

Draft
“Reimagining City Hall”
Report of the Infrastructure Task Force Advisory Committee
to the Fort Lauderdale City Commission
June 4, 2024

Introduction

In August 2023 the Infrastructure Task Force Advisory Committee (ITFAC) was asked by the Fort Lauderdale City Commission to help them, “find a path forward to replace City Hall”. After the unprecedented flood of April 2023, the existing city hall was damaged beyond repair and will be demolished this summer. The Commission asked us for two things: recommend principles for them to consider when deciding on a new city hall and gather public input. To do that we embarked on a joint project with city staff and a consultant to “Reimagine City Hall”.

As part of our work, we did an extensive public outreach. The City Office of Management and Budget, the Strategic Communications Office and Dickey Consulting helped us design this effort. Information was presented to the public in mailings, email notices, surveys, and on social media. A dedicated City website was created to solicit, publish, and document all of the public input. Five workshops were held, one in each Commission District. ITFAC Meetings, where we discussed the result of each workshop, were live streamed and viewed by many people. We are grateful to all of them for their assistance. And we are especially grateful to the people who attended and participated in the workshops. While they represented a statistically small portion of the city’s residents, they were enthusiastic and engaged. Documentation of the public outreach effort is available in a separate report.

Executive Summary

Having been informed by the public input and our own discussions we submit this report. We are mindful that the city is planning for a facility for the next 50 years and it will not be like the one that served us for the last 50. It would be presumptuous to assume that anyone can accurately predict the nature of work in the next fifty years. We are not engaged in site selection, programing, and building design. However, “principles” are enduring. They are the “fundamental quality or attribute determining the nature of something”. This something is the new City Hall, and we recommend that it be:

1. Welcoming and Engaging

The building should be recognizable and inviting. Interaction between the public and elected representatives should be transparent.

- * Extensive use of glass and architectural elements to invite people in
- * AI to generate helpful material and educate but not replace people
- * Available space for Advisory Boards and civic associations.
- * Space for ceremonies and public engagement
- * Architecturally recognizable but cost effective.

2. Accessible and Secure

The building should be centrally located in downtown with ample parking and access to public transit. Security should be evident but not overwhelming.

- * Downtown prominent location is preferred
- * Free and abundant public parking
- * Clear separation between public areas and staff
- * Open space integrated into the design but not a destination

3. Amenable for the Public and Staff

The public should have amenities that increase their enjoyment of and interaction with city hall. The staff should have amenities that contribute to their well-being and productive work environment.

- * Provide open space and native plants
- * Amenities for the public make it a pleasure to be in city hall
- * Include a wellness center for staff
- * Easy for the public to participate i.e., food and childcare

4. A Showcase of History Art and Civic Engagement

The new city hall should be a showcase for Fort Lauderdale history and local artists as well as be used as a space for civic engagement.

- * Permanent exhibit of the history of Fort Lauderdale
- * Permanent revolving artist gallery
- * Engage youth and public in civic engagement.
- * Space available for nonprofits to hold events.
- * Space available for public education and student engagement.
- * Foster economic development i.e., business incubator

5. Cost Effective

The building should be architecturally recognizable but cost effective. All avenues to reduce the cost of the building should be explored.

- * Pursue all grant opportunities.
- * Consider soliciting P3 partners.
- * If doing an RFP go Design/Build
- * Consider generating income from co-workspaces, vendors.
- * Consider selling the current site and relocating if cost effective.
- * Consider consolidation and selling other city buildings.
- * Consider renovating the Federal Court House
- * Consider renting and not making a long-term commitment.

6. Functional and Efficient

The building should be future oriented using the latest in technology and be capable of adapting to future needs.

- * Flexible workspaces for staff that can be rearranged.
- * Incorporate technology to allow for hybrid home/office work
- * Expandable for a growing work force or unanticipated technologies
- * Protected infrastructure for communication systems
- * Redundant systems

7. Resilient and Innovative

Smart building technology should be used to strive for net zero operation. The building should set a standard for new development in the city.

- * Designed to withstand hurricanes.
- * The building should be LEED Certified
- * Smart building technology to save/produce energy
- * AI should augment but not substitute for human interaction.

Conclusion

An important challenge we face is fostering stronger relationships between residents, neighborhoods, and local government. We believe that by following these principles, the city can meet this challenge. We imagine a new City Hall as a place that residents enjoy coming to, where they engage cooperatively with each other and participate with their elected representatives for the betterment of the city. The ITFAC recommends that the conversation continue. As the city begins the site

selection process and develops the building program additional opportunities for public input should be provided.

Respectfully submitted,

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