



DOWNTOWN AKRON PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT 2023



In a world often marked by digital disconnection, our downtowns serve as physical forums for fostering human interaction, dialogue, and a shared sense of belonging. Public spaces, whether adorned with historic landmarks, modern architecture, or vibrant street art, become the canvas upon which our collective experiences are painted. They transcend mere geographical locations, evolving into the living tapestries of our shared memories and aspirations.

2023 was a year of bright lights in downtown Akron:

- As homelessness increases across the nation, support from Peg's Foundation in partnership with Community Support Services introduced Tera Jordan, a dedicated downtown homeless outreach worker, and successfully transitioned 14 people into housing this year.
- We celebrated the human spirit with shared joy, pushing new visions of how downtown can embrace and propel our community. Our programming work engaged close to 30 thousand of the two million annual visitors to downtown, which overleaps pre-pandemic figures from 2019.
- We turned up the volume on the engagement of youth and young adults as the future of the success of our city by piloting a youth downtown experience field trip and Summer



Youth Employment partnerships with downtown businesses.

- We augmented our relationship with The University of Akron—supporting the Fall Kick Off and partnering with student government, Residence Life and the UA Ambassadors for four downtown experience events and the emergence of the RooView Instagram campaign.
- We lent our voice to successfully retaining the NIHF STEM Middle School program downtown, a gift to this neighborhood that has helped us engage a cross section of Akron's neighborhoods through the voices and hearts of children.
- We again engaged MKSK Consultants and the community to update the 2018 Downtown Akron Vision + Redevelopment Plan, reimagining equitable development downtown in the next decade and beyond.
- We saw ground break on the Lock 3 Redevelopment project, the publication of Reconnecting our Community's Phase 1 Report and Greater Akron's federal designation as a Sustainable Polymer Tech Hub.

This is just the beginning. The rest, you can read about in the pages of this report.

DAP is entering a period of transition as the ever-capable Kimberly Beckett steps into leadership while the Board of Directors plans a search for a new president



to stand at the helm of our organization. With complete confidence in the capable staff, we are certain that the legacy of excellence we have built will not only endure but also flourish in the days ahead.

Thank you for guiding and supporting our work this year in the pursuit of a city center where people from all walks of life find common ground and opportunity, forging bonds that strengthen the social fabric of our community.

Malcolm J. Costa
Malcolm J. Costa
Chairman

Suzie Graham
Suzie Graham
President



KEEPING DOWNTOWN CLEAN, SAFE & WELCOMING

Ambassadors provide responsive, flexible services from cleaning to hospitality and safety, that bridge gaps between city services, law enforcement, and private management companies to benefit the district from building face to building face.

DAP reviews crime reports provided by Akron Police Department (APD) and works to enhance safety downtown through ambassadors, traffic alerts, and safety communications. DAP also funds a night-time police patrol of the district Thursday through Saturday nights from 11 p.m. to 3 a.m. This investment supports regular, city-supported patrols, as well as DORA officers and security teams hired by other downtown partners.

Thanks to support from The Corbin Foundation, DAP planted and maintained 265 beautification elements in 2023. This more than \$100,000 investment was designed in collaboration with downtown stakeholders, DAP staff and Keep Akron Beautiful, who DAP contracts to maintain additional in-ground displays downtown. The beautification elements were planted with assistance from 50+ volunteers from Goodyear. Additionally, to manage the goose population downtown, DAP contracts Ohio Geese Control whose patrols keep the waterfowl at bay, humanely.



"I wanted to express my sincerest gratitude for the ambassador Darrell Stamps, who helped me and my young family when we locked our keys in the car after a trip to the Akron Children's Museum.

I'm so grateful to your organization, and to Darrell, for saving the day. We had driven an hour to Akron for a day of adventuring and were preparing to pay \$70 for a new windshield if we had to go to extremes to get the keys out.

So, thank you, and we can't wait to come back to Akron again soon!"

—Mark and Laura Barkett



33,120

TRASH
COLLECTED
(LBS)

3,050

METRO
BUS STOPS
CLEANED

3,200

DOGGIE
WASTE
STATION
BAGS
DEPLOYED

409

GRAFFITI
REMOVED

6,831

BUSINESS
CHECKS

3,019

BUSINESS
CONTACTS
MADE

112

SAFETY
ESCORTS

19,122

HOSPITALITY
ASSISTANCE

904

SCOOTER
SUPPORT

544

PARKING
ASSISTANCE

71

MOTORIST/
VEHICLE
ASSISTANCE

PARTNERSHIP FOR PURPOSE

Since November 2020, Downtown Akron Partnership, Community Support Services, and several other local social service organizations and safety teams have been collaborating on a program, Partnership for Purpose, to help homeless individuals transition into permanent housing.

In 2023, DAP and CSS received grant support from Peg's Foundation to strengthen the program with a dedicated downtown homeless outreach worker. This worker, Tera Jordan, started her position with CSS in October and works closely alongside DAP ambassadors to proactively engage and respond to calls of concern about homeless individuals downtown. No matter the weather, Jordan can often be found in the nooks and crannies of downtown—under bridges, on vacant lots, and in other spaces frequented by unhoused people—getting to know people, building relationships and trust, and connecting them with resources.

More than 40 people have been housed since the program's inception, and this number is expected to continue rising.



55

DIFFERENT
PEOPLE
ENGAGED IN
2023

14

ATTAINED
PERMANENT
HOUSING

40

ATTAINED
PERMANENT
HOUSING
SINCE 2020

7

DOWNTOWN
PARTNER OR-
GANIZATIONS
WORKING
TOGETHER

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT



Since 2007, DAP has met with businesses for Retention and Expansion visits as a proactive approach to growing the number of jobs downtown, as well as assisting businesses with direct services and connections to address any challenges they face. DAP strives to meet with retailers quarterly, and with professional services at least biannually.

To improve service to downtown businesses and assist in strengthening Akron's central business district, DAP is a member of the Elevate Greater Akron (EGA) Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) team. By partnering with the City of Akron, County of Summit, Greater Akron Chamber, METRO RTA, ConxusNEO, Jobs Ohio and other community partners, DAP helps ensure downtown remains at the forefront of this collaboration. As part of DAP's management of a portfolio of businesses, in 2023 the organization participated in all BRE committee meetings, and attended 60 EGA BRE outreach visits.

DAP also meets with prospective businesses to assist them on their path to establishing a business. Businesses ready to locate downtown can take advantage of free, confidential site selection services that help prospective tenants identify potential downtown space and connect them to property managers and owners.

In 2023, DAP continued to administer the Start Downtown program, a Burton D. Morgan Foundation-funded initiative that helps match entrepreneurs with property owners to bring new businesses downtown and encourage economic growth in the district. It prioritizes supporting businesses owned by women and people of color. The program received numerous applicants, and DAP is working to bring the 7th phase of new businesses into the program.



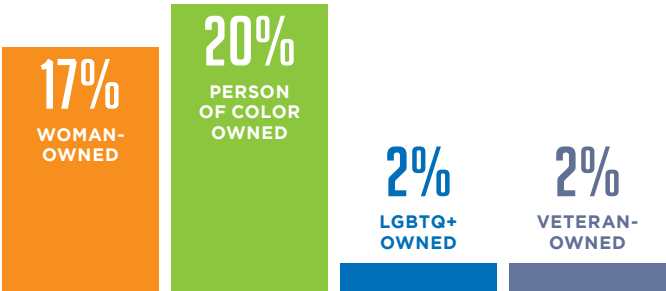
2023 BUSINESS OUTREACH

233	130	73	14
RETAIL CONTACTS IN 2023	COMMERCIAL CONTACTS IN 2023	ASSISTANCE WITH SITE SELECTION DOWNTOWN	NEW DOWNTOWN BUSINESSES OPENED IN 2023

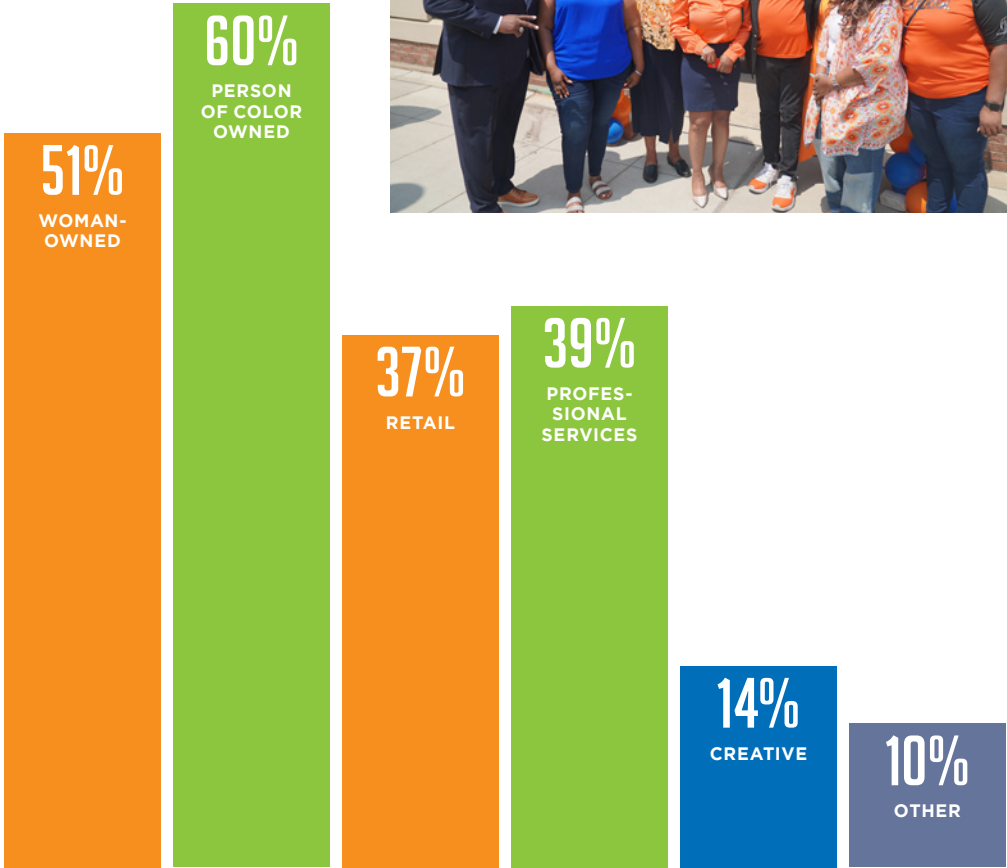
2023 EGA PARTICIPATION

64%	9.1	54%
NET PROMOTER SCORE (GOAL IS 50%)	AVERAGE RESPONSE RATING (OF POSSIBLE 10)	SURVEY RE- SPONSE RATE (GOAL IS 35%)

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT



DAP BUSINESS OUTREACH
233
QUARTERLY RETAIL OUTREACH



ATTRACTING NEW BUSINESS
73
PROSPECTIVE BUSINESS CONTACTS
(BY DEMOGRAPHICS & SECTOR)

DOWNTOWN RESIDENTIAL



The 2018 Downtown Vision + Redevelopment Plan emphasized the need for mixed-use, residential development. Residential development is critical to downtown's economic recovery, as well as an important part of keeping the district socially connected, vibrant and strong. DAP supports residential development with professional housing market analysis provided through the 2018 and 2022+ Vision + Redevelopment Plan.

In 2023, DAP hosted another edition of its annual Residential Open House, featuring 5 downtown Akron properties. Visitors interested in living downtown toured the newly-opened living spaces, learned the benefits of downtown living, and experienced the neighborhood.

Additionally, in 2023 DAP presented 6 downtown resident meet and greet events at 6 different residential buildings to engage with residents and share more about the downtown community and ways to get involved, as well as to gather information about what downtown residents would like to see happen in the neighborhood.

\$176M

RESIDENTIAL
INVESTMENT
SINCE 2018

217

UNITS IN
DEVELOPMENT

88%

RESIDENTIAL
OCCUPANCY
2023

100

RESIDENTIAL
WELCOME
PACKETS
DISTRIBUTED
IN 2023

8

RESIDENTIAL
PROPERTY
VISITS IN 2023

INVESTING IN PUBLIC SPACE

DAP continually works to improve and maintain public spaces to support a positive downtown experience, enhance sociability, attract and retain residents and employees, and increase property values. DAP plants and maintains more than 276 planters, hanging baskets and flower boxes in the growing season, and contracts with Keep Akron Beautiful to manage in-ground displays. DAP also coordinates public space improvement efforts to keep downtown walkable, safe and sociable. 2023 efforts include:

- The rejuvenation of the Roots of Rubber, a colorful, immersive installation on the NIHF STEM Plaza created in 2018 in collaboration with STEM learners and internationally renowned art collective Boa Mistura
- Ongoing annual collaboration with volunteers from Goodyear to assist DAP with summer planting and maintenance of space-enhancing furniture
- Festive wintertime lighting on Main St.
- Festive wintertime display planters on Main St.



102
STUDENTS
WHO HELPED
REFRESH THE
ROOTS OF
RUBBER
INSTALLATION

239
SUMMER
BEAUTIFI-
CATION ELE-
MENTS

104
MAIN ST.
TREES LIT
DURING
WINTER
SEASON

37
WINTER
BEAUTIFI-
CATION ELE-
MENTS

CREATING A VIBRANT DOWNTOWN



Placemaking through programming plays a vital role in DAP's portfolio of economic development efforts. DAP adds programming to public spaces and assists others in bringing excellent programming downtown to create a vibrant and valuable neighborhood for all.

Part of DAP's commitment to programming for diversity, equity and inclusion is illustrated by its work with local contractors, with a focus on working with businesses owned by people of color. For people of all backgrounds to feel truly invited to participate in what downtown has to offer, they need to see themselves reflected in the vendors, artists, instructors, committee members and performers DAP works with to create programming.

DAP presented 6 signature events in 2023:

- Downtown Akron Lunar New Year Celebration
- Downtown Akron Sakura Festival
- Juneteenth Mix & Mingle Friday & Celebration Saturday
- The 3rd Annual Akron Latin Fest
- Fall Fest
- Smells Like Snow Coffee Festival

For each event, DAP worked with numerous community partners and committee members.

DAP also provided support for other downtown events, such as the UNKNWN 3v3 Courtyard Classic basketball tournament on Main St. and Akron Pride Festival.

26,817

ATTENDEES
AT DAP
EVENTS &
PROGRAMS

6

SIGNATURE
EVENTS

19

DIFFERENT
EVENT
PARTNERS

11

DIFFERENT
EVENT
SPONSORS

8

DIFFERENT
WELLNESS
ON THE
PLAZA
INSTRUCTORS

18

WEEKS OF
WELLNESS
ON THE
PLAZA
PROGRAMS

104

WELLNESS ON
THE PLAZA
PROGRAMS
OFFERED

62%

OF WELLNESS
INSTRUCTORS
WERE PEOPLE
OF COLOR

71%

OF EVENT
CONTRACTORS
WERE PEOPLE
OF COLOR

73%

OF PROGRAM-
MING CON-
TRACTS WERE
AWARDED TO
PEOPLE OF
COLOR

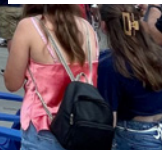
STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP & ENGAGEMENT

DAP represents and advocates for downtown across a number of cross-sector local and regional partnerships designed to drive equity, economic growth and placemaking initiatives. Core partnerships maintained in 2023 include:

- Elevate Greater Akron, where DAP serves the partnership as the facilitator of Refocus on Downtown, and member of SPARK! Akron, Opportunity Akron, BRE teams and the Economic Development Working Group
- Reimagining the Civic Commons, a national, multi-year initiative that demonstrates that transformative public spaces can connect people of all backgrounds, cultivate trust and create more resilient communities, and which has spearheaded the Lock 3 Redevelopment Project alongside the City of Akron
- The Downtown Akron Programming Committee, encompassing more than 25 arts, culture and entertainment organizations, which come together for biweekly meetings facilitated by DAP to ensure continuity, cohesion and collaborative marketing efforts on events happening downtown
- Reconnecting Our Community, where DAP serves on the Advisory Group of this multiyear initiative to identify community preferences for the future of a portion of the Innerbelt. In December 2023, the Phase 1 Report was released
- The University of Akron, with an aim to continue strengthening the relationship between downtown and the University, anchored by forthcoming Polsky

Building renovations. DAP works with UA Ambassadors, student government, Residence Life, interns, classes and administrators in a variety of ways

- METRO RTA, where DAP serves on committees to study the feasibility of both Transit Oriented Development and Bus Rapid Transit
- The City of Akron, County of Summit, and countless other community partners involved in shaping an update of the 2018 Downtown Akron Vision + Redevelopment Plan for 2022+



MEMBER SERVICES & SUPPORT



Business Convenings & Communications

In 2023, DAP prioritized dialogue with businesses through quarterly in-person meetings with downtown business owners to share information about downtown projects, provide networking opportunities, and generate shared ideas about how to bring positive change downtown. DAP also continued with robust business communication efforts, such as the monthly Do Business Downtown newsletter, traffic updates, and the as-needed deployment of an emergency text service developed in 2022. DAP also compiles Downtown Akron Quarterly Reports, sharing the digital publication as a survey of good news and progress of downtown with 3,925 email subscribers four times a year.

Downtown DORA

The Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area (DORA) supports neighborhood businesses by creating an additional way to capture revenue while activating public space. The program allows patrons to carry alcoholic beverages anywhere inside DORA boundaries, as long as they use designated cups. DAP coordinates the DORA cup program, with proceeds providing for Akron Police Department (APD) safety services in the district. In 2023, DAP sold 36,750 cups.

2023 DO BUSINESS DOWNTOWN

494	48%	4.33%
MONTHLY SUBSCRIBERS	AVERAGE OPEN RATE	AVERAGE CLICK THROUGH RATE

2023 DOWNTOWN QUARTERLY REPORT

3,925	37.8%	3.6%
QUARTERLY REPORT SUBSCRIBERS	AVERAGE OPEN RATE	AVERAGE CLICK THROUGH RATE

2023 DORA

36,750
CUPS SOLD

MEMBER SERVICES & SUPPORT

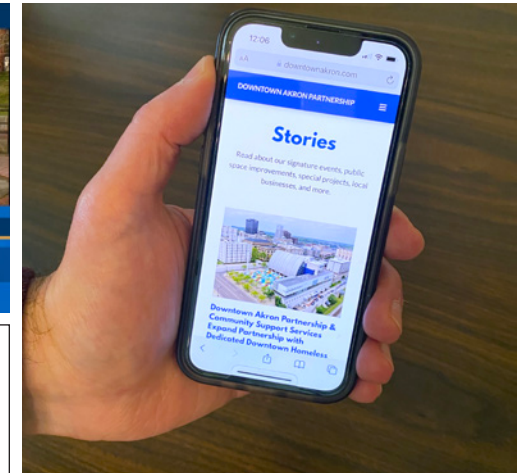
Promoting Downtown

Through strategic marketing and management of downtown resources, DAP promotes the district as the premier place to live, work and play in the center of our city. In 2023, in addition to ongoing social media promotions, DAP piloted the Enjoy Scenic Downtown Akron passport program, which encouraged visitors to discover food, shopping and experiences and make purchases at downtown establishments for a chance to win prizes.

DAP also worked with Baker Media Group to create the 2023 Downtown Look Book, which supplemented an issue of Akron Life Magazine and was distributed throughout the district and in select hotels and rest areas in Northeast Ohio.

DAP continued to write and publish guides to experiencing downtown Akron, sharing 21 new or updated guides and 8 new stories, which garnered more than 40,000 unique page views in 2023, and continued to meticulously maintain a calendar of district events, which garnered a total of 126,348 unique page views. DAP also ran 15 print ads in local publications, reaching thousands of readers.

Weekly dispatches of Do Downtown, DAP's email newsletter reached thousands of subscribers with news of downtown businesses, events and resources. And, DAP added TikTok to the stable of social media platforms it regularly uses.



331K

WEBSITE:
USERS

1M

WEBSITE:
PAGE VIEWS

16,021

FACEBOOK
FOLLOWERS

9,412

TWITTER
FOLLOWERS

8,398

INSTAGRAM
FOLLOWERS

2,638

LINKEDIN
FOLLOWERS

233

TIKTOK
FOLLOWERS

14,241

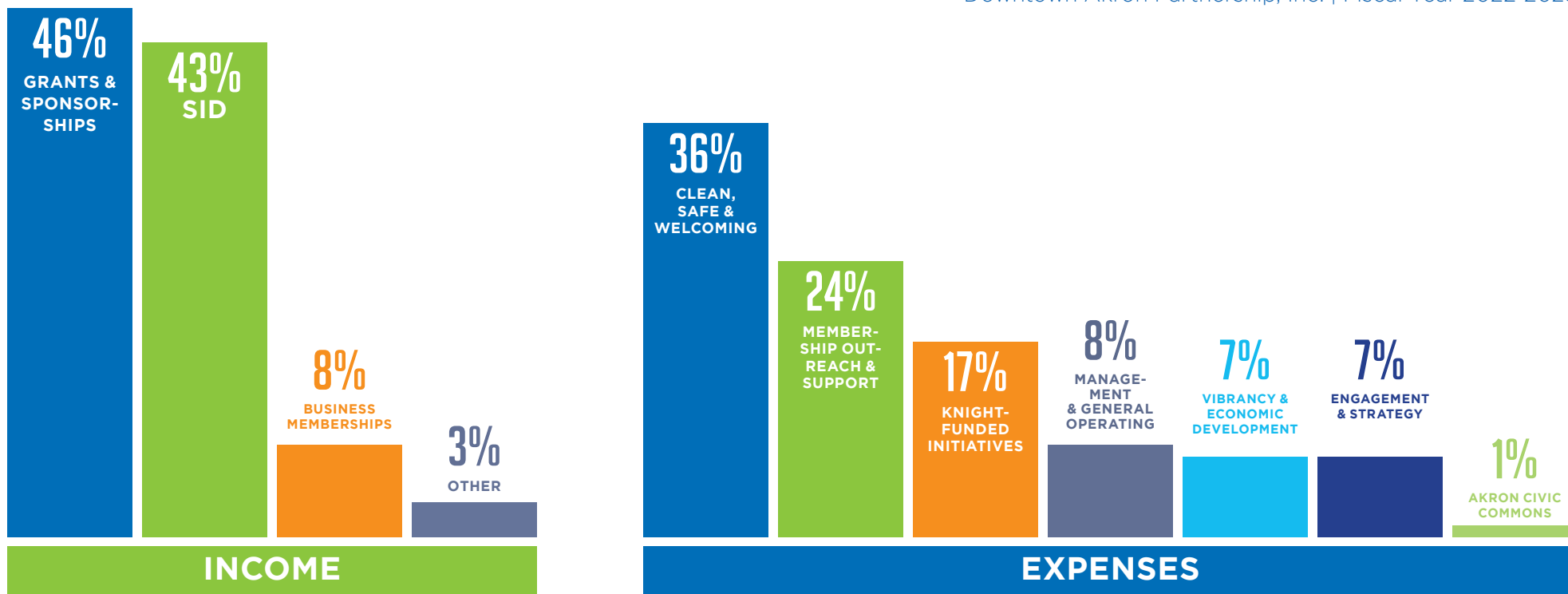
DO
DOWNTOWN
WEEKLY
EMAIL
NEWSLETTER
SUBSCRIBERS

34%

DO DOWN-
TOWN OPEN
RATE

2.4%

DO DOWN-
TOWN CLICK
THROUGH
RATE



DAP operates with 8% of revenue dedicated to management compared with 92% in programming expenses, demonstrating a lean and nimble operating structure that focuses on delivery of services and programs to the district.

\$686,577 of the DASID assessment collected is spent directly on clean and safe activities with the balance invested in member outreach and support, and communications. DASID revenue stabilizes the organization and is leveraged to extend DAP programs and activities in downtown with philanthropic and business member support.



In addition to funding from downtown business and property owners, Downtown Akron Partnership receives support from the above philanthropic organizations.

FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

DAP strives to maximize each SID dollar for the greatest impact to the district. Last year's SID revenue of \$846,339 provided 43% of our \$2,146,484 combined operating revenue (includes \$187,733 restricted grant income earned in FY 2021-2022). Participation in the DASID by the City of Akron and County of Summit helped drive the collective impact of the organization.

Our ongoing partnership with METRO RTA provided an additional 7% of operating revenue for services to the Robert K. Pfaff Transit Center and support for our ambassador team services throughout the district. Business memberships with partners like The University of Akron, GOJO Industries and Canal Place allowed us to strengthen the safety of the corridor by providing contracted services to University properties and those just outside our SID border.

DAP also has valued business memberships with Akron-Summit County Public Library and the John S. Knight Center. Our financial stability invites philanthropic support to improve services, programs and spaces downtown.

General operating support was generously provided by GAR Foundation and Akron Community Foundation, allowing us to use our discretion to respond to the changing needs of the SID. In 2022-23, DAP used \$187,733 from restricted grants received in FY 2021-22, primarily from Knight Foundation. DAP's grant from Knight Foundation allows DAP to continue robust programming, investments in public space, DAP capacity building and collective action in the district.

The use of revenue earned in a prior year resulted in a positive change in net assets of \$77,505. DAP's cash and cash equivalents year-end position better reflects the organization's financial position which remains strong, stable and fiscally responsible.

Non-SID funding sources: Akron Civic Commons, Akron Community Foundation, Burton D. Morgan Foundation, Corbin Foundation, GAR Foundation, Knight Foundation, Peg's Foundation and Ohio Arts Council.

Information presented reflects our 2022-2023 fiscal year.

*DAP conducts an annual independent audit of the organization which, in conjunction with the engagement of a finance committee of the Board of Directors, helps to ensure the excellent fiscal stewardship of the organization. This year, the audit was performed by CLA. We are happy to report that CLA provided an unmodified opinion with no management issues. The independent auditor's report is available for review at downtownakron.com/audit.



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DAP Staff Members

THANK YOU

Downtown Winter Lighting Sponsors

McDonald Hopkins
Ajinomoto Health & Nutrition
Families First Health Services
HealthMarkets Insurance Agency

Friends of Downtown

Eddies Famous Cheesesteaks & Grille
Maria, Isabelle & Theo Beckett
Spring Garden Waldorf School

2023 LEADERSHIP *inclusive of all 2023 participation*

Executive Committee

Chair: Malcolm Costa
Akron Summit Community Action, Inc.

Vice Chair: Patrick Kelly
FirstEnergy

Treasurer: Julie Wesel
Chemstress Consultant Company

Secretary: Laura Wallerstein
McDonald Hopkins

Catherine Breck
City of Akron

Romona Davis
Huntington Bank

Dawn Distler
METRO RTA

Tracy Dowe
Fifth Third Bank

Pam Hickson-Stevenson
Akron-Summit County Public Library

Paul Levy
The University of Akron

Greta Johnson
County of Summit

Brian Moore
Roetzel

Donald Pavlik
PNC

Gary Rickel
CBRE

Board of Trustees

Chris Burnham
Development Finance Authority of Summit
County

Rana Matar
Summit County Clerk of Courts

Donae Ceja
Tactical & Practical LLC

Carla Chapman
Akron Public Schools

Kathy Cunningham
Cascade Plaza Associates, LLC

Luis Escudero Muniz
El Patrón Tequilería & Cuisine

Jaclyn Flossie
Pastoral Counseling Service of Summit
County

Kirk Gardner
FirstEnergy Service Company

Sue Hobson
Cleveland Clinic Akron General

Dave Lieberth
Lieberth Consulting Group

Emily Gellatly
Student

Gregg Mervis
John S. Knight Center

C. Allen Nichols
Akron Bar Association

Ralph Palmisano
Hanna Rasnick Evanchan Palmisano Hobson & Fox

Jessica Cherok
GAR Foundation

Tiffany Roper
OH SNAP Photo Lab

Ilene Shapiro
County of Summit

Charlie Somtrakool
Cilantro Thai & Sushi

Tony Troppe
Everett Group

Dominique Waters
UNKNWN

Michael Derr
Downtown Resident

SID Board

Chair: Lee Walko
Brennan Manna Diamond

Treasurer: Denise Armstrong
McKinley Inc.

Secretary: Michael Kunce
Ocasek Management OKSK, LLC)

Alicia LaMancusa
Akron Children's Hospital

Jason Segedy
City of Akron

Margo Sommerville
City of Akron

DAP Staff

Suzie Graham
President

Kimberly Beckett
Director of Business Relations & Development

Dominic Caruso
Communications Director

Lauren Lienhart
Programming Coordinator

Sonia Jurkowski
Communications Specialist

Caleb Thurman
Operations & Business Specialist

Emma Grosjean
Programming Specialist

Rose Vance-Grom
Programming Assistant

Richard Walter
University of Akron Intern

Brian Cummins
Operational Accounting & Finance

Ambassador Team

Kyle Robison
Operations Manager

Tiffani Delarosa Kinney
Regional Operations Manager

Brandon Averett
Mashona Cannon

Kaleb Dlugoleski
William Foster

Val Kramer
Thomas Moss

Brandon Parmer
Nicholas Raymond

Greg Smith
Liam Smith

Mike Smith
Darrell Stamps





**HAPPY
2024**

**Downtown Akron Lunar New
Year Celebration**
Winterblast ends

Akron ArtWalk
St. Patrick's Day Parade

RubberDucks Opening Day
Sakura Festival
Solar Eclipse Day
Springtime South Asian Festival

DAP Wellness on the Plaza
Programs Begin
Michelangelo Lovelace Exhibition at
Akron Art Museum
Memorial Day

Akron ArtWalk
Downtown Akron Juneteenth
Celebration
Rib, White & Blue Fest
National Interstate 1 Mile & 8 K
Rock the Lock Concerts

JANUARY

FEBRUARY

MARCH

APRIL

MAY

JUNE



Independence Day
African-American Cultural
Festival
Rock the Lock Concerts

Italian-American Fest
Akron Pickle Fest
Goodyear Half Marathon
Rock the Lock Concerts

Labor Day
Akron ArtWalk
Akron City Fest
Akron Latin Festival
Rubber City Jazz & Blues Festival
Akron Marathon

Downtown Akron Fall Fest
Halloween

Smells Like Snow Coffee Festival
Thanksgiving
Welcome Santa Illuminated Parade &
Tree Lighting
Winterblast Begins
Black Friday
Small Business Saturday

Artist Sunday
Cyber Monday
Giving Tuesday
Christmas
New Year's Eve

JULY

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER



EXPLORE THE
DOWNTOWN
EVENTS CALENDAR



DOWNTOWN AKRON PARTNERSHIP

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Ambassadors: 330-706-7383 | www.downtownakron.com

