

2026



CITY OF PORT ST. LUCIE STATE LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

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THE CITY'S TOP LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

PROPERTY TAX REFORM

Port St. Lucie's Unique History

Port St. Lucie, incorporated in 1961, was envisioned as a sprawling planned community by the General Development Corporation, or GDC, which acquired 40,000 acres—about 62.5 square miles—and platted roughly 80,000 quarter-acre lots. By 1976, the city covered approximately 70 square miles, and today, it spans 120 square miles, making it one of Florida's largest cities by land area.

This rapid expansion brought unique challenges, as early development occurred without modern development fees to fund infrastructure. Instead, property taxes shouldered the cost of roads, drainage systems, and utilities for a vast, sparsely populated area.

The GDC's bankruptcy in the 1980s deepened this problem, leaving Port St. Lucie with a significant infrastructure backlog. With thousands of platted lots sitting vacant, the city was forced to maintain and expand services using property taxes alone. In the 1960s, only 250 homes existed, yet the city was planned for tens of thousands. This mismatch meant early residents paid for infrastructure that primarily benefited future growth, highlighting the inequities of pre-development fee systems and the strain on property taxpayers.

The Role of Property Taxes in Transformative Infrastructure

Despite these challenges, property taxes have been instrumental in shaping Port St. Lucie's success. A standout example is the 2006 referendum for the Crosstown Parkway, a \$150 million bridge and roadway connecting Interstate 95 to U.S. 1. With an overwhelming 92% voter approval, residents authorized a property tax increase to fund this project, completed in 2019. The bridge eased traffic congestion, spurred economic development, and created jobs, demonstrating how property taxes, when supported by the community, can drive transformative infrastructure. The debt for this project appears as a clear line item on property tax bills, ensuring transparency.

The Importance of Property Tax Protections and Save Our Homes

Florida's property tax protections have also been vital in managing Port St. Lucie's growth equitably. The Save Our Homes cap limits annual assessment increases for homesteaded properties to 3% or the inflation rate, protecting homeowners as property values rise with rapid development. Non-homestead properties, including businesses, benefit from a 10% assessment cap, fostering economic stability.

Port St. Lucie's millage rate is among the lower rates in Florida, making property taxes more manageable for residents despite the city's growth from 330 residents in 1961 to over 260,000 today. These protections have shielded residents and businesses from tax spikes driven by the city's expansion.

The absence of development fees in Port St. Lucie's early years left a lasting burden. Property taxes alone couldn't keep up with infrastructure needs, leading to deferred maintenance and strained services. Today, the adoption of development fees has transformed this dynamic. New developments now pay a range of fees—covering roads, schools, utilities, and other infrastructure—reducing the burden on existing taxpayers. This shift ensures that growth funds its own needs, a principle that should anchor any property tax reform considered by the Florida Legislature and Governor.

Port St. Lucie's Continued Evolution

Conservative financial management is our foundation. Specifically:

- We operate with a lean, efficient government and emphasize long-range financial planning.
- We have reduced our millage rate for 10 straight years.
 - » Went from 6.6289 in FY 2015-16 to 4.9750 in FY 2025-26.
 - » Dropped more than 1.65 mills
 - » A 25% reduction in millage
 - » Third-lowest millage rate among 20 largest cities in Florida
- Reduced our debt by \$400 million
- Improved our bond ratings.
 - » Credit rating agencies have praised us for how we've managed finances and sustainable fiscal strategies and policies
- A 2024 Planning and Infrastructure Study indicated the City is operating with a net expense significantly lower than other similar benchmark cities.
- Increased services while decreasing staffing ratios.
 - » While Port St. Lucie's population has increased, we've decreased staffing to 5.95 employees per 1,000 residents – down from 7.45 15 years ago.

Results are Benefiting Residents

- Named an All-America City in 2025, one of just 10 nationwide.
- A hub of business development attracting national and international corporations, growing the economic base locally, regionally and across all of Florida.
- Safest large city in Florida for more than a decade.
- Recognized by multiple organizations for everything from being one of the best places to live in the U.S., to being one of the best smaller U.S. cities for economic growth, to one of the best markets for homebuyers.

Transparency and Collaboration with Residents is Fundamental

The City engages thousands of residents every year, actively seeking input that drives our Strategic Plan. For example:

- The City has been nationally recognized for our public engagement and outreach efforts. Other cities nationwide have begun to adopt our methods.
- More than 1,000 residents attended Citizen Summit last year. They give us priorities and how they want resources spent.
- Annual Citizen Survey benchmarks us to other cities nationwide, provides scientifically valid data on resident priorities, perspectives, needs.
- This drives our strategic plan, updated each year.
- City Council workshops in winter and spring provide transparency in planning, budget workshops give residents' opportunity to weigh in.
- City finances are audited every year by independent auditors.
- Budget and financial information is posted online and updated regularly.

Predictability in Revenue is Key to Strategic Planning

All of these accomplishments are made possible by working with our residents to plan for the future. That can only be done by having a source of stable, reliable local funding that allows us to:

- Plan proactively not reactively
- Maintain essential infrastructure and services
- Avoid overreliance on debt or short-term financial fixes
- Meet existing debt obligations responsibly
- Maintain our credit rating to ensure borrowing is as inexpensive as possible
- If there are changes to local government's abilities to collect property taxes, whatever the replacement is we need to be able to have access to consistent, predictable revenue streams.
- Staying Connected with Residents Locally Ensures Efficient, Effective Governance
 - » Cities understand the needs and priorities of their communities.
 - » We ask our residents, engage with them and respond to them, often in real time.
 - » Our residents trust us to invest their dollars wisely and to meet their needs. We can deliver because we're in those communities too.

REQUEST

Port St. Lucie strives to be a model of conservative fiscal stewardship, with a strategic plan developed with input from our residents to meet their needs.

As Florida's tax future is shaped, Port St. Lucie's experience offers key insights. First, preserve protections like Save Our Homes to shield residents in high-growth areas from rapid tax increases, especially in cities like ours with lower millage rates. Second, strengthen and standardize development fee frameworks to ensure new projects help cover their infrastructure costs, preventing property taxes from bearing the full load. Finally, consider targeted support for cities like Port St. Lucie, which are still addressing infrastructure backlogs from pre-development fee eras.

We urge the Governor and Florida Legislature to support a policy that allows cities like ours to continue investing wisely in our future, with the flexibility and tools needed to do so effectively. Without it, our ability to plan for growth, manage debt, or serve our residents on a day-to-day basis will be significantly impacted.

Port St. Lucie's journey from a 70-square-mile planned community to a thriving 120-square-mile city shows the power of property taxes when paired with community support and modern fee structures. With a millage rate among Florida's lowest, we've funded critical infrastructure, supported economic growth, and built a stronger future. As you craft reforms, let our experience guide policies that promote fairness, sustainability, and responsible growth across Florida.





HOGPEN SLOUGH HPS-60 WATER CONTROL STRUCTURE

REQUEST

\$1,000,000 (\$500,000 local match)

SUMMARY

The purpose of this project is to improve flood control and storm protection by constructing a new control structure equipped with a Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system. This new structure will be located immediately upstream of the existing one and will integrate with the City's overall system to allow for automated control. The project also includes dredging upstream and downstream areas to remove sediment buildup and stabilizing the banks to prevent erosion.

BENEFIT

These improvements will significantly reduce flooding caused by heavy rainfall and protect surrounding areas from tidal events and storm surge from the St. Lucie River. The automated system will enhance the City's ability to manage water levels more efficiently and respond quickly to unpredictable weather patterns, increasing community resilience and safeguarding infrastructure and property.

WATER QUALITY/ WATER SUPPLY

RANGELINE REVERSE OSMOSIS WATER TREATMENT FACILITY CLASS I DEEP INJECTION WELL

REQUEST

\$1,000,000 (\$500,000 local match)

SUMMARY

The City of Port St. Lucie Utility Systems Department (USD) plans to construct the Rangeline Water Treatment Facility (RLWTF) by 2029, which will use reverse osmosis (RO) as its treatment process. To support this facility, a deep injection well system is proposed for the disposal of RO concentrate and other non-hazardous by-products. The system will also serve as a backup for disposing of groundwater when bypassing the RLWTF is necessary. The proposed system includes two (2) Class I Industrial injection wells (IW-1 and IW-2) and one (1) dual-zone monitor well (MW-1), with funding currently being sought for one of the injection wells.

BENEFIT

This request will fund one of the two injection wells, which will ensure safe, efficient, and environmentally responsible disposal of RO treatment by-products and groundwater when needed. Without the second well, the City risks being unable to dispose of the concentrate byproduct of the water treatment process, which could slow or halt water production. The second well provides essential redundancy, enhances long-term system resilience, and positions the City for future expansion. It also improves the reliability and operational flexibility of the RLWTF, supports regulatory compliance, and protects surrounding ecosystems. By investing in this infrastructure, the City is proactively preparing for future water treatment demands while safeguarding public health and environmental quality.

GLADES WASTEWATER TREATMENT FACILITY CLASS I DEEP INJECTION WELL #2

REQUEST

\$1,000,000 (\$500,000 local match)

SUMMARY

The City of Port St. Lucie Utility Systems Department (USD) plans to construct a second Class I deep injection well (IW-2) at the Glades Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) to support future capacity needs. The facility currently treats up to 12 million gallons per day (MGD) and is expected to expand to 24 MGD by 2031. The existing single injection well will not be sufficient to handle the increased volume. The injection well system is used for the disposal of treated wastewater and also serves as a backup for reverse-osmosis concentrate from the James E. Anderson Water Treatment Plant (JEAOTP), making the addition of a second well essential for future operations.

BENEFIT

The new injection well will ensure continued safe and efficient disposal of effluent, which is treated to high-level disinfection standards before being injected. This expansion will enhance system reliability, provide critical redundancy, and support the City's growing infrastructure needs. Redundancy is especially vital during emergencies such as hurricanes, which can cause power outages, equipment failures, or restricted facility access. In such scenarios, a second injection well ensures uninterrupted operations if one well becomes inoperable due to power loss, pump failure, or control system malfunction. It also enables compliance with Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) Mechanical Integrity Testing, required every five years, by allowing one well to be taken offline while the other remains operational.

Acting now is also fiscally responsible. A current injection well under construction at the Prineville Water Treatment Facility—contracted in November 2023—has experienced a 15% cost increase compared to projections from two years ago. While the Glades Wastewater Treatment Facility Class I Deep Injection Well #2 will be larger, similar cost escalation trends are expected due to rising material, labor, and demand pressures. Investing now helps the City avoid further cost increases while ensuring long-term system resilience and regulatory compliance.



Public Safety

SMART CITY POLICING – DRONE EXPANSION

REQUEST

\$750,000

SUMMARY

The Smart City Policing – Drone Expansion program will allow the Police Department to potentially drop response times below two minutes at the City's furthest points, significantly improving response time, officer safety and operational capacity. This technology will strengthen PSLPD's ability to respond to today's most dangerous threats and natural disasters, ultimately protecting lives and enhancing community resilience.

BENEFIT

The Port St. Lucie Police Department (PSLPD) is seeking to expand its newly launched comprehensive drone program in order to improve response times in the City's 120 square miles, the third largest city in terms of land mass in the state of Florida. The program will include three additional air docks to enhance the program, with an emphasis on eastern Port St. Lucie.



Parks & Recreation

PORT ST. LUCIE COMMUNITY CENTER DESIGN

REQUEST

\$250,000 for design (\$250,000 local match)

SUMMARY

The City is proposing to repurpose approximately 6,841 square feet of existing administrative office space within the community center into public recreation areas. This initiative aims to better meet the growing demand for accessible indoor recreation by creating more space for fitness, wellness, and community-building activities. As part of the planning process, the City will also review the site layout to explore options for additional parking, ensuring the facility can support increased usage. Planning funds will be used to assess the design and feasibility of this transformation.

BENEFIT

The project will expand access to indoor recreation, promoting physical and mental well-being while fostering social connection. Repurposing existing space is a cost-effective and sustainable approach that maximizes public use without the need for new construction. The improved facility will serve a broader range of residents, including underserved populations that encompass approximately 1,500 students from nearby Title 1 schools. It will also continue to support senior wellness through ongoing fitness and health programs at the Community Center. The improved facility will strengthen community engagement by transforming the center into a more inclusive and active public space in a city with only two dedicated community centers in 121 square miles.

OTHER REQUESTS/SUPPORT FOR GRANT FUNDING

LAND ACQUISITION AND POLICY CHANGES TO SUPPORT HIGH-PERFORMANCE PUBLIC SPACES

REQUEST

The City is exploring acquiring parcels in areas outside of any 10 minute walking distance to a park in an area with high-population density. The City is seeking state resources to support land acquisition and flexibility in allowing for high-performance public spaces on property acquired for stormwater purposes. Specifically, expand grant eligibility to recreational elements such as trails and park amenities when acquiring land for infrastructure and stormwater projects and stormwater amenities for park projects in order to create high-performance public spaces that maximize public benefits and provide enhanced value to taxpayers.

BENEFIT

Acquisition would preserve and expand the tree canopy and provide high-performance public spaces.

Currently state and federal grant funding restrictions can limit the integration of such multifunctional uses due to siloed policies with singular purposes, focusing on solely stormwater or recreation. Such policy barrier presents a missed opportunity to address growth with innovation and collaborative projects.

ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

SOUTHERN GROVE & CITY JOBS CORRIDOR

SUMMARY

When the City acquired a portion of Southern Grove in western Port St. Lucie, the land was earmarked to become the City’s Jobs Corridor. In 2018, there were estimates that this process could take upwards of two decades to sell and included the development of nearly 1,200 acres. However, by the end of 2024 a little more than 100 acres remained available for purchase. The Southern Grove Jobs corridor now includes industrial, retail, office, multi-family and hotel units that have been constructed or are under active development. Most recently the Costco Warehouse Distribution Center purchased a 192-acre parcel that will ultimately bring 500 jobs to the City of Port St. Lucie.

REQUEST

The City of Port St Lucie is seeking funding assistance for roadway and other infrastructure improvement projects in the City’s current and future jobs corridors through available federal sources to advance job creation and economic development.

BENEFIT

The City’s Jobs Corridor in Southern Grove is generating new jobs and opportunities in Port St. Lucie, a key priority of the City Council. The City is also seeking to develop job corridors in other locations of the City.

CORRIDOR OF OPPORTUNITY: PRIMA VISTA BOULEVARD

REQUEST

Support for Conceptual Design

BENEFIT

The City is exploring land acquisitions and partnerships with St. Lucie Public Schools, the Boys & Girls Clubs of St. Lucie County, Indian River State College, St. Lucie County and the St. Lucie County Economic Development Council (EDC) on maximizing the potential public benefits of the community facilities and programs on Prima Vista Boulevard. This project would support the design of public spaces that would provide more efficient and effective service delivery to taxpayers and provide greater opportunities for educational and economic advancement.

SUPPORT FUNDING FOR STATE PROGRAMS

- **FLORIDA RECREATION DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM:** The City also supports the Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP) that provides state funds for the acquisition or development of lands for public outdoor recreational use.
- **HISTORIC PRESERVATION:** The City continues to support historic preservation for interior stabilization and major restoration work to the recently relocated 1917 Peacock House and 1952

PROGRAMS WE ARE SUPPORTING:

ST. LUCIE COUNTY'S 2026 LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM

St. Lucie County's 2026 Legislative Program common guiding principles in the areas of Unfunded Mandates and Budget, Economic Development, Environmental/Natural Resources, Transportation & Infrastructure, Public Safety, Public Health & Human Services, Education, and Agriculture.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION (FDEP)

The City supports continued FDEP program funding for Alternative Water Supply; Water Quality and Restoration; Indian River Lagoon Water Quality Improvement Projects and other funding sources to support local government projects to improve water quality and stormwater management. Further, the City supports innovative long-term funding mechanisms and partnerships to support water quality and build future supply. The City also supports funding for land acquisition to improve the preservation of community green space, the development of park space and to support stormwater management and resiliency.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (FDOT) WORK PROGRAM

The City supports the funding of all ranked transportation projects by the FDOT in the 5-year work program. Support includes reimbursement of the funding committed by FDOT and advanced by the City for the widening of Port St. Lucie Boulevard to Becker Road. Additional projects include sidewalk construction, intersection improvements, bridge rehabilitation, and traffic signal operation and maintenance.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (FDOT) STATE BEAUTIFICATION FUNDING (KEEP FLORIDA BEAUTIFUL)

The City supports restoration of funding for Keep Florida Beautiful. Keep Florida Beautiful brings together a network of more than 40 local affiliates throughout the state serving as one of Florida's largest volunteer-based community action and education organizations. Funds requested will be used to benefit local Florida communities through litter removal, new environmental protection programs, recycling education, youth engagement and beautification projects.

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

The City supports the funding of innovative economic initiatives to improve the state of Florida, including but not limited to: Job Growth Grant Fund, Community Planning, Workforce Development and Small and Minority Business Development Resources. Additionally, the City supports DEO's funding to increase the availability and effectiveness of broadband internet throughout the state through partnerships with local and state government agencies, community organizations and private businesses.

INDIAN RIVER LAGOON-SOUTH AND EVERGLADES RESTORATION

The City supports funding for the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP).

BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL CARE

The City supports funding for afterschool and school age care in conjunction with St. Lucie Public Schools.

POLICIES WE ARE SUPPORTING:

FLORIDA LEAGUE OF CITIES

Resolutions approved by the following Florida League of Cities Policy Committees: Finance, Taxation and Personnel, Land Use and Economic Development, Municipal Administration, Transportation and Intergovernmental Relations, Utilities, Natural Resources and Public Works.

MOBILITY FEES

Support the continued ability of municipalities to utilize a mobility fee in order to ensure fees paid by new development in the City are spent in a timely manner within or adjacent to the City to provide mobility projects (improvements & services); to ensure the City has the ability to prioritize and advance mobility projects that best meet the needs of the City.

HOUSING

The City supports efforts to mitigate the rising costs of housing for low-moderate income residents and workforce personnel.

SOVEREIGN IMMUNITY

The City opposes any changes to the \$200,000 (per person)/\$300,000 (per incident) caps for sovereign immunity.

OPPORTUNITY ZONES

The City supports expansion of the opportunity zone program and effective placement to support economic development.

PUBLIC RECORDS EXEMPTION FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS

The City supports a public records exemption for the home addresses, dates of birth, and telephone numbers of elected officials.

STREAMLINED PERMITTING FOR RAILROAD CROSSINGS

The City supports increased cooperation between Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and Florida East Coast Railroad (FEC) and local governments to facilitate streamlined permitting to ensure secure railway crossings.

SEPTIC TO SEWER CONVERSION

The City supports funding to encourage residents to convert from septic tanks to sewer systems to curb pollution that enters water bodies. Port St. Lucie would like to finalize one of the nation's largest municipal septic to sewer conversions by assisting residents.

COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL CODE ENFORCEMENT

The City supports efforts to amend section 125.69, Florida Statutes, to allow for residents to submit anonymous code complaints to their local government.

FUNDING FOR CYBERSECURITY INITIATIVES

The City supports funding of the competitive grant program through the Florida Digital Service to fund cybersecurity initiatives in cities and counties.

ABOUT OUR CITY

The City of Port St. Lucie is proud to be a hometown where people live, learn, work, play and celebrate all of life's opportunities. With more than 260,000 residents, Port St. Lucie is Florida's sixth largest city by population (South Florida's third largest city) and ranked second safest city in America. The City occupies an area of 120 square miles in St. Lucie County on Florida's east coast, about 50 miles north of West Palm Beach, halfway between Miami and Orlando. The City provides most traditional municipal services, including law enforcement, water and sewer and public works.



Shannon Martin
Mayor



Jolien Caraballo
Vice Mayor | District Four



Stephanie Morgan
District One



David Pickett
District Two



Anthony Bonna
District Three



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