

DOWNTOWN AKRON PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT 2017



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A LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Close your eyes. Envision what Akron looked like in the 1920's and 30's. People were walking everywhere and groups waited on corners to cross to their next destination. Businesses – retail and corporate – were thriving due to the amount of foot traffic in the city. We are moving closer to this becoming reality again with many exciting projects and initiatives on the horizon. We are proud of the accomplishments and achievements Downtown Akron Partnership has been a part of over the last 22 years and look forward to building on these successes in the future.

2017 saw much progress toward the goal of providing services to our four key stakeholders of the Special Improvement District: Professionals, visitors, students and residents. The Pop Up Retail Program remained strong in 2017 bringing new shopping and service destinations to Main Street and the Northside Marketplace. In July, Downtown Akron Partnership was awarded a \$1.5 million grant from The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation for the improvement of public spaces throughout the Special Improvement District. These funds will be used for public space improvement and planning at the Northside District, North High Street and Cascade Plaza, as well as the creation of “The Link” to connect the University of Akron

and Akron Children's Hospital to the downtown corridor.

Three residential projects were also announced in 2017 as we work toward building the “live” pillar in the Live | Work | Play matrix. The Bowery project, renovation of the former Akron City Centre Hotel and the Law Building will provide more than 300 additional housing units, combined with office and retail space. Integrating these new assets with current established assets like Akron Civic Theatre, Locks 3 & 4 and Canal Park will continue to make a more vibrant and valuable downtown.

After 18 months of strategic work, public meetings, online surveys and stakeholder feedback, MKSK unveiled concept plans and strategic recommendations for the future of downtown Akron. Work on the Downtown Akron Vision & Redevelopment Plan will continue with the city of Akron, businesses, residents and visitors to take advantage of the existing momentum and identify new opportunities.

As we look back on Downtown Akron Partnership's accomplishments in this annual report, we acknowledge and are grateful for the roles that city and county government have played in making downtown a safe and vibrant community. We truly appreciate the

property owners in our Special Improvement District and know without their recognition of what can be accomplished by working together, downtown would not be positioned for the growth and opportunities we will see over the next several years. We know that this support has not just been financial, but has included ideas, hard work and patience. We have come a long way, but there remains much to do.

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



Donald J. Pavlik

VIBRANCY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Business Development

DAP has developed its scope of Business Development services through recommendations from the DAP Strategic Plan and Downtown Akron Vision and Redevelopment Plan.

DAP's Director of Business Development supports the growth of businesses in the district with a business development strategy that includes entrepreneurship, retention, attraction, assistance and oversight of the Pop Up Retail program. The director and her work are supported by GAR Foundation and Burton D. Morgan Foundation. In 2017, DAP pursued 118 potential new businesses or expansions as prospects for downtown, with 26 new businesses opening their doors in 2017. With the help of FirstEnergy and their LOIS (LocationOne Information System), DAP structured a searchable map of available spaces in the district to provide immediate, accessible information for new or expanding businesses looking to locate downtown.

Additionally, in 2017, DAP partnered with Testa Companies and The John S. Knight and James L. Knight Foundation to open the Northside Marketplace. The Marketplace features a collection of 50 retail entrepreneurs, food, beverages and social space with a shared point of sale system that provides a valuable and much needed mid-step between cottage industry entrepreneurs and storefront businesses. The Marketplace was inspired and informed by the public market research collective convened by DAP in 2015-16. Since its grand opening on Nov. 17 and through the end of 2017, the Marketplace grossed \$350,000 in sales in downtown. Grant support provided by Knight Foundation empowered the opening of 17 of the entrepreneurs through Pop Up Retail subsidies and funds the ongoing work of Marketplace coordinator, Jane Douglas.

DAP is proud to have played an integral part in the convening of entrepreneurs, business and educational institutions and non-profit organizations in the selection process that secured Akron as the first U.S. city to partner with eBay in their Retail Revival program. We anticipate ongoing involvement in this important, entrepreneurially focused work in 2018.

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

Pop Up Retail

In addition to the 17 entrepreneurs supported in the Northside Marketplace, DAP welcomed seven new businesses during phase two of the Pop Up Retail program.

Phase two of the program concluded in September and was supported by the Burton D. Morgan Foundation. During this phase Akron Honey Company, Akron Yoga & Wellness, Do Good Yoga, Electric Pete's E-Bikes, Hair Geek Studios, P'Mychals Clothing by Leapy and Wholly Joe's Coffee Shop and Café were added to the downtown neighborhood.

Cumulatively in 2017, with an investment of \$20,000, DAP helped to position downtown properties to gain a projected total of \$348,429 in lease revenue over the terms of the leases signed. A total of 26 employees were added to the downtown workforce through this investment.

Since 2015, a total investment of \$66,400 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 neighborhood.

New Businesses

In addition to the Pop Up businesses, Downtown Akron welcomed 12 new companies and organizations to the district in 2017: Burning Bush Church, Coffee and Code, Country Pure Foods, Hamad's on Main, Homesite Insurance, Full Spectrum Marketing, Judge Law Firm, Playground Sessions, Pots and Pans Jamaican Cuisine, Reminger Attorneys, RoadRunner Transportation Services and Woody's Bar.

STAKEHOLDER LEADERSHIP & ENGAGEMENT

Downtown Akron Vision & Redevelopment Plan

Phase two of the Downtown Plan concluded in 2017. MKSK worked over 18 months and diligently guided the city and DAP through this process to develop a plan that creates a unified vision for the future of downtown Akron. Working with a 42-person steering committee, MKSK led an open and inclusive process that engaged 150 stakeholders, nearly 600 members of the public at meetings and 1,800 people online. The resulting input yielded 592 ideas for how to make downtown more vibrant, livable and connected.

The plan identified five focus areas poised for catalytic investment. These areas build upon already planned improvements for streetscapes, infrastructure, placemaking, and residential/hospitality/innovation district projects. Working with the community, MKSK developed market-based conceptual plans for mixed-use nodes of activity that enhance planned and future Main Street and downtown improvements. The plan is supported by implementation strategies that identify needed partnerships, incentives and policy changes. Some of these changes have already been implemented, with the city unveiling a residential property tax abatement and renovation program before the plan was even complete.

The third and final public meeting for the Downtown Plan was held Dec. 6 at the Akron Civic Theatre. Concept plans and strategic recommendations were unveiled that captured feedback and ideas gathered from the Akron community through meetings, surveys and online engagement tools. DAP invested approximately 336 hours of staff time in the completion of this significant, first-of-its-kind process. The investment for phase two totaled \$120,000 of which half was funded by a lead grant from Huntington Bank. Huntington championed garnering the match funding through downtown businesses and corporate support.

All presentation slides and discussion topics can be found at www.downtownakron.com/plan.

District Meetings

Quarterly meetings for each of the downtown districts continued on a rotating basis. The meetings, held on the 2nd Thursday of the month, are used to keep stakeholders informed about city projects, construction, general information, events and updates.

In 2017, DAP hosted 12 meetings with an average attendance of 20 people per meeting, including representatives from city engineering.

Advocacy

DAP staff members attend meetings of the city and various organizations to continue to advocate for downtown and provide information to the public. Meetings include Akron Civic Commons, Downtown Operations Group, Partnerships in Motion with Akron-Summit County Convention & Visitors Bureau, Main Street Promenade, iTowpath, Akron Waterways Renewed! and UA Safety Task Force.

Public Space/Public Life

In 2016-17 DAP contracted Gehl Studio with the support of The John S. Knight and James L. Knight Foundation and Akron Civic Commons to conduct research and prototype projects in public space.

Public Space/Public Life measurements gathered in 2017 were used to make recommendations for targeted public space investments that build on existing momentum in key areas of downtown as well as make meaningful connections between The University of Akron students and Akron Children's Hospital patients, family and staff.

The site-specific recommendations for Cascade Plaza, North High Street and The Link (connection from Akron Children's Hospital to UA via State Street and University Avenue) are being co-developed with business and property owners, DAP and city departments, and will be implemented in 2018-19 as part of a two-year, 1.5 million dollar grant from Knight Foundation.



CLEAN, SAFE & WELCOMING

Clean

Clean and safe initiatives continue to be a priority of the district with the goal of publishing and monitoring metrics to ensure ongoing success. Through the dedication of 10 Clean & Safe Ambassadors, the following achievements mark 2017.

4,978



METRO BUS STOPS CLEANED

39,717

TRASH COLLECTED (LBS)

404

GRAFFITI REMOVED

534

SAFETY ESCORTS



5,983

HOSPITALITY ASSISTANCE

1,150

BUSINESS CONTACTS MADE



449

MOTORIST/VEHICLE ASSISTANCE

74

POWER WASHING (HOURS)

Green and Clean

The 10th annual event implemented principals from Akron Civic Commons and Gehl Studios to undertake “spacelifts” for several projects in addition to the standard annual projects. Over seven weeks, more than 350 volunteers including fifth and sixth graders from the NIHF STEM school, employees from 11 downtown companies, and Goodyear completed several tasks that included:

WEEDING/MULCHING
FLOWER BEDS

25 BLOCKS

PUBLIC SPACES
IMPROVED

5

MURALS PAINTED/
REPAINTED

3

FLOWER PLANTERS PLANTED

80

TOWPATH TRAIL
& SIDEWALKS CLEANED

3 MILES

Downtown Community Recycling Program

Through coordination with the city of Akron's single stream recycling program, we welcomed State & Federal Communications, Andrew Jackson House, Chemstress Consulting, Akron Civic Theatre, Courtyard Marriott Hotel and the Federal Building to the program. We also increased the capacity of recycling efforts at Northside Lofts.



LOVE LETTERS TO OUR AMBASSADORS

“Just wanted to compliment the great service provided by your organization. I am an Akron police officer and have used your organization’s assistance with several stranded motorists (flat tires and dead batteries.) The Ambassadors have been polite and professional, a great reflection of our fine city.”

“I just wanted to write a few lines about Akron’s goodwill Ambassador Program; and Rhonda Smith is AWESOME! I locked my keys in the car and someone gave me your phone number. In 15 minutes Rhonda came to my rescue. What a nice lady and I was grateful for the stupendous service she gave.”

“It was by mistake that I locked my keys in my car. I was in Luigi’s for lunch when I realized what I had done. The cashier gave me the number for Downtown Akron Partnership. An Ambassador arrived in 10 minutes and explained the program to me. The only “payment” they would take was to write and let you know how my service was. It was fantastic! Thank you for offering a great service.”



Safe

DAP’s 10 Clean & Safe Ambassadors enhance downtown safety with foot and bike patrols Monday-Saturday covering the 42-block district and adjacent business member properties. DAP staff collects crime data within the district from weekly APD reports and the online Lexis Nexis© Community Crime Mapping system and follows up on issues of concern. Email safety alerts and traffic advisories are also sent to businesses and individuals.

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

Welcoming

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

Students from the NIHF STEM school researched and recommended boxwoods for the cycle track, and GPD Group and Goodyear helped with the planting.

Flowers remained in the containers through October due to the extended warm weather. Evergreen boughs and curly willow were added to the cycle track planters for the winter months. Bulbs were placed in the soil of the cycle track planters for spring blooming.



Cigarette Litter Prevention Program

DAP launched an expanded Litter Prevention Program through support from Keep America Beautiful to educate the public on the environmental hazard of cigarette litter and to motivate smokers to responsibly dispose of cigarette litter. The program included new receptacles in Cascade Plaza, Mayflower, Canal Park, the Ohio Building and Summit County Parking Deck.

A campaign with METRO RTA ran for eight weeks in August and September to encourage responsible disposal, and more than 40 new receptacles were added, or replaced existing receptacles with the message, "thank you for keeping downtown clean."

 **52** PLANTER BOXES

 **52** HANGING BASKETS

 **69** SIDEWALK PLANTERS (CONCRETE/PORTABLE)

 **53** CYCLE TRACK PLANTERS



MEMBER OUTREACH & SUPPORT

Akron Civic Commons

DAP is proud to be a partner to convene Ohio & Erie Canalway Coalition and core team members Knight Foundation, city of Akron, Akron Civic Theatre, Akron Metropolitan Housing Authority, County of Summit and Summit Metro Parks in Akron Civic Commons. Akron Civic Commons brings inspiration, networks and education from a national cohort to Akron through the Reimagining Civic Commons project, a three-year, national initiative with projects in five U.S. cities that revitalize and connect civic assets.

A collaboration of national foundations and a network of local partners, the initiative is working toward four main goals: civic engagement, socioeconomic mixing, environmental sustainability and value creation. Many of these goals were already embedded in the work of DAP and the process has helped to validate them through programming, implementation and data collection. In 2017 we worked to integrate the goals throughout DAP's entire scope of work with a focus on improving civic engagement.

Utilizing principles and practices that align with those goals, Civic Commons funding was utilized to make the following improvements in downtown in 2017:

- Make public space improvements in Lock 2
- Complete the Public Space/Public Life survey with Gehl Studio
- Convene business and property owners around Cascade Plaza to understand future developments, identify potential improvements to the public space and address boundaries of the TIGER project
- Create a test area for the cycle track on Quaker Street
- Maintain the cycle track planters with flowers and seasonal displays
- Pilot a program to provide public space maintenance assistance through the employment of transitionally homeless individuals
- Program Cascade Plaza with yoga, music and recess activities at lunchtime

- Support public engagement at public meetings for the Downtown Vision and Redevelopment Plan
- Maintain downtown public spaces outside of the public right of way
- Make recommendations for revisions in the Main St. Promenade design facilitated by MKSK consultants
- Assist in a structural capacity study of Cascade Plaza

QUARTERLY RETAIL OUTREACH	240
BUSINESS OUTREACH	150
PROPERTY OWNER OUTREACH.	40
PROPERTY OWNER/BROKER OUTREACH . . .	130
RESIDENTIAL OUTREACH . . .	12 property visits
RESIDENT WELCOME PACKETS	1,200
BUSINESS INFORMATION PACKETS	800

DOWNTOWN AKRON MARKET STATISTICS

JANUARY-JUNE 2017

Vacancy rate - 21.2%

Average asking lease price SF - \$15.66

Net absorption - (16,308)

JULY-DECEMBER 2017

Vacancy rate - 21.6%

Average asking lease price SF - \$15.80

Net absorption - 3,622

YTD absorption - (10,397)

Data from CBRE

MARKETING, BRANDING & PROMOTIONS

DAP website and branding

Traffic continues to grow more than a year after the launch of the new downtownakron.com. Engaging photos, a robust calendar of events, pages for each business, the latest news stories and many more features attract thousands of visitors each month. Landing pages are also dedicated to the Downtown Akron Vision and Redevelopment Plan with details on the process, the committee, presentation slides from the three public meetings, as well as online engagement tools like surveys and maps.

DAP unveiled redesigned collateral materials created in the new brand standards including business cards, Parking Guide & Skywalk Map, The Towpath Trail through Downtown Akron brochure and Clean & Safe Ambassador brochure. A branded presentation folder was created for these materials to distribute among stakeholders, residents and employees. The DAP ambassador truck was also re-wrapped to match the style of the printed materials.

Lunchtime summer entertainment

Summer on the Plaza returned to Cascade Plaza on Wednesdays and Fridays from June to September. Employees, students and

residents were encouraged to have lunch on the plaza and enjoy outdoor games and new seating. The Nantucket Concert Series continued for a second year at Commerce Park on Wednesdays from May to August. Through support from Huntington Bank and businesses in the Nantucket Building, each week featured a different musician. The Sidewalk Stage found a new home at the courtyard of Pritt Entertainment Group, who continued to support this season through a sponsorship. Live music was performed by different entertainers each Thursday from June to August.

Pokemon GO! in downtown Akron

DAP worked with The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, The University of Akron and Niantic, Inc., the developer and publisher of Pokémon Go!, to create an event on Aug. 26 and 27 in conjunction with New Roo Weekend. The event encouraged more than 3,500 Akron residents, visitors and University of Akron students to connect to the downtown neighborhood using the innovative augmented-reality experience of the popular mobile game.



DOWNTOWNAKRON.COM

212,965
unique visitors



FIRSTNIGHTAKRON.COM

18,222
unique visitors



AKRONSTOCK.COM

-2,000+ high quality photos of Downtown Akron and surrounding areas
-Five contributing photographers
-New photos added: High Arts Festival 2017, Pokemon Go! in downtown Akron, First Night Akron 18 and Downtown Akron Vision + Redevelopment Plan



FACEBOOK (DAP)
5,571 fans



FACEBOOK (FNA)
1,477 fans



TWITTER
8,054 followers



INSTAGRAM
2,917 followers



CONSTANT CONTACT
16,693 contacts receiving downtown news, alerts and e-newsletters

MARKETING, BRANDING & PROMOTIONS

3rd Thursday

3rd Thursday launched in June as the new monthly event highlighting arts, culture, cuisine and entertainment in downtown. The event is designed to introduce visitors to independent destinations, events and activities that establish downtown as an arts and culture destination. The city continued to provide the free trolley for each event and the footprint was expanded to include Lock 3 and The University of Akron Myers School of Art.

The event was made possible with a destination grant from the Akron/Summit CVB which was used to create signage for the trolley stops, promotional buttons for patrons, window clings for businesses and to engage UA's design x nine graphic arts program to create the new logo. A Facebook page for this event was also created to promote the event. Themes were developed for each month and the 2017 season ran June-December.

DAP continued to promote the Summit Artspace coordinated Artwalk on the first Saturday of the month to include their galleries and artists, Zeber-Martell Clay Studio & Gallery and the Northside Market.

High Arts Festival

DAP was awarded a Knight Arts Challenge grant in 2016 to expand Akron Art Prize over the next two years with continued support from the Margaret Clark Morgan



Foundation. The expanded event was renamed High Arts Festival and ran Sept. 15 through Oct. 7. Visual artists, musicians and filmmakers were invited to showcase their work with public and juried votes determining \$24,000 in cash prizes. A total of 117 visual art pieces, 23 films and 33 musical entries were featured.

Entries were featured in several downtown Akron venues including Summit Artspace, The Nightlight, Jilly's Music Room, Musica and Uncorked Wine Bar. An opening night event, mid-event party and finale were held to encourage attendance to the venues, collect votes and engage the community with participating artists.

The 2018 event will further expand to include the new category of non-musical performing arts.

First Night Akron

Celebrating 22 years on the coldest New Year's Eve in downtown Akron, First Night Akron drew nearly 10,000 revelers to welcome in 2018. As a result of a second year for an open call to artists, the button was designed by Alison Brouse. The button, featuring an owl, was inspired by a drawing popularized by an international tattoo artist.

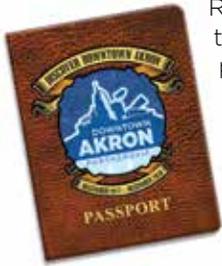
To continue to reflect the diversity of event revelers and performers, thoughtful consideration was given to select the more than 40 activities programmed in six downtown venues. Approximately 30 percent of the entertainment line-up was either new to First Night Akron or returned after more than a year off. New experiences included Charm the Guard, The Kahuna Kings, Himalayan Music Academy, Blu Pi, Ohio Shakespeare Festival, Spin and



Paint and Shelby Olive. Returning favorites included Matrix Performing Arts, The Akron Big Band, The Gospel Wonders, Kofi Boakye, Neos Dance Theatre, Hard Day's Night and two fireworks shows sponsored by Huntington Bank. METRO provided free shuttles throughout the event footprint.

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

Discover Downtown Akron Passports



Residents were invited to tour their own town through the Downtown Passport program. The tour began with First Night Akron and continues through December 2018 with 13 additional events including outdoor recreation, musical performances, theater and film, historic tours and more. The passport, which costs \$15, has a value of \$258.

Annual Downtown Visitors (2017)

3.4 million

Publications

- Co-op page in Akron/Summit County Visitors Bureau Visitor Guide – May 2017
- Downtown Akron Guide with akronlife magazine – June 2017
- Co-op page in Greater Akron Chamber's Experience Greater Akron Guide – Sept. 2017
- First Night Akron Guide in akronlife magazine – Dec. 2017
- Redesign of the Parking Guide & Skywalk Map and Clean & Safe Ambassadors brochures – July 2017
- DAP Quarterly Reports were produced in May, July, October and January. All issues are housed on the DAP website.



General Survey: Since 2009 DAP issues an annual online survey that is distributed to downtown stakeholders, employees, property and business owners, students, residents and visitors. More than 800 responses were received for the 2017 survey. Key results included:

SATISFACTION WITH DOWNTOWN SAFETY

94% are either very satisfied or satisfied

SATISFACTION WITH DOWNTOWN APPEARANCE

88.2% are either very satisfied or satisfied

WHAT BRINGS YOU DOWNTOWN?

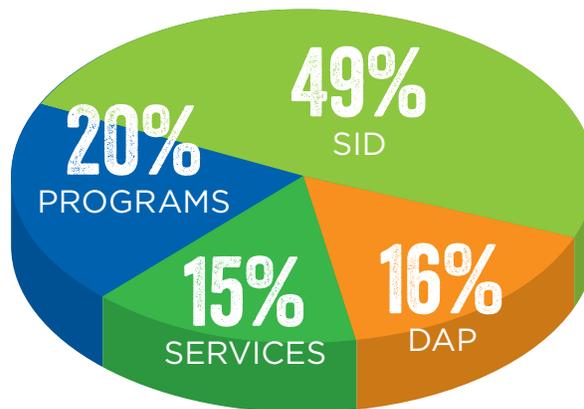
special events . . .	67.4%	work	55.9%
dining	61.2%	nightlife	22.5%
arts/culture/ entertainment	60%	shopping	13.4%

FINANCIALS

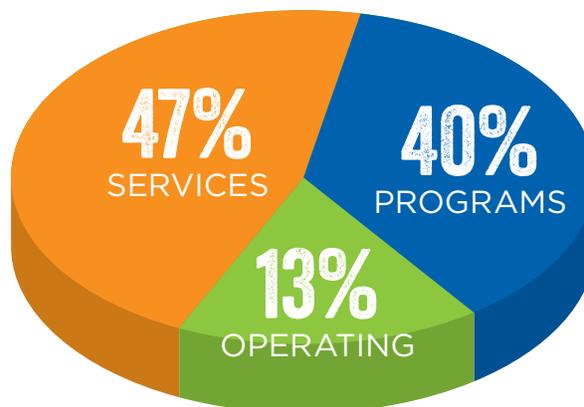


**Downtown Akron Partnership, Inc.
Fiscal Year 2016-2017***

INCOME



EXPENSES





FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

Last year's SID revenue of \$753,942.68 provided 49% of our overall \$1.5 million operating revenue. Our ongoing partnership with METRO RTA provided an additional 9% of operating funding for services to the Robert J. Pfaff Intermodal Transit Center and supported our Clean and Safe team services throughout the district. Business memberships with partners like The University of Akron, GOJO Industries and Canal Place allowed us to strengthen the safety of the corridor by providing contracted services just outside our SID border and provided for an additional 4% of revenue. DAP has valued business memberships with the Akron-Summit County Public Library and the John S. Knight Center. General operating support was generously provided by GAR Foundation and Akron Community Foundation allowing us to use our discretion to address the changing needs of the SID on an annual basis. Special events rely heavily upon corporate and foundation support. Only 5% of annual SID revenue is utilized to support events such as First Night Akron and High Arts Festival. Those two events were supported through corporate and foundation support in excess of \$132,000 in FY 2016-2017.

Other non-SID funding sources: Margaret Clark Morgan Foundation, (High Arts Festival), Corbin Foundation (Beautification), John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

(public space), Keep America Beautiful (cigarette litter prevention), SummaCare (Everyday Health), Civic Commons (public space programming) and Welty Family Foundation (Downtown Akron Passports).

First Night sponsors included: Akron Beacon Journal; city of Akron; 98.1 WKDD; A. Schulman; Acme Fresh Market; Akron Children's Hospital; Akron Community Foundation; Glenn R. and Alice V. Boggess Memorial Foundation; Kenneth L. Calhoun Charitable Trust KeyBank, Trustee; Coca-Cola; Cohen & Company; County of Summit; FirstEnergy Foundation; GAR Foundation; GOJO Industries, Inc.; Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company; Huntington Bank; The J.M. Smucker Company; John S. and James L. Knight Foundation; John S. Knight Center; Labels & Letters; Lost Tribe Media; The Maynard Family Foundation; Sisler McFawn Foundation; METRO Regional Transit Authority; Miller's Party Rental Center; Ohio Arts Council; OMNOVA Solutions Foundation; Pat Catan's Craft Centers; PNC Foundation; Charles E. and Mabel M. Ritchie Foundation; Roetzel; Lloyd L. and Louis K. Smith Memorial Foundation and the Welty Family Foundation.

* Downtown Akron Partnership is independently audited on an annual basis by an independent accounting firm selected via an RFP process every three years. CliftonLarsonAllen audited the DAP financials in fiscal year 2016-2017. The independent auditor's report is presented at the annual meeting and is available for review at downtownakron.com/audit.

Photos in this publication courtesy of Shane Wynn, Tim Fitzwater, and Jeffrey Klauam

DOWNTOWN AKRON PARTNERSHIP

