



May 28, 2020

Ms. Lucia Panica  
Ms. Gretchen Schneider  
Manager of Development Services  
City of Sarasota  
1565 1<sup>st</sup> Street  
Sarasota, FL 34236

Dear Ms. Panica and Ms. Schneider,

The Implementation Plan (IP) recommended and approved unanimously at the September 16 City Commission meeting provided for an Implementation Agreement (IA) proposal after Site Plan (SP) approval.

This “one step at a time” approach...from Guiding Principles to Master Plan to Implementation Plan to Site Plan and then to Implementation Agreement...has served the City and the community well over the past five years.

In our discussion on September 16 with the City Commission, and on pages 31 and 32 of the Implementation Plan, the Bay Park Conservancy (BPC) expressed its intention to follow existing City Parks and Recreation and Special Events policies, procedures and regulations.

Ultimately, the Implementation Agreement will be submitted to the City Commission for approval. The current timetable calls for submission in the fall of 2021 while we are still developing and building out the first phase of The Bay Park and well in advance of the planned opening of the first phase in mid-2022. The BPC will not be authorized to take responsibility for management of the first phase of the park unless and until the construction and development is complete.

Bayfront 2020, Sarasota Bayfront Planning Organization (SBPO) and BPC understood that the City-owned land on Sarasota Bay was not only the City’s most valuable real estate but also the public’s most precious asset.

Both the City and the community came to understand this public good would have to serve the broadest possible public interest...for the greater good of everyone in our community and the



longer-term benefit of our city – not only for the current generation but also for our children, grandchildren and generations to come.

We will continue to follow the Guiding Principles proposed by Bayfront 2020, approved by the City Commission and adopted by SBPO and BPC. These principles have guided the planning process from the beginning.

The first and overarching principle is access to The Bay Park for everyone in our community. Overall, we have designed and will continue to plan for a public park on Sarasota Bay that is open and accessible, free and welcoming to the full and rich diversity of Sarasota.

We are at the very early and very preliminary steps in the process of planning activation and programming for the first park phase.

As a starting point, we were beginning to put together a calendar of all the activities, events and programs that will take place on The Bay Park site in calendar 2020. This calendar work came to a halt with the pandemic and the City's emergency order. Still, we are continuing to work closely with all the current site incumbents, the Sarasota Garden Club, the Art Center Sarasota, the Sarasota Orchestra, the Van Wezel, and the Municipal Auditorium. One important role for BPC will be park/site calendar coordination.

After the Site Plan is approved, we plan to survey the community to gain a better understanding of the kinds of accessible and free activities and events they would like to see in their park.

We conducted extensive surveys during the master and implementation planning stages to get broad community input about park uses, design and plan features. These surveys at each step of the planning process are very important for better and deeper understanding of community needs and wants, and habits and practices regarding public park usage. More than 1,000 members of our community have completed each of our previous surveys. We expect as strong or stronger response to a future survey about park activities and events. More than 5,000 people visit one or both Bay websites every month, more than 5,000 follow The Bay on social media (Facebook and Instagram), and about 4,500 open and read our weekly email newsletter.

(The City Parks and Recreation team has shared results from the survey they conducted to inform city park planning and programming. While the City park survey is generally of interest and some help, the findings of course do not address the specific site design and plan for the first phase of The Bay Park, which is very different from other City parks.)



To be clear, the first 10 acres of The Bay Park are intended to be for passive recreation use. As can be seen in the proposed site plan, there are no sports buildings or facilities. There are no provisions for high impact activities or team sports or for sports playing fields, tennis courts, basketball courts, baseball, football, softball or soccer playing fields, etc.

(There are two activities on the larger 53-acre site to the north and not included in the first park phase...the public boat launch and the lawn bowling club...that could be considered active recreational use. It is our understanding that lawn bowling will move to the Bobby Jones Golf Club complex. The boat launch will be totally redesigned in a future park phase and moved further north on the site.)

We have received a generous grant from one of the local foundations that would provide for the services of a Park Program Director for The Bay Park Conservancy to be hired in 2021 to begin planning, and then ultimately manage programming in 2022. We have also received grants for arts, cultural, educational, health, fitness and recreational activities that would be open and accessible, free and welcoming, to park goers when the first phase opens in 2022.

We have begun very preliminary conversations with the Arts and Cultural Alliance and with EdExplore to see whether they would have any interest in creating, designing and planning free arts, cultural and educational activities for park goers of all ages in the first phase of the park. Since we have only had a single meeting with each party, it is obviously premature to talk about any specific plans or activities.

A common practice in other successful city public parks like The Bay Park is to host free activities and events that have particular appeal to park goers and are suited to a park setting.

It will take significant resources and time to begin to identify and explore the feasibility of a wide range of arts, cultural, educational, health, fitness and recreational activities and programs appropriate for the first phase of the park. Today, the BPC staff consists of one part-time and three full-time employees. We have to stay focused and make clear choices to work effectively and efficiently every step along the way.

The focus right now and for the foreseeable future is on Site Plan approval for Phase 1 through the DRC, Planning Board, and City Commission. At the same time, we continue to focus on fundraising because we are committed to raising about 80% of the total capital required to develop and build out the first phase of The Bay Park from private sources. We are committed to having the majority of commitments and sufficient cash in hand when we begin development in 2021. It doesn't make financial or management sense to hire a Park Program Director until we have Site Plan agreement to proceed with development of the first phase of the park.



**Below are specific examples of how we are beginning to think about different aspects of park operations:**

- Hours of operation would be set within existing parameters for other city parks. The most comparable, similar park is Bayfront Park which is open from 5:00 am to 12:00 midnight every day. Most city parks are open from 5:00 am to 11:00 pm every day. For the record, Centennial Park at the northern most end of the bay park site is open 24 hours a day for boating and fishing.
- Dogs will be permitted in The Bay Park on a leash. However, we do not have any plans in the first phase for a dog park to allow off leash exercise. Dog owners will be responsible for cleaning up after their dogs to keep the park clean for all users.
- Smoking will not be allowed in The Bay Park.
- Applications and approvals for special events would either be handled by the City for the entire 53 acre site or by the BPC for the first phase of The Bay Park according to established principles, policies and procedures and in the same way as they are currently handled by either the City or the Van Wezel. We will honor/respect any/all current agreements with the City/Van Wezel for events that have been previously scheduled/planned for the site.
- We will continue to allow/support the same/similar food and beverage offerings for these special events and other similar events. Food and beverages may be provided by a range of caterers, food trucks, vendors, etc. An appropriate range of food offerings will be made available depending on the event. Beverages will include waters, juice drinks, soft drinks, beer and wine, all provided in environmentally responsible recyclable containers.
- We have just begun to think through the options for limited pre-prepared food, snacks and beverage service from the small pavilion in the first phase of the park. We are studying the options/menus/services provided at similar park food and beverage operations in the area. Right now, we intend to open with a very limited offering targeted to daytime park fare needs through sunset every evening. We anticipate park goers will come to The Bay to view the 300+ sunsets Sarasota enjoys annually.
- There are currently no plans at the Phase 1 food and beverage pavilion facility to do any “restaurant type” cooking onsite (as is done at Siesta Beach Park, Lido Beach Park, etc.) Hence, we are not planning to provide for restaurant infrastructure, e.g. a grease trap, etc.



- While we expect to be able to provide for certain, permitted small private events...a neighborhood picnic, a family reunion, a graduation celebration, a wedding/reception, a company get together, etc. we will always ensure that portions of the park remain open to the general public every day of the year.
- We have already begun to meet with both City Parks and Recreation and the Deputy Police Chief and his team to discuss principles, policies and best practices regarding park safety and security. We have held several meetings together and are working our way up the learning curve. We will continue to evaluate best practices in city parks across America, e.g. a park ambassador program, enhanced police patrols (possibly including bicycle and walking patrols), additional security for special events, etc.

Once we have the Site Plan agreed, and can begin development and build out, we can shift some existing resources and judiciously add other experienced resources to begin work on the community survey and the preliminary planning for an Implementation Agreement that governs activation, management, operations and maintenance of the first phase of The Bay Park.

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A.G. Lafley,  
Founding CEO

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Bill Waddill,  
Chief Implementation Officer