

DOWNTOWN AKRON QUARTERLY UPDATE



2ND QUARTER 2021
DOWNTOWN AKRON SPECIAL IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

WORKING FOR DOWNTOWN

DAP Is Working for Downtown

Downtown Akron Partnership's (DAP) mission is to build and promote a vibrant and valuable downtown that is open and welcoming to all people. Like all organizations, DAP has had to adapt to the uncertainties caused by the global pandemic, but the commitment to our mission continues to drive our efforts.

In the second quarter of 2021, DAP created the new Downtown Guide to illustrate the idea that downtown is a place for all people, with experiences, opportunities and resources that only downtown can deliver. DAP worked with 11 local photographers to create the guide which begins to encourage people to see downtown as a unique place, open to all, with new opportunities waiting to be unlocked.

DAP staff also worked diligently with storefront business owners to help them navigate the application process for the City of Akron Downtown Storefront Relief Grant. As a result, DAP was able to distribute these CARES Act funds to over 40 businesses on the path to reemerging from the hardships of the pandemic.

The second quarter also saw DAP celebrating and promoting the opening of new residential properties alongside existing residential properties with a Downtown Residency Open House, that included 159 Main, The Bowery, The Standard, 401 Lofts, Northside Lofts and Townhomes and Canal Square.

DAP continued to build upon a history of excellent programming and space activation by bringing back a full season of fitness programs, monthly roller skating on Cascade Plaza, doggie bootcamp, solo concert performances in Northside Green, recess games on Main St. at Lock 3, walking, biking and scooter tours, and the introduction of two Try-Cycle activity bicycles to Main St. The Try-Cycles are mobile activity machines, carrying art supplies, music-making items, books for visitors to keep, games and more.

In addition to the activities mentioned above, DAP staff and ambassadors continued to work to make downtown clean, safe and welcoming, including planting and maintaining hundreds of planters, flower beds and boxes across downtown.

Downtown Small Businesses and Storefronts in the News

Akron's Pritt Entertainment Group keeps hightech focus in historic building, by Marc Bona, Cleveland.com: If you tune in to a major-league sporting event, there's a chance that before anyone takes the ice, field, or court, you're going to see something produced by Pritt Entertainment Group.

Based in the heart of downtown Akron, the small company creates high-tech videos for teams and companies all over the world from its home base—the Carlton Building, a 121-year-old structure that PEG—as it's branded—bought and renovated starting in 2018. It's a symbiotic mesh of very old and new, with the building's rich history being preserved by the modern company. The firm maintains about 20 sports and corporate clients, from the Vegas Golden Knights to University of Akron football.

At its core are a pair of brothers raised in Portage County who have kept their base in Northeast Ohio. Their unassuming start in the business dates to when Ryan was in middle school. Along the way he hired his tech-savvy and creative brother Jeffrey, and a client roster has snowballed.

They work in a building that served as one of several anchors along S. Main Street in Akron, whose past is

rooted in bygone days. The Pritts have breathed life into a once dilapidated building, making it home to their very high-end digital world. On May 19, the renovations Pritt

Entertainment Group were completed. [READ MORE](#)

Focus on Black-owned businesses: Julia Belle's Seasonings a tribute to mom's comfort food, by Eric Marrotta, Akron Beacon Journal: When her mother died in 2015, Tanya Green ended up with a trunk full of cookbooks and recipes in the back of her car. Now she's the owner

of Julia Belle's Seasonings, which sells spice blends and mixes in downtown Akron, as well as across the country.

"Entrepreneurship is something that you have to have a passion for and it works for some people, but it doesn't work for other people," she said. "You definitely have to have a passion for, or drive for wanting to move it forward, because you'll work harder for yourself than you've ever worked in your life."

"But it is incredibly fulfilling and rewarding when people buy your product, when people have an interest in it, when people want to know more about it and when people have a desire to purchase it," she said. [READ MORE](#)



VIBRANCY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Residential Development



Construction Projects

Q2 - 2021	UNITS RECENTLY OPENED	UNITS IN CONSTRUCTION	UNITS IN RENOVATION	PLANNED UNITS
THE BOWERY	96	—	—	—
CANAL PLACE	—	139	—	—
THE 159 MAIN	102	—	—	—
LOFTS AT THE EVERETT	15	—	—	—
ASCEND & CITICENTER	—	—	—	200
THE MAYFLOWER	—	—	263	—
THE STANDARD	—	—	236	—

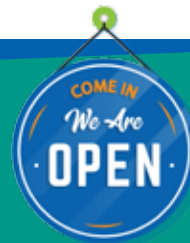
RESIDENTIAL OCCUPANCY IN Q1 2021 IS 90%



Business Development

Office Occupancy

	OCCUPANCY RATE	AVG ASKING RATE (PER SQ. FT.)
H1 - 2019	81.8%	\$15.83
H2 - 2019	81.6%	\$16.49
H1 - 2020	79.5%	\$16.46
H2 -2020	80.7%	\$16.24



Business Outreach

Q2 - 2021	CONTACTS MADE*	CONTACT GOAL
RETAIL OUTREACH	77	75
BUSINESS OUTREACH	58	30
RETAIL AND BUSINESS PROSPECTS**	16	25

* refers to the number of unique visits/contacts initiated by DAP per quarter

** Refers to the number of requests for DAP's assistance in locating space for business

VIBRANCY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



DAP Supports Small Business

City of Akron Storefront Relief Grant

DAP helped the city of Akron administer the City of Akron Downtown Storefront Relief Grant. The grant is designed to support downtown small business storefronts and help them recover from the impacts of COVID-19. To date, 60 downtown businesses have received the grant.

Restaurant Relief

The restaurant business remains one of the most challenging businesses to operate. Impacts of the pandemic, from health compliance to supply chain and staffing challenges, continue to threaten the sustainability of the industry that brings character, culture, vibrancy and value to downtown's street level storefronts. To help, the State of Ohio has created four new grant programs, in support of Food and Beverage Establishments, Entertainment Venues, and the Lodging Industry (up to \$30,000 in grants for each), as well as a New Small Business grant for businesses established between Jan 1, 2020 and Dec. 31, 2020, of up to \$10,000. More information is available at businesshelp.ohio.gov

Elevate Greater Akron

DAP is participating in ongoing EGA work as a member of the Steering Committee, Economic Development Working Group, Refocus on Downtown, and New BRE teams of Elevate 2.0.

The New BRE established a downtown priority portfolio with DAP leading those visits. Visits that intersect downtown in the Minority Owned Business and Top 25 business portfolios are also attended by DAP.

DAP schedules BRE visits with the new focus on downtown portfolio and attends visits with downtown businesses in other portfolios. To date DAP has lead 10 Downtown EGA BRE Meetings, with the goal of completing 45 by the end of the calendar year.

Legacy Cities

DAP was invited by James Hardy to participate in the Legacy Cities program through the Lincoln Institute on Land Policy. Suzie joins James Hardy, Heather Rosczyk, Theresa LeGrais, and Ace Epps on the project that will focus on Rubber City Match in downtown with a particular focus on equity. The program has launched and we are encouraging applications.

DORA

DAP hosted a meeting with businesses owners in the DORA to discuss summer plans and rules around festivals and other events in early June. Wild Oscars, a new event space underneath the Akron Civic Theatre will open on Friday nights this summer and will sell DORA beverages during Lock 3 concerts. Baxter's re-opened May 18 and is part of the DORA.

VIBRANCY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Downtown Residential Open House

Downtown continues to grow into a vibrant, active residential neighborhood through the redevelopment of several buildings on Main St., and on E. Exchange, and with renovations to existing properties. And, there are more opportunities to live downtown coming.

Working with building owners and managers, DAP presented a downtown residential open house on Saturday, June 26 from 2 - 5 p.m. Properties that offered tours included Northside Lofts and Townhomes, Canal Square Lofts, The Bowery, The 159 Main, The Standard and 401 Lofts.

"The downtown neighborhood has a lot to offer its residents. Access to green space and the Towpath Trail, proximity to restaurants and arts and entertainment," states Kimberly Beckett, director of business relations for DAP.

The Open House attracted between 75 - 100 visitors during the 3-hour period. Visitors were also given welcome bags with information about downtown amenities, snacks and a drink ticket for the DORA. Spin eScooters were also unlocked for visitors to use during the event. DAP encouraged Open House participants to stay in downtown to enjoy the evening's RubberDucks game, the concert in Lock 3 by Midnight Star, or dinner in any of the restaurants nearby.

"Enjoyed the residential open house this afternoon. Nice seeing what options are available living downtown," said Herndon Robinson, who visited during the Open House.

With the completion of much of the Main St. Corridor Project, exciting additions and renovations to the Akron Civic Theatre and other downtown properties, along with the addition of world-class public art and street beautification efforts, downtown has a renewed sense of possibility, and DAP actively promotes the high quality of life to be experienced as a downtown resident.



DOWNTOWN PROGRAMS



Juneteenth Celebrations

DAP was pleased and honored to work with a number of community organizations and individuals to help bring Juneteenth celebrations to three neighborhoods across the city.

Juneteenth commemorates June 19, 1865, the date in which Union troops arrived in Galveston Bay, Texas and announced that 250K enslaved people in Texas were free by executive decree. Newly freed people in Texas christened the day “Juneteenth” and the day has been celebrated for over 150 years.

Community leader, Gerald R. Carter, who died in 2020, founded the Juneteenth Festival in West Akron in 1998 after learning about Juneteenth during a trip to Dallas in the mid-1990s. Initially, the festival was held at John Brown House, and later moved to Stoner/Hawkins Park.

“The celebration of Juneteenth has become an all-city venture. It’s what Gerald Carter wanted. This year, it gelled beautifully,” Reva Golden said.

On June 19, the Akron Juneteenth Festival was held in Stoner/Hawkins Park on the West side of town, featuring food, vendors and artists, music and a talent show.

Summit Historical Society presented a family picnic, panel discussion and performance of “The Life of John Brown,” a play written by Reva Golden. DAP hosted Gospel singing and Skate Night with Phuture Boogie on Cascade Plaza, and programmed live music in restaurants throughout downtown. DAP also worked with Inda Blatch-Geib, Bill Myers of S3 Technology and artists Dara Harper and Diane Johnson to create a window display and an augmented reality experience for Juneteenth in the window of the Circulation Building in The Bowery.

The North Akron Community Development Corporation hosted a film screening and discussion of *One Night in Miami*, as well as a World Refugee Day Celebration at Exchange House. The National Center for Choreography at the University of Akron presented a YouTube premier of a collection of short dance films by Cara Hagan and her artistic collaborators as part of NCCAkron’s Community Commissioning Residency. The Akron Symphony performed a program of music by African American composers at E.J. Thomas Hall.

In all, Juneteenth programming was enriched and enhanced by numerous partners, such as the Akron Black Artist Guild, Akron Juneteenth, Akron Symphony Orchestra, the City of Akron, DAP, North Akron Community Development Corporation, NCCAkron, Summit County Historical Society, and others.

[Click here to view Juneteenth photos on Facebook](#)

DOWNTOWN PROGRAMS

PROGRAM ATTENDANCE

EVENT	DATE	FREQUENCY	ATTENDANCE TO DATE
#BAND AKRON	4/23	ONCE	150
BUSKING IN THE GREEN	5/22 - 6/26	WEEKLY	160
DRUMFIT	6/19	MONTHLY	58
FAMILYFIT	6/26	1 OF 4 SESSIONS	8
FAMILY SKATE	6/5	1 OF 4 SESSIONS	100
JUNETEENTH BREAK DANCE AND GOSPEL	6/19	YEARLY	43
KICKBOXING	6/3 - 6/24	WEEKLY	38
LINE DANCING	6/3 - 6/24	BIWEEKLY	170
RECESS ON MAIN	6/2 - 6/30	BIWEEKLY	1170*
SKATE NIGHT	6/19	MONTHLY	200
TAIJI	6/3 - 6/24	WEEKLY	25
THANK DOG BOOTCAMP	6/1 - 6/29	WEEKLY	15
TOURS	6/12 - 6/30	BIMONTHLY	50
YOGA	6/1 - 6/29	WEEKLY	251
ZUMBA	6/5, 6/12	2 OF 7 SESSIONS	126
TOTAL (AS OF 6/30)			2560

*Count measures 3-hour sessions on Main St. at Lock 3 and includes foot traffic, bicyclists, scooters and skateboards



DOWNTOWN PROGRAMS



Downtown Summer Programming

The 2021 summer programming schedule is full of fun activities for all, six days a week. The schedule includes free fitness/wellness classes (DrumFIT, FamilyFIT, Exercise Basics, Kickboxing, Line Dancing, Nutrition 101, Pop-up Dance Classes with ArtSparks, POUND, Taiji, Thank Dog! Bootcamp, Yoga and Zumba), roller skating parties, walking, scooter and bike tours, live music, Recess on Main and new activity carts called the Downtown Try Cycle. All events and activities are free to attend thanks to the generous support of the Knight Foundation, Ohio Arts Council and KeyBank.

Roller skating on Cascade Plaza has been expanded to two parties per month: Family Skate is held on the first Saturday of the month, from 3 to 6 p.m., and Skate Night is held on the third Saturday of the month, from 6 to 9 p.m. Family Skate features music from Kevin Richards and DJ Ness, and Skate Night features music from the DJ collective Phuture Boogie. Rental skates are available in children's and adult sizes for \$2 a pair.

New this year is the concert series, Busking in the Green, which showcases a different performer every Saturday from 6 - 7 p.m. in the Northside Green, through September 25. The concerts make use of the EarthQuaker Seismic Station, a custom-made cabinet on wheels with a stool, chalkboard sign, microphone and stand, and a rechargeable, battery-powered amplifiers, complete with four EarthQuaker Devices effects pedals. Performers have ranged from classical musicians, to Irish fiddler players, Latin jazz musicians and singer-songwriters.

[View DAP summer programs on downtownakron.com](https://downtownakron.com)

Try Something New: the Try Cycles Are Here

Just introduced to downtown Akron in mid-June, the Try Cycles are people-powered fun machines.

The bikes feature a brightly colored storage box (resembling an ice cream bike) filled with books from the Akron-Summit County Public Library, games purchased at Full Grip Games, maracas from Summit Choral Society, art supplies, sidewalk chalk, bubbles and more. The activities are free for anyone to enjoy and are available to all ages.

The Try Cycle brings joy to downtown on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11 a.m. - 1 p.m., and on Saturdays during events on Cascade Plaza.

The Try Cycles, and our Try Cycle operators, encourage you to "try something new today!"

MARKETING & PROMOTIONS

DAP shares news about downtown progress, businesses, institutions and organizations, downtown life and the downtown community in numerous ways. The most readily measurable outlets for promotion and advocacy are digital, through the DAP website, social media and email newsletter. Below are selected metrics related to these communications.

SOCIAL MEDIA	Q2 - 2020	Q2 - 2021
FACEBOOK	7,592	8,928
TWITTER	9,092	9,250
INSTAGRAM	4,448	5,698
LINKEDIN	1,287	1,487

WEBSITE TRAFFIC	Q2 - 2020	Q2 - 2021
USERS	20,375	54,887
SESSIONS	25,020	68,486
PAGE VIEWS	47,033	126,043

EMAIL NEWSLETTER	Q2 - 2020	Q2 - 2021
NUMBER PUBLISHED	8	14
SENDS	67,716	55,232
OPENS	15,005	10,805
CLICKS	1,389	1,748
SUBSCRIBERS	16,820	16,772

Stay connected to the latest information on downtown Akron, subscribe to Do Downtown, our biweekly email newsletter at downtownakron.com/news/subscribe, and follow us on social media @DowntownAkronPartnership

2021 Downtown Guide

New Downtown Guides are available in the July 2021 issue of Akron Life Magazine. Copies will also be available in locations downtown (Northside Marketplace, Lock 3 and in various storefronts).

The 2021 Downtown Guide represents a different approach: DAP worked with 12 local photographers to envision downtown as a place for everyone, filled with possibilities. The guide is more of a “look book,” and its pages are an invitation to find yourself among the people, places, culture and the heart of the city.

[View the digital copy.](#)



CLEAN, SAFE & WELCOMING

CLEAN, SAFE & WELCOMING

DAP Ambassador Stats Apr. 1 - Jun. 30, 2021

5139

TRASH COLLECTED (LBS)

17

MOTORIST/
VEHICLE
ASSISTANCE

983

SCOOTER
SUPPORT

2562

BUSINESS CONTACTS MADE

550

BUS STOPS CLEANED

78

GRAFFITI
REMOVED

161

SKYWALK
PATROL

204

PARKING
ASSISTANCE

51

SAFETY
ESCORTS

8047

FLOWER
WATERING
(gallons)

211

WEED
ABATEMENT
(block faces)

4620

HOSPITALITY
ASSISTANCE



A team of downtown ambassadors works to ensure a clean, safe and welcoming environment by providing safety escorts, cleaning of common touch points and other services to make downtown safe and enjoyable for everyone.

Ambassador hours of operation:

Monday - Friday: 7 a.m. - 11 p.m. | Saturday 11 a.m. - 11 p.m.
Sunday: 8 a.m. - 8 p.m.

For ambassador services or to report a problem, call the on-duty ambassador during hours of operation at 330-706-7383,

[Find out more about downtown Ambassadors.](#)

“We had an issue with our truck in Akron yesterday. We didn’t know about the Ambassadors. The Marriott gave us a card and LaTonda came to help us. What a pleasant and wonderful experience. This service is great. I’ve already let a bunch of people know about it. LaTonda was friendly and professional and had us on our way very quickly... I just wanted to let someone know how much I appreciate this service and what a great person you have in LaTonda.”

—Lori Limbacher, via email



NEWS: VIBRANCY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

How one man's soap business fuels The LoveTruck to help Akron's homeless

By Phil Keren, Akron Beacon Journal, Apr. 2021

Nathan Walden said helping others is in his blood.

Walden, 30, said he grew up in a family where assisting people in need was always a focal point.

"We've just always been involved in philanthropy and helping the community," Walden said.

As an adult, Walden continues to serve the community through his work as founder and CEO of Hope SoapOhio, which sells items such as soaps, shampoos, body washes and lotions. He's also founder of The LoveTruck, a nonprofit that provides meals, hygiene products and other essentials to the homeless community.

[Click here to read the full story on ohio.com](#)



Check out the Redesign Plans for Lock 3 Coming Next Year

by Abbey Marshall, The Devil Strip, Apr. 2021

Lock 3 wasn't meant to be Akron's central park.

Eighteen years ago, the downtown patch of grass where dilapidated buildings once stood was simply that. But hundreds of concerts and scores of festivals later, Lock 3's 300,000-some annual visitors have turned it into a beloved site for summer entertainment, lunchtime walks, winter ice skating and more.

"I refer to Lock 3 as the city's most successful pop-up," says James Hardy, the Deputy Mayor for Integrated Development. "The city acquired and demolished the buildings and parking structure there and erected a temporary entertainment venue as a way to draw people downtown. It was never meant to be a permanent park or venue. It ended up being wildly successful."

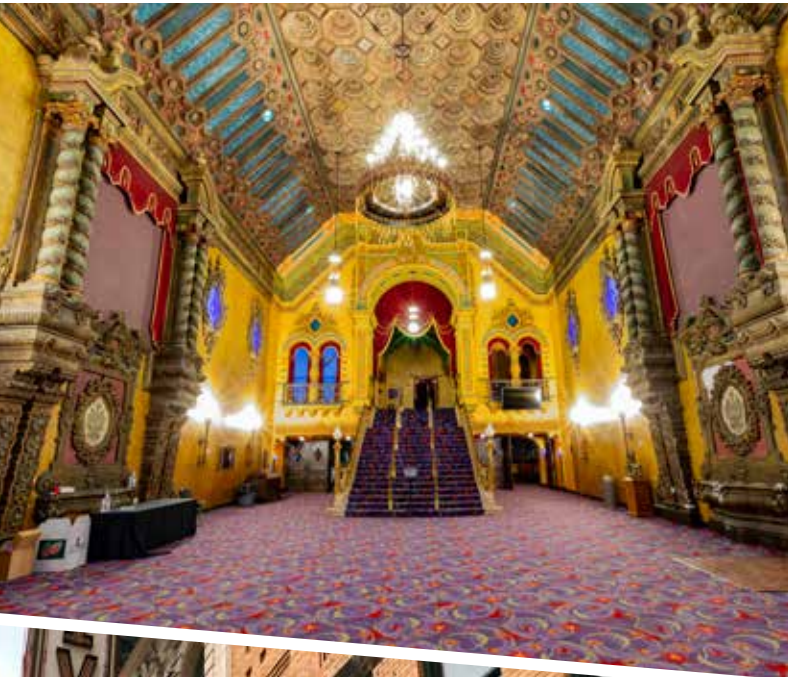
As a result, the facilities and infrastructure—or lack thereof—remain relatively the same as they were when the park was thrown together in 2003.

Now the city, in partnership with [Akron Civic Commons](#), is preparing design plans for a \$10 million reimagining of Lock 3, with construction beginning as early as 2022.

[Click here to read the full story on thedevilstrip.org](#)



NEWS: VIBRANCY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Akron Civic Theatre celebrates completion of \$9M renovation

By Shannon McNeil, Spectrum News 1, Aug. 2021

The Akron Civic Theatre is showcasing its renovations this week and is inviting the public to celebrate during its "Civic Celebration Week."

What You Need To Know

- Akron Civic Theatre has completed its massive renovation project and is eager to welcome back the public
- The designs have been restored, and a new black box theatre space was added
- You can check out what's new at their free events all week

Before the start of the pandemic, the theatre started a campaign to raise \$8.5 million to help paint murals outside, build the brand new Knight stage, basic upkeep and renovations of the grand lobby and arcade.

The community met their goal and then some, raising a total of \$9 million from foundations, private donors and the public.

"Any of us that work here, we always say, 'We're the keepers of the memories,'" explained Associate Director Valerie Renner, "and we tried to bring everything back to the original look and feel of 1929 when it was built."

[View the entire story on spectrumnews1.com](https://www.spectrumnews1.com/ohio/akron/civic-theatre-renovation)

Inside Akron's Newest Downtown Restaurant, El Patron Tequileria & Cuisine

By Katie Byard, Akron Beacon Journal, Apr. 2021

Luis Escudero, 26, left Mexico City with his family when he was 4.

But the city's cuisine and architecture is central to his new El Patron Tequileria & Cuisine restaurant at 54 E. Mill St. in downtown Akron.

"I'm celebrating my heritage... and I wanted to create a place that was centered on the (tequila) agave, the plant that is used to make tequila," Escudero said.

...The menu "is a fusion between chef James Phillips, Monica Valdez (El Patron's prep chef) and my mother (Gabriela Escudero)," owner Luis Escudero said.

[Click here to read the full story on beaconjournal.com](https://www.beaconjournal.com/story/entertainment/dining/2021/04/01/el-patron-tequileria-cuisine-akron/)

NEWS: VIBRANCY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Akron Area is No. 12 Emerging Housing Market in Nation in Debut of Ranking System

Staff Report, Akron Beacon Journal, Apr. 2021

The Akron area is turning heads in residential real estate by yet another measure this week with the debut of a new tool to analyze market activity.

On the heels of a [Realtor.com report](#) ranking Akron as the 20th-hottest housing market last month, the homebuying region that includes Summit and Portage counties scored a No. 12 ranking in the inaugural Wall Street Journal/Realtor.com Emerging Housing Markets Index released Tuesday.

The new index, which will be updated quarterly, takes steps beyond the industry group's "hottest" cities criteria "to rank which housing markets are expected to provide a strong return on investment — and are a nice place to live."

Factoring into the scores are real estate supply and demand, median home listing price trends, unemployment, wages, regional price parities, amenities, commutes, population percentage of foreign-born residents and small-business activity.

[Read the entire story on beaconjournal.com](#)

Akron is Among 50 Finalists in Bloomberg Philanthropies' 2021 Global Mayors Challenge

Doug Livingston, Akron Beacon Journal, June, 2021

Akron is a finalist for a \$1 million grant to grow 200 Black-owned businesses by 2030.

Bloomberg Philanthropies announced Tuesday morning that Akron Mayor Dan Horrigan is among 50 in the world still in the hunt for the \$1 million grants. The 50 finalists with ideas to help their residents bounce back from the pandemic emerged from a pack of 630 applicants representing 99 countries in the 2021 Global Mayors Challenge.

Applicants filed their ideas in March. The next phase involves "expert support" from Bloomberg Philanthropies to hone the top 50 ideas before 15 grant winners are announced in early 2022.

Horrigan is pitching THRIVE (Targeted Help for Resilient InnoVative Entrepreneurs), a program to grow Black-owned businesses that are under-represented in the local retail sector.

[Read the entire story on beaconjournal.com](#)

DOWNTOWN AKRON COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE

Looking for office or storefront commercial space? Downtown Akron Partnership can help you search for available locations within our 42-block Special Improvement District and arrange for tours. This is a free and confidential Site Selection service provided by our organization. [Click here to try it!](#)

Downtown Akron is the heart of business and government in Summit County. Whether you are looking to locate a new business, relocate an existing business or open a satellite office, downtown Akron is the place to be. With a wide-range of retail and office space, downtown offers beautifully renovated historic buildings as well as newer, state-of-the-art space.

Visit downtownakron.com/do-business to view the ways in which DAP can help you relocate or start your business in downtown.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The DAP website also highlights available job opportunities within the Special Improvement District. Whether it's an office job or service position, full or part time, we want this page to become a go-to source for those interested in working downtown.

TO UPDATE YOUR COMPANY PROFILE, PROVIDE A PHOTO OR TO LIST A JOB OPENING, PLEASE EMAIL INFO@DOWNTOWNAKRON.COM.

QUARTERLY DISTRICT MEETINGS

Updates include but are not limited to City of Akron construction projects, DAP updates, neighborhood updates and special events.

Meetings are virtual.

RSVP at www.downtownakron.com/district

Canal District: Aug. 12, Nov. 11, 2021 | 2 p.m.

Northside District: Sept. 9, Dec. 9, 2021 | 1 p.m.

Historic Arts District: Oct. 14, 2021 | 10 a.m.

Stay tuned for information on changes to the district meetings in 2022.

NEWS: VIBRANCY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



GAR Foundation Announces \$1.6 Million in Grants for Akron-area Nonprofit Organizations

Megan Becka, Cleveland.com May 2021

The GAR Foundation awarded \$1.6 million in grants to Akron-area nonprofit organizations at its May grant distribution meeting.

Awards include grants for summer learning at the YMCA and Boys & Girls Clubs for Akron Public Schools' students.

"We are pleased to announce this support and provide funding for our nonprofit community and innovative partnerships, like the summer partnership strategy between the YMCA, the Boys & Girls Clubs and Akron Public Schools," Christine Mayer, president of GAR Foundation, said in a news release. "Together, they will ensure that APS students have an enriching, engaging, fun summer, which they certainly deserve after the challenges COVID has brought."

[View the entire story on cleveland.com](https://www.cleveland.com/news/2021/05/gar-foundation-announces-16-million-in-grants-for-akron-area-nonprofit-organizations/)



University of Akron, City Team Up for Arts-based Initiative

By Amy Morona, Crain's Cleveland Business, Jun. 2021

The city of Akron wants to boost its population. The University of Akron would undoubtedly like to see more students. Those quests can be intertwined.

"If you look at successful universities and successful cities, they have relationships that are positive," said Akron Mayor Dan Horrigan.

In a talk with the Akron Roundtable last month, UA president Gary Miller said the university needs to redefine what it means to be a campus post-pandemic. Officials are turning to their downtown partners and the area's art scene to help figure it out.

AkronArts is a new wide-ranging initiative that looks to better connect some of the university's arts offerings with the city. University spaces, like the Polsky Building in Akron, will be repurposed. The downtown dwelling will house some of UA's arts programs while becoming a place for community members to visit for arts offerings.

E.J. Thomas Hall and the Akron Civic Theatre will pair together to host more programming, and the National Center for Choreography will have more offerings, too.

[Click here to read the full story on crainscleveland.com](https://www.craincleveland.com/news/2021/06/university-of-akron-city-team-up-for-arts-based-initiative/)



NEWS: VIBRANCY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

New Maiden Lane Live! Stage to Launch in Downtown Akron

By Kerry Clawson, Akron Beacon Journal, June 2021

Both Musica and BLU Jazz+, owned by Tony Troppe, have been closed since March, 2020. The new outdoor summer concert space will be used by both venues as the indoor venues slowly open, [Jenn] Kidd said, marking the return of live music to the historic arts district at the north end of downtown.

“So many more people are comfortable outside,” Kidd said. “We just have the space and the community to make that happen.”

Concertgoers will be able to buy drinks from Musica and order carryout pizza from the new Totally Baked Pizza nearby.”

[View the entire story on beaconjournal.com](https://www.beaconjournal.com/story/news/2021/06/01/new-maiden-lane-live-stage-launch-downtown-akron/7544447002/)

Cities Are Boosting the Economy by Rewarding Those Who Shop Local

By Sakshi Udavant, Next City, Jun. 2021

When stay-at-home orders were imposed last year, 43% of small businesses in the United States closed temporarily.

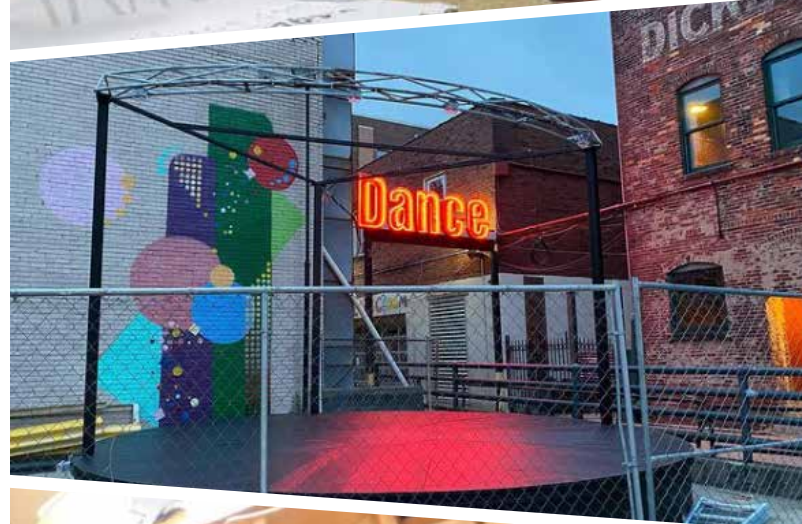
Businesses owned by people of color were hit especially hard, having reduced access to funding and federal relief programs.

To help, the city of Akron, Ohio, launched a unique program to reward citizens for shopping locally. For every purchase a customer makes through Akronite, a city-sponsored app, they receive “blimps” or reward points. (Goodyear Tire and Rubber, and its famous Goodyear Blimp, are based in Akron.) Blimps can be redeemed at any of the participating stores for discounted or even free services. At the end of every month, the city reimburses the businesses for these redeemed values.

“We are creating a circular economy,” says James Hardy, Akron’s deputy mayor of integrated development. “We are encouraging citizens to spend money while putting cash back into their pockets.”

...The Akron app launched in August 2020 has more than 5,000 users today, driving \$500,000 worth of economic activity, based on \$40,000 government investment, generating nearly \$9 of economic impact per dollar spent.

[Click here to read the full story on nextcity.org](https://nextcity.org/story/economy/2021/06/01/akron-ohio-rewards-local-shoppers/)



NEWS: VIBRANCY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Danny Ratcliff
Artist, Curated Courthouse



John T. Petures Jr.
President and CEO
Akron Community Foundation



Akron Community Foundation Distributes Nearly \$2.7 Million in Quarterly Grants

Akron Community Foundation Press Release, Jun. 2021

Akron Community Foundation's board of directors approved grants totaling \$2,657,885, including \$603,500 in competitive arts and culture grants chosen by the foundation's Community Investment Committee.

This quarter's arts and culture funding included a \$10,000 grant to Keepers of the Art Education for the Hip-Hop Preservation Project (HHPP), which seeks to counteract the corporatization of rap music. HHPP is a series of events that aim to highlight, safeguard, and share hip-hop's history and importance in Black society.

Organizations receiving grants included the Akron Art Museum, Akron Civic Theatre, Akron Soul Train, Akron Symphony Orchestra, Nightlight Cinema, and Summit Artspace among others.

[View the entire story on akroncf.org.](https://akroncf.org)

[ACF President and CEO John T. Petures Jr. describes some of the work grant recipients are doing in this video.](#)

Akronym Brewing Celebrates 3rd Anniversary, Opens New Biergarten

On June 18 and 19 Akronym Brewing celebrated their 3rd anniversary in downtown Akron with a full weekend of events. Visitors were treated to a cask tapping of Diemos, a Russian imperial stout with maple syrup, cinnamon, orange peel and granola, along with grilled food options.

The festivities also included live music, yoga sessions, brewery tours, and Father's Day Brunch.

The anniversary celebration coincided with the grand opening of the new Akronym Biergarten, located at 11 S. Main St. in the space once occupied by Commerce Park. The biergarten is just a short walk from the brewery on the corner E. Market and S. High St. Akronym Biergarten serves beer and mixed drinks and offers an outdoor space for people to gather, enjoy lunch or live music performances.

Read more about the process behind converting the space into the Akronym Biergarten, as well as the history of Commerce Park, the Howe Hotel—which once stood on that spot—and where the giant stone columns at the Main St. entrance to the garden came from on beacon-journal.com.

NEW BUSINESSES

Muggswiggz Coffee & Tea Now Open on South Main St.

373 S. Main St.

330-845-8770

muggswigz.com

Mon.-Fri. 7 a.m.-3 p.m., Sat. & Sun. 8 a.m.-3 p.m.

Muggswiggz Coffee & Tea has been Canton's coffee roaster and tea merchant since 2003. In 2014, they were named to USA Today's Top 10 Coffeehouses in America, and have been earning accolades since their beginning.

Their new coffee shop is now open on S. Main St., offering a variety of coffees, lattes, teas, pastries and more.

Drip Drive

Muggswiggz joins Akron Coffee Roasters and Evelyn's Coffee and Banh Mi as one of three downtown coffee establishments included in the [2021 Drip Drive](#), a passport to 18 coffeeshops in Greater Akron, created by the Akron/Summit Convention and Visitors Bureau. Collecting all 18 stamps in the passport enters the visitor in a drawing for a \$500 Greater Akron Experience Package.

Totally Baked Pizza Opens on North High St.

18 N. Main St.

234-678-0421

totallybakedpizza.net

Tues.-Fri. 4 p.m.-12 a.m., Sat. 11 a.m.-12 a.m.,

Sun. 11 a.m.-8 p.m.

Akron Dish: Totally Baked pizza joint features adventurous options, by Katie Byard, Akron Beacon Journal

A new downtown Akron pizza joint is in a bit of a time warp—with its colorful psychedelic wall murals that would have fit right in during the late 1960s.

But this place isn't stuck in a rut.

Far from it.

Totally Baked Pizza—at 18 N. High St., next to the High St. Hop House bar—features adventurous pizzas such as the Shaggy & Scooby (PBJ, shredded short rib, red onion and Italian cheeses) and the Tony Montana (whole grain mustard, shredded short rib, ham, Italian cheeses and pickles).

"We're chef driven... and we want to give you our heart," said Ari Vandendriessche, 34, who co-owns the place and is a pizza maker.

[Click here to read the full story on beaconjournal.com](#)



BUSINESS ACHIEVEMENTS & NEWS



AKRON ART MUSEUM STAFF WINS SILVER AWARD IN 2020 VISUAL COMMUNICATIONS COMPETITION

Joe Walton, director of design, and Malissa Vernon, marketing & communications manager, won the award Silver Award in the 2020 Visual Communication Competition from the Ohio Museums Association for their creation of the Museum's Love Art Safely signage on display throughout the building and on the museum website. [Find out more.](#)

VETERANS MEMORIAL PLAZA DEDICATED IN SUMMIT COUNTY, BY ABIGAIL BOTTAR, WKSU

Summit County Executive Ilene Shapiro today officially dedicated the newly finished Summit County Veterans Memorial Plaza outside the county courthouse. The plaza now includes plaques featuring the names of fallen Summit County service members from World War I, the Korean War and the Vietnam War, in addition to the World War II Memorial plaques installed in 2018. The plaza is also now home to a Soldiers Cross sculpture that honors all Summit County service members and was donated by local business owner Paul Thomarios. [Read the entire article.](#)



AKRON COMMUNITY FOUNDATION CELEBRATES 66TH ANNIVERSARY

On June 8, 2021, The Akron Community Foundation (ACF) marked their 66th anniversary. The foundation was created thanks to a \$1 million bequest from Edwin Shaw. That gift has since been leveraged into an endowment of nearly \$272 million, with a growing family of more than 730 funds established by charitable people and organizations from all walks of life. ACF offered thanks to all of the organization's fundholders, volunteers, board members and other partners who continue to help them make a significant impact in the community. [Find out more.](#)

PRITT ENTERTAINMENT GROUP WINS FIRST EMMY AWARD

Pritt Entertainment Group (PEG) took home its first ever Emmy Award at the NATAS Lower Great Lakes 52nd Annual Emmy® Awards on Saturday, June 12th. The Akronite App Launch Video was recognized in the category for the best commercial produced in the region.

"We're incredibly proud and can't say enough about our partners who collaborated with us on bringing this piece to life, and introduced the city to this important and meaningful app," said Ryan Pritt, PEG President and Co-Founder. "It was truly a team effort."

PEG worked with the City of Akron and other downtown Akron partners to create the commercial spot highlighting the new Akronite app's features and encourage Akron residents to support local businesses by "following the blimp."

[Read the entire article and view the winning video.](#)



BUSINESS ACHIEVEMENTS & NEWS

AKRON YMCA MARKS 150+ YEARS

In 2020, the Akron Area YMCA proudly marked 150 years of strengthening our community.

Fueled by faith and propelled by the practices of reaching ALL people through a connection of mind, body and spirit, the Akron Area YMCA has continued to launch lives, careers and passions for 150 and counting.

We've taught kids how to swim and Moms how to relax. We've guided girls and boys, teamed up with corporations, given kids a strong start in school and led the way for campers of all ages and abilities... [Find out about YMCA 150th Anniversary Celebrations in Lock 3.](#)

NIGHTLIGHT CINEMA GETS A NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, BY DAN SHINGLER, CRAIN'S CLEVELAND BUSINESS

Akron's got a new Kidd in town, and we're betting she's going to be one of the most popular in town.

Jenn Kidd was named executive director of Akron's Nightlight Cinema, effective Monday, June 7, the nonprofit's board of trustees announced.

"The Nightlight has held a special place in my heart since its opening in 2014," Kidd said in a news release. "I am thrilled to be directing its next act and taking cinema and community connection to the next level." [Read the entire article at crains-cleveland.com.](#)

AKRON OFFICIALLY NAMES CHRISTINE FOWLER-MACK AS ITS NEXT SUPERINTENDENT, BY RACHEL ABBEY MCCAFFERTY, CRAIN'S CLEVELAND BUSINESS

Christine Fowler-Mack has officially been named the next superintendent of Akron Public Schools. The district's board of education unanimously voted to approve her contract in a meeting on Tuesday, April 27.

Fowler-Mack said she was "deeply humbled and extremely excited" to publicly accept the role as the district's next leader. This is a homecoming for Fowler-Mack, who both attended and started her career at the Akron schools.

"I accept this post with eyes wide open, recognizing that this is an opportunity that comes at a time that is clearly the most challenging point in history, post-pandemic, after a full year of disruption due to the pandemic that altered our lives, our work and our schools in countless ways," Fowler-Mack said. [Read the entire article at crainscleveland.com.](#)

BEACON JOURNAL EARNS 11 OHIO APME JOURNALISM AWARDS

The Akron Beacon Journal won 11 awards in Ohio's most competitive journalism contest on Tuesday night, including five top honors.

Education reporter Jennifer Pignolet was named best news writer by the Ohio Associated Press Managing Editors for Division V, which included the state's largest newspapers and websites. [Read the entire article.](#)



TRANSPORTATION & DEVELOPMENT

FEATURED PROPERTY

The Kaiser Building | 325 S. Main Street

The Kaiser Building is a beautifully renovated office/retail space located in the heart of downtown, with 6,411 available SF at \$14/SF. Handicap accessible elevator, open floorplan, expansion options on the 2nd floor. For more information, contact Kimberly Beckett 330-374-7676 | kbeckett@downtownakron.com



FEATURED BUSINESS

Buckingham, Doolittle & Burroughs 23 S. Main Street, Suite 302

Buckingham, Doolittle & Burroughs is Northeast Ohio's business law firm, and has served the Akron, Canton and Cleveland areas for over 100 years. More than a business law firm, Buckingham, Doolittle & Burroughs is your partner in business.

In February 2021, the firm added six new attorneys to its litigation and business practice areas, and opened a new office in downtown Akron.



"Some of us who've been here for many years missed being downtown and we believe the office is a good investment and will lead to further growth in downtown Akron," BDB Managing Partner Steve Dimengo told Akron Legal News. [Read the entire article here.](#)

330-376-5300 | bdlaw.com

METRO EXPANDS BOOK IT ON METRO PROGRAM

METRO Regional Transit Authority is pleased expand its Book It On METRO program to include Barberton, Cuyahoga Falls, Twinsburg, and Stow-Monroe Falls public libraries. The four libraries join Akron-Summit County Public Library, who pioneered Book It On METRO in September 2020.

Passengers with a valid library card for Barberton, Cuyahoga Falls, Twinsburg, Stow-Monroe Falls, or Akron Summit-County Public Library can ride free on METRO fixed-routes on the first Thursday of the month when they show their library card to the bus operator upon boarding. Up to two children, age five and under, can ride free with an adult showing a valid library card. Free rides are not valid on METRO SCAT/Paratransit, Call-A-Bus, or NCX.

[Find out more on akronmetro.org.](https://akronmetro.org)

AKRON METRO CALL FOR ARTISTS

Akron METRO RTA is seeking local artists to display their work at the Robert K. Pfaff Transit Center for fall 2021 and into 2022! There are two large cases available to display several pieces of work, and artists are rotated every 6-8 weeks. Send examples of your favorite pieces to pr@akronmetro.org.

[Learn more about METRO's Art in Transit program.](#)

NOW HIRING

METRO RTA is the premier public transportation provider serving Summit County, Ohio. METRO is seeking driven individuals who want to take the wheel and make a difference in our community. METRO prides itself in its innovative approach to serving our communities through diverse services, cutting edge technology and customer service that is second to none. If you are interested in driving us into the future, while continuing our rich and deeply rooted history, we want to hear from you.

[Find out more and apply at akronmetro.org.](#)

MAYOR HERRIGAN ANNOUNCES UPDATES TO PHASE II OF MAIN STREET CORRIDOR PROJECT

In late October 2020, the City of Akron broke ground on Phase II of the TIGER-grant funded Main Street Project—starting first with excavation and utility work in the sidewalk. Beginning in January 2021, the project entered its next stage, which included excavation and utility work in the roadway, closing traffic on Main St. from Market St. to Mill Street. Beginning today, traffic has reopened to North/South traffic on Main St. including the intersection of Main and Market. Main St. is now currently open to two-way traffic from Perkins St. through Cedar St.

"Today marks another important milestone in the Main Street corridor project," said Akron Mayor Dan Horrigan. "The improvements being made to our infrastructure downtown will last for generations to come, benefiting current and future Akronites. I'm proud of the progress we've made so far and look forward to the full completion of the downtown corridor improvements."

[Find out more at downtownakron.com.](https://downtownakron.com)

Installation of Bronze Statue Downtown is Dedication to the Men and Women Who Built Akron

by Doug Livingston, Akron Beacon Journal, May 2021

Johnnie Downs returned from the Vietnam War in 1967 with no idea where he would work. He spent the next 18 years making tires at BF Goodrich.

"The conditions were bad, but the money was good," said Downs, who is now 74 and retired. "See, the thing about working the job, sometimes you had to do what you had to do to take care of your family. And this was a means of me taking care of my family and my children."

Downs stood Thursday morning with a few dozen people invited by the city of Akron to witness the unveiling of a 15-foot-tall bronze rubber worker statue. The commemorative work of art was sculpted by Zanesville artist Alan Cottrell and modeled after the 1920s tire worker on the cover of "Wheels of Fortune," a book by former Beacon Journal writers David Giffels and Steve Love.

As elected officials, artists and others involved in the project pulled away a green parachute to reveal the statue, Downs and fellow BF Goodrich retiree Heskiah Lampley thought about how the rubber industry built Akron.

[Click here to read the story on beaconjournal.com](#)



Historical Influx Of Money Will Allow Large Scale Community Investments

City of Akron, Mayor's Office Press Release, Apr. 2021

The City of Akron will be receiving \$153,370,000 of direct federal funding from the American Rescue Plan. This funding represents the largest positive fiscal jolt to the City budget in history. These federal dollars will be used as a catalyst to kick start programs focused on inclusive economic growth, vibrant public spaces and recreation for all, and a substantial investment in residential housing, all while addressing continued immediate needs as fallout from the pandemic. The funds will be distributed in two rounds. The first will be distributed in May 2021 and the second in May 2022. The funds must be spent by December 31, 2024.

"This pandemic has profoundly affected our City," said Akron Mayor Dan Horrigan. "This federal funding is the boost we need to not only get back on our feet, but to create lasting growth and positive change for future generations. We are looking carefully at how we spend this money equitably in a way that benefits everyone, especially focusing on those hardest hit by the pandemic."

Mayor Horrigan and his administration have identified six key priorities for expenditures. Each priority has an estimated funding allocation which will be further defined as specific program details and investments are determined. Final Federal guidance is forthcoming which may impact the specific investments for each priority.

- Housing - Estimated \$25M
- Housing rehabilitation grant program, residential building grants for infill housing
- Public Utility Support - Estimated \$25M
- Investments in drinking water infrastructure including lead services and water mains, ongoing Akron Cares Utility Bill Relief grant program
- Local Economic Recovery - Estimated \$24M
- Small business loans, supporting entrepreneurship ecosystem/ access, assisting local sectors directly impacted by COVID-19, supporting downtown Akron recovery, increasing job readiness/ access/employment services, investing in Vacant Building Registry to combat blight
- Community and Youth Violence Prevention - Estimated \$20M
- Youth employment programs/training, Youth Violence Prevention Strategic Plan priorities, recreational assets for teens and young adults, gun violence reduction strategies or programming
- Parks and Public Facilities - Estimated \$30M
- Investments in City park and public space projects, community center capital needs, downtown parking deck maintenance.
- City IT and Budget Stabilization - Estimated \$29M
- Replace revenue lost due to the pandemic's economic impacts, maintaining at least \$25 million in cash reserves through 2026 to weather additional economic fallout/potential tax code changes, invest in existing city workforce, continued hardware replacement and cybersecurity upgrades.

[Click here to read the release on downtownakron.com](#)



PICTURE YOURSELF DOWNTOWN

Akron Pride Festival 2021
Saturday, August 28
Locks 3 & 4 | Cascade Plaza
and throughout downtown Akron
10 a.m. - 11 p.m. | Make a day of it!



Downtown Yoga Benefitting Akron Pride Festival

August 24 | 5:30 - 6:30 p.m. | Lock 3

Join Yoga Squared for a FREE, hour-long Yoga class benefiting the Akron Pride Festival from 5:30-6:30 p.m. at Lock 3. While the class is free, we will be collecting donations for the Akron Pride Festival. Pre-registration is encouraged as space is limited, but on site registration will be allowed.

Ahead of the Curve* - Cinema Night

August 26 | 7 - 10 p.m. | Akron-Summit County Public Library (Main Library)

ReelAbilities 2021 celebrates Akron Pride Fest! Following the screening, Photographer Autumn Bland (Portraits of Pride; Portraits of a Pandemic) and Disabilities/LGBTQ+ Activist Michelle Tenney discuss visibility and voice at the intersection of identity. *recommended for mature audiences

POUND® for Pride

August 27 | 6:30 - 7:30 p.m. | Cascade Plaza

Join FitCamp for a FREE, hour-long POUND® class benefiting the Akron Pride Festival. This high energy, cardio class is good for all fitness levels and abilities. While the class is free, we will be collecting donations for the Akron Pride Festival. Pre-registration is encouraged as space is limited.

Akron Equity March

August 28 | 10 - 11 a.m.

Do you own a business? Go to a supportive church? Are you in a community group? Are you an individual that believes in equity for ALL? If so, grab a few friends and join us for our fifth annual March!

The 2021 Akron Pride Festival will begin with March step off at 10 a.m. We invite you to be part of the celebration! Registration is required at akronpridefestival.org/march.

Akron Pride Festival

August 28 | 10 - 11 p.m. | Lock 3, Cascade Plaza and throughout downtown
Food, vendors, organizations and live entertainment from Sandra Valls, Jiggly Caliente, Gia Gunn, and Wrabel. For more information and the schedule of Pride events, visit akronpridefestival.org.

For more events, food, shopping, arts and entertainment in downtown Akron, visit downtownakron.com
Share your experiences on social media #pictureyourselfdowntown





#Downtownakron

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