

Michigan Municipal League

# Frankfort Historic Landmarks Arts Center



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Better Communities. Better Michigan.



## PROJECT DETAILS:

### NAME:

Elizabeth Lane Oliver  
Center for the Arts

### DATE:

2005-present

### CATEGORIES:

Cultural Economic Development  
Heritage  
Art  
Green Initiatives  
Sustainability

### THE GIST:

The Elizabeth Lane Oliver Center for the Arts (ELOCA) is a repurposed Coast Guard Station and serves as a popular community hub for residents and visitors.



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## PROJECT SCOPE:

### Overview:

A public/non-profit partnership to 1) preserve the area's maritime heritage, 2) obtain waterfront property and views for the public trust, 3) advance the city's cultural economic development goals and 4) benefit the city as a regional hub for the arts, in conjunction with their renovated downtown theater. The regional arts community has two galleries and three classroom spaces for art, music, literature, dance and exercise classes, as well as a professional test kitchen for the culinary arts. The venue is rented for receptions several times a week and proceeds are used to sustain the art center. The center increases downtown traffic and utilizes area businesses.

### Accomplishments:

- Saved an historic landmark and complemented maritime heritage, keeping waterfront property in public trust.
- Drew successfully upon more than 500 local donors for fundraising and strengthened volunteer base of support, building social capital.
- Provided perfect lighting, atmosphere and space for the arts.
- Provided an intriguing, historic and attractive location for receptions.
- Achieved LEED Platinum certification and uses only natural cleaning products.

- Renovated kitchen for culinary class instructors and caterers to facilitate use of the site as a reception venue, building in financial sustainability for the Arts Center.
- Complemented a recently renovated, historic downtown theater, providing a hub for the regional arts community and stimulating cultural economic development.
- Received grant (city) to extend wi-fi downtown to Betsie Bay and Lake Michigan Beach.
- Received grant (center) to complete pottery building (former garage) connector, including a gift shop aimed at sustainability.
- Increased downtown traffic and business, including to several caterers, florist, lodging establishments, bars and restaurants.

#### **Budget/Equipment:**

2012 estimate: Total Operating Budget: \$218,000 (up 38% from 2011: \$157,000)

2012 estimate: Total Capital Campaign (Building Fund) Income: \$314,000

2012 estimate: Total Equity: \$3,126,000

#### **Funding:**

Coastal Management Grant Program, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Michigan Council for Art and Cultural Affairs, Oleson Foundation, Les and Ann Biederman Foundation, ELOCA fundraising and private donations, and reception proceeds

#### **Organization:**

The Elizabeth Lane Oliver Art Center (a 501(c)3 incorporated in 1981), has been a cultural cornerstone of Benzie County since its founding in 1948. The twelve-member Board of Directors meets monthly for Executive Committee meetings preceding each monthly Board meeting. Staffing consists of a full-time Executive Director who oversees a part-time Associate Director and four hourly workers who together coordinate a multitude of responsibilities, including exhibitions, marketing, sales, facility rentals and maintenance, events, class registration and instructor coordination. Volunteers are recruited and assigned to specific tasks by a Volunteer Coordinator. The Center is fortunate to have 35 volunteers to greet visitors, secure galleries, lead tours, staff events, assist in hanging exhibitions, and complete general and administrative tasks.

The Coast Guard Station is now the center's permanent home. This location was made possible because the City of Frankfort partnered with U.S. Department of the Interior Lands to Parks Program to acquire the property, and the State Historic Preservation Office to repurpose it.

#### **Participants:**

One full-time and one part-time employee, 35 active volunteers, 30 instructors, arts patrons, arts students, about 2,500 visiting residents and about 4,750 out-of-town visitors (2,500 for the art center itself and another 2,250 during rental occasions).



### Impact:

The Arts Center has helped strengthen the community's volunteer base, building valuable social capital for future projects. Coupled with the theater as an increased cultural draw, the downtown will soon see the opening of a brewery and a wine bar. A local products store is also slated to open. The project highlights the area's maritime heritage and hopes to catalyze a long-anticipated car-ferry heritage project with neighboring Elberta. As a cultural and recreation destination, increased emphasis is also placed upon the 27-mile Betsie Valley Trail, linking the Traverse Area Recreation and Transportation (TART) network to Grand Rapids via Frankfort.

### Actions Taken:

#### BE TRUE TO YOURSELF:

When reinventing oneself for the new economy, be authentic. Repurposing the Coast Guard Station preserved the city's maritime heritage, and complemented the region's other attractions.

#### BE PREPARED

The city had previously purchased the Frankfort Lighthouse and was prepared to submit a Letter of Interest and application for the Coast Guard property.

#### SEEK PASSION:

The Arts Center donors and volunteers were committed. The Center was outgrowing its previous location, demonstrating the community's support and enthusiasm for the arts. The group had the momentum, determination and creativity necessary to take on the adaptive reuse challenges. The location's lighting, space and views also proved motivational. Community residents were supportive of maintaining the property for the public.

#### SEEK EXPERIENCE:

Adaptive reuse of historical buildings is challenging. The Arts Center hired an architectural firm specializing in adaptive reuse of historical structures. The firm had experience with the National Parks Service and the State Historic Preservation Office and had worked on the local Point Betsie Lighthouse and Petoskey's Crooked Tree Arts Center projects.

#### ADDRESS FUNDING:

While the property was virtually free, the adaptive reuse carried a price tag of \$3.3 million. A skillful combination of grant sources was necessary for success. Demonstrated financial support from the community helped to secure the sources and demonstrated commitment continues to yield grant dollars eight years later. Experience with grant sources and writing is a key component of success.

#### BUILD TENANT SUSTAINABILITY:

Fundraising must remain a priority for the organization. Further efforts toward sustainability include the proceeds from the center's rental for group functions and a future gift shop.



**ANIMATE THE SPACE:**

There is frequent traffic at the center for exhibits, events and classes. The center has more than 30 instructors, so class offerings and attendees are continually changing, creating a buzz in the community. The changing art, the interesting history and the breathtaking views combine to make the center a successful “third place” people seek to experience again and again. Catered receptions several times a week add to the excitement and regional buzz.

**MAKE THE INTANGIBLE TANGIBLE:**

Data can be sexy. Keeping track of the number of events, attendees and hours can provide tangible evidence as to how much a project like the center contributes to the community as it both utilizes other business services and attracts people who then patronize other businesses. To the extent possible, track correlations directly related to help demonstrate economic value.

**Lessons Learned:****BE LEGALLY CREATIVE:**

Don't expect the attorneys to “cut the deal.” The attorneys for both the arts center and the city were unable to reach consensus on a position each felt was in the best interests of their client. After many months the clients met without the attorneys, with the best interests of the community as their priority. A solution was achieved in a matter of hours and attorneys instructed to proceed accordingly.

**DON'T LET NON-STARTERS STOP YOU:**

The city's first identified potential partner was a non-starter. Non-traditional partners may be the solution. The Arts Center proved to be a viable alternative, while also providing significant opportunities for local businesses as a reception venue—including boosting business for several caterers, local florist, local B & B's, other lodging establishments and bars/restaurants.

**INCREASE TRAFFIC:**

The Arts Center exhibits, classes and receptions increase downtown traffic beyond the work day. Flexibility for some non-traditional arts, such as holistic exercise complements the natural foods store and farmer's market. Area businesses are supportive of the arts center and recognize the traffic generated as a tangible contribution to area businesses, creating a symbiotic relationship.

**Supporting Documents:**

- Department of Interior: Terms & Conditions, Federal Lands to Parks Application, Authority to Acquire Property
- Quitclaim Deed
- Property Lease
- Coastal Waterways Grant Application
- Adaptive Reuse Communications
- Arts Center Rental Brochure

**Experts' Contact Info:**

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# The Center for 21st Century Communities

## Building 21st century communities

Experts from around the world—in academic, business, and public sectors alike—agree that investing in communities is a critical element to long-term economic development in the 21st century. Michigan’s future depends on its ability to attract and retain knowledge-based workers. Central to attracting this priceless commodity is *place*. Research proves that successful 21st century communities effectively leverage the assets summarized in this brochure. Learn more and stay engaged at [mml.org](http://mml.org).

## Who we are...

The Michigan Municipal League is the one clear voice for Michigan communities. We are a nonprofit, but we act with the fervor of entrepreneurs; our people are dynamic, energetic, and highly approachable, passionately and aggressively pushing change to achieve better communities and a better Michigan.

## What we know...

Never before have so many diverse interests, from academic researchers to the business community to government leaders, shared a single conclusion: Michigan’s future depends on its ability to attract knowledge-based workers. And what is central to attracting this priceless commodity? *Place*, specifically vibrant 21st century communities.

## What we offer...

Through its Center for 21st Century Communities (21c3), the League provides education, technical assistance, public outreach, and unprecedented access to experts and resources. The 21c3 is a “one-stop-shop” for communities interested in creating and sustaining livable, desirable, and unique places that attract the highly skilled, creative, and talented workforce of the next century.



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