

Jeff Wilhite

Akron

In Summit County, a healthy and fully leveraged arts and cultural sector will **attract and retain talent** to our region, **build jobs** in the creative sector, **add significant value to the education** of our community's children, and serve a leading indicator of **economic prosperity and impact**.

The creative industry in the Akron MSA supports over **17,000 jobs and drives \$1.4 billion in economic activity**.

To learn more about the vibrant arts, culture, and environmental sector in Summit County, visit:

ArtsNow.org

SummitLive365.com

akronculturalplan.com

Arts and Culture Questionnaire for Summit County Mayoral Candidates

Below, you will find information and prompts related to important issues that impact the creative sector.

ArtsNow respectfully requests that you complete this questionnaire by

5PM on Thursday, April 6th, 2023 so your constituents can learn more about your arts and culture platform. Please respond as thoroughly as possible, as responses will be shared with the public and posted in their entirety online at artsnow.org.

Responses will be published at artsnow.org

Questions/responses begin on the next page.

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ONE: YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH ARTS AND CULTURE

Please give us a sense of your relationship with the arts and culture sector. Keep in mind that our sector is made-up not only of nonprofit organizations, but also artist entrepreneurs and creative businesses and venues.

Response Prompt(s):

- What arts and culture events, performances, or experiences have you attended in the last year?
- What arts/culture organizations or commissions have you supported as a board member, volunteer, donor, or season ticket holder?

Please list cultural groups and experiences, even if they have not taken place locally.

Candidate Response: JEFF WILHITE

We are season Ticket holders at Western Reserve Playhouse and Blossom. We patronize performances at the Civic Theatre, E.J. Thomas annual Christmas Arts Show, Hardesty Park, Ohio Mart, Brandywine Art Show. We attended the Goodyear Theatre performance of White Christmas this past holiday season. We patronized Artists in Recovery at Summit Art Space. We attend the annual Pride Festival and Parade

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TWO: ADVOCACY

The role of mayor includes in large part being a cheerleader and advocate for your city and the assets that make our communities special. During the process of creating the [Akron/Summit Cultural Plan](#), we heard loud and clear that residents want an administration that will make the arts and culture a centerpiece of their administration and legacy and who understands the importance of the arts to the city's economic development, tourism, public spaces, vibrancy, cultural brand, and quality of life.

Response Prompt(s):

- As mayor, how will you use your position to strengthen the arts and culture sector in the city?
- Where will arts and culture fall within your priorities?

Candidate Response: JEFF WILHITE

As Mayor, I will have a cabinet level administrator whose responsibility will be to keep the City focused on implementing the Akron Cultural Plan for the entire City and across all demographics.

Arts and Culture will be a key component in all economic development plans for the City. It will be key in business retention and new business development. I believe by making it a real part of our development initiatives, we can have great success at retaining businesses and people, and have a unique advantage in attracting new people and business to Akron.

We will not have great success if we ignore Arts and Culture.

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THREE: RESOURCES

A healthy cultural sector requires sustainable funding sources in order to maximize its potential for community impact. We must invest in our cultural hubs and venues. We must investigate and leverage new funding sources, and we must explore new resources for our sector.

Response Prompt(s):

- What leadership would you provide to ensure sustainable funding of the arts and culture sector?

Candidate Response: JEFF WILHITE

I think there is great strength in endowments for the Arts.

So often the challenge for any non-profit is how do we pay the light bill and staff at the end of the day. So the challenge is how do we create funding for perpetuity of organizations.

I am not an Arts and Culture Professional. What I would do as Mayor is convene the team that created the Akron Cultural Plan with the goal of identifying resources from multiple sources that we could annually build an Akron Endowment for the Arts as a core. Once that is done, how do we feed the endowment to serve us in an equitable manner so that all areas of the Arts and Culture Community benefit.

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FOUR: PUBLIC ART (ONLY FOR CITY OF AKRON MAYORAL CANDIDATES)

In 2020, Akron City Council formally adopted the Akron Public Art Master Plan which included:

- a thoughtfully designed Administrative Guide has been provided here as an attachment and which is available at <https://www.akronpublicart.com/how-does-it-work>;
- established a Commission to be fully and appropriately staffed by the City of Akron;
- codified a commitment of one percent (1%) TIF Percent for Art to be used exclusively for the development and maintenance of the visual public art collection of the City of Akron;
- adopted the national definition of public art to be any visual art available to the public a minimum of 40 hours per week which has been paid for with public dollars or resides on public land;
- and committed to staff developing and presenting an annual work plan and budget to Akron City Council in order to be included in the General Operating Budget.

Response Prompt(s):

- How would your administration ensure the structures and processes created in collaboration with City staff are being fully realized and implemented?

Candidate Response: JEFF WILHITE

As mentioned in my previous answer. I will have a Cabinet level administrator whose responsibility will be to focus on the implementation of the Akron Cultural Plan and the Akron Public Art Master Plan.

Arts and Culture will not be housed in a department of the City. It will be front and center where it belongs as it is, in my opinion, the unique offering that sets us apart from every other City.
