



Memorandum

Memorandum No: 24-109

Date: July 22, 2024

To: Honorable Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Commissioners

From: Susan Grant, Acting City Manager *Susan Grant*

Re: Heavy Rainfall and Flash Flooding Initiatives

Over the past few years, South Florida has experienced an increasing number of heavy rainfall and flash flooding events. The City of Fort Lauderdale is recovering from two major flash flooding events in the past 18 months, April 2023 and June 2024. At the conclusion of the last event, the City Commission challenged the City Manager to prioritize resiliency efforts to proactively mitigate the associated impacts of heavy rainfall.

On June 18, 2024, Vice Mayor Glassman issued a memorandum outlining a multi-point plan to enhance flood resilience and reduce the associated impacts. City leadership concurs with many of the memorandum objectives and is happy to report that many are actively being addressed. For those not being addressed, additional industry research, community involvement, or substantial funding commitments are needed to gain consensus on the appropriate next steps.

Below are high level overview examples of the City's current efforts that were included in Vice Mayor Glassman's memorandum:

- Flash Flood Action Plan: The City of Fort Lauderdale has a Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan as well as multiple specific emergency response plans but does not have a specific flash flood action plan. Given the increase in heavy rainfall events, staff will begin to develop a specific action plan that includes communications standards, key contact information for external agencies, contracts for City vendors, and establish par levels for heavy equipment. The plan will include a checklist for pre-storm and post-storm considerations. The plan will be broad and focused on citywide needs as each weather system has unique localized impacts. Staff anticipates completing the first draft in the next 3 – 4 months.
- Resilience Leadership Structure: The City's Proposed Fiscal Year 2025 budget includes a new position of *Chief Waterway Officer (CWO)*. The position will report directly to the City Manager's Office and be responsible for managing the

City's 165 miles of navigable waterways. The CWO will be tasked with recommending waterway policy, applying for grant opportunities, providing operational assistance, and coordinating with external agencies such as the Coast Guard.

In addition, Dr. Nancy Gassman will assume the subtitle of Chief Resilience Officer (CRO) and continue to carry out the CRO duties in Public Works. Dr. Gassman will remain dedicated to cross departmental efforts that focus on advancing the City's Sustainability and Climate Resilience programs.

- Insurance Community Rating System: The City of Fort Lauderdale continues to strive to improve the Community Rating System (CRS). The City of Fort Lauderdale receives a 15% premium discount for being in Class 7. The City is working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to address some outstanding issues that need to be resolved before the City can apply to improve the CRS. Once resolved, the City will apply at one of the two defined application periods per year and any change will be reflected in the following year. Therefore, any potential change in the CRS rating is likely 16 – 24 months away. It's important to note that even with an improved CRS, the FEMA actuarial rate increases will continue to put upward pressures on premiums and supersede the associated discount factors.
- Roadway Elevations: The City has an active initiative with the Urban Land Institute (ULI) to deliver a report on *Developing Criteria for Road Elevation*. This effort has included cross departmental and cross community input. ULI is expected to deliver the final report in the next 4-6 weeks. Staff anticipates that the chair of the ULI Advisory Services panel will present its findings to the City Commission in October 2024. Following this Conference briefing, the Commission will be encouraged to discuss the criteria and provide policy direction for prioritizing roads for elevation. The established policy can then be used to develop a prioritized list of roadways to elevate. Funding source(s) for this long-term resilience program will need to be identified to implement the program.
- Save Our Swale Program: The Public Works Department offers a program to rehabilitate swales fronting residential properties to enhance stormwater drainage and recharge of the surficial aquifer. Residents can apply for swale installation once per residence by submitting a completed swale agreement. After installation, the resident is responsible for the ongoing swale maintenance. For more information, residents can visit <https://ftlcity.info/sosp>.
- Repurposing of Surplus Property: The City has excess and surplus property across the City. Through our current Stormwater Master Plan efforts, staff will

evaluate the feasibility of using surplus properties to improve the stormwater system and increase capacity during the design phase. At the July 2, 2024, Regular Commission meeting, the City Commission passed an ordinance approving a public purpose use and structure for a stormwater pump station and associated facilities within a residential area on a vacant, City-owned property generally located at 515 NW 15th Avenue. The pump station is being designed to mitigate any audible or visual impacts associated with the improved infrastructure.

The City will continue to address the Commission's Infrastructure and Resilience priority by bringing the City's ongoing and future flood response into focus.

c: Anthony G. Fajardo, Assistant City Manager
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Final Audit Report


2024-07-22


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