

Marco Sommerville

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: MARCO SOMMERVILLE

As a musician (drummer and singer), arts and music are part of who I am. My family and I have attended countless musical performances at Lock 3 and throughout the city and we are extraordinarily proud to be able to do so. Lock 3 was a project that I championed and helped make a reality over the years.

Further, I was instrumental in contacting Woodrow Nash to complete the mural on the Odom Boulevard branch of the Summit-County Public Library. Additionally, I advocated for and received a budget carve out of \$100,000 to allocate to supporting local artists and creating more public art.

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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: MARCO SOMMERVILLE

I believe that arts and culture are a key component to building our community up. The arts and culture sector bind us together and strengthens Akron's character. As mayor, it would be my role to unite Akron to tell its shared story, and art allows us to do just that. I would work to engage more of our community's organic assets and involve more of our residents to create momentum.

It's critical that our minority, immigrant and otherwise marginalized communities have the same access to arts and culture as the rest of our residents and that is an important priority for me.

Arts and culture are the soul of Akron. It is vitally important to me to celebrate evolving and recognized artists and devote resources to art that honors diversity and originality. Art has the ability to educate our youth and continue to inspire us as a city. Art is not just a way to bring people to our community and keep our dollars here, but also to enhance the experience for our residents.

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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: MARCO SOMMERVILLE

I will continue to invest in art and culture projects, make sure our city infrastructure supports art and culture and advocate for more arts in our schools. Arts as a whole can support our broader interests as a city, especially in economic development.

I will ensure that there is an evaluative framework in place for the arts sector to guarantee sustainable funding and to identify gaps now and in future. I would also work to develop a shared vision of our arts and culture, assuring the active support of business and our own governmental organizations.

Through all of these efforts, I believe I will provide leadership for Akron arts community.

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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: MARCO SOMMERVILLE

I would build relationships and model behavior that ensures that each staff member of my administration understands the importance of prioritizing arts and culture. A key component of that will be to directly advocate for public art in new development projects and require a public art component in all city-funded initiatives.
