



LETTER TO THE COMMISSION

LTC No: 26-134

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the Fort Lauderdale City Commission
FROM: Rickelle Williams, City Manager *RW*
DATE: May 4, 2026
SUBJECT: **City's Homeless Response - Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 2nd Quarter Update**

The purpose of this Letter to the Commission (LTC) is to provide the City Commission with an update to LTC No. 26-031 (Attachment 1) regarding the City's ongoing efforts to fulfill the City Commission's Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 priority to provide Homeless Resources through a range of programs and initiatives to address homelessness. As the City of Fort Lauderdale continues to deliver a comprehensive and compassionate response to homelessness, this LTC provides an overview of the 2nd Quarter of FY 2026 highlighting the significant progress made in implementing new strategic initiatives approved in the FY 2026 Budget.

Expanded Homeless Services Team & Intensive Outreach

Building on the integration of the Police Homeless Outreach Team (HOT), Fire Rescue's Mobile Integrated Health (MIH) unit, behavioral health specialists, and the Community Services Department's (CSD) Homeless Initiatives team in Quarter One (Q1) to form the Homeless Outreach Progressive Engagement (HOPE) team, the City has continued to refine its multidisciplinary approach to addressing homelessness. By maintaining a unified framework of public safety, public health, and case management, the HOPE team has expanded its real-time response capabilities for high-need community members.

The team continues to operate across three (3) integrated focus areas:

- Street Engagement
- Intensive Outreach
- Program Services

The HOPE team met regularly throughout Quarter Two (Q2) to refine the City's integrated care model. These sessions significantly improved communication and coordination across the team, particularly regarding the City's collaboration with Broward Health. By establishing more consistent information-sharing protocols, the HOPE team and Broward Health successfully aligned patient care strategies, resulting in smoother transitions and more reliable continuity of care for unhoused individuals.

Furthermore, collaboration has created a vital forum for addressing operational challenges in real time and identifying specific opportunities for process improvements. This proactive communication has strengthened the team's overall responsiveness and established a higher standard of internal accountability. While the HOPE team continues to focus on streamlining workflows and ensuring rigorous follow-through, the progress made in Q2 has markedly elevated both the level of care provided and the strategic coordination of our outreach efforts.

Hiring of Case Managers and Park Rangers

During Q1, the City reassigned five (5) existing positions to support the homeless response program. Two (2) are Case Manager positions with the Community Services Department's (CSD) Housing and Community Development (HCD) Division and three (3) are Park Rangers working with the HOT. As of Q2, the two (2) Case Manager positions are in the final stages of the hiring process, and one (1) Park Ranger has been hired. One (1) Park Ranger candidate is in the final screening process, and the remaining position is actively being recruited.

Once the onboarding process is complete, Case Managers will collaborate with medical and mental health experts to provide the longitudinal care coordination essential for long-term housing stability. Their responsibilities will include direct outreach to the unhoused population, service delivery, and enrollment of individuals in the Broward County Continuum of Care's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). Park Rangers will join the HOT and focus on areas like downtown, Riverwalk, Esplanade Park, and Stranahan Park.

Streamlining Service Delivery and Partnerships

During Q2, the City continued to refine its homeless response strategy, prioritizing cross-sector partnerships and administrative efficiency to transition individuals from crisis to long-term stability. This collaborative framework is sustained by the Community Court program, strategic service contracts for emergency shelter and addiction recovery, and planned safe parking initiatives. Furthermore, the City remains committed to providing critical grant-funded support to housing and shelter providers to ensure a seamless continuum of care for those served.

Community Court

The City has expanded its supportive services through a series of targeted outreach events designed to promote long-term stability and wellness. As outlined in LTC No. 26-082, published on March 24, 2026, HCD is partnering with local service providers to host an event series that activates the Community Court facility during non-court days. Activations include providing services related to health and wellness, photo identification, employment, financial literacy, and mental health. These initiatives bolster the support provided to the unhoused population by offering viable pathways to independence.

Community Court serves as a vital entry point for individuals seeking assistance. The data below reflects the high volume of engagement and the conversion of those who walk into Community Court into formal service provider referrals during Q1 and Q2.

	Q1	Q2
Total Walk-Ins	958	913
Service Referrals Provided	629	676
Notices to Appear (NTAs) Written	54	48
Notices to Appear (NTAs) Fulfilled	27	28
Program Graduates	15	18

Approximately seventy-four percent (74%) of all walk-in engagements resulted in direct service provider referrals during this quarter.

Emergency Shelter Services - The Caring Place

The Miami Rescue Mission, Inc., also known as The Caring Place, continues to play a vital role in supporting individuals experiencing homelessness within the City of Fort Lauderdale. Through a contractual agreement with the City, The Caring Place’s emergency shelter placement and comprehensive supportive services assist clients as they progress toward stable housing.

The City maintains access to a total of twenty (20) beds at The Caring Place, allocated as follows: eight (8) for male clients, eight (8) for female clients, and a dedicated room for a family of four (4).

The following data provides a breakdown of participant outcomes, highlighting the program's efficacy in stabilizing high-acuity individuals and facilitating their transition into appropriate care or housing.

- Since the beginning of FY 2026, the Caring Place served fifty-five (55) individuals, including three (3) families.
- The average length of stay for those utilizing the emergency shelter was fifty-eight (58) days, reflecting both the ongoing need for transitional support and the organization’s commitment to facilitating positive housing outcomes.
- During Q2, the emergency shelter maintained an average daily bed occupancy rate of sixty-five percent (65%). This high level of utilization demonstrates the ongoing demand for transitional housing services and the effectiveness of outreach efforts in connecting individuals with available resources. Among the thirty-eight (38) participants managed during this reporting period, twelve (12) individuals (31.58%) successfully maintained or increased their income, reflecting progress toward financial independence and stability.
- Of the forty-three (43) participants evaluated for housing outcomes, fourteen (14) individuals (32.56%) successfully obtained permanent housing. These outcomes underscore the impact of the coordinated service approach in supporting both

economic advancement and access to stable housing for those experiencing homelessness.

Fellowship Recovery Community Organization (Fellowship)

Fellowship continues to play a vital role providing substance use stabilization, residential treatment, and supportive services for individuals experiencing homelessness in the City of Fort Lauderdale. These services are an integral component of the City's Mental Health and Substance Abuse Housing Program.

During Q2, fifty-one (51) individuals accepted the opportunity to receive services at Fellowship through a referral from the City. The following data provides a breakdown of participant outcomes, highlighting the program's efficacy in stabilizing high-acuity individuals and facilitating their transition into appropriate care or housing.

- Twenty-one (21) individuals successfully transitioned into structured recovery housing environments. This represents forty-three (43%) of the total served, demonstrating strong alignment with stabilization and recovery goals.
- Nine (9) individuals (18.4%) were referred to a higher level of clinical care, such as inpatient treatment, detoxification, or behavioral health intervention. This accounts for approximately one (1) in five (5) participants and reflects appropriate triage and responsiveness to relapse risk, acute mental-health needs, or other clinical concerns identified during their stay.
- Seven (7) individuals (14.3%) exited Fellowship support by moving into independent housing or reconnecting with family, representing a successful transition to greater self-sufficiency or restored family relationships.
- Fourteen (14) individuals (28.6%) exited the program without completing the intended services. A non-completion rate around thirty percent (30%) is typical for high-acuity populations, underscoring the ongoing need for targeted support strategies such as engagement and retention strategies, harm-reduction approaches, and rapid re-engagement pathways for participants who return in crisis.

Safe Parking

Since the beginning of Q1, the City has actively engaged potential safe parking service providers to design a program that prioritizes both security and long-term stability. A significant milestone in this process occurred on March 12, 2026, when the Homeless Advisory Committee received a presentation from LifeNet4Families (LifeNet) regarding their proposed Safe Parking Project. Following the presentation, the Committee expressed support for the program. Staff is working with LifeNet to finalize the details of proposing a Safe Parking Program for the City using funds included in the FY 2026 budget.

The City's initiative is informed by a comprehensive evaluation of existing models both locally and nationwide. The local example is the program sponsored by Hope South Florida and largely funded by Broward County. The Hope South Florida program launched on December 15, 2025. Using Hope South Florida's program as a source to evaluate Safe Parking, the City has identified critical best practices and areas for improvement.

Based on 'lessons learned' from the Hope South Florida's safe parking program, the City's program would include a budget for the following services to ensure that challenges related to vehicle access are incorporated into the program's Client Support Services funding:

- **Vehicle-Related Costs:** Need to consider essential fees for driver's licenses and vehicle registrations.
- **Transportation Assistance:** Provide immediate aid through resources like gas cards and help with mechanical issues.
- **Housing Stabilization:** Funds for housing-related costs including rental application fees and emergency stability expenses.
- **Operational Eligibility:** Support for miscellaneous limited expenses necessary to maintain program eligibility and ensure successful outcomes for participating families.

The program's funding would also support food services for two (2) meals per day and the purchase of toiletries, cleaning materials, diapers and baby items, first-aid supplies, blankets, and other essential items necessary to support the health, safety, and dignity of families with minor children participating in the Safe Parking Program.

The City's approach will center around a strong exit strategy, specifically granting participants direct access to City housing assistance programs to facilitate a seamless transition into permanent housing. This integrated approach ensures that the City's resources are utilized effectively to move families from the crisis of living in a vehicle to the stability of a home.

Engagement and Housing Resource Utilization

In Q2, the HOPE team continued prioritizing areas frequented by unhoused individuals and rapid response to community requests for service. The team maintained a consistent operational tempo, ensuring that street-level engagements were both frequent and strategically targeted to areas of highest need.

During Q2, the HOT had 1,751 engagements with unhoused individuals, made one hundred fifteen (115) referrals to Broward Addiction and Recovery Center (BARC) and The Caring Place, and conducted eighty (80) arrests (issued a Notice to Appear or taken to jail).

Panhandling Signage

To promote informed giving and manage the effects of panhandling, the City deployed new signage across key areas. These high-visibility signs are situated at the intersections and downtown locations outlined below, targeting the areas of highest frequency. A comprehensive map detailing these locations is currently in development and will be provided upon completion to illustrate the full scope of the rollout.

- Federal Highway and SE 17 Street
- Broward Boulevard from I-95 to Federal Highway
- Downtown Bus Terminal
- Federal Highway and Sunrise Boulevard
- Sunrise Boulevard and A1A
- Las Olas Boulevard and A1A
- Federal Highway and Oakland Park Boulevard
- Federal Highway and East Commercial Boulevard
- Federal Highway and 56 Street
- Huizenga Park
- Esplanade Park
- Stranahan Park
- Riverwalk area



The signage is designed to educate the public on long-term solutions by directing individuals to the City's dedicated webpage: ftlcity.info/FTLGives, a resource that connects the community with professional service providers as an alternative to direct giving. With the design and installation of the signs complete, current efforts are focused on ensuring these tools are active and visible in high-impact areas throughout the City.

If you have any questions, please contact Porshia L. Garcia, Director, Community Services Department, at PGarcia@fortlauderdale.gov or 954-828-5249.

Attachment:

1. LTC No. 26-031

c: Shari L. McCartney, City Attorney
David R. Soloman, City Clerk
Patrick Reilly, City Auditor
City Manager's Office
Department Directors



LETTER TO THE COMMISSION

LTC No: 26-031

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

FROM: Rickelle Williams, City Manager *RW*

DATE: February 4, 2026

SUBJECT: Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Quarter One Update on the City's Homeless Response

The purpose of this Letter to the Commission (LTC) is to provide the City Commission with an update on the City's efforts to address homelessness. As the City of Fort Lauderdale continues to prioritize a comprehensive and compassionate response to homelessness, this LTC provides an overview of the first quarter of Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 highlighting the significant progress made in implementing new strategic initiatives approved in the FY 2026 Budget. Subsequent updates will be provided through a monthly LTC.

Expanded Team & Intensive Outreach

A critical part of the City's enhanced strategy is securing additional resources to engage individuals experiencing homelessness where they are out in the community. Building on the foundation established in the last quarter of FY 2025, the City formed a Homeless Outreach Progressive Engagement (HOPE) team by merging the Police Homeless Outreach Team (HOT) and Fire Rescue Emergency Medical Services (EMS). The HOPE team provides enhanced, unified, and integrated response through a multidisciplinary response unit designed to address those experiencing a complex behavioral health crisis and high-need community members in real time. This integrated team operates with a public safety and public health framework, combining law enforcement, EMS, behavioral health, and case management. Through intensive outreach, EMS conducts proactive visits with homeless individuals, to high utilizers of EMS, and those with complex health needs. This restructuring ensures that services from initial engagement to housing placement are coordinated and seamless, with our team operating across three (3) integrated focus areas: Street Engagement, Intensive Outreach, and Program Services.

Hiring of Park Rangers and Case Managers: To enhance resources available to the City staff tasked with addressing homelessness, the City reclassified five (5) existing vacant positions and moved two (2) filled positions into the homeless response program.

As part of the seven (7) staff additions to the restructured response, the City has hired one (1) Park Ranger who is embedded with the Homeless Outreach Team (HOT). Two (2) additional Park Ranger positions are in the recruitment process. Furthermore, two (2) positions within the Police Department were reclassified to serve as Case Managers and are in the recruitment process. The two (2) case managers will join the Housing and Community Development Division (HCD) within the Community Services Department (CSD) to work alongside medical and mental health professionals on the Intensive Outreach team to ensure comprehensive, sustained support.

Streamlining Service Delivery and Partnerships

The City's homeless response strategy relies on strong partnerships and efficient program management to move people from crisis to stability. These partnerships are exemplified through our Community Court program, service provider contracts for emergency shelter beds and addiction recovery treatment, safe parking providers, and grant funded support to housing providers.

Community Court: The success of the Community Court program continues to grow. This initiative addresses low-level misdemeanor crimes and municipal ordinance violations by connecting participants to tailored social services, case management, and treatment in lieu of incarceration. Community Court also provides anyone in need with direct access to critical social and health services by assembling providers in a single location each Wednesday starting at 9:00 am. The Community Court Coordinator oversees the program and curates providers to ensure the most needed services are available which include housing, health, substance abuse counseling, transportation, and nutritional support. The Community Court Coordinator is aligned with the Housing and Community Development Division, which optimizes case tracking, coordination, and the linkage of participants directly to housing resources.

The Caring Place and Fellowship Recovery Community Organization Contracts:

The City continues to rely on contractual relationships with essential community service partners to ensure a full spectrum of shelter, meals, and supportive services are available to those in need. Key contracts with organizations like The Caring Place and Fellowship Recovery Community Organization ("Fellowship") remain vital. Staff are working closely with these community service partners to ensure our resources are strategically aligned to facilitate success for persons sheltered with both entities. Doing so will be a function of soon-to-be-hired Case Managers.

Safe Parking with Hope South Florida: The City Commission budgeted \$200,000 in FY 2026 to fund a safe parking program. Throughout the first quarter of the fiscal year, City staff have engaged with two (2) service providers that are interested in establishing a safe parking program. Staff intend to bring a not-for-profit grant agreement with

LifeNet4Families before the City Commission in March 2026. It is expected that the funds will be used to expand the capacity and services of an existing safe parking program that is focused on serving families. Tangentially, the City has also partnered with Hope South Florida to support the Broward County funded Safe Parking Program. The Safe Parking Program is a significant initiative launched on December 15, 2025, aimed at assisting families that are experiencing homelessness and living in their vehicles. The program provides a safe, secure, overnight parking location along with essential on-site case management to facilitate participants' transition into permanent housing. The City's collaboration is focused on establishing a strong exit strategy by granting participants direct access to City housing assistance programs. The City and Hope South Florida will monitor and evaluate the County-funded Safe Parking Program to identify best practices and areas for improvement, ensuring effective use of City funds. The evaluation will take place three (3) months after the program's rollout, scheduled for March 15, 2026.

Support Programs: The City utilizes several targeted financial programs to provide crucial housing support and transition individuals and families out of homelessness. The State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) Program-funded Rapid Re-housing program, administered by the Housing and Community Development Division, allocates \$30,000 to offer immediate assistance by covering first month's rent, last month's rent, and security deposits. To qualify, applicants must meet the legal definition of homelessness under Florida Statute—residing in a shelter or a place not meant for human habitation—and fall within Low to Very-Low Income brackets. Most importantly, the program specifically targets individuals or families who possess an independent income sufficient to sustain monthly rent and utilities without ongoing subsidies once initial relocation costs are covered. Participation also requires the selection of a unit within Fort Lauderdale city limits that meet basic habitability and safety standards.

For longer-term stabilization, the Tenant-Based Rental Voucher program—administered by H.O.M.E.S., Inc. with \$400,000 provided by the City—supports ongoing rent assistance for twelve (12) months for households referred through the Homeless Continuum of Care, specifically for those whose last address was within City limits. Additionally, the City allocates \$3,178,988.94 via Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA) funds to provide essential move-in assistance, project-based rental assistance, and utility deposits for eligible households that include a member who is human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) positive.

Engagement and Housing Resource Utilization

In Quarter One of FY 2026, the HOPE team made 910 individual contacts, demonstrating a proactive presence throughout Fort Lauderdale's high-traffic corridors. By prioritizing 'hot zone' saturation and rapid response to community complaints, the team maintained a consistent operational tempo, ensuring that street-level engagements were both frequent and strategically targeted to areas of highest need.

Community Court serves as a vital entry point for individuals seeking assistance. The data below reflects the high volume of engagement and the conversion of those who walk into Community Court into formal service provider referrals during the First Quarter.

Total Walk-Ins	958
Service Referrals Provided	629
Notices to Appear (NTAs) Written	54
Notices to Appear (NTAs) Fulfilled	27
Program Graduates	15

Approximately sixty-five percent (65%) of all walk-in engagements resulted in direct service provider referrals during this quarter.

Throughout the First Quarter, staff closely monitored the utilization of the twenty (20)-bed emergency shelter allocation provided by The Caring Place to ensure immediate housing resources remained available for those in crisis. The quarter began with peak demand in October, when an average of thirteen (13) beds were occupied. This was followed by a notable decrease in November 2025, with occupancy dipping to seven (7) beds before rising again in December to nine (9) beds. On average, the City maintained a forty-eight percent (48%) occupancy rate across the three (3)-month period.

Policy and Regulatory Environment

Food Sharing and Social Service Event Permits: Staff are working with the City Attorney's Office to develop a revised ordinance that protects First Amendment rights while implementing reasonable time, place, and manner regulations necessary for public health, safety, and park conservation. The proposed regulations will establish a streamlined permit process for larger outdoor social service events and will incorporate new regulations designed to manage the impact of frequent services on public spaces and neighborhoods. These regulations focus on setting appropriate separation distances between events, establishing a necessary residential buffer, and creating a limit on the frequency of large group feedings by the same organization in the Downtown area. The revised policy will also clearly outline essential operational standards, such as required sanitation and hygiene facilities.

Panhandling Signage: To mitigate the negative impacts of panhandling and to provide clear information to both residents and visitors, the City has initiated the creation of informative signage. These signs will be installed in key areas known for high foot traffic and frequent panhandling activities. The strategically selected locations include main intersections and downtown areas where the visibility and effectiveness of the signs will

be maximized. The signage will educate the public on ways to contribute to long-term solutions rather than giving directly to individuals on the street by directing them to the City's webpage: ftlcity.info/panhandling, which lists opportunities to support homeless service providers link. The signs are currently in the final design phase, with installation expected in spring 2026.

If you have any questions, please contact Porshia L. Garcia, Director, Community Services Department, at PGarcia@fortlauderdale.gov or 954-828-5249.

c: Shari McCartney, City Attorney
David R. Soloman, City Clerk
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