

## FROM VICE-MAYOR BRUCE G. ROBERTS JANUARY 2013



I hope everyone was able to spend time with family, friends and loved ones during the recent holiday season. We also wish you a happy and healthy New Year for 2013! We are looking forward to another great year for Fort Lauderdale and the opportunity to work with you.

After five years of difficult economic times, we believe we are witnessing Fort Lauderdale coming out of the recession. During those tough years, your Commission developed sound fiscal policies and directed their implementation to reduce spending, hold the line on taxes, and yet maintain vital City services. Now we see the local unemployment rate continue to decline; tourism has increased for the last thirty consecutive months; City infrastructure improvements have been undertaken along our Beach, Sistrunk Boulevard, Executive Airport and Downtown; County infrastructure improvements are progressing at Port Everglades and at Fort Lauderdale/Hollywood International Airport; infrastructure enhancements are planned to support multimodal transportation initiatives such as the FEC Railway fast track from Orlando to Miami with stops in Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach, the FEC commuter line connecting the East Coast downtowns from Jupiter to Miami, and our own Downtown WAVE. All of this activity has spurred private investment for redevelopment. Lastly, the residential market is on the upswing.

**BEACH RENOURISHMENT:** I know everyone is aware of the damage Hurricane Sandy and subsequent high tides caused to our beach. As serious as that damage was, and not to diminish the impacts all the way through the Galt Mile, it is important to keep in perspective that the most severe damage was limited to a four-block stretch. Furthermore, I believe we finally have the opportunity to turn a negative into a long-term sustainable outcome. On December 10<sup>th</sup>, the City of Fort Lauderdale hosted a community meeting to present what had transpired, the current situation and potential solutions. After hearing from experts from several agencies, the forum was opened to public participation. Almost 300 attended the meeting and anyone who wished to speak was given that opportunity. Future concerns and recommendations were expressed. At the conclusion of the meeting, it was decided that the City Manager's office would remain open to collecting new ideas, which would be evaluated for implementation. Indeed, it was a very good meeting with a positive outcome:

- The working agency relationships developed during the emergency are continuing as we move through short, medium and long term remedies.
- A public consensus for a three lane greenway seemed to be a common thread.
- Ongoing public participation in problem resolution.

At the December 13<sup>th</sup> Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) meeting, the funds were approved for the long-term greenway project. All of the voting MPO municipalities and County Commissioners understand the gravity of the situation and its potential regional impacts. There was overwhelming support for funding the \$8.3 million project. A contract for the work has been awarded and it is anticipated that the actual installation of the steel sheets will occur in mid February. In the meantime, pre-drilling will take place during the week from 7 a.m. to 7 p. m. Monday through Saturday, and from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Sunday. The long-term sustainability plan is more complex and it offers many potential technical solutions. This is where we have a great opportunity and must work with you and all of our agency partners to succeed. Please keep in mind that we are on schedule for the long overdue Phase II beach renourishment project, which is now set to start in November/December 2013. Working around turtle season, the project will take two years and will include Pompano, Lauderdale-by-the-Sea and Fort Lauderdale to Sebastian Street.

**LIEN AMNISTY PROGRAM:** At the October 16, 2012 Commission Meeting, a resolution was passed initiating a Code Enforcement Lien Amnesty Program that allows the City, for a limited period of time, to settle Code Enforcement Liens on real property for less than face value. It will also provide the City with a mechanism to clear many old and cumbersome liens from the books, which will give new and existing property owners the incentive to bring old, existing violations into compliance. In addition, this program could stimulate the sale of many abandoned properties that may have previously been thought to be unmarketable due to these encumbrances. Existing homeowners who are in foreclosure but still occupying these properties will be able to obtain clear title and renegotiate their mortgage with their lender. The resolution states that in order to qualify or participate in this program the following conditions must be met: all properties owned by the applicant must be free of any code violations as evidenced by a completed inspection; all repeat violators will not be able to participate in the program until all properties in violation are in full compliance; all direct City costs, and any liens including lot cleaning charges, board up charges, demolition charges, civil penalties, condemnation and legal fees, shall be paid in full prior to the expiration of the Amnesty Program. Also, reductions will be offered at the following rates: residential and non-residential properties: 15% of the total amount owned on fines/liens, not to exceed 5% of the Just Market

Value as determined by the BC Property Appraiser's Office for 2012. Many existing code violations will require extensive and often costly work, which may require the expertise of architects and contractors, resulting in the need to obtain and close out necessary building permits. This may result in the need for an extended amnesty program period. Public outreach to our neighbors and the real estate and banking communities will be necessary as staff also prepares for a successful roll out of the program. If you would like the full content of this resolution, please contact my office and we can email it to you.

**LAUDERDALE NOW HAS DOWNTOWN PARKING APP:** Need help finding a parking spot in and around downtown Ft. Lauderdale? Now there's an app for that. The City is now using technology from Streetline to let drivers know where and when parking spots open up. Sensors embedded in the pavement detect when spaces are available. "Parker," a free smart phone app, provides the location and general availability of spaces through the use of web-enabled devices such as smart phones, PCs and tablets. Once parked, drivers can use the app to pay for parking via PayByPhone, set a timer to track how much time is remaining on the meter, or access walking directions to help find their parking space when they need to return to their vehicle. The system is currently set up near the Florida Atlantic University and Broward College campuses. In addition to detecting spots with "Parker," drivers will be able to toggle between availability and price, including real-time updates as prices are changed or updated. There is also the option to enter an address within "Parker" and view parking options nearest to that destination. To download the free "Parker" app, please visit [www.streetline.com/park](http://www.streetline.com/park). "Parker" is available as a free download on iTunes and the Android Market.

**OUTLAWING ADDITIONAL SYNTHETIC DRUGS – A follow-up to the drug problem in Florida:** Attorney General Pam Bondi (Tallahassee) filed an emergency rule outlawing 22 new synthetic drugs, commonly called "bath salts," "K2" or "Spice." Attorney General Bondi was joined by law enforcement officers and a health practitioner as she announced the emergency rule designating new synthetic drugs as **Schedule I** of controlled substances, making it a third-degree felony for an individual to "sell, manufacture, deliver or possess with intent to sell, manufacture or deliver" these drugs. Synthetic drugs can cause psychotic episodes, hallucinations, seizures, paranoia, tremors, and more. "Synthetic cannabinoids have been linked to thousands of emergency department visits across the country, and a majority of those visits are by patients ages 12-29," stated Attorney General Pam Bondi. She also stated that she was very grateful to our law enforcement partners and the health care community for their continued dedication to protecting Florida's youth from these horrible drugs. FDLE Commissioner Gerald Bailey also commented that these dangerous drugs are widely available in smoke shops, truck stops and convenience stores, and through the Internet. Retailers who stock these products have two options: surrender their inventory or face enforcement action. Attorney General Bondi will work with the Florida Legislature during the 2013 legislative session to ban these 22 additional drugs permanently.

#### **Did You Know?**

- The most common code violations are the illegal parking of inoperable vehicles and failure to clean up junk and rubbish.
- Any structural repairs, new fences, most plumbing and electrical work, driveway installations, and even removal of certain trees, can require a permit from the City. Please call (954) 828-5191 for more information.
- The City can eliminate unsafe buildings or structures through demolition under the Florida Building Code.
- The City can board up vacant buildings that are open at the doors and windows after the required legal notification is made to the owner.
- The City can clean and clear vacant lots after the required legal notification is made to the owner.
- The City performs routine fire inspections.
- You can search for code violations and track code cases online by going to <http://gis.fortlauderdale.gov/cct/>

**OFFICE CONTACT:** Robbi Uptegrove – 954-828-5033; email: [ruptegrove@fortlauderdale.gov](mailto:ruptegrove@fortlauderdale.gov).