

CITY OF HALLANDALE BEACH, FLORIDA
MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 5th, 2025

TO: Honorable Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Commissioners

FROM: Jeremy Earle, Ph.D., AICP, City Manager/CRA Executive Director

SUBJECT: City Manager Self Evaluation 2024-2025

As the longest-serving City Manager in almost fourteen years, I have been extremely blessed with the opportunity to lead a team that has stabilized the City's finances, increased employee morale, and tackled long-standing infrastructure and organizational challenges.

Over the past five years alone, we have all worked tirelessly to stabilize the City's finances, overcoming many financial challenges, including the threat of insolvency. Our commitment to methodical long-term financial planning and strategies, generating over \$30 million in non-ad valorem revenue in a five-year period, as well as the hard work and extraordinary dedication by everyone during those years, have placed our City in the strongest financial position in almost thirteen years. We have stabilized finances and built reserves and laid the groundwork for sustainable growth and resilience.

Through rigorous fiscal responsibility, we eliminated deficit spending of the past and balanced our budget without using reserves for the past five years. Additionally, we focused on increasing reserves, providing the City with not only a reliable fund balance to prevent any future threats of insolvency but also setting the stage for our City to receive an A+ bond rating from S&P Global Ratings (**Exhibit 7**), which aligns closely with the A1 rating which we received from Moody's.

Our City's newfound financial resilience and prudent planning ensure that both S&P's rating and Moody's confirm our investment-grade standing.

Unlike in previous years, I will not, in this evaluation, attempt to create a twenty-page document highlighting every single thing that our team has worked on over the past year. There are so many initiatives, programs, and projects that we work on throughout the year that it would be almost impossible to list them all without creating a treatise. However, on a monthly basis, I do provide members of the City Commission with a Teams and Initiative Presentation (Exhibit 2), which provides insights into some of the initiatives that we are collectively working on, including metrics on where we are with each project, and which projects we have completed.

Our record, and the City's stability are evidence that we collectively have the best public sector team of employees in the entire nation. I will instead only provide some highlights of some of the larger initiatives that we have been able to accomplish over the past year.

With an eye towards the future, and with a strong emphasis on teamwork, our staff has collectively accomplished more in three and a half years to transform this organization and this City than has been done in many decades. Despite the fact that we still face serious challenges that we are feverishly trying to address, we are a much better and stronger City than we were just a year ago. Our goal is constant improvement.

Strategic Planning

One of the most important things that we were able to accomplish in 2024 was our strategic planning initiative. Strategic planning is essential for any organization to do on a regular basis, because it ensures that the budget is effectively utilized to achieve organizational goals and support long-term success. This becomes especially important during a time when a multitude of projects and initiatives are underway, and not all can be a priority.

In April 2024, we launched the update of the citywide Strategic Plan with the goal of identifying priorities strategically aligned with Commission-approved focus areas over the next five years. This collaborative effort included the City Commission, City Charter Offices, and City Leadership Staff and is the basis for our budgetary decisions both now and in the future. The plan was approved by the City Commission in June of 2024

Through the strategic planning process members of the City Commission developed a new Vision statement, Mission statement, and a suite of Core Values, which have been promulgated throughout the entire organization, and will continue to provide the benchmarks by which all of our efforts are judged (**Exhibit 4**).

Commission Annual Action Plan

This effort led to the creation of the City's first Commission Action Plan (**Exhibit 3**), which is an easy and transparent way for the City Commission to inform both staff, residents and other stakeholders of its priorities for the fiscal year. The plan works in conjunction with the commission approved strategic plan, and delineates the areas of focus, priority projects and initiatives for the organization during the fiscal year.

The Commission Annual Action Plan promotes alignment of daily City operations with clearly defined goals as well as performance metrics that will provide insight into operational efficiencies and organizational accountability. These priorities are vital to the City's future planning as they outline the goals of the City's five-year Strategic Plan. Commission action is necessary to ensure consensus on priorities for the fiscal year.

Resident Survey

Resident engagement has also been considered in the allocation of resources in the upcoming fiscal year. As we shift into financial sustainability, further prioritization of investments with input from our constituents is key to prosperity. Ensuring diverse participation in the budget process helps address the needs of all community members and reveals areas of satisfaction as well as dissatisfaction that might not be apparent through

other channels. Understanding which services and projects residents value most has assisted us in directing resources toward areas that will have the most significant impact on residents' daily lives.

As part of the budget process, a resident survey (**Exhibit 5**) was conducted where we reached out to 4,000 residents to participate in a comprehensive survey aimed at gathering community input on budget priorities and city services. We were pleased to receive 406 responses, reflecting a significant level of engagement and interest from all areas in our community. As mentioned, this valuable feedback has played a crucial role in shaping our budget decisions and ensuring that we address the needs and priorities of our residents effectively.

Highlights from this survey include that the City of Hallandale Beach surpasses the U.S. average by 6% in overall quality of City services and by 11% in customer service provided by City employees. Residents' top reasons for retiring in Hallandale Beach include safety and security, access to restaurants and entertainment, and access to quality shopping.

Residents also expressed the highest levels of satisfaction with fire services (87%), emergency medical services (80%), police services (73%), the overall quality of City parks (71%), and the overall appearance of City beaches (71%).

The top priorities for us to accomplish over the next two years, based on residents' top three choices, should be to improve the overall flow of traffic, enhancing the appearance of the City's streets, medians, buildings, and facilities, and upgrading the stormwater drainage system.

Bond Issuance

After many fits and starts, the City was finally able to close on tranche one of its infrastructure plans. The total amount for the bond was approximately \$60M, and goes towards water, wastewater, and stormwater needs for our City.

Due to our sound fiscal planning, the City received an A+ bond rating from S&P Global Ratings (**Exhibit 7**), which aligns closely with the A1 rating we received from Moody's.

Our City's newfound financial resilience, and prudent planning ensure that both S&P's rating as well as Moody's confirm our investment-grade standing.

The importance of this is that the City was able to and will continue to be able to receive much lower interest rates due to our high reserves and sound fiscal policies.

Infrastructure Projects

Currently, millions of dollars' worth of underground infrastructure projects are under construction, and millions more are planned for tranches 2-4. Our stated goal is to complete the overhaul of the City's infrastructure for the first time in over 60 years. A detailed list of projects can be found in **Exhibit 2**.

Roadway Repaving Project

I am very proud to say that we were able to restore and repave more streets in the one-year period ending 9/30/2024 than had been done in many decades. The entire \$1.5 million allocated for FY 23/24 was utilized, and an additional \$1.5 million has been budgeted for FY 24/25. This means that by the end of this fiscal year, the City will have invested approximately \$3 million in roadway restoration over two fiscal years.

Initially, the City Commission approved \$500,000 for the program's first year, with plans to allocate an additional \$500,000 annually over eight years to address streets across all quadrants. However, through sound budgeting and rising property values, the City Commission approved an additional \$1.5 million for the program in Fiscal Year 2023/2024, allowing us to expedite progress.

Millage Reduction

One of the things that I am extremely proud of over the past year was our ability to lower the millage rate from 8.2466 mills to the rollback rate of 7.5884. This is almost unheard of for a City that was supposed to be bankrupt in 2022. This was only feasible due to the enhanced revenue streams that are included in the City's 5-year Financial Stabilization Plan, as well as cost savings, allowing us to absorb the reduction without compromising the City's financial stability.

Community Redevelopment Agency Projects

In addition to the incredible things that we were able to accomplish on the City side of our operations, the Hallandale Beach Community Redevelopment Agency (HBCRA) also made significant strides over the past year with its community redevelopment efforts.

Within the last year, the HBCRA completed the Foster Road Streetscape project, which included miles of sidewalk improvements for every quadrant, tree plantings throughout every quadrant, and FEC parking lot improvements.

Additionally, staff worked diligently to purchase property and are actively collaborating with architects and contractors to not only rehabilitate run-down properties within the CRA but also the development of brand-new housing, all of which are going to be affordable housing. We currently have the goal of delivering approximately 30-50 new or refurbished affordable housing units over the next 2-3 years. This does not include the additional 170 units of new marketing rate and affordable housing, along with retail and commercial at the intersection of Dixie and Foster Road.

Finally, staff is working on the creation of a business incubator and a new food hall at the City Center site.

Because of our entire team's hard work and dedication, there is so much more that I could have included in this memo. I am immensely proud of our team!

Honorable Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Commissioners, it has been an honor to serve the residents of this community as your City Manager. There is not one single day in which I take my job and what I do for granted. For me, it is a sacred trust and the continued fulfillment of a promise that I made to “honor the memory of my father and my mother.” I can sleep peacefully at night, knowing that I have done my best each and every day and that Hallandale Beach is in a much better place because of what we have been able to accomplish together.

Thank you for entrusting me to manage this beautiful and amazing City.