

**HISTORIC VOGUE THEATRE OF  
MANISTEE  
STRATEGIC PLAN UPDATE  
2023 2024 2025**



# Fulfilling the Community Promise

## 2023 2024 2025

The theme of this Strategic Plan Update, “*Fulfilling the Community Promise*” reflects the Mission, Vision, and Values that guide the Board of Directors for your Historic Vogue Theatre of Manistee.

### **The Vogue’s Mission**

The Historic Vogue Theatre of Manistee, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit volunteer-driven organization, is devoted to bringing its audience the latest and best cinematic offerings at affordable prices, as well as enriching the community culturally and economically by providing a gathering place and source of pride and excitement now and for future generations.

### **The Vogue’s Vision**

To be a premier choice for entertainment in Northwest Michigan, creating an unparalleled movie-going experience for everyone, and serving as the centerpiece for a revitalized downtown Manistee.

### **The Vogue’s Values**

Transparency

Volunteerism

Sustainability

Stewardship

Community

Artistic Appreciation

### **The Vogue’s Journey**

In 2006, the closing of the Vogue Theatre, a fixture of downtown Manistee for nearly 70 years, left Manistee County without a movie theater. The small community could not support a commercial for-profit theater, particularly in the downtown building where extensive restoration costs were prohibitive to such an enterprise. Area leaders decided to use a nonprofit model successful in other smaller communities to bring the Vogue Theatre back to life. That major

effort, involving approximately 900 individual and business donors, as well as foundation and state agency grants, led to the renovation and reopening of the Vogue in December 2013.

After reopening, the theatre has been a resounding success, becoming the centerpiece of downtown Manistee. It not only provided Manistee area residents and visitors with access to both current and classic film offerings, but also generated renewed enthusiasm for the Manistee central business district. And the reopening of the Vogue has led to a robust outreach to civic groups, schools, and other non-profits, and partnering with them to advance their missions through film, serving as a community convener, offering the theatre as a venue free of charge for important community events; and partnering with businesses and organization to help maintain an economically and culturally thriving downtown.

The revitalization of the Vogue has been a grassroots effort under the direction of the Historic Vogue Theatre of Manistee (HVTM), a non-profit organization formed to spearhead the project. To date, well over 500 people from all walks of life have volunteered their time and talents to make this project a reality.

The HVTM Board is comprised of seasoned business and community leaders with extensive and relevant contacts both locally and within the broader arts community. They bring experience in non-profit and business management, finance, law, and event promotion.

The Vogue Theatre staff includes professionals with many years of management experience and degreed media arts professionals. With varied backgrounds, they share a passion for film, the Vogue Theatre and their community and are joined by an army of enthusiastic volunteers.

Beginning in early 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic dramatically impacted all arts venues, including the Vogue Theatre. For two periods the theatre was required to close by government orders. While the pandemic did not change the mission or materially impact management capacity or long-term organization, it did necessitate temporary operational changes. With no little operational revenue, most employees were furloughed, and expenses were carefully monitored.

But during the shutdowns, The Vogue maintained its community presence. It offered a “Virtual Vogue” program, which allowed patrons to stream selected movies at home. On weekends, the theatre offered curbside concession sales, selling popcorn, candy, and Vogue merchandise to loyal customers. The theatre made a special effort to keep up with friends and supporters. With over 2,000 subscribers, monthly newsletters apprised supporters of the theatre’s situation. Board members and staff personally engaged with many supporters over the year, and, overall, this engagement proved crucial for continued fundraising, marketing, and public outreach.

Eventually, with the help of government loan and grant programs and continued generous support from donors, the Vogue emerged from that difficult period in a sound position to renew its role in the community.

As Manistee – and the nation - normalize after the trauma of the last few years, the Vogue is ready and able to play its important role in making Manistee a welcoming and enjoyable place

for its residents and visitors. The Vogue Strategic plan outlines our vision and plans for the future.

For much more information about the Vogue, visit our website at <https://voguetheatremanistee.org/>

We are pleased to present the following Strategic Plan Update. We invite your input and creative ideas. We pride ourselves on transparency. Input can be provided to our full Board of Directors at Historic Vogue Theatre of Manistee, PO Box 291, 383 River Street, Manistee, Michigan 49660; or 231-222-5199 or [info@voguetheatremanistee.org](mailto:info@voguetheatremanistee.org).

#### Historic Vogue Theatre of Manistee Board of Directors

Steve Brower, President  
David Mix, Vice President  
Frank Greco, Secretary  
Erin Secord, Treasurer  
Tom Kramer, Board Member  
Margaret Voelker, Board Member  
Nick Callesen, Board Member

Mary Russell, Board Member  
Julia Cook, Board Member  
Eric Gustad, Board Member  
Lindsey Swidorski, Board Member  
Eric Thuemmel, Board Member  
Jim Snoeyink, Board Member

## Management and Operating Efficiency Goals

- **Continue efforts to transition the Board’s function into an advisory and oversight role.**

As the organization matures, the Board needs to dedicate its focus to strategic priorities and accountability as opposed to day-to-day operations. The Board must ensure it is looking to the future on matters involving programming, our market and market demand, long-term financial stability and growth.

- **Maintain a process for nominating board members and officers that considers the changing needs of the organization and the available pool of skills and experience, including identification of potential Board members who will advance the Vogue’s ability to achieve its evolving mission.**

No organization can succeed without understanding the rapidly evolving interests of its customers and taking the steps to ensure those interests are met, including, in this case, fulfilling the community promise. As we transition the Board into one more centered on strategy and accountability, so too must we continue to understand the skills and expertise that our Board members should possess as members complete their terms of office and new Board members are recruited.

- **Maintain and revise as necessary a process for Board self-evaluation in keeping with a need’s analysis of Board member talents/expertise and principles of the Michigan Nonprofit Association.**

While it is relatively easy to identify the strengths of individual Board members, considering the Board as a whole, gaps in our inventory of skill sets can be less obvious. Gathering information about Board members expertise in a compiled way can highlight those areas where we need to supplement our skill sets.

- **Encourage increased involvement of additional Board members in specific tasks with the view toward developing options for succession planning and reduced burdens on current leadership.**

Even as we refine the focus of the Board and recruit new skills and talents in Board members, we must also ensure that we are spreading the responsibilities for governance among all Board members. With effective orientation and training, Board members can become equipped to oversee and provide governing support addressing the full range of strategic matters involving the Vogue.

- **Maintain a rigorous process of governance and accountability to assure that the Vogue is operating within legal requirements and best practices for non-profits.**

The Board is responsible for ensuring that the organization is operating in compliance with laws and rules governing Michigan nonprofit organizations and IRS regulations for tax exempt organizations. In addition, it must ensure that we have the internal capacity to secure, manage and administer grants and accept and properly acknowledge and account for charitable contributions.

- **Periodically review the bylaws to ensure accuracy and relevance,**

The bylaws were written at the time of formation of the non-profit corporation in 2011, before the theatre began operating. Experience with the evolving nature of the Vogue operation has revealed the need for adjustment of the bylaws, and a number of amendments have been adopted. For example, the provision regarding use of committees has been expanded allow some functions to be performed by committees, rather than requiring full Board involvement.in categories of activities. We will continue to look for ways that the bylaws can be updated and improved.

- **Assign to a Personnel/HR committee the functions of overseeing the management of human resources, including:**

- **Organize and oversee the process for employee assessments based upon defined job objectives.**

We will annually review job performance expectations to ensure they are current and carry out an assessment at least annually to encourage formal, two-way, productive discussions and feedback and to strengthen overall operations and performance.

- **Make recommendations to the Executive Committee or Board regarding salaries, benefits, contract labor and performance-based compensation.**

Because our organization relies on volunteers, the employee job duties and expectations are customized to fit the needs of the organization in a way that differs from most. Accordingly, it is imperative that job functions be annually reviewed and revised when needed and that compensation reflects levels of responsibilities within the organization which includes significant interaction with and contributions by volunteers.

- **Oversee volunteer recruitment, training, utilization, and recognition programs.**

Establishing a system of trained, dedicated volunteers is one of the foremost challenges for many nonprofit organizations. The Vogue is fortunate to have a Board and staff that understand the true value and challenges of volunteerism and that, in many ways, it is the highest calling for philanthropy: the donation of time and talents to get important things done.

- **Periodically review Personnel and Volunteer Policy Manuals and make recommendations for changes.**

While policies and procedures may seem like a necessary evil to some, for the Vogue they are the underpinning that helps ensure a consistent entertainment experience for customers. Doing the right thing for customers 100% of the time is a lofty but achievable goal if there is a common understanding among Board members, staff and volunteers. Employee or volunteer consultation with Board members on questions involving existing procedures or practices that should be put into place is an imperative.

## **Community Relations Goals**

- **Consult on and oversee staff management of event scheduling.**

The Vogue has and will continue to make its venues available for special events, including marketing the opportunity to increase awareness and participation at the Theatre and, in some cases to derive added revenues. In that regard, we will develop plans and packages for major events, enlist additional assistance as needed.

- **Maintain contacts with local businesses and groups regarding sponsorship/underwriting and other collaborative efforts.**

Businesses, nonprofits, educational institutions and other entities can make a significant contribution to sustaining the impact of the Vogue through their sponsorship and underwriting of programming and events. The opportunities are nearly endless, and we will provide a menu of options for groups to identify sponsorships that align with the vision and values of their organizations.

- **Monitor and oversee membership program.**

Memberships hold significant potential to provide an important way for anyone to support the community-driven goals and impacts of the Vogue Theatre. We will assess other high performing membership programs to understand their elements and impacts and continue to evolve the development of ours – assessing retention and growth and providing opportunities for two-way feedback involving members.

- **Monitor and oversee advertising/social media/and website activities.**

The opportunities, methods and approaches for communicating with existing and prospective Vogue stakeholders becomes rapidly more complex as social media continues to evolve. It is essential that we align ourselves with the individuals and organizations that can enable us to both produce outstanding content and then deliver that content in ways that compel people to enjoy the Vogue in as many ways as possible.

- **Organize and report to the Board on merchandizing activities.**

The Vogue has met its commitment to keep merchandise accessible and affordable to patrons. However, we need to assess our current merchandising and continually strengthen our offerings. While this may not become a large profit producer for the Vogue, it can and should become a meaningful revenue stream to help support the cost of operations. As funds are available, we will avail ourselves of the best technical assistance available to ensure we sustain an appealing and accessible merchandising program.

## **Finance and Fund Development Goals**

The Vogue will continue to make financial control and management a priority in keeping with the Community Promise under the supervision of the assigned Director who chairs the Finance Committee.

- **Consult with manager/staff to develop proposed budget for action by the Board.**

Each manager prepares their portion of the proposed budget for the subsequent year covering their operating expenses and projected capital needs. These are then compiled and reviewed by the Board to establish the projected budget for the next fiscal year. A goal of the Vogue is to reach a point where budgets are prepared for a two-year period, encouraging proactive planning by all involved.

- **Manage relationship with accountants performing services for the Vogue.**

Review procedures established by staff and the accountants to ensure that complete and accurate information needed to prepare financial statements and tax filings is communicated to those responsible. Review of accountants' and staff reports regarding receipts and expenditures and report to Board regarding financial situation and monitoring account balances and ensuring appropriate transfer are made between accounts. In addition, educate and inform Board members about the organization's financial position, factors affecting that position and the roles of our accounting services team.

- **Monitor and manage reserves and debt structure.**

The Vogue has retired the short-term debt that remained after the restoration. The Finance Committee and Board will continue to monitor our long-term debt structure and place a priority on maintaining reserve capital to cover operating costs when revenue fluctuates and to be prepared for contingencies such as the need to replace major equipment.

- **Organize fund-raising activities, including grant applications, annual solicitations, and special fund-raising events and initiatives.**

Through the work of our Finance Committee, we will continue to understand our current financial and forecasted financial position. We must continue to identify and understand gaps. We need to build a reserve fund as well as a fund for equipment replacement and ongoing maintenance and repair. We must have well-organized fund development activities that tell our story in ways that are genuine, and fact based so that organizations and individuals understand the value proposition of the Vogue. It is our intent that we efficiently plan fund raising so it is focused and clear of purpose and makes the Vogue a stable and strong organization – now and for the future.

- **Ensure that appropriate reports are filed with granting organizations and there is compliance with grant requirements. Develop and implement appropriate donation record-keeping systems and donor recognition measures.**

The Vogue must maintain or acquire the capacities to ensure that we are meeting the program and fiscal reporting requirements of all organizations that grant or donate to our 501 (c) (3) tax exempt nonprofit. We must become known as an outstanding, dedicated fiduciary for grants and donations, enhancing our future fund development opportunities. We must also acquire the software to maintain donor data bases and have policies that spread nothing but appreciation and goodwill to every organization or individual that financially supports the Theatre's vision and mission.



## **Fulfilling the Community Promise**

- **Consult with/oversee staff regarding films to be shown.**

Sustaining the quality, diversity and appeal of films programmed for the Vogue is fundamental to the success of the Theatre. This includes consideration of community values and demographics, time of day, day of the week, balancing the two theatres and staffing levels. It is important for the Board to be vigilant about programming to ensure that staff and volunteers have the support they need to see that our fundamental organizational promise is met. This includes periodically analyzing programming trends and audience attitudes toward Vogue offerings which may involve surveys and other means of gathering customer feeling and recommendations.

- **Maintain Our Focus on Enhancing the Vogue's Role as a Centerpiece of the Manistee Community**

We end this Strategic Plan update on the same topic it began: fulfilling the community promise. We need to ensure we are both seeking and receiving feedback we need to ensure we have programming and events that are of optimal benefit to our community. We need to participate in and support community events, parades festivals and similar activities. We need to ensure we are providing a unique and comfortable experience to families, children, seniors – everyone!

- **Consider expanding operations where resources allow.**

There are potential avenues for expanding the scope of the Vogue's operation that could enhance our ability to serve the community. The Board will continue to evaluate the options and the available resources that might allow such expansion.

We hope that all interests will join us – our Board, staff and volunteers – in ensuring that the Vogue Theatre is all that it can be for the community we love.