NEW BEDFORD ART MUSEUM/ARTWORKS!

STRATEGIC PLAN 2021
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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this strategic plan document is to provide a roadmap for the New Bedford Art Museum/ArtWorks! to follow for the next few years. A strategic plan is first and foremost a set of future activities that guides an organization towards its mission and its vision. This plan should be used to prioritize efforts and resources in an efficient and strategic manner and ensure that they align with both short and long-term goals. The plan allows for a framework for evaluating proposed actions to ensure that continued alignment with the Museum’s stated purpose is put into place. Goals should be measured on a regular basis and objectives realigned as needed, and the plan should be considered a living document that is revised and updated periodically. The plan is also a vehicle to engage stakeholders and foster alignment between the Museum and community organizations.

HISTORY

With the official declaration by the Secretary of State on February 3, 2014, the merging of ArtWorks! Partners for the Arts & Community and New Bedford Art Museum was official. New Bedford Art Museum/ArtWorks! became the unified organization built on the foundations of two long standing community organizations. New Bedford Art Museum was founded in 1993 to preserve and promote the artistic and cultural heritage of the region and to showcase area artists through exhibitions and programming. It is a place to showcase New Bedford’s art collection, held by New Bedford Free Public Library. ArtWorks!, also founded in 1993, grew into an established community gallery and art education center with a mission to make art accessible to everyone through exhibits, classes and community outreach.

NBAM/ArtWorks! offers a dynamic calendar of a dozen exhibitions a year in our several galleries. Exhibitions are accompanied by a variety of educational programs and events that enrich the visitor experience. We highlight and support local artists in our shop, Regions Gallery, and some of our exhibitions. We provide a wide range of educational programs both on site and in the community that serve people of all ages with special attention to youth and the under-served. Our signature purple artmobiles provide creative experiences for the youth of our community every summer.

The museum’s vision is to be a regional center for exhibiting and interpreting art. To do this we need expanded space to showcase the city’s existing art collection as well as expand the opportunities for local artists to display their works and expand the classroom and education opportunities for the community.
MISSION STATEMENT

The New Bedford Art Museum/ArtWorks! is dedicated to engaging a diverse audience in relevant exhibitions, exemplary education and creative experiences as a vital innovative center for the arts.

VISION STATEMENT

The New Bedford Art Museum/ArtWorks! vision is to transform the community by inspiring all generations through art.

The museum is committed to being a leading institution where people of all identities and diverse perspectives are welcomed into an artistic environment and where equity and inclusivity are fundamental values of the museum. The Museum seeks to have a staff that represents the New Bedford community, support collaboration with community organizations, host events, programs and exhibits that represent the city’s multiplicity.

STRATEGIC GOALS

OVERALL

The Museum’s primary focus is on its engagement with the myriad and diverse New Bedford communities to enhance the reach and content of its exhibition programming as well as the expansion of its education programs through community and regional partnerships. The Museum enlists a diverse Board of Directors and a cross-generational staff who engage in community activities and assist in the development of the financial and staff resources. A key area for focus is the expansion of the museum space to enable the hosting of selected works from the New Bedford City Library Collection as well as develop additional space for exhibitions and educational activities.

New Bedford Art Museum/ArtWorks!’s two main areas of focus are Exhibits and Education, with Development as a key underpinning for these two areas. While each department has developed their own strategic goals, there are some needs of the organization that are overarching for all and some that are discrete from each other. Goals that do not fall directly and solely under a specific department are included here as organizational goals intended to move New Bedford Art Museum/ArtWorks! forward as a whole.

BARR-KLARMAN

The Museum has been the recipient of a grant from the Barr-Klarman foundations to assist with the museum’s development in three key areas:

- Financial sustainability: The Foundations provide workshops and consulting resources to staff and Board members to enhance the understanding of capitalization and assist in the growth of
skills to improve the accumulation and application of resources on the balance sheet to support the achievement of an organization’s mission over time;

- Adaptive Capacity: The Foundations provide workshops and consulting resources to staff and Board members to improve a set of skills and competencies that bolster an organization to take bold steps in response to external conditions;

- Cultural Competency: The Foundations provide workshops and consulting resources to staff and Board members to enhance the understanding and responses appropriate and respectfully to the unique combination of cultural variables and dimensions in communities.

EXPANSION PROJECT

New Bedford Art Museum/ArtWorks! enjoys the support of the City of New Bedford in the form of space in a municipally-owned building. The building originally was a bank and as such has unique architectural features that enhance the gallery spaces. The building was not designed as a museum or to house art studios or education spaces so presents a number of challenges which are now being addressed. The envelope of the building has been under remedial care for years and this project would address the structural integrity of the building. This project expands the scope of a long term, collaborative relationship between the City and Museum. This expansion would solidify the building’s use for future generations and contribute to the conservation and preservation of the City’s Art Collection.

The City’s collection is presently housed in the New Bedford Public Library. By increasing access to the City’s art collection and enhancing the downtown cultural hub, this project will contribute to the cultural, educational, and economic life of the community in several respects:

- The City’s Art Collection will be more accessible to a wider group of people;

- The Museum’s mission is enhanced by providing rich connections and context to the City’s history and current creative climate.

- The City’s collection has the potential for growth.

- The expansion plan aligns with the City’s Arts & Culture Plan because it enhances access to the arts for tourists and residents, including youth.

- Additional exhibition and community space available to the diverse cultural communities will enhance New Bedford’s draw as an arts destination.

The expansion strategy was initiated with requests to the Massachusetts Cultural Council and the New Bedford Community Preservation to engage architectural and financial consultants to create renovation plans and construction estimates and establish an operations plan that reflect the financial aspects of the project. A preliminary concept and architectural model has been completed by the architectural firm
Machado Silvetti. The current proposal is based on discussions with the city and artists, museum staff and the Expansion Project committee and includes the following priorities:

- Increase gallery footprint in terms of quantity to host city collection;
- Provide flexible space for hosting community events, gallery shows, & educational programs;
- Provide Gallery with complete control of natural light;
- Provide Gallery with moderate control of natural light;
- Increased visibility & connection between 1st & 2nd floor galleries;
- Expanded and enhanced offices space with natural light;
- Provide dedicated interactive educational space within the galleries;
- Strengthen the Museum’s identity through the visibility of the museum collection;
- Provide unique civic space for the city of New Bedford;
- Provide Exhibition Prep. & enhanced storage space.

Additional funds are being sought to continue the development of a more detailed architectural and engineering design. A development consultant has been engaged to work with the museum to conduct a fundraising feasibility study for its upcoming capital campaign. A third phase of the project will be to develop a five-year operating budget for the gallery and initiate a capital campaign estimated to last two years.

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

The Museum seeks to improve its marketing capability that will identify and reach our audiences, build relationships with members and donors, and share what we have to offer. We are developing a marketing and communications plan and working on creating an engaging brand for the Museum to deliver a consistent and memorable association with the institution. Ongoing work includes brand development, evolving the website, maintaining a robust presence on social media, establishing target markets, producing newsletters for members and donors, hiring a part-time marketing staff and developing a long-range advertising plan that includes the myriad communities and encompasses the multi-faceted nature of the city.

BOARD ENGAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

Engaging the Museum Board of Directors is a way of leveraging personal connections to help identify corporate sponsors and new high-end donors. As we build an organization with a clear vision for the future we need to ensure that there will be leadership in place to carry these things forward. To facilitate achieving the goals of the strategic plan and to support the continued financial and operational well-being of the institution, there needs to be the development of a strong Board structure that governs the succession planning of the Executive Director and Board officers. Priorities include the following:

- Establish criteria for contributions and participation by Board members and continue to expand the diversity and representation of the city’s multicultural population;
● Expand the DAC through Board relationships;
● Develop Board practice of identifying potential new Board members, officers and committees who will represent the artistic and cultural diversity of the city;
● Develop Board governance that outlines goals, commitments and responsibilities for Board members;
● Prepare potential Board officers through additional training and exposure to responsibilities;
● Ensure that job description and expectations for the Executive Director stay current;
● Establish a formal liaison with the New Bedford Free Public Library Board to oversee the display of the city’s art collection in the newly established exhibition gallery.

DEVELOPMENT

The goal of the Development team is to increase the financial contributions from various sources which will enable the long-term sustainability of the exhibits and education programs.

CULTIVATE COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

Our on-going partnerships with organizations in the Greater New Bedford area will prove to be the key in the Museum’s long-term sustainability and overall presence in the community.

● Develop the partnership with the Library and other community organizations
● Focus on the development of strategic partnerships which enhance the Museum’s mission and support sustainability.

EXPANSION OF DONOR BASE

An on-going effort to communicate on multiple levels to past donors and make new connections with prospective donors is essential to growing the donor base. Our efforts will include reaching out to younger generations as well as re-connecting with individuals who may have become disassociated with us due to the merger or any other reason.

● Develop focused approach to identifying donor groups and membership base to grow a culture of stewardship
● Leverage Board contacts
● Review operational systems for optimization of donor database
● Work with the Director’s Advisory Council (DAC) to engage potential donors and grow the number of DAC members and offer them exclusive events
● Reach out to the parents of the students who participate in our educational programs
● Focus on the Membership Campaign and Annual Appeal to order to increase Museum’s financial stability.
● Explore a capital campaign to fund the second-floor floor renovations.

CORPORATE SPONSORSHIPS

Corporate sponsorships help build community partnerships and expose the Museum to additional audiences to support exhibitions and educational programs and add to the financial stability of NBAM/ArtWorks!

● Work with the Exhibition Manager to identify potential corporate donors for future exhibits
● Target specific campaigns (such as sound equipment)
● Target donors for specific gallery naming rights.
● Utilize Board connections to utilize corporate support.

FUNDRAISING EVENTS AND RECEPTIONS

Events are a key method to raise funds for general operating expenses and provide an opportunity for community outreach and visibility, as well as to celebrate individuals and organizations who have contributed to the success of NBAM/ArtWorks!

● Look for ways to increase the participation of existing events and avoid creating too many events that will disperse the donor base;
● Grow and expand the capacity of the principal fundraising events to support the Museum;
● Develop the capability to host an event that recognizes leaders in the community;
● Encourage participation in event committees by community members to get fresh ideas and energy and build relationships.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN TO BUILD AN ENDOWMENT

An endowment will ensure a long term sustainability for the Museum. An agreement on targets for a capital campaign and prioritization for resources by Board and staff for this campaign will be needed in the future.

● Conduct a feasibility study for the development of a capital campaign;
● Identify financial goal and objectives;
● Identify leadership and major donors as well as other prospects.

EXPANSION OF STAFF AND DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES

The addition of more resources will enable a continued and expanded capability for the development process.

● Expand current Development roles.
GRANTS

Government and foundation grants contribute substantially to the support of our educational programs, exhibits and general operating support. Time and energy should be devoted to nurturing relationships with current grantors and identifying new potential grants.

EXHIBITS

The overall intent of the Exhibitions component of the New Bedford Art Museum/ArtWorks! is to maintain a calendar of events that is lively, engaging, thought-provoking and resonant to the area while at the same time creating a balance between regional (New England), national and international exhibitions. Short-term objectives consist of currently identified items and in no way limit activity consistent with long-term objectives. Long-term objectives lean toward overarching values that warrant perpetual consideration.

To enhance the quality of exhibitions it is important that the Museum increase its engagement with the local art community and expand its network of prospective artists. The Museum also encourages Board members and others to contribute to the development of the exhibits schedule. The Museum will develop a strategy for the professional marketing of exhibits to increase participation. The Museum will continue to strengthen its internal staff to improve the quality of exhibits and allow the Exhibits director to focus on future relationships beneficial for future exhibits. The Exhibits team works with the operational team to develop strategies to improve the quality of infrastructure to support the exhibitions.

In addition, the upcoming focus of the five-year expansion plan includes the project to utilize the second-floor space of the museum to offer access to the city’s art collection, one of the great historic collections of New Bedford art.

We strive to create exhibitions that feature regional artists as well as national and international artists. In doing so, the Museum develops its reach and reputation as a culturally diverse institution. In addition the Exhibits department continues to:

- Review geographic origin of Artists and Curators and possibly that of the subject exhibited artwork for the past 3 years and map and analyze the resultant information;
- Maintain an artistic ‘balance’ by keeping exhibitions diverse – in media and in a variety of artist’s identities as a high priority and identify adjustments to planned schedule of exhibits needed to meet the determined ‘balance’;
- Cultivate relationships with a broad range of local artists and develop a history of exhibiting work from both the region and farther afield with a focus on cultural relevance to the New Bedford region.
STRIVE FOR SELF-SUSTAINABILITY OF EXHIBITS

Art exhibits are at the heart of the Museum’s programming. In order to produce powerful and interesting art exhibits, the Museum must develop strategies for exhibition expenses, shipping and transport of art works, print and support materials as well as artist support. The Museum must seek to grow the management of fundraising and development of sponsorships for each exhibition by enlisting additional resources to make these efforts sustainable in the long term. The Museum seeks to:

- Develop strategies for funding of shipping and receiving national and international works;
- Prepare a template to assist Artists and Guest Curators in developing their exhibit budget;
- Establish a sustainable and possibly endowed annual budget specifically for Exhibits;
- Establish a listing (including applicability criteria and submission schedule) of available annual grants that could be applied for on a rotating basis;
- Prepare an outline of specific expenses that sponsorship could help defray for distribution to potential sponsors;
- Establish corporate funding program.
- Develop a Docent program;
- Develop a Museum Educator in Residence program in partnership with institutes of higher education;
- Develop a dedicated interactive educational space in the galleries;
- Investigate digital application programs including consideration of data input and user access.

DEVELOP EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS DIRECTLY ASSOCIATED WITH EXHIBITS

Education that is specific to exhibitions enhances the viewer experience. New Bedford Art Museum/ArtWorks! strives to develop and maintain an innovative Museum Education program. To enhance the offerings the Museum aspires to:

- Develop a Docent program;
- Develop a Museum Educator in Residence program in partnership with institutes of higher education;
- Develop a dedicated interactive educational space in the galleries;
- Investigate digital application programs including consideration of data input and user access.

REACH FOR DIVERSITY OF ARTISTS AND GUEST CURATORS

It is important that New Bedford Art Museum/ArtWorks! is a cultural institution that represents the population that it serves and to this end should:
- Monitor local and regional diversity statistics;
- Identify nationality, race, gender and religious populations, as well as art disciplines being underserved;
- Develop strategies for approaching and encouraging participation (as visitors, artists and/or guest curators) of under-served populations;
- Work with artists and guest curators who reflect the diversity of the community.

**ENLIVEN RELATIONSHIP WITH THE NEW BEDFORD FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY**

A continued, active relationship to the Library will diversify viewer experience of both institutions. The Library houses the city’s art collection; exhibition of the Library’s Collection was the cornerstone to the original establishment of the New Bedford Art Museum. To date the museum has not had the capacity to fully realize this goal. Engagement with this collection is something that will directly benefit the Museum’s exhibits and education programs.

- Enhance the close relationship with the New Bedford Free Public Library;
- Meet with Library personnel on a regular basis to review plans for the City Gallery exhibitions and coordination with planned exhibitions in the remaining galleries;
- Plan a tour and follow-up workshop with the Museum’s Exhibitions Committee and Library Staff to review the NBFPL collection;
- Develop outline of expectations, responsibilities and privileges for artists and guest curators to assist in their professional growth and development.

**FOSTER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF ARTISTS AND GUEST CURATORS**

New Bedford Art Museum/ArtWorks! strives to be an educator of and advocate for artists and curators and should develop a plan to foster this professional development by artists and curators. The Museum look to:

- Develop outline of expectations, responsibilities and privileges for artists and guest curators to assist in their professional growth and development;
- Provide periodic professional development workshops and seminars for area artists to attend or run;
- Develop a sustainable annual budget specifically for artists and guest curators education and stipends;
- Develop programs to highlight artist members on Museum’s website; to this end Local Artist Living Archive has been created and the next step is to address a web-based application form that self-generates the LALA list.
- Develop programs to encourage and support professional development of Museum staff;
- Develop policies for using NBAM/AW as a case study subject for staff professional development;
● Create a Museum Exhibitions Education Resident staff position.

DEVELOP COLLECTIONS STRATEGY

New Bedford Art Museum/ArtWorks! continues to explore the possibility of becoming an institution with its own collection which would complement the city’s art collection. Based on the above data and the Museum’s Barr Klarman Theory of Change the Exhibition Department’s 2021 goals are to:

● Develop a Museum Engagement Manager staff position, to be hired 2022/2023
● Collaborate with a 2021 Development hire who can help with Exhibition funding and establish endowments and corporate funding program;
● Revamp the Exhibitions Committee;
● Engage with the Portuguese Consulate to create an international artistic exchange;
● Increase 2022 attendance numbers by 10% (of 2020 numbers).

EDUCATION

The Museum’s education programs are integral to the Museum’s mission to provide education for all. The Museum offers a variety of learning online, in-gallery, and off-site with classes and workshops for all ages, as well as regular art education to the community and private groups on request. Specialized art education and educational offerings related to current and upcoming exhibits are offered. The Museum promotes diversity in programs, plans to continue the growth of scholarships offered and expand and create partnerships that will enable the growth of additional educational offerings. Specialized art education and outreach-based offerings related to the current and upcoming exhibits are offered and will be expanded to include more engagement opportunities. Programming includes virtual and in-person field trips, the artMOBILE and grant-supported programs such as The Learning Studio which connects early literacy and art. The Art Museum plans to promote and administer more free programs, continue the growth of outreach offered, expand and create more partnerships that will grow educational offerings, and investigate and pursue any opportunities for additional space.

NBAM will use its expertise as an innovative arts center to provide quality art instruction and materials to thousands of youth and hundreds of seniors in the greater New Bedford community to help combat loneliness and isolation. Using art as a medium to connect and create, NBAM will use its knowledge of working with elder groups through previous partnerships with Community Nurse and Hospice Care, Autumn Glen Assisted Living Facility, and the MA/NH Chapter of the Alzheimer’s Association. Isolation is a lack of social connections and NBAM strives to find meaningful programs for youth and older adults that struggle with this challenge. NBAM has expanded its artMOBILE programming to specifically engage youth and seniors in meaningful art programming paired with yoga sessions through direct delivery with safety protocols in place.

NBAM will provide seniors quality art materials and instructive lessons in conducive and constructive ways that promote safety during the pandemic and going forward. NBAM recognizes and serves at-risk and isolated populations within the community, including low-income youth and seniors, vulnerable individuals, and people with disabilities - and it consciously strives to make direct, positive impacts by
offering engaging programming that explores creativity and movement which are integral components of prolonging the effects of aging and intellect. Art can help break down barriers of isolation and connect people, and it’s through this medium that NBAM seeks to bring these individuals. The artMOBILE program endeavors to inspire and to open up possibilities while providing a foundation of skills, artistic expression, and as art therapy.

Looking ahead, we are focusing resources on our upcoming exhibitions that will connect with and inform outreach programming. This includes continuing to support the Grab and Go meal program, traveling to parks in LMI neighborhoods with our Ruth Carter exhibition partners, and expanding relationships with organizations like Meeting Street. Meeting Street and Coastline will provide training sessions and collaborate with our staff to best serve the program participants.

It is through this effort that we will continue to advocate for artists and bring cultural awareness to the community through safe engagement. It is through a multi-tiered approach that we will get national visibility and see a robust but safe volume of visitors engage with our exhibitions. As we bring people to the museum, we aim to increase memberships and friendships across the community. We are continuing to grow our artMOBILE outreach program and expand the definition and delivery of this 25-year-old program.

INCREASE PARTICIPATION IN THE EDUCATION PROGRAMS.

A variety of classes are offered to children, teens and adults throughout the year both onsite at the Museum and off-site locations. Classes are offered in painting, drawing, clay, and digital photograph, and computer design. The Education committee continues to assess potential programs and re-prioritize programming as community needs change.

Types of programs:

- ArtMobile which is now a year-long program and includes elementary to middle school
- Tuition-based programming.
  - Clay program, virtual drawing classes, summer programming both inside and outside the galleries.
- Grant based programs:
  - TAIP – Teen artist internship program
  - Creative Aging – adult ArtMobile program
  - Get Out and Art!
  - Creative Aging
  - Invest in Kids Exploring My City Through Art,
  - Learning Studio: Early Literacy Through the Arts
• Donor based
  o Funding ArtMobile
  o Children’s Art
  o Fund with community foundation to support children’s art programming

**ONGOING GOALS**

- Assess and evaluate course offerings in terms of diversity, current trends and audience demands;
- Assess equipment needs regularly to determine future costs and possibilities for expanded opportunities;
- Assess space requirements to determine how second floor opportunities would increase the capacity for additional educational offerings;
- Review and improve transportation options to facilitate arrival at the Museum for visitors;
- Increase the participation of the teen programs.

**OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH:**

- Grant-funded programs;
- Specific allocation of monies for special programs;
- Patron-funded programs such as the clay classes;
- Increased marketing of programs and focus on advertising to notify the community of the Museum’s capabilities;
- More effective planning for upcoming programs to allow the community to engage;

**COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS**

Community partnerships are an important way to engage with the community. Some of the recent partnerships include:

- Creative Courts, transformative art mural-style court projects with artist Maria Molteni;
- Practice Best Practice workshops created by New Bedford Art Museum/Artworks, the Co-Creative Center and S&G Project Gallery Art Brokerage for participants in the cultural community on the Southcoast with the partnership of New Bedford Creative; National Whaling Historic Park
REFINE THE MUSEUM’S EDUCATIONAL OFFERING

The Museum has access to a vast network of artists and professionals that allow for additional offerings to the community. The Museum seeks to:

- Incorporate educational programs with exhibits for educational opportunities;
- Grow the marketing capabilities to notify community organizations of the Museum’s capabilities to support off-site customized art classes and workshops
- Explore the possibility of master classes with established and new artists that relate to current exhibits;
- Explore partnerships with organizations to facilitate programs specifically focused for educators;
- Maintain alignment with community and cultural events to develop relevant educational offerings;
- Recruit volunteers to support one-time educational events or specialized activities that help the Museum membership be exposed to region-wide artistic activities.

IMPROVE THE MUSEUM’S CAPACITY TO EVALUATE AND PRIORITIZE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS TO REMAIN ALIGNED WITH MUSEUM MISSION, EXHIBITS AND THE GREATER COMMUNITY.

There must be a focused process for the evaluation and prioritization of the education programs in alignment with financial, community and strategic considerations. This annual assessment should take into consideration both quantitative as well as qualitative values in order to determine which programs to continue to support and strengthen.

PLAN MANAGEMENT

Strategic Planning does not end with the Museum’s Strategic Plan document. Board members are kept abreast of changes or revisions to the Plan at regular intervals and review the plan for consistency and changes as well as assist in the establishment of a methodology for measuring the success and progress of the Plan. The Museum’s Strategic Plan document is used to facilitate engagements with stakeholders and elicit input in regard to the direction of the museum. The Museum’s Strategic Plan is used as a framework for dialogue with the community.
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John Vasconcellos  Community Foundation
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