



## Memorandum

**Memorandum No: 25-159**

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and Members of the Fort Lauderdale City Commission

**FROM:** Rickelle Williams, City Manager *RW*

**DATE:** September 2, 2025

**SUBJECT: Fiscal Year 2026 Balancing Act Budget Engagement Results**

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The City of Fort Lauderdale (City) is dedicated to fostering ongoing opportunities for neighbor engagement and participation in the budgeting process. The Balancing Act tool is an innovative online platform designed to involve residents directly by allowing them to explore and adjust elements of the City's Proposed General Fund Budget, thereby promoting transparency and accountability.

### **Overview of Fiscal Year 2026 Balancing Act Engagement**

The City via the Office of Management and Budget prepared the Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Balancing Act simulation based on the Proposed General Fund Operating Budget, including all program modification (decision package) requests. The metrics summarized below highlight community feedback from neighbors who provided submissions between July 8 and August 26, 2025:

- 2,384 pageviews
- 164 hours of engagement
- 37 unique budget submissions (after duplicate removal)
- Responses received from all four (4) commission districts

### **Key Community Feedback**

#### *Revenue Preferences Shared*

- 75% favored maintaining the proposed property tax rate
- 14% supported decreasing the rate
- 11% supported increasing the rate
- Fire Assessment Fee opinions were evenly split regarding adjustments
  - Notable comments included preferences for funding fire services through property taxes due to federal deductibility

*Expense Priorities Shared*

- Supported budget increases for Fire Rescue, Public Works, Parks and Recreation, and Transportation and Mobility
- Mixed opinions of Special Events funding (54% increase vs. 46% decrease)
- Support for increased Community Investment Plan (CIP) funding to support traffic calming, sidewalks, and infrastructure
- Opposition to non-essential projects, with preference for essential infrastructure (e.g. sidewalks and streetlight repairs)
- Suggestion to bolster General Fund reserves due to federal funding uncertainties

*Highlighted Departmental Suggestions*

- Transportation and Mobility: Increase driver wages, improve bus frequency, and expand Beach-to-Las Olas service to daily operations
- Community Services: Emphasize funding for homelessness solutions; reduce spending on consultants and art projects
- Development Services: Support for enhanced funding to improve zoning and business tax efficiency

**Budget Advisory Board Feedback and Future Enhancements**

The Budget Advisory Board (BAB) reviewed the Balancing Act engagement results at its August 13, 2025 meeting and provided favorable feedback regarding the tool's effectiveness in promoting neighbor participation and transparency. The BAB also offered valuable suggestions to enhance the tool's effectiveness including expanding marketing efforts to target additional responses, offering more detailed guidance within the tool, and adding educational videos to provide users with added background and context.

**Conclusion**

The FY 2026 Balancing Act exercise successfully gathered meaningful community input on budget priorities and trade-offs, reflecting the City's ongoing commitment to transparency and resident involvement. We appreciate the City Commission's continued support as we refine this tool in partnership with the BAB to strengthen public participation in the budgeting process.

c: D'Wayne M. Spence, Interim City Attorney  
David R. Soloman, City Clerk  
Patrick Reilly, City Auditor  
City Manager's Office  
Department Directors  
Budget Advisory Board