



NOVEMBER 2013

## City looks for solutions to homeless issues

Steps underway to help homeless while protecting community quality of life

One of the major tasks facing Fort Lauderdale is to find a way to help the homeless while also ensuring the city remains a great place for people to live, work and visit.

We have begun making strides in that direction. Last month, my office was able to bring together many groups, including city officials, their counterparts at Broward County and representatives of all the major entities involved in helping the homeless.

It was heartening to hear the tremendous advancements underway.

The Salvation Army will soon begin providing daily meals at its Broward Boulevard campus and is expanding its shelter. The United Way of Broward County recently received a \$2 million grant from the federal Veterans Administration to work with homeless vets. And, the Broward Homeless Assistance Center is expanding its 200-bed facility to add more beds for women and children.

Hopefully, our discussion can be the start of a greater examination of the issues regarding the homeless that we face in Fort Lauderdale and Broward County.

We will continue to talk in the coming weeks about how to improve feeding services, provide shelter, assist the chronically homeless and deal with conduct that is unsafe or problematic to the larger community.

The City Commission is scheduling a workshop within the next 60 days to focus solely on the issue.

Much of the progress we're seeing will directly help those parts of our community where the homeless tend to congregate. Broward County estimates there are more than 800 homeless, with half that population on the streets of Fort Lauderdale.

The Salvation Army's plans for regular meals could provide Fort Lauderdale an opportunity to address the feeding programs that now take place in public parks. A court ruling has prevented the city from discouraging public feeding programs

unless it could ensure meals were available nearby.

The homeless assistance groups that we brought together agreed that indoor meals are much more preferable. For them, mealtime is an opportunity to explain what programs are available to help people get off the streets. They noted such compromises have been reached in other cities around the country.

The same groups also recognized the need to curb dangerous behavior, such as panhandling in the middle of the street. Pembroke Pines recently banned panhandling at heavily traveled intersections where there is great risk for accidents. Our city attorneys are now examining if we can do something similar.

Another idea we want to explore is a Miami-Dade model where all governments and non-profits work together to avoid the revolving door of homelessness.

Too often in Broward, we see homeless individuals released from jail or the emergency room directly onto the streets. The cooperative effort underway in Miami ensures that a social worker is there when the individual is discharged so they can discuss what services are available.

This is a good time for us as a community to take a fresh look at the homeless issue.

Miami, with its growing downtown, is in federal court seeking



revisions to a long-standing settlement agreement detailing what it can and cannot do in regard to people living on the street. We are closely following the developments to see if the legal landscape changes and how much latitude cities now possess.

Our goal is not to criminalize being homeless. Many are on the streets because they lost jobs or homes during the recent recession, and part of our responsibility as a society is to offer help.

But another part of the city's responsibility is to preserve the quality of life for the community as a whole. We need Stranahan Park to be an inviting entrance to downtown. We want to promote walkability in nearby neighborhoods. And, we want families to enjoy places like Holiday Park.

Working together, I think we can succeed.

Sincerely,

Dean

## News updates for District 2

Fort Lauderdale's last remaining unimproved streets are slated to be paved, while a major redevelopment project for Middle River Terrace has won critical financial aid.

It was a great pleasure to tell the residents of South Middle River's civic association last month that the engineering work to pave Northwest 14th and Northwest 15th streets is completed and that Northwest 14th is scheduled to be paved by July.

The City Commission earmarked Community Redevelopment Block Grant aid for the paving as part of the 2014 budget. The 12-foot-wide streets will be one way running between Powerline Road and Andrews Avenue. Intersections will be improved, and there will be wide areas along each side for swales and landscaping.

The city manager expects to award the contract for Northwest 14th in January with construction beginning in February. The city promises to fast-forward the second phase of paving of Northwest 15th. That should be accomplished within the next couple years.

On Nov. 12, we also received good news about plans to improve the NE 13th Street corridor.

The Broward County Commission agreed to commit \$1.5 million in redevelopment assistance. On-street parking, bike lanes, better lighting and improved landscaping would be installed between NE 4th and NE 9th avenues.

This is the first project for Fort Lauderdale's new community redevelopment area, the Central City CRA.

City staff and leaders from that community worked together on this plan envisioning a safe and appealing environment along 13th. Specific details will be ironed out in the coming months with more input from those in the area.

Design work will likely take place by next summer. The city expects construction to be underway by the end of 2014.

The county created its redevelopment bank to assist vital projects in areas with a history of blight and impoverishment.

The 13th Street corridor is well-situated between downtown Fort Lauderdale and Wilton Manors, but it needs help to reach its full potential. The area has been burdened for too long by high crime rate, high unemployment and low property values.

This should improve safety, promote economic development, encourage walking and biking, and build a strong community.



Commissioner Trantalis joins Mayor Jack Seiler and local business executives at a reception at the Brazilian embassy during a business trip to Washington, D.C.



Commissioner Trantalis joins Riverwalk Trust CEO Genia Ellis to lead a parade through downtown as part of annual Day of the Dead events.



Commissioner Trantalis tours the Lester H. White Boys & Girls Club in Fort Lauderdale and meets children participating in its community programs.