

BACKGROUND



Ownership and Use

The City of Sarasota owns all of the land within the primary study area. The City also owns and operates the largest facility, the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, as well as the Municipal Auditorium.

- The City has leases with the following entities within the primary study area:
- Florida West Coast Symphony;
- GWIZ Science Museum;
- Sarasota Convention and Visitors Bureau Visitors Center;
- Sarasota Garden Club;
- Sarasota County History Center;
- Arts Center Sarasota;
- Sarasota Lawn Bowling; and.
- US Coast Guard Auxiliary.

The predominant land use within the primary study area is surface parking with 1,374 spaces currently available. Noticeably absent are private uses such as eating establishments that would benefit from proximity to the cultural facilities and the bayfront views. As a result of the limited

uses and the development pattern, cultural facility patrons largely enter the site by car shortly before events and leave shortly thereafter.

Natural Features

The Cultural District fronts Sarasota Bay along its west side. A relatively narrow strip of plantings and a walkway along the bayfront offer spectacular views. South of Van Wezel a natural inlet from the bay leads to a small manmade lagoon with natural vegetation.

Development Pattern

The existing development pattern consists of independent cultural facilities with adjacent surface parking for the Van Wezel, the Florida West Coast Symphony buildings and GWIZ. An extremely wide frontage road and parking lot parallel to US 41 provides parking for those facilities fronting US 41. The overall pattern is suburban in that it is dominated by automobile use. Minimal or non-existent are: an inviting overall pedestrian system; a sense of urban space created by building massing; a clear system of auto circulation (though access to Van Wezel and GWIZ parking lots is relatively straight forward).

Renaissance Project

View Easement: The City's redevelopment agreement with the Renaissance project on the east side of US 41 includes a provision that limits the height of future development, within the Cultural District, to one building above 45 feet (measured from FEMA elevation). Florida West Coast Symphony buildings have been granted the right to be the buildings that exceed this height. The view easement also contains additional restrictions related to the placement of buildings.

Additional Development: The Renaissance Project also has plans for a second phase of development north of its present buildings that mirror the existing development.

Streetscape Improvements: The City's agreement with the Renaissance project has resulted in the existing major streetscape improvements to US 41 fronting the Cultural District from Boulevard of the Arts to Tenth Street and to Boulevard of the Arts from US 41 to Central Avenue.

Recent Plans

Civic Center Plan: In July 1991, Wallace Roberts & Todd with Barton-Aschman Associates completed a plan for the area that includes the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, Selby Library (since moved to the downtown core), the Municipal Auditorium, Centennial Park and other facilities. The plan resulted in major landscape and parking improvements for the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall and other lessees.

City of Sarasota Downtown Master Plan 2020: This plan, adopted in January 2001, was prepared by Duany Plater – Zyberk and Company and included extensive community participation in its preparation and review. The Plan contains a preliminary proposal for intensifying the use of the Cultural District and includes in its recommendation that the City sponsor an invited competition or a formal public charrette to determine the optimal program and design of the District. The Plan also

contains direction regarding pedestrian and vehicular circulation. Sixth Street and Boulevard of the Arts are to be a major pedestrian way linking the Rosemary, Gillespie Park and Park East neighborhoods to the Bayfront. Attachment "A" to this RFP includes an excerpt from this plan.

Parks + Connectivity Master Plan: This Plan, adopted in September of 2002, was prepared by EDAW Inc. The Plan includes a bayfront Multi-Use Recreational Trail (MURT). The MURT runs along the bayfront from the University of South Florida and New College on the north, through the Cultural District, to the Marie Selby Botanical Gardens on the south.

Current Related Planning

Downtown Mobility Study: This study is being conducted jointly by the City and the Florida Department of Transportation. Its primary purpose is to examine the feasibility of implementing major transportation recommendations outlined in the City of Sarasota Downtown Master Plan 2020.

Downtown Parking Master Plan: The primary purpose of this master planning effort is to develop a long-term plan for parking in the downtown area consistent with objectives and principles outlined in the City of Sarasota Downtown Master Plan 2020.

PRELIMINARY ISSUES LIST FROM THE RFP

Florida West Coast Symphony - Does the future of this district include the Florida West Coast Symphony? If so, what are the details?

Conference Center - Should a conference center be located in the primary or secondary project area? If so, what are the details?

Additional Performance Spaces - Should additional indoor or outdoor performance spaces be included in the district? If so, what are the details?

Parks and Open Space - How much land along the bayfront or elsewhere in the district should be reserved for park and open space use? What should be the character of these spaces?

Commercial Facilities - Should some of the public land be leased to operators of commercial facilities to generate activity and revenue? If so, what uses and under what conditions?

Tenant Mix – What is the optimal long-term tenant mix for this district? Should facilities for uses such as office space for non-profit entities, housing for performers, docking for water taxis, docking for Aquarian Quest, a "boat as museum", a police sub-station, be included in the district?

Parking – How many parking spaces are needed? What are the opportunities for shared parking between the district's facilities? How should these facilities be designed? How should they relate to other uses and spaces?

Building Height and Massing - What are the desirable heights and massing of buildings within the cultural district?

Boat Facility Parking – How can sufficient parking be provided for the Payne Terminal boat facility without diminishing the viability of the cultural district?

CONSULTANT TEAM

The City Commission, at its meeting on November 4, 2002, approved the scope of work for the project. A Request for Proposals (RFP) was advertised. Seven consultant teams submitted proposals; four were interviewed and ranked by a consultant evaluation committee. On February 3, 2003 the City Commission authorized entering into a contract with the top ranked team lead by Cooper, Robertson & Partners (CRP).

CRP is an architecture and urban design firm with 20 years experience designing and realizing major waterfront developments throughout the U.S. and Florida. Previous projects include: plans for the Miami waterfront's Cultural and Entertainment District; plans for the new towns of Celebration and Watercolor; and cultural facility planning for Lincoln Center of the Performing Arts, the Museum of Modern Art, the Brooklyn Botanic Garden, and the Miami Art Museum.

AMS Planning and Research Corp. serves as a sub-consultant to CRP for the project. AMS has been involved in cultural facility planning and market research for hundreds of communities across the U.S. The consultant team also includes the firm of Nelson-Byrd Landscape Architects.

SCOPE OF WORK

The following represents CRP's scope of work and deliverables for the preparation of the Cultural District Master Plan.

Analysis Phase

Project Orientation

CRP and AMS will convene a kick-off meeting with the City's Project Team to facilitate input on issues related to the Cultural District, discuss and confirm expectations for the study and review resources for project analysis.

Analysis of Existing Conditions

The consultant team will conduct a thorough review of existing conditions in regard to land use, building form, pedestrian circulation, vehicular circulation, parking and natural features through visiting the site and reviewing existing drawings and documentation.

The consultant team will prepare and provide base maps of the primary study area documenting this area based on information provided by the City. One paper set and one electronic set in a format compatible with City requirements.

Analysis of Existing Plans

The consultant team will review previous and on-going plans that impact this area, including the Civic Center Plan, the City of Sarasota Downtown Master Plan 2020, the Downtown Parking Master Plan, the Downtown Mobility Study, the Tamiami Trail Scenic Corridor Plan, and any other relevant studies, including planning efforts of cultural institutions in the study area and region. CRP will review and map building location and height restrictions as outlined in the view easements between the City and the Renaissance project. CRP will also review any preservation, tourism, culture and recreation, and any other relevant plans being developed by educational, business or regional agencies. The consultant team will summarize findings in a form useful for the charrette.

Lease Holder Plans and Issues

The consultant team in consultation with City staff will develop a system for obtaining relevant information from leaseholders within the primary study area. A series of structured, in-person interviews with stakeholders will be used for gathering information on each group's needs as well as on broader shared needs and goals. CRP staff, Steve Wolff and other consultant team members will be present to lead these discussions.

The opinions of these key "stakeholders" with respect to the proposed development of the Cultural District would be solicited in order to generate information on related community issues, and visions for the social, economic and community expectations of the project. The interviews will also generate information on facility and access needs, including parking, transportation and other issues on the Preliminary Issues list of the RFP. CRP will work with City staff to identify the most effective and efficient system for obtaining this information.

The consultant team will provide copies of interview meeting notes and will analyze and summarize the data in a useful form for the charrette.

Market Analysis

In order to ensure the plan is economically and programmatically feasible, AMS will conduct an analysis of the market potential for the cultural attractions (existing and proposed), including assessment of current attendance, patronage of cultural attractions in the region and research into potential attendance and visitor interests. The assessment will draw on existing audience data and demographic and lifestyle information for the region, tourism and visitor statistics, and additional national, regional and local sources. The analysis will utilize AMS's *ArtsVision*[®] demographic and lifestyle database, combining census information and the firm's proprietary lifestyle and arts participation data. This data can also be used to provide a detailed demographic profile of the overall market and illustrate variables such as projected buying power, product preferences, etc. Tasks to be completed will include:

- A comprehensive analysis of demographic and lifestyle data for the Sarasota market area to more fully comprehend the composition and leisure pursuits of residents of the region.

- Analysis of available attendance data for local performing arts organizations (including Van Wezel Hall and the Municipal Auditorium), museums, cultural sites and visitor attractions, including data on individual and group visitors, tourists, and conventioners.
- A review of local and regional market conditions, including an overview of trends in population and economic growth in the area and projections well into the 21st century.
- A comparative analysis of arts and cultural program attendance data and trends nationally, drawing on AMS's data and other information from national and regional sources.
- A AMS will prepare a survey of potential users and distribute it to a list developed in consultation with the City, in order to assess the universe of potential users for existing and proposed facilities and to learn what type of facility they would be most likely to use. The survey would be conducted using personal interviews, on-line tools and telephone contacts. Data to be collected would include: venue needs, organizational data (financial, management), current audiences, programs, venues, and perceived opportunities for collaborative partnerships.
- AMS will develop an inventory of current performing arts programming in the proposed Cultural District, and develop a comparative analysis of activity in three comparable markets for the purpose of validating the opportunity for increased programming.

Results of the Market Analysis will be documented in a report to the City.

Master Plan Design Principles

As a result of a comprehensive analysis of the site conditions and context, and of interviews with stakeholders the consultant team together with the City's Project Team will draft proposed design principles to guide the development of a master plan for the cultural district. The principles will serve as criteria for evaluating the plan during its development.

Charrette and Framework Master Plan Options

Visioning Charrette

The consultant team, in consultation with the City's Project Team, will organize and conduct a two day long charrette to develop a cultural district vision and program together with participants listed in the RFP. In order to make the session as effective as possible, the consultant team will prepare materials in advance to support the effort and frame the issues, including the base plans, site analysis, parking and transportation analysis, and programmatic goals from stakeholders.

The charrette will include: presentation of the results of analysis phase; discussion of issues, including preliminary issues listed in the RFP; discussion of master plan design principles; recommendations and discussion regarding the district's proposed purpose, its target audiences, uses,

activities and programs. The preliminary general format of the charrette (to be discussed, detailed and finalized after consultation with the City's Project Team) will include a presentation of analysis to all groups, discussion of design principles, vision and program recommendations with participant groups listed in the RFP, with a concluding workshop with the City Commission. The goal of the charrette will be to develop a general consensus on design principles, vision and program that can be implemented over time to address the major issues and achieve the project objective for a feasible design concept.

Framework Master Plan Options

As a result of the charrette, the consultant team will develop a framework master plan including alternative design approaches for realizing the design principles, vision and program. The consultant team will evaluate a limited number of design options for a framework master plan. These would respond to a single program identified from the analysis phase and the charrette.

AMS, a sub-consultant to CRP will assist CRP to review the preliminary estimates of space requirements for the elements within the Cultural District to confirm their ability to accommodate planned cultural programs and serve the project's intended outcomes.

The consultant team in this phase will produce site plans that include:

- New or expanded buildings
- Parking garages and lots, with liner buildings as appropriate
- Pedestrian circulation, parks and open space coordinated with the secondary area and City systems
- Vehicular circulation, coordinated with the secondary area and City systems
- Landscape elements
- Relevant elements in the secondary study area

A progress report will be developed for each option. This would be submitted to the City and to additional stakeholders as appropriate before the public forums. The report would include:

- A summary narrative of each option, how it addresses the issues and project objectives
- Support data for buildings, traffic and parking at a preliminary level
- A list of public/private projects with a general description of need, implementation strategy, and development standards

Public Forums on Master Plan and Options

Following a general public presentation and distribution of the Framework Master Plan Options and progress report, the consultant team will participate in public forums. These may include but not be limited to:

- Open House to dialogue with Cultural District Leaseholders

- Open House to dialogue with property owners and tenants from the Secondary Project Area, other City Advisory Boards, and the public
- Workshop with the Planning Board
- Workshop with the Community Redevelopment Advisory Board
- Workshop with the City Commission

The consultant will provide recommendations in an Issues and Recommendations Matrix used to record issues from various groups and individuals, recommendations from advisory groups, and direction by the City Commission. The consultant team will use design principles, the vision and program developed in the charrette phase to make these recommendations.

Final Cultural District Master Plan

Following direction regarding preferred options and response to issues by the City Commission, the consultant team will produce the final Cultural District Master Plan including plans indicating:

New or expanded buildings

- Parking garages and lots, with liner buildings as appropriate
- Pedestrian circulation, parks and open space coordinated with the secondary area and City systems
- Vehicular circulation, coordinated with the secondary area and City systems
- Landscape elements
- Relevant elements in the secondary study area

The consultant team will also provide the following:

- A written narrative describing how the plan meets the project objective and addresses the issues noted in the RFP and raised during the charrette.
- Support data for building and vehicular volumes
- A conceptual cost estimate for all major improvements within the primary study area
- A 20-year capital improvements program (in five year increments) for public improvements
- A list of public/private projects with a description of need, implementation strategy, and development standards
- Appropriate graphics and narrative describing relevant elements in the secondary study area.

The final deliverable will consist of an original copy and an electronic copy in a format that meets the City's requirements.

The consultant will make revisions to master plan graphics that may be required during the formal adoption process.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Contact Steve Stancel at the City of Sarasota Department of Planning and Development.

Phone: 941-954-4195

e-mail: steven.stancel@sarasotagov.com