



Center for the Arts Stakeholder Meeting Summary

Date: July 30, 2025

Facilitator: John Curran, ASD|SKY

Host: St. Petersburg Area Chamber of Commerce

Participants: Approximately 20 stakeholders including representatives from Mahaffey Theater, The Dali Museum, Florida Orchestra, Saturday Morning Market, Downtown Business Alliance, Chamber of Commerce, and others

Key Takeaways

1. Unified Vision: Center for the Arts as a Destination District

Participants repeatedly emphasized the need to brand and design the site as a cohesive arts district — not a collection of isolated venues, but a collective destination. Reference was made to New York’s Lincoln Center as a successful model.

2. Visibility & Identity Matter

The Mahaffey Theater, Dali Museum, and other institutions should be visually prominent and not hidden behind infrastructure like parking garages. The design should celebrate these cultural landmarks from all approaches — by car, on foot, or by boat.

3. Fountain of Youth as a Historic Anchor

There's strong interest in honoring the original Fountain of Youth site, currently hidden. Stakeholders proposed commemorative features or interpretive signage to preserve its role in local memory.

4. Parking Remains Contentious but Necessary

Stakeholders raised concerns about the garage location, aesthetic, and its potential to visually dominate. While its functionality is critical — especially during events like the Grand Prix — many feel parking should support, not define, the site.

5. Need for Inclusive Design Process

Several stakeholders voiced frustration at not being included earlier in the process. ASD|SKY committed to ongoing engagement and one-on-one follow-ups in the coming weeks.

Ideas & Opportunities

- **Develop District-wide Signage and Identity System:** Use creative wayfinding (color-coded signs, artistic elements) to help visitors navigate and reinforce the “Center for the Arts” brand.
- **Reconsider Long-term Site Configuration:** Evaluate the future of Al Lang Stadium and adjacent spaces for improved spatial flexibility and programming.
- **Make Parking Garage Multi-functional:** Design garage spaces to support ground-floor activation and artistic programming rather than detract from the district’s aesthetics.
- **Celebrate and Activate Waterfront Views:** Maximize visibility and public engagement with the bay, ensuring the district is welcoming from all approaches.
- **Promote Institutional Collaboration:** Encourage shared programming and space use among arts organizations to create a seamless cultural experience.
- **Leverage Mahaffey Theater’s Expertise:** Utilize Mahaffey’s logistical experience to inform event and plaza planning.

- **Pedestrianize Waterfront Routes:** Explore blocking off Bay Shore to create a fully pedestrian waterfront promenade.
- **Green Roofs and Sustainable Design:** Integrate green roofs and native landscaping for environmental and aesthetic benefits.
- **Homelessness and Security Management:** Develop plans for balanced security and compassionate management of homeless presence.
- **Historical Preservation:** Create a commemorative baseball shrine if the stadium is removed, preserving the cultural legacy.
- **Convention Center Reevaluation:** Consider repurposing or redesigning the convention center addition for better alignment with the arts district.
- **Environmental Resilience:** Prioritize flood and storm resilience studies in all planning.