

Villa Barr Art Park

Strategic Plan 2021



Acknowledgements

Since its inception, Villa Barr Art Park has had numerous supporters who want to see it continue to evolve. Ideas for future programming, investments and marketing have been very broad.

This strategic plan will serve as a roadmap for future programs, projects and investments. Input for the plan was provided by members of the Novi community, as well as friends and family of the Barrs and local artists. Thank you to all who participated in the process and those who have supported the unique effort of opening Villa Barr Art Park.

City Council

Hugh Crawford
David Staudt

Friends of Villa Barr

Joe Beyer
Terry Croad
Paul Duffy
David Landry
Ron Omilian
Ken Stevens
Marilyn Wheaton

Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Commission

Supriya Joshi
Salene Riggins
Brian Smith
Charley Staab
Harry Torimoto

Historical Commission

Kathy Crawford
Kim Nice

Cultural Arts Advisory Board

Mary Kondraciuk

Beautification Commission

Laura Williams

Older Adults Advisory Board

Joslyn Letscher

Regional Residents

Pat Fallis
Heather Montilla
John Sauve
Sher Watkins

City Staff

Tracie Ringle, PRCS
Alyssa Golles, PRCS
Betty Lang, Novi Public Library

North Coast Consultants

Julie Hales-Smith

Park Overview

Villa Barr Art Park is a singularly unique facility in the Parks and Recreation system of Novi Michigan. The four-acre property, previously owned by internationally recognized artist David Barr and dancer Beth Dwaihy Barr, includes a home, studio and multiple sculpture installations in a park setting. The home was designed by Chicago architect Lawrence Booth to reflect David Barr's personal aesthetic, one that was "...germinated by constructivist principles of art, fascination with nature's innermost structural processes, and a belief in the promises of the American democratic experiment."

It is a peaceful space where visitors can relax, contemplate and imagine. The accessible walkways and seating/picnic area are punctuated with over two dozen inspiring sculptures that echo the interwoven dependence of life in the arts, sciences and humanities.

The park is home to an artist-in-residence program that welcomes sculptors, writers, painters, musicians, and more. The parking lot includes a bus loop and a seasonal portable toilet is available.

The development of the park was funded by the City of Novi with contributions from the Novi Parks Foundation and a grant from the Michigan Council for the Arts and Cultural Affairs.

The Cultural Arts Advisory Board and the Friends of Villa Barr have been instrumental in the selection of resident artists, group tours, and marketing input. The Novi Parks Foundation provides the funding for the artist-in-residence program.



Strategic Planning Process

In February and September 2020 (delayed because of Covid-19) representatives from City Council, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Commission, Historical Commission, Cultural Arts Advisory Board, Older Adult Advisory Board, Beautification Commission, and Friends of Villa Barr participated in visioning sessions to discuss common themes and determine priorities and action steps for moving the park forward.

In addition to the priorities discussed in by the group, City goals that are relatable to Villa Barr Art Park are incorporated into the plan.



February 2020

The following goals and objectives are included in the City's 2020-2024 Strategic Community Recreation and Master Park Plan and are used as framework for the future implementation strategies. The list includes goals determined by staff and City Council related to Villa Barr Art Park.

Nurture public services that residents want and value

- Look for opportunities to ensure all residents have a park, school playground or common area within a 10-minute walk (.05 mile) from their residence.
- Increase marketing and programming efforts to connect with 40-60 year old range
- Create a master plan for Villa Barr Art Park

Operate a world-class and sustainable local government

- Consider long term funding solutions for park improvements and trails
- Explore further service consolidation and joint opportunities with neighboring governments and schools districts
- Add art displays throughout parks and facilities

Value and build a vibrant community for residents and businesses both now and into the future

- Continue to work with local property owners and developers on potential property acquisitions and developments
- Pursue properties leveraging grant funding opportunities

Themes/Priorities /Actions

Themes were determined during the first sessions with priorities and action steps identified during the second (virtual) session. Action steps were assigned to those who volunteered to assist City staff.

An **educational resource** with opportunities to:

- Tie into Novi school district curriculum
- Sponsor special programs/events
- Nurture and invite multidisciplinary inquiry
- Serve multiple populations: seniors; special needs
- Capitalize on the artist-in-residence program

Priorities

- Studio space for students
- Lecture space
- Separate building
- College internships
- Viability of red building
- Engage Novi educators to expose students to the park
- Increase connection with Michigan Legacy Art Park to access their education resources
- Explore further service consolidation and joint opportunities with neighboring governments and schools districts**

Action Steps

Studio/Lecture Space and Building

- Determine what it would take to make red studio compliant
- Evaluate building a new classroom space, perhaps adjacent to red building
- Researching building a shelter or gazebo for summer programming
- Creating tasks for interns to log material, assist with creating educational pieces for school-age children: *Ken Stevens*
- Assist with marketing tools
- Volunteer maintenance of gardens and engaging scout troops: *Mary Kondraciuk*
- Create education piece about plants. Research adding bird and butterfly stations and create kids programs: *Laura Williams*
- Create an educators guide to be provided to teachers and placed on website and work with Michigan Legacy Art Park to identify other school related programming: *Ken Stevens*

** City goal

A **means of connecting** the City, the region, the state and the world with all that Villa Barr has to offer: the knowledge, experience, uniqueness and richness of David, his work and Villa Barr.

- Technology (App;QR)
- Tours (virtual and onsite)
- Marketing

Priorities

- More people to be aware of the park (increased visitation)
- Recognition of the park to assist with grant applications, increased applications for artist-in-residence
- Connecting the city, state and world with Villa Barr Art Park
- Re-vamp cityofnovi.org/villabarr
- Increase marketing and programming efforts to connect with 40-60 year old range**

Action Steps

- Increase social media exposure by increasing usage of Facebook, Instagram, etc.: City staff
- Create virtual tours using IZI application: *David Landry and Ken Stevens*
- Increase testimonials from artists - word of mouth
- Have a presence at the sculpture conference in Detroit in fall 2021: *John Sauve*
- Enhance advertising listing for residency program: *Ken Stevens*
- Match Villa Barr Art Park with travel and tourism opportunities
- Provide new content and images for upgraded webpages: *Ken Stevens and City staff*



** City goal

Themes/Priorities /Actions

An unprecedented opportunity to be a “**community convener**” and respectfully and authentically **preserve the legacy** of David and his Villa Barr.

- Through intentional community engagement
- By honoring and preserving the contemplative nature
- Positioning as a destination to inspire, engage imagination and educate

Priorities

- Increase awareness of the park with more visitors
- Increase awareness with the artist community
- Determine the balance between preserving the Barr legacy and creating new avenues and enhancing the park
- Increase parking options
- Implement a sculpture maintenance plan

Action Steps

- Add programming to the park, including education and fitness programs
- Invite other artists clubs to use Villa Barr as a meeting space
- Invite the public to view art club works
- Create a memorial garden to David and Beth
- Historical Commission presentation and promotion of David's books: *Kathy Crawford*

A community cultural institution that would benefit from some form of **tracking and evaluation**.

- Could assist with cultivating advocates and supporters and applying for grant funding
- Possible to use an online survey to track success

Priorities

Determine the usership of the park

Determine the views of the online virtual tours

Action Steps

Add QR codes when appropriate to the kiosk to direct people to virtual options and measure how many times accesses:

Use Google analytics to understand how many visitors are searching the website

Track social media stats for engagement with Facebook and Instagram

Set up google alert for Villa Barr Art Park

Track visits on Pure Michigan and Alliance for Artist Communities: *Ken Stevens*

A sustainable park with a variety of **funding sources** to ensure the long-term attraction of the park and the residency program

- Grants
- Revenue producing programming
- Park Rentals

Priorities

- Continuing offering stipends to resident artists
- Determine priorities for future investments (expansion, parking, maintenance)
- Investigate park rentals for private events
- Consider long term funding solutions for park improvements and trails**
- Pursue properties leveraging grant funding opportunities**

Action Steps

- Support Novi Parks Foundation fundraising efforts: David Landry
- Apply for MCACA grants
- Source and apply for grants for art maintenance
- Work with Community Development Department to determine code compliance for red art studio and get work estimates to determine grant applications
- Create plan for park rentals to host small gatherings, weddings, etc.
- Add a visitor donation option for the park

** City Goal

As of **April 15, 2021**, a number of action steps and have been addressed by City staff, contractors and volunteers. These include:

Educational Resources

- Villa Barr Art Park activity book for children was created and placed on website
- Educators guide has been provided to Novi Schools for review
- Villa Barr Art Park suggested reading list has been compiled
- Garden replanting/renovation is underway with butterfly friendly plants
- Webpage updates have been compiled and will be implemented alongside City website refresh

Means of Connecting

- Botanical tour recorded for placement on IZI travel app
- Sculpture tour approved for recording and placement on IZI travel app
- Residency listing updated on Alliance for Artist Communities
- Park is listed on Pure Michigan website

Community Convener and Preserving the Legacy

- Sculptures cleaned and maintenance priorities identified

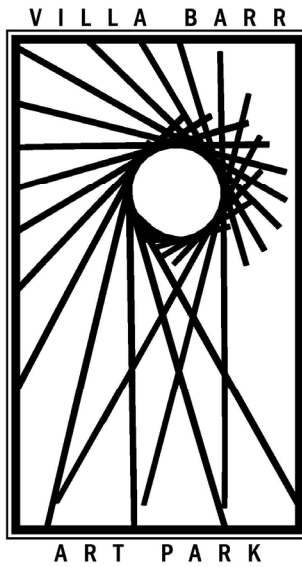
Tracking and Evaluation

- Google Alerts have been created for Villa Barr Art Park

Sustainable Funding Sources

- Applied for a Keep Michigan Beautiful Foundation Grant in the amount of \$500 to assist with garden replanting/renovation

In summary, the action steps in this plan will be used to keep Villa Barr Art Park a desirable and evolving space for visitors to enjoy. Progress is already being made through the combined efforts of staff and volunteers. City staff will work with the volunteers identified in the plan to ensure priorities keep moving forward, as well as seek out others who are interested in assisting. Progress reports will be shared with the PRCS Commission, Friends of Villa Barr and City Council, as well as included on cityofnovi.org/villabarr.



City of Novi Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services
45175 Ten Mile Road
Novi, MI 48375
248.347.0400