

Shammas Malik

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: SHAMMAS MALIK

I make a great deal of effort to attend community events, as an elected official who wants to support our arts and culture sector and as someone who genuinely enjoys and appreciates attending such events. Over the past year, I've attended or supported things such as individual art shows for Akron artists, school arts programs like Choirs in the Round and Firestone's Theatre program, public arts programs like the Akron Art Walk, nonprofit arts organizations like Akron Soul Train, community and neighborhood programming like reading at Elizabeth's Saturday Storytime for children at The Well CDC, cultural programs within our immigrant and refugee community, and private events like the Andrea Teodosio Art Auction.

I'm happy to talk more about how I and other community leaders can and should support both Akron's private and public arts and culture sector.

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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: SHAMMAS MALIK

Thriving communities have thriving arts and culture sectors -- not just providing entertainment and life-enriching experiences, but also by providing jobs through creative entrepreneurship. But thriving arts communities don't just happen on their own -- it takes intentionality and investment by our city in both the infrastructure needed and the creative professionals who work for and contribute to artistic and cultural programs and institutions.

While Akron's private philanthropic community has generally been very supportive of the arts, as a city, we must do a much better job of providing the support our local artists need to sustain and thrive. I believe this has to start with stabilizing the population loss we've seen for decades and beginning to grow our city and tax base, which is the approach our campaign's Together for Akron plan takes (www.MalikForAkron.com/vision).

There are also very simple but meaningful ways our city government can better leverage and support the immense local talent that we have. For example, recent local projects like Lock 3 and the bronze rubber city worker statue downtown that was the inspiration for our city's new logo that Mayor Horrigan recently revealed -- both of these projects should have been contracted to local artists. This would have been more than a symbolic gesture -- it would have been our city making an actual, direct investment in our local working creative professionals.

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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: SHAMMAS MALIK

I would be open to exploring best practices that other cities have put in place, like tobacco or other taxes. I would also certainly look to continue and grow the city's collaborations with philanthropic partners and foundations.

Most importantly, though, I would be interested in exploring sustainable funding mechanisms for individual artists or artist collectives. Much of our arts funding (public and private) to-date has gone to nonprofits, which while critically important to our community, are not the only places creative programs and works come from and which often rely on individual artists to provide training or programming at low wages or for free. I would focus on getting more funding directly to creative professionals and setting up mechanisms to sustain that funding to make Akron a city where artists can afford to live and support themselves and their families.

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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: SHAMMAS MALIK

The Akron Public Art Master Plan is one of many plans our city has developed thoughtfully with input from people all across our community that have, unfortunately, been sitting on a shelf -- our Youth Violence Prevention Plan, the recommendations from our Racial Equity and Social Justice Task Force, and more. It's an example of a problem with how our local government has operated for decades, with a very top-down mentality. In order to move our city's plans forward, we need a form of government that is more open, more responsive, and more transparent. My administration will be focused on implementation -- including the Public Art Master Plan. As we begin implementation, however, we should revisit the plan to ensure we have the structure and resources needed to meet the goals outlined. As an example, the city's projections show that within 10 years, the 1% TIF will generate \$40,000 to \$110,000 each year, which is insufficient to maintain Akron's existing public art assets, let alone create more. I am committed to implementing our city's outstanding plans, doing so in a thoughtful and meaningful way.
