



Longboat Key News

April 24, 2026

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InsideLook



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Eighty-ish with no clothes on ...page 10

'Sunny Day' Flooding Swamps Longboat — and Its Budget

Rising seas and aging infrastructure have left three Longboat Key neighborhoods perpetually at risk. The fixes are designed. The money is not yet there.

STEVE REID
Editor & Publisher
sreid@lbknews.com

The sky can be cloudless, the Gulf of Mexico calm, and still the water comes. It pools in the streets of the Village, backs up into the low corridors of Sleepy Lagoon, and sits stubbornly in the Buttonwood neighborhood until it has nowhere left to go. No hurricane required.

This is the new normal on Longboat Key. And Longboat, being a slender barrier island separating Sarasota Bay from open water, increasingly struggles to keep that water at bay.

Town officials have been quietly grappling with what they call "sunny day flooding" — the chronic, tidal inundation that creeps into low-lying streets during king tides and modest rain events — since at least 2021. The

See Flooding, page 3

Sarasota's Bay Park is Getting Its First Waterfront Restaurant

Plans call for a new performing arts center, a sunset pier, day docks for boaters, and at long last — a restaurant worthy of the setting.

For years, visitors strolling through The Bay — downtown Sarasota's sweeping 53-acre waterfront park along Sarasota Bay — have had no shortage of breathtaking sunsets. What they've lacked is a proper place to sit down and enjoy one over a meal. That's about to change.

The next phase of the beloved park, situated adjacent to the Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall, will include a full-service waterfront restaurant targeting a late 2027 opening. And the team chosen to run it has serious Gulf Coast credentials.

A Park That Grew From a Parking Lot

What was once an unremarkable stretch of asphalt has transformed into the beating heart of downtown Sarasota's outdoor life. The Bay now offers kayaking, an ibis-themed playground, eight acres of green space and a scenic boardwalk overlooking Sarasota Bay — all free and open to the public.

Phase 2 of the park's development is now in motion, and it's ambitious. Plans call for a new performing arts center, a sunset pier, day docks for boaters, and — at long last — a restaurant worthy of the setting.

The Canal District: Prime Real Estate for Dining

The restaurant will anchor a section of the park being called the Canal District, situated at the far end of the property from the Van Wezel, right alongside the Sarasota Boat Canal. It's a coveted position, offering diners sweeping views of Sarasota Bay, the boat canal's steady maritime traffic, and the boat basin at Centennial Park next door.

Bay Park Conservancy founding CEO A.G. Lafley has been open about the design vision: an accessible, affordable dining experience housed in a structure that reflects

See The Bay, page 3

Nik's On the Wire at Key Club

Sarasota's own Nik Wallenda — the 11-time Guinness World Record-holding high-wire artist and seventh-generation member of the Flying Wallendas — thrilled onlookers Friday with a breathtaking wire walk between buildings at The Resort at Longboat Key Club, serving as the spectacular centerpiece of the 30th Annual Phil Galvano Golf



Classic. The sold-out charity tournament, hosted by former Florida Senate President Bill Galvano in memory of his father, benefits the Manatee Education Foundation, which has funneled more than \$10 million into Manatee County classrooms over the past three decades.

She Came for the Beauty, and Stayed to Protect It

Longboater Linda Mitchell Didn't Plan to Chair a Bird Rescue Organization. Then She Saw the Seabirds.

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Linda Mitchell has a phrase she has lived by for most of her adult life: bloom where you are planted.

It sounds simple enough — the kind of thing you needlepoint on a pillow or write in a card. But for Mitchell, it has been an actual operating philosophy, a quiet but firm commitment to look around wherever life has put her, find what needs doing, and do it.

When she and her husband Bill moved to Queens Harbour in Bay Isles on Longboat Key in 2019, she looked around. She found the binoculars first. Then the birds.

"We were both blown away by the beauty of the seabirds," she says. "You see them all over Longboat Key — on the docks, in the shall-



lows, riding the thermals over the Gulf. Once you start paying atten-

tion, you can't stop."

See Seabirds, page 13

Mote Deploys Secret Weapon Against Dying Coral Reefs

The crabs were born at Mote's Aquaculture Research Park in east Sarasota County — and they may be one of the reef's best hopes for survival.

For Longboat Key residents who love the ocean — and there are more than a few — a piece of news arrived quietly in late March that deserves a second look. On March 28, scientists from Sarasota's own Mote Marine Laboratory waded into the waters of the lower Florida Keys and released something no one had ever released onto a coral reef before: Caribbean king crabs born and raised in captivity.

It sounds modest. It may be enormous.

The crabs — spiny, rust-colored creatures that can grow to about a foot across — were hatched and raised at Mote's Aquaculture Research Park in eastern Sarasota County, roughly 30 miles from the shores of Longboat Key. The 6,000-square-foot facility is the first and only fully operational Caribbean king crab hatchery of its kind anywhere in the world, and it currently houses more than 300 adult crabs. The goal, over time, is to produce up to 250,000 juvenile crabs annually.

The reason they matter comes down to one word: algae.

Florida's Coral Reef — the third-largest barrier reef system on the planet — has lost more than 90 percent of its living coral over the past 75 years. Overfishing, disease, warming seas and algal overgrowth have all taken their toll. The 2023 marine heat wave alone was the worst on record in Florida's history, pushing water temperatures in the Keys to levels that caused 100 percent bleaching at multiple reef sites. By October 2025, the University of Miami declared staghorn and elkhorn corals — two iconic reef species — functionally extinct in the region.

When algae takes over a reef, it smothers coral, blocks light and makes corals more vulnerable to disease. That's where the king crabs come in. They are, in the language of marine science, elite grazers — capable of consuming more algae than any species of parrotfish in the Caribbean. More importantly, they eat the chemically defended and calcified algae that other herbivores won't touch. Early studies found that when these crabs were introduced to test sites, algae cover dropped by 50 to 80 percent.

"As we placed the crabs on the reef, nearly every one of them grabbed a piece of algae, put it in their mouth, and darted for cover," said Dr. Jason Spadaro, Mote's Coral Reef Restoration Research Program Manager.

This first release was intentionally small — roughly 25 crabs — designed to let researchers study transport methods and observe the animals' behavior once they hit the water. But Mote has already planned a larger deployment for later this month, and the hatchery's production is ramping up.

The effort is part of the broader Mission: Iconic Reefs initiative, a federal partnership led by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which aims to restore seven key reef sites across the Florida Keys. NOAA and the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation are helping fund the work.

Mote's connection to this story runs deep. The institution has been transplanting hand-grown corals onto the reef since 2008, and after the devastating 2023 heat wave, researchers



Scientists from Mote Marine Laboratory release the first hatchery-raised Caribbean king crabs onto Florida's Coral Reef on March 28, 2026. The crabs were bred at Mote's Aquaculture Research Park in east Sarasota County. Photo: Mote Marine Laboratory.

surveyed those sites and found that 75 percent of the corals Mote had planted over the previous 15 years survived — and many were still growing and reproducing. It was a rare piece of good news in an otherwise grim chapter.

"There is some hope," said Dr. Spadaro. "But we don't need hope. We've got science telling us that what we're doing is working."

For Longboat Key, the stakes in all this are easy to understand. Florida's coral reef is not just a scenic wonder. It is the engine behind the state's marine economy — tourism, recreational fishing, commercial fisheries, and diving all depend on a living reef. What Mote is doing in the Keys, it is doing with Sarasota science, Sarasota staff, and crabs raised just up the road.

Mote's research campus on City Island — familiar to anyone who has passed over the bridge heading toward St. Armands — is now home to cutting-edge work on red tide, sea turtle conservation, manatee health, and coral restoration. The lab's newer public-facing facility, the Mote Science Education Aquarium, recently opened at Nathan Benderson Park near University Town Center, bringing that science to an even wider local audience.

The king crab project represents something Mote's leadership has been pushing toward for years: not just replanting corals, but rebuilding the ecological conditions in which corals can survive on their own.

"For decades, Mote has worked to shift the paradigm of coral restoration science," said Dr. Michael P. Crosby, Mote's President and CEO. "Now, by actively restoring not just corals but the ecological balance of the reef itself, we are advancing solutions that address the root causes of reef degradation."

One reef at a time. One crab at a time.



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Flooding, from page 1

question of how to pay for the infrastructure needed to stop it has grown more complicated, and more costly, with each passing year.

A Problem That Preceded the Storms

Though each of the three target neighborhoods requires a different engineering approach, the remedies share common elements: raising road elevations, adding drainage structures, and optimizing how water moves through the system. Town staff has been careful to note that these projects are not designed to defend against the kind of catastrophic storm surge that Hurricanes Helene and Milton delivered in 2024 — they are aimed at the quieter, persistent flooding that happens when the tide simply runs too high or a summer squall drops two inches of rain on streets that sit barely above sea level.

Charles Mopps, the town's director of public works, has described the core problem with blunt precision: in the lowest-lying sections of these neighborhoods, floodwaters have no exit. The elevation is too minimal, the drainage infrastructure too aged, and the cumulative effect is streets that turn to shallow canals not during emergencies but during routine tidal cycles. The practical consequences extend beyond inconvenience. Before recent resilience work began, high tides and rain events regularly blocked emergency personnel from accessing flooded roads — a public safety failure in a community where the median resident is well past retirement age.

The Funding Maze

The engineering plans exist. The designs for Sleepy Lagoon, Buttonwood, and the Village are largely complete or advancing rapidly. What remains stubbornly unresolved is the money.

Longboat Key has pursued flood-mitigation funding with considerable ingenuity. The town secured a \$2.8 million federal grant from the state's Division of Emergency Management to address roughly 3,000 feet of the lowest road segments in the Village, with plans that include raising roads by up to 1.1 feet and installing a new stormwater management system with inlets, pipes, and updated one-way valves. A dedicated grants coordinator, hired in mid-2023, has helped the town piece together tens of millions of dollars across multiple programs. In the current fiscal year alone, the town has already received \$13.3 million in grants — more than double the previous year — though most of that money is directed at a separate wastewater infrastructure project.

Community Project funding — the congressional mechanism formerly known as earmarks — has also played a role, helping to cover the design phase of resilience improvements in low-lying neighborhoods. Federal and state programs rarely pay for planning and design, but having shovel-ready projects is often the prerequisite for competing for the larger construction grants that follow. The town has learned to work that pipeline methodically, funding design first, then returning to grant agencies for construction dollars once costs are verified — a process that is labor-intensive and, as officials have discovered, subject to inflation-driven recalculations at every stage.

The town's five-year Capital Improvement Plan reflects the scale of the undertaking: \$1.4 million budgeted in fiscal year 2026 for Norton Street drainage construction in Sleepy Lagoon; roughly \$987,000 for Buttonwood Phase 1, followed by \$2.6 million in FY27; and more than

\$6 million earmarked across multiple phases of Village improvements stretching into FY28. Those numbers, however, have already proven unreliable as guides. Initial estimates for several projects have approximately doubled, according to Mopps, compressing the town's financial maneuvering room and pushing timelines further out.

Residents Losing Patience

For homeowners in the affected neighborhoods, the planning retreat schedules and budget workshop calendars feel increasingly abstract. They have watched the water come, recede, and come again, and they have heard variations of "we're working on it" for the better part of four years.

Barbara Moschetta, who lives in one of the flood-prone areas, has become a pointed voice for a constituency that is tired of being asked to wait. She frames the issue not merely as one of inconvenience but of financial survival — pointing to the insurance claims, the structural damage, and the ongoing household costs that chronic flooding imposes. She has questioned publicly why the town would prioritize aesthetics, such as streetscape improvements along Gulf of Mexico Drive or the construction of a new library that many residents opposed, over drainage work that she argues is fundamental to the island's habitability and to the fiscal health of its property owners.

Her frustration touches a real tension in municipal governance: the competition between projects that are visible, popular, and politically legible — widened sidewalks, landscaped corridors, civic buildings — and the unglamorous infrastructure work that happens underground or beneath road asphalt, invisible until it fails.

The Larger Stakes

Longboat Key's flooding challenge is, in miniature, a case study in the fiscal and logistical pressures facing coastal communities across the country. FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, one of the most significant federal funding sources available, distributes money only to municipalities that have an approved local mitigation plan in place — a requirement that Longboat Key has addressed by renewing participation in the multi-jurisdictional plans maintained by both Sarasota and Manatee Counties, the two counties that divide the island between them.

The town's updated Sea Level Rise and Recurring Flooding Resilience Plan, revised in 2025 following the devastation of Hurricanes Debby, Helene, and Milton, documents both the accelerating risk and the adaptation work already underway — including 27 permits issued to raise seawall heights and three stormwater management projects now in active development.

Budget hearings are scheduled for May and June, and town officials say the drainage projects will be central to those discussions. There is no construction start date on the calendar. What is clear, Mopps has said, is that the town intends to be ready the moment funding materializes — designs approved, permits in hand, contractors on notice. In a competition for scarce federal and state dollars, the towns that move fastest are the ones that planned earliest.

On the streets of Buttonwood and Sleepy Lagoon, residents are banking on that preparation paying off before the next king tide proves, once again, that the water does not wait.

The Bay, from page 1

Sarasota's modernist architectural heritage — think clean lines, a flat roof and generous expanses of glass. The building footprint is planned at no more than 5,000 square feet under roof, which organizers say is sufficient for the roughly 300-seat capacity envisioned. For reference, Lafley has compared the scale to that of the Dry Dock Waterfront Grill on Longboat Key.

The project architect is Sweet Sparkman, the well-regarded Sarasota firm — a fitting choice given their prior work designing Fins at Sharky's in Venice, the upscale sister restaurant of the company now tapped to operate the new space.

The Budget

The overall price tag for Phase 2 of The Bay comes in at \$65 million. The concept phase for the restaurant building alone carries a budget of \$5.8 million. Design work is already underway, with construction completion expected in fall 2027.

The Operator: Venice's Waterfront Royalty Heads North

Following a competitive request-for-proposals process, the Bay Park Conservancy selected the Venice Pier Group as the operator for the park's debut restaurant. The company owns and operates two well-known waterfront dining destinations in Venice — Sharky's on the Pier and the adjacent upscale Fins at Sharky's.

The Venice Pier Group is a family business with deep regional roots. Mike Pachota, originally from the Detroit area, co-founded Sharky's in 1987 after winning the bid to convert a rundown beach concession stand at the base of the Venice Fishing Pier into a restaurant. The place started with just 78 seats. Today it is a full-blown Venice landmark. His son Justin, who holds a hospitality management degree from the University of Central Florida, took over as company president in 2020 and has since guided its expansion.

The Pachotas weren't newcomers to The Bay when they won the restaurant contract. Venice Pier Group has been operating the park's concession stands since The Bay first opened, giving them firsthand knowledge of what Sarasota's waterfront visitors want — and what they'll pay for it.

Justin Pachota has spoken enthusiastically about the new location's potential, pointing to the combination of canal activity, boat traffic and those coveted west-facing sunsets as ingredients for something special. The concept is expected to lean toward what the industry calls "polished casual" — a step above a tiki bar, with quality food and a refined setting, but without the stuffiness of white-tablecloth fine dining.

The Business Case

The restaurant isn't merely an amenity — it's central to the Conservancy's plan for long-term financial independence. Lafley has noted publicly that a well-run waterfront restaurant in this region can generate between \$8 million and \$14 million in annual revenue. With the Conservancy taking a modest percentage cut — projected in the range of 5% to 10% — even a single thriving restaurant could return hundreds of thousands of dollars annually to park operations.

Three restaurants are ultimately planned across the park's various phases. Two more are slated for Phase 3B, a later stage of development. If all three perform well, Lafley has said, restaurant commissions alone could cover half the Conservancy's roughly \$2 million in annual operating costs — a significant shift from the current reliance on donations and grants.

A Region Hungry for More

Sarasota's waterfront dining scene is celebrated, but Conservancy leadership has argued for years that supply has never caught up with demand. After surveying the waterfront restaurant landscape from Bradenton and Anna Maria Island all the way down to Casey Key, Lafley concluded there simply aren't enough quality options — a gap The Bay is now positioned to help fill.

For now, Sarasota residents and Longboat Key neighbors will need to be patient. With design underway and the calendar pointed toward a late 2027 debut, the first Bay Park restaurant is still a ways off. But with a proven operator, a celebrated architect, a jaw-dropping location and the full weight of one of the region's most exciting civic projects behind it, anticipation is already building — one sunset at a time.

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NewsWorthy

Hurricane Preparedness Seminar Set for May 14

With hurricane season beginning June 1, Longboat Key residents are encouraged to review emergency plans and gather supplies now. The town's 2026 Disaster Preparedness Seminar will be held May 14 at 4 p.m. in the Longboat Key Club Harbourside Ballroom, 3000 Harbourside Dr. Admission is free. For more information, contact the Longboat Key Chamber of Commerce at 941-383-2466.

Re-Entry Stickers Available Starting April 20

Longboat Key re-entry stickers will be available beginning April 20 at the Police Department and Town Hall, Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Residents and business owners must bring proof of residency or employment verification. Contact izunz@longboatkey.org or call 941-316-1999 with questions.

Free Sandbags Offered This Summer

The town's Public Works Department will conduct sandbag distribution events at Broadway Beach Access, 100 Broadway St., on June 4, July 2, August 6, and September 3, from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. Proof of residency is required. Ten bags will be provided per household, though residents may bring their own bags for filling. Contact jmanderson@longboatkey.org or call 941-316-1988 for details.

Sign Up for Emergency Alerts

Residents are urged to register for Alert Longboat Key to receive emergency notifications by email or text. Sign up at www.longboatkey.org under "Helpful Links" at the bottom of the page, or call 941-316-1999 for assistance.

Arts in April Wraps Up With Three Events

The town's Arts in April series closes out the month with three events. A free art exhibit and reception will be held at Town Hall, 501 Bay Isles Road, on April 23 from 5 to 6:30 p.m. The Longboat Key Garden Club hosts Dinner & A Movie on April 24 from 5:30 to 9:45 p.m. at Bayfront Park, 4052 Gulf of Mexico Dr., with a rain date of April 25; tickets are available at www.lbksgardenclub.org. Cops, Cars & Coffee takes place April 25 from 8 to 10 a.m. at Whitney Plaza, 6920 Gulf of Mexico Dr., giving residents a chance to meet local officers and support area businesses. Coffee and food will be available for purchase from local vendors.

Reminder: No Car Haulers on Gulf of Mexico Drive

Police Chief Mager reminds residents that car haulers are prohibited from loading or unloading vehicles on Gulf of Mexico Drive. Car haulers must use Bay Isles Road in front of Mediterranean Plaza, 595 Bay Isles Road.

Coyote Sightings Should Be Reported

Residents who spot coyotes on Longboat Key are asked to report sightings — including date, time, and location — to izunz@longboatkey.org. Tips for coexisting safely include securing garbage, keeping pets on leashes, and bringing pets indoors at night. Coyotes can typically be scared away with loud noises. More information is available at MyFWC.com.

Sea Turtle Nesting Season Begins in May

Sea turtle nesting season runs May through October 31 on Longboat Key beaches. Residents and visitors are asked to turn off or shield beachfront lights, fill in holes, knock down sandcastles, remove furniture from the beach, and dispose of trash. Anyone who spots a distressed or stranded turtle should contact the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission Wildlife Alert Hotline at 1-888-404-FWCC.

Town Launches New Website

Longboat Key has launched a redesigned town website at www.longboatkey.org, featuring updated information and easier navigation. Residents can sign up for email or text notifications under "Helpful Links." The town can also be followed on Facebook (Town of Longboat Key), X (@TownofLBK), and Instagram (@townoflbk).

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Editor Letters



Longboat Key News and Sarasota City News encourages Letters to the Editor on timely issues. Please email to: letters@lbknews.com or mail to PO Box 8001, Longboat Key, FL 34228. We also print letters sent to Town Hall that address Longboat Key issues. We reserve the right to edit.

Implementation Item of Green Team Analysis of Building Permitting Process

To: Longboat Key Commissioner Steve Branham

Just to follow up on your question regarding the results from Lean Six Sigma efforts, Allen has provided a brief summary below of the permitting team project and how they're getting ready to roll it out.

We'll be measuring the impacts of these changes with the goal of reducing the time to get a permit issued and share these results with the Commission at the appropriate time.

Again, I want to recognize Lisa for working to roll this training out and Allen for utilizing the Green Belt team project to streamline services. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Howard N. Tipton
Town Manager
Town of Longboat Key

ideas for bolstering the submission of complete applications, which will lead to faster building permit review times.

Staff from the Building Division worked incredibly diligently over the past several months to update application checklists. The intent behind the checklists is to provide building permit applicants with the resources they need to submit complete applications & to submit those application materials with file naming conventions that will make the reviewers' jobs more efficient. Both of these issues (accepting incomplete applications & allowing non-standardized file naming conventions), have resulted in slower processing times (due to unnecessary rounds of reviews to gather missing information) & unnecessary burdens on staff (quickly identifying applicable files for review). The end result will be better utilization of staff time & faster overall reviews for applicants (win & win). I'll report back on efficiencies after assessing the processing time related data.

Allen Parsons
Director Planning, Zoning & Building Department
Town of Longboat Key

Implementation Item of Green Team Analysis of Building Permitting Process

To: Longboat Key Town Manager Howard Tipton

I wanted to share an example of one of the implementation efforts going into effect next Monday (4/27) related to the Lean Six Sigma Green Belt review of how the processing of building permits can be improved.

As you know, the Green Belt team dug into permitting data from last year to tease out where there's room for improvement in processing timelines & what the likely causes are of those areas for improvement. The multi-step data analysis they went through identified some great

Town sends compliance agreement to Half Moon house owner

To: Longboat Key Commissioner BJ Bishop

As a follow up to the Town Manager's email below, the newspaper article is summarizing an agreement that was forwarded to the Property Owner's counsel pursuant to Section 150.21 (G) of the Code. This section of Code authorizes the Town Manager, Building Official and Town Attorney to utilize a "Compliance Agreement" to obtain a written commitment from a Property Owner to perform certain abatement, repair, rehabilitation or demolition activities

See Letters, page 7



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Sandra Smith | 941.383.3388

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EditorLetters



Letters, from page 6

relating to an unsafe/unfit structure by agreed upon milestones/deadlines. Relevant sections off this Town Code are attached and highlighted. This "Compliance Agreement" process in the Code essentially serves as another opportunity for a property owner to address the structures condition(s) identified by the Building Official before the matter escalates further. This stage of the process is solely administrative.

I apologize if the Observer's coverage of the transmitted (unsigned agreement) led to questions or concerns about the status of this matter. I wouldn't normally share an unsigned, administrative agreement with the Town Commission because an unsigned agreement is meaningless until it is fully executed by all parties. The Compliance Agreement was fully executed and entered into today. Accordingly, there is now a written commitment from the Property Owner to act by stated deadlines.

If there is further escalation of this matter under the Code due to breach of the deadlines within the Compliance Agreement (which could lead to actions appearing before the Town Commission or the Circuit Court), we will certainly notify the Town Commission of those proceedings.

Please let me know if you have any further questions or would like to discuss this matter further.

Maggie Mooney
Town Attorney
Town of Longboat Key

Town sends compliance agreement to Half Moon house owner

To: Longboat Key Commissioner BJ Bishop

I don't believe so Commissioner. We brought the matter to the Board to pursue approval for compliance and/or demolition, and the property owner agreement was just finalized (after a lot of back and forth with legal representatives). Knowing that we were going to do one (compliance) or the other (demolition), I just thought of this as an operational matter. My apologies if I didn't close the loop with you.

Howard N. Tipton
Town Manager
Town of Longboat Key

Town sends compliance agreement to Half Moon house owner

To: Longboat Key Town Manager Howard Tipton
Did the Commission receive this info? I believe this is the first time I am reading the owner's

comments.

BJ Bishop
Commissioner
Town of Longboat Key

2027 CPF Requests

To: Potomac Partners Adam Cross

Thanks Adam - good info. I am wearing multiple hats in DC in June - one being the Chair of the FL League of Cities Federal Task Force so there may be some opportunities to see some of our other FL representatives.

BJ Bishop
Commissioner
Town of Longboat Key

2027 CPF Requests

To: Longboat Key Commissioner BJ Bishop

The CPF process is uniquely Member-driven and district-focused, but I have had conversations with a few friends on staff at the THUD Subcommittee to highlight the Buchanan projects. Rep. Steube's request is with the Interior-Environment subcommittee, so we mentioned Longboat's request to Subcommittee Chairman Simpson at lunch last month. Rep. Mario-Diaz-Balart is the Committee's Vice Chair. Rep. Scott Franklin is the only other Florida Republican on the Committee. Democrats from Florida will likely be thinking about prioritizing competing water projects in South Florida (they have a few), but they include Rep. Wasserman-Schultz and Rep. Frankel.

Last year and the year before, nearly all requests were funded at a lower amount than the original request. The only exceptions to this were projects that were essentially State requests being routed through a single Member, but with the support of a larger group. This is due to overall spending cuts and the self-imposed rule that only 0.5% of all discretionary funding can be used for CPFs. However, Democratic requests saw the biggest cuts, while Republican requests were mostly preserved.

Because this process is so Member-driven, many Committee Members are reluctant to promote one over the other unless the pressure comes from the Requesting Member's office (i.e. Sami). So staying in contact with Sami is the right way to go.

Adam Cross
Potomac Partners DC

2027 CPF Requests

To: Potomac Partners Adam Cross

See Letters, page 11



JEFF RHINELANDER

941-685-3590
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COURTNEY TARANTINO

941-893-7203
courtney.tarantino@floridamoves.com


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BIRD KEY • SARASOTA

259 Robin Drive
3BR/3FB/2HB • FULL BAYFRONT • \$7,900,000

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Her Oak Box
by Bob Parrish (c)

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You saw my tears of sorrow
I felt my hugging goodbye
That will be coming tomorrow**

**I do not want this what can be done
To help your body heal and be warm
You to be well and far from harm**

**The night before I saw your eyes
soft and blue
You looked at me as if you knew
I saw you rest your chin
As I had tears seeing you again
Your life again to keep your life**

**But I will be lonely
As I Walk out of a room
With in my arms only
Your oak box not you**

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The Right Kind of Love

By bob parrish (c) 7/3/2014

How do you love me - oh please show me
I know my love for you is the right kind eternally

Do you love me for now and eternity,
Or do you love me only when you're near me

Ohhhhhhhhh - please show me

Do you know me when in silence my thoughts lay
Do you know my thoughts when you're away

Ohhhhh - please tell me my love
Do you love those I love

Ohhhhhhhhhh - please show me

Has your love for me sent you in a whirl
Changed your view(s) of this world

Have I become a new value - a new reality
Does your love for me change views of reality

Ohhhhhhhhhh - please show me

I promise To Be side-by-side
It's always forever by you side-by-side

The right kind of love forever
It's you and me for eternity

It's Right Kind of love Our spirits and souls collided
And melded into each other from our first hello -



Music To Warm The Lonely Nights ©

(The nights became lonely - just memories
of us)

By bob parrish (c) 7/18/2014 23:27

Oh my love and my friend of so many years
You've been here to fill my nights for years

Now you are away - you're not here
My nights so lonely without you my dear

I 'can feel you when I'm still 'n sing
To you my dear --- now with your wings

So lonely - so lonely am I
In this empty room I sigh

The music I sing from my soul
Brings thoughts of you - I know

my love - now you are away
It's to my music 'n empty arms I sway

I can feel you when I'm still and sing
Ooooh --- dear, my dear, fill my heart and
sing

of all the memories my music brings
Nights so lonely in this empty room I sing

of your love to fill me with song
While I simply just get along

I can feel you when I am still and sing
I can feel you when I am still and sing



Our Journey - Fairy Tales Really Do Come True

by bob parrish 7/25/2024 (c)

Fairy Tales Really Do Come True
I looked, you saw me I met you
That was our God directed start
To learn with each other to share hearts

When you looked to show me your eyes
I gave my heart and never ever'll say goodbye
Fairy Tales Really Do Come True
We found us - it's only me and you

Fairy Tales Really Do Come True
You've told me your sorrows from you
You've told me emotions from you
Fairy Tales Really Do Come True

Fairy Tales Really Do Come True
I know without you telling me
I reply so you will know I am true
Fairy Tales Really Do Come True

You've felt and know you can trust
I will seek to prove trust is true
I'll hold your emotions giving you stardust
Fairy Tales Really Do Come True

You'll never have to ask - I'll answer you
Just look and be near or far I'll be true
To all your emotions yes this is true
Fairy Tales Really Do Come True

This is about me and you
Fairy Tales Really Do Come True
Fairy Tales Really Do Come True
Fairy Tales Really Do Come True

Stop! this world - this moment in time
It's real - ours is a fairy tale for you and me
We're for us - "forever has stopped time
Our fairy tale is love it's only you and me

Stop! we hold us - it's me and you
Fairy Tales Really Do Come True
Fairy Tales Really Do Come True

Music To Warm The Lonely Nights © Continued

It's Right Kind of love Our spirits and souls collided
And melded into each other from our first hello -

Right kind of love Our eternity with
each other became true from our first hello

Right kind of love I feel you my love
It's forever, it's real from above

Right kind of love is alive is alive,
Forever we're meant to be side-by-side

'Till then, I'll remember you forever me and you
'Till then, I'll forever remember love it's me and you

I can feel you when I am still and sing
I can feel you when I am still and sing
to you my dear ___ --- now with your wings
to you my dear ___ --- now with your wings

Bob Parrish

Life's Thoughts

941-302-2926

BOBPARRISHLBK@GMAIL.COM

* "Joys With Your Bestie"

* "Sadness Needs Company"

* "Coping Requires A Trusted
Understanding Friend Listening
With Direct Eye Contact - You Can
Trust Your Heart With"

OnPatrol



The following are actual police reports as written by Longboat Key Police Officers. They are edited for length, punctuation and to protect privacy.

April 17

Boat

9:22 a.m.

Officer Pescuma while on marine patrol at Longboat Pass Bridge and saw a disabled vessel that had reportedly lost steering and collided with the bridge. Upon arrival, Officer Pescuma observed the vessel pinned beam on its port side against the Longboat Pass Bridge. The vessel's mast was lodged against the bridge structure and strong tidal currents were actively pushing the vessel against the bridge, creating a hazardous situation for all onboard. The U.S. Coast Guard was on scene and attempted to tow the vessel free from the bridge. However, due to the strength of the current and the position of the vessel, the mast still pinned against the bridge, failed and broke. As a result, the vessel shifted position abruptly, increasing the risk to passengers and responding personnel. Due to the unstable conditions, this officer maneuvered vessel alongside and safely removed all passengers, as well as one Coast Guard crew member, without incident or injury. All individuals were accounted for and relocated to a safe area. Following the breakage of the mast, the vessel eventually became dislodged from the bridge and drifted to the east side of the Longboat Pass Bridge. Sea Tow was on scene and assumed control of the vessel, towing it out of the navigational channel to a safer location. Shortly thereafter, another tow company arrived on scene and took over towing operations of the vessel along with its occupants. No injuries were reported or damage to the bridge. Case clear.



on jack stands with two missing tires. An FCIC/NCIC query yielded negative results for the vehicle being stolen or abandoned. Officer Pescuma made contact with the vehicle owner who stated he resides on a boat in the Moorings and got two flat tires. He stated that he had his vehicle towed, however the tow truck would not enter Bay Isles. The man said he called the police last night to inform them of his vehicle being in the parking lot. The man will make repairs and remove the vehicle. Case clear.

April 18

Noise

7:39 a.m.

Sgt. Smith while on patrol on Longboat Drive South observed and heard someone operating a skid steer that was in violation of town ordinance regulating construction noise. The man indicated he was new to the job site and would make sure he did not start before 8 a.m. in the future. Sgt. Smith issued a written warning for the violation and sent the builder an email with the town ordinance attached. Case clear.

April 19

Noise

11:29 a.m.

Officer Nazareno was dispatched to Juan Anasco Drive for a noise disturbance call regarding construction noise at the location. Upon arrival, Officer Nazareno made contact with the manager on site. Officer Nazareno advised him that his company in violation of the noise ordinance. The man was issued a written warning and immediately stopped the construction work. Case clear.

April 20

Vehicle

12:44 p.m.

Officer Pescuma was dispatched to Broadway Street for a suspicious vehicle complaint located in a nearby alley. Upon arriving on scene, the vehicle, a red Chevy passenger van, was located. Officer Mathis and Officer Miano located the man in the pool area of Broadway Street. An interview was conducted with the man who advised he was on the property for maintenance purposes. He was sent through FCIC/NCIC which yielded negative results. No suspicious activity observed. Case clear.

April 21

Vehicle

Officer Pescuma while on patrol of Bay Isles Road, observed a blue BMW in the parking lot

Person

7:55 p.m.

Officer Pescuma was dispatched to the 3700 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive in reference to a suspicious person smoking on the beach. The caller stated that a 70 year-old man was last seen in an orange shirt and sitting in a chair smoking. Upon arriving on scene, Officer Pescuma made contact with a subject that matched the description and he had an unfiltered cigar in his left hand which is not in violation of town ordinance. Case clear.

April 22

Person

5:01 p.m.

Officer Nazareno was dispatched to the 3100 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive for a suspicious person call regarding a 70-80 year-old male subject naked on the beach. Upon arrival, Longboat Key Police units canvassed the beach area from the 3100 to 3200 blocks of Gulf of Mexico Drive with negative results. The caller left the area prior to my arrival and did not wish to be contacted. Case clear.

April 23

Property

10:45 a.m.

Sgt. Smith was dispatched to a report of damage to a rental vehicle. Sgt. Smith made contact with the complainant and she indicated that an unknown golfer had hit a golf ball into her rental vehicle. The damage was a dent to the rear passenger side quarter panel. Sgt. Smith informed the complainant to contact the rental company and provided a case number. Case clear.

Incident

11:33 a.m.

Officer Maple was dispatched to the 5400 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive for an incident. Upon arrival, Officer Maple met with the complainant who stated he was having an ongoing issue with another resident and wanted to file a police report. The complainant stated there was an argument the day prior in regard to water spilled in the parking lot that escalated in a verbal confrontation with the brim of his cap bumping up against his forehead causing him to extend his hand to the man's chest to stop any further forward progression. The complainant felt the man was trying to provoke him into a possible physical altercation and wanted the incident documented. Officer Maple explained that currently they just have an informational report and he should contact 911 for any further escalations. Case clear.

Civil

1:21 p.m.

Officer Maple was dispatched to the 2000 block of Gulf of Mexico Drive for a civil call in reference to a parking space dispute between neighbors. Upon his arrival, Officer Maple met with the complainant who stated over the last two days she had a verbal altercation with a neighbor over her assigned private covered parking spot. The complainant said that the man had parked in her spot over the last two days and she had blocked him in. At approximately 9 a.m., the man presented himself to her door and demanded she move her vehicle immediately. Words were exchanged at the door and later in the parking lot. No criminal activity was reported and Officer Maple contacted management who stated they would reach out to the man to remind him of parking regulations. The incident took place on private property and the complainant was instructed to contact police in the event of any escalations of the situation. Case clear.



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Editor Letters



Letters, from page 7

Any House Appropriations members I can reach out to? I have not pulled up the committee yet. Sami is in regular contact with me so I will let you know if there is any other news.

BJ Bishop
Commissioner
Town of Longboat Key

Green Team Longboat Key

To: Terri Driver
Terri. Thanks for the update. I was not aware of the replantings
BJ Bishop
Commissioner
Town of Longboat Key

Green Team Longboat Key

To: Blythe Jeffers
To the best of knowledge, Jackson Way was repopulated with native species as a living shoreline via a grant from SBEP.

As for the area between Emerald Harbour and Spanish Main, it there was a wonderful effort by (our own Green Team member) Jeanne Leszczynski at Emerald Harbour, in cooperation with Damon Moore (ORE), grant from SBEP, and a lot of volunteer hours, money, working with the Association to get this area where it is now. Exotics were removed and natives are being planted.

I do not feel either of these areas are correct for micro-forests, but I could be wrong. We can have a walk-about with Charles Reith (fellow Rotary member) who knows more about micro-forests than anyone I know. Let me know if you all think that would be a good field trip, and I can call Charles.

Terri Driver
Longboat Key

Green Team Longboat Key

To: Terri Driver
I wonder if the two locations on LBK that were cleared of invasive would be opportunities for micro forests.

I was wondering how to avoid invasives repopulating those spots, and this may be the answer. I think the two locations were Jackson way and between emerald harbor and Spanish Main. What do you think?

Blythe Jeffers
Longboat Key

Resources from CAC members

To: Longboat Key Commission
Regarding the canal "Kick Start" grant, we've been working with Congressman Steube's Office and he's officially included the \$3 million ask in his appropriation request. As Adam notes, the House Appropriations Committee may reduce the amount of an award based on a formula, but whatever we receive ultimately will only help.

Howard N. Tipton
Town Manager
Town of Longboat Key

CPF Requests

To: Longboat Key Town Manager Howard Tipton
That's great, Sami is a true professional! Rep. Steube's office has officially posted his requests, including the \$3M Aquatic Habitat Restoration Project.

Longboat Key Aquatic Habitat Restoration Project:
Proposed Recipient: Town of Longboat Key
Recipient Address: 501 Bay Isles Road, Longboat Key, FL 34228
Amount Requested: \$3,000,000

Explanation: The funding would be used for required maintenance dredging of residential canals and to restore several acres of seagrass habitat.

Timing: In the next few weeks, the House Appropriations Committee will begin posting the bill text of the individual bills. I'll keep monitoring, but we should be prepared for the Committee to potentially reduce the amount they are willing to appropriate for each request. These committee-level reductions are often done by formula and are tied to the overall spending allocated for each individual bill. I'll keep you updated!

Adam Cross
Potomac Partners DC

CPF Requests

To: Potomac Partners Adam Cross
Thank you Adam. Commissioner Bishop, Charlie Mopps (Public Works Director) and myself had a very positive and productive meeting this morning with Sami Araboghli on the \$3 million ask.

Howard N. Tipton
Town Manager
Town of Longboat Key

CPF Requests

To: Longboat Key Assistant Town Manager Isaac Brownman and Kalee Zavela
See Letters, page 12



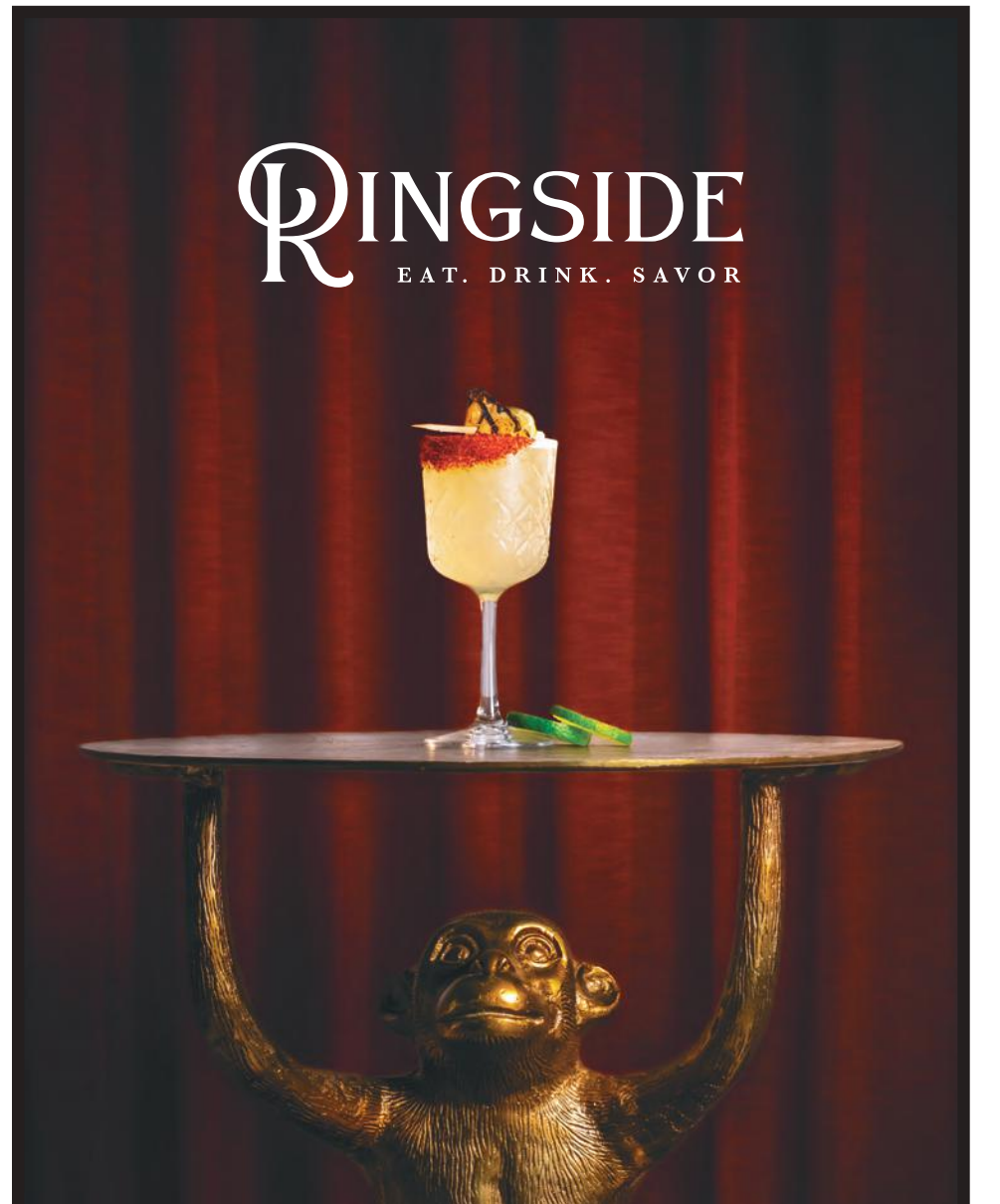
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EditorLetters



Letters, from page 4

I wanted to let you know that both Rep. Buchanan and Rep. Steube will be submitting our requests to the House Appropriations Committee. Here is the posting from Rep. Buchanan:

- 1) Town of Longboat Key
\$3 million request

The funding would be used to complete the Major Feasibility Analysis for the full 10-mile Gulf of Mexico Drive corridor, a planning and feasibility component of the Gulf of Mexico Drive Corridor Improvement Project. Funds will support technical analysis, engineering evaluation, environmental screening, traffic and safety modeling, drainage and resiliency assessment, right-of-way review, public engagement, and development of phased implementation recommendations.

- 2) Town of Longboat Key
\$1 million request

The funding would be used to advance the planning and feasibility phase for a 12-foot-wide multi-use trail along State Road 789 (Gulf of Mexico Drive) within the Town, addressing pedestrian and cyclist safety, drainage, and resiliency needs, a transportation and active mobility component of the Gulf of Mexico Drive Multi-Use Trail Project.

Rep. Steube has not yet posted all of his requests online, but his staff have informed me that they will be submitting the Aquatic Habitat Restoration project.

Rep. Buchanan's requests can be viewed here: <https://buchanan.house.gov/funding-requests>

Rep. Steube's requests can be viewed here: <https://steube.house.gov/appropriations-requests-fl-17/>

The House Appropriations Subcommittees will announce which projects are selected, and at what amount, sometime later this month, or in early May.

Adam Cross

Potomac Partners DC

Annex neighborhood

To: Bona President Jody

I am adding Alison Christie to this email. Ms. Christie is the General Manager of Development Services and can answer any questions you have on the annexation process.

Below is a link to the City Ordinance that explains the process. https://library.municode.com/FL/Sarasota/codes/Code_of_Ordinances?nodeId=PTIITHCO_CH2AD_ARTVIIIAN

Additionally, I have attached a development application form - Form A that would need to be completed and submitted the City Auditor and Clerk's office as stated on the bottom of the form, along with a checklist and fee list for the process. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to Alison and she will direct you to the right individual.

Jennifer Jorgensen

Interim City Manager

City of Sarasota

Annex neighborhood

To: Bona President Jody

Thanks Jody! I met with the Interim City Manager, Ms. Jorgensen, last week about this and have copied her on this email so when she has information for me she can copy you as well. I suspect this will also involve input from the City Attorney as well, I copied him on this email.

Jen Ahearn-Koch

City Commissioner

City of Sarasota

Annex neighborhood

To: Sarasota City Commissioner Jen Ahearn-Koch

I am reminding you and hoping you get a chance to send me information about annexing a part of our neighborhood.

Jody

Bona President

Annex neighborhood

To: Sarasota City Commissioner Jen Ahearn-Koch

Hi Jen, it was such a pleasure to talk with you last night. Thank you for spending a moment with me. A great number of us are looking forward to your being elected.

Just a reminder that you were going to send me some info on annex in our neighborhood (Central, North of Myrtle). Thanks ever so much.

Jody

Bona President

To: Kelly Brown

My understanding of Eminent Domaine is that the situation with US Recycling does not qualify. I have the regulation language in my office at City Hall on the bulletin board next to my chair and I thought this situation was explicitly excluded, but I could be mistaken. I'll let the attorney weigh in on this.

Jen Ahearn-Koch

City Commissioner

City of Sarasota

US Recycling

To: Sarasota City Commissioner Jen Ahearn-Koch

Act now before it's too late! The city should claim imminent domain due to public health nuisance. Sell the property on 1st Street to buy this property and build out real affordable housing at 30-70% AMI with a partner that knows how to do this.

Kelly Brown

Sarasota

US Recycling

To: Sarasota City Commissioner Jen Ahearn-Koch

Jen and Ron, it looks like there is a new operator coming. I received a copy of a Warning Letter from this month for non-filing violations, sent to Freedom Estates. The representative on site refers to a new owner. I don't know whether Freedom Estates sold or will be leasing to a new operator. Activities continue on-site without a permit. DEP has received no response.

Justin Bloom

Sarasota

Request for Records

To: Justin Bloom

I sent you multiple emails on March 12 with 2026 documents and communications. The search results produced yesterday contained 2025 communications. There was a warning letter sent by certified mail last week that is relevant to your concerns. I've attached that. We have not received a response from the facility yet.

Rick Gillis

Office of General Counsel

Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Honoring Dr. Shelley

To: Kennedy Cole

It is a wonderful idea to honor Dr Shelly! I have known, and admired her during her entire tenure at Booker HS. She was the principal for both of my boys who attended Booker HS, and for my husband is a teacher there for over 20 years. She has been invaluable as a resource in City Business and on the CRA advisory board. We have built a special friendship and working relationship. She has been a partner for me in City business, a steady hand in leadership, and I admire respect, and value our friendship.

I would like to schedule a meeting with you, our Interim City Manager, and City Staff and have copied the ICM on this email along with Brianna who can arrange the meeting.

I am sure there are so many who will want to participate in this effort, including Commissioner Battie. This might be challenging to include two Commissioners because of sunshine laws, so we must be careful. And, I also want to be respectful of Commissioner Battie's position in the Community, and as an elected D1 representative, along with acknowledging his friendship with Dr. Shelly as well. She might have two, or likely more, Commissioners clamoring to honor her!

Let's meet with the ICM and figure this out!

Jen Ahearn-Koch

City Commissioner

City of Sarasota

Honoring Dr. Shelley

To: Sarasota City Commissioner Jen Ahearn-Koch

As you know, I am a student at Booker High School, and the incoming Student Body President at that. You may have heard that our principal, Dr. Shelley, is retiring later this year, and I would love to discuss a very special way to honor her.

For a few years now, we have had the idea to rename the part of Orange Avenue around Booker in her honor. With her retirement impending, I can't think of a better time to do it.

The section we would like to discuss renaming, either officially or honorarily, curves around Booker, from 32nd Street to Myrtle Avenue.

An honorarium on a street is commonplace in Sarasota Schools, with Riverview, Venice, and Pine View all having the stretch of road right outside their school named after the school's mascot. If this is at all possible, please let me know. Booker staff and students would be ready to help however we can!

Kennedy Cole

Sarasota

Longboat Key News Sarasota City News

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Seabirds, from page 1

Paying attention, it turned out, was the beginning of something much larger.

Today, Mitchell is the board chair of Save Our Seabirds, the Sarasota nonprofit that has quietly become one of the most important wildlife rescue operations on Florida's Gulf Coast — a Four-Star Charity Navigator organization that fields more than 5,000 distress calls a year, treats roughly 1,000 to 1,200 injured birds annually in its on-site avian hospital, and provides permanent sanctuary to nearly 100 non-releasable birds on its campus at 1708 Ken Thompson Parkway on City Island. It is open 365 days a year, free of charge, to anyone who wants to walk the campus and spend an hour in the quiet company of brown pelicans, roseate spoonbills, great blue herons, sandhill cranes, and the occasional crested caracara.

It is, by any measure, an extraordinary place. Mitchell is one of the reasons it keeps getting better.

The Call that Found Her

At the time, a bird rescue organization was not on her radar. She was looking, as she puts it, for “something that would call to me.” She had been active in her community in Greensboro, North Carolina — involved in food scarcity initiatives, various nonprofits, the kinds of hands-on civic work that reflects a person who takes seriously the idea that you owe something to the place you live. She arrived on Longboat Key open, as she says, to whatever presented itself.

What presented itself was Save Our Seabirds, via a mutual friend and a conversation about board membership. She spoke with then-board chair Jim Curtis, checked out the organization, and joined the board in 2022. She was asked to serve as vice chair. Then, as these things tend to go when you are good at what you do, she became chair.

“I'm good at strategically looking at the operational aspects of an organization,” she says, with the matter-of-fact modesty of someone who has spent decades actually fixing things rather than describing how she might fix them. “And to some degree, marketing.”

What she found when she arrived was an organization of remarkable mission and considerable challenge. The campus, originally established in 1988 as the Pelican Man Sanctuary under the late Dale Shields, had been rebuilt as Save Our Seabirds in 2008 by co-founders Lee Fox and Ann Anderson after the original sanctuary closed in 2006. The core mission — rescue, rehabilitate, release — was being met with remarkable consistency. The infrastructure was another story.

“The operational budget was a challenge. The facility was tremendously aging — original wooden structures throughout all of the aviaries. A limited board. Tight resources,” Mitchell says. “And yet despite all of those challenges, we were still achieving our core mission of treating more than a thousand birds a year. That was amazing to me.”

What the Numbers Mean

The numbers behind Save Our Seabirds are quietly staggering. More than 5,000 distress calls a year — that's nearly 14 a day, every day, from people across Sarasota and Manatee counties who have found an injured pelican on their dock, a hawk tangled in fishing line, an owl that has fallen from a tree. SOS has a corps of trained volunteer rescuers — people who keep boots and a transport cage in their car at all times, who will drive across the county on a moment's notice to help a bird they have never met.

“They are extraordinary,” Mitchell says. “They are not people who have done this all their lives. Many of them came to it later — retirees, professionals who wanted to give back to something meaningful. I know a man who retired from a corporate career, had some carpentry skills, started building shelves at the facility — and then began singing to the birds and the birds sang back.”

The birds that make it to the hospital are treated by a senior rehabber who holds the state license, supported by a consulting veterinarian. The goal is always release — getting the bird healthy, keeping it wild, returning it to its natural habitat. Many of the injuries SOS treats are human-caused: fishing line entanglement, collisions with vehicles and buildings, poisoning from rodenticide that works its way up the food chain into eagles and hawks. Save Our Seabirds' social media team has made a particular point of sharing these stories — the owl caught on a glue trap, the eagle sickened by rat poison — not to shame, but to educate.

“We have to intercede because of what we have done to their natural environment,” Mitchell says simply. “Whether it's golf balls or fishing line or pesticides — we've altered the world they live in. Somebody has to help.”

Why Birds?

It's a question she has fielded often enough that she has a considered answer ready.

“Not because they are more important than hungry children or struggling families,” she says. “Not more important. But also important. Somebody has to help with environmental issues, with wildlife. Somebody has to pay attention.”

The numbers suggest that not many do, proportionally speaking. Only about three percent of all charitable giving in the United States goes to animals and environmental causes. Of that, only one percent goes specifically to wildlife. Save Our Seabirds operates, like most wildlife rescue organizations, on the thinnest of margins — supported almost entirely by donations, with limited grant funding available, because in a world of competing needs, birds typically are low on the list.

“If you are a funder looking at food scarcity, homelessness, children's health — and then a bird rescue organization — the birds come last,” she acknowledges. “That is the reality. Which is exactly why we need people who care specifically about this, who will show up specifically for this.”

The Longboat Key Club has been a significant supporter, as has the Longboat Key Garden Club, which Mitchell credits with meaningful on-the-ground involvement. But the organization relies heavily on visitor donations, event fundraising — including an annual Fundraising Gala and a collaboration with 3 Car Garage Brewing that produced the Laughing Gull Lager — and the generosity of individual donors who walk the boardwalk, see what's being done, and feel compelled to help.

“When people come and visit — truly, when they leave reviews on TripAdvisor, when they tell their friends — they are always in awe,” Mitchell says. “That is the number one thing. Come see it. Come walk the boardwalk. Because when people see what we're doing, they want to be part of it.”

Full Speed Ahead

The storms changed things. Hurricanes Helene and Milton in 2024 brought roughly three and a half feet of storm surge to the SOS campus, killing vegetation, flooding enclosures, forc-

ing emergency bird evacuations. Staff secured a boat from the Sarasota Police Department just to check on the birds in the aftermath. All of them survived — a fact Mitchell recounts with visible pride.

But the storms also accelerated what Mitchell and executive director Brian Walton had already identified as an urgent need: the campus has to be modernized, and it has to be made resilient. The first five new aluminum aviaries — replacing the aging wooden structures — are near completion, with 32 total on the campus eventually needing replacement at roughly \$35,000 each. A master site plan developed with DSDG Architects envisions a fully reimagined campus, including a new avian hospital built on an elevated footprint to protect against future flooding, new water features and a renovated pelican area at the center of campus, a Bird Walk, and upgraded facilities throughout. A ribbon-cutting for the initial phase is targeted for later this year.

“Going forward — full speed ahead,” Mitchell says, echoing Walton's words at a recent community gathering. “We have survived two major hurricanes in a matter of weeks. We came back. The birds came back. And now we are building something better than what was there before.”

There are also quieter moments that stay with her — the ones that remind her why she is doing this.

She tells the story of two bald eagles brought in with their talons locked together, embedded in each other from a midair territorial confrontation. Staff worked meticulously, removing one talon at a time, treating the wounds. At the end of the day, both eagles survived. Both were eventually released.

Mitchell tells another story about a sandhill crane hit by a vehicle, the phone calls that flew back and forth after hours, the coordination that brought the bird in. She was on the periphery of that rescue — watching the network activate, watching people respond. “I was so proud of the coordination,” she says again, and you get the sense she says it often, and means it every time.

How to Help.

For Longboat Key residents, Save Our Seabirds is a short drive across the bridge — and for many, Mitchell says, it might as well be in another county for how little they know about it.

“On Longboat Key, you see these birds everywhere — every dock, every shoreline, overhead every morning,” she says. “But in broader Sarasota, people aren't necessarily aware that this place exists or what it does. Broadening that awareness is a next step.”

The organization is open daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., with no admission fee. The daily pelican feeding is at noon; the raptor program runs at 1 p.m. Volunteer opportunities range from bird rescue (training classes are offered several times a year, no prior experience required) to facility maintenance, event support, docent work, and an intern program developed in partnership with area colleges.

“The first thing I always say is: come to Save Our Seabirds,” Mitchell says. “Come enjoy the Bird Walk. See what's there. People are always amazed by what they find. And then — if you like what you see — consider a donation, or get involved. There are so many ways in.”

She pauses.

“I have learned over many years that if everybody could just do a little something for the larger picture — something beyond their own immediate circumstances — that is how things actually get better. That is how communities work. You bloom where you are planted. And then you help the things around you grow.”

Save Our Seabirds is located at 1708 Ken Thompson Parkway, Sarasota, on City Island near Mote Marine. Open daily 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Free admission. For information on visiting, volunteering or donating, visit saveourseabirds.org or call 941-388-3010. After-hours bird emergencies: 941-416-4967.

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BreakPoints



Parisian Power Vacuum: With Carlos Alcaraz Officially Out, Who Stops Sinner on Red Dirt?

With Alcaraz now confirmed to be confined to the sidelines, who genuinely possesses the tactical toolkit to threaten Sinner over best-of-five sets on Court Philippe-Chatrier?

STEVE REID
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By the time the European spring yields to the Parisian summer, the narrative of the ATP Tour is usually carved into the red dirt. But as we approach Roland Garros this year, a massive shadow that has been looming over the Bois de Boulogne has finally dropped—the official withdrawal of two-time defending champion Carlos Alcaraz.

Now that the Spaniard's right wrist injury has officially forced him out of the French Open, the draw doesn't just open up; it radically reshapes the tactical landscape of the entire tournament.

Without the sport's most dynamic clay-court titan to defend his crown, World No. 1 Jannik Sinner becomes the undisputed man to beat. But clay is a living, breathing surface that rarely respects linear logic. With Alcaraz now confirmed to be confined to the sidelines, who genuinely possesses the tactical toolkit to threaten Sinner over best-of-five sets on Court Philippe-Chatrier?



The Mechanics of a Sidelined Defending Champion

To understand the void Alcaraz leaves behind, we must first understand the specific cruelty of the injury that derailed his title defense. Suffering a right wrist injury at the Barcelona Open earlier this month, Alcaraz has been forced to make the agonizing decision to prioritize his long-term career over a potential three-peat in Paris. For a modern clay-courtier, this is perhaps the absolute worst physical ailment to endure.

Clay demands heavy topspin to push opponents behind the baseline and open up the geometry of the court. Alcaraz's game is built on a devastating, whip-like forehand that generates massive RPMs. That shot relies heavily on the aggressive snap and pronation of the wrist and forearm through the contact zone. On hard courts, a player can occasionally get away with flattening out their strokes to protect the joint. On clay, doing so is tactical suicide. Without the ability to unleash his inside-out forehand or his heavy kick serve without severe discomfort, Alcaraz's kinetic chain is broken. By withdrawing, the tournament loses the one player whose peak physical and tactical ceiling matches—and often disrupts—Sinner's relentless baseline aggression, famously outlasting the Italian in last year's grueling five-and-a-half-hour final.

The Linear Assassin on a Lateral Surface

Jannik Sinner's relationship with clay has always been one of adaptation rather than natural marriage, but recent results—including his victory over Alcaraz at the Monte-Carlo Masters this spring—prove he has solved the puzzle. Sinner plays linear, first-strike tennis. He hits flat, takes the ball exceptionally early, and absorbs pace better than anyone in the world.

Traditionally, the heavy conditions of Roland Garros neutralize flat hitters, allowing pure dirt-ballers the time to set up their heavy, looping groundstrokes. But Sinner has evolved. By improving his drop shot, enhancing his physical endurance, and learning to slide into his shots rather than just out of them, he has turned his flat pace into a weapon that rushes opponents even on the slowest surface. Without Alcaraz's chaotic brilliance to drag Sinner into a grinding, multi-directional dogfight, Sinner will dictate the baseline terms against 95 percent of the locker room.

So, who makes up that remaining five percent?

The Prime Contenders: Who Can Derail the Express?

If Sinner is to be beaten in Paris without Alcaraz standing in his way, it will require a player capable of withstanding extreme baseline pace while possessing a weapon heavy enough to push the Italian off the baseline.

Alexander Zverev: The Heavy-Artillery Threat

Alexander Zverev's game translates dangerously well to the conditions of Philippe-Chatrier. The sheer height of his contact point, particularly on his world-class two-handed backhand, allows him to handle Sinner's crosscourt pace without being pushed out of the strike zone. Furthermore, Zverev's massive first serve wins him free points—a critical necessity against Sinner's elite returning. Zverev's heavy, high-bouncing groundstrokes can force Sinner to hit from above his shoulders, a zone where it is significantly harder to generate flat, piercing win-

ers. If Zverev serves at over 70 percent, he poses the most immediate stylistic threat to the Italian.

Casper Ruud: The Traditional Dirt-Baller

You do not reach multiple Roland Garros finals by accident. Casper Ruud represents the antithesis of Sinner's game. The Norwegian plays with immense height over the net, relying on a forehand that kicks violently off the surface. Ruud's strategy against Sinner would be pure attrition: pin Sinner deep in the ad-court, loop heavy forehands to Sinner's backhand, and refuse to give him the waist-high pace he craves. The question is whether Ruud can withstand the sheer velocity Sinner will send back his way. Ruud's backhand can break down under sustained pace, and Sinner will target it mercilessly.

Novak Djokovic: The Eternal Variable

Even in the twilight of his career, discarding Novak Djokovic at a major is a fool's errand. While he lacks the week-in, week-out physical dominance he once had, a two-week peak in Paris is never off the table. Sinner has turned the tide against Djokovic on hard courts, but best-of-five on clay is a different beast. Djokovic's unparalleled ability to absorb pace, change down-the-line direction, and tactically dissect an opponent's movement makes him a latent threat. If he finds his legs in the second week, Djokovic remains the ultimate chess master on the terre battue.

The Verdict: A Tournament of Margins

Now that Carlos Alcaraz has officially withdrawn, the narrative undeniably shifts from a two-horse rivalry to Sinner versus the field. Sinner's flat, suffocating baseline game makes him the heavy favorite, but Roland Garros is a tournament of physical margins.

To beat Sinner, an opponent must either out-serve him, out-grind him, or successfully drag him into a tactical war of attrition. Zverev has the power, Ruud has the spin, and Djokovic has the intellect. Yet, it will take a near-perfect performance to dismantle the Italian's pristine baseline mechanics. The French Open without its defending champion loses its most electric spark, but it sets the stage for a fascinating tactical chess match: Can the traditional weapons of clay-court tennis hold off the cold, calculated execution of Jannik Sinner?

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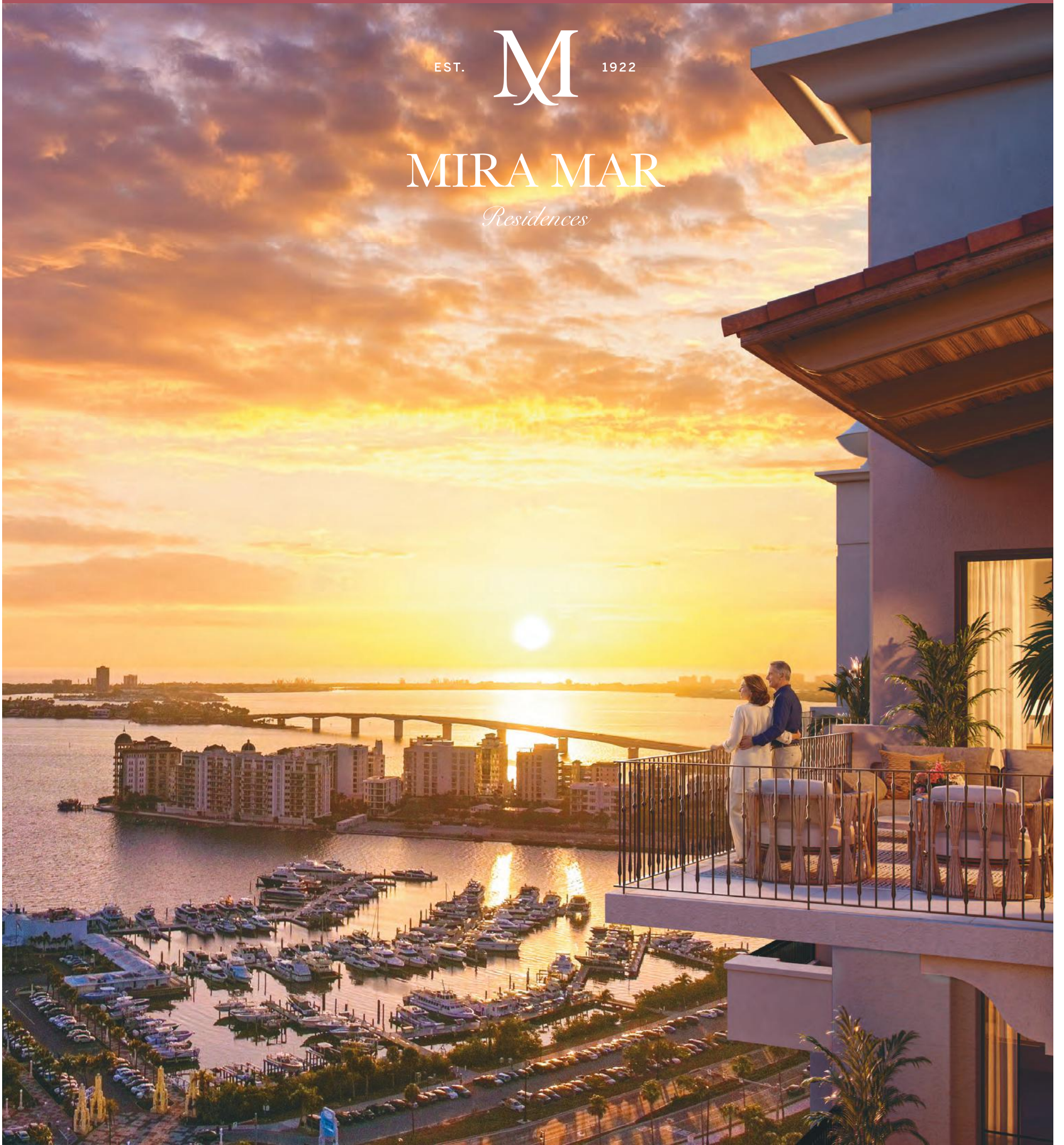
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