



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
City Commission Agenda Memo
CONFERENCE MEETING

#26-0504

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

FROM: Rickelle Williams, City Manager

DATE: June 2, 2026

TITLE: City of Fort Lauderdale Lien Amnesty Program: Current Practices, Municipal Comparison, and Opportunities for Enhancement – Community Services Department (**Commission Districts 1, 2, 3 and 4**)

On July 5, 2023, the City Commission approved a one (1)-year Lien Amnesty Program (Program) to begin on October 1, 2023. The Program was implemented to provide a mechanism for the City to address \$62.5 million in outstanding debt for code enforcement fines and liens. The Program standardized the reduction amount provided for code enforcement fines and liens which was a significant change from the prior process that allowed the Special Magistrate to subjectively reduce code enforcement fines and liens on a case-by-case basis.

Since the Program's start in Fiscal Year (FY) 2024, the Lien Amnesty Program has served as an effective administrative tool for resolving outstanding code enforcement liens and encouraging voluntary compliance. To date, the City has received and processed 229 applications, resulting in the approval of more than 200 lien amnesty requests. Through these efforts, liens originally totaling more than \$16,000,000 have been reduced, generating approximately \$2,300,000 in recovered revenue. This includes \$797,997.21 in FY2024, \$876,880.41 in FY2025 and \$634,059.99 in FY2026 to date.

These outcomes reflect the Program's ability to convert lien balances that can be difficult to collect and sometimes uncollectible into realized revenue all while bringing properties into compliance with the City's Code of Ordinances and Unified Land Development Regulations. The current program expires on September 30, 2026, and differs from the originally adopted program by reducing discount levels and tightening eligibility for specific violations. The following is an overview of the evolution of the lien amnesty program since its most recent availability that began in 2023.

FY 2023 – Initial Lien Amnesty Guidelines

- Program provided a standard ninety percent (90%) reduction
- Established basic amnesty framework including eligibility criteria
- Focus on encouraging payment of outstanding lien and compliance

FY 2025 – Expanded Lien Amnesty Considerations

- Added the ability to consider additional relief above ninety percent (90%)
 - Included the consideration of a hardship burdening the property owner
 - Considered additional reduction in cases where the lien exceeds the value of the property

FY 2026 – Current Lien Amnesty Framework

- Standard lien reduction decreased to eighty-five percent (85%)
- A reduction from 90% to fifty percent (50%) for repeat, nuisance, noise, and vacation rental violations

The presentation, attached as Exhibit 1, provides an overview of the City's Lien Amnesty Program, including current practices, program performance, a municipal comparison, and key policy components. The presentation will evaluate the City's current approach and explore opportunities to adjust the program structure, eligibility criteria, and reduction percentages, to improve effectiveness, support compliance, and maximize lien recovery.

A review of comparable municipalities indicates a wide range of approaches to lien mitigation, including structured amnesty programs, Special Magistrate review processes, and internal administrative resolutions. Reduction amounts vary significantly, from minimal percentage reductions to full lien forgiveness, with some jurisdictions applying fixed thresholds while others rely on case-by-case discretion. Lien reduction program application fees also differ, with some municipalities charging nominal fees per case or property and others offering participation at no cost.

Overall, the comparison highlights that while many jurisdictions provide pathways for lien resolution, program structure, financial incentives, and levels of flexibility vary considerably, presenting multiple examples for the City of Fort Lauderdale to evaluate and refine its approach.

Based on insights gained from municipal comparisons and the City's experience in administering the lien amnesty program, City staff is proposing targeted revisions to strengthen the Lien Amnesty Program. These changes include reducing the overall amnesty discount to increase financial recovery, narrowing eligibility to focus on residential properties, and excluding high-impact and repeat violations from participation. Additionally, the revised approach emphasizes accountability by limiting additional relief to verified hardship cases only. Collectively, these updates are intended to balance fairness with enforcement, enhance program integrity, and ensure the Program more effectively supports compliance while maximizing revenue recovery.

City staff proposed Lien Amnesty Program Revisions are:

- Refine Amnesty Eligibility – Amnesty discount to be adjusted from the currently available eighty-five percent (85%) to fifty percent (50%).
- Targeted Exclusions from Amnesty – Ineligible Categories Include:
 - Nuisance Violations

- Repeat Violations
- Noise-related Violations
- Vacation Rental Violations
- Irreparable or Irreversible Violations
- Violations Applied to Commercial, Industrial, and Income-Producing Properties
- Hardship-Based Consideration – Additional relief limited to verified hardship cases for residential property owners

Changes to the Lien Amnesty Program will require the City Commission to adopt a resolution to implement the revisions to the program.

Strategic Connections

This item advances the Fast Forward Fort Lauderdale 2035 Vision Plan: We Are Community.

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

- The Neighborhood Enhancement Focus Area, Goal 1: Be a community of strong, beautiful, and safe neighborhoods.
- The Infrastructure and Resilience Focus Area, Goal 3: Be a sustainable and resilient community.

Attachment

Exhibit 1 – Lien Amnesty Presentation

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