



SUMMIT

# ARTSPACE

## Strategic Plan

2016 - 2018

Draft – January 2016

## Executive Summary

Summit Artspace is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization established in 1991 as the Akron Area Arts Alliance. The original purpose of the organization was to bring together local artists and arts organizations and promote the arts sector in the Greater Akron community. In 2015, the Alliance undertook a comprehensive self-study with the support of several local foundations to reassess its organizational structure and its future goals. It was determined that the organization's future lay with developing the Summit Artspace building to become a premier community arts center. AAAA's membership voted in April 2015 to end the membership-based structure and begin plans to establish a business model focusing on the operation of Summit Artspace. The agency now does business as Summit Artspace.

Summit Artspace operates as a community arts center that houses artist studios, galleries and exhibit spaces, offices for arts organizations, and performance and meeting spaces. The operation of the arts center is a joint project with the County of Summit. The County leases the building to Summit Artspace for a nominal fee and subsidizes a significant portion of the utility costs as well as some maintenance costs.

In addition to operating the local arts center, Summit Artspace offers professional development and other support for established and emerging artists, arts education and creative experiences for all ages, and a wide range of performing arts experiences.

A board of directors governs Summit Artspace. The agency has a full-time executive director, three part-time staff, and several independent contractors.

This strategic plan sets the overall direction for Summit Artspace for FY 2016 - 2018. The plan was developed in support of the Summit Artspace mission and reflects our commitment to growth in the Greater Akron community—in programs and services, in visibility and awareness, in leadership capacity, and in financial strength and stability. The planning process involved our key stakeholders and the plan is intended to align the efforts of all those involved in supporting the organization's mission.

Consideration was also given to how Summit Artspace will be involved in new arts and culture initiatives that have emerged since the publication of the *Arts and Culture Assessment for Summit County* in 2014.

The duration of this strategic plan is expected to be three years, depending on shifting internal priorities, external factors and the pace and success of implementation. Successful implementation of the strategies described in this plan will be challenging, but will have a profoundly positive impact on Summit Artspace and the community. These strategies are interdependent and a shortfall in one area may affect others. This strategic plan will be supported by goals and objectives for each strategic priority.

## **Mission Statement**

Building community through the arts.

Summit Artspace is dedicated to providing a nurturing environment for artists at all levels of their creative journey, encouraging participation in the arts through education and outreach, and serving as a vital creative resource for the community.

## **Our Values**

### **Creativity**

- We recognize the creative potential in everyone and we believe that the arts are central to realizing this potential.
- We believe that the creative process fosters self-discovery and expression, providing a powerful means for learning, understanding, communication and teaching.
- We believe that the full expression of creativity results in productive and successful individuals who make meaningful contributions to society, increasing the quality of life.

### **Collaboration**

- A collaborative approach informs everything we do, including our approach to internal management and leadership of the organization, our activities and programs, and our engagement with the community.
- We respect the diversity of perspectives that individuals and groups bring to the pursuit and achievement of our mission.

### **Community**

- We are committed to making the arts accessible to all.
- We believe that our programs and activities strengthen the community and that we, in turn, are strengthened by the community's participation in and response to our programs.
- We believe that the arts are central to a vibrant and sustainable community.

## **Definition of Terms**

### **Strategic Priorities**

Strategic priorities are high-level topics or activities that Summit Artspace wants to particularly encourage and promote over the long term. These priorities will guide budget and resource allocations decisions.

### **Strategic Goals**

Strategic goals are the milestones that Summit Artspace aims to achieve that evolve from the strategic priorities. They transform strategic priorities into specific performance targets that impact the entire organization. Goals can be qualitative or quantitative.

### **Strategic Objectives**

Strategic objectives identify the approaches or activities that will be carried out to achieve the strategic goals.

### **Annual Operations Plans**

The strategic priorities, goals and objectives identified in this Strategic Plan are intended to be high level and relevant for the next two to three years. The successful implementation of the plan will rely on the development of annual operations plans that include annual goals and specific, measurable objectives. The operations plans also identify individuals or groups accountable for the achievement of objectives, performance indicators and desired outcomes.

## Strategic Priorities for FY 2016-2018

### **Strategic Priority 1: Support artists at all levels of their creative journeys.**

We will build a creative community for artists and arts organizations by offering affordable studio and office spaces. We will offer traditional and non-traditional exhibit spaces for artists to show and sell their work. We will provide technical assistance and professional development opportunities for artists that help ensure the long-term success of their creative vocations. We will connect artists with opportunities for exhibits, commissions and collaborations.

### **Strategic Priority 2: Encourage participation in the arts through education and outreach.**

We will offer creative experiences for all ages and abilities. We will offer opportunities for experimentation, for self-expression, for developing talent and for honing skills. We will provide experiences in a variety of visual and performing arts. We will seek partners that can help us provide creative experiences for those who might otherwise go without. We will develop partnerships with organizations that allow us to leverage our collective resources to expand arts and culture offerings in the region. We will bring Summit Artspace to the community through events and exhibits that showcase local artists in venues throughout Summit County.

### **Strategic Priority 3: Serve as a vital creative resource for the community.**

We will be the premier community arts center in the region. We will promote Summit Artspace as an affordable and accessible venue for the community to see and hear new and established artists of all kinds. We will work with local organizations, schools and businesses to offer meaningful volunteer opportunities for individuals and groups. We will encourage the use of Summit Artspace as an environment for creative thinking. We will promote Summit Artspace as a venue for artists and arts supporters to convene, connect and collaborate.

### **Strategic Priority 4: Increase awareness and visibility throughout the community**

We will seek new opportunities to tell our story to targeted audiences through public outreach, media relations, social media and the Internet. We will strengthen our efforts to communicate with our community partners, donors and volunteers to demonstrate the impact of their support. We will communicate our valued partnership with the County of Summit while affirming our position as a separate entity that needs the support of the community's corporate, philanthropic and volunteer sectors.

### **Strategic Priority 5: Build financial sustainability through revenue growth and diversification.**

We will demonstrate fiscal accountability and ensure financial stability by maintaining a balanced budget. We will raise funds to meet revenue targets and spend less than we take in. We will ensure our long-term sustainability by investing in existing programs and services while exploring opportunities to build on successes and being open to new partnerships. We will

minimize risk by balancing dependence on any one funding source. We will exercise rigor when reviewing existing and potential programs to ensure that financial as well as programmatic objectives are achieved. We will seek opportunities to generate revenue through shared administrative services, cause marketing or other mutually beneficial ventures.

**Strategic Priority 6: Develop and maintain effective leadership.**

We will ensure the continued success of Summit Artspace by recruiting highly qualified individuals to serve on the board of directors and we will apply best practices in nonprofit governance. We will attract talented, dedicated employees to carry out our mission. We will strive to create a culture of high performance and accountability that helps employees feel recognized, valued and rewarded for their accomplishments. We will ensure that both board and staff leaders understand the organization’s mission and strategic priorities as well as their roles and responsibilities.

## Strategic Priorities, Goals and Objectives for FY 2016-2018

### **Strategic Priority 1: Support artists at all levels of their creative journeys.**

**Strategic Goal 1-1: Develop a creative community of artists and arts organizations through leased studio and office spaces.**

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:**

- Offer a variety of studio and office spaces to meet the diverse needs of tenants.
- Ensure a balance between start-up artists/organizations and established ones, as well as a diverse mix of the arts.
- Ensure that lease rates are affordable, but competitive, and generate sufficient revenue to meet our obligations as a landlord.

**Strategic Goal 1-2: Provide a high-quality venue for visual and performing artists to exhibit and perform.**

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:**

- Showcase diverse, high-quality work from area artists in the Summit Artspace Gallery.
- Make capital improvements needed to continue the evolution of the Summit Artspace Gallery into the region's premier community art gallery.
- Develop a plan and seek resources to upgrade the EventSpace to a high-quality performance space.
- Expand opportunities for visual and performing artists by using non-traditional and unexpected spaces within Summit Artspace for exhibits and performances.

**Strategic Goal 1-3: Offer professional development and other assistance to individual artists and art organizations.**

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:**

- Conduct the annual Artist as an Entrepreneur Institute (AEI) in conjunction with the Community Partnership for Arts and Culture (CPAC).
- Offer in-depth workshops on topics essential for achieving success in creative vocations.
- Connect artists with opportunities for exhibitions, commissions and collaborations.
- Seek opportunities to promote local artists as creators, collaborators and leaders.

## **Strategic Priority 2: Encourage participation in the arts through education and outreach.**

### **Strategic Goal 2-1: Offer creative learning experiences in both visual and performing arts.**

#### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

- Develop a broad array of arts experiences, including two and three-dimensional art, digital media, vocal and instrumental music, dance, drama, storytelling and more.
- Offer a variety of programming formats, including: workshops, ongoing classes, lectures, individual and group instruction, etc.
- Engage local and regional artists as instructors and facilitators.

### **Strategic Goal 2-2: Offer creative experiences for all ages, audiences and abilities.**

#### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

- Develop programs that appeal to all age groups, including opportunities for families to participate together.
- Offer experiences that are accessible to, and if necessary, adapted for individuals with disabilities.
- Provide opportunities for all levels of ability: for those who are beginners, for those who are developing their talent and for masters who are refining their skills.
- Offer experiences that broaden the participants' understanding of arts, culture and our world.

### **Strategic Goal 2-3: Develop partnerships that expand the community's participation in the arts.**

#### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

- Engage under-served audiences through outreach initiatives to schools and community organizations.
- Offer program underwriting and event sponsorship opportunities to local businesses and foundations.
- Work with other arts organizations on collaborative projects that encourage the community's involvement in and support for the arts.



### **Strategic Priority 3: Serve as a vital creative resource for the community.**

**Strategic Goal 3-1: Provide an affordable and accessible venue for the community to see and hear the work of local artists and performers.**

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:**

- Support new and emerging artists with the opportunity to exhibit and perform at Summit Artspace.
- Showcase established artists and performers.
- Seek opportunities to incorporate additional exhibits or performances into new and ongoing events held at Summit Artspace.

**Strategic Goal 3-2: Provide meaningful individual and group volunteer opportunities.**

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:**

- Develop plan for volunteer management that includes recruitment, placement, training and recognition.
- Work with local schools and universities to develop internships and other student volunteer experiences.
- Offer group volunteer activities geared to local organizations and businesses.

**Strategic Goal 3-3: Position Summit Artspace as an environment that inspires creative thinking and builds community.**

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:**

- Offer lectures, exhibits and performances that inform, inspire and start conversations.
- Convene gatherings of artists and arts supporters.
- Offer event and non-traditional meeting and event spaces to local organizations and businesses.
- Develop a corps of trained facilitators to lead planning and training sessions.

**Strategic Priority 4: Increase awareness and visibility throughout the community.**

**Strategic Goal 4-1: Develop and implement a communications plan that includes messages for targeted audiences using traditional channels as well as new media.**

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:**

- Maintain the Summit Artspace website and other social media channels as valuable resources for current and potential visitors, participants, volunteers, community partners and donors.
- Tell the Summit Artspace story through presentations to civic groups, service organizations and others.
- Ensure that board members, volunteers and staff have timely and appropriate communication tools to convey key organizational messages.

**Strategic Goal 4-2: Develop and share the message that emphasizes the need for private sector support as a non-governmental nonprofit agency.**

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:**

- Incorporate key messages about Summit Artspace's community impact and the need for support in communications and marketing materials as appropriate.
- Promote the value of the County of Summit's financial contribution and in-kind support as a foundation for programming and for leveraging other sources of support.

**Strategic Goal 4-3: Work with local and regional organizations to increase public awareness, promote shared priorities and implement joint initiatives.**

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE:**

- Participate in relevant local and regional initiatives that are consistent with the Summit Artspace mission and strategic priorities.

**Strategic Priority 5: Build financial sustainability through revenue growth and diversification.**

**Strategic Goal 5-1: Develop fundraising capacity.**

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

- Develop a comprehensive fundraising plan that includes annual giving, major gifts, grants, planned giving, and in-kind donations; ensure that plan balances aspirations with realistic expectations.
- Explore opportunities to secure program support through corporate and foundation underwriting and sponsorships, and through cause marketing.
- Consider establishing an endowment fund to ensure long-term financial sustainability.

**Strategic Goal 5-2: Ensure sound fiscal practices.**

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

- Develop and maintain balanced annual budgets that reflect organizational priorities.
- Establish metrics for financial performance and triggers for taking corrective action.
- Minimize risk through strong internal controls.
- Demonstrate transparency and accountability by providing financial reports to funders and others as appropriate.

**Strategic Goal 5-3: Increase the board's involvement in financial development activities.**

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

- Maintain annual board giving campaign with 100% participation; maximize board member connections to existing and new sources of support.
- Engage board members in donor cultivation, solicitation and stewardship.

**Strategic Goal 5-4: Explore opportunities to expand earned income.**

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

- Periodically review lease and rental rates and make adjustments as needed.
- Continually assess the utilization of the building to ensure that all spaces are being used for maximum financial benefit.
- Explore opportunities to provide back-office support to other organizations and to participate in shared administrative services.

## **Strategic Priority 6: Develop and maintain effective leadership.**

### **Strategic Goal 6-1: Recruit a Board of Directors that reflects the community and build their commitment to the agency mission and strategic priorities.**

#### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

- Recruit skilled and passionate individuals from diverse sectors of the community.
- Conduct an orientation program for new board members.
- Encourage early involvement in programming that connects board members with constituents.

### **Strategic Goal 6-2: Follow best practices of nonprofit governance.**

#### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

- Review and revise the Code of Regulations as necessary to meet changing organizational needs.
- Support, direct and evaluate the executive director.
- Create a culture of inquiry and accountability within the board.
- Ensure that the board maintains its focus on the agency's key performance indicators.
- Develop a board succession plan to ensure leadership continuity.

### **Strategic Goal 6-3: Develop and maintain a high performing workforce.**

#### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

- Ensure that the staff reflects the skills and competencies needed to achieve the organization's mission.
- Periodically review compensation, benefits and development opportunities to ensure the ability to attract and retain talented employees.
- Maintain a performance management system that ensures accountability, provides feedback and rewards outstanding results.