

LANSING ART GALLERY & EDUCATION CENTER

Strategic Plan: 2015 to 2017

Opening Letter from Executive Director Barb Whitney

Lansing, Michigan

The 50th Anniversary of Lansing Art Gallery is an extraordinary opportunity to reflect on the past, to celebrate our successes, and to look to the future. While the gallery began as a small group of dedicated artists, our community reach has expanded to hundreds of supporters, which shape the agency's programs, services, and the direction of our organization.

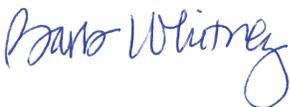
Since 1965, Lansing Art Gallery has served as a key cultural resource for our local and statewide community. Continuing a legacy of programming, the gallery and its on-site education center provide free and accessible exhibitions year-round. After over 500 exhibitions, we are proud to continue a tradition of excellence by providing public awareness, education and enjoyment of the visual arts.

Our strategic plan is informed by community feedback through an extensive survey, interview process, and testimonials, and we are proud that the strategic plan has helped clarify our work and overall direction of the organization. While acknowledging the potential challenges to non-profit organizations, Lansing Art Gallery has responded by becoming a vital center for the arts in this community.

The 2015 – 2017 strategic plan was funded by the Professional and Organizational Development Minigrant funded by the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs and administered by the Arts Council of Greater Lansing. The broad cross-section of over 15 stakeholders participated in the in-person session and/or directly in interviews with Rory Neuner, including board, staff, volunteers, and interns.

The inspiring trajectory of this plan offers a glimpse into the potential for an inspiring facility, which showcases the tremendously talented pool of artists in this state. On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff, I invite you to peruse the plan and share in our excitement about next steps. We look forward to the years to come in an organization striving to serve the community through a permanent facility, which truly provides public awareness, education and enjoyment of the visual arts by promoting the works of Michigan artists.

Sincerely,



Barb Whitney
Executive Director

Overview

STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Strategic planning is a decision-making process that the entire leadership of an organization makes together. This Strategic Plan is the result of a comprehensive process undertaken by the Lansing Art Gallery in spring 2015. The planning process was facilitated by R. Neuner Consulting and designed to help a variety of voices across the organization give input and ideas – including board, staff, and volunteers – to generate goals and objectives to chart an exciting vision for the future of the Gallery.

This process included multiple opportunities for input, including interviews of Board members, staff, and external stakeholders; an in-person planning session on March 26, 2015; and a follow up presentation to the Board of Directors at their April 2015 meeting.

After conducting pre-interviews and gathering input from staff, a set of goals for the strategic planning process were identified. These goals were to:

- Develop clear goals for 2015-2017
- Leave feeling like a team
- Identify way to inspire people to action
- Identify clear ways of building awareness of Lansing Art Gallery

SURVEY

In addition to the strategic planning process, this work was also informed by an online survey of external stakeholders. In March 2015, Lansing Art Gallery disseminated a survey to approximately 1,500 patrons, students, supporters, and community members. 88 responses were received, which informed the gallery regarding perspectives on a variety of subjects, including:

- Programs
- Location
- Accessibility
- Marketing
- Membership
- Strategic Planning

Respondents shared that word of mouth is the overwhelming driver for means of introduction to Lansing Art Gallery at 32.95%. In contrast, only 3% of survey respondents were introduced to the gallery via social media, and only 6.82% online. 53.57% of respondents visit to enjoy art, and 33.3% were members of Lansing Art Gallery. 1.19% of respondents were parents of students who attend art classes.

The majority of respondents perceived the gallery as successful as achieving its mission to provide awareness, education, and enjoyment of the visual arts by promoting the works of Michigan artists (44.71% – very successful, 40.0% somewhat successful). Exhibitions, Education, and Gallery Shop were rated as very successful by 45-47% of respondents). Regarding membership, most respondents were not aware of benefits, and many stated they were not aware of opportunities to become a member.

Survey respondents responded that recent experiences were very satisfied with customer service (78.57%); however, parking issues and noise from the facility above were listed as primary reasons for unsatisfying experiences. Respondents isolated Saturdays and Sundays from 1 – 4 p.m. and weekdays from 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. as the most convenient times to visit the gallery. Some respondents (32.5%) also listed 6 – 8 p.m. on Thursdays or Fridays as convenient.

In terms of what areas Lansing Art Gallery should focus on for the next 3 – 5 years, respondents isolated four areas as of the highest priority:

1. Building awareness
2. Visible community engagement
3. Seeking a new location
4. Promoting artwork or artists

About + Mission & Vision

ABOUT LANSING ART GALLERY

Founded in 1965, Lansing Art Gallery is a non-profit organization led by a Board of Directors and staff, who are committed to upholding the mission of the organization to provide “public awareness, education and enjoyment of the visual arts by promoting the works of Michigan artists.” Serving as one of Michigan’s key cultural resources, the gallery and provides a forum for self-expression, dialogue, and community engagement. LAG showcases quality art, which represents the diversity of contemporary work currently created by Michigan artists. Throughout its [history](#), Lansing Art Gallery has provided more than 500 free juried visual art [exhibitions](#) to the Lansing and statewide community. The gallery and its on-site education center additionally serves the local and statewide community in many ways, including [education programs](#), placemaking and public art programs, which offer a sense of place to those who live, work and play In Lansing. These mission-based initiatives highlight Michigan artists and develop additional support in the form of volunteerism, in-kind professional donations, sponsorships, membership, and financial contributions.

Mission Statement

Lansing Art Gallery provides public awareness, education and enjoyment of the visual arts by promoting the works of Michigan artists.

Vision Statement

Enhancing the quality of life and cultural well being of the community, Lansing Art Gallery provides a permanent cultural facility and outreach initiatives to fulfill its mission. We ensure that exhibits, educational programs and opportunities to purchase Michigan art are available to the public.

Findings

The following outlines the findings of the strategic planning process, combining the results of interviews, the external survey, and the March 26, 2015 strategic planning session:

Focus Area #1: Raising Visibility and Awareness

- Feedback on the visibility of the Lansing Art Gallery was highlighted as a two-fold issue: one of the **physical location** as well as an issue of **promotion and community engagement**.
- Several programmatic strategies for ramping up outreach and promotion were discussed, including **connecting to other organizations** and **expanding programming** to include **speaker series** and **visiting artist workshops**. Also discussed were ideas for more **informal, one-on-one strategies** among Board members, staff, and volunteers to raise awareness and sustain community participation in the various programs of the Lansing Art Gallery.
- A number of exciting ideas for the physical space were captured. There was consensus on the strong need to optimize a facility that can fully support the mission and programs of the Lansing Art Gallery. This includes the need for a **visible location with dedicated access to modern amenities for programming and education** (including more **classroom and studio space**).

Focus Area #2: Financial Security

- Tied to Area #1, participants discussed goals to leverage the programming of the Lansing Art Gallery to build a stronger **financial footing for the organization**.
- Specific strategies for improving the organization's financial security emerged from the conversation, with consensus around the **need to grow an endowment to ensure long-term sustainability**. Participants also highlighted a need and desire to **significantly expand the membership base** to strengthen engagement and financial support.

Focus Area #3: Building a strong organizational identity

- Many participants highlighted the **brand** of the Lansing Art Gallery as a **major asset**. There was a strong sentiment that the **grassroots, homegrown, local element** of the Lansing Art Gallery, and the **specific focus on Michigan artists is a strong point**, something that can be built upon. There was also consensus that the **current staff and educational programs** produce high-quality programming that needs to be better promoted to help the organization thrive.

Key Goals (by Audience)

Artists

Expand the number of artists we represent and promote. Create networking and engagement opportunities that allow artists and community members to meaningfully interact.

- Create website bios and portfolios of past and present artists and their work.
- Use the Lansing Art Gallery's social media platforms to support and draw attention to individual artists.
- Plan and host public artists talks, informal lunches, studio demos, and lectures for community members to attend.

Donors

Increase the financial sustainability of the Lansing Art Gallery by growing the total number of donors, growing the endowment, and launching a legacy campaign.

- Build increased awareness and visibility of the Lansing Art Gallery through targeted fundraising appeals that reinforce the value of the organization.
- Expand the pool of donors that give to the Lansing Art Gallery.
- Utilize targeted marketing strategies and materials to kick off a legacy campaign to raise \$1 million for the Lansing Art Gallery.

Membership

Reach out to and engage with more community members in order to increase the membership of the Lansing Art Gallery.

- Provide specials or coupons on membership pricing.

Education

Increase positive communication and collaboration with parents, seniors, and MFA Educators in the Greater Lansing community.

- Parents: Significantly grow the network of parents of school-age children that receive communications from the Lansing Art Gallery.
- Seniors: Plan and launch a new seniors program at the Lansing Art Gallery and in area nursing homes and other senior facilities.
- MFA Educators: Reach out to key networks at Michigan State University, including the Residential College in the Arts and Humanities, and the Kresge Art Center.