



July 2026

Fort Lauderdale is setting a record – a record that has benefited taxpayers year in and year out while also maintaining public safety and shaping an amazing community.

What's the record? For the 20th consecutive year, the city is not increasing its property tax rate. Few other municipalities in Florida can make a statement like that. The tax rate has increased in Broward County's other cities an average of 36 percent in the same timeframe.

This accomplishment is especially meaningful now.

Across the nation, families are still dealing with inflation, elevated insurance costs, higher borrowing rates and economic uncertainty. In Florida, housing affordability has become one of the defining challenges of our time – for both homeowners and renters. Businesses, too, are watching costs closely as they decide where to invest, expand and hire.

People want government to be disciplined, accountable and sensitive to the burden carried by taxpayers. Fort Lauderdale has been doing exactly that.

Even while we've avoided tax rate increases, the city has stepped up to the challenge of advancing the priorities that matter

For two decades, we have held the line on the city tax rate while still moving forward on the priorities that matter most — public safety, infrastructure, resilience, parks, water quality and neighborhood services. We have not always had easy choices, but the result has been a city that is more vibrant, safe, successful and prepared for the future.

That is the balance reflected again in the proposed budget for the next fiscal year.

Public safety remains our top priority.

The budget continues funding for the Group Violence Intervention program, ShotSpotter gunshot detection program and the Real Time Crime Center. It expands our license plate reader network and increases public safety aide coverage at schools. Money is included to buy new marine vessels for both Fire Rescue and Police and replace 81

public safety vehicles. We also set aside funding for the new Holiday Park Fire Rescue Station.

These are practical investments in prevention, response and readiness. They will help ensure our police officers, firefighters and paramedics have the tools and support they need. That is why over 60% of our annual budget is dedicated to public safety.

The proposed budget also makes one of the strongest investments in recent years to combat homelessness.

The budget expands shelter access through the Broward Partnership. It supports mental health and substance abuse treatment initiatives, the Community Court Program, the Police Homeless Outreach Unit, reunification efforts and the Mobile Integrated Health -- Homeless Action Team. It funds five positions supporting homelessness initiatives and adds support for the Rotary Connection transportation and relocation program.

These efforts reflect the seriousness of the issue. We must continue working with Broward County, service providers, hospitals and the business community to transition people from the streets to needed services and housing, while maintaining the quality of life on our streets and in our public spaces that residents and businesses expect.

Infrastructure and resilience continue to dominate capital spending because they are central to Fort Lauderdale's future.

The proposed budget continues major investment in flood mitigation, including \$58.3 million for the Fortify Lauderdale program and \$9.4 million for stormwater improvements. It also provides additional operating funds to maintain completed Fortify Lauderdale projects.

As a coastal city, we live with the realities of heavy rain, tidal flooding and sea level rise. Strengthening drainage, protecting neighborhoods and planning watershed improvements are essential to our long-term resilience.

The budget also advances critical water and sewer priorities, including \$22 million in new capital projects, \$36.7 million for the operation of the new Prospect Lake Clean Water Center. It should come online by September of this year. There is also \$4.2 million to support transition staffing as the city moves from its current operations at the Fiveash Water Treatment Plant.

This is one of the most important infrastructure transitions in Fort Lauderdale history. Clean, clear, reliable water is fundamental to public health, economic development and public confidence. The investments we make now will shape the city's utility system for decades.

Seawalls are another major focus.

The proposed budget includes \$8.3 million in new seawall replacement funding, along with \$22.3 million in previously appropriated seawall project balances and \$5.1 million in grant funding. These investments help protect neighborhoods, roads and public property.

Transportation and mobility also receive continued attention.

The budget supports implementation of the Las Olas Mobility Plan, bridge replacement projects, roadway and sidewalk improvements, traffic calming projects and enhanced pedestrian safety through installation of Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons. These projects will help improve safety, walkability and neighborhood quality of life.

The budget process belongs to the public.

Residents have opportunities to review the proposed budget, follow the city's financial data, participate in meetings, use online tools and share their priorities. I encourage everyone to take part as a budget is strongest when it reflects not only professional analysis but also the lived experience of the people we serve.

The public hearings are set for 5:01 p.m. Sept. 9 and Sept. 14 at the new community center in the Police Station at 1300 W. Broward Blvd.

As mayor, I believe our responsibility is clear. We must spend wisely, and we must invest where investment is needed. And we must respect the pressure that families, seniors, homeowners, renters and businesses are facing.

Plans for a new City Hall

I'm pleased to announce that the City Commission has made a final decision to move forward with construction of a new City Hall.

This was not a decision made lightly. The former City Hall was demolished after it was severely damaged by the historic April 2023 flooding. Since then, city services have been scattered across multiple locations and we've lacked a permanent home for public meetings. It's been costly and inefficient.

Some wanted us to consider buying and renovating an old building – potentially the towers at 101 NE 3rd Ave. or 1 E. Broward Blvd. But this was just a bad idea for the future of our city. Let me share with you my thoughts.

We should build the City Hall we need — not inherit the problems of buildings designed for someone else. An old office tower can house employees, but it does not automatically become a secure, accessible, resilient, public-facing City Hall.

Also, renovation costs are a major unknown and would make buying an older building more expensive than building a new one. Any bargain starts to disappear once you add code upgrades, flood protection, hurricane-resistant features, improvements to electrical and HVAC systems, complying with government security needs, office space buildout and the creation of public meeting space and commission chamber.

The city already learned the hard lesson of relying on yesterday's buildings.

Our former City Hall failed because it was not built for today's climate reality. Its replacement should be designed for the storms, flooding and public-service demands for decades to come.

A new City Hall lets us design around residents, employees, public access and civic purpose. After all, this is a generational decision, not a real estate deal.

The goal is not simply to find office space. The goal is to build a durable civic headquarters that reflects Fort Lauderdale's future, protects taxpayers and gives the public a City Hall worthy of a growing city.

With the decision in hand to build a new City Hall, the commission also advanced an interim agreement to design and build the facility through a public-private partnership with a team that includes CORE Construction, Stiles Corp., PALMA and PGAL.

They will now move to the next phase of evaluation, design, cost review and planning. Within the next three months, we will also select a final design for the building.

It's time for us to move forward.

Residents should not have to navigate a scattered system to obtain basic services. City employees should not be forced to work from temporary or fragmented spaces that were never designed for long-term municipal operations. Public meetings, permitting, customer service, emergency coordination, technology systems and day-to-day operations all work better when they are housed in a facility built for that purpose.

Continuing to delay the project would come at its own costs.

The city spends millions of dollars each year on temporary space and scattered operations. Every month of delay risks higher construction costs, continued inefficiency and missed opportunities to create a more effective government center.

We have been fiscally responsible in our approach. We have weighed the options, refined the budget and reviewed the costs all to protect the public interest. We will continue to do so as design and construction progress.

Yours,
Dean