



TO: Honorable Mayor & Members of the Fort Lauderdale City Commission

FROM: Rickelle Williams, City Manager

DATE: June 16, 2026

TITLE: First Reading – Ordinance Amending the City of Fort Lauderdale Code of Ordinances Chapter 15, Business Tax Receipts and Miscellaneous Business Regulations, to Establish a Certificate of Use Pilot Program - **(Commission Districts 1, 2, 3 and 4)**

Recommendation

Staff recommends the City Commission approve an ordinance amending the City's Code of Ordinances, Chapter 15, Business Tax Receipts and Miscellaneous Business Regulations, to establish a Certificate of Use Pilot Program.

Background

The proposed ordinance establishes a Certificate of Use (CU) pilot program in the City of Fort Lauderdale for a period of one (1) year. A CU is a document that verifies compliance with specific zoning requirements of the City's Unified Land Development Regulations (ULDR) as well as a review of the Code of Ordinances and the Building Code. Many municipalities effectively use a CU as a proactive tool to assist new businesses, businesses with new ownership, and businesses that are relocating. Implementing a CU process will enable City staff to provide applicants with a detailed review of their proposed business and location, with the intent of offering the applicant as much information as possible so they can make an informed decision before signing a lease or hiring contractors to do building alterations for a use that may not be permitted at the subject location.

This process is designed to assist new businesses in establishing new physical locations by providing a more predictable regulatory environment and minimizing after-the-fact denials. It aims to prevent applicants from significant expenditure of time and money related to leasing, purchasing, or renovating properties by helping business owners to identify potential issues and offering clearer guidance for new businesses up front.

While this ordinance does not establish the steps, below is a general overview of the process for obtaining a CU:

1. Applicant submits a CU application online.
2. Completeness review conducted to confirm all required documentation is provided.

3. Proposed use is verified as permitted.
4. Historical review of business tax receipts is conducted.
5. Determination is made whether a change of use is required.
6. Final review is conducted, and determination made by Zoning Administrator.
7. Applicant is notified determination has been made resulting in one of the following outcomes:
 - Approval of CU allowing applicant to apply for BTR; or
 - Approval of CU with conditions i.e. requirement to apply for higher level review or building permit; or
 - Denial based on use not permitted.

Public Outreach

Staff presented the proposed CU process to the Economic Development Advisory Board (EDAB) on October 8, 2025, and November 12, 2025. Staff presented the CU process to the Budget Advisory Board (BAB) on January 21, 2026, regarding potential revenue impacts. Both the EDAB and BAB recommended adoption of the initiative starting with a one (1)-year pilot program.

Staff presented the CU program to the City Commission at the February 17, 2026, City Commission Conference Meeting. The City Commission directed staff to proceed with the pilot program.

If the amendment is approved by the City Commission, staff will conduct a robust outreach campaign to inform the public and monitor the program for one (1) year. The ordinance automatically repeals on June 30, 2027, unless the City Commission chooses to reenact it. Prior to the completion of the pilot period, staff will return to the City Commission with program results including a summary of customer surveys, cost recovery, any programming modifications needed, and a recommendation as to whether the City should proceed with full implementation.

Resource Impact

This action has the potential to result in an estimated increase of approximately \$405,450 in Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 General Fund revenue to support full cost recovery for services provided.

Strategic Connections

This item is a *FY 2026 Commission Priority*, advancing the Bolster Thriving Communities initiative.

This item supports the *Press Play Fort Lauderdale 2029 Strategic Plan*, specifically advancing:

- The Business Growth and Support Focus Area, Goal 6: Build a diverse and attractive economy

This item advances the *Fast Forward Fort Lauderdale 2035 Vision Plan*:

- We Are Prosperous

This item supports the *Advance Fort Lauderdale 2040 Comprehensive Plan* specifically advancing:

- The Business Development Focus Area

Attachments

Exhibit 1 – Business Impact Estimate

Exhibit 2 – Ordinance

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