic increased on downtownakron.com as visitors, residents and employees continue to use the site for the latest events, news and business listings. Dedicated landing pages are created for summer and winter activities, Making it Happen business profiles, Make it to Main videos, and more as a way to better highlight specific initiatives and events. A newly developed downtown employment page was added with the goal of promoting employment opportunities in the district.

To accompany the newly branded collateral materials, a brochure holder was created for placement in downtown offices, security desks, restaurants and shops. These prominently highlight parking, Towpath Trail and ambassador services.

Summer programming

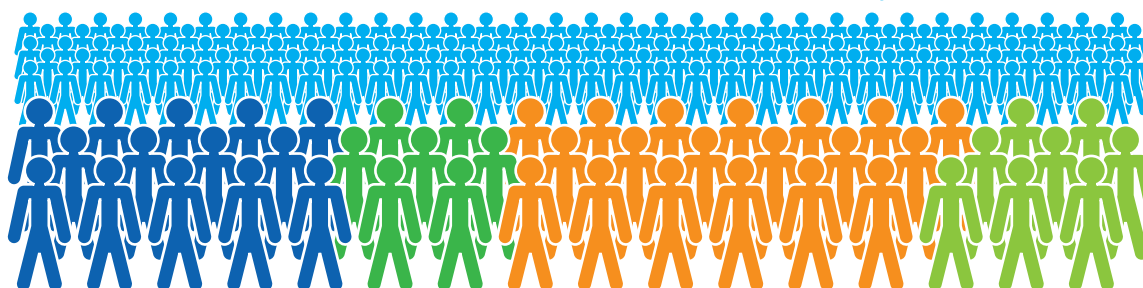
Lunchtime concerts returned in three locations from June to August to encourage people to explore the neighborhood. Concerts were held at the Akron-Summit County Public Library amphitheater (Amp it UP) on Wednesdays, at Pritt Entertainment Group's courtyard on Thursdays (Sidewalk Stage) and Cascade Plaza on Fridays. Summer on the Plaza on Cascade Plaza was expanded to include more than lunchtime concerts and outdoor games. Zumba with brunch, yoga, roller skating events, Spikeball and bocce ball leagues and happy hour events were added to the season. A concession shed for storage, information and bar was added with a University of Akron intern assigned to manage the activities. Guests to the plaza also enjoyed free Wi-Fi courtesy of the Knight Foundation.



AKRONSTOCK.COM

- Now includes more than 3,000 photos of downtown Akron and surrounding areas
- Features nine contributing photographers
- New photos added: High Arts Festival 2018, space lift projects, Elevate Akron, Roller Dance Parties, Pokemon Go 2018 and several retail businesses.

Total Cascade Plaza attendance is estimated at approximately **3,000** people



372 people attended
sports leagues and
happy hour events on
Thursdays

255 people
attended Sunday
Zumba sessions.

600 people
attended the three
roller party offerings.

301 people
attended yoga.

MARKETING, BRANDING & PROMOTIONS



Pokemon GO! in downtown Akron

For the second year DAP worked with The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, and Niantic, Inc., to hold Pokémon GO in the 330 on Aug. 25. The event drew approximately 500 people to downtown using the innovative augmented-reality experience of the popular mobile game.

3rd Thursday

3rd Thursday continued each month inviting people to explore art, culture, cuisine and entertainment throughout downtown Akron. A robust committee meets regularly to discuss promotions, trolley route and general event oversight. An Instagram account was created and has seen good growth and engagement. Walking tours are offered throughout the season to focus on different areas of the neighborhood. The city of Akron continues to support the event with provision of the free trolley and printing of the 3rd Thursday map.

High Arts Festival

The High Arts Festival completed year two of the Knight

Arts Challenge grant and was further expanded to include literary art in addition to visual art, film and music. Continued support was received from Peg's Foundation as well as Ohio Arts Council. The event ran Sept. 14-Oct. 10 with each weekend showcasing a different genre leading up to the finale celebration. A total of 236 visual artists, musicians, filmmakers and literary artists showcased their work in several downtown venues with public and juried votes determining \$33,000 in cash prizes. More than 3,400 people attended the events, 1,132 people registered to vote and more than 2,400 votes were cast.

From First Night to every night

After 22 years of hosting downtown Akron's signature New Year's Eve celebration, Downtown Akron Partnership declared victory in igniting the community's interest in annual downtown event programming and announced the retirement of First Night Akron in July.

"We are honored to have been a champion of this beloved event and look forward to DAP's next chapter in improving the downtown neighborhood," said Suzie Graham, DAP president and CEO. "DAP's ongoing work will be dedicated to helping make more dreams for downtown a reality."

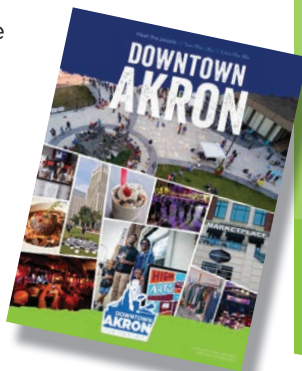


Annual Downtown Visitors (2018)

3.7 million

Publications

- Co-op page in Akron/Summit County Visitors Bureau Visitor Guide – May 2018
- Downtown Akron Guide with akronlife magazine – June 2018
- Co-op page in Greater Akron Chamber's Experience Greater Akron Guide – Sept. 2018
- DTAkron Update were produced quarterly in April, July, October and January. All issues are housed on the DAP website.



General Survey

Since 2009 DAP issues an annual online survey to downtown stakeholders, employees, property and business owners, students, residents and visitors. Nearly 800 responses were received for the 2018 survey. Key results included:

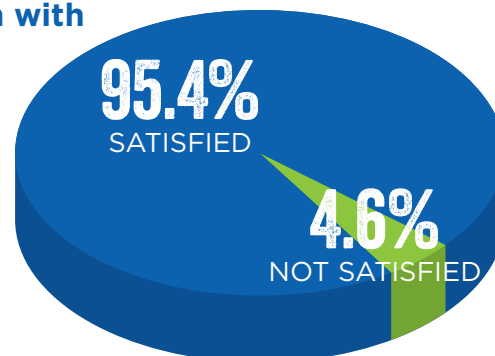
WHAT BRINGS YOU DOWNTOWN?

special events ..	58.5%	work	63.4%
dining	57.8%	nightlife.....	24.1%
arts/culture/ entertainment...	51.5%	shopping	13.9%

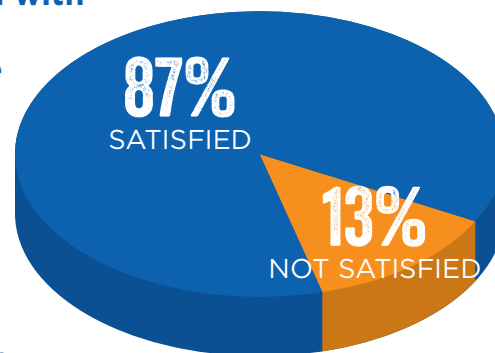
WHAT DO YOU THINK OF DOWNTOWN PARKING?

62% say it is never a problem or pretty easy

Satisfaction with downtown safety



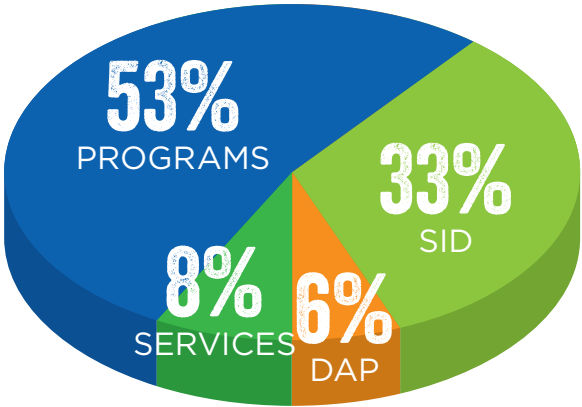
Satisfaction with downtown appearance



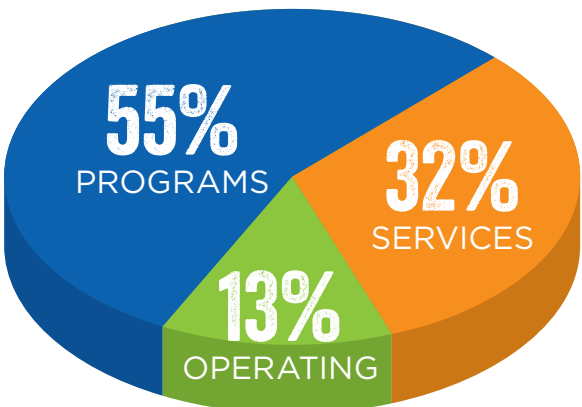
FINANCIALS

Downtown Akron Partnership, Inc.
Fiscal Year 2017-2018*

INCOME



EXPENSES





FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

DAP strives to maximize each SID dollar for the greatest impact to the district. Last year's SID revenue of \$734,942.68 provided 33 percent of our overall \$2,260,000 operating revenue. Our ongoing partnership with METRO RTA provided an additional 6 percent of operating funding for services to the Robert J. Pfaff Intermodal Transit Center and supported our Clean and Safe team services throughout the district. Business memberships with partners like The University of Akron, GOJO Industries and Canal Place allowed us to strengthen the safety of the corridor by providing contracted services just outside our SID border and provided for an additional 3 percent of revenue. DAP has valued business memberships with the Akron-Summit County Public Library and the John S. Knight Center. Our strong financial practices and stability empower us to request philanthropic support to improve services, programs and spaces downtown. General operating support was generously provided by GAR Foundation and

Akron Community Foundation allowing us to use our discretion to address the changing needs of the SID on an annual basis. We were honored to receive a \$1.5 million grant over two years from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation – the largest grant in DAP's history, to assist us in evaluating and improving public spaces downtown. Special events rely heavily upon corporate and foundation support.

Other non-SID funding sources: Peg's Foundation, (High Arts Festival), Corbin Foundation (Beautification), John S. and James L. Knight Foundation (special programming), Burton D. Morgan Foundation (business development), Keep America Beautiful (cigarette litter prevention) and SummaCare (wellness initiatives).

*Downtown Akron Partnership is independently audited on an annual basis by an independent accounting firm selected via an RFP process every three years. CLA audited the DAP financials in fiscal year 2017-2018. The independent auditor's report is presented at the annual meeting and is available for review at downtownakron.com/audit.

Photos in this publication courtesy of Shane Wynn, Tim Fitzwater, Stephanie Leonardi, John Aylward, Jeffrey Klaum, Todd V., and METRO RTA

DOWNTOWN AKRON PARTNERSHIP

