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City Commission Approves The Bay Master Plan to Move Forward with Phase 1 *Design of Phase 1A of the master plan begins immediately*

SARASOTA, FL (September 14, 2018) – The Sarasota City Commission approved a community-driven master plan, shepherded by the Sarasota Bayfront Planning Organization (SBPO) board and led by Boston-based design firm Sasaki, last Thursday. The approval further authorizes the current board to transition into a conservancy tasked with overseeing and managing implementation of the master plan and activation of the site including approval to move forward with a first phase of design and construction.

“This is a huge step forward for our initiative to build a great park on the City’s 53 acres on the waterfront,” said Bill Waddill, Managing Director for SBPO. “With nearly 50,000 community connections since December, SBPO facilitated a process that applied the City’s adopted vision and guiding principles in an unprecedented way that engaged our community and reflects a consensus for the future of The Bay. Phase 1 actually implements every single guiding principle – aspiration, blue and green oasis, cultural vitality, enlivened destination, connectivity, and economic sustainability.”

The 10-acre Phase 1, which will now move from master plan to final design, permitting, and implementation, includes Boulevard of the Arts and all the adjacent land north to the mangrove inlet, the bay to the west and US 41 to the east. Connectivity improvements at and over US 41, as well as a new pier on the bay, are major features of this phase. Additionally, Phase 1A will convert the Boulevard of the Arts corridor and adjacent parking from its current asphalt-prominent condition to a welcoming, flexible community space that will include a linear public park with event spaces, ecological and access enhancements to the mangrove inlet, and food and beverage services. The first phase will highlight access to, along, and over the bay, which was consistently the top desired amenity in community surveys.

“The master plan provides a resilient and inclusive framework for this important site and, with Phase 1, an immediate path forward for realizing a park for all of Sarasota,” said Gina Ford of Agency Landscape + Planning, the design lead for the Sasaki team. “The level of engagement from the community defies precedent based on our experience designing and building public parks nationally – and certainly contributed to the unanimous commission support.”

In the next few months, SBPO will enter into an agreement with the City of Sarasota to transition to a conservancy model, a time-tested and successful governance method for creating, funding, and operating iconic community spaces. This conservancy will embrace the SBPO culture of transparency and inclusiveness.

The funding for Phase 1A will be primarily from philanthropists whose giving aspirations match the many aspects of this phase, from enhancing the natural environment and providing learning opportunities within, to creating vibrant and iconic features to be enjoyed by all residents and visitors of all ages. Depending on the reception to the many possible features that can be incorporated on the Phase 1A site, the total capital budget for the aspirational design is approximately \$4-8 million. A more detailed budget will be developed during the design phase.

“We look forward to moving ahead to finalize the design and planning of Phase 1 of the bay park and to complete interim and going partnership agreements between the city and a Bay Park Conservancy to help plan, develop, manage, and operate the park on behalf of the community.” AG Lafley continued, “With city staff continuing to work side-by-side, facilitating implementation every step along the way, we will be able to begin constructive conversations with foundations, philanthropists, and other community-minded private entities interested in joining the city and other government funding sources to create a signature park on Sarasota bay that realizes the aspirations of our community.”

In the near term, the SBPO intends to enliven various areas of the 53-acre site, along with its neighbors, for a broad range of activities and events. Managing Director Waddill will soon begin building a team to begin planning activation for the first phase and lead philanthropic giving.

“These are exciting times ahead,” said Waddill. “While Phase 1 provides an opportunity to implement the first step in the community’s vision for the 53-acre park, it also provides the opportunity to implement a fiscally responsible park model, with maintenance and operating funds in place, to ensure this park is economically sustainable for the next 50 or 100 years – something my grandchildren will be able to enjoy.”

For more information, visit www.TheBaySarasota.org.

About Sarasota Bayfront Planning Organization (SBPO)

The Sarasota Bayfront Planning Organization (SBPO) was formed in 2016, building on work completed by the Sarasota Bayfront 20:20 organization, to oversee the vision for the 53 acres of City-owned land along the Sarasota Bayfront. This private-public partnership with the City of Sarasota is headed by a nine-person board comprised of trusted and experienced individuals with a diverse set of competencies. The SBPO is tasked with ensuring the delivery of a professionally prepared master plan for the sustainable development of a park on the 53-acre Sarasota Bayfront in accordance with the Guiding Principles established by the community and the City of Sarasota Commission. Moving forward, the SBPO will also partner with the City to establish an operating

structure that will professionally manage the Sarasota Bayfront Project during and following construction. For more information, visit www.sbpo.org.

About Sasaki

At Sasaki, we believe in the transformative power of place. Places transcend physical spaces, becoming the context and the content of our experience of life. For over sixty years, Sasaki has brought together the best of landscape architecture, planning, urban design, architecture, interior design, civil engineering, graphic design, place branding, and data science to shape the places in which we live. Out of our Boston and Shanghai offices we are defining the contours of place and redefining what's possible along the way. Today, we are a diverse practice of 270 professionals who share a singular passion for creating spaces and places around the world that prove human potential. For more information, visit www.sasaki.com.

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