

CITY OF LA CROSSE ARTS BOARD

PLAN for ART PARK *Nii HOSTÓ**

*Phonetic pronunciation: Neenh ho STO'

MAP showing sculpture sites

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PLAN for **ART PARK Nii HOSTÓ***

Concept approved by Arts Board and Park Board in 2020

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BACKGROUND and VISION

Nii Hostó (“water comes together” in Ho Chunk) exists between the proposed River Point development and the Black, La Crosse, and Mississippi River. **Nii Hostó** will serve as an important bike/pedestrian connector between La Crosse’s downtown and the new River Point development. This creative art corridor will provide a natural, safe, well-lit and engaging space as both conduit and gathering place.

The concept of Nii Hostó was approved by the Arts Board and Park Board in 2020. The Arts Board is working with other council committees and with the City Council to realize this important part of its mission: “analyze gaps and opportunities in programming, support, funding, and promotion for the arts, cultural activity and economic development.” Notable gaps include the city’s lack of a sculpture park, nonexistent public art by Native Americans, and no native place names. Further, while the city boasts a wealth of public art in designated places such as parks and other city-owned venues (one example is the *Confluence* mural on the west façade of the Pump House), no space exists for contemporary, experimental art or a place where art and nature can share a stage. In large part, our culture (nationally and locally) demonstrates a predilection for permanent monuments and sculpture.

Contemporary art, spanning at least the last five decades, has sought a different concept of art in public places, often embracing a temporal, ephemeral nature, in the form of earthworks and site-specific sculpture, and artwork that evolves with the culture. Another notable gap is the absence of inclusivity in cultural activity, specifically (Ho-Chunk) place names of public lands within the city. This wetland landscape and the entire river valley exists on Ho-Chunk Land. With an expressed intention to honor native peoples, specifically the Ho-Chunk people who maintain a presence in the area, the board received a name from the Ho-Chunk Tribal Elder Court that describes the space: **Nii Hostó (water comes together)**.

WHAT IS AN ART PARK?

Art exists at the center of who we are and where we are going as a healthy, engaged society. Art is for everyone, especially when situated in a public park devoted to celebrating creativity and culture. An art park is similar to a sculpture park, in that it is an outdoor park or garden space dedicated to the arts and nature: pieces might involve light-based artwork, or temporary, ephemeral sculpture, as well as more permanent, enduring works. **Nii Hostó** is conceived as an **art park** because it will not only feature sculptures/installations, but could also serve as a space for creating art outdoors in the form of temporary outdoor exhibitions, ceremonies and performances, or open-air drawing and painting. A gateway artwork will create a dynamic entry point, signifying this new passageway and place to linger and explore. **Nii Hostó** will also serve as an outdoor classroom both for the artwork it features in addition to a newly restored indigenous landscape. It is also the site for a new Ho-Chunk listening tour.

INAUGURAL ARTWORKS/ GATEWAY SCULPTURE

With this outdoor space dedicated as an Art Park, some of the amenities are artist-designed. Sculptor



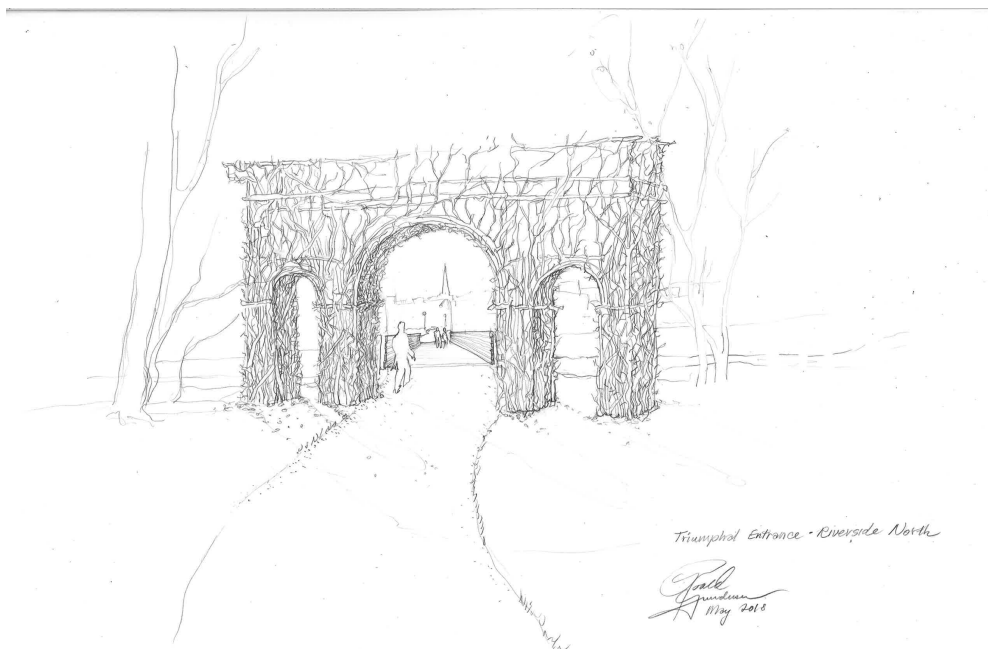
Joe Keenan modeled benches after Ho-Chunk toys, describing his inspiration: “When I was a boy, my grandmother made baskets out of black ash. There were always little bits of scrap left over when the basket neared completion. These little scraps were used to make little dog forms, horse forms, and occasionally deer forms made by cutting and folding the black ash strips. These

little toys were common but not widespread unless your family was involved in basket making.” Examples of “toy” benches are shown here. These functional sculptures/benches would be fabricated in sheet metal, with edges filed smooth, powder-coated, and mounted to a concrete slab in accordance with site requirements.



In anticipation of the establishment of **Nii Hostó**, the Arts Board identified the opportunity for a gateway-type artwork to signify the new space. The board approved a sculpture called the *Arch of Nature*. This artwork was designed by Roald Gundersen, whose inspiration came from the Losey Memorial Arch at the entrance to Oak Grove Cemetery, based on the triumphal arch of antiquity. *Arch of Nature* celebrates the triumph of nature's ability to survive by changing, acknowledging the ephemerality of our existence. Functioning as gateway feature, the artwork offers a transition from our urban world into the wetland habitat, a passage between downtown and the new River Point development. The Arts Board will fund other inaugural artworks through an RFP process, seeking grants and sponsorship for this endeavor. Some artworks will be ephemeral in nature, while others will remain on site for a longer period of time. All artwork placement will comply with all permits and site requirements.

Artist's sketch of the *Arch of Nature*:



FEATURES and AMENITIES

The Arts Board, Park Board and Park Department are working in concert to create a safe, attractive and exciting art park. We seek to create both continuity and variety within the art park with regard to lighting pathways and artworks, indigenous landscape, and artist-designed seating and signage. Together with the artworks situated throughout **Nii Hostó**, pathways and seating offer views of downtown, the pond and rivers.

OBSERVATIONS, PRECEDENTS and SOURCES

Nii Hostó is a space that will accommodate innovative, contemporary sculpture/installation by regional and national artists. The area that will become **Nii Hostó** currently exists as an extension of the network of recreational trails in the city center, as it connects with the La Crosse River Marsh Trails, the International Friendship Gardens and Riverside Park. We have identified similar initiatives for sculpture parks, including the following (3 of which are on public/city-owned land) – links below. Socrates Sculpture Park is of particular interest given its proximity to water:

Franconia Sculpture Park (founded 1996) <https://www.franconia.org/>

Michigan Legacy Art Park (founded in 1995) <https://michlegacyartpark.org/>

Stevens Point Sculpture Park (founded in 2009) <http://stevenspointsculpturepark.org/>,

Socrates Sculpture Park (Queens, NY; founded in 1986) <http://socratessculpturepark.org/>.

The Greenway (Boston; founded in 2008) <https://www.rosekennedygreenway.org/art/>

These venues feature some temporal sculpture installations, which is part of our vision for **Nii Hostó**. Further, there is strong potential for utilizing the space as an outdoor creative laboratory by area schools, such as Summit Environmental School, the School of Technology and the Arts I & II, area higher education institutions. The Arts Board envisions this space as an intersection of art, nature, and culture. We are especially interested in engaging the Ho Chunk Nation in developing site-specific sculpture for **Nii Hostó** to connect with the Ho Chunk listening tour. In proximity to the proposed mixed-use development of River Point, the art park could inspire a segue to more public art in park and commercial spaces within the development.

“Using Art to Define Our Parks” (article by Paula Jacoby-Garrett featured in Parks & Recreation magazine, September 2015) <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2015/september/using-art-to-define-our-parks/>

DRAFT BUDGET

| Item | Estimated amount |
|--|---|
| Wayfinding signage, artwork signage | |
| Lighting | |
| Slab concrete for sculpture | \$ 360 each, for both ephemeral and enduring works |
| Sculptural metal benches (including materials/labor/concrete slab) | \$ 1450 per bench |
| Arch of Nature | \$ 10,000 |
| Ephemeral sculpture (annual) | \$ 5,000-20,000, depending on # of artworks, grant funding, etc. |
| Enduring work (even-year purchases?) | \$ 10,000-90,000, depending on # of artworks, grant funding, etc. |
| Programming costs (art events, tours/workshops, marketing) | |
| Ho-Chunk Listening Tour Stations | |

TIMELINE

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| February-May 2021 | Work with Darius Allen-Lanai Bottorff, UW-Madison Landscape Architecture student, with recommendations from his BLA capstone project that includes Nii Hostó and the River Point development |
| March-April 2021 | Approve Nii Hostó plan and 2021 budget; Park Dept. selects landscape architect/engineer for site plan Arts Board planning for inaugural sculptures and funding, draft RFP for additional ephemeral works |
| June 2021 | Publish RFP for ephemeral artworks |
| August 2021 | Completion of site plan Ephemeral artworks deadline |
| October-November 2021 | Install sculptural benches and portion of signage Install “Arch of Nature” and additional ephemeral artwork(s) Naming ceremony: Nii Hostó* |
| January 2022 | Arts board publishes RFPs for ephemeral and enduring artworks |
| May 2022 | Install new ephemeral artwork(s) Install concrete slabs for enduring sculptures, lighting, complete signage |
| July 2022 | Install first enduring artwork(s) Nii Hostó art park DEDICATION* |

*subject to consultation with Ho-Chunk National and other entities as to nature/scope/scheduling of event