**VIBRANCY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

"Oh yeah? Watch this!" replies Downtown Akron in a monster half

After 5 years of declining metrics, Downtown Akron posts an incredible half, accounting for over 120,000 sq. ft. of positive absorption, and dropping 800 basis points in vacancy.

The Akron Office Market finished 2016 in stellar fashion, accounting for an estimated 176,715 sq. ft. of positive absorption. The Central Business District (CBD) led the charge, experiencing 127,650 sq. ft. of absorption, with the 5 suburban submarkets combining for a strong 49,065 sq. ft. of absorption.

Average asking lease rates for Class A dropped from $19.36 to $18.83 over H2 2016, although looking within can point out that this is primarily due to the absorption of large blocks of marketed Class A space, and not necessarily a market drop. Class B rates rose, from $14.65 to $14.89 over the same time frame. Overall, rates across the entire office market dropped from $15.61 in H1 2016 to $15.35 in H2 2016.

The story to end 2016 is the blazing lease velocity that occurred at 388 South Main Street, the former local headquarters for AES. Within the last 6 months, Brouse McDowell Law Firm renewed their lease of 70,038 sq. ft. on the 5th floor, Homesite Insurance executed a lease of an estimated 54,060 sq. ft. on the 6th floor, Quanex Building Products executed a lease of 39,420 sq. ft. on the 7th floor, and Roadrunner Transportation Services executed a lease of 12,990 sq. ft. on the 3rd floor of the Class A asset. As has been displayed in other Midwest markets, the trend of a “flight to quality” in regard to office space is alive and well within the Akron CBD.

In another story for Downtown Akron, Huntington Bank announced a plan to keep in place the offices now occupied by FirstMerit Bank, and potentially expanding the employment base to 1,500 jobs by 2018. The future of the iconic office tower had been in question, given Huntington’s acquisition of FirstMerit and the uncertainty that followed in regard to one of Akron’s largest employers being absorbed. However, the recent news is glowingly positive, not only for the office market, but for the local job market and the community as a whole.

**City Center Hotel redo revs up revival**

Team to add apartments amid Akron effort to boost area

Reprinted with permission of the Akron Beacon Journal and Ohio.com, by Doug Livingston and Katie Byard

Two Akron area developers are teaming up on a $25 million renovation of the vacant Akron City Center Hotel, with plans to turn it into a hotel and apartment complex.

“I think everybody knows there were very minimal operations going on there,” developer Joel Testa said of the 19-story hotel in downtown Akron that closed late last year. “I’ve been eyeing this building for the better part of the year as the city discusses development downtown.”

Testa said he plans to close a deal by the end of the week with David Brennan, who owns the building that dates to the early 1970s.

Together, they would be equal partners in Testa City Centre LLC, a venture that would own and redevelop the building. It would be Testa’s second hotel venture in town. He is president and COO of Testa Cos. of Cuyahoga Falls, which developed and owns the 10-story, $25 million Northside Courtyard by Marriott that opened last year at downtown Akron’s northern edge.

Testa said the plan is to renovate the entire building, creating 80 to 100 market-rate apartments, which would rent for $900 to $1,200 a month. About 80 percent would be single bedroom, and the rest two-bedroom.

An 80-to-90 room hotel would operate on six floors of the building.

Phase 2 of the Downtown Akron's Pop Up retail program is supported by the Burton D. Morgan Foundation. At the close of the 2016 calendar year, Stray Dog Cafe, Levels Barber Studio and Chameleon Cafe’s second location were added to the downtown neighborhood.

In 2016, an investment of $32,500 helped DAP position downtown properties to gain $233,250 in lease revenue with a projected total of $344,358 in lease revenue over the terms of the leases signed. A total of 34 employees were also added to the downtown workforce through this investment.

### Pop Up Retail

**Levels Barber Studio**

106. S. Main St. | 234-303-4004

Levels Barber Studio is Downtown Akron’s newest barber salon and is the second business of owner Rodney Dennis (Dennis also owns Kingdom Kuts on Grant Street). Levels is located on the Mill Street level of Huntington Bank in the First National Tower and offers haircuts, trims and additional barber services.

**Akron Honey Forage**

106 N. Main St. | Facebook @AkronHoney

Akron Honey Forage is a creation of Akron Honey Company, and the first experiential micro production facility location for the developing skin care line. Everything at Forage will be made in small, quality driven batches (just like their urban honey) with natural ingredients, including ingredients from their beehives.

### Welcome new businesses

**The Great Escape Room Akron**

323 S. Main St. | 234-281-2877 | www.thegreatescaperoom.com/ohio/akron/

The Great Escape Room is a revolutionary new form of entertainment that is redefining the idea of a night out or a team-building event. Puzzles are designed to help you appreciate other team member’s strengths and celebrate your accomplishments. They would love to host your birthday parties, corporate team-building events, fundraisers and much more! Come get Sher-“locked” in.

**Roadrunner Transportation Services**

388 S. Main St. | www.rrts.com

Roadrunner Transportation Systems is dedicated to a customer-focused culture that provides flexible, responsive and comprehensive supply-chain and logistics solutions. A major part of the unparalleled Roadrunner customer commitment is employees devoted to fulfilling that company mission. They pride themselves on fast and friendly customer service.

**SecureValue Storage**

540 S. Main St., bldg 4 | 330-434-7786

SecureValue Storage is the perfect space for all of your storage needs. Find secure indoor units, 24 hour security and flexible lease terms - all conveniently located in Downtown Akron.

### QUARTERLY DISTRICT MTGS

Quarterly meetings for downtown stakeholders are held the second Thursday of the month. RSVP at www.downtownakron.com/work/district-meetings

**Northside:** March 9, June 8, Sept. 14 | 1-2 p.m. | Jilly’s Music Room

**Historic Arts:** April 13, July 13, Oct. 12 | 10-11 a.m. | ASCPL main library

**Canal District:** May 11, Aug. 10, Nov. 9 | 2-3 p.m. | location TBD
First Night Akron 2017 celebrates 21 years of community celebrations

First Night Akron experienced changes and enhancements for 2016-17. For the first time, a public call for artists resulted in a new button artist, April Couch, who developed a unique design using the city skyline wrapped in a Zentangle design.

Nearly one third of the entertainment line-up was brand new to First Night or returned after several years off. New highlights included PechaKucha, a sensory space sponsored by the Center for Applied Drama and Autism, Jul Big Green, Elec Simon, Chardon Polka Band, Wesley Bright and the Honeytones, Matrix Performing Arts and the Kevin Smalley Experience. Returning favorites included carriage rides, UA Steel Drum Band, Yiddishe Cup, the Silent Disco, Magical Theatre Company and two fireworks shows sponsored by Huntington Bank. Once again METRO provided free shuttles throughout the event footprint.

More than 50 activities were programmed in seven venues, including the new Mill Street Main Stage between JSK Center and Greystone Hall. Approximately 13,000 revelers spent their New Year’s Eve in Downtown Akron.

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 mobility challenged individuals.

Residents were invited to be a “tourist in your own town” with Downtown Akron Passports. The journey began with First Night Akron and continues through December 2017 with 13 additional events including sporting events, theater offerings, free tours and more. The passport, which costs $15, has an actual value of $234. Nearly 600 passports have been sold for 2016-2017.

MARKETING & PROMOTIONS

CLEAN, SAFE & WELCOMING

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DAP Ambassador stats in 2016

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TWO DOWNTOWN AKRON BUSINESSES AWARDED WEATHERHEAD 100 AWARD FOR GROWTH ACHIEVEMENTS

Established in 1988, the Weatherhead 100 awards celebrate Northeast Ohio’s spirit of entrepreneurship and recognize companies that exemplify success in the region. This award ceremony was held on Dec. 1.

**WhiteSpace Creative** earned the prestigious award for exceptional growth in sales and two acquisitions from 2011 through 2015. Recognized as one of the best examples of leadership, growth and success in Northeast Ohio, they were ranked 38th among the elite group of 100 companies. It’s their seventh Weatherhead 100 award, with wins in 2006, 2007, 2008, 2010, 2014 and 2015. The company also was honored with a Weatherhead Upstart award in 2004.

**Pritt Entertainment Group** (PEG) was named the second fastest-growing Upstart company in the region. The Upstart category includes companies with up to 15 employees and net sales of up to $5 million in the previous year. PEG has shown growth of over 510% in the last five years and has more than tripled the size of their full-time staff.

THREE RODERICK LINTON BELFANCE ATTORNEYS RECOGNIZED AS SUPER LAWYERS®

Attorneys Lawrence R. Bach, William G. Chris and Christopher C. Esker of the Akron-based **Roderick Linton Belfance** law firm have been selected as Super Lawyers for 2017.

Presented annually, the Super Lawyers distinction is based on 12 indicators of peer recognition and professional achievement with the objective of creating a list of outstanding attorneys as a resource for those seeking legal counsel.

Founded in 1885, the Roderick Linton Belfance law firm employs attorneys with diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise. The firm represents an equally diverse range of clients from individuals to Fortune 500 companies.

PANTEK, METISENTRY MERGE TO BUILD ON OPEN SOURCE IT EXPERTISE

Two local IT services firm that specialize in open source technologies have merged. Pantek of Independence and **Metisentry** of Akron became one company on Jan. 1.

Combined, they now have 21 employees. Metisentry founder Marling Engle will remain on as president. Pantek CEO Mike Fischer and Pantek chief technology officer Richard Zack will continue serving in those roles.

SEGMINT’S USE OF BIG DATA ADDS UP TO LARGE GROWTH

Big data is turning into a big business in downtown Akron, where the data-mining firm **Segmint** just moved into new offices in the city-owned Hamlin Building.

The 9-year-old company provides data analytics, primarily to banks, savings and loans, and credit unions. CEO Rob Heiser says business is brisk as more banks realize both the value of customer data and his firm’s expertise when it comes to using it.
The Development Fund of the Western Reserve, affiliated with the Development Finance Authority of Summit County, recently financed the Ronald McDonald House of Akron expansion. The Ronald McDonald House of Akron serves the Akron Children’s Hospital, which is the 9th largest children's hospital in the United States. With 20 rooms currently, the Ronald McDonald House of Akron was able to provide service to 821 families in 2014 with over 75% of those families being Ohio residents and over 50% of the patients’ families served by the House are low income, Medicaid-eligible families.

The Ronald McDonald House of Akron serves families not just from Northeast Ohio, but from many parts of the state, country, and world. In 2014, the House accommodated families from 46 Ohio counties, 23 states, and 8 countries. The need for accommodations far outweighs the resources currently available. In the same year that 821 families were accommodated by the Ronald McDonald House of Akron, over 6,000 families were turned away due to lack of space. This project triples the number of available rooms available from 20 to 60.

## Pizzafire Celebrates Two Years in Downtown Akron

Congratulations to Pizza Fire for celebrating two years in Downtown Akron.

The restaurant is located at 22 E. Exchange St. at the corner of Main and Exchange. Pizza Fire serves hand crafted pizzas and chopped salads created by you and built just for you. They’ll get you out the door fast, but will use fresh ingredients to hand craft personal pizzas or chopped salads. The dough is hand-stretched and aged 24 hours. Hand crushed tomatoes are used for the sauce with extra virgin olive oil and a blend of fresh spices added. They grind fresh cheese daily and hand cut veggies.

You can search all you want but you won’t find a fryer or freezer at the restaurant.
City begins work on Old Main Sewer Separation (CSO Rack 21)

Work on Old Main Sewer Separation (CSO Rack 21) will begin Monday, December 5, 2016 on Ridge Street. Part of the Akron Waterways Renewed! (AWR!) program, the $5.9 million project will continue until Nov. 2017.

The separation involves constructing new storm and sanitary sewers, along with lining portions of the existing sewer. The sanitary sewer will flow to the Little Cuyahoga Interceptor (LCI), and eventually the Akron Water Reclamation Facility, where it will be treated. The new storm sewer will carry water from the wet weather events directly to the Ohio and Erie Canal and the Little Cuyahoga River.

The project will result in 4,300 feet of new storm sewer, 5,400 feet of new sanitary sewer, and 1,500 feet of sewer lining. This project also includes rehabilitating 31 manholes and constructing 40 new manholes. The contractor for the project is Kenmore Construction, and H.R. Gray is the Construction Manager at Risk.

The Rack 21 area includes: N. College St. (Perkins to Bluff), N. Prospect St. (Market to Bluff), Osage Alley (Park to Bluff), N. Summit St. (Market to Furnace), Perfida Place (Journal to MLK), N. Broadway St. (Market to Furnace), N. High St. (Market to Ridge), N. Main St. (Market to MLK), N. Howard St. (Market to Little Cuyahoga River), State Route 59 (N. Main to N. College), Bluff St., Furnace St. (N. Howard to 240’ East of Summit), Ridge St. (N. High to N. Howard), Market St. (N. Howard to N. Main), Park St. (N. College to Summit), Journal Alley (N. Prospect to Broadway), N. Bank Alley, Maiden Lane Alley, and Beech St.

Updated traffic information will be posted on www.DriveAkron.com. Access to the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad and the Courtyard by Marriott Hotel will be maintained throughout construction.

For more information about this and other AWR! projects, please contact Heather Bolestridge, AWR! Communications Manager at (330) 375-2949

City to lower one of the B.F. Goodrich stacks

Mayor Dan Horrigan announced that the city of Akron will be partially removing a portion of one of the two iconic red brick "GOODRICH" smokestacks on South Main Street. Preliminary work is scheduled to start in the coming weeks.

The northern stack (closer to downtown) will be lowered by approximately 100 feet—from its original height of 195 feet to a new height of approximately 95 feet. The southern stack will be preserved at its current height of approximately 195 feet.

The stacks sit atop the former B.F. Goodrich tire complex, which the city has owned since November 1987. The facility is currently used by Akron Energy Systems (AES), which operates the city’s steam plant; and AES employees enter the facility regularly for maintenance and work.

The stacks were in active use for nearly 100 years. During that time of activity, they maintained a constant temperature, which prevented swelling and contracting. The stacks were decommissioned in 2015, due to EPA mandated regulations, and have since been exposed to the variations of Ohio weather, which has taken a significant toll on their structural condition.
Intersection of MLK, Main, Howard and Perkins closed for Innerbelt project and Old Main sewer separation

The intersection of Main, Howard, and Perkins Streets and Martin Luther King Boulevard closed Monday, Feb. 6 to facilitate the beginning of ODOT’s work on the first phase of the Innerbelt Project on SR59. This project, known as the Oak Park Renewal Project, will last for an estimated six months and will exponentially increase the safety of both the intersection and SR 59.

“The SR 59 corridor, along with the intersection where SR 59 and North Main Street meet, have the highest crash rates in the area,” said John Moore, Director of Public Service. “Once this project is complete, the corridor and that intersection will be much safer for both pedestrian and vehicular traffic.”

The removal of the Innerbelt has been named the Oak Park Renewal Project because it will serve to reconnect the historic Oak Park neighborhood (around Glendale cemetery) to Downtown Akron. When the Innerbelt was certified in 1969, it artificially cut this area off from the City’s urban core, leading to disinvestment. In addition to the significant safety benefits, the Oak Park Renewal Project will reverse that trend and will better link Downtown with these adjoining neighborhoods. Future uses being considered for the restored space include potential redevelopment as a residential area with green space, and possibly the construction of a water feature.

In conjunction with the closure for the Oak Park Renewal project, the City of Akron will be performing an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) mandated sewer separation project on the same intersection that will eliminate 39 combined sewer overflows or 4.1 million gallons of overflow in a typical year. The work is part of the Old Main Sewer Separation (CSO Rack 21), currently taking place in that section of town.

“We worked very closely with ODOT to ensure that the intersection was only closed one time and for the shortest duration possible,” said Mayor Dan Horrigan. “Both the City and ODOT are committed to improving our public infrastructure, while simultaneously enhancing public safety.”

Signs alerting drivers to the upcoming closure are posted in the area. Information about the closure along with maps showing different detours will be available at www.DriveAkron.com. For questions or concerns, please contact the Mayor’s Action Center at (330) 375-2311 or 3-1-1.

The businesses in Northside (Jilly’s Music Room, DBA, Luigi’s, Courtyard Akron, NOTO North, Zeber-Martell, etc) as well as Subway & Einstein Bagels at Main/Market are open during construction.

Join DAP as we host Hard Hat Happy Hour the third Wednesday of every month at rotating locations in the Northside District.
**HARD HAT HAPPY HOUR**

March 15, April 19, May 17 | 4-6 p.m.
Northside District | www.downtownakron.com

Don't let the construction at Main/Perkins/59/MLK keep you from enjoying activities in the Northside District. Grab a bite, get a drink, talk some shop. It's all happening the third Wednesday of the month in the Northside of Downtown Akron. Join us for Hard Hat Happy Hour and enjoy a midweek pick-me-up. Locations vary each month, so check out the website and social media posts for updates.

**10TH ANNUAL ART & ALE**

Friday, March 10 | 6-9 p.m.
Akron Art Museum | www.akronartmuseum.org

Now in its 10th year, ART & ALE features locally crafted brews from Ohio's best brewmakers, complemented by some of the region's favorite local food. Participating brewers include Thirsty Dog Brewing, Ohio Brewing Company, Hoppin’ Frog Brewery and more.

**AWR! CONSTRUCTION SITE TROLLEY TOURS**

Mar. 10, Apr. 5, May 12 | 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m.
www.akronwaterwaysrenewed.com

The Akron Waterways Renewed! program will offer monthly two-hour bus tours of the completed and active sewer construction projects around the city of Akron. Tours start at the Mustill store, where attendees will learn all about its significance and the history of the canal, as well as the ongoing Ohio Canal Interceptor Tunnel (OCIT) work. Everyone will then board the trolley, and visit all of the six OCIT sites.

**BREAKFAST WITH THE BUNNY**

April 1-2, 8-9, 15 | 8:30 a.m.
Akron Zoo | www.akronzoo.org

Breakfast with the Bunny features a buffet, crafts, activities, visits with the Easter Bunny and an egg hunt. Bring your own camera for pictures and your own basket to collect eggs. All activities are indoors except the egg hunt, which is outdoors.

**AKRON RUBBERDUCKS OPENING DAY**

Thursday, April 6 | 6:35 p.m.
Canal Park Stadium | www.akronrubberducks.com

The Akron RubberDucks are the Double-A affiliate of the Cleveland Indians and defending Eastern League champions. The 2017 season will be the franchise’s 21st since moving to Akron. The 20th year of Canal Park kicks off with the Home Opener on Thursday, April 6, at 6:35 p.m. vs. Bowie Baysox.

The Akron RubberDucks single-game tickets go on sale March 7. Single-game tickets start as low as $11 for adults, $10 for children 12 and under or adults 60 and over and $5 for general admission. Children three years old and younger are free, as long as they do not require a seat.

Fans can purchase tickets by calling the RubberDucks office at 330-253-5151 or online at www.akronrubberducks.com.

**THE WIZARD OF OZ PRESENTED BY BALLET THEATRE OF OHIO**

May 6, 2 p.m. & 7 p.m., May 7, 2 p.m.
Akron Civic Theatre | www.akroncivic.com

We’re off to see the Wizard! Ballet Theatre of Ohio invites you to follow the yellow brick road to the Akron Civic Theatre for the Wizard of Oz. Artistic Director, Christine Meneer, is BTO’s resident choreographer and costume designer. The costumes are delightful and her creative vision is sure to measure up to the high quality for which BTO is famous. Munchkinland and Emerald City will be a glimmering fantasy of color, designed by Jack Ballance.

**ARTIST AS AN ENTREPRENEUR INSTITUTE**

May 6, 7, 13, 20 | 9 a.m.-5 p.m.
Summit Artspace | www.summitartspace.org

A series of WEEKEND workshops, led by working artists, entrepreneurs and business leaders, will help artists find financial success in their creative careers by teaching them the fundamentals of how to start, grow and maintain a healthy business. Cost: $100