

# Keith Mills

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: KEITH MILLS

We have visited and continue to visit the Akron Art museum and take our children to the craft room there. We took our ten year old to see Cirque de Soleil in Cleveland for his birthday. We attended the Alice in Wonderland walk (Pokémon go type, search). We took our children to attend ArtSparks dance classes in the summer.

We enjoyed attending art classes at both the library and at a local business called Street Craftery. We visited multiple places on our family trip over the summer including the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery in Washington D.C. as well as many monuments. We loved City Garden and City Museum in St. Louis. We also enjoyed exploring Otherworld and the Chihuly exhibit at the Botanical Garden on a separate trip to Columbus. We visited the Holden Arboretum to check out the Stickworks exhibition. We also attended multiple performances of MacConmara Irish Dance Academy during the month of March.

We have been members of the Akron Art Museum as well as City Museum in St. Louis. We are also members of Beech Creek Botanical Garden, Akron Zoo, and the Great Lakes Science Center.

We concentrate most of our time and energy in exposing our children to various art, cultural and educational experiences.

Currently, we are wrapped up in guitar (Henry) and piano (Ben) lessons, as well as Irish dance classes for our youngest (Ivy) at MacConmara Irish Dance Academy.

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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?
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### Candidate Response: KEITH MILLS

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

As my profound respect for the arts and deep belief that arts, society and culture go hand in hand, I would want to promote and strengthen our arts and culture here in Akron in a multitude of ways.

Some of those ways would be to create a separate Art App for Smart Phones that earn points and rewards for people to encourage them to go and experience different art exhibits. I would love to encourage and promote traveling art shows and have them not only present at Lock 3 but also in our parks around the city both big and small.

I want these same art shows to be streamed/recorded and put on our social media platforms. I will dedicate a person on my staff that intimately knows and understands the role of arts in culture. I want to continue procuring art and digitizing it in order to help with preservation.

Even though we have some decent competition with Cleveland and other surrounding communities, I believe that we are on the right path to make Akron an Art lovers destination and I will continue to support this journey. I will also roll out an SMS texting app and an all call that citizens can sign up for (small discount on trash), as well as mailers in the water bills as well as separately, and they will get notified when new exhibits and shows arrive or are available. I will champion the fact that we have so many free things here in Akron but not everyone knows about them. Through this I will partner with APS and all other local schools to promote our art. It is possible that we could partner in such a way that we could have a traveling show, going from school to school and possibly long term care facilities.

- Where will arts and culture fall within your priorities?

Being an educator and a life-long lover of architecture and history, arts and culture are very high on my priority list on a personal level. My father-in-law has an art-based degree as does my sister-in-law, and so we are raising our children in a very art-centered family. I believe art and culture are the bedrock of society and as such are very important. I feel that having someone full time, and paid appropriately, on staff will help us properly give it the attention it needs.

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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?

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### Candidate Response: KEITH MILLS

I want to cultivate a creative profile for Akron that will emphasize the mix, range, and diversity of talent, places, organizations, activities, and infrastructure that comprise the creative ecology of Akron.

This directly correlates with my ultimate plan to make sure all organizations and agencies meet and collaborate to make a readily available list of services in order to streamline our overall mission of providing aid and support to our citizens.

A mayor not only needs to be an innovator and look at situations from all aspects but also needs to lead by example and facilitate discussions, collaborations and meetings whenever possible.

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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?

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#### **Candidate Response: KEITH MILLS**

A full time staff member with access to resources will be on staff, meeting the outlined commitment made above for the commission. By having true and meaningful follow-through, this will help ensure that these structures and processes will be realized and implemented. We will also raise that commitment from 1% to 2% and routinely check to see if more monies and resources are needed in order to fulfill the mission. Unfortunately, I can only use words for now but I give my word, as an educator, a father and lover of knowledge, that I (as someone who grew up poor and never got to appreciate varied amounts of art until I met my wife) will ensure that we meet goals and plans laid out to further promote our arts and culture. Communication that is positive, beneficial, meaningful and constructive is essential in moving this city as a whole forward and making this city a place people want to move to and in which to thrive.

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