

**April 2, 2025**

## **What's Happening at NPAC Update**

Since **July 2024**, a 3-Member Ad Hoc committee of the North Port Art Center has been coordinating activities at the art center after the untimely departure of its Executive Director for family health issues.

After receiving notice from the City of North Port that the **NPAC has to vacate** the buildings at Sam Shapos Way as of September 1, 2025, because the aging buildings need to be demolished, the Board has contacted local realtors, talked with community developers like Benderson and Ashley Bloom, followed up on vacant lots and vacant buildings.

Not finding a suitable location for a new art center to meet the needs of a growing community, the NPAC Board asked the City Commissioners in October 2024 for the opportunity to **return to the same "footprint"** where the NPAC has provided arts education for youth, adults and veterans for the past 18 years.

**HomeSchool, AfterSchool, Adult Classes, Senior Paint Parties and Veterans' Workshops continue** to serve North Port residents while the NPAC Board seeks temporary off-site locations to hold future classes, retaining a presence in this community after it leaves Sam Shapos Way. Several locations have been identified.

There is no question that **North Port needs an art center**. Youth programs help children develop critical thinking skills, in addition to enhancing confidence and self-esteem. Seniors who take arts classes develop new friendships and reduce isolation that can occur with the loss of a spouse. Veterans have reduced PTSD symptoms and achieved awards and recognition for their artwork after taking classes at the NPAC. Wellen Park reaches out to the NPAC to provide artwork for the Welcome Center and to assist with youth arts activities in Downtown Wellen Park. The new NP Behavioral Hospital asked NPAC to create a piece of artwork for their 2025 grand opening because they know the value of art for good mental health.

In response to a strategic plan created by the NPAC Board in 2024, Shenkel Shultz, an architectural firm in Sarasota County, has created **a draft floor plan for a new art center**. It includes 3 classrooms, a larger gallery space, 2 meeting rooms available to nonprofits and local businesses, as well as 4 artist studios.

**NPAC needs community support .. Volunteers and Financial ..** as well as support from **Foundations and Philanthropists**. A new art center is a significant investment in any community. Residents could make small monthly donations through the **"Grass Roots"** fundraising campaign on the NPAC website. Larger donations and grants will be critical to a capital campaign.

### **What are specific needs for the NPAC to move forward?**

1. **3-5 new focused Board members committed to bringing a new art center to this community.**
2. **Volunteers who assist with grant writing and connect with philanthropic individuals and foundations on behalf of the NPAC.**
3. **Ambassadors who will reach out to let others know the benefits of the NPAC to the community and encourage financial support for the NPAC.**

**Thank you for letting me share my vision and thoughts** about the future of arts education in North Port which began 37 years ago as the North Port Area Art Guild with local artists sharing their arts and skills.

### **How will you help keep ART in the HEART of the North Port community?**

Submitted by Gale West, Volunteer Board President for NPAC April 2025

