

# Sarasota County

Destination Strategic Plan 2020-2025 Summary



*Summary Description: Sarasota County's tourism landscape is rich in assets and amenities. From some of the world's best beaches to offering world class arts and culture experiences, Sarasota County's destination product is currently positioned for success, but the future will require more intensely focused development and promotional strategies.*

This is a summary of the key priorities of the 2025 Sarasota County Destination Strategic Plan (DSP). To view the full plan go to:

<https://www.visitsarasota.com/sarasota-county-destination-strategic-plan-2025-resources>

## Foundational Component – Differentiating Attractions from Attractors

When visitors make decisions about taking a trip they are making those decisions based on the level of significance of a destinations' attractors – those things that inspire and ultimately drive a visit. The DSP includes a tool that was developed for VSC to work with attractions across the County to understand where they are today and how they could work their way up the scale to becoming a genuine visitor attractor.

- VSC will work with attractions to complete visitor attraction analysis.

Timeline 2021-2022



### *Priorities*

#### **PRIORITY 1 - NEW & REPEAT VISITORS**

There are phases of visitor types (New Visitors, Sporadic Repeat Visitors and Frequent Repeat Visitors) and understanding how to reach and convert each type will be a critical shift in how VSC targets potential targets in the future.

#### **HOW IS PRIORITY ACHIEVED?**

- VSC Annual Business Plan will reflect efforts to reach new visitors and to motivate return trips by sporadic and frequent visitors.
- VSC will utilize advertising that is highly targeted with a message that appeals broadly to a new audience, while using public relations and social media strategies to reach niche audiences.

Timeframe 2020-2025



**PRIORITY 2 - ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE BEACHES**

The beaches of Sarasota County continue to be the lead reason for a visit, but just having beautiful beaches isn't enough in today's competitive market. There will need to be continued thought on beach access, programming, business opportunities, transportation and issues around water quality.

**HOW IS PRIORITY ACHIEVED?**

VSC will pursue strategies to promote all of the county beaches and garner attention for some of the lesser known beaches.

Timeframe: 2020-2025

VSC will influence County beach assessment processes to include discussions on programming

Timeframe:2021-2023

**PRIORITY 3 - PUBLIC VENUES**

Across Sarasota County there are key venues and assets that relate to sports, arts and culture, and recreation and nature. There are opportunities that should be studied further such as conference center and multi-sport complex. VSC will assist in any study of a multi-sport facility and/or conference center. The Sarasota Bay Park Conservancy will be formed.

**HOW IS PRIORITY ACHIEVED?**

- VSC will assist Sarasota County Government in a study of a multi-sport facility and/or conference center.

Timeframe: 2021

- The Bay Park Conservancy will be formed and Phase 1A completed.

Timeframe: 2023-2024



**PRIORITY 4 - EVENTS**

A comprehensive countywide approach to evaluating and promoting events is a new initiative that can help grow current events to a scale that drives new visitation around those high priority events.

**HOW IS PRIORITY ACHIEVED?**

- VSC will implement a countywide event evaluation process using a uniform matrix.

Timeframe 2021-2022

- VSC will set multiyear goals to grow overnight visitor generating events.

Timeframe 2023-2025

**PRIORITY 5 - PREPAREDNESS**

With the potential for natural or man made catastrophic events, it will be critical to have a proactive plan in place for how reserve funds are accessed and utilized and how communication and messaging is distributed.

**HOW IS PRIORITY ACHIEVED?**

- Working with Sarasota County EOC, VSC will continue to refine its crisis plan and response.

Timeframe 2020-2025

- Sarasota County will create a process to access TDT promotion reserve funds for emergencies.

Timeframe: 2020

**PRIORITY 6 - FUNDING IMPLICATIONS AND STRATEGIES**

There are opportunities for new funding streams through the creation of a model and tools to ensure TDT investments are being made strategically. The Lodging industry will fund and work with Sarasota County in exploring a countywide Tourism Business Improvement District.

**HOW IS PRIORITY ACHIEVED?**

- The Sarasota County lodging industry and Sarasota County Government, will explore a countywide Tourism Business Improvement District.

Timeframe: 2020

- Sarasota County will adopt a Tourism Investment Decision Matrix for use of TDT in capital projects.

Timeframe: 2020

- TDT collections will achieve \$30 million.

Timeframe: 2026

# Visit Sarasota County: 2025 Direction



There are seven key focus areas each with multiple objectives for VSC to work on internally. Each of the focus areas below will help the organization evolve to support the implementation of the DSP.

## *Internal Areas of Focus*

**Governance Strategic Direction:** Cultivate a comprehensive governance environment that fosters communication and performance monitoring across future tourism asset enhancements, visitor services and destination business development investments.

**Organizational Strategic Direction:** Provide a nurturing team environment built on personal accountability in pursuing strategic implementation of direction.

**Finance Strategic Direction:** Supplement and expand (but not replace) current funding TDT funding levels with new sources of revenue.

**Brand & Awareness Development Strategic Direction:** Develop a brand assimilation approach for Sarasota County that drives unified understanding of the destination's potential, livability and dependence on tourism.

**Business Development Strategic Direction:** Drive demand for off-season visitation to Sarasota County.

**Destination Development Strategic Direction:** Deliver a county-wide approach to further develop and strengthen the Sarasota County destination product offering.

**Visitor Services Development Strategic Direction:** Deliver high-quality, sensory compelling visitor information to educate travelers to Sarasota County.



## *VSC Effectiveness Measures*

- VSC will maintain DMAP accreditation for 2020-2025
- Positive indicators in growth of visitor intent to travel generated by marketing campaigns (e-newsletter sign ups/ guide requests/ Arrivalist style data)
- Maintain or exceed at least 50% of visitors to Sarasota who have noticed messages about Sarasota and of those at least 50% influenced by those messages to come to Sarasota
- VSC will maintain a Return on Investment of at least \$500 in visitor spending in Sarasota for every \$1 dollar of VSC advertising
- Positive indicators in the number of sporting events in Sarasota and their positive economic impact
- Positive indicators in the number of meeting and group leads generated by VSC sales for area businesses
- VSC will utilize industry measurement platforms to provide actual visitor conversion stats. These stats will be driven out of actual visitors to Sarasota County that were influenced by, and exposed to, VSC marketing initiatives. VSC's annual business plan will project target market's for each campaign and track subsequent visitor arrivals into the destination and partner businesses on a rolling two-year period.

This plan is the culmination of our collective communities' feedback on tourism's future and we would like to thank all of you that participated in developing this tourism roadmap to 2025.