



MOMENTUM

— DOWNTOWN AKRON —

2020-2024



SPECIAL IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT // 2020-2024

SERVICES PLAN







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Photos by: Tim Fitzwater, Jeff Klaum, Stephanie Leonardi and Shane Wynn

GAR
FOUNDATION

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Momentum

▶ DOWNTOWN AKRON SPECIAL IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT SERVICES PLAN 2020-2024

It was 1994. The glory days were behind us. The future struggling to begin. That year, the Mary Means Report sponsored by the City of Akron and Akron Tomorrow identified the need for a non-profit organization to work with business and government to create and maintain a vital downtown. Thus began the Downtown Akron Special Improvement District (DASID).

Since then, Akron's steady downtown development is remarkable. More remarkable is the momentum of growth that has taken hold in the last three years. Since 2016, more than 1 billion dollars have been invested in completed and in-process public and private projects downtown.

Akron is ready to take advantage of the national resurgence of cities as the best place for a live, work and play lifestyle filled with diversity, authenticity and culture. With a host of locally owned and operated restaurants, unique shopping opportunities and one-of-a-kind experiences, downtown is poised to become the place that combines live, work and play in our signature, approachable Akron way.

The DASID is uniquely positioned to exclusively serve the needs of downtown Akron. Through a spectrum of services from tactical to strategic, we are able to meet and serve our stakeholders to elevate the district as a whole. As the employment center for more than 50,000 people, a catalytic growth area for residential development and the county's arts and culture hub, downtown Akron plays a critical role in the cultural, economic and social health of our region.

The role of the DASID has evolved. While we maintain the clean, safe and welcoming work that has become an integral part of downtown's vibrancy, we've expanded our services to provide leadership in downtown strategy, business development and public space enhancement.

It is with demonstrated accomplishment in both our existing and new areas of service that we approach the fourth renewal of the DASID. We look forward to working hand in hand with private, public, non-profit and philanthropic sectors in shifting from momentum to motion as we build and promote your vibrant and valuable downtown Akron.

DOWNTOWN AKRON SID is a not-for-profit organization through which property owners assess themselves to provide funding for district-wide marketing and promotion, business resources, physical environment enhancement services, safety, residential and parking programs, as well as advocacy services.

Under a management agreement, the Downtown Akron Partnership (DAP) administers the services plan for the 42-block Downtown Akron SID.

See you downtown,

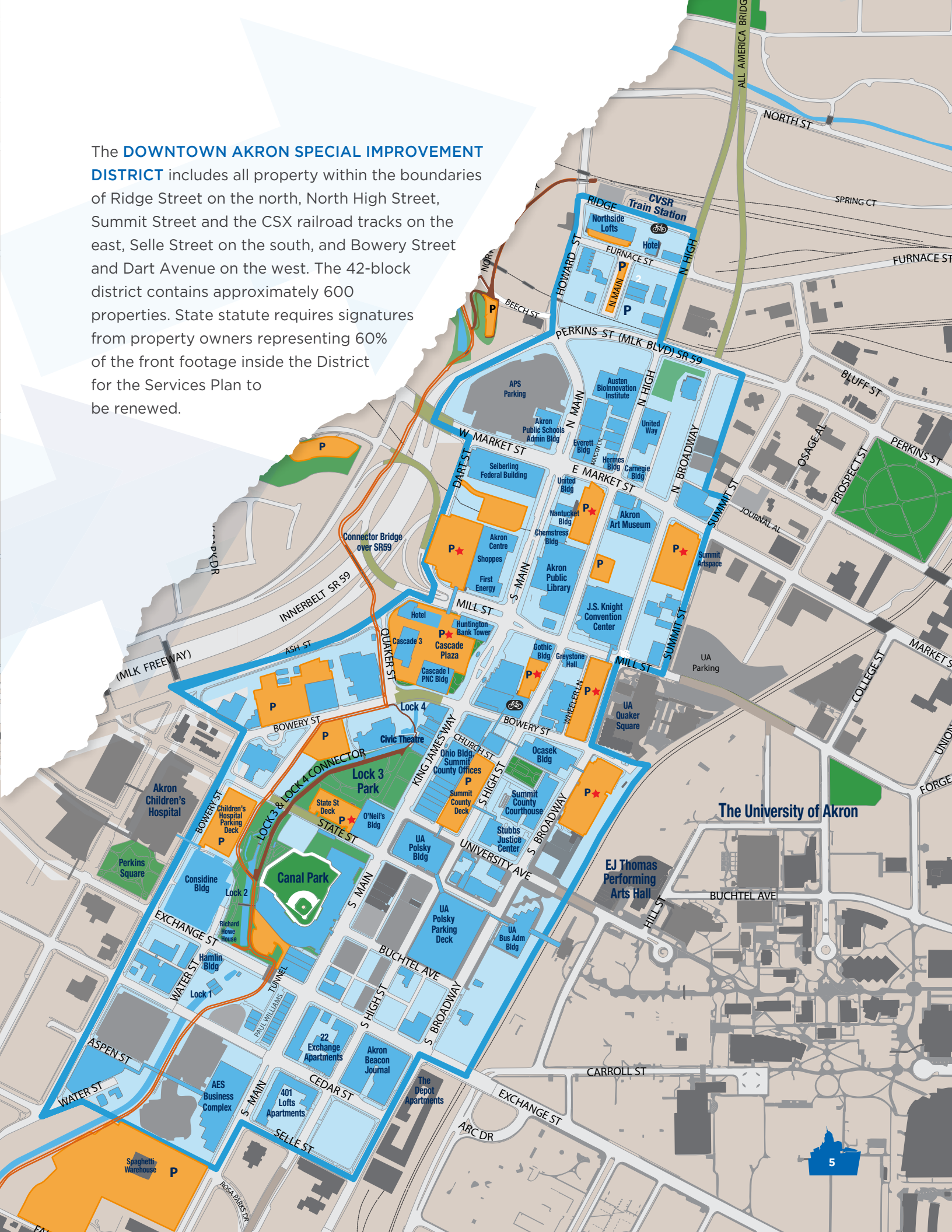
Lee Walko
SID Chairman

Suzie Graham
DAP President



The DOWNTOWN AKRON SPECIAL IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

includes all property within the boundaries of Ridge Street on the north, North High Street, Summit Street and the CSX railroad tracks on the east, Selle Street on the south, and Bowery Street and Dart Avenue on the west. The 42-block district contains approximately 600 properties. State statute requires signatures from property owners representing 60% of the front footage inside the District for the Services Plan to be renewed.



Our 2020 Vision Looks Great

▶ DOWNTOWN AKRON SPECIAL IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT SERVICES PLAN 2020-2024

Downtown Akron is critically important to the health of our region. We are the county's hub for employment, locally owned business and arts and culture. The downtown district plays a critical role in the economic health of the entire city. Income tax collected from the more than 50,000 employees of the central business district help maintain streets, infrastructure and safety forces throughout the city. We are exciting, valuable and impactful - and we are on the move.

This 2020-2024 Services Plan is a five year blueprint that provides the strategy and support that benefits the residents, employees, visitors, business and property owners of the DASID 42-block district.

The DASID has been a key contributor in the downtown Akron community since our inception in 1999. We have served as a catalyst for enhancing the environment, a comprehensive source of information, a convener for stakeholder conversations and a problem solver for downtown concerns.

We support existing community programs while also developing new, innovative programs and strategies to generate interest, build investment and attract people to downtown Akron.

In 2016 we engaged more than 200 downtown stakeholders and 1,118 survey respondents to find out what you needed from us. The outcomes shaped our scope of services into Stakeholder Leadership and Engagement; Member Outreach and Support; Vibrancy and Economic Development; Clean, Safe and Welcoming; and Marketing and Branding. The groundwork laid in the Strategic Plan has guided our work since 2016, and played an integral part in creating our new services plan.

Excellent services must be paired with excellent financial management in order to make sustainable, consistent and scalable impact. DASID funds are leveraged with the power of our non-profit management partner to make the most of your district assessment investment.

LEVERAGING SID FUNDS FOR GREATER IMPACT

- ▶ For each DASID dollar contributed, DAP is matching it with an additional two dollars through business memberships, grants and sponsorships.
- ▶ SID contributions averaged 50.6% of DAP's annual operating income from 2014-2017. DAP's 2018 budget reflects SID revenue at 32% of DAP's operating budget.



Engaging Stakeholders and Leadership

A NEIGHBORHOOD WITHOUT A SHARED STRATEGY FOR GROWTH WILL STRUGGLE TO PROGRESS. BY ENGAGING OUR STAKEHOLDERS TO BUILD CONSENSUS AND DETERMINE DIRECTION, WE ARE ABLE TO MOVE TOWARD A COMMON GOAL – A BETTER, STRONGER, MORE VIBRANT DOWNTOWN.

Highlights of the past five years:

- As an outcome of feedback from the 2016 DAP Strategic Plan, we routinely convene stakeholders to share information, assess downtown progress and identify issues and concerns at District Meetings held every month in downtown.
- Guided by Mayor Horrigan and a team of 37 multidisciplinary stakeholders in combination with more than 1000 public voices, DAP drove the completion of the Downtown Vision and Redevelopment Plan.
 - PHASE I** - DAP secured funding support from GAR and Knight Foundations
 - Reviewed past studies, conducted new, in-depth interviews with more than 150 stakeholders
 - Established 10 shared planning principles
 - PHASE II** - Gathered support from the corporate community in conjunction with a lead challenge grant from Huntington Bank
 - Collected input from more than 1,000 participants
 - Completed a full housing analysis
 - Completed a hospitality scan to determine hotel growth recommendations
 - RESULT** - Robust collaboration and real plan for short, medium and long term success

To keep the momentum going:

- Serve as convener, facilitator or advisor as needed to ensure consistent understanding and flow of information among stakeholders.
- Continue relationships with local government to share plans and recommendations.
- Continue monthly District Meetings.
- Develop a retention plan/template/assistance for members and affiliates.
- Work with city, County of Summit, Greater Akron Chamber, philanthropy, downtown business and property owners and Development Finance Authority of Summit County to create capacity to fully implement the Downtown Akron Vision and Redevelopment Plan.

DAP PURSUES GRANT FUNDING - independent of SID assessment funds - to support downtown Akron needs.



Supporting Our Membership

▶ THE DASID WAS CREATED TO SERVE ITS MEMBERSHIP.

We strive to serve as a source for accurate information, liaise between businesses and local government, and be a community connector, advocate and advisor. We stay informed of the downtown business climate by connecting with district businesses, residents and property owners to best understand the needs of the neighborhood and co-develop solutions to meet those needs.

Highlights of the past five years:

In 2017 DAP staff provided more in-person visits to the district than ever before:

- ▶ We served as downtown liaison to connect the city's Office of Integrated Development with business and property owners in the redesign of Main Street.
- ▶ Developed a GAR Foundation/Burton D. Morgan Foundation partnership that supported a Director of Business Development position. This was an immediate outcome of the DAP strategic plan in order to test impacts of what we perceived to be needed stakeholder services. Established a clear scope of work for Business Development including retention interviews and surveys and contact management software.
- ▶ **OUTREACH 2014 VS 2017:**
2014 OUTREACH: Business Visits: 120, Property Owner Visits: 20
2017 OUTREACH: Quarterly Retail Visits: 240, Business Contacts: 150, Property Owner Contacts: 40, Broker/Property Manager Contacts: 130
- ▶ **RETAIL GROWTH 2014 VS. 2017:**
2014: RETAIL BUSINESS: 36
2017: RETAIL BUSINESS: 73
 (39 located in Northside Marketplace)

To build on this momentum we will:

- ▶ Maintain or grow the business visit program by funding the Director of Business Development as a staff position to increase our on-the-street connection to businesses and provide resources necessary to support growth and improve their downtown experience.
- ▶ Provide information, communication, advocacy, support and services throughout public and private development and construction projects.
- ▶ Develop business retention strategies in collaboration with the County of Summit, City of Akron and Greater Akron Chamber.
- ▶ Survey members annually to determine needs.
- ▶ Provide connections to resources, information, guidance and promotional support.
- ▶ Grow residential engagement with new housing developments.

STAKEHOLDER SERVICES	2012	2017	PERCENT INCREASE
Outreach Packets	1,425	2,000	40%
Residential Outreach	900	1,200	33%
Business Contacts/ Interviews	152	560	531%



Vibrancy and Economic Development

A VIBRANT DOWNTOWN IS CRITICAL TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN TALENT, RESIDENTS, ENTREPRENEURS AND CULTURE.

Downtown Akron proudly serves as a hub for locally owned restaurants, anchor and independent cultural institutions and local retail destinations. Being vibrant includes fostering diverse small businesses, programming events, enhancing public spaces and building cultural capital as a city for all people.

Highlights of the past five years:

- As part of the scope of the Director of Business Development, we've been able to spur and attract new business downtown.
- In 2017, DAP pursued 118 potential new businesses or expansions as prospects for downtown.
- Serve as a liaison to new developments, connecting them to city/county/DFA and other assistance providers, assisting with navigating permitting process.
- Prototyped, piloted and made permanent improvements in public spaces like Northside Green, North High and Lock Next as ways to positively impact walkability, safety, sense of place, private investment, talent attraction and retention and civic pride.
- Created the pop Up Retail program-Since 2015, a total investment of \$66,400 in pop-up retail helped position downtown properties to gain a projected total of \$858,159 in lease revenue over the terms of the leases signed. A total of 68 employees have been added to the downtown workforce and 62 new businesses were added to the downtown neighborhoods.
- Created Akron Art Prize and High Arts Festival as a way to elevate the excellence of the Akron regions area art community.
- Helped to establish the Northside Marketplace - a unique national model of retail development that serves as a ladder of opportunity for entrepreneurship.
- Provided neighborhood concerts, events and recreational programming to activate public spaces and enhance the downtown experience.

We will continue this momentum to:

- Maintain and strengthen the Director of Business Development services.
- Maintain quarterly retailer visits to assist in retaining small business.
- Focus efforts in collaboration with the city, County of Summit and Greater Akron Chamber to contribute to regional economic development.
- Program public spaces with diverse artists and activities to enhance the downtown experience.

DAP WAS AWARDED a \$1.5 million Knight Foundation grant for public space improvements and to assist in establishing the Northside Marketplace.



Clean, Safe and Welcoming

▶ **THE KEYSTONE OF THE DASID SERVICES, A CLEAN, SAFE AND WELCOMING DOWNTOWN IS THE FOUNDATION UPON WHICH WE GROW.**

Highlights of the past five years:

- ▶ **Nipped nightlife problems in the bud.** How? Collaboration. We created a coordinated committee with business and property owners, The University of Akron, Akron Fire, Police and City Prosecutor's office. Together we take a proactive approach to building vibrant and responsible nightlife downtown.
- ▶ **Spread downtown beauty.** We added more planters and planter boxes along fence lines and sidewalks and piloted the use of self-watering containers to improve efficiency and sustainability.
- ▶ **Expanded the Ambassador Program.** In 2018, we began to pilot a seven-day-a-week ambassador shift to expand our popular services to all downtown constituents, regardless of the day of the week.
- ▶ **Expanded volunteer engagement.** Expanded annual Green and Clean Day to a month-long volunteer engagement experience providing a cleaner, greener downtown along with enhanced civic pride and ownership.
- ▶ **Piloted an Ambassador Assistant Program** to provide maintenance assistance for public spaces while providing opportunity for transitionally homeless individuals.
- ▶ **Extended the employment of off-duty Akron Police Department officers** in the district to include Thursday evenings in addition to Friday and Saturday.

We will continue to grow by:

- ▶ Keeping clean, safe and welcoming as a priority.
- ▶ Improving service levels in the Ambassador Program.
- ▶ Auditing environmental factors like street lamps and pedestrian signals daily.
- ▶ Holistically assessing and addressing issues in the physical environment and public spaces.
- ▶ Maintaining the newly renovated Main Street with attention to detail.

2017 STATISTICS ILLUSTRATING HOW AMBASSADORS CONTRIBUTE TO DOWNTOWN AKRON:



Metro bus stops cleaned	5,001
Graffiti removed	406
Safety escorts	540 times
Powerwashing	74 hours, 8,700 gal. of water
Contacts with businesses	1,154 contacts
Hospitality assistance	6,066 instances
Engage panhandlers	47 times



Marketing and Branding



▶ THE DASID ALLOWS US TO PROMOTE THE BUSINESSES, PROPERTIES AND ORGANIZATIONS IN THE DISTRICT BOTH COLLECTIVELY AND INDIVIDUALLY.

Locating your business downtown means access to promotional services, inclusion in a comprehensive calendar of events, location on the DAP website and co-location in the region's most diverse and impactful employment and cultural hub. Downtown Akron is the place to be.

Since the last Services Plan was enacted in 2015, we have:

- ▶ Optimized downtownakron.com and all related marketing collateral including new guides, brochures and other materials promoting downtown attractions and services. Website traffic has increased nearly 75%.
- ▶ Created the Discover Downtown Akron guide for distribution in the district, to Akron destinations and to more than 40 hotels in the greater Akron region.
- ▶ Created innovative marketing campaigns such as:
 - ▶ Kiss My Akron
 - ▶ Discover Downtown Akron Passport
 - ▶ Eating Downtown



We will continue this momentum by:

- ▶ Continually optimizing website and social media for easier access to information and to prioritize district needs.
- ▶ Continuing to publish the Quarterly Report.
- ▶ Assisting members with promotional services, press release and collaborative programs to help grow small businesses.
- ▶ Developing and executing an annual marketing plan to target downtown needs.
- ▶ Developing a new comprehensive marketing initiative to promote downtown Akron's array of shopping, dining and visitor experiences.

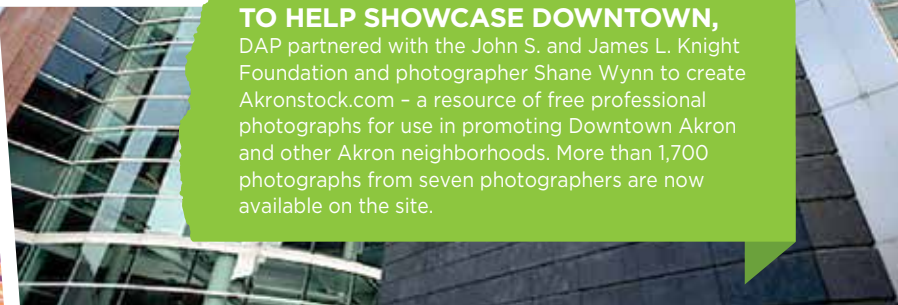
EXPLOSIVE ONLINE AND SOCIAL MEDIA GROWTH	YEAR END 2014	YEAR END 2018
Facebook followers	3,879	6,171
Twitter followers	4,960	8,392
Instagram followers	428	3,220

MARKETING	2012	2017	PERCENT INCREASE
Do Downtown Subscribers	12,002	12,661	6%
Facebook Followers	2,520	5,571	121%
Twitter Followers	2,675	8,054	201%
Instagram Followers	0	2,917	Launched 6/13
Average Unique Visitors (Website)	16,994	212,965	1,153%



TO HELP SHOWCASE DOWNTOWN,

DAP partnered with the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and photographer Shane Wynn to create Akronstock.com – a resource of free professional photographs for use in promoting Downtown Akron and other Akron neighborhoods. More than 1,700 photographs from seven photographers are now available on the site.



How Your Assessment is Responsibly Budgeted

DAP RESPONSIBLY MANAGES ASSESSMENT FUNDS, INCREASING IMPACT BY SEEKING ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL SUPPORT THROUGH BUSINESS MEMBERSHIPS, GRANTS AND SPONSORSHIPS. OUR COLLABORATION MOVES THE PLAN FORWARD.

Budget Breakdown:

The 2020-2024 Services Plan leverages resources, creates and sustains partnerships, and provides services essential to a vibrant, vital urban core.

These services are encompassed by Downtown Akron Partnership's six key areas of focus:

- › Stakeholder Leadership Engagement
- › Clean, Safe and Welcoming
- › Marketing and Branding
- › Vibrancy and Economic Development
- › Member Outreach and Support
- › Organization and Operational Effectiveness

In addition to funding from property assessments, your resources are enhanced by our aggressive pursuit of grants, sponsorships, business memberships and favorable contracts for service.

DASID revenue currently accounts for approximately 34% of DAP's 2018-19 annual operating budget.

57% is made up of program income, grants, sponsorships and other income, and 8% is made up of business memberships and services.

The proposed total SID assessment for the 2020-2024 services Plan is \$850,000 per year.

INCOME



EXPENSES



DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS about our financial stewardship? Contact DAP at DowntownAkron.com or 330-374-7676.



How Your Assessment is Calculated and Managed

▶ ADDITIONAL FUNDING SUPPORTS THE PLAN, TOO. FUNDING IS MANAGED RESPONSIBLY. COLLABORATION AND CONSENSUS MOVES THE PLAN FORWARD.

Downtown Akron Special Improvement District Method of Assessment

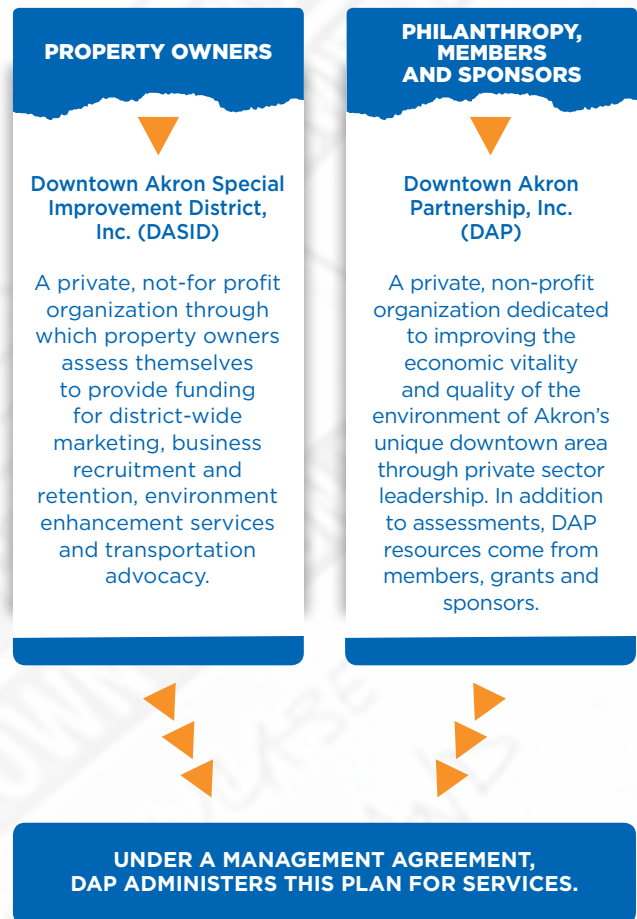
How it works:

Each property's front footage is divided by the sum total of SID front footages. This percentage is then multiplied by 850,000 (proposed SID budget).

Next, the assessed land and building values, set by the Summit County Auditor's Office, are added together. This sum is divided by the total assessed value of the SID properties. This percentage is then multiplied by 850,000.

The final step is to add 25% of the front footage calculation to 75% of the assessed value calculation to arrive at the SID assessment number.

This funding makes up half of the typical annual operating budget of Downtown Akron Partnership DAP managers the Downtown Akron SID Services Plan. (See page 10.)



ASSESSMENT PERIODS	
YEAR	ASSESSMENT
2020	\$850,000
2021	\$850,000
2022	\$850,000
2023	\$850,000
2024	\$850,000



Frequently Asked Questions

► What is a Special Improvement District?

A Special Improvement District (SID) is a private, not-for-profit organization established under state law. A SID is a mechanism through which downtown property owners assess themselves to provide funding for extended services aimed at the economic enhancement of the area.

There are approximately a thousand SIDs in the United States – demonstrating their effectiveness in helping communities navigate successfully through the economic and social challenges.

► What is a Services plan?

The Downtown Akron Special Improvement District (DASID) Services Plan outlines services and initiatives to be funded through the assessment paid by the property owners in the district.

DASID's first Services Plan was approved in 1999 by a majority of owners and outlined activities funded from 2000-2004. The SID has since been renewed three times for the years 2005-2009, 2010-2014 and 2015-2019. The Services Plan must be renewed at the end of each term. Owners may revise the services and increase or decrease the budget to meet changing needs.

► Why does Downtown Akron need a SID?

Office parks, suburban properties and shopping malls are developed, managed and marketed by a single ownership group or management company. In contrast, Downtown Akron is divided among multiple companies, individuals, nonprofits, and government entities with no coordinated management to protect its interests or serve as a primary advocate.

Without your SID, planning for safety patrols, hospitality, coordinated marketing and communication to improve the neighborhood would be difficult and unwieldy. The DASID unifies this effort, creates consensus and collaboration to make progress that benefits the entire 42-block area. The SID will continually assess your needs and offer relevant solutions.

► Isn't that what my property taxes are already paying for?

No – there's a difference. SIDs are designed to boost and reinforce economic enhancement of downtown areas by providing a range of focused services customized to local needs in addition to standard municipal services.



▶ **Who will ensure that I benefit from the Services Plan?**

The SID is governed by its own Board of Directors, who own property or represent property owners within the District. Elections are held each November. Another protection is the assessment term of five years. Its renewal is determined by the support of property owners.

▶ **What do these services cost me?**

By state statute, the Special Improvement District assessment must be apportioned equitably among all property owners within the service delivery area. Seventy-five percent of the cost is based on the assessed value of your property, and 25% according to its front footage. Front footage, as defined by Ohio Revised Code 1710.01, is all real property located in the District that abuts upon any street, alley, public road, place, boulevard, parkway, park entrance, easement, or other existing public improvement within the District. The formula distributes the burden across small and large properties.

▶ **How do I pay this assessment?**

The Downtown Akron SID assessment will continue to be collected by the Summit County Fiscal Office. Notification that your assessment is due will appear as part of your semi-annual property tax bill.

▶ **Does everyone pay the assessment?**

If the owners representing 60% of the front footage in the District sign the petition to renew the District, then everyone in the District will receive an assessment for their required portion.

TO CREATE A COLLABORATIVE VOICE
for everyone in the DASID, we welcome all of your questions, comments and concerns. Contact DAP at DowntownAkron.com or 330-374-7676.





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