



Music Center Planning Statement

September 10, 2021

By Joseph McKenna, President and CEO

The intention of Sarasota Orchestra to build a new music center has always been to enrich the well-known and respected Sarasota community of arts. A world class concert hall will raise the visibility of our musicians, and bring a new dimension to the mosaic that our community already enjoys. It was always meant to enhance, not detract. That is why, in the June 16, 2021 edition of the Sarasota Observer, Sarasota Orchestra stated that Payne Park was “taken off the table.”

Since the City Commission’s decision more than two years ago (May 2019) to remove Payne Park from consideration, the Orchestra’s planning team has maintained regular contact with the City administration including an open and candid dialog about the Orchestra’s comprehensive planning process and the space needs that resulted from those efforts. As we have consistently shared, the Orchestra’s music center plan includes two performance spaces for Sarasota Orchestra and other music organizations, extensive education space, room for our internationally acclaimed Sarasota Music Festival, and other necessary practice, rehearsal, library and storage spaces.

Our detailed, multi-year planning work identified the need for seven acres. This has been our plan throughout our process, and we are committed to bringing it to reality, even though it will not reside in Payne Park. We have not ruled out options within the city limits, but at this time there appear to be no viable options. Since Payne Park is not an option, and other locations we reviewed with City Officials have all been ruled out, we are currently concentrating on opportunities in Sarasota County.

The Orchestra is engaged in confidential site analysis work and that process is expected to last until the spring given the impact by the ongoing pandemic. When that process is completed, we look forward to sharing more details.

The Orchestra continues to be diligent in its efforts and has looked at numerous sites throughout its planning process. For privately owned sites that have not worked out, the Orchestra has appropriately guaranteed confidentiality and privacy to the involved parties.

Because the City owns Payne Park, that process was appropriately open and transparent. As an independent non-profit, our focus is currently on privately owned parcels, so it would not be appropriate for us to comment publicly until the process to negotiate terms and determine site suitability is completed. We are as eager as the community to share news as soon as it is possible, and we remain very committed to our mission and our goal of bringing a world class music center to our Sarasota community.

We appreciate the patience and support of our Orchestra patrons and the citizens of the community.

Contact:

Audrey Dunne, Digital Marketing and Public Relations Manager
786-508-2306 or adunne@sarasotaorchestra.org