

HBA INFRASTRUCTURE *Update*

By Tim Stocksdale



Bridge Replacement Project: Community vs. Concrete

Over the next several years, the City of Fort Lauderdale plans to replace the three bridges that connect Harbor Beach along West Lake Drive: the Estelle, Lucille, and Mercedes River bridges. While these replacements have been deemed necessary due to age, the design choices currently being proposed have raised serious concerns across our community.

What's Changing and Why It Matters

The existing bridges fit our neighborhood well. They are simple, low-profile structures with modest railings that complement our seaside setting. Early design concepts from the city and its engineering consultants, however, suggest a much more industrial aesthetic: taller bridges, wider approach ramps, large concrete barriers, metal railings, and six-foot-wide sidewalks on both sides.

Since Harbor Beach does not have sidewalks, many residents feel these additions are unnecessary and visually out of place. They would create "sidewalks to nowhere," dead-ending into private yards. A recent bridge project on South Ocean Drive shows just how awkward this can look in practice.

Other proposed features, such as oversized metal railings, exposed heavy-duty concrete, and steep elevation ramps feel out of scale for our quiet residential streets.

Project Timeline and Next Steps

The project is still in the design phase. The 30 percent design plans were shared publicly in April 2024. The project is now moving into the 60 percent design phase, with construction expected to begin in 2028 and continue through 2030. No final decisions have yet been made on sidewalk layout, railings, designs, or construction methods.

City staff and engineers are planning a community meeting at 6:00 PM on February 19, 2026, at the Renaissance Fort Lauderdale Marina Hotel, 1617 SE 17th Street, Ft Lauderdale, FL 33316 to present updates and gather input from our neighborhood.



Infrastructure continued

CURRENT DESIGN

Community Concerns

Residents have raised several important issues during early discussions:

Sidewalks to Nowhere: Adding six-foot-wide sidewalks where none exist today makes little sense. The proposed walkways would drop off abruptly into residential properties and disrupt the streetscape.

Industrial Appearance: The design elements feel more suited for a highway or port facility than a quaint seaside neighborhood. Harbor Beach has always favored charm and simplicity over bulk and concrete.

Increased Elevation: Raising the bridge heights may be required for seawall standards, but the accompanying slopes, driveway transitions, and concrete massing need to be carefully managed and minimized.

Disruption: A projected two-year construction period would bring serious noise, traffic, and access issues. We need a clear, efficient construction plan to minimize disruption.

How You Can Help

Harbor Beach residents have a long track record of constructive civic engagement. This bridge project offers another moment to come together to advocate for a solution that balances function with neighborhood fit.

Now is the time to make your voice heard. This project is still in the design phase, and your input matters. Here are some ways to get involved:

Attend the February 19th meeting with the City at the Renaissance Ft Lauderdale Marina Hotel and share your concerns.

Reach out to city staff and elected officials directly to express your views.

Encourage thoughtful changes like removing sidewalks, scaling back railings and barriers, and selecting more attractive designs and materials.

Advocate for a shorter, better-managed, and less disruptive construction process.

These bridges will shape our neighborhood for the next 50 years. Let's ensure they reflect the character, quality, and beauty that Harbor Beach is known for. Residents are strongly encouraged to contact the officials and project managers listed below to request consideration of more neighborhood-sensitive solutions.

Be vocal. Be respectful. Be involved.



Project Contacts

City of Fort Lauderdale – Project Team

Laura De Luca, P.E., Project Manager II
LDeluca@FortLauderdale.gov | 954-828-5817

Raymond Nazaire, P.E., Senior Project Manager
RNazaire@FortLauderdale.gov | 954-828-8954

Connie Hayman, Project Manager II
CHayman@FortLauderdale.gov | 954-828-7150

Jacobs Engineering – Design Consultant

Houman Assari, P.E., Senior Project Manager
Houman.Assari@Jacobs.com | 954-328-3590

Joseph Martin, P.E., Engineering Lead
Joseph.Martin@Jacobs.com

CURRENT DESIGN





Infrastructure continued

City of Fort Lauderdale Leadership

Rickelle Williams, City Manager
RickelleWilliams@FortLauderdale.gov | 954-828-5959

Mayor Dean Trantalis
DTrantalis@FortLauderdale.gov | 954-828-5314

City Commissioner Ben Sorensen (District 4)
BSorensen@FortLauderdale.gov
954-828-5930 | 954-270-2302

Florida Department of Transportation
Steve Braun, P.E., Secretary (District 4)
Steve.Braun@dot.state.fl.us
954-777-4143 | 954-486-1400

Florida State Representative
Rep. Chip LaMarca (District 100)
Chip.Lamarca@FLHouse.gov
954-784-4531 | 954-444-3200

Harbor Beach Association
Mike Byrne, HBA President
President@HarborBeach.org HB

