

Effective: May 2022



CITY OF VASSAR MARKETING PLAN

ABSTRACT

This marketing plan has been created as part of the City's efforts to obtain status as a Certified community in the Redevelopment Ready Communities[®] (RRC) program through the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). The plan has been completed in partnership with the City's RRC Planner, Christopher Germain.

City of Vassar, Tuscola County,
Michigan

Vassar City Council

Mike Damm - Mayor

Chuck Fabbro Jr. – Mayor Pro-Tem

Melissa Armstrong – Councilwoman

Pat Mecham – Councilwoman

Tom McTaggart – Councilman

City of Vassar Planning Commission

Mike Damm – Council Liaison

Gary Kasper

Buryl Binder

Ian Rudknik

Jennifer Miller

Nathaniel Miller

Benjamin Kaiser

Andrew Niedzinski – Vassar City Manager

Christopher J. Frazer – Project Coordinator
for the City of Vassar

Christopher Germain –Senior RRC Planner
for the Michigan Economic Development
Corporation

Purpose

The City of Vassar’s marketing plan strives to market and promote the city as a connected, vibrant, distinctive, and livable community. The city actively partners with agencies and local organizations to promote the community as a redevelopment ready community with business opportunities. The city aims to be a vibrant, prosperous community with a high quality of life through the preservation of its natural environment, the protection of its residents’ health and safety, the enhancement of its cultural heritage and recreational opportunities, its diverse neighborhoods with varied housing options, and its thriving business and restaurants. An assessment of the city’s assets assists in marketing the city to potential developers, residents, businesses, and tourists. The marketing plan identifies visual to potential and non-visual assets the city wants to retain and build upon. In addition, an evaluation procedure will determine the effectiveness of the marketing campaign.

The Planning Commission will be responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of the marketing plan. The Planning Commission with input from the Chamber of Commerce will conduct the review each year at their first meeting in January. A brief report that highlights accomplishments and recommends activities for the following year will be prepared and presented to the City Council.

The purpose of a marketing plan is to guide the city’s marketing efforts through the end of 2027 which will put it in line for an update at the same time as the City’s RRC recertification process would begin. Having a marketing plan is the RRC’s Best Practice 5.3. Vassar is fortunate to already be doing some great marketing and has some active partners to spread the work.

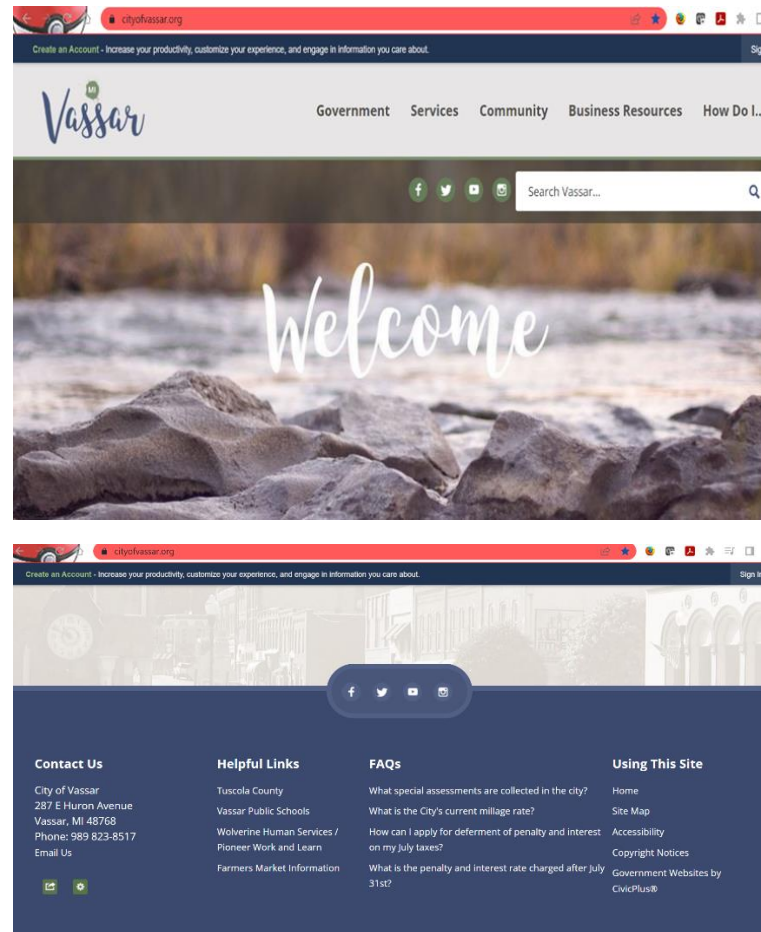
Introduction

The City of Vassar is in Vassar Township, Tuscola County, near the thumb region of Michigan. The city's location provides access to the reputable cultural history of Frankenmuth and shopping centers of Birch Run. The city is also near population centers of Bay City, Saginaw, and within a reasonable distance of Flint and Midland. In addition, the city is surrounded by small town living that gives residents ease of low crime and a friendly environment. In addition, the surrounding areas house facilities in both higher education and hospitalization. These facilities include Saginaw Valley State University, Delta College, Mott Community College, Covenant, Ascension, McLaren, and Hills & Dale hospital and healthcare systems.

Existing Marketing Assets & Tools

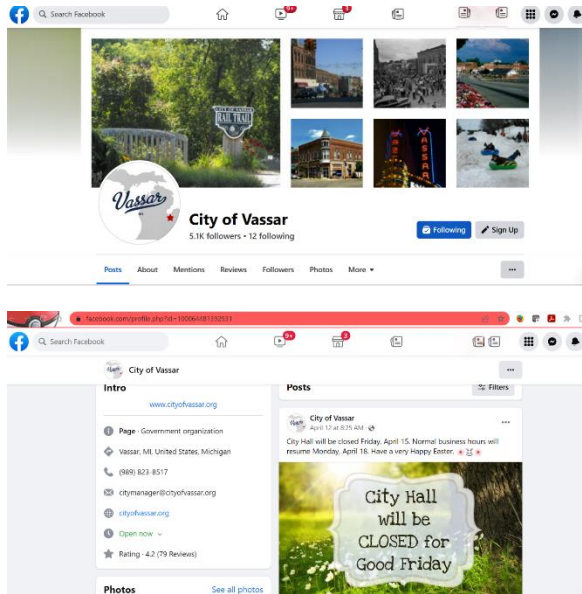
Throughout the year, the City of Vassar and neighboring communities hold events that attract visitors to the region, which include the River Festival (River Fest), the Summer Concert Series, Vassar's Car Show & Swap Meet, the Tuscola County Fair, and the Fall Festival with its famous pumpkin rolling contest.

The City of Vassar has a web presence that allows the city to market and advertise what the city has to offer. The City's website gives Vassar the opportunity to not only share key information with the public, but also allows for stakeholders in the community to retrieve documents such as permits and notifications of upcoming events.

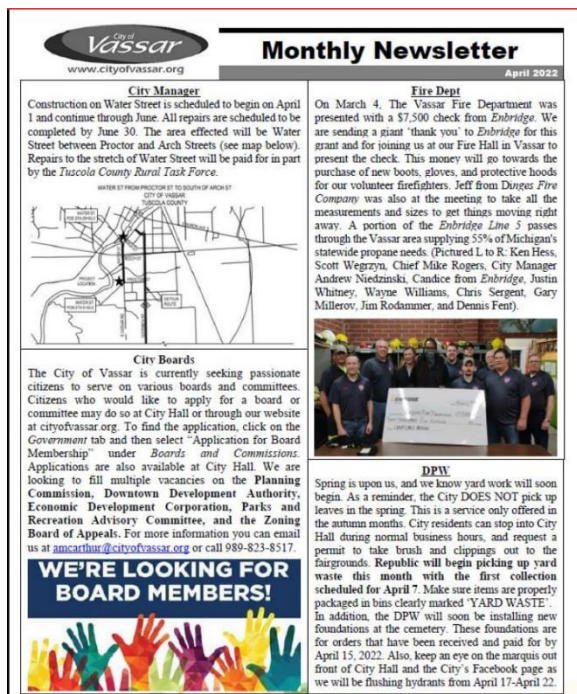


The City of Vassar utilizes social media too. The city has a Facebook page to engage with the Vassar community to inform the public of upcoming events and any updated information that may be missed or not seen on the City's website. Facebook is the most used social media platform across the multiple generations that live in Vassar, so it is key that the City of Vassar continue its presence on social media to communicate with the public. As of now, the City's Facebook page is the only social media platform the City of Vassar utilizes as this time. To be more effective in engaging the community, the City of Vassar will need to utilize more social media platforms to engage the public.

*Photos courtesy of John Cook Photography, Christopher J. Frazer, and the Vassar City Staff.



In addition to its web presence, the City of Vassar also utilizes a newsletter to engage the Vassar community. The purpose of the newsletter is to inform the public of what is currently going on in the community and for the city to continue its efforts in both community relations and community engagement.



<p>Police Department This month we take a look at <i>Charity Fraud</i> and how you can protect yourself.</p> <p>HEARD ABOUT... Charity Fraud</p> <p>Here's how it works: Someone contacts you asking for a donation to their charity. It sounds like a group you've heard of, it seems real, and you want to help. How can you tell what charity is legitimate and what's a scam? Scammers want your money quickly. Charity scammers often pressure you to donate right away. They might ask for cash and might even offer to send a courier or ask you to wire money. Scammers often refuse to send you information about the charity, give you details, or tell you how the money will be used. They might even thank you for a pledge you don't remember making.</p> <p>Here's what you can do: 1. Take your time. Tell callers to send you information by mail. For requests you get in the mail, do your research. Is it a real group? What percentage of your donation goes to the charity? Is your donation tax deductible? How do they want you to pay? Rule out anyone who asks you to send cash or wire money. Chances are, that's a scam. 2. Pass this information on to a friend. It's likely that nearly everyone you know gets charity solicitations. This information could help someone else spot a possible scam.</p>	<p>Bullard Sanford Memorial Library News April 15-May 13 Tiny Art Show We will be displaying art inspired by a poem and painted by community members. Open to all ages; (Pick up kits April 1 and return by April 15)</p> <p>April 5 and 26: 6-8 PM Fiber Arts Help us achieve our goal of 100 newborn crochets or knit hats to donate or work on your own project</p> <p>April 12: 6-8:30 PM Quilting Class This month's project is a table runner</p>
<p>Community Corner Spring is here and our Community is beginning to come alive. So many local associations have been forced to postpone or cancel events during the last few years. Non-profit organizations rely on these events to fund their special projects and even for daily operations. This month, both the Library and the Historical Society will host fundraisers to benefit their groups. The events happen to fall on the same Saturday in April 30. Join in the fun on April 30 with tea in the afternoon and dinner in the evening!</p>	<p>April 14: 1-2 PM Senior Social Hour April 21: 6:30 PM Book Club This month's selection is "Social Graces" by Fiona Davis</p> <p>April 28: 6-8 PM Watercolor Painting Class Learn the basics of watercolor while painting "Nature in Spring" on canvas.</p>
<p>VASSAR HISTORICAL SOCIETY SPRING FLING DINNER & AUCTION SATURDAY, April 30, 2022</p> <p>LOCATION: Frankmouth Credit Union - Main Office 380 N. Main Street, Frankmouth MI (Next to Coopers Health) Lunch included - donation available.</p> <p>5:00 PM AUCTION PREVIEW 6:00 PM TWO-MEAT BUFFET DINNER 7:00 PM LIVE & SILENT AUCTION</p>	<p>Story Time Every Tuesday in April 10:30 am</p> <p>For more info: 989-823-2171</p>
<p>Coming Up: Thursday, April 7: Yard Waste Collection Begins Friday, April 15: City Hall closed for Good Friday Sunday, April 17-Friday, April 22: HYDRANT FLUSHING (Begins at 10 PM) Thursday, April 28: Recycling Collection Saturday, May 7: Annual M15 Garage Sales Saturday, May 21: Petunia Planting</p>	

Focus Areas

In the public survey, the City's residents and stakeholders indicated the City's major assets are its friendly, small-town atmosphere, low crime rate, affordable housing, convenience to work, and community activities. The following focus areas have been chosen to describe the way in which the City of Vassar intends to market itself – as a community which offers an opportunity to reduce commuter fatigue, a community that prioritizes safety, a community with a full range of activities, and desirable home ownership. The following characteristics – (1) Atmosphere, (2) Safety, (3) Affordable, (4) Invested and (5) Community Oriented – are the characteristics which describe Vassar, and which support the five focus areas. The marketing strategy table (which follows the goals and action items) describes the key strategies, core audience, core messages,

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and the avenues for communication which will be used to communicate these characteristics.

Focus Area 1: Small-Town Atmosphere

The City of Vassar has an extensive history regarding its small-town atmosphere. With less than 3,000 people that live in Vassar year-round, it gives the people the sense of small-town living. Smaller community means less noise and light pollution. In addition, children of families that grow up in Vassar tend to stay and have families themselves. This gives residents the feeling of a sense of security and familiarity that allows them to stay in Vassar. **Core Message: Vassar is an excellent place for small town living!**

Focus Area 2: Safe & Family Oriented

Vassar has a history of low crime within its community. With low crime rates in the city, residents can feel at ease knowing they can raise a family and send their kids to the Vassar school district with little to no worries of threat to their children's safety. In addition, the friendly environment of the Vassar community allows for residents to feel comfortable and secure in their neighborhood. **Core Message: Vassar is a great place to settle down and raise a family!**

Focus Area 3: Affordable Housing

Vassar has a variety of options in affordable housing. Residents have the choice to live in Vassar's variety of multiple-family housing developments across the city. Families can choose through Vassar's various single-family housing options. In addition,

developers and builders can fill out Vassar's easy-to-use building permit applications for single-family housing as well our simple conceptual review meeting application process for multiple-family housing developments. **Core Message: Vassar has a variety of affordable housing options!**

Focus Area 4: Growing & Invested

In large part to Vassar's commitment to investing in the future, infant industries are beginning to grow in the city. Growth in Vassar's marijuana industry has allowed for new industries and businesses never seen in Vassar begin to invest in the community. In that aspect, Vassar continues to trend as a community focused on encouraging fledgling businesses and industries to lay ground in the city. In addition, Vassar has become a sought-after community for residents that want to work from home. Our partnership with telecommunication companies makes working from home as convenient as the commute to the office. **Core Message: Vassar provides opportunity for businesses to grow and invest in the community!**

Focus Area 5: Staying Active in the Community

Vassar offers several activities that are oriented towards the community. Activities like Concert Series in the Park, Riverfest, and activities hosted by other organizations in the community demonstrate Vassar's focus on community orientation and keeping the community engaged with the City of Vassar. **Core Message: Vassar is community oriented!**

	Key Strategies	Core Audience	Core Messages	Avenues for Communication
Atmosphere	- Streetscapes, resilient buildings and landscapes, historic preservation, beautification program, LEED-certified development, Diversity, downtown improvements, wayfinding, and recreation opportunities.	- City Leadership - Developers - Business Owners - Local Organizations - Residents	- Looking to past to build towards the future. -Big city amenities in a small town.	- Website information - City brand and logo - Redevelopment Ready Site Marketing Package - City outreach to developers and prospective businesses. - MEDC Zoom Prospector
Safety	-Enforce zoning ordinances including peace ordinances across city, finishing roadway and side streets, search for grants and additional funding sources for the hiring of additional police officers.	- City Leadership - Residents - Visitors - Local Business Owners	- A safe place to raise a family. -Kids can walk around city with ease of mind.	-Website announcements - Brochures and packets - Word of mouth - Networking through the Vassar Chamber of Commerce
Affordability	- Priority redevelopment sites, infill and mixed-use developments, entrepreneurs, and single-family developments.	-Developers - City Leadership - Local Organizations - Tuscola County Economic Development Corporation	-Diverse housing types and stock is encouraged. -Housing in Vassar is affordable. -Building permits and housing development proposals are simple and easy to obtain and navigate.	-Networking through the Vassar Area Chamber of Commerce - Redevelopment Ready Site Marketing Package. - City outreach to developers and prospective businesses - MEDC Zoom Prospector
Growing & invested	-Enhance the community's internet and cell phone connectivity, search for grants to fund street and road projects, encourage current and future local businesses to invest in the community, analyze data towards business retention, and build and retain relationships with current and future investors	-City Leadership - Business Owners - Vassar Economic Development Corporation	- Creating a connected, walkable community - Access to amenities is important -Vassar provides development resources when opening or expanding businesses. -Vassar is an attractive place to open your business.	-Networking through the Vassar Area Chamber of Commerce - Redevelopment Ready Site Marketing Package. - City outreach to developers and prospective businesses - Brochures and packets

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Marketing & Promotion

The overarching goal of all the goals and action items listed below is to communicate messages of Focus Areas 1 through 4 above.

TIMEFRAMES

Short: Low cost, easy implementation, directly addressing priorities, or critical to the advancement of other strategies, and to be implemented in the next 1-5 years.

Medium: Important actions that have some level of significant cost and can be implemented within the next 5-10 years.

Long: Actions that often require significant amounts of funding that must be planned for over time or require other strategies to be completed prior to their implementation.

Ongoing: Actions that have no beginning and end period, but which are continuously ongoing in the city.

RESPONSIBLE PARTIES

VCC: Vassar City Council

PC: Planning Commission

CM: City Manager

Staff: City Staff

CoC: Chamber of Commerce

LBO: Local Business Owners

VCS: Vassar Community Schools

DDA: Downtown Development Authority

EDC: Vassar's Economic Development Corporation

TCEDC: Tuscola County Economic Development Corporation

Residents: Residents that reside in the Vassar city limits.

Pure Michigan®

I-69 Region

Goal 1: Branding		
Develop a branding strategy in partnership with the Vassar Chamber of Commerce, Vassar Downtown Development Authority, Vassar Economic Development Corporation, Tuscola County Economic Development Corporation, and or local businesses.		
Action Items	Time Frame	Responsible Party
Action Item 1: Develop a brand including a tagline and logo for the city. Elements of the current logo used on the city sign will be incorporated into a refined branding effort (i.e. tree, river, hill). Messaging will key into these elements (see image below).	Short	VCC, CM, Staff, CoC, LBO, DDA, EDC, TEDC
Action Item 2: Develop a brand campaign strategy.	Short	VCC, CM, Staff, CoC, LBO, DDA, EDC, TCEDC
Action Item 3: Use the brand on signs, banners, fixtures, official government materials and promotion items, such as pens and notepads.	Short	VCC, CM, Staff, TWP, CoC, LBO, DDA, EDC, TCEDC



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Logo should be simplified so that it can be more easily reproduced and used on signs and merchandise. The following color palette closely follows the design of the current logo. It is suggested the logo be simplified using a similar color palette:

Lettering (white): White Background 1 Black: Black Text 1

Oval (blue): Blue Accent 1; and dark blue: Blue, Accent 1, Darker 50%

Tree (green): Green, Accent 6, Darker 25%; and brown: Brown (R: 108, G: 67, B:0_

Background (white): White Background 1

Goal 2: Partnerships		
Partner with businesses, consumers, real estate developers, and other entities to actively market the City of Vassar.		
Action Items	Time Frame	RP
Action Item 1: Work with real estate agents to market redevelopment/development sites online and to increase site exposure.	Ongoing	VCC, CM, Staff, LBO, CoC
Action Item 2: Partner with the arts community in implementing public art installations throughout the City of Vassar.	Short	CM, Staff
Action Item 3: Work with Vassar's VFW Post, Vassar Lions Club, Vassar Chamber of Commerce and Bullard Sanford Library to market the city's quality of life.	Ongoing	CM, Staff, CoC
Action Item 4: Partner with businesses/business associations to promote local businesses.	Ongoing	CM, Staff, CoC
Action Item 5: Partner with Vassar Community Schools to market the city with displays about	Short	CM, Staff, VCS, CoC

redevelopment projects at athletic and academic events. Encourage the school system to use and display information at the city's facilities		
Action Item 6: Work with local, regional, and state partners to establish activities and programs that will elevate Vassar's attraction towards new businesses and residents.	Medium	VCC, CM, CoC, PC, EDC, TEDC, Pure Michigan, I-69 Region.
Action Items 7: Market priority redevelopment sites for the RRC -Create site marketing team consisting of city staff, realtors, economic development professionals, and other business owners. -Create marketing packets for redevelopment sites. -Provide packets to local commercial realtors. -Upload the sites on the MEDC Site Selection website and evaluate and submit sites each time a matching project need is posted. -Use social media to promote current successful business and advertise available business space. -In partnership with the MEDC, issue RFQ/RFP for developers. Reach out personally to developers (in person and online). -Work with MEDC to connect with developers through the RRC program.	Ongoing	CM, Staff, CoC, LBO, PC, EDC, TCEDC

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Goal 3: Campaign Marketing		
Develop a marketing campaign to express how the City of Vassar is unique.		
Actions	Time Frame	Responsible Party
<u>Action Item 1:</u> Develop and distribute marketing materials that ‘tells Vassar’s story’ – marketing messages should focus on the five Focus Areas. Utilize brochures, packets, newsletters, an email listserv, the Internet, and social media.	Ongoing	VCC, CM, Staff, CoC
<u>Action Item 2:</u> Purchase ads in publications, (virtual and real) that target enthusiasts, retirees, entrepreneurs, and young workers. Communicate the Focus Area messages via ads.	Medium	VCC, CM, Staff, PC, CoC
<u>Action Item 3:</u> Publish press releases in local publications that highlight events and major products and policy decisions.	Ongoing	VCC, CM, Staff, EDC, TEDC
<u>Action Item 4:</u> Develop a marketing strategy for Redevelopment Ready Sites that includes the sites’ assets, a strategy for information	Short	VCC, CM, Staff, EDC, TEDC

sharing (e.g., website announcements), and a distribution strategy that includes the media, commercial, and real estate networking events, and word of mouth engagement.		
<u>Action Item 5:</u> Reach out and discuss potential development projects with developers.	Ongoing	VCC, CM, Staff, EDC, TEDC
<u>Action Item 6:</u> Partner with the county, local, and state officials to create a market analysis to determine the support and shortfalls in market demand in the city.	Ongoing	VCC, CM, Staff, EDC, TEDC
<u>Action Item 7:</u> Create a database to assist in measuring the effectiveness of the marketing campaign (e.g., # of people reached, engagement types, return of investment, # of projects, etc.). Use this qualitative data in annual reports.	Ongoing	CM, Staff
<u>Action Item 8:</u> Market Vassar as a destination for all of your marihuana needs and wants. This includes ability to purchase and	Ongoing	VCC, CM, Staff, DDA, EDC, CoC

*Photos courtesy of John Cook Photography, Christopher J. Frazer, and the Vassar City Staff.

ability to set up a business for different areas of the marihuana process.		
Action Item 9: Market Vassar as a destination for recreational opportunities. This includes creating brochures and using the City's website and social media presence to promote the kayak launch and the Rail Trail.	Short	VCC, CM, Staff, EDC, CoC

Action Item 2: Market Vassar's assets including, but not limited to, neighborhoods, business districts, services, hidden gems, and schools across various websites.	Ongoing	CM, Staff, CoC
Action Item 3: Utilize social media to showcase the City of Vassar on different platforms using the #vibrantvassar to showcase Vassar in a positive manner. This includes creating an Instagram page to coincide with the City's Facebook page, enticing visitors and residents to take snap shots and tagging Vassar locations on Snapchat, and partnering with local influencers to showcase Vassar as a vibrant community.	Ongoing	CM, Staff, CoC, Residents

Goal 4: Online Presence		
Maintain an online presence with a regularly updated website.		
Action Items	Time Frame	Responsible Party
<u>Action Item 1:</u> Upload and maintain the following items on the website: lists for merchants, restaurants, businesses, and available spaces for lease or purchase; and area map; information about special events and projects; brochures and development site packets; and the type of businesses the city would like to attract.	Ongoing	CM, Staff, CoC

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City of Vassar's
PUMPKIN ROLL

1994 **27 ANNUAL** 2021

Saturday, October 16
 2 - 5 PM
 Buy a Pumpkin for .50c
 Roll it down the Hill for .50c

VASSAR HISTORICAL SOCIETY
 Vassar Historical Society
 LUMBERJACK BRUNCH!!
 9 am - 1 pm at T. North Pavilion

VASSAR CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
 VASSAR CHAMBER
 Vassar Chamber of Commerce
CHILI COOKOFF!!
 Beginning at Noon under the Budget-Lot tent.

FEATURING:
Acoustic Cocktail
 With members of the Sinclairs Band

THANK YOU SPONSORS!!

GENISYS
 CREDIT UNION

COOK
 GM SUPER STORE
 VASSAR

SCHOOL FIX
 CATALOG

Food Trucks **Bounce Houses**
Antique Tractors
Games **\$500 GRAND PRIZE**
LIVE For the pumpkin that makes it into the barrel!!
MUSIC
Wandering Magician **vendors**



*Photos courtesy of John Cook Photography, Christopher J. Frazer, and the Vassar City Staff.

2021



SUMMER CONCERT SERIES

DOWNTOWN VASSAR
Wednesday Nights
5:30 PM - 8:30 PM

June 9 Jedi Mind Trip
June 23 Todd Michael Band
July 7 The Strickler Brothers
July 21 The Sinclairs
August 11 Dueling Pianos
August 25 The Rock Show

Food • Games • Fun
Family Entertainment



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