

Overview of Public Safety Initiatives

As Fort Lauderdale continues to grow into an even more thriving, fast-moving city, maintaining a safe and secure community remains at the forefront of the City's top priorities. At the January 13, 2026 City Commission Prioritization Workshop, staff presented several options for enhancing police response capabilities in the near-term – including, specifically, the potential creation of a fourth police district. Following a comprehensive review of service demands, workload distribution, staffing development, and fiscal impact – staff determined that the greatest opportunity for impact lies in advancing other high-priority initiatives at this time. In 2026, crime has decreased 6% overall, and the department aims to continue this positive momentum – specifically focusing on reducing violent crime.

Accordingly, the Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 budget concentrates resource enhancements within the Police Department on high-impact investments in evidence-based violence prevention, community-based programs, technology, personnel development, and capital improvements. Within the Fire Rescue Department resource enhancements focus on further expanding the number of fire rescue facilities, modernizing equipment for fire rescue personnel and adjustments to fire inspector staffing. This approach builds upon both departments' existing strengths, positions the City to proactively address emerging needs, and reinforces the City's long-standing commitments – all while simultaneously maintaining operational flexibility and adhering to fiscal responsibility. An overview of these key initiatives is provided below.

New Community Initiatives

The FY 2027 budget expands programs and launches new initiatives that prevent violent crime, reduce harm, and build stronger connections between neighbors and public safety personnel.

- **Group Violence Intervention Program (Expanded):** The Police Department's FY 2027 budget includes approximately \$316,000 to operationalize the City's Gun Violence Intervention Program, launched in FY 2026 with a Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) initiating grant of \$650,000. This enhanced funding will support ongoing program operations, including one (1) dedicated Senior Administrative Assistant position responsible for program coordination, community outreach, and performance tracking. This program focuses on individuals at the highest risk of gun violence, connecting them with targeted services to reduce harm and make the City's neighborhoods safer.
- **Harm Reduction and Opioid Overdose Prevention Program (New):** The Fort Lauderdale Fire Rescue (FLFR) Department was recently awarded approximately \$345,000 from the Florida Department of Health to initiate a Harm Reduction Overdose Program. In FY 2027, this grant will fund Narcan distribution stations, Narcan wall mounts at local businesses, wellness kits, and a public awareness campaign. Building upon FLFR's Mobile Integrated Health Program, this initiative expands access to prevention resources and strengthens community outreach and education efforts.
- **Public Safety Aide School Traffic Coverage Program (New):** The Police Department's FY 2027 budget includes approximately \$184,000 in additional funding to increase Public Safety Aide coverage at City schools on a rotating basis throughout the City's four (4) Commission districts. Funding will support traffic control and pedestrian safety during peak drop-off and pick-up periods, improving safety and traffic management.

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Public Safety Personnel Growth

- **Staffing Enhancements:** Over the last five (5) years, the City has increased its commitment to public safety with the addition of 94 additional sworn personnel, including police officers, firefighters, fire lieutenants, and police sergeant positions.
- **Fire Inspectors:** The FY 2027 budget includes \$330,000 in ongoing funding to add two (2) new Fire Inspector I positions, expanding the City's capacity to ensure building safety, strengthen code compliance, and accelerate plan reviews, inspections, and fire investigations.
- **Ocean Rescue Captain:** The FY 2027 budget includes \$195,000 for one (1) new Ocean Rescue Captain, which will provide additional oversight and support for beach operations.
- **Support Services Bureau Manager:** The FY 2027 budget includes approximately \$240,000 in funding for the addition of one (1) Support Services Bureau Manager position, allowing sworn personnel to transition from administrative responsibilities to supporting core public safety operations.
- **Training and Instructional Services:** The FY 2027 budget includes \$175,000 to enhance training led by Florida Certified Training Instructors, increasing Fire Rescue's readiness and strengthening the department's operational capabilities.

Sworn Public Safety Personnel Enhancements
94 Since FY 2023

Expanding Emergency Response Resources

To support Fort Lauderdale's continued growth and evolving service demands, the City is investing in new public safety facilities throughout the community, expanding emergency response capacity, and positioning the City to meet future needs:

- **New Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Facilities:** The FY 2027 Capital Improvement Plan invests \$7.8 million in a new Fire Rescue substation at Holiday Park and incorporates \$12.1 million in unspent Capital Improvement Plan balances to complete the construction of two (2) full-service substations - the Emergency Medical Substation #88 and the Heron Garage Fire Rescue Station #117 - serving the Las Olas and South Federal Highway corridors.
- **Police Headquarters:** The Police Department budget includes approximately \$491,000 to support the operation and maintenance of the new 191,000-square-foot Police Headquarters, ensuring the continued functionality and upkeep of the facility.
- **New Ocean Rescue Headquarters:** The Fire Rescue budget includes \$275,000 in funding to support the start-up costs and operational expenses at the new Ocean Rescue Headquarters, which is currently under construction as a key component of the International Swimming Hall of Fame. Set to open in FY 2027, this facility represents a critical investment in public safety infrastructure and coastal resilience. Strategically integrated into the broader modernization of the Hall of Fame complex, the facility will provide state-of-the-art operational space for the City's Ocean Rescue Division, including improved dispatch capabilities, training areas, equipment storage, and rapid beach access.

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Public Safety Readiness and Operational Support

The FY 2027 budget includes strategic investments in technology, equipment, and specialized resources that enhance public safety operations, support first responders, and ensure police and fire personnel have the tools needed to effectively serve the community:

- **Technology Modernization and Improvements:**
 - The Police Department budget includes approximately \$484,000 for the continuation of the ShotSpotter Program, a gunshot detection system that helps identify and locate suspected gunfire incidents in real time, enabling faster response and supporting criminal investigations.
 - The Police Department budget includes approximately \$508,000 to support a vendor-managed, subscription-based License Plate Reader (LPR) service model that expands citywide coverage, modernizes equipment, improves system reliability, and enhances the Department's ability to identify vehicles associated with criminal activity and ongoing investigations.
 - The Capital Improvement Plan includes \$560,000 to support fire station surveillance and backup power modernization.
 - The Police Department's operating budget includes \$484,00 to staff the Real-Time Crime Center (RTCC) to enhance efforts to prevent, investigate, and solve crime - especially auto theft and violent crime. The Department uses Tactical Analysts to provide real-time intelligence to responding officers. Analysts use Motorola's Command Central Aware platform, which consolidates key law-enforcement data sources including warrants, electronic monitoring, sex offenders, inmate releases, career offenders, license plate readers, ShotSpotter, GPS vehicle locators, and cameras. The RTCC also receives live video feeds from all public schools in the County and more than 500 City cameras.
- **Marine Response Fleet Enhancements:** The Fire Rescue and Police Department budgets include funding, in the amounts of \$760,000 and \$521,000 respectively, for new marine vessels which will improve safety and emergency response on the City's waterways.
- **Critical Equipment and Gear:** The FY 2027 budget funds the replacement and enhancement of critical public safety equipment. This includes the following:
 - *Vehicle Replacement:* \$8.4 million to replace eighty-one (81) public safety vehicles including three (3) fire apparatuses, one (1) front line ambulance, one (1) SWAT transport unit, and twenty-two (22) motorcycles. In addition, the Police Department budget includes \$1.5 million in enhanced funding to reduce the lifecycle for Police patrol vehicles from seven (7) to six (6) years ensuring a more dependable fleet and a stronger front-line response.
 - *Equipment Upgrades:* \$1.4 million is invested to replace critical public safety equipment including power-pro stretchers, nighttime vision goggles, technical rescue equipment, and boat engines.
 - *Protective Gear:* \$278,000 is included for the replacement of over one-hundred and forty-one (141) ballistic vests and \$436,000 is included for replacing eighty-five (85) bunker gear sets.
 - *Animal Replacements:* \$50,000 is included to replace two (2) police canines and one (1) mounted patrol horse.