



Coalition of City Neighborhood Associations of Sarasota, Inc. – PO Box 1851 Sarasota, FL 34230
Sarasotaccna.org

Date: May 11, 2026

To: City of Sarasota Commissioners

From: Board of Directors, Coalition of City Neighborhood Associations of Sarasota

Topic: Downtown Master Plan Update – A Call for Pause and Review

The Coalition of City Neighborhood Associations writes to reinforce concerns raised by notable organizations including the Downtown Sarasota Condominium Association (DSCA), Argus Foundation, and planning expert Andrés Duany regarding the current Downtown Master Plan Update process. We share their view that both the advisory board's work and the associated procurement process should be paused and thoughtfully reevaluated.

The Downtown Master Plan is a foundational document that will shape Sarasota's land use and development patterns for decades. The procurement process that yielded only a single consultant candidate raises significant concerns about competitiveness, transparency, and long-term outcomes. When considered alongside the city's increasingly complex legal environment—particularly the constraints associated with SB 180 and Bert Harris Act liability—this moment calls for a deliberate reset.

A renewed process could benefit from clearer direction and defined priorities. With the incoming city manager just a few weeks away the city as a whole, staff and commission would be best served to allow for a fresh start for the best possible outcome for our city over the next 25 years.

Our recommendation should not be interpreted as criticism of the advisory board or its members. We recognize and appreciate their time, expertise, and commitment to Sarasota's future. Rather, we believe that pausing now to reassess will ultimately strengthen the integrity and effectiveness of the final plan.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kelly Brown, President Jim Ludwig, 1st Vice President Ron Kashden, 2nd Vice President

Melinda Delpech, Daniel Frank, Beth Nothstine, Leslie Spangler

Please note that Board member Will Luera recused himself from consideration of this matter and from the preparation of this letter



May 8, 2026

Kelly Brown, President
Council of Neighborhood Associations (CCNA)
City of Sarasota

Re: Request for CCNA Support — Downtown Master Plan Process: A Call for Pause and Review

Kelly,

On behalf of the Downtown Sarasota Condominium Association, I am writing at the request of our President, Patrick McNamee, who is currently traveling.

DSCA, representing more than 13,000 downtown residents, is asking for CCNA's support on a matter of significant consequence to downtown Sarasota's future.

As you may be aware, serious concerns have been raised about the integrity of the procurement process for the Downtown Master Plan update. Three of Sarasota's most respected civic and business organizations — the Argus Foundation, the Coalition of Business Associations (COBA), and the Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce — have each written independently to the City Commission calling for a halt to the current process. Their letters, which I have attached for your reference, raise overlapping and consistent concerns: a procurement that narrowed to a single remaining firm, limited involvement of the Ad Hoc Downtown Master Plan Committee, transparency deficiencies throughout, and a significant erosion of public confidence in the outcome.

DSCA shares these concerns fully. I attended the most recent CCNA meeting and raised this matter during the neighborhood updates portion of the program. At that meeting I referenced urban planner Mitchell Silver's observation that master planning "should proceed at the speed of trust." That is precisely the issue here. The trust required to carry this plan forward has been undermined.

While DSCA could advocate on this matter independently, we believe it warrants CCNA's own voice. The Downtown Master Plan is not solely a downtown issue — its implications for land use, transportation, density, and the character of our city touch every neighborhood CCNA represents. We are therefore asking CCNA to formally call on the City Commission to pause the current procurement process before any contract is executed, and to allow incoming City Manager Karie Friling to lead a full, transparent, and credible restart this fall.

This is not directed at any individual, any firm, or the members of the Downtown Master Plan Ad Hoc Committee, who invested considerable time and effort in good faith. Our concern is solely about the integrity and credibility of the overall process 2014 and ensuring that one of the most

consequential planning decisions our city will make in a generation proceeds with the public confidence it deserves.

Thank you for your consideration and for CCNA's continued leadership on behalf of Sarasota's neighborhoods. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further at your convenience.

Sincerely,

David Lough
On behalf of Patrick McNamee, President
Downtown Sarasota Condominium Association

Enc.:

Argus Foundation Letter, May 1, 2025
Argus Foundation Letter, April 17, 2026
COBA Letter, April 24, 2025
Greater Sarasota Chamber of Commerce Letter, April 28, 2026



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April 17, 2026

Honorable Mayor Debbie Trice and Honorable City Commissioners
Sarasota City Hall
1565 1st Street
Sarasota, FL 34236

Re: Downtown Master Plan Update

Dear Honorable Mayor Trice and Honorable City Commissioners,

We write to you today with serious concerns regarding the Downtown Master Plan Update and to respectfully request that you halt the entire process, including any ongoing procurement, and begin again from scratch next fall, once your new City Manager has had three to four months to familiarize herself with the current plan and is positioned to guide this effort properly.

The problems plaguing this update bear a troubling resemblance to those that derailed the first City Manager search, and the outcomes have been similarly disappointing. By the time procurement reached the Selection Committee interview stage, only one applicant remained in the process. We understand that staff are now in contract negotiations with that sole applicant. Having just one candidate to choose from is not an acceptable outcome. It is a sign of a process that lacks structure and leadership.

Members of the business community have raised concerns about this procurement for some time. The Coalition of Business Associations, which represents over 7,000 businesses throughout Sarasota County, wrote to the city on April 24, 2025, expressing reservations about how this procurement was being assembled. The Argus Foundation followed with a letter on May 1, 2025, raising concerns about transparency and process. In that letter, we noted the lack of substantive information in agenda packets for the Downtown Master Plan Update Ad Hoc Committee (DMPUAHC), supported COBA's request that the committee review the existing Downtown Master Plan before drafting procurement documents, and flagged ongoing transparency concerns. The baseline review of the plan was never conducted. To this day, the DMPUAHC has not formally reviewed the existing plan, yet it established consultant objectives without doing so.

Phone: 941.365.4886 | Website: www.argusfoundation.org
P.O. Box 49361, Sarasota, FL 34230-6361



Over the past year, we have raised these concerns repeatedly with city administration and individual committee members. Transparency remained a persistent problem throughout, much as it was during the first City Manager search. Public comment at DMPUAHC meetings has been limited to a single opportunity at the very start of each meeting, before any staff presentations. On numerous occasions, staff provided supplemental materials or information to committee members after public comment, materials the public could not see. This practice effectively cut the public out of the process. It was for this reason that we stopped attending the meetings, as we were no longer able to offer meaningful input.

Twenty-five years ago, Sarasota undertook a visionary planning process that transformed a downtown that emptied out at five o'clock into a vibrant destination. What has unfolded here has been the opposite of that. The process has been troubled from the start, and the business community, as a primary stakeholder, has been sidelined.

This is a pivotal moment for downtown Sarasota and its long-term future. Getting the process right matters far more than moving quickly. We are asking you to do exactly what you did with the City Manager search: reset entirely. Not just the procurement, but every component of this effort.

Strong leadership will be essential for this Master Plan update to succeed and to restore public confidence in the process. We believe that having a permanent City Manager overseeing this work from beginning to end will make a meaningful difference, just as the involvement of the City Attorney and City Clerk did in the manager search. This should not be a staff-driven process. It should be one that genuinely engages the public, including both residents and businesses, and one that gives this Commission real and strong choices.

We respectfully ask that you pause this process before any contract is brought forward for approval, allow your new City Manager time to settle in, and relaunch this effort with fresh eyes next fall.

Sincerely,

Christine Robinson
Chief Executive Officer

Enc.: April 22, 2025, COBA Letter
May 1, 2025, Argus Letter

cc: Jennifer Jorgensen, Interim City Manager
Pat Robinson, Deputy City Manager
Joe Polzak, City Attorney
Shayla Griggs, City Clerk



March 27, 2026

Renee Hayes, CPPO, CPPB
GM, Procurement Official
Main # (941) 263-6452
Ext 36448
Renee.Hayes@SarasotaFL.gov
1565 First Street, Room 205,
Sarasota, FL 34236

ITN# 26-19RH Downtown Master Plan Update

Dear Ms. Hayes,

The interview process has disclosed that DPZ's methodology and experience are not congruent with the expectations of the envisioned planning process in Sarasota. The evaluation committee appears to be seeking predetermined answers, rather than those that emerge through a rigorous public planning process.

In our experience, plans that are not implemented are often the result of a lack of coherent leadership – a condition already evident in this process. There is a fundamental misunderstanding of the role and value of public planning.

With this in mind, we appreciate the opportunity to have participated. However, we do not believe this process is positioned for success. We respectfully withdraw and offer best wishes to the remaining firms.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andres Duany".

Andres Duany,
Founding Partner

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Galina Tachieva".

Galina Tachieva,
Managing Partner/ Project Manager

DPZ.COM
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305.644.1023