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City of Sarasota City Manager Brochure Review

1. Review of Community Description
2. Review of Government Structure
3. Review of Ideal Candidate Profile
4. Review of Key Challenges and Opportunities
5. Review of Qualifications
6. Review of Application Process Timeline
 - a. Brochure includes an aggressive timeline. City may want to consider the impact of the winter holidays on candidate recruitment
7. Review of Salary Range
 - a. Recommend a tighter highing range: \$275,000 and \$295,000
8. Discussion of challenges related to the residency requirement
 - a. Recommend further discussion about the city providing housing assistance to account for the expense of purchasing a house, high mortgage rates, and limited severance payouts by Florida law

CITY MANAGER – HOUSING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM OPTIONS

1. DOWN-PAYMENT ASSISTANCE — GRANT OR LOAN

Structure: One-time assistance toward down payment/closing costs. Can be a forgivable loan (e.g., 20% forgiven per year of service over 5 years)

2. EMPLOYER-ASSISTED HOUSING — TENURE-BASED SUPPORT

Structure: City (as employer) provides a loan or grant that is forgiven over time (e.g., 1/60th monthly over five years) contingent on continued employment and primary residence.

3. CITY PURCHASE + LEASE TO EMPLOYEE

Structure: City (or an associated entity) buys a home and leases it to the City Manager at an income-appropriate rent; may include an option to purchase later.

4. LOW-INTEREST “SECOND MORTGAGE” OR INTEREST-RATE BUY-DOWN

Structure: City issues funds at a rate buy-down on the first mortgage for X years.

5. SHARED-EQUITY / DEED-RESTRICTED HOMEOWNERSHIP

Structure: City invests equity up front in exchange for a deed restriction capping appreciation; employee buys at a reduced price.

RECRUITMENT

City of Sarasota, FL

City Manager



First review of resumes - December 5, 2025

Executive search
provided by:



About the Community

Sarasota, Florida, is a vibrant and culturally rich city nestled along the Gulf Coast, celebrated for its beautiful beaches, artistic vitality, and small-town charm. Consistently ranked among *America's Best Places to Live* by *U.S. News & World Report*, Sarasota offers the perfect balance of sophistication, coastal living, and community spirit.



With a population of roughly 60,000 residents, the city's energy expands significantly during the winter months, when seasonal residents and visitors swell the community to over 100,000 people. Sarasota's lifestyle reflects a blend of laid-back coastal elegance and forward-looking innovation. Residents enjoy 251 days of sunshine each year, an award-winning performing arts scene, world-class dining, and access to the region's natural treasures—white sand beaches, tranquil bay waters, and lush parks and trails.





Cultural amenities abound. The City-owned Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall anchors Sarasota's reputation as Florida's "Cultural Coast," complemented by institutions such as the Ringling Museum of Art, Asolo Repertory Theatre, Sarasota Opera House, Florida Studio Theatre, and the Sarasota Ballet. Signature events like the Sarasota Film Festival, Siesta Key Crystal Classic, and the Powerboat Grand Prix draw national attention each year.

Sarasota's economy is anchored by tourism, healthcare, education, and professional services. The area's largest employers include Sarasota Memorial Hospital, the Sarasota County School Board, and Publix Super Markets, with growing contributions from the construction and tech sectors. Housing options range from walkable downtown condominiums to coastal neighborhoods and family-friendly communities inland, providing choices for every lifestyle.





A RICH AND UNIQUE HISTORY

Sarasota's roots date back to the 1500s, when Spanish explorers arrived along Florida's Gulf Coast. The city was incorporated in 1902 and reincorporated as a city in 1913, with John Hamilton Gillespie—who built Florida's first golf course—serving as the community's first mayor.

The city's character was further shaped by visionary figures such as John Ringling, whose winter home and investments brought national attention and earned Sarasota the nickname "*Circus City*." Ringling's influence, along with the civic leadership of Bertha Palmer, who championed local agriculture and tourism, helped establish Sarasota as both a cultural and economic hub.

In 1945, the City formally adopted the Commission-Manager form of government, ensuring professional management and stable leadership as Sarasota transitioned from a small coastal town to a thriving regional center.



GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE

Sarasota operates under a Commission–Manager form of government, as established by its City Charter. The City Commission serves as the community’s legislative and policymaking body, consisting of five members—two elected at-large and three elected from single-member districts. Each serves a four-year term, with elections staggered in even-numbered years.

Each November, Commissioners select from among themselves a Mayor and Vice Mayor. The Commission appoints three Charter Officials:

- The City Manager, who serves as the City’s Chief Administrative Officer
- The City Auditor and Clerk, who acts as the official recordkeeper and internal auditor
- The City Attorney, who serves as legal counsel to the City

The City Manager oversees employees across major departments such as Police, Parks and Recreation, Public Works, Utilities, and Development Services. The City’s FY 2025–2026 total budget is \$303 million.

Sarasota’s government is guided by the principles of integrity, accountability, teamwork, and respect. This structure reflects the community’s commitment to transparent governance, professional management, and strong collaboration between elected officials and staff—values that have helped sustain Sarasota’s success for decades.



The Sarasota Experience

Sarasota is more than a place to live and work—it's a community that embraces creativity, celebrates diversity, and thrives on civic pride. Known as Florida's Cultural Coast, Sarasota offers a unique blend of coastal beauty, cosmopolitan energy, and small-town warmth that continues to draw artists, entrepreneurs, professionals, and families from across the nation.

A THRIVING ARTS AND CULTURE SCENE

The arts are not just a pastime in Sarasota—they are part of its identity. Few cities of comparable size can boast the depth and diversity of Sarasota's cultural landscape. The John and Mable Ringling Museum of Art, Florida's official state art museum, anchors a constellation of world-class institutions that include the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, Asolo Repertory Theatre, Sarasota Ballet, Florida Studio Theatre, Sarasota Opera, Westcoast Black Theatre Troupe, and the Sarasota Art Museum.

The community's artistic spirit spills outdoors, too. Public art installations dot city streets and parks, murals enliven downtown alleyways, and open-air festivals fill the calendar year-round—from the internationally renowned Sarasota Film Festival to the Chalk Festival, Sarasota Music Festival, and the Siesta Key Crystal Classic sand-sculpting competition. Whether one's passion lies in fine art, live theatre, film, or music, Sarasota offers continual inspiration and opportunities for engagement.



A CULINARY DESTINATION

Sarasota's dining scene rivals that of much larger metropolitan areas, combining global sophistication with Gulf Coast freshness. Dozens of chef-driven restaurants and locally owned bistros offer everything from upscale waterfront dining to creative farm-to-table concepts and casual seafood spots featuring the day's local catch. The downtown core, St. Armands Circle, and the Rosemary District provide walkable clusters of restaurants, cafés, and wine bars that come alive after dark.

Local culinary traditions are enriched by the city's diversity—Italian trattorias, Caribbean grills, French bakeries, and New Southern kitchens all thrive here. A growing number of microbreweries and craft cocktail lounges add to the city's vibrant nightlife, while open-air markets and food festivals celebrate Sarasota's love of good food and community connection.





DOWNTOWN AND NEIGHBORHOOD LIVING

At the heart of it all is Downtown Sarasota—a walkable, tree-lined district filled with boutique shopping, art galleries, historic architecture, and waterfront views. Main Street, Lemon Avenue, and Palm Avenue serve as lively corridors of commerce and culture, with year-round events such as the Downtown Farmers Market, art walks, parades, and live music. The nearby Bay Park project is transforming the city's waterfront into a signature public space that blends green design, recreation, and community gathering areas along Sarasota Bay.

Housing options in and around the city are as diverse as the people who call Sarasota home. Downtown condominiums and luxury high-rises offer modern amenities and sweeping views of the bay, while charming bungalows, historic homes, and new developments provide appealing options for families and professionals alike. Waterfront estates, golf-course communities, and mixed-use neighborhoods create a housing market that accommodates a wide range of lifestyles and income levels. The median home price, around \$549,000, reflects Sarasota's strong desirability and steady growth, while surrounding neighborhoods and inland areas offer more attainable options without sacrificing access to the city's amenities.



A LIFESTYLE OF CONNECTION AND COMMUNITY

Despite its sophistication, Sarasota retains an inviting, close-knit atmosphere. Neighbors greet each other at the Farmers Market, families gather for concerts in Payne Park, and volunteers of all ages support a wide array of civic, cultural, and philanthropic organizations. Residents value Sarasota's tradition of participation—whether serving on local boards, supporting the arts, or engaging in lively public discourse about the city's future.

In every sense, Sarasota offers a lifestyle that combines beauty, creativity, and community. For the next City Manager, it represents a truly special place to lead—a city where art and culture meet coastal living, where innovation is encouraged, and where civic pride runs deep.



City Commission



MAYOR, DISTRICT TWO
Liz Alpert



VICE MAYOR, AT-LARGE
Debbie Trice



COMMISSIONER, AT-LARGE
Jen Ahearn-Koch



COMMISSIONER, DISTRICT ONE
Kyle Battie



COMMISSIONER, DISTRICT THREE
Kathy Kelley Ohlrich



Charter Officials



INTERIM CITY MANAGER
David Bullock



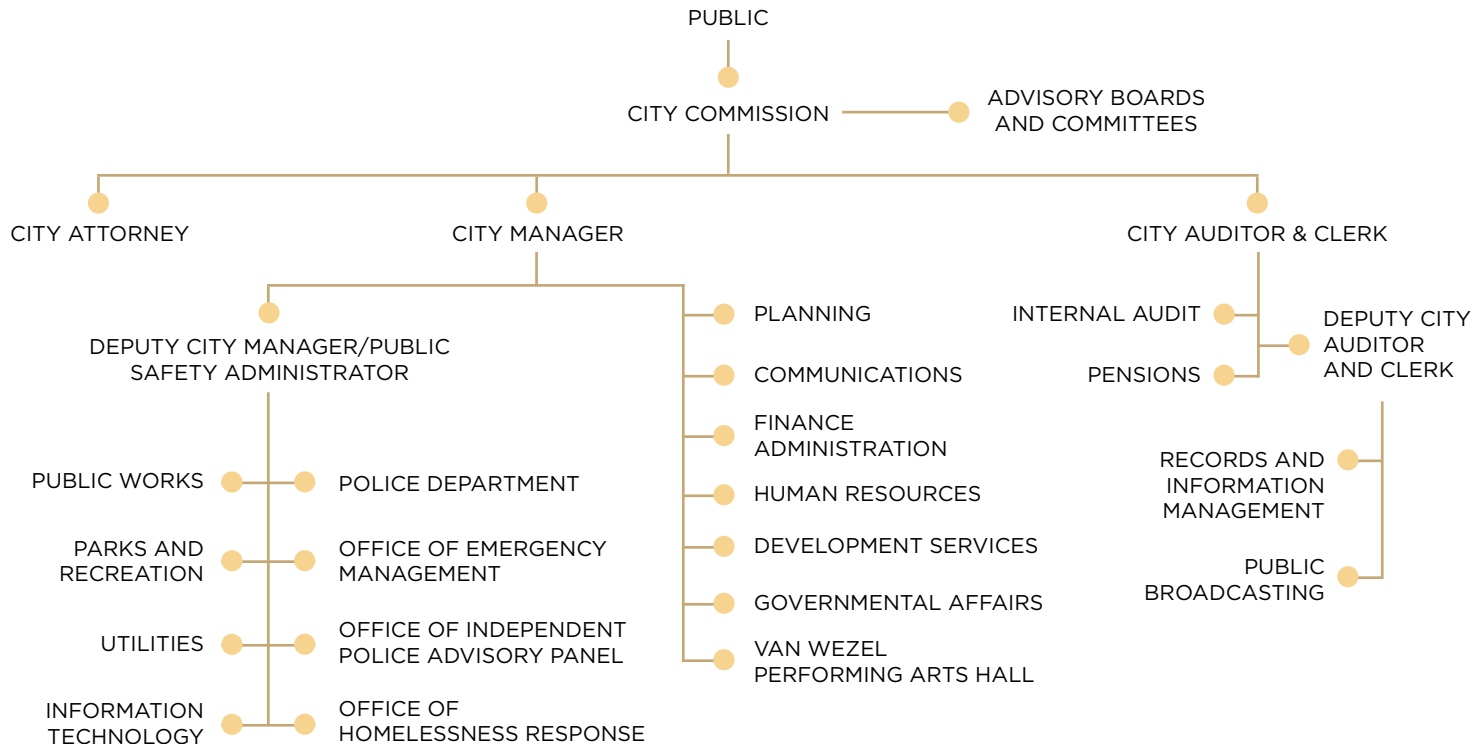
CITY ATTORNEY
Joe Polzak



CITY AUDITOR & CLERK
Shayla Griggs



Organization Chart



The Role

ABOUT THE POSITION

The City Manager is a cornerstone leadership role within the City of Sarasota, responsible for guiding the daily operations of this vibrant and evolving community. Working closely with the Mayor and City Commission, the City Manager helps shape and implement citywide policy while ensuring that organizational priorities align with the community's long-term vision.



As the City's chief administrative officer, the City Manager provides strategic leadership in developing and executing both short- and long-term plans. This individual supports the Mayor and City Commission by preparing reports, offering professional recommendations, and attending Commission meetings to provide staff insight and operational perspective.





The Role

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Oversee all city departments and the management team, including the hiring, supervision, and evaluation of department directors (Except for positions appointed by the Commission directly – City Attorney and City Auditor and Clerk)
- Establish and maintain policies and procedures that ensure efficient, effective, and transparent municipal operations
- Lead the preparation of the annual budget in close collaboration with the City's Chief Financial Officer, demonstrating strong financial management skills and a deep understanding of municipal finance
- Serve as a key representative and spokesperson for the City, building strong relationships with residents, business leaders, community organizations, and regional partners

The next City Manager of Sarasota will be a forward-thinking, collaborative leader with a passion for public service and a proven ability to bring people together. The ideal candidate will value transparency, communication, and teamwork—working in full partnership with the City Commission, staff, and community stakeholders to advance Sarasota's goals and ensure the City continues to thrive.



Challenges and Opportunities

THE OPPORTUNITY

The City of Sarasota is seeking an exceptional, forward-thinking leader to serve as its next City Manager. This position offers an exciting opportunity to guide one of Florida's most dynamic and vibrant coastal communities through a period of continued growth, innovation, and community engagement. Sarasota's next City Manager will be a visible, approachable, and relationship-driven leader who thrives on connection with residents, business leaders, civic organizations, and regional partners.

This is not a role for an introvert or someone who views community engagement as a box to check. Success in Sarasota requires genuine enthusiasm for public interaction and a strong presence at community events. The City Commission is looking for a City Manager who truly values civic involvement and sees it as a core leadership responsibility, not an obligation.

LEADERSHIP STYLE AND GOVERNANCE APPROACH

The ideal candidate will be a trusted advisor to the Mayor and City Commission—someone who communicates with honesty, transparency, and integrity. The Commission seeks a professional who tells them what they *need* to hear, not simply what they *want* to hear.

This position requires a collaborator who works *with* the Commission, not one who manages it—someone who respects the diversity of perspectives and can help shape those perspectives into a shared vision through thoughtful dialogue and consensus-building.





Key Leadership Qualities

The next City Manager will be a strategic thinker and a strong organizational leader—a person who:

- Understands the long-term implications of today's decisions.
- Establishes clear, achievable goals for staff and ensures they have the tools and resources to succeed.
- Promotes stability, trust, and respect within the organization.
- Listens carefully, values diverse viewpoints, and fosters collaboration across all levels of the City.
- Creates a positive, inclusive workplace culture where employees are supported and empowered.

Sarasota needs a leader who balances innovation with practicality and embraces new ideas yet maintains a steady hand when navigating complex issues.



Community and Strategic Priorities

The incoming City Manager will find a community filled with opportunity—and a few challenges that demand attention. Among the priorities and initiatives the next City Manager will help lead are:

- Stormwater System Improvements: Partnering with Sarasota County to address critical infrastructure needs
- Performing Arts Center Project: Advancing this high-profile initiative that holds deep significance for the community
- Workforce and Affordable Housing: Developing strategies and partnerships to expand access and affordability
- Downtown Traffic and Parking: Evaluating and implementing solutions that support mobility, business vitality, and quality of life

Additionally, the next City Manager will be expected to conduct a comprehensive review of the City's Strategic Plan, modernize its goals, and work with the Commission and community stakeholders to establish a shared, forward-looking vision for Sarasota's future.



THE CITY OF SARASOTA SEEKS A CITY MANAGER WHO IS:

- Relatable and engaging—a visible presence in the community and a genuine relationship-builder.
- Decisive yet inclusive—someone who leads with confidence but values the input of others.
- Data-driven and adaptable—able to assess performance metrics while remaining flexible and responsive to changing conditions.
- Visionary and grounded—able to inspire innovation while maintaining a practical understanding of municipal operations.

The successful candidate will view every challenge as an opportunity and every opportunity as a challenge worth tackling.

A CAREER-DEFINING ROLE

For the right professional, this is a tremendous opportunity to make a lasting impact in one of Florida's most desirable communities. Sarasota's City Manager will have the privilege of leading an experienced team, working alongside a dedicated City Commission, and partnering with an engaged, passionate citizenry.

The City is looking for a unifier with vision, a communicator who values inclusion, and a leader who thrives on collaboration.





The Ideal Candidate

- A competitive individual who knows, understands, and values the importance of being part of a team
- A leader who possesses the ability to relate to a diverse workforce
- An individual who can work with a shared community vision to see the big picture and execute the City Commission's direction to achieve that vision
- A supportive leader with the will and ability to collaborate with the staff
- A confident leader willing and able to delegate tasks that allow seasoned staff to work autonomously
- Exceptional communication skills
- A person of high integrity, always working to do what is in the long-term best interest of the City
- Someone who can think both locally and regionally
- An individual who can respectfully and effectively help resolve problems between opposing viewpoints
- Resourceful problem solver who works to progress, not impede the process
- Actively involved with local, state, and federal officials in a continuing effort to secure the resources necessary to continue moving the City forward





Qualifications

- The ideal candidate must have at least 10 years of progressive senior management experience as a City Manager, Assistant City Manager, or department head.
- A bachelor's degree in business, public administration, public policy, or a related field is expected. While not mandatory, a master's degree is highly desirable.
- Per the City Charter, the City Manager is expected to reside in the city. A reasonable amount of time will be provided to candidates to move into the city limits.

Preferred Experience

- Knowledge and experience in developing and maintaining complex municipal infrastructure
- A proven track record of open and productive community dialogue with community groups, business organizations, residents, visitors, and regional and state leaders who may have at any time similar or conflicting views on community issues
- Knowledge of issues commonly associated with coastal communities, including infrastructure, emergency preparedness, crisis management, and intergovernmental cooperation
- Familiarity and comfort with promoting and managing the impacts of tourism, seasonal resident populations, and active and vibrant downtowns

[CLICK HERE FOR CITY MANAGER JOB DESCRIPTION](#)



Application Process

For more information on this position, including supplementary documents and resources, visit the recruitment webpage at:

[CLICK HERE FOR CITY OF SARASOTA CITY MANAGER RECRUITMENT PAGE](#)

The first review of resumes will take place on December 5, 2025.

Please refrain from communicating with the staff or elected officials with the City of Sarasota. Please direct inquiries to Sumter Consulting.

Please contact the Executive Recruiter with any questions or concerns:

Warren Hutmacher

Email: warren@sumterconsulting.com

Phone: 404-535-0525

Website: sumterlocalgovconsulting.com

Florida's robust "Sunshine" and public records laws create one of the most transparent local government environments in the nation, and candidates for the Sarasota City Manager position should understand how these laws may affect their privacy throughout the recruitment process and beyond. Under Florida's Government-in-the-Sunshine Law, virtually all meetings between elected officials—including City Commissioners—must be open to the public, noticed in advance, and documented. This means that interviews, discussions, and deliberations regarding candidates will generally occur in public settings and may be covered by the media or accessible to any interested resident. Likewise, Florida's Public Records Law treats most documents related to city business—including applications, résumés, emails, text messages, and correspondence related to the recruitment—as public records subject to inspection by any member of the public. While certain limited exemptions exist, applicants should expect that their interest in the position, as well as much of the information they submit, may become publicly available. Candidates should be prepared for an unusually high level of public visibility, community scrutiny, and media attention throughout the selection process.



Compensation and Benefits

Key benefits:

Participation in the Florida Retirement System

457(b) Deferred Compensation with a city match

Retiree health benefits, including two medical plans, access to the City's Health Clinic when enrolled in medical, dental insurance, vision insurance, basic retiree life insurance if eligible, conversion of additional life insurance, and a health reimbursement account (HRA)

Fitness Days: The City of Sarasota allows all employees to earn paid time off twice per year by exercising. An employee may earn up to six days of paid time off annually by participating in the Run/Walk/Swim program. Other wellness incentives, such as diet and exercise, are available and provide the opportunity to reduce your monthly health insurance premium.

Salary

Between \$225,000 and \$305,000, depending on qualifications and experience

[CLICK HERE FOR
BENEFITS GUIDE](#)

Florida law (F.S. § 215.425) places clear restrictions on severance payments for public employees, including City Managers:

- Maximum payout: Severance may not exceed 20 weeks of compensation under any employment agreement.
- No severance for misconduct: If termination is for misconduct, no severance may be paid.



Hiring Process and Projected Timeline



1. Apply Here



2. First Review of Resumes

December 5, 2025



3. Semi-Finalist Interviews

Mid-December 2025



4. Finalist Interviews

Mid-January 2026



5. Background Check & Offer

Late January 2026

