Overview of Public Safety Initiatives

With the City of Fort Lauderdale's rapid growth and robust economic development, it is essential that everyone who lives, works, and plays in the City feels safe and protected. The City remains steadfast in its commitment to strengthening public safety through smart investments in personnel, facilities, and equipment. The initiatives outlined below are designed to make the City's public safety services more responsive, comprehensive, and effective.

Public Safety Infrastructure

To keep pace with Fort Lauderdale's urban expansion, the City is constructing new public safety facilities – in both the downtown corridor and throughout the City – to build for a sustainable future ahead:

- **New Police Headquarters:** Set to open in FY 2026, the state-of-the art 191,000-square-foot facility will feature training rooms, public meeting areas, and community spaces where neighbors and officers can work together on crime prevention and safety initiatives. To prepare for the opening, the budget includes an additional $427 thousand in operational funding to proactively maintain the new facility and prevent costly repairs.
- **New Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Substations:** To enhance emergency fire and medical service response times, the City has invested in additional full-service substations, which include the following: the Downtown Substation #88 and the Heron Garage Substation. The City is contributing $7.1 million in this year's Community Investment Plan (CIP) to complete the construction of these two facilities.
- **Fire Station Replacements:** Nearly $55 million in funding has been appropriated to support Fire Rescue Bond Projects. Among these projects, Fire Station 13 represents the final project, with $12.8 million in funding appropriations to date. The final appropriation of $3.7 million is scheduled for FY 2026 to finish constructing the project.

Public Safety Personnel

SWORN PUBLIC SAFETY PERSONNEL ENHANCEMENTS
91
SINCE 2023

- **Staffing Enhancements:** Over the last three (3) years, the City has increased its personnel complement by 91 additional sworn personnel including police officers, firefighters, fire lieutenants, and one (1) police sergeant position.
- **Technology Support for First Responders:** The FY 2026 budget includes $1.1 million for seven (7) new information technology (IT) positions to support Police and Fire Rescue operations. As technology serves an increasingly vital role in law enforcement, emergency response, and public safety, the addition of IT positions has become essential to delivering reliable and dedicated support for these critical functions.
- **Expanded Training Opportunities:** This FY 2026 budget includes additional training funding essential for enhancing professionalism and building community trust including:
  - $299 thousand for the Fire Rescue Department to establish a two (2) year program to enhance training related to incident command, emergency medical response, and leadership.
  - $128 thousand for the Police Department to provide training focusing on crisis intervention tactics and promoting community engagement.
- **Forensic Specialist:** $162 thousand in enhanced funding is included in the FY 2026 budget for a new forensic specialist position to allow the Department to process and validate DNA samples internally, resulting in faster case resolutions and improved clearance rates.
- **Administrative Support:** $250 thousand in enhanced funding is included in the Fire Rescue budget for two (2) senior administrative assistant positions to manage the Telestaff workforce management system and provide critical support for the City's Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

Overview of Public Safety Initiatives

- **Grant Initiatives**: Over the last two years, both public safety departments have pursued and received significant multi-year grants to enhance services for our neighbors. The programming funded by these grants will continue into FY 2026.
  - In FY 2024, the Fort Lauderdale Police Department received approximately $1.0 million in grants from the U.S. Department of Justice to hire additional public safety personnel. This includes $750 thousand in Community Oriented Policing (COPS) funding to hire six (6) new full-time police officers and $257 thousand for one (1) civilian clinician to start a Co-Responder Pilot program for crisis response involving mental health or substance abuse.
  - In October 2024, the City was awarded a Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant from the Department of Homeland Security in the amount of $11.4 million to fund 28 additional firefighter positions to enhance the number of rescue units that are staffed by a three-person team. To support the initiative, the City has committed to providing $3.5 million in financial support over a three-year grant period.

Investments in Public Safety Equipment

The FY 2026 budget includes the following appropriations to ensure that the City's sworn personnel have the tools needed to safely and smartly respond to calls for service:

- **Technology Improvements:** This year's budget invests heavily in technological solutions to act as a force multiplier to assist public safety personnel and keep them safe on the job.
  - Closed-Circuit Television Cameras (CCTV): $1.2 million is included for the installation of CCTV cameras to improve public safety and support crime prevention efforts in high-traffic areas such as Himmarshee, Las Olas, and Sistrunk Boulevards.
  - License Plate Readers (LPR): $189,000 is included for the final year of the LPR expansion and replacement program, allowing officers to focus more on proactive policing and building stronger community relationships.
  - Neighborhood Security Equipment: $220,000 in enhanced funding is included to purchase three (3) message boards, with LPR integration, and two (2) tower surveillance trailers for large events, protests, and disaster response. The message boards will help manage pedestrian and vehicular congestion, share public service announcements, and provide integrated LPR technology to identify tags and alert officers of stolen or wanted vehicles.
  - Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Security Policy: $357,660 in enhanced funding is included to ensure that the City meets critical regulatory requirements, such as the CJIS security policy requirements.
- **Critical Equipment and Gear:** The FY 2026 budget funds the replacement and enhancement of critical public safety equipment. This includes the following:
  - Vehicle Replacement: $9.4 million to replace 136 public safety vehicles including two (2) front-line ambulances.
  - Equipment Upgrades: $1.5 million is invested to replace critical public safety equipment including power-load systems, high-resolution cameras, technical rescue equipment, and boat engines.
  - Barricades and Removable Bollards: $408 thousand is included for the purchase of traffic barricades and padlock removable bollards to assist with crowd control during special events and reduce the risk of vehicle related accidents.
  - Protective Gear: $270 thousand is included for the replacement of over 140 vests as scheduled in the ballistic vest replacement plan, $385 thousand is included for replacing 75 bunker gear sets, and $39,000 for specialized Fire Rescue gear including wetsuits and powered air-purifying respirators.
  - Animal Replacements: $50 thousand is included to replace two (2) police canines and one (1) mounted patrol horse.