

# DOWNTOWN AKRON PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT 2016



# LEADERSHIP

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*Akron Children's Hospital*

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Director of Finance  
**Holly Mattucci**

Operations Director, Clean &  
Safe Ambassadors  
**Darrell Stamps**

Director of Business  
Development  
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## Clean & Safe Ambassadors

**Keith Dobbins**  
**Mark Gibbs**  
**Val Kramer**  
**Sean Scott**  
**Aaron Shugart**  
**Mike Smith**  
**Rhonda Smith**  
**Lanita Ware**





## A LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

We are seeing a renewed optimism in the city of Akron. Mayor Horrigan has set the goal of “growing the city,” and Downtown Akron Partnership is proud to enthusiastically be part of striving toward that goal. Exciting, fun things are happening in our downtown neighborhood. We are proud of the things the Partnership has been a part of over the last 21 years and look forward to building on past successes in the future.

This past year saw much progress, including the start of construction on a new campus of Stark State College at the edge of our Special Improvement District. Once completed, it will bring new educational opportunities to our city. At the same time, we are encouraged that the University of Akron is once again moving in the right direction. Akron is a college town, and it is our hope that students who attend these institutions will partake of all our downtown has to offer. In fact, we hope that some of them will decide to stay on as downtown residents once they complete their educational experience. The partnership is here to assist in whatever way we can.

Things are happening on Main Street. There’s a new bike path, and progress is being made on the buildings surrounding the Akron Civic Theatre. Every ten minutes, the purple DASH bus passes by providing free transportation between downtown and the university. More excitement is just around the corner as work begins on our downtown promenade, thanks to the team effort that led to Akron receiving a \$5 million Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grant.

As we look back on Downtown Akron Partnership’s accomplishments last year in this annual report, I am reminded of the challenges we still face as a city. We acknowledge and are grateful for the roles our city and county governments have played in making downtown the safe and vibrant community it has become. And we truly appreciate the property owners in our Special Improvement District. Without their recognition of what could be accomplished through working together, downtown would not be the stimulating place it is now. Thank you for your support. We recognize that support has not just

been financial, but has included your ideas, your hard work and your patience. Your efforts have paid off in making our downtown neighborhood not just a great place to work, but also a family-friendly recreational area that has become more and more a destination for having fun. We have come a long way, but 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 improve our downtown and, by doing so, continue to improve the health of our entire region.



**Clair  
Dickinson**

*Clair E. Dickinson*

# VIBRANCY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## Business Development

As a priority initiative of our strategic plan, DAP restructured our staff and pursued funding to support a full time Director of Business Development. Through the help of GAR Foundation and Burton D. Morgan Foundation, DAP hired Christine Vadala to oversee a business development strategy that includes retention, attraction, assistance and oversight of the Pop Up Retail program. In 2016, DAP pursued 98 potential new businesses or expansions as prospects for downtown. Outreach to existing business is quantified in Member Outreach & Support on page 10.

## Pop Up Retail

In late 2015, DAP developed a Pop Up Retail program to create opportunity for entrepreneurs, address storefront vacancy, build walkable districts and strengthen the character of downtown through independent retail.

Round I of the program was supported by the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and placed seven independently owned, small businesses in the district: Apotheclaire, Chill Ice Cream Co., Ely Road Boutique, Pressed for Success, Royal Dance Academy, Rubber City Comics and Sweet Mary's Bakery.

Round II of the program is supported by the Burton D. Morgan Foundation. As of the close of the 2016 calendar year, Stray Dog Café, Levels Barber Studio and Chameleon Café's second location were added to the downtown neighborhood.

Cumulatively in 2016, with an investment of \$32,500, DAP helped to position downtown properties to gain \$233,250 in lease revenue this year with a projected total of \$344,358 in lease revenue over the terms of the leases signed. A total of 34 employees were added to the downtown workforce through this investment.

## New Businesses

In addition to the pop up clients, Downtown Akron welcomed 20 new businesses to the district in 2016: Akron Coffee Roasters, ASCPL Microbusiness Center, Center for Applied Drama and Autism (CADA), Courtyard Akron Downtown, El Gato Taqueria, Full Grip Games, Gabriel Performance Products, Great Escape Room, Hennes Communications, Northside Speakeasy, NOTO North, Ohio Shakespeare Festival, Pad Thai, Pin Oak Energy Partners, Pyramid Consulting International, Quanex Building Products, SecureValue Storage, Totally Tangled Creations, Vibe Market, Vine Marketing (Library Microbusiness Center).



# Stakeholder Leadership & Engagement

## **Downtown Akron Vision & Redevelopment Plan**

In 2016, Downtown Akron Partnership and the city of Akron embarked on the development of a plan for downtown for the first time in DAP's history. From the beginning, the plan was supported by Mayor Dan Horrigan, whose Blue Ribbon Task Force saw the need for such a plan. It was also a primary recommendation from DAP's strategic planning process that took place last year.

The mayor and his staff joined with DAP's leadership in assembling a multidisciplinary group of 37 representatives from small and corporate business, development, city and county government, health systems, non-profits, finance, education, housing, tourism, real estate and philanthropy to populate the committee. DAP contracted with MKSK of Columbus to lead Phase I of the Downtown Akron Vision and Redevelopment Plan, which was supported by GAR and John S. and James L. Knight Foundations.

The first phase of the process integrated more than 150 citizens and stakeholders in a five month collective decision making process. It evaluated existing conditions as well as plans and processes that have been undertaken that intersect with the downtown neighborhood. Through the process, ten planning principles were identified to be prioritized and integrated into future public or private developments. Many of these principles are now paired with workgroups charged with leading the full development and integration of the principle into the way Downtown Akron does business. Finally, the process identified five key opportunity sites for development and provided recommendations for each to catalyze growth. Of the five sites identified, the Lock 3 & 4 area and Main and Exchange were prioritized as the most critical and catalytic areas to begin work.

The plan was revealed at a public meeting on Nov. 15 and was well received by stakeholders and the media, positioning the corridor as an exciting place to bring business and develop our quality of life. Executive committee member Nick Browning, Akron Region President of Huntington Bank, announced a challenge

grant of \$60,000 for the next phase of planning. He has championed the fundraising effort for that match, with MKSK's work to continue in 2017.

## **District Meetings**

In alignment with the Strategic Plan, a schedule was established for quarterly meetings for each of the downtown districts 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. Attendance and participation has grown since the inception of the meetings, including representatives from city engineering to better connect to business and property owners to understand the many projects in play in each area.

## **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 Downtown Operations Group, Partnerships in Motion with Akron-Summit County Convention & Visitors Bureau, TIGER Grant Committee, iTowpath, Akron Waterways Renewed!, Bike Share Committee and UA Safety Task Force.

## **Public Space/Public Life**

Through a grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, DAP contracted with Gehl Studio to conduct a Public Space/Public Life survey and prototype project. The studio trained staff and 25 stakeholders on public space use measurement and prototyping activities, and led DAP in more than 190 hours of data mapping in the district. Four prototype projects were implemented on Main Street in October with activity mapping and counts to measure impact. Data will be processed by DAP through Gehl software to provide baseline data for district use and to inform the second phase of this project in 2017. This phase will include pilot projects to enhance public space.

# CLEAN, SAFE & WELCOMING

## Clean

As identified in the DAP Strategic Plan, clean and safe initiatives continue to be a priority of the district with the goal of publishing and monitoring metrics to ensure ongoing success. Through the dedication of nine Clean & Safe Ambassadors, the following achievements mark 2016.



5,268



METRO BUS STOPS CLEANED

42,527

TRASH COLLECTED (LBS)

1,247

GRAFFITI REMOVED

1,582

SAFETY ESCORTS



8,805

HOSPITALITY ASSISTANCE

2,030

BUSINESS CONTACTS MADE



374

MOTORIST/VEHICLE ASSISTANCE

8,436

POWER WASHING (HOURS)



### Green and Clean

The 9th annual event, presented by Pritt Entertainment Group, changed from a one-day initiative to five consecutive weeks of projects including engagement of more than 450 volunteers. From April 22-May 20, these volunteers spruced up downtown doing varied tasks that included:

### Downtown Community Recycling Program

Through continued coordination with the city of Akron's single stream recycling program, we welcomed Apotheclaire, Northside Marriott and Sweet Mary's Bakery. We also increased the capacity of recycling efforts at Northside Lofts. A total of 86.3 tons of recycled materials was collected from participating businesses.

WEEDING  
**26 BLOCKS**

MULCHING  
PLANTERS  
**45**

TRASH  
COLLECTED  
**90 BAGS**

RAILINGS PAINTED  
**200 FEET**

TOWPATH TRAIL  
& SIDEWALKS CLEANED  
**5 MILES**



Pritt Entertainment Group's spacelift



# LOVE LETTERS to our AMBASSADORS

“I just wanted to take a moment to thank Downtown Akron Partnership, and specifically Marcus Gibbs, for assisting me in getting into my locked car yesterday. I had no idea that Akron offered this wonderful free service. It made me truly thankful that I have chosen a place like Akron to start my business and grow my family.”

“Often in the snowy winter weather, I noticed that the sidewalk on Broadway, north of the Metro Transit Center, had never been cleared. I would see women with strollers, or older people struggling just to walk to get a bus. This morning as I drove by, I saw two DAP ambassadors (Lanita Ware & Mike Smith) clearing the walk. It made my heart happy to see this.”

“I wanted to say thank you for providing friendly, helpful ambassadors in your community. My friend and I spent a delightful afternoon visiting and exploring downtown Akron. We encountered Lanita Ware who gave us excellent information and directions to the Art Museum, Quaker Oats silos and a number of other downtown locations. She was super friendly and welcoming!

We were very impressed with the city and the friendly people we encountered that day on our Great Akron Adventure.”



## Safe

DAP's nine Clean & Safe Ambassadors enhance downtown safety with foot and bike patrols Monday-Saturday 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

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

DAP ambassadors also took on creating a buffer for the new cycle track by planting and maintaining planters along the stretch from South Main Street from Canal Park to the entrance of Canal Place.







For the winter season, ambassadors placed mini evergreen tips and other greenery in the cycle track planters as a test for future winter plantings.





### Cycle Track

DAP assisted the O&E Canalway Coalition and the city of Akron in planning and maintaining the first separated bike lane in Downtown Akron through an alternate route to the Towpath Trail. This project set the tone for accommodating cyclists, cars and pedestrians in downtown. DAP planted and maintained bollards utilizing self-watering planters. Ambassadors provided assistance on RubberDucks game days with signage and support. The cycle track ribbon cutting occurred on Aug. 18 and included a bike ride along South Main Street from Spaghetti Warehouse to Canal Park's Diamond Boardwalk.

-  **57** PLANTER BOXES
-  **54** HANGING BASKETS
-  **80** SIDEWALK PLANTERS (CONCRETE/PORTABLE)
-  **51** CYCLE TRACK PLANTERS



# MEMBER OUTREACH & SUPPORT

## Reimagining The Civic Commons

Akron was awarded a Reimagining the Civic Commons \$5 million grant to revitalize public space along the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail in the city. Reimagining the Civic Commons is a partnership of four national foundations that seeks to foster civic engagement, economic opportunity and environmental sustainability through revitalizing and connecting parks, libraries, community centers and other public spaces.

Akron Civic Commons will focus on three civic assets – the Civic Gateway, Park East and Summit Lake Park – connected along a three mile section of the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail. DAP is proud to participate in the project as a stakeholder in the Civic Gateway.

Groundswell was contracted to implement improvements to the State Route 59 pedestrian bridge and Lock 4 which were unveiled during Harvest Fest in November. The core team, comprised of convener Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition, and supporting partners Knight Foundation, city of Akron, Akron Civic Theatre, Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority, Downtown Akron Partnership, County of Summit and Summit Metro Parks, continue to plan for civic commons work in 2017 including new projects with Gehl Studio.

## Emerging Leaders

DAP Emerging Leaders is comprised of eight young professionals committed to engaging their demographic in downtown. Projects include a marketing campaign for ambassador services using baseball card of each team member and a social media campaign to find an ambassador during specific times to win prizes.



QUARTERLY RETAIL OUTREACH . . . . .	210
BUSINESS OUTREACH . . . . .	135
PROPERTY OUTREACH. . . . .	45
PROPERTY OWNER/BROKER OUTREACH . . . . .	114
RESIDENTIAL OUTREACH . . . . .	21 property visits
RESIDENT WELCOME PACKETS. . . . .	1,300
BUSINESS INFORMATION PACKETS . . . . .	800

## Downtown Akron market statistics

### JANUARY-JUNE 2016

Vacancy rate – 24.6%  
Average asking lease price SF - \$16.29  
Net absorption – (33,239)

### JULY-DECEMBER 2016

Vacancy rate – 20.4%  
Average asking lease price SF - \$15.56  
Net absorption – 127,650

Data from CBRE

# MARKETING, BRANDING & PROMOTIONS

## New DAP website and branding

The newly formed DAP marketing committee convened to respond to RFPs for the redesign of the DAP website. Interviews were held with six firms and WhiteSpace Creative was selected to drive the project. The new site launched on Nov. 14, 2016 and traffic has increased over the previous year. The site is now mobile responsive, which eliminated the need to maintain a separate mobile site and looks the same no matter what device the visitor is using.

DAP also worked with Studio Graphique to finalize DAP brand standards and usage guidelines to outline proper logo to use, primary and secondary typefaces and colors, photo styles and graphic elements that will be carried through the partnership's collateral for a unified, consistent look.

## Market at Lock 3

The market, sponsored by SummaCare, moved to Cascade Plaza and ran July 1 through Sept. 9. Five vendors ranging from farmers, flowers, baked goods and more participated. Various promotions and entertainment were added to enhance the market experience. A new logo and collateral

materials were developed to help promote the changes.

## Kiss my Akron

For the 4th year DAP and Emerging Leaders led the Kiss my Akron promotion to spread the love of Downtown Akron businesses in February. Approximately 2,000 kiss clings were distributed through 20 downtown locations. The person who "kissed" the most businesses, and shared on social media, received a \$50 gift card to the downtown business of his choice.

## Lunchtime summer entertainment

Recess on the Plaza returned on Wednesdays and Fridays with yard games and new seating at Cascade Plaza. The Nantucket Concert Series was developed by the businesses in the Nantucket Building and presented by Huntington Bank. Each Wednesdays a different musician performed on the stage in Commerce Park. Pritt Entertainment Group continued their support of the Sidewalk Stage throughout downtown on Thursdays with a variety of performers.



DOWNTOWNAKRON.COM

148,852  
unique visitors  
(250% increase)



FIRSTNIGHTAKRON.COM

19,531  
unique visitors



AKRONSTOCK.COM

-2,000+ high quality photos  
of Downtown Akron and  
surrounding areas  
-Five contributing  
photographers  
-New photos added:  
Akron Art Prize 2016,  
First Night Akron 17,  
Gehl Main Street  
prototyping  
and Harvest Fest



FACEBOOK (DAP)

4,912 fans  
(14.3% increase;  
614 new followers)



FACEBOOK (FNA)

1,321 fans  
(21.7% increase;  
236 new followers)



TWITTER

7,169 followers  
(17.3% increase;  
1,057 new  
followers)



INSTAGRAM

2,328 followers  
(83.7% increase;  
1,061 new  
followers)



CONSTANT  
CONTACT

16,287 contacts  
receiving  
downtown  
news, alerts and  
e-newsletters



# MARKETING, BRANDING & PROMOTIONS

## METRO DASH

In an effort to strengthen the availability and use of public transit in the district, METRO unveiled the new DASH, Downtown Akron's free weekday shuttle service. The DASH runs every 10 minutes from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. and every 15 minutes from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. in a loop route from METRO's Transit Center, around downtown and to The University of Akron. The DASH is made possible by the city of Akron, DAP, GPD Group, The University of Akron and METRO.

## Downtown Akron Artwalk

Was held 11 times in 2016 and attended by more than 2,800 visitors (trolley counts). An Artwalk committee was formed to discuss changes to the format in mid-year 2017.

## Akron Art Prize

For the 5th year the Margaret Clark Morgan Foundation supported Akron Art Prize with help from Burton D. Morgan Foundation. Several focus groups meetings with venue owners, artists and community members were held to determine the direction of the event. A new logo was developed which highlights the color and vibrancy of this arts experience.

New categories and prize structure were developed with a total of \$16,000 in prize money in 10 categories. The overall winner received \$5,000 and the opportunity to display his winning entry in the Akron Art Museum for one month. First place 2D received \$2,000, second place 2D received \$1,000, first place 3D received \$2,000, second place 3D received \$1,000 and an Artists' Choice Award

winner received \$1,000. A juried component with two arts and two civic leaders was added. The four juried winners received \$1,000 each.

The 2016 event had 1,300 voters cast nearly 3,000 votes for their favorite artist(s) via the Art Prize app or at kiosks in Summit Artspace. The number of participating artists increased to 203, up from 188 in 2015. DAP was awarded a Knight Arts Challenge grant in 2016. The grant will allow Akron Art Prize to transition into the High Arts Festival in 2017, expanding to include music and film entries.

## First Night Akron

Celebrating its 21st year, First Night Akron experienced many changes and enhancements. For the first time a public call for artists resulted in a talented new button artist, April Couch, who developed a unique design using the city skyline wrapped in a Zentangle design.

Nearly one third of the entertainment line-up was either brand new to First Night, or back after several years off. New highlights included PechaKucha, a sensory



space sponsored by the Center for Applied Drama and Autism (CADA), Jul Big Green, Elec Simon, the Chardon Polka Band, Wesley Bright and the Honeytones, Matrix Performing Arts and the Kevin Smalley Experience. Returning favorites included carriage rides, UA Steel Drum Band, Yiddishe Cup, the Silent Disco, Magical Theatre Company and two fireworks shows sponsored by Huntington Bank. Once again METRO provided free shuttles throughout the event footprint.

Nearly 50 activities were programmed in seven venues, including the new Mill Street Main Stage between the JSK Center and Greystone Hall. Approximately 13,000 revelers spent their New Year’s Eve in Downtown Akron.

Through the Community Outreach program, more than 2,000 First Night buttons were provided to local service agencies for distribution to low-to-moderate income, elderly and disabled clients.

### Discover Downtown Akron Passports

Residents were invited to be a “tourist in your own town” with Downtown Passports. The journey began with First Night Akron and continues through December with 13 additional events including sporting events, theater offerings, free tours and more. The passport, which costs \$15, has an actual value of \$234. To date, nearly 600 passports have been sold.

### Publications

- Co-op page in Akron/Summit County Visitors Bureau Visitor Guide – May 2016
- Downtown Akron Guide with *akronlife* magazine – June 2016
- Co-op page in Greater Akron Chamber’s Experience Greater Akron Guide – Sept. 2016
- First Night Akron Guide in *akronlife* magazine – Dec. 2016
- Redesign of the Towpath Trail in Downtown Akron trifold. – Dec. 2016
- A Quarterly Report was developed to replace the monthly Downtown Partners. The September and December issues have been published and are housed on the DAP website.



### Annual Downtown Visitors (2016)

3.6 million



**General Survey:** Since 2009 DAP issues an annual online survey that is distributed to downtown stakeholders, employees, property and business owners, students, residents and visitors. Nearly 1,000 responses were received for the 2016 survey. Key results included:

**SATISFACTION WITH DOWNTOWN SAFETY**  
**96.4%** are either very satisfied or satisfied

**SATISFACTION WITH DOWNTOWN APPEARANCE**  
**88.8%** are either very satisfied or satisfied

**WHAT BRINGS YOU DOWNTOWN?**

special events ...	<b>75.4%</b>	work .....	<b>52.1%</b>
dining .....	<b>66.4%</b>	nightlife.....	<b>23%</b>
arts/culture/ entertainment...	<b>61.3%</b>	shopping .....	<b>20%</b>

**AWARE OF AMBASSADOR PROGRAM?**  
yes - **53.4%** | no - **29.2%**

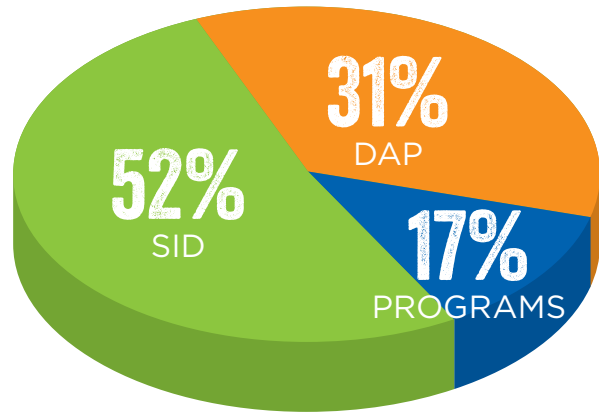


# FINANCIALS

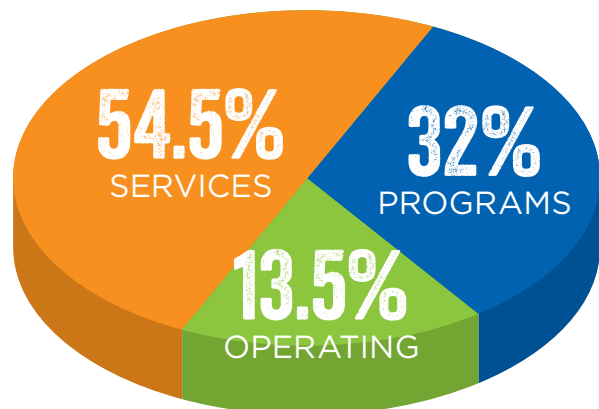


**Downtown Akron Partnership, Inc.  
Fiscal Year 2015-2016**

## INCOME



## EXPENSES







# FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Last year's SID revenue of approximately \$689,943 provided 52% of our overall \$1.33 million operating revenue. Our ongoing partnership with METRO RTA provided an additional 10% of operating funding for services to the Robert J. Pfaff Intermodal Transit Center and supports our Clean and Safe team services throughout the district. Business memberships with partners like The University of Akron, GOJO Industries and Canal Place allow us to strengthen the safety of the corridor by providing contracted services just outside our SID border and provided for an additional 3% of revenue. DAP has valued business memberships with the Akron-Summit County Public Library and the John S. Knight Center. General operating support is 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. Special events rely heavily upon corporate and foundation support. Less than 4.5% of annual SID revenue is utilized to support events such as First Night Akron and Akron Art Prize. Those two events were supported through corporate and foundation support in excess of \$140,000 in FY 2015-2016.

**Other non-SID funding sources:** Margaret Clark Morgan Foundation (Akron Art Prize), Corbin Foundation (Beautification), John S. and James L. Knight Foundation (special programming), Burton D. Morgan Foundation (Akron Art Prize), Keep America Beautiful (cigarette litter prevention), SummaCare (Everyday Health) and Welty Family Foundation (Downtown Akron Passports).

**First Night sponsors included:** Founding partners: Akron Beacon Journal, city of Akron. Venue partners: Acme Fresh Market; Akron Children's Hospital; FirstEnergy Foundation; Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company; Huntington Bank, Ohio Arts Council and PNC Foundation. Stage partners: Charles E. and Mabel M. Ritchie Foundation; John S. Knight Center; Kenneth L. Calhoun Charitable Trust KeyBank, Trustee; Lloyd L. and Louis K. Smith Memorial Foundation; Lost Tribe Media, METRO Regional Transit Authority, Roetzel; Sisler McFawn Foundation and the Welty Family Foundation. Activity partners: Bridgestone Americas Trust Fund; Cohen & Company; Glenn R. and Alice V. Boggess Memorial Foundation; GOJO Industries, Inc.; Labels & Letters; Life Skills High School; Meggitt Aircraft Braking Systems Corporation; The Murdough Foundation; OMNOVA Solutions Foundation, Pat Catan's Craft Centers and County of Summit; Luminary sponsors: Akron's Finest Mulch and Power Media Special Friends: Coca-Cola, The Maynard Family Foundation and Miller's Party Rental Center.

\* Downtown Akron Partnership is independently audited on an annual basis by an independent accounting firm selected via an RFP process every three years. CliftonLarsonAllen audited the DAP financials in fiscal year 2015-2016. The independent auditor's report is presented at the annual meeting and is available for review at [downtownakron.com/audit](http://downtownakron.com/audit).

*Photos in this publication courtesy of  
Shane Wynn, Tim Fitzwater,  
Jason Edwards, Cameron Robinson  
and Pritt Entertainment Group*

# DOWNTOWN AKRON PARTNERSHIP

