

CITY OF SARASOTA



100-DAY CITY MANAGER REPORT

FROM LISTENING TO ACTION



OCTOBER 2026

Prepared by:
Karie Friling, City Manager

Executive Summary

From Listening to Action

I came to Sarasota with the belief that this is an extraordinary community—and that extraordinary communities should not settle for ordinary outcomes. After my first 100 days, I believe that even more strongly.

Sarasota has much to celebrate. We have talented and dedicated employees, engaged residents, distinctive neighborhoods, treasured parks and open spaces, a vibrant cultural identity, and a community that cares deeply about its future. We do not count those blessings often enough.

At the same time, Sarasota faces extraordinary challenges that will require all of us to work together. Aging infrastructure, flooding and stormwater needs, housing affordability, public safety, development pressures, fiscal uncertainty, organizational capacity, and the need to strengthen trust among the community, City Commission and staff all demand sustained attention.

My first 100 days were intentionally centered on listening and learning. I visited departments and facilities, met individually with department directors, talked directly with employees, and engaged neighborhood organizations, businesses, nonprofits, foundations, community leaders and residents. I wanted to understand not only what Sarasota does well, but also where we can do better.

That listening reinforced one conclusion above all others: Sarasota has extraordinary people—inside our organization and throughout our community. The next phase must move from listening to action; however, listening will never stop.

A further reality emerged from my conversations: our employees have carried an exceptional burden over the past two years. While the City operated without a permanent City Manager, staff responded to the 2024 storms, sustained emergency and recovery operations, and continued the complicated work of restoring damaged infrastructure - all while delivering everyday City services. The City has approximately \$50 million in storm-related recovery costs. This prolonged workload and uncertainty must inform how we set priorities and support our workforce.

Distinct Roles. Shared Responsibility.

The City Charter establishes distinct responsibilities for the City Commission and City Manager. Respecting those roles is fundamental to effective government. Equally important is the partnership between them.

The Commission establishes policy and community priorities. The City Manager leads the organization responsible for carrying out that direction and managing day-to-day operations. Many organizational and operational actions identified in this report fall within the City Manager's administrative responsibilities. I will advance those initiatives transparently and collaboratively - keeping the Commission informed, listening to its collective policy direction, engaging employees and communicating with the community.

We have distinct responsibilities, but a shared responsibility for Sarasota's success. This report therefore distinguishes administrative actions that are underway or being advanced from policy matters that require Commission consideration and formal action.

Distinct roles do not mean separate missions. The Commission, City Manager, employees and community share responsibility for Sarasota's success.

Governance Is Different

How the Commission conducts its business and establishes its Rules of Procedure is ultimately the Commission's decision. Based on more than three decades of experience working with elected boards, together with professional training and best-practice guidance from ICMA and the National League of Cities, I will respectfully offer governance recommendations for the Commission's collective consideration.

If the Commission reaches consensus to proceed, proposed changes will be brought back through the appropriate public process for formal consideration and adoption. These recommendations are not administrative directives.

What I Am Hearing

Our people are our greatest strength. Employees repeatedly describe their coworkers as talented, knowledgeable, supportive and deeply committed to public service. That is an organizational asset we must protect. Employees are also telling us where we can improve: organizational capacity and workload, clearer priorities, stronger internal communication, fewer silos, leadership and career development, competitive employee support, and a culture in which accountability and respect coexist.

Residents and community stakeholders are asking for clearer communication, greater transparency, meaningful engagement and a City government that remains focused on the issues that matter most.

Across nearly every conversation, I have heard the importance of rebuilding and strengthening trust—not only between residents and City Hall, between the Commission and staff, and across departments, but also among the many stakeholders who share this community. There is also a strong desire for stability and intentional leadership, after almost two years without a permanent City Manager.

Sarasota is made up of distinct neighborhoods, residents who have lived here for generations and those who have recently arrived, full-time and seasonal residents, businesses and neighborhood interests, and a tourism economy that brings tremendous benefits while also creating pressures that must be balanced with the needs of those who call Sarasota home. Different parts of our community will not always agree. But disagreement does not have to become division.

City government has an important role as a convener—bringing people together around facts, shared challenges and Sarasota's long-term interests. We do not have to agree on everything to recognize that we share responsibility for the future of one community.

Preparing for Fiscal Uncertainty

Fiscal discipline must be central to the work ahead. Amendment 3 on Florida's November ballot would increase the homestead exemption for non-school taxes to \$150,000 in 2027 and \$250,000 in 2028, while also reducing the annual assessment-growth cap for non-homestead property from 10 percent to 5 percent. We estimate the full impact would reduce the General Fund revenue by approximately \$5.6 million annually plus inflation. The effect does not stop at City Hall: Sarasota County has publicly discussed an estimated \$87.1 million annual impact at full phase-in. This will also impact the City.

Preparation has already begun through increased scrutiny of General Fund vacancies, identification of efficiencies and cost reductions, exploration of revenue opportunities, and greater attention to organizational priorities. Regardless of the election outcome, these disciplines can make Sarasota stronger and more financially sustainable.

Focusing on What Matters Most

Government will always face more requests than it has time, staff or resources to address. One of our most important responsibilities is deciding what matters most, and that is not an easy task. Local government exists in part to provide essential services and address community needs that the private sector cannot or will not meet. Good governance therefore requires discipline and focus.

That discipline will become even more important as Sarasota develops its next strategic plan. A professionally administered community survey, broad public engagement, measurable priorities, clear performance indicators, and alignment among the strategic plan, budget and capital program can create a shared roadmap. The goal is not simply to produce another plan. The goal is to create focus.

From Vision to Action

During the City Manager selection process, I shared a portfolio outlining my leadership philosophy, professional experience, and initial vision for serving Sarasota. That portfolio reflected my commitment to organizational excellence, responsible financial stewardship, meaningful community engagement, and a collaborative approach to addressing the City's challenges.

My first 100 days have provided an opportunity to test those ideas against the realities of our organization and community. While my understanding of Sarasota has deepened, the principles that brought me here remain unchanged.

The difference today is that I am no longer speaking about what I would do if given the opportunity to serve. I am accountable for what we are doing—and the results we deliver.

This report represents that transition from vision to action.

From Listening to Action

LISTENED - I began by going directly to employees, departments, neighborhoods, businesses and community partners to understand what is working, what is getting in the way and what Sarasota most needs from its City government.

ACTED — The first 100 days also required decisions. We moved to stabilize executive leadership, strengthened economic-development capacity, implemented Project Briefing Sheets, deepened employee engagement, aligned parking enforcement with public safety, increased scrutiny of General Fund vacancies and continued rebuilding financial reserves.

BUILDING NEXT — The next phase is about execution: a focused Strategic Plan, measurable departmental performance, organizational alignment, leadership and succession development, proactive economic development, stronger communications, infrastructure and stormwater planning, and long-term protection of parks and open space.

The Next 100 Days—and Beyond

This report is not the conclusion of my first 100 days. It is the beginning of the next phase. Some actions are already underway. Others require additional analysis, community engagement or Commission policy direction. Progress will be communicated openly, measured wherever possible and adjusted as we learn.

I began this journey believing Sarasota was an extraordinary community. One hundred days of listening have confirmed that belief. Now our responsibility is to protect what makes Sarasota special, improve what is getting in our way, count our blessings, and work together on the extraordinary challenges and opportunities ahead.

1. The First 100 Days: Listen First

Before changing an organization, a new manager must understand it. My first 100 days were designed to create that understanding through direct engagement—with employees, the Commission, residents and community partners.

Inside the Organization

I have held or attended over 350 meetings since my arrival, intentionally splitting my time internally and externally. I visited City departments and facilities, including operations outside City Hall, and established regular one-on-one conversations with department directors. Those visits matter. They allow leadership to see the work where it happens, understand operational constraints and hear directly from the employees who deliver services every day. I have met with each of the Commissioners weekly, to understand public policy priorities and to listen for areas of common agreement and unified policy direction.

Fridays with Karie

I also began “Fridays with Karie,” giving any employee 30 minutes of closed-door, uninterrupted time with the City Manager. I ask every participant the same two questions: What do you love about working for the City? If I gave you a magic wand and one wish, what is the one thing you would change about our organization?

The purpose is not to collect isolated complaints or promises. It is to identify patterns—what employees value and want protected, and what recurring barriers are getting in their way. Those themes will help us inform organizational priorities, training, process improvement and culture work.

EMPLOYEE LISTENING

Protect what is working. Fix what repeatedly gets in the way.

Listening Beyond City Hall

The listening effort has extended to neighborhood organizations, business groups, nonprofits, foundations, institutional partners and residents. Sarasota is highly engaged. That is a strength—but engagement works best when people can see how their input connects to decisions, priorities and outcomes, including when the City cannot do what is being requested and must clearly explain why.

Recognizing the Weight Our Organization Has Carried

During 2024, Debby, Helene and Milton placed extraordinary demands on Sarasota in a matter of weeks. City employees and regional partners responded during the emergencies, worked to protect public safety and restore access and services, and began an extensive recovery effort. Many employees also faced storm impacts in their own lives.

The storms did not end for our organization when the immediate emergencies passed. Two years later, staff continue to manage restoration projects, engineering and permitting, procurement, financial documentation, grant compliance, and coordination with state and federal agencies. Delayed funding obligations and reimbursement processes can complicate both project schedules and the City’s finances.

At the same time, employees have continued providing public safety, utilities, planning, permitting, parks, infrastructure maintenance and the other services that residents and businesses depend on every day. In many respects, our employees have been operating the City while simultaneously rebuilding it.

This is not a judgment that every employee is exhausted or that our workforce lacks resolve. It is recognition of the cumulative organizational demands created by storm response, extended recovery, normal operations and nearly two years without permanent executive leadership. Dedication does not mean unlimited capacity.

Our responsibility is to match ambition with capacity: stabilize leadership, recognize employee contributions, establish realistic and collective priorities, reduce avoidable work, coordinate across departments, and invest in the people who keep this City running. Taking care of our employees is essential to taking care of our community.

Understanding the Timeline of Recovery

I recognize the frustration of residents who question why, nearly two years after the 2024 storms, some public facilities and infrastructure have not been fully restored. From the public's perspective, two years is a long time to wait, and the community deserves meaningful progress and clear explanations.

Yet the time required to restore public infrastructure after a major disaster is very different from the time it takes to complete an ordinary repair. In disaster recovery, two years can be a relatively short period in a complex, multiyear process. For someone waiting to use a neighborhood park or public facility, it can feel like an eternity. Both perspectives deserve respect.

Recovery requires damage assessments, engineering, design, environmental and regulatory reviews, permitting, procurement, and coordination with state and federal agencies. FEMA eligibility, documentation and funding requirements add further steps. Proceeding before required approvals put potential reimbursements—and ultimately local taxpayers—at risk.

Sarasota is also one of many communities recovering from major storms. Local governments must navigate overlapping demands on federal and state agencies, specialized contractors, engineers and other recovery resources. Some timelines depend on decisions and capacity outside the City's direct control. What looks like inactivity to the public may reflect months of essential work behind the scenes.

None of this is an excuse for unnecessary delay. We must continue to challenge avoidable bureaucracy, identify what the City can accelerate, distinguish local responsibilities from external dependencies, and communicate project milestones and obstacles plainly. Our responsibility is to balance urgency with accountability: restore facilities as quickly as practicable, protect taxpayer dollars and build infrastructure that will serve Sarasota for years to come.

Our employees have not been standing still during these two years. They have been advancing a demanding recovery program while continuing to deliver everyday City services. We owe residents transparency about that work—and we owe employees recognition for carrying it out.

ACTION UNDERWAY

Continue structured listening. Maintain department visits, director one-on-ones, employee conversations and community engagement while tracking recurring themes and translating them into measurable organizational work.

2. Our People: Build the Organization We Need

A high-performing city is built by people. Sarasota has deep institutional knowledge and a strong public-service ethic. The responsibility now is to support that talent, grow it and make sure the organization is prepared for the future.

Leadership at Every Level

Leadership development should not be limited to directors. We need supervisors, emerging leaders and subject-matter experts who can lead projects, facilitate teams, improve processes and eventually step into larger roles. Succession planning is not simply replacement planning; it is deliberate preparation.

Use the Talent We Already Have

The City should identify employees who already have skills and credentials in areas such as Lean Six Sigma, project management, facilitation and process improvement. A skills inventory can help us use internal expertise more intentionally, form cross-departmental project teams and develop train-the-trainer capacity.

The goal is not simply to build a database of credentials, but to deploy hidden talent. We should create cross-departmental improvement cohorts that allow employees to work on real City problems outside their normal areas of responsibility. Lean Six Sigma Green Belt cohorts can be trained together, supported by qualified outside experts, and then assigned

measurable improvement projects. Train-the-trainer approaches can build internal capacity, so skills remain in the organization rather than depending indefinitely on outside consultants.

High Performance and Customer Service

Training should connect culture to performance: customer service, leadership, process improvement, accountability, collaboration and data literacy. The goal is not training for training's sake. It is to give employees practical tools to solve problems, work across departments and serve the public better.

Customer service is everyone's job. Whether our customer is a resident, business owner, visitor, commissioner or fellow employee, every interaction shapes how people experience City government. Clear communication, timely follow-through, respectful treatment, realistic expectations, and a problem-solving mindset should be organization-wide expectations.

Employee Lunch & Learns can reinforce that culture. Staff should be surveyed about what they want to understand about the organization, and departments should regularly teach one another about their work, challenges and connections. We cannot truly operate as One Team if we do not understand what the rest of our team does.

Culture is built not only through policies, organizational charts and training, but through relationships. If we want employees to operate as One Team, we need to create opportunities for them to know one another, learn together, celebrate together and understand that they are part of something larger than their individual department.

ACTION UNDERWAY

ALL-HANDS MEETINGS — One Team. One

Conversation. At least once, but preferably twice, each year, I will bring the entire City workforce together for an all-employee meeting. With employees working across different departments, facilities, shifts and functions, these meetings will provide a shared forum to hear directly about City priorities, recognize accomplishments, discuss challenges and reinforce how every employee contributes to our common mission.

IMPLEMENTED & ONGOING

CREATE INTERNAL TASKFORCES – Foster New Ideas & Remove Fear of Failure. Analyze and solve city-wide challenges and identify new ways of doing things. Create cross functional groups of employees to address specific, complex issues or projects – based upon their expertise and skills.

IMPLEMENTED & ONGOING

EMPLOYEE FAMILY FUN DAY — Building Relationships Beyond the Workplace. In September, the City held its first Employee Family Fun Day, bringing employees and their families together outside the workplace. The event created an opportunity for employees from across the organization to meet one another, build relationships and simply have fun together with their families. Building a high-performing organization is also about building relationships, belonging and pride in being part of the City team.

Respect and Accountability

Employees are public servants and must be accountable for results, conduct and service. They also deserve to work in an environment where professional expertise is respected, and disagreement does not become personal vilification.

Accountability and respect are not competing values; a strong organization requires both.

Supporting employees also means paying attention to morale, recognition and the day-to-day employee experience. I want Sarasota to be a place where people are proud of their work, can have fun while doing serious work, see opportunities to grow, and know that leadership will support them when they are doing difficult work professionally and appropriately. Leadership exists at every level of the organization—not only in titles.

ACTION UNDERWAY	Create an internal talent and credentials inventory. Identify Six Sigma, PMP, facilitation and related skills; use the inventory to form project teams and internal training cohorts.
ACTION UNDERWAY	Build leadership and process-improvement cohorts. Develop scalable training for supervisors, emerging leaders and cross-functional teams, including train-the-trainer opportunities.
ACTION UNDERWAY	Strengthen succession planning. Identify critical positions and institutional knowledge risks, then build development pathways before vacancies occur.

3. Organizational Alignment: One Team, Fewer Silos

Organizational charts should follow the work—not the other way around. I am reviewing how Sarasota’s structure supports service delivery, accountability, collaboration and the priorities established by the Commission.

The organizational strategy is straightforward: stabilize leadership, clarify accountability, align related functions and build the capacity to execute. The changes underway or under consideration are not reorganization for its own sake; they are intended to create clearer responsibility, stronger coordination and better service.

IMPLEMENTED & ONGOING	Stabilizing Executive Leadership. I moved quickly to permanently appoint Jennifer Jorgensen as Deputy City Manager, establishing an experienced second-in-command and clearer lines of leadership, responsibility and reporting within the City Manager’s Office. After nearly two years without permanent executive leadership in the CMO, this step was important to restore stability and continuity, strengthen coordination across departments, and create clear accountability for carrying out Commission priorities and City Manager direction. Strong organizations require clarity and continuity at the top; this appointment provides a stronger foundation for the organizational work ahead.
-----------------------	---

One Planning Team—From Vision to Implementation

As part of the organizational alignment review, I am evaluating consolidation of long-range and current/development planning into one coordinated planning function. The professionals helping establish Sarasota’s long-term land-use vision should be closely connected to those applying that vision to development decisions today.

Organizational structure is only one part of the development experience. We also need to review the customer journey through permitting, planning, review, inspection and enforcement. The objective is not to weaken standards; it is to make compliant processes clearer, more predictable and more efficient while ensuring that violations are addressed fairly and in a timely manner. Current code enforcement processes need to be reviewed and strengthened. We should also evaluate whether appointed advisory boards have the training and support necessary to consistently follow adopted City codes, rules and laws, and review the magistrate process for consistency and accountability.

“Sell our codes, don’t just tell our codes.” Residents and businesses deserve to understand not only what a rule requires, but why it exists and how to comply. Whether the purpose is safety, accessibility, neighborhood protection, resiliency, environmental stewardship or fairness, explaining the why behind the how should become part of our customer-service culture. Regulation and enforcement should be clear, consistent, timely and solution-oriented without compromising adopted standards.

Technology and Administrative Services

We will be reviewing opportunities to reduce duplicated technology and administrative functions, clarify ownership of systems and data, strengthen cybersecurity and service support, and make better use of enterprise tools. Any restructuring should be supported by a clear business case and measurable service improvements. Our Deputy City Manager is also working on creating an IT Governance Team, which will be responsible for overseeing IT continuity, risk and long-term strategy.

Economic Development Alignment with the City Manager’s Office

Economic development is inherently cross-functional. It touches planning, redevelopment, infrastructure, housing, workforce, business relationships and regional partnerships. I will be strengthening its connection to the City Manager’s Office so that economic opportunity is treated as an organization-wide responsibility rather than a stand-alone activity.

I am evaluating repurposing an existing vacancy in the City Manager’s Office into an Assistant City Manager for Community Development. This position would provide executive-level coordination across community-development functions, strengthen accountability and cross-departmental problem-solving. This would also create additional City Manager capacity for citywide strategy, organizational performance, economic development, intergovernmental relations and community engagement.

I am also evaluating an existing position to be repurposed into a Manager of Strategic Plans & Initiatives within the City Manager’s Office. The position would strengthen enterprise-wide coordination of strategic priorities, performance and cross-department initiatives. The fuller concept is described in the next section.

ACTION UNDERWAY

Advance the organizational alignment review. Evaluate reporting relationships and consolidation opportunities administratively, communicate changes transparently, and keep the Commission informed of changes that materially affect service delivery.

ACTION UNDER CONSIDERATION

Create one coordinated planning function. Evaluate a structure that better connects long-range vision, current planning and implementation.

ACTION UNDER CONSIDERATION

Manager of Strategic Plans & Initiatives. Repurpose an existing position in the City Manager’s Office to coordinate the Strategic Plan, city priorities, department work plans, KPIs, dashboards, cross-department initiatives and progress reporting.

4. Focus, Performance and Strategic Direction

Sarasota does not lack ideas. The challenge is focus: deciding what deserves organizational capacity, aligning resources to those priorities, and measuring whether our work is producing results.

Collective Priorities, Not Five Separate Work Plans

The organization must respond to the policy direction of the City Commission collectively. Individual Commissioners should always be able to ask questions, seek information and raise issues. But major new work assignments and shifts in organizational priorities should reflect collective direction so staff can manage workload, resources and accountability responsibly.

A New Strategic Plan – 25 Year Vision – 5 Year Implementation Plan

When everything is a competing priority, we have no priorities. The next strategic planning process should be community-informed, focused and measurable – but led by the City Commission. I envision a professionally administered statistically valid community survey, broad engagement, a limited set of meaningful priorities, clear performance indicators, and direct alignment with the budget and capital improvement program.

The 25-year vision should describe the Sarasota we want to become, while the five-year implementation plan should identify measurable actions, responsible parties, resource needs and a schedule for reporting progress.

I am currently preparing an RFP scope for a professional strategic-planning consultant with a demonstrated record of not merely writing plans but helping comparable communities implement them. The process should identify Sarasota's community values, a limited number of strategic pillars, clear goals and objectives, measurable KPIs, responsible ownership and an implementation framework that connects the Strategic Plan directly to department work plans, the annual budget and the Capital Improvement Program. The objective is not another plan for the shelf; it is a management roadmap for the organization and a transparent accountability tool for the community.

As mentioned previously, I am evaluating the repurposing of an existing position within the organization to create a Manager of Strategic Plans & Initiatives reporting to the City Manager's Office.

The position would help translate Commission-adopted priorities and the City's Strategic Plan into coordinated action across departments. Responsibilities could include monitoring implementation of strategic initiatives; coordinating departmental work plans; supporting development of meaningful KPIs and performance dashboards; tracking progress on major cross-department initiatives; identifying barriers to implementation; and preparing regular progress reports for the City Manager, Commission and community.

The position could also serve as a central point of coordination for initiatives that cross traditional departmental boundaries—helping ensure that important projects do not become fragmented among multiple departments without clear ownership.

This would not create a new position. It would repurpose an existing position to better align organizational resources with the City's emerging strategic priorities.

The role would provide an administrative backbone connecting the Strategic Plan → Commission Priorities → Department Work Plans → KPIs → Dashboards → Cross-Department Initiatives → Progress Reporting.

National Community Survey

A professionally administered community survey can provide statistically valid information about residents' priorities and perceptions while allowing Sarasota to benchmark results against peer communities. Survey findings should inform—not replace—public dialogue and Commission policy decisions.

The National Community Survey (NCS) is a comprehensive survey that gauges residents' opinions on various dimensions of community life. It provides local governments with an in-depth understanding of how their residents perceive the community and its governance. Additionally, when conducted regularly (every three years), the NCS allows cities to track changes in public sentiment over time and benchmark their performance against other municipalities.

The NCS would establish Sarasota's first scientifically representative baseline of resident perceptions of quality of life, City services and community priorities. Public meetings, emails and social media are valuable forms of engagement, but they do

not necessarily represent the full community. A repeatable survey allows us to hear from a broader cross-section of residents, compare Sarasota with Florida and national communities, identify areas needing improvement, and measure whether perceptions change over time. The sequence should be simple: Listen → Measure → Plan → Act → Report.

Dashboards: Measure What Matters

Departments should distinguish activity statistics from performance measures. Counting permits processed, calls answered or work orders opened tells us volume. Measures such as turnaround time, response time, resolution time, customer satisfaction, cost and outcomes tell us how well the service is performing. These dashboards should be easy to understand, intuitive, and integrated into our communication outreach.

ACTION UNDERWAY	Develop department performance dashboards. Establish a small set of meaningful measures for each department and publish understandable public-facing dashboards tied to budget and strategic priorities.
ACTION UNDERWAY	Prepare the next strategic planning process. Develop the scope for community survey, engagement, measurable priorities and Commission adoption.

5. Governance: Recommendations for Commission Consideration

This section is intentionally different from the administrative actions elsewhere in this report. The City Commission determines how it will govern and conduct its business. My responsibility is to offer professional observations and recommendations that may help the Commission and organization work effectively.

These recommendations draw on more than three decades of experience working with elected boards and on professional principles and training from ICMA and the National League of Cities. I offer them respectfully for the Commission’s collective consideration. If there is consensus to proceed, I will bring proposed Rules of Procedure amendments back through the appropriate public process for formal consideration and adoption.

Governance belongs to the Commission. Administration belongs to the City Manager.
Effective government depends on both respecting those roles and working collaboratively.

1. Collective Direction to the City Manager

Formal direction that creates significant new work, changes priorities or commits organizational resources should come from the Commission collectively rather than from individual members. This protects both the Commission’s policymaking role and the Manager’s responsibility to manage workload and implementation. Any request for information and assistance should flow through the City Manager’s Office – not directly to departmental staff. This ensures adherence to the City Charter and allows my office to manage both city resources and individual Commissioner expectations.

The prolonged 2024 storm recovery illustrates why this discipline matters. Every new initiative, information request or change in direction draws on staff capacity already committed to essential services and restoration work. When the Commission collectively establishes priorities, the City Manager can identify the resources, tradeoffs and timing necessary to deliver them.

2. Adding Items to Future Agendas

I recommend a clear process requiring Commission consensus and a formal vote before a commissioner-directed item is added to a future agenda. Commissioners retain the ability to raise issues; the Commission collectively determines whether those issues become organizational priorities. The City Manager then needs to determine how to pivot to implement the new priority, including consideration of what may or may not get completed, re-prioritized or delayed.

3. Public Input

Review the timing, structure and expectations for public comment so residents have meaningful opportunities to be heard while meetings remain orderly, fair and focused. My recommendation is to keep public comment at the beginning and the end of Commission meetings where attendees can comment on general city topics but also on any item that is also on the agenda for public action. Public hearings and quasi-judicial hearings would still be opened for public testimony, per State Law; however, regular legislative items would not be open to public comment during deliberation among the Commission. This is also respectful to those in the public chambers who currently wait, sometimes for hours, to be able to speak on a specific agenda item. Lastly, public comment should be directed to the Chair/Mayor of the meeting and not to individuals.

4. Consent Agendas

I recommend consolidating Consent Agenda No. 1 and Consent Agenda No. 2 into a simpler consent process, with a clear method for pulling items that require discussion. Routine business should be efficient without reducing transparency. This would also allow related agenda items to be grouped together for ease of understanding rather than separated across two areas of the agenda.

5. Questions Before Meetings

I respectfully request and encourage Commissioners to submit technical or clarifying questions in advance when practicable so staff can provide accurate information and reduce avoidable delays at the dais. Responses of broad interest will be shared consistently with the full Commission. Agenda packets are released well in advance of legal requirements to ensure that each Commissioner has enough time to review, prepare, and ask any staff questions. Advance questions, whenever practicable, allow staff to provide more complete responses, reduce avoidable delays and preserve Commission meeting time for meaningful policy deliberation.

6. At the Dais

In anticipation of new Commissioner(s) being elected next month, continue to reinforce expectations for professional, respectful deliberation among Commissioners, staff and the public. Vigorous disagreement is part of democracy; personal attacks and public disparagement undermine trust and make it harder to recruit, retain and support professional staff. It is important to remember - the only time the Commission gets to gather to discuss important city policies is twice a month. This time is essential for a healthy Commission - to allow focused and collaborative policy debate and discussion.

7. Policy and Administration

Use the Rules of Procedure to reinforce the Commission-Manager model: the Commission establishes policy and priorities collectively; the City Manager administers the organization and implements that direction. Clear lanes support collaboration rather than diminish it.

COMMISSION CONSIDERATION

Commission discussion and consensus. If the Commission wishes to advance any governance recommendation, I will return with specific proposed language for public review and formal Commission consideration.

6. Trust, Communication and Civic Understanding

Trust cannot be built through messaging alone. It grows when government communicates clearly, provides facts, listens consistently and demonstrates that decisions connect to stated priorities. Trust is also a two-way street.

Meet People Where They Are

Sarasota should use multiple channels: neighborhood meetings, digital platforms, newsletters, public meetings, educational programs and direct mail when appropriate. Not everyone follows City social media or attends Commission meetings.

Annual Report and Quarterly Communication

I want residents to receive a clear, accessible annual report explaining what the City accomplished, where public dollars are going, what major projects are underway and how performance is changing. A quarterly communication can maintain that connection throughout the year. At least once per year, every household in the City, should receive a printed and mailed report that summarizes the work of their city government.

“Just the Facts” Website Page

When significant misinformation about City business is circulating, residents should have an easy place to find verified information, source documents and concise explanations. The purpose is not to argue with criticism. It is to make accurate information easier to find.

“Word on the Street” Initiative

I want to explore creating a two-way communication program with stakeholders throughout the community on a regular schedule to discuss “boots on the ground” issues that are impacting our residents, businesses, and nonprofits. We will survey the community and staff for identified topics of discussion that are of benefit to the entire community. We can also use this program for impromptu community dilemmas that may arise unexpectedly.

Public Education & Engagement

A new Citizen Academy, lunch-and-learns, behind-the-scenes tours and “Meet the Makers” opportunities can help residents understand who performs City work, how services are delivered and why some decisions are more complex than they appear from the outside.

Community Lunch & Learns should become a regular educational series. Residents can be surveyed about the subjects they most want to understand and sign up for sessions on topics such as the budget and property taxes, development and permitting, public safety, parks and open space, stormwater and flooding, transportation, housing, emergency preparedness, economic development and “How City Hall Works.” Civic engagement should include opportunities to understand government—not only opportunities to speak to government.

IMPLEMENTED & ONGOING

PROJECT BRIEFING SHEETS — Consistent Facts. Clear Communication. Standardized briefing sheets are now used to give the City Commission timely, concise and factual information on significant projects and emerging issues. They create a common factual foundation—what is happening, why it matters, project status, community impacts and next steps—and will remain an ongoing management and communication practice. Goal: Communicate early. Communicate consistently. Make the facts easy to understand.

FURTHER EXPLORATION — #SRQKind: Small Acts. One Community.

I want to explore a Sarasota-wide kindness initiative inspired by #OPKind, a community campaign used during my time in Orland Park to encourage residents and organizations to recognize small acts of kindness. #SRQKind would celebrate the everyday actions of City employees, residents, neighbors, students, businesses, nonprofits, volunteers and visitors that make Sarasota an extraordinary community. The goal is to notice, share and multiply the good already happening around us—not to create another City-centered recognition program.

The concept could begin with employee-to-employee and employee-to-resident recognition, then grow through schools, neighborhood associations, community groups and local businesses. Simple, low-cost tools could include shareable social posts, “Caught Being #SRQKind” recognition cards, community spotlights and optional partner decals.

FURTHER EXPLORATION

Develop a community-owned #SRQKind campaign—“Small Acts. One Community.”—to recognize acts of kindness across Sarasota. Invite residents, businesses, schools, nonprofits and City employees to share stories using #SRQKind; consider “Caught Being #SRQKind” cards and recurring community spotlights.

ACTION UNDERWAY

Build and expand a coordinated communications and civic-education program. Develop the annual report, quarterly communications, fact-based issue pages, proactive media engagement and public-education opportunities.

7. Fiscal Stewardship: Preparing for Uncertainty

Fiscal stewardship means preparing before a problem becomes a crisis. Amendment 3 creates material uncertainty for local governments, but the discipline it demands—prioritization, efficiency and long-range planning—is valuable regardless of the election outcome.

Amendment 3: What Is Known

Florida Amendment 3 will appear on the November 3rd general-election ballot. The measure would increase the homestead exemption for non-school levies to \$150,000 in 2027 and \$250,000 in 2028, with inflation adjustments thereafter, and reduce the annual assessment-growth cap for non-homestead property from 10 percent to 5 percent. It requires 60 percent voter approval to pass.

The City’s current public estimate is an approximately \$5.6 million annual General Fund impact at the full \$250,000 exemption. Sarasota County has discussed an approximately \$87.1 million annual impact at full phase-in. Those figures illustrate why this is not simply a City Hall issue: residents experience City, County and other public services collectively.

Preparing Without Predetermining

The City’s responsibility is to provide factual information, prepare for possible fiscal impacts and protect essential services—not to tell residents how to vote. Preparation should continue on parallel tracks, so Sarasota is ready for either outcome. Additionally, many of the ideas and suggestions received thus far are simply good government and will proceed forward regardless of the referendum results.

Actions Already Underway

- General Fund vacancies are being reviewed before recruitment and hiring decisions are made.
- Departments are identifying efficiencies, cost reductions and opportunities to simplify work.
- Revenue and fee options are being evaluated where appropriate, with attention to service impacts and affordability.
- Organizational consolidation and process improvements are being examined for sustainable savings.
- Major commitments are being evaluated in the context of long-term operating and capital capacity.

Rebuilding the City's Financial Resilience

The 2024 hurricane season demonstrated why strong reserves are essential for a coastal community. Hurricanes Debby, Helene and Milton required significant immediate recovery expenditures and materially reduced the City's General Fund reserves. The FY 2025–26 budget began a multi-year effort to rebuild those reserves, and the recently adopted FY 2026–27 budget continues that work. Current city estimates anticipate General Fund reserves of approximately 17.1% of expenditures at the end of FY 2025–26—back within the City's recommended range, but still well below the stronger cushion Sarasota should maintain given its exposure to hurricanes and other emergencies.

The storms created an operational burden as well as a financial one. Recovery involves years of project delivery, reimbursement documentation and coordination with other agencies, alongside routine municipal services. Even when eligible costs are reimbursed, the time and attention invested by City employees cannot be recovered.

My goal is to continue rebuilding the General Fund balance toward 25% of expenditures over the next two fiscal years, subject to annual Commission budget decisions and changing financial conditions. Reaching that level would strengthen Sarasota's ability to respond quickly to emergencies, manage unexpected costs, protect essential services and reduce the likelihood that a future disaster immediately creates a financial crisis.

ACTION UNDERWAY

Rebuild General Fund Reserves. Continue the multi-year reserve-replenishment strategy begun after the 2024 storms. Work toward a General Fund balance equal to 25% of expenditures over the next two fiscal years, subject to annual Commission budget decisions and changing financial conditions. Stronger reserves provide critical capacity for emergency response, protect essential services and improve Sarasota's resilience when the next major storm or unexpected event occurs.

Infrastructure First

Fiscal discipline also means resisting the temptation to add new assets without understanding their full lifecycle costs. Sarasota should prioritize reinvestment in aging infrastructure and existing obligations before continually expanding what the City must operate and maintain. When new assets are considered, a clear capital and operating funding strategy needs to be completed.

ACTION UNDERWAY

Continue scenario planning. Refine multi-year fiscal scenarios as information develops and communicate impacts factually to the Commission, employees and community.

Resilience is also organizational. The lessons of the 2024 storms reinforce the need for strong hurricane preparedness, continuity-of-operations planning, clear emergency roles, employee readiness and coordinated communication before, during and after major events. Infrastructure resilience and organizational readiness must advance together.

8. Infrastructure and Stormwater: Take Care of the Foundation

Infrastructure is easy to overlook until it fails. Sarasota’s long-term success depends on disciplined reinvestment in the systems that support daily life and community resilience. Additionally, good intergovernmental partnerships are critical for Sarasota’s future sustainability.

Stormwater as a Long-Term System

Stormwater must be approached as infrastructure—not only as a response to individual flooding complaints. The City needs a clear understanding of system condition, capacity, ownership, maintenance responsibilities, capital needs and the way water moves across jurisdictional boundaries.

As the City and Sarasota County discuss future stormwater responsibilities, due diligence is essential. Greater city control could improve accountability and responsiveness, but any transfer must be supported by reliable information about asset condition, operating costs, capital needs, regional inflows and a fair allocation of costs where unincorporated drainage affects City systems.

The broader objective should be a comprehensive long-range stormwater strategy: inventory and condition assessment of assets; identification of flood-prone areas and neighborhood vulnerabilities; maintenance, rehabilitation and replacement schedules; capital prioritization based on risk; measurable service levels; sustainable and equitable funding; regional drainage analysis; and clear responsibilities for responding when residents experience drainage or flooding problems. Stormwater planning should be integrated with the Strategic Plan, Capital Improvement Program, land-use decisions, resiliency work and future development regulations.

I also strongly believe that now is the time to think “outside the box”. The City, in collaboration with the County, should convene a Sarasota Water Resilience Summit and invite experts from across the nation and even the world to come to Sarasota to examine and discuss the impact of climate change, reality metrics related to storms and sea level rise, coastal flooding, rising groundwater tables, and solutions, both short and long-term, that have successfully worked throughout the world. Sarasota has an opportunity to become a national leader in developing practical, science-based solutions to coastal flooding and water resilience. Rather than simply responding to the next storm, we should help shape the solutions that coastal communities will need for generations.

FURTHER EXPLORATION	Convene Sarasota Water Resilience Initiative. Invite regional, national, and world experts to Sarasota to share knowledge, history, trends, and solutions that have worked across the region and globe to address storm water and coastal flooding. This could be a regional initiative, as well.
----------------------------	--

Asset Management and Capital Discipline

The City should increasingly connect capital planning to asset conditions, risk and lifecycle cost. A project’s ribbon-cutting cost is only the beginning; long-term maintenance and replacement obligations must be visible when decisions are made.

ACTION UNDERWAY	Advance stormwater due diligence. Develop the technical, financial and intergovernmental information needed to evaluate future service responsibility and long-term investment.
------------------------	--

ACTION UNDERWAY

Strengthen asset-based capital planning. Prioritize condition, risk, lifecycle cost and service consequences when sequencing capital investments. Expand GIS capacity to make informed investment decisions.

9. Parks and Open Space: Protect What Makes Sarasota Special

Parks, recreation and open space are not amenities at the margins of community life. They contribute to health, resilience, neighborhood identity, environmental quality and Sarasota's sense of place.

A Long-Term Protection and Funding Strategy

Sarasota should evaluate durable ways to protect and fund parks and open space over the long term. That includes exploring the legal and financial feasibility of a dedicated parks structure or funding mechanism, with any option brought through the appropriate public and Commission process.

The long-term strategy should examine three complementary tools: sustainable public funding and governance, including the feasibility of a dedicated parks district or other dedicated funding mechanism; an independent Friends of Sarasota Parks, Recreation & Open Space 501(c)(3) to expand philanthropy and partnerships; and an asset-management approach that identifies condition, lifecycle costs and reinvestment needs before new obligations are added. The question is not simply what parks Sarasota wants today. It is what system we need to create to protect, maintain, fund and enhance them for the next generation.

Friends of Sarasota Parks & Open Space

I want to explore creation of an independent 501(c)(3) "Friends" organization focused exclusively on parks, open space and recreation. In my previous role with the Forest Preserve District of DuPage County, I saw firsthand how this model can expand philanthropy, volunteerism, advocacy and community ownership without replacing government's core responsibility to fund and manage public assets.

A Sarasota Friends organization could create another avenue for residents, businesses and philanthropic partners to invest in public spaces through major gifts, grants, planned giving, corporate partnerships, volunteerism, conservation, programming and special projects. The model should supplement—not replace—public responsibility for parks and recreation.

FURTHER EXPLORATION

Develop the Friends concept. Evaluate mission, governance, nonprofit structure, fundraising role and relationship to the City.

COMMISSION / PUBLIC POLICY

Evaluate long-term parks funding options. Return policy choices requiring Commission or voter action through the appropriate public process.

10. Public Safety and Community Well-Being

Public safety is foundational. Residents should feel safe in their neighborhoods, public spaces and interactions with City services, and our employees should be supported when they face threats or violence.

Technology as a Tool

Tools such as license-plate recognition cameras can assist law enforcement investigations and help connect information across incidents. Technology should be used with clear policy, appropriate safeguards and an understanding that it supports—not replaces—professional policing and community relationships.

Young People and Violence Prevention

Recent violence involving teenagers is a reminder that public safety cannot be addressed by enforcement alone. Prevention requires partnerships among families, schools, law enforcement, neighborhoods, nonprofits and youth-serving organizations. The City can help convene those partners and focus attention on practical interventions.

Parking and Field Operations

The recent focus on the City’s parking program reinforced the need to align field operations with public-safety resources. We are moving towards a customer service and ambassador model for parking enforcement with stronger coordination with the Police Department, appropriate safety tools and clearer integration with special events and downtown operations.

The reorganization of Parking Enforcement with the Police Department provides an opportunity to strengthen employee safety, field responsiveness and professional training while redefining enforcement as both compliance and customer service. Parking personnel are receiving enhanced training in communication, de-escalation and consistent enforcement; body-worn cameras will add safety and accountability; and closer coordination with Police and special-events operations will improve field support. At the same time, the City should continue simplifying the parking program and expanding business-oriented services such as validation and valet options. Small hospitality touches can reinforce a larger message: sometimes exceptional public service is found in the smallest interactions.

Community-Wide Public Safety Partnerships

Public safety is a shared responsibility that extends beyond any single department or jurisdiction. Strong collaborations among residents, neighborhoods, schools, youth-serving organizations, businesses, social-service providers, emergency responders, law enforcement and regional partners support prevention, preparedness, trust and coordinated responses to emerging challenges.

I want to explore forming a community-based public safety advisory group to help advance safe, collaborative and community-supported public safety programs and initiatives. Its scope should extend beyond the Sarasota Police Department and recognize public safety as a citywide and regional responsibility involving law enforcement, fire and emergency services, schools, neighborhoods, youth-serving organizations, businesses, nonprofits, social-service providers and other governmental partners.

The group could help identify emerging concerns, strengthen relationships, support prevention and education initiatives, connect community resources and develop collaborative solutions to issues that cannot be addressed by enforcement alone. The objective is not simply to advise the City and our Police Department; it is to help build a safer community through shared responsibility, prevention, partnership and trust.

FURTHER EXPLORATION

Explore forming a Community Public Safety Advisory Group with a citywide and regional perspective—not solely an advisory group for the Police Department.

Evaluate its purpose, membership, relationship to existing groups, appropriate governance and legal requirements, and opportunities to advance prevention, education, partnerships and collaborative public-safety initiatives.

IMPLEMENTED & UNDERWAY

Strengthen parking/public-safety alignment. Continue organizational and operational review emphasizing employee safety, customer service, ambassador practices and coordinated field response.

11. Economic Opportunity: A More Proactive Sarasota

Economic development should be intentional, data-informed and connected to the broader goals of housing, workforce, neighborhood investment and fiscal sustainability.

During my first 100 days, the City completed the recruitment of a new Economic Development Manager. I was actively involved in the recruitment and selection process because strengthening Sarasota's economic-development capacity is an important part of the City's future direction.

The new manager will help lead the transition toward a more proactive, data-informed and relationship-driven economic-development program—one that understands Sarasota's existing businesses and assets, identifies market opportunities and gaps, strengthens relationships with employers and entrepreneurs, and positions the City to pursue opportunities strategically rather than simply responding when they arise. Hiring the right leadership is the first step; the work now underway is to build the economic-development program Sarasota needs for its future.

Community Development and Economic Development are related—but they are not the same. Community development is primarily about the place and built environment: land use, planning, neighborhoods, housing, infrastructure, redevelopment, permitting and public spaces. Economic development is primarily about people and economic opportunity: businesses, jobs, workforce, entrepreneurship, investment, industry sectors, talent attraction and retention, and the conditions that allow residents and businesses to prosper. Community development helps shape the place. Economic development helps create the opportunities that allow people, businesses and the community to prosper within that place. Sarasota needs to be intentional about both.

Build the Basics

A stronger program needs reliable business intelligence: business and property directories, vacancy information, GIS analysis, market and leakage data, business-retention and expansion outreach, and regular relationships with brokers, employers and regional partners.

Let's start with the facts. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates Sarasota's 2025 population at 58,458—6.6% above the 2020 estimate base. About 29.2% of residents are age 65 or older, while 15.6% are under 18. Among adults age 25 and older, 41.8% hold a bachelor's degree or higher. Median household income for 2020–2024 is estimated at \$72,105, median gross rent at \$1,684, and the median value of owner-occupied housing at \$463,000. These facts reinforce the importance of workforce, housing, talent and the "Every Generation Matters" lens in economic strategy. (U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts, Sarasota city, Florida; 2020–2024 estimates and 2025 population estimate.)

We can't sell what we don't know we have. We need to inventory our economic and business assets. The City should build a comprehensive, GIS-supported Economic & Community Asset Inventory that includes businesses and major employers; commercial districts and corridors; vacant commercial space and redevelopment opportunities; available land and public property; healthcare and educational institutions; workforce and training resources; transportation and mobility assets; parks, waterfront and recreational assets; historic resources; nonprofits and foundations; financial institutions and sources of capital; entrepreneurial resources; and Sarasota's arts and cultural institutions.

A more mature economic-development program should follow a disciplined sequence: Know Our People → Inventory Our Assets → Understand Our Market → Identify Our Gaps → Support Existing Businesses → Recruit Strategically → Measure Results.

Working with the new Economic Development Manager, we must develop the foundational tools for a proactive program: a comprehensive business and community asset inventory; business-retention and expansion outreach program; commercial vacancy and occupancy information; GIS and market analytics; leakage and gap analysis; workforce and education partnerships; targeted recruitment; and stronger relationships with regional and industry partners. Arts and culture should also be fully incorporated as economic assets and competitive strengths.

Newtown and Historically Underserved Areas

Economic opportunity must reach every part of Sarasota. Newtown deserves sustained attention that combines business development, entrepreneurship, access to capital, redevelopment, workforce opportunity and partnerships with banks, credit unions, nonprofits and foundations. Economic equity needs to be honestly and openly discussed as a core value and pillar of our community. The City should explore creating new incentive programs that can bolster reinvestment, stabilize and enhance neighborhood homes, and create pathways for economic equity. Additionally, we should utilize our GIS technology to build out the assets and deficiencies of Newtown, to allow for a more strategic and focused approach.

Every Generation Matters

Economic vitality is also intergenerational. Sarasota needs young people who can see a future here, working families who can afford to remain, professionals and entrepreneurs who can build careers and businesses, and older adults who can continue contributing their experience and resources.

I believe local colleges and universities can be stronger partners in this work. Student talent, internships, applied research and civic engagement can connect institutional capacity with community needs.

We should make Sarasota a living laboratory by building formal partnerships with local colleges and universities so real City and community challenges become opportunities for internships, capstone projects, studios, applied research, faculty collaboration and other hands-on learning. Students would gain meaningful experience and portfolio-building opportunities while the City gains new ideas, research capacity and stronger connections to the next generation of Sarasota's workforce and civic leaders.

This initiative can be part of the broader Every Generation Matters strategy, connecting the talent within our organization, the expertise already living in our community through SAGE, and the talent of the future developing in our colleges and universities.

ECONOMIC FUTURE	
EVERY GENERATION MATTERS	
ACTION UNDERWAY	Build a modern economic-development toolkit. Establish core data, business-retention outreach, market intelligence, partnership strategy and measurable outcomes.
ACTION UNDERWAY	Deepen Newtown partnerships. Coordinate financial institutions, nonprofits, foundations, employers and community leaders around practical opportunity-building initiatives. Build trust.
FURTHER EXPLORATION	Launch Sarasota as a Living Laboratory. Build formal partnerships with local colleges and universities that connect student learning, faculty expertise and applied research with real City and community challenges through internships, capstone projects, studios, research assignments and other collaborations.
FURTHER EXPLORATION	Develop SAGE as part of the Every Generation Matters talent strategy. Connect experienced residents and community experts with defined City challenges while linking Talent Within, Talent Around Us and Talent of the Future into a broader pipeline of civic contribution and problem-solving.

12. Housing, Growth and Balanced Development

Sarasota’s desirability creates both opportunity and pressure. The challenge is not choosing between growth and preservation; it is making disciplined decisions about how change supports the community we want to remain.

Housing Affordability

Housing affordability affects workforce stability, economic development, transportation choices and the ability of multiple generations to remain part of Sarasota. City actions alone cannot solve the regional housing market, but land-use policy, partnerships, public assets, redevelopment tools and intergovernmental coordination can contribute. We also need to explore new programs that can help our income-eligible residents reinvest and keep their existing homes or even buy their first home. This will require thinking outside of the box and partnering with others throughout the City.

Development Process and Community Expectations

A predictable development process benefits applicants, neighborhoods and staff. Standards should be understandable, review should be coordinated, and community expectations should be grounded in adopted policy. Better internal alignment between long-range and current planning is part of that work.

Preparing for Future Code Work

Staff should maintain a disciplined list of priority development-code issues that warrant future evaluation, so the City is prepared to act when legally appropriate (SB 180 expiration). The purpose is not to predetermine outcomes, but to preserve institutional knowledge and sequence future policy work around Commission priorities.

Create an “October 2027 Ready List.” For each potential future amendment, staff should document the issue, why a change may be needed, the responsible department, legal analysis, research and data needs, required community engagement, Commission policy direction and an implementation schedule. October 1, 2027 should be a starting line—not the date we begin figuring out what needs to be done. Any future action must also remain consistent with applicable Florida law and Commission direction.

ACTION UNDERWAY	Develop and maintain a future code-priority inventory. Document issues, legal constraints, research needs and potential timing so future policy discussions can be well prepared.
------------------------	---

13. One Community: Engagement Beyond the Loudest Voices

Public participation is essential, but participation is not the same as representativeness. City government must hear from people who attend every meeting and from people who rarely have the time, access or inclination to come to City Hall.

This means combining traditional public meetings with surveys, neighborhood outreach, digital engagement, targeted conversations and partnerships that reach renters, families, young adults, seasonal residents, businesses and historically underrepresented communities.

From Participation to Contribution

Community engagement should not stop at asking residents what they think. Sarasota is home to extraordinary professional talent, and we should create meaningful ways for residents to contribute that expertise to solving defined City challenges.

SAGE — Sarasota Advisory Group of Experts

Local Expertise. Fresh Perspectives. Sarasota Solutions.

I envision SAGE as a City Manager-led volunteer talent pool that invites residents to submit applications or resumes identifying their professional experience and areas of expertise. The City Manager’s Office can then assemble small, issue-specific teams when a City or community challenge would benefit from outside expertise.

Unlike a traditional standing advisory board, SAGE is intended to be project-based and problem-focused. Teams could generally serve for 30 to 90 days, work on a clearly defined assignment, provide research, ideas or recommendations, and conclude when the assignment is complete. SAGE would advise the City Manager and would not replace professional staff, formal advisory boards or the City Commission’s policymaking authority.

Potential assignments could include technology and artificial intelligence, process improvement, economic development, workforce housing, parks and open space, communications, resiliency, customer service and financial efficiency.

This reinforces a broader strategy for harnessing Sarasota’s human capital: TALENT WITHIN—our employees and their skills; TALENT AROUND US—SAGE and community expertise; and TALENT OF THE FUTURE—students, colleges and universities through Sarasota as a Living Laboratory.

FURTHER EXPLORATION

Develop and launch SAGE. Establish the application process, expertise inventory, project-selection criteria, operating guidelines and appropriate legal framework for deploying resident experts on defined City challenges.

Count Our Blessings

Public discourse naturally focuses on problems. Government has to solve problems, but a healthy civic culture also recognizes what is working and what is worth protecting. Sarasota’s parks, neighborhoods, cultural institutions, public servants, volunteers, businesses and engaged residents are strengths. Counting our blessings is not complacency; it helps us identify what must be preserved while we tackle what must change.

ACTION UNDERWAY

Broaden engagement methods. Design future strategic planning and major initiatives to reach beyond the people who routinely participate in formal meetings.

14. The Next 100 Days—and Beyond

The next phase is about disciplined execution. The work below is not a promise that every issue will be solved in 100 days or even in the near future. It is a commitment to move the highest-priority work forward with clear ownership, communication and measurable progress.

STATUS	PRIORITY WORK
IMPLEMENTED & ONGOING	Permanent Deputy City Manager leadership; Fridays with Karie; Project Briefing Sheets; Employee Family Fun Day; reserve-rebuilding discipline.
ACTION UNDERWAY	Strategic-planning procurement; departmental KPIs and dashboards; organizational alignment and planning review; leadership, succession and internal-talent development; proactive economic development; strengthened parking/public-safety alignment; communications and civic education; stormwater and asset-planning work.
NEXT ACTION	Advance customer-service and process-improvement cohorts; develop the annual report and quarterly communications; refine the October 2027 development-code readiness list; continue General Fund reserve progress toward the 25% goal; move priority cross-department initiatives into measurable work plans.
FURTHER EXPLORATION / COMMISSION CONSIDERATION	Rules of Procedure and governance reforms; long-term parks and open-space funding options; Sarasota Water Resilience Initiative; Friends of Sarasota Parks, Recreation & Open Space; Community Public Safety Advisory Group; #SRQKind; SAGE; Sarasota as a Living Laboratory; policy, budget or intergovernmental decisions related to stormwater and other major initiatives.

The goal is not more activity. The goal is to be a more focused, aligned and accountable City government.

Closing

My role is to lead the organization: to turn collective policy direction into execution, build the capacity of our employees, improve how we work, and bring forward professional advice when policy choices are required. I will do that transparently and collaboratively.

The Commission's role is to set policy and priorities collectively. The community's role is to participate, question, contribute and hold all of us accountable. These roles are different, but the mission is shared.

We can protect what makes Sarasota special while improving how we serve. We can disagree without becoming divided. We can prepare for uncertainty without losing ambition. And we can count our blessings while still expecting more of ourselves. Thank you for this extraordinary opportunity to serve the City of Sarasota.

ONE CITY. ONE TEAM. ONE COMMUNITY.