



From The Desk Of DEAN TRANTALIS

Fort Lauderdale City Commission • District II

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Budget funds new public safety efforts

Yearlong efforts to craft homeless strategy for Fort Lauderdale begin to come to fruition

The past month has brought progress on two significant fronts for the city. We approved the annual budget with money set aside for some major, new initiatives, and without raising the millage rate. In addition, we took numerous steps to address the many issues regarding our homeless population.

The 2015 budget marks the eight year in a row that the city will not increase the property tax rate. The fire assessment fee also did not increase.

Because of a larger tax base created by rising real estate prices and new development, the City Commission had money to undertake some projects that residents have wanted, particularly enhancements to public safety.

We're adding seven additional Ocean-Rescue personnel to extend the hours that lifeguards are present on the beach. Lifeguards previously were on duty between 9:45 a.m. and 5 p.m., but will now remain until 7 p.m. Two additional park rangers will aid in safety on the beach and other parks.

The city manager is dedicating 10 police officers, including three new mounted patrol units, to increase public safety on the beach and downtown. The budget earmarks money for security cameras and license plate readers to be installed along Sistrunk Boulevard, the beach and major streets north of downtown.

The budget for the Northwest Community Redevelopment Area also included \$250,000 to help create a program in which security ambassadors will help patrol downtown streets to deter crime while also providing assistance and information to residents and tourists.

Additionally, we're beefing up our efforts to keep our streets and public places clean. The budget also sets aside \$1 million for renovations to Fort Lauderdale Beach Park – what some refer to as the South Beach.

There are some significant items in our community investment budget as well.

We will spend \$1.7 million to replace the aging bridge on Coconut Isle. Another \$1.1 million will go to improve safety on Las Olas Boulevard, while \$246,000 will be spent to pave Northwest 15th Street. We worked with the South Middle River neighborhood to ensure this project was not pushed aside, but will be done in 2015. We will dedicate the improvements to 14th Street on Oct. 25.

There is \$5.5 million budgeted for improvements in the Northwest-Progresso-Flagler Village area. Other items in the community investment plan include \$400,000 for neighborhood traffic calming projects, \$1.4 million for streetscape improvements, \$174,000 for climate change initiatives and \$720,000 for street resurfacing.

Now let's address the efforts which we hope will create a process to better work with folks who are homeless as we try to balance the quality of life for the rest of our citizens and visitors.

The City Commission has strengthened public indecency laws, prohibited individuals from storing their belongings on public property, prohibited panhandling at busy intersections and banned camping downtown. Within the next month, we should finalize regulations on food distribution programs.

The budget included money to hire a homeless activity coordinator to oversee our strategy. It also committed money to re-establish a program to pay bus fares for homeless residents who wish to re-unite with families.

Along with other local governments, we will continue to do



as much as possible to help the homeless who want to find a way off the streets.

We previously told you about the expansion of the Homeless Assistance Center and a new program to help the chronically homeless. But there is more.

The Broward County Homeless Initiative Partnership was awarded an additional \$1.25 million from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for support services and housing programs. The United Way of Broward County received a \$2 million federal grant for a program for homeless veterans.

The city also finalized an agreement with Broward County to expand its addiction recovery center. It's a step that should help with homelessness because addiction plays a role in why many are on the street.

The city's actions have not been without controversy and compromises were necessary. But it's our hope that the result will be more help for the homeless alongside a commitment to address the impact on the quality of life of all residents by the sizable number of people living on the streets.

Sincerely,

Fort Lauderdale scores high in national surveys

Earlier this summer, Fort Lauderdale received the prestigious All-America City designation from the National Civic League. Beyond that, the city continues to score highly in national quality-of-life and economic surveys.

Most recently, Man About World, a digital magazine, named Fort Lauderdale "Destination of the Year" for gay tourism.

Here are some of the other honors.

- Top 10 Best Downtowns in 2014 by Livability.com
- Top 10 Most Exciting Places in Florida by Movoto National Real Estate
- Top 10 Most Exciting Mid-Sized Cities in America by Movoto National Real Estate
- Top 10 American Dream Cities by Xavier University and The Burghard Group
- Top 10 Greenest Mid-Sized Cities by MyLife.com
- Top 10 Best U.S. Cities for Small Businesses by Biz2Credit.com
- Top 10 Best Cities to Move to in 2014 by SML National Moving
- Top 10 Small American Cities of the Future by Foreign Direct Investment Magazine
- Top 10 Best Places for Veterans to Live by Best Places for Veterans Report
- Top 10 Great Cities for Family Vacations by Vacation Critic Travel Planning Guide
- Top 10 Most Affordable Summer Destinations by GoBankingRates.com
- Top 10 Best Fourth of July Fireworks Shows by USA Today
- Top 10 Best Places to Retire by Money Magazine
- Top Ranked Complete Streets Policy in Florida and #3 Nationally by Smart Growth America
- Most Popular U.S. Beaches by The Daily Beast
- Favorite Winter Destination of Canadians by FlightNetwork.com
- Most Outstanding Green Government by U.S. Green Building Council South Florida
- Happiest Cities for Young Professionals by Forbes Magazine
- Top 100 Best Cities to Start a Business by WalletHub
- Best Places for Business and Careers by Forbes Magazine
- Certified as a Florida Green Local Government by Florida Green Building Coalition
- Lowest Travel Taxes among Top 50 U.S. Travel Destinations by Global Business Travel Association



Commissioner Trantalis joins Police Chief Frank Adderley, Lake Ridge president Michael Albetta, South Middle River president Lawrence Jackson-Rosen and Middle River Terrace president Domingo Cid at a recent neighborhood crime meeting.



Commissioner Trantalis participated in Sunrise Mayor Mike Ryan's Mayors' Chess Challenge at the Museum of Discovery & Science to launch the new school year.



Commissioner Trantalis helps launch the recent Fort Lauderdale Fire Expo, an event that drew firefighters and emergency officials from around the world.