CITY OF AVENTURA, FLORIDA

# THE MAYOR'S JOB

*and Why I Want It*

How a city actually works — and what I refuse to promise

**FREE**


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# Introduction

This book began as an answer to a question I kept hearing at kitchen tables, in condominium lobbies, and at the curb outside city hall. People would ask me, almost apologetically, as if the question were too basic to be worth a serious answer: what does a mayor actually do all day? What does a city really control, and what is simply out of its hands? I found that the honest answer took longer than a handshake and a business card could deliver, and that most people, once they heard it, wanted to know more, not less. This book is the longer answer.

It is written for the residents of Aventura, but I hope it is useful to anyone who lives in a city and has ever wondered how the place actually runs. Not the version you see in a campaign mailer, with its bright renderings of parks that do not yet exist, but the real machinery underneath: how a budget is built and where the money can and cannot go, how a police department is staffed and overseen, how zoning decisions get made and unmade, how a small city government interacts with the county, the state, and the federal government above it, and how much of daily life in a place like ours is actually shaped by decisions made far from any mayor's desk. Understanding that machinery is not a luxury for policy wonks. It is the difference between being a citizen who can hold power accountable and one who is simply hoping someone else is doing that job.

The book is organized in three parts, and I want to tell you plainly what each one is, so you can read all of them, or skip to the one you need, with open eyes.

The first part is a practical guide to how an American city like Aventura is actually governed. I have tried to write it the way I would explain it to a smart neighbor who has never sat through a commission meeting: what a city charter is and why it matters more than most residents realize, how property taxes and other revenues actually fund the services people rely on, what a city manager does and how that role relates to elected officials, how public safety, public works, and code enforcement really function day to day, and where the boundaries of city authority end and county or state authority begins. I have tried to avoid jargon, and where I could not avoid it, I have tried to explain it in plain terms. My aim in this section is not to persuade you of anything. It is to arm you with a working knowledge of the tools available to any mayor and any commission, so that later, when you read my own proposals, you can judge for yourself whether they are realistic or whether they are simply pleasant things to say.

The second part is a history of mayors, and a few other local leaders, who did the job well. I did not choose these examples because they are famous or because their politics match mine. I chose them because their records are well documented and because they illustrate something specific and useful: a mayor who rebuilt trust in a police department after a crisis, one who managed a city through a fiscal emergency without abandoning its most vulnerable residents, one who thought carefully about growth and infrastructure in a fast-changing coastal community not unlike our own. These are not hagiographies. Every one of these leaders made mistakes, faced criticism, and left behind an imperfect record, because that is what governing actually looks like. I include their failures alongside their successes because I think the failures teach as much as the victories, and because I do not want this book to pretend that leadership is ever as clean as it looks in retrospect.

The third and final part of this book is different from the first two, and I want to be completely straightforward with you about that difference before you turn to it. I am a candidate for Mayor of Aventura in the November 2026 election. The last third of this book is my platform: my case for how our city should approach growth, public safety, fiscal management, and quality of life in the years ahead, and my case for why I believe I am the right person to lead that effort. I have placed it last, and separated it clearly from the rest of the book, so that you can read the first two parts on their own terms, as an education rather than an argument. But I would rather tell you outright what the third part is than let you discover it and wonder whether the whole book was building toward a pitch. It was, in part. I think that is a fair thing for a candidate to do, as long as I say so plainly, and I have tried to write that section held to the same standard as the rest: no invented numbers, no promises I cannot keep, no attacks on the people running against me.

My hope is that by the time you reach that last section, you will not need to take my word for anything. You will have your own understanding of what a city can do, your own sense of what good leadership has looked like elsewhere, and your own basis for deciding whether what I propose for Aventura makes sense. That is the kind of vote I want, an informed one, whether or not it goes to me.

# A Note on Sources and Endorsements

The chapters about other American cities are drawn from the public record of those administrations: widely reported events, published budgets and official programs. They are included because their lessons apply to a city the size of Aventura, not because of any connection between those cities and this campaign.

None of the public figures discussed in this book has reviewed it, contributed to it, or endorsed this campaign, and nothing written here should be read as their support for any candidate. Their names appear only as the subject of a historical account.

Where a precise figure could not be verified against the public record, the text describes the fact in qualitative terms rather than risk publishing a number that is wrong. No statement in this book is attributed to anyone as a direct quotation.

Any error of fact is the author's own. Corrections are welcome at azaltzberg@gmail.com and will be reflected in later editions.

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*Chapter 1*

# Why I Am Running

I did not come to this decision at a podium or in a strategy meeting. It came to me across kitchen tables, in the front seat of my car between showings, and in the quiet moment after a client hangs up the phone having just learned that their insurance premium doubled again. I have spent my career as a real estate broker in South Florida, which means I have spent my career listening. Not to consultants or committees, but to the people who actually live here, who actually pay the bills here, and who are increasingly unsure whether this city still works for them.

I came to this country the way so many in Aventura did, with very little and with no guarantee that any of it would work out. I built a business from nothing, the slow way, one relationship at a time, one closing at a time. Nobody handed me a client list or a shortcut. I learned this market by walking it, unit by unit, building by building, and in doing so I learned something that no report or press release ever tells you: the difference between how a city describes itself and how its residents actually experience it.

Aventura likes to describe itself as a success story, and in many ways it is. But success for whom, and at what cost, are questions I hear every single day from people who are not investors or spectators but residents trying to hold on to a life they built here. I sit across from retirees who bought their condominiums decades ago at a price that made sense for a teacher's pension or a small business owner's savings, and who now stare at HOA assessments that have climbed past anything they budgeted for, notices that arrive like a verdict rather than a bill. I sit with young families who did everything right, who saved carefully, who now find that rents have moved further out of reach each year while wages have not kept pace. I sit with longtime owners who call me not because they want to sell, but because they are doing the math on whether they can afford to stay.

Insurance is its own chapter of anguish. I have watched premiums climb to levels that make ownership feel less like a milestone and more like a gamble, and I have watched association boards forced into impossible choices between special assessments and deferred maintenance, choices that inevitably land hardest on people who have the least room to absorb them. I do not say this to frighten anyone. I say it because I believe residents deserve a mayor who has actually sat in these rooms, who has actually read these letters alongside the people who received them, not a mayor who learns about these pressures secondhand, filtered through a briefing.

Traffic is not an abstraction to me either. It is the extra twenty minutes that turns a parent late for pickup, the intersection that residents have quietly stopped trusting, the slow erosion of a quality of life that was supposed to be the entire reason people chose to live here in the first place. When a city grows the way Aventura has grown, without the infrastructure and planning discipline to match that growth, residents are the ones who absorb the difference every single day, whether they notice it consciously or simply feel it in their shortened patience and their longer commutes.

None of this makes me anti-growth or anti-development. I am a broker. I believe in building, in investment, in a city that continues to attract people and capital. But I have also seen, from the inside of this industry, how easily a city's growth conversation can become a conversation conducted mostly with developers and mostly for developers, with residents invited in only after the major decisions have already been made. I have watched projects get discussed and shaped in rooms where the only voices at the table are the ones with something to sell, while the people who will actually live next to that project, who will actually drive that new intersection, who will actually pay the higher insurance premium that comes with denser construction, are told about it only once it is close to finished.

That gap, between the people making decisions and the people living with the consequences of those decisions, is the reason I am running for mayor. Not because I believe I have every answer, and not because I think one election changes everything overnight. I am running because I believe a mayor's first and only real obligation is to the residents who live here, who pay their taxes here, who raise their children here, and who deserve a City Hall that treats their daily struggles as seriously as it treats the interests of anyone with a development proposal on the table.

I have spent enough years in this business to know how these rooms work, which is exactly why I do not want to govern the way they are currently run. A broker who only served the interests of the buyer with the most money would not last long in this community, because residents talk to each other, and trust here is earned slowly and lost quickly. I believe the same standard should apply to public office. A mayor works for the people who elected him, full stop. Not for the developer with the next project, not for the association board with the biggest budget, not for anyone with easier access to a phone call. For the retiree doing math on a fixed income. For the young family stretching to make rent. For the resident who simply wants their city to notice what they are going through and to act like it matters.

I do not have a slogan for that. I have twenty years of sitting across tables from the people of this city, hearing what they carry, and deciding that listening was no longer enough. That is why I am running for mayor of Aventura.

*Chapter 2*

# What a Mayor Actually Does

People run for mayor with a certain picture in their heads, one shaped by movies and by the mayors of much larger cities they have seen on the news. In that picture, the mayor is a chief executive who hires and fires department heads, signs off on every contract, and personally steers the machinery of city government from the fifth floor of some large municipal building. It is a compelling image. It is also not what the job is in Aventura, and residents deserve to understand the actual structure before they vote, because the structure determines what any mayor can honestly promise.

Aventura operates under a council-manager form of government, the same basic model used by most cities of its size across Florida. Under this structure, the city commission, which includes the mayor as a voting member and presiding officer, is the policy-making body. The commission adopts the budget, sets priorities, passes ordinances, and decides what kind of city Aventura wants to be over the next decade. Day-to-day operations, the hiring of staff, the management of departments, the execution of approved projects, belong to a professional city manager, who is appointed by the commission and accountable to it.

This division exists for good reason. It was designed, going back to the reform era of American municipal government in the early twentieth century, to separate political direction from administrative competence. The idea was straightforward. Elected officials should represent the public and decide what the city values. Trained professionals should run the machinery according to those values, insulated from the daily churn of politics so that police response times, permit processing, and payroll do not rise and fall with election cycles. Most successful, well-run cities in Florida use some version of this model precisely because it has proven durable.

For a mayor, this means the job is less about command and more about direction, negotiation, and accountability. The mayor presides over commission meetings, sets the tone for how disagreements are handled, and often serves as the public face of the city in dealings with the county, the state, and federal agencies. When Aventura needs to advocate for a transportation project with Miami-Dade County, or respond to a state regulatory change, or coordinate with federal partners on emergency preparedness, it is usually the mayor who carries that conversation, backed by the commission and supported by staff. This representational role is not ceremonial. It requires relationships, credibility, and the discipline to speak for the city as a whole rather than for any single faction within it.

The mayor's vote counts the same as any other commissioner's vote. What distinguishes the office is not additional authority to direct staff, but the responsibility to build consensus among elected colleagues who may see an issue very differently. A commission with five or seven members, each elected independently, each responsive to different constituents and different parts of the city, will not always agree on priorities. Some may favor slower growth and quieter neighborhoods. Others may favor economic development or infrastructure investment. A mayor who understands the job knows that progress happens only when enough commissioners can be brought to agreement on a shared course of action, and that requires patience, respect, and the willingness to listen even when you are certain you are right.

This is where mayors succeed or fail. A mayor who tries to act as though the office carries unilateral executive power will find that authority does not actually exist, and the attempt to exercise it usually produces conflict with the city manager, confusion among staff, and gridlock on the commission. I have seen this pattern play out in municipalities across the country, where an ambitious mayor, frustrated by the limits of the office, begins bypassing the manager, giving direct orders to department heads, or trying to punish staff who report inconvenient facts. The results are rarely good. Legal challenges follow. Staff turnover increases. Public trust erodes. Florida's Sunshine Law and public records requirements exist in part because transparency is the natural check on this kind of overreach, and any mayor who chafes against those requirements is telling residents something important about how they intend to govern.

Conversely, a mayor who succeeds in this structure is one who treats the city manager as a genuine partner rather than a subordinate to be managed around. That means giving clear policy direction through the commission, then trusting the manager and staff to execute it professionally, while still holding them accountable for results. It means using the mayor's convening power, the ability to bring people to the table, to resolve disputes among commissioners before they harden into permanent factions. It means showing up prepared to meetings, having actually read the agenda materials, and treating disagreement among colleagues as a normal part of governing rather than as personal betrayal.

It also means understanding that accountability runs in more than one direction. The mayor is accountable to residents, who can vote differently at the next election if they are unhappy with the city's direction. The commission as a whole is accountable to residents in the same way. And the city manager is accountable to the commission, which means that if residents have concerns about how a department is run, or how a project is being handled, the correct channel is through their elected commissioners, not through personal appeals to individual staff members who serve at the pleasure of the manager.

None of this makes the mayor's office powerless. A mayor who understands the structure has real influence over the direction of the city, over which projects get priority, over how the commission conducts its business, and over how Aventura presents itself to the county and the state. But that influence is exercised through persuasion, coalition-building, and the patient work of policy-making, not through the kind of command authority that television has trained people to expect.

I am running for this office with a clear understanding of what it actually does. I do not intend to promise residents that I will personally fix every operational problem in the city, because that is not the job, and any candidate who tells you otherwise either does not understand the structure or is not being straight with you. What I can promise is that I will show up prepared, treat my colleagues on the commission with respect even when we disagree, work constructively with the city manager and staff, and remain accountable to the people of Aventura for the direction I help set. That is what the job actually is, and it is worth doing well.

*Chapter 3*

# Strong Mayor or City Manager: Two Ways to Run a City

Every city in America has to answer a basic question of design before it answers any question of policy. Who is actually in charge of the government day to day, and who is accountable when something goes wrong. The answer usually falls into one of two broad traditions, and the choice shapes everything from how quickly potholes get filled to how a hurricane response gets coordinated to how a budget gets built. Neither model is inherently better. Each was built to solve a different problem, and each carries a different set of tradeoffs.

The strong mayor form is the older instinct, and the more familiar one to most Americans, because it mirrors the structure of the federal government. Voters elect a mayor who functions as a chief executive, roughly the way a president or a governor does. The mayor hires and fires department heads, proposes and administers the budget, sets the operational direction of the city, and answers directly to the public for how well the government runs. A council exists alongside the mayor, usually to legislate, approve budgets, and provide oversight, but the execution of city government rests with one person the voters chose specifically for that job. New York, Chicago, and Miami all use versions of this system. Its logic is simple: if one person holds real power, one person can be held accountable, and voters have a clear address for both credit and blame.

The council-manager form emerged from a very different set of concerns, born out of the Progressive Era at the turn of the twentieth century. American cities in that period were often run by political machines, where elected officials controlled patronage jobs, awarded contracts to allies, and treated city hall as a source of personal and party power rather than a public service. Galveston, Texas adopted an early version of professional, business-style city government after the devastating hurricane of 1900 overwhelmed a politically fractured city government, and the commission model that resulted influenced reformers elsewhere. Dayton, Ohio is generally credited as the first city to adopt the council-manager structure in its modern form, shortly after. The idea took hold nationally through the reform movement associated with figures like Richard Childs, who argued that running a city was fundamentally an administrative problem, not a political one, and that cities would be better served by a trained professional manager, hired for competence rather than elected for popularity, who would run departments, oversee the budget, and answer to the elected council rather than to the voters directly. The mayor in this system is typically a member of the council, first among equals, chairing meetings, setting agendas, and serving as the public face and ceremonial leader of the city, but without direct authority over hiring, firing, or the daily operation of departments. That authority belongs to the manager, who can be removed by the council but who is not elected and does not answer to voters in a general election.

The strong mayor model's chief advantage is accountability that voters can actually exercise. When a mayor controls the machinery of government, a citizen frustrated with slow permitting, poor road maintenance, or a mishandled emergency knows exactly whose decision led to that outcome, and can vote accordingly. This model also allows for speed and decisiveness. A strong mayor can redirect city resources during a crisis, reorganize departments, and respond to emerging problems without waiting for consensus among several council members and a manager who may have competing priorities. The tradeoff is that everything depends on the quality of the person elected. A strong mayor with poor judgment, or one who treats city jobs and contracts as political rewards rather than public trust, can do real damage, and the checks on that behavior are political rather than professional. Council oversight and eventually the ballot box are the main correctives, and both work more slowly than a bad decision can do harm.

The council-manager model's chief advantage is professionalism insulated, to a meaningful degree, from short-term political pressure. A manager is typically hired for training and experience in public administration, can be recruited from outside the city rather than limited to whoever wins a local election, and can make personnel and operational decisions based on competence rather than political loyalty. This tends to produce more stable, technically sound administration, particularly in the unglamorous daily functions of government like budgeting, procurement, and public works. The tradeoff is a diffusion of accountability. When something goes wrong, voters cannot simply vote out the manager, because they never voted the manager in. They are left choosing among council members, each of whom can point to the others, or to the manager, as the source of the problem. Decisions can also move more slowly, since a manager typically needs council buy-in for major changes, and a council of five or seven people negotiating priorities does not act with the speed of a single executive.

It is worth being honest about what a mayor can and cannot do under each system, because campaign rhetoric often blurs this. Under a strong mayor charter, a mayor can genuinely set direction, hire the people who run departments, and be judged on the results. Under a council-manager charter, a mayor without additional formal powers is largely a convener and a voice, someone who can build consensus, set the public agenda, and use the visibility of the office to advocate for priorities, but who cannot unilaterally direct staff, terminate department heads, or reorder the budget without the council and the manager's cooperation. Many cities blend elements of both models, giving an elected mayor some enhanced powers, such as budget proposal authority or a role in personnel decisions, while still employing a manager for day to day operations. These hybrid charters exist precisely because both pure models have real costs, and communities have tried, with mixed success, to capture the accountability of one system and the professionalism of the other.

Neither structure guarantees good government, and neither prevents it. A strong mayor can govern with integrity and competence, or without either. A council-manager system can produce disciplined, professional administration, or a slow-moving bureaucracy that no single person is responsible for fixing. What the structure does is establish where power sits and who answers for how it is used. Understanding that distinction is the necessary first step before any voter can reasonably judge what a candidate for mayor is actually promising to do.

*Chapter 4*

# Reading a City Budget Without Being an Accountant

Most residents never open a municipal budget, and I understand why. It arrives as a thick document full of fund names and line items that seem designed to be skimmed rather than read. But a city budget is not a mystery novel. It follows a logic, and once you see that logic, you can read one with the same confidence you bring to your own household finances. You do not need a CPA license. You need patience and a few concepts.

Start with the idea of funds. A city does not keep all its money in one pot. The general fund is the checking account that pays for police, fire rescue, parks, code enforcement, and the everyday administration of the city. It is fed mostly by property taxes and a mix of smaller revenues. Then there are enterprise funds, which operate more like independent businesses inside the city. Water and sewer utilities, stormwater systems, and sometimes parking garages fall into this category. The idea is that the people who use the service pay for it through rates and fees, and that money is supposed to stay within that fund rather than subsidize unrelated city operations, or vice versa. When you see a headline about a city facing a budget shortfall, the first question worth asking is which fund is actually in trouble. A struggling utility fund is a very different problem than a general fund that cannot cover payroll.

Within any fund, spending divides into operating and capital. Operating costs are the recurring expenses of running the city day to day: salaries, benefits, fuel, insurance, contracts for services. Capital costs are investments in things that last for years: a new fire truck, a resurfaced road, a renovated community center. This distinction matters because the two should be financed differently. Operating costs should be paid for with steady, recurring revenue, because they recur every single year. Capital costs, especially large ones, are often financed over time through bonds, much the way a family might take out a mortgage for a house rather than pay cash, because the asset will serve residents for decades and it is fair to spread the cost across those years.

Revenue has its own important split, between recurring and one-time. Recurring revenue is money the city can reasonably expect year after year: property taxes, utility fees, franchise fees, the steady hum of ordinary municipal income. One-time revenue is exactly what it sounds like: a state or federal grant that arrives once, a legal settlement, the sale of a piece of city property, an unusually large development impact fee tied to a single project. One-time money is not bad money. It can be used wisely for one-time purposes, like a capital project or a reserve deposit. The trouble begins when a city uses one-time money to cover a recurring cost, because next year that money is gone and the cost is still there. I will come back to this, because it is the single most important failure to watch for in any municipal budget, and it is more common than most residents realize.

Now, the property tax itself. The millage rate is the tax rate applied per thousand dollars of assessed property value. If you own a home assessed at three hundred thousand dollars and the millage rate is a certain number of mills, the arithmetic tells you your tax bill for that portion of your taxes. Here is the part that trips people up: a city can technically hold its millage rate flat, announce that it has not raised taxes, and still collect significantly more revenue than the year before, simply because property values across the city have risen and assessments have risen with them. This is sometimes called the "rolled-back rate" question in

Florida, and it is worth understanding, because when officials describe holding the rate steady as fiscal restraint, that description is only half the story. The other half is what is happening to assessed values, and whether the resulting revenue growth is being spent responsibly or simply absorbed into higher recurring obligations.

Reserves, sometimes called fund balance, are the city's savings account. They exist to cushion against emergencies: a storm, an unexpected legal judgment, a sudden drop in revenue during an economic downturn. Bond rating agencies pay very close attention to reserve levels, because those agencies are essentially asking one question on behalf of every future bondholder: if something goes wrong, can this city absorb the shock without missing payments or making panicked cuts? A healthy reserve, maintained honestly rather than raided for convenience, supports a strong bond rating. A strong bond rating means the city borrows at a lower interest rate when it does need to finance a major capital project, which means residents pay less over time for the same road, the same building, the same infrastructure. Reserves are not idle money sitting around doing nothing. They are doing something important simply by existing.

Which brings me back to the failure I mentioned earlier, because it deserves to be named plainly: paying for recurring costs with one-time money. It happens gradually and often with good intentions. A grant covers a new program, and the program becomes popular, and by the time the grant runs out, ending the program feels politically painful, so it gets folded into the regular budget without a corresponding recurring revenue source to pay for it. Or a one-time surplus from an unusually strong year gets used to add positions or expand services, and then a leaner year arrives and those commitments cannot be quietly withdrawn. Governments do not usually collapse from one bad decision. They erode from a series of individually reasonable-sounding decisions that each borrow a little bit against the future.

The good news is that this failure is detectable by anyone willing to ask a simple question about any new spending: is the money that pays for this expected to arrive again next year, and the year after that. If the answer is no, or if the answer depends on hope rather than a defined revenue source, that is worth a second look. You do not need an accounting degree to ask that question. You just need to ask it, and to expect a real answer.

*Chapter 5*

# Where the Money Comes From

Every city tells a story about itself in the way it raises money, and Aventura is no exception. Before we can argue about what the city should spend on, we need to understand where the money actually comes from. This is not a glamorous subject. It will not fit on a yard sign. But nothing else in this book will make sense unless we walk through it plainly, the way a broker walks a buyer through the true cost of a building before he lets them fall in love with the view.

The largest and most consequential source of city revenue is the ad valorem property tax. Every year, the county property appraiser estimates the market value of every parcel in the city, applies whatever exemptions the owner is entitled to, and arrives at a taxable value. The city then sets a millage rate, a rate expressed in dollars per thousand dollars of taxable value, and applies it to that base. The result is the property tax bill. Because the city does not control the underlying values, only the rate, city officials are in the odd position of setting a percentage while the market sets the size of the pie that percentage is taken from.

In a rising market, a city can hold its millage rate flat and still collect meaningfully more revenue, simply because property values have climbed. That is why you sometimes hear officials boast that they "did not raise taxes" in a year when the tax bill on a given home still went up substantially. The rate stayed the same. The value under it did not.

Franchise fees are a smaller but steady source of income. These are fees the city charges private utility companies, most commonly the electric company, in exchange for the right to run lines, poles, and equipment through public rights of way. The utility typically passes this cost through to customers on their monthly bill, so residents do pay it, just indirectly, as a line item rather than a tax bill. Utility taxes work similarly. Florida law allows municipalities to levy a tax on the purchase of certain utility services, most notably electricity, within their limits. Both of these revenue streams are relatively stable because people keep the lights on in good times and bad, but they are also somewhat regressive, since the cost is roughly the same whether a family struggles to pay it or barely notices it.

Then there are permits and impact fees, which are the revenues most directly tied to growth and construction.

When a builder wants to put up a new tower, renovate a building, or connect to city utilities, the city charges fees to review plans, inspect work, and issue permits. Impact fees go further: they are meant to make new development pay for the added burden it places on roads, parks, schools, and other infrastructure. These fees can generate real money in a city that is still building, but they are inherently tied to construction activity. When building slows, this revenue source slows with it, often quickly and without much warning, because it depends on decisions made in boardrooms and bank loan committees far outside city hall.

Intergovernmental transfers and grants are money that flows down from the state and federal government, or occasionally up from the county, for specific purposes. Some of this is formula-based revenue sharing, tied to things like population or gas tax collections. Some is competitive grant money for particular projects, resiliency work, transportation improvements, public safety equipment, and the like. This category is useful and often underappreciated, but it comes with strings. Grant money usually has to be spent on what it was awarded for, on a particular timeline, often with matching funds from the city's own budget. A city that becomes too reliant on grants can find itself shaping its priorities around what funders are willing to pay for, rather than what residents actually need.

Finally there is enterprise revenue, money the city earns by charging for services it provides directly, most commonly water and sewer utilities, stormwater management, and sometimes solid waste collection. These are usually run as enterprise funds, meaning the fees collected are meant to cover the cost of running that particular service, rather than subsidizing the general budget or being subsidized by it. Utility rates are one of the few revenue levers a city controls with real precision, since the city sets the rate structure directly rather than depending on outside markets or state formulas.

Now, why are Florida cities so unusually exposed to property values compared to municipalities in many other states? Part of the answer is structural. Florida has no state income tax, which means state and local governments lean more heavily on property taxes and sales-related revenue to fund public services. Florida also caps how much the taxable value of a homesteaded property can rise each year, which protects longtime homeowners from sudden tax shocks but also means that in a hot market, new buyers and non-homesteaded properties, including many condominiums and investment units common in a city like ours, absorb a disproportionate share of the growth in taxable value. When you combine no income tax, constitutional limits on homestead assessment growth, and a local economy where much of the tax base is tied to residential and commercial real estate rather than diversified industry, you get cities that rise and fall with the property market in a way that cities in states with broader tax bases simply do not.

This dependency becomes very real when the market turns. Property values do not adjust instantly to a downturn the way a stock price does. There is a lag, because assessments are typically based on prior-year data, so a softening market shows up in the tax roll a year or more after buyers and sellers already feel it. That lag can lull a city into a false sense of security, followed by a sharper correction once the numbers finally catch up. When taxable values fall, a city has a narrow set of choices: raise the millage rate to make up the difference, which means residents whose home values may have dropped still see a higher tax rate applied, cut spending, or draw down reserves. Permit and impact fee revenue tends to fall even faster than property values in a downturn, since new construction is often the first thing to freeze when credit tightens and buyers hesitate. This is exactly why healthy reserves and honest, boring budgeting matter more than any single promise a candidate can make. A city that has been careful in the good years is the only kind of city that can be steady in the hard ones.

# Capital Projects, Debt and the Discipline of Saying No

Every city eventually confronts the same quiet arithmetic. A new park, a rebuilt roadway, a drainage system that finally works during a heavy rain, a modernized fire station — these are the visible achievements that mayors like to stand in front of on a sunny afternoon. But behind every ribbon cutting lies a set of financial decisions made months or years earlier, decisions about how to pay for something that will be used for decades. Capital projects are different from ordinary government spending precisely because of that time horizon, and treating them with the same casualness as an annual operating budget is one of the most common ways cities get into trouble.

An operating budget pays for the things a city consumes every year: salaries, fuel, supplies, contracts for services that end when the fiscal year ends. A capital budget pays for things a city builds or buys that will last many years: a bridge, a building, a stormwater pump station, a fleet of vehicles. Because capital assets last a long time, it is reasonable to pay for them over a long time, rather than forcing one year of taxpayers to bear the entire cost of something that will benefit residents for the next thirty years. That is the basic logic behind municipal borrowing, and it is a sound one when used with discipline.

Municipal bonds are simply a way for a city to borrow money from investors and repay it over time, with interest. In a general obligation bond, the city pledges its taxing power to repay the debt, which usually means voters or a governing body must approve it, and the cost shows up in property tax bills over the life of the bond. In a revenue bond, repayment comes from a specific stream of income the project itself generates or that is dedicated to it, such as utility fees or parking revenue, rather than from general taxation. Both types are legitimate tools. Both types also commit the city, and the people who live in it, to a fixed obligation for many years into the future, regardless of what happens to the local economy, to interest rates, or to the political mood of the moment. That is the part that deserves the most sober attention, because a bond is not free money. It is a promise, and promises made by one city commission bind the residents who show up long after that commission has left office.

This is why serious cities build a multi-year capital improvement plan rather than deciding projects one at a time as they arise. A capital improvement plan typically looks five or six years into the future, listing every major infrastructure need, roughly estimating its cost, and identifying how it might be paid for, whether through cash reserves, grants, impact fees, or borrowing. The value of this kind of plan is not that it predicts the future with precision. It rarely does, and costs almost always shift as projects move from concept to design to construction. The value is that it forces the city to look at its obligations as a whole, rather than approving each new project in isolation as though it existed alone in the budget. A road resurfacing looks affordable by itself. A road resurfacing, a new community center, a fire station renovation, and a stormwater expansion, all considered together over the same five years, may reveal that the city is approaching the edge of what it can responsibly carry. Without a comprehensive plan, that edge is invisible until the city has already gone over it.

A capital improvement plan also protects a city from the natural political rhythm of enthusiasm followed by amnesia. Elected officials arrive in office eager to leave a mark, and capital projects are the most visible way to do that. A splashy new project announced at a ribbon cutting is remembered. The debt service line item that quietly appears in every subsequent budget for the next twenty years is not. This asymmetry is exactly why a mayor's discipline matters more in capital planning than almost anywhere else in city government. The temptation is always to say yes to the next attractive idea, because saying yes generates goodwill immediately, while the cost of saying yes is deferred, diffused across future budgets, and easy to blame on someone else once it finally comes due.

The harder and more important skill is learning to say no, or at least not yet, to projects that are genuinely appealing but that create obligations the city has not accounted for. Every capital asset a city builds also creates an ongoing operating cost that rarely gets the same attention as the construction price tag. A new building needs staff, utilities, maintenance, insurance, and eventually a costly renovation of its own. A new park needs landscaping crews, irrigation repairs, and lighting. These operating costs continue for the entire life of the asset, long after the original bond that paid for construction has been forgotten by everyone except the finance department. A city that focuses only on the sticker price of a project, without asking what it will cost to run every year afterward, is setting a trap for its future self.

This is not an argument against building things. Cities that refuse to invest in infrastructure eventually pay a much higher price, in deferred maintenance, in failed systems, and in the slow erosion of quality of life that drives residents and businesses elsewhere. The point is not caution for its own sake. The point is sequencing, honesty about full cost, and the willingness to rank projects by real need rather than by which idea generated the most applause at a public meeting.

A mayor's job in this area is less about generating new ideas and more about acting as a kind of quality filter, asking the questions that are easy to skip in the excitement of a good proposal. What will this cost to operate once it is built. What existing obligations already compete for the same tax dollars. What happens to the plan if interest rates rise or a major revenue source underperforms. Who exactly is going to pay for this, and over how many years, and is that fair to the people who will still be living here when the bill is due.

None of this requires an economics degree. It requires patience, a willingness to read the fine print of every proposal, and the political courage to tell residents that a good idea presented at the wrong time, without a clear plan to pay for it, is still the wrong decision. That kind of discipline rarely wins headlines. It is, nonetheless, one of the clearest measures of whether a city is being governed responsibly or simply being run from one exciting announcement to the next.

*Chapter 7*

# Fiorello La Guardia and the Rebuilding of New York

Fiorello La Guardia became mayor of New York City on the first day of January, 1934, at the bottom of the Great Depression. The city he inherited was close to insolvent. Its banks had cut off short-term credit to a government that could not reliably meet its own payroll. Its politics had long been organized around Tammany Hall, the Democratic machine that treated municipal jobs, contracts, and favors as currency to be distributed to the loyal rather than to the capable. La Guardia, a Republican fused with reform Democrats and independents, took office promising to break that system and to put the city's finances and its workforce on a professional footing.

He moved quickly on personnel. La Guardia embraced civil service hiring in place of patronage appointment, insisting that police officers, engineers, health inspectors, and clerks be chosen on the basis of examinations and qualifications rather than clubhouse loyalty. He brought in a city administrator's approach to budgeting that treated the city's departments as accountable operations rather than as fiefdoms to be traded among ward leaders. None of this made him universally popular within his own government. Career politicians who had built careers on the old system resisted him, and he fought many of those battles in public, with the theatrical bluntness that made him famous. But the underlying reform was not theater. It was the substitution of competence for connection as the basis of public employment, and it changed how New York was run for decades afterward.

The other half of La Guardia's achievement was his relationship with Washington. He took office in the same year that Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal was beginning to move large sums of federal money into public works across the country, through agencies like the Public Works Administration and later the Works Progress Administration. La Guardia understood, earlier and more completely than most big-city mayors of his time, that federal dollars were about to become the decisive fact of urban governance. He built a close personal relationship with Roosevelt and with Harold Ickes, who ran the PWA, and he positioned New York to receive a disproportionate share of the money flowing out of those programs.

The results were physical and visible across the five boroughs. Robert Moses, working under La Guardia's political cover and with federal financing, built and rebuilt parks, playgrounds, swimming pools, and parkways at a pace the city could never have financed on its own. LaGuardia Airport, which still carries his name, was constructed with heavy federal support during his mayoralty, at a time when commercial aviation was just becoming a serious factor in a city's economic future. Bridges, tunnels, and public housing projects went up across the city using federal labor and federal capital, employing men who would otherwise have been idle and building infrastructure the city would otherwise have gone without. La Guardia did not invent this money. He did not appropriate it by force of local taxation. He went and got it, using the credibility of a reform mayor to make the case that New York was a place where federal dollars would be well spent rather than lost to graft.

This is the central management lesson of the La Guardia years, and it is one that applies far beyond New York City in the 1930s. A mayor's authority is not only, and often not even mainly, a function of the local budget that mayor directly controls. It is a function of the mayor's ability to bring in resources that originate somewhere else, whether from a state capital, from a federal agency, from a private foundation, or from a developer or an institution willing to invest in the city's future. The mayor who treats the local budget as the only lever available to city hall will always be constrained by the limits of local taxation and local political appetite for new spending. The mayor who understands how to attract outside capital, and who has the administrative credibility to make outside partners believe their money will be well managed once it arrives, has access to a much larger set of possibilities.

La Guardia's reforms in hiring and management were not separate from his success in Washington. They were the precondition for it. Ickes and Roosevelt were willing to send large sums of federal money to New York in part because they trusted that a reformed city government, one that had broken with Tammany's habits, would build what it promised to build and would not simply let the money leak away into patronage and graft. Competence at home was what made outside partners willing to invest. That order of operations matters. A city or a town that wants to attract state grants, federal infrastructure dollars, private investment, or institutional partnerships first has to demonstrate that it can manage what it already has honestly and well. Trustworthiness is not a soft virtue in this context. It is a hard financial asset, and it is often the single most important thing a mayor can offer to anyone thinking about sending money into the jurisdiction.

There is also a lesson in La Guardia's willingness to build relationships across party lines and across levels of government, without losing his own independence. He was a Republican who worked closely with a Democratic president because the two of them shared a practical interest in getting the city rebuilt. He did not treat federal partnership as something to be avoided out of ideological purity, nor did he treat it as a substitute for competent local government. He treated it as a tool, to be pursued energetically and used well.

The New York that La Guardia left in 1945, after more than a decade in office, was a city transformed physically by parks, bridges, airports, and housing that outside money had made possible, and transformed institutionally by a civil service that had begun to replace patronage with professionalism. Both halves of that legacy depended on each other, and both remain relevant to any mayor, in any city, who is serious about doing more for residents than the local tax base alone can pay for.

*Chapter 8*

# Baltimore, CitiStat and Government That Measures Itself

When Martin O'Malley became mayor of Baltimore in 1999, he inherited a city government that ran largely on habit. Departments filed reports, budgets were approved, and problems were addressed when someone complained loudly enough. What was missing was a routine mechanism for anyone to ask, in public, why a pothole took six weeks to fill or why one district collected trash on schedule while another did not. O'Malley had studied the New York Police Department's CompStat program, which used weekly crime data mapped by precinct to hold commanders accountable for results in their own jurisdictions. He borrowed the logic and applied it to the whole machinery of city government, calling the result CitiStat.

The idea was simple, even if the discipline behind it was not. Every city agency had to collect real, current data on its own performance. Not narrative summaries, not year-end reports, but numbers that could be checked against previous weeks and against other departments. Then, on a regular schedule, department heads sat in a room with the mayor and his senior staff, projected their own data on a screen, and answered questions about it. Why were work orders piling up. Why had response times slipped in one neighborhood. What was being done about it, and by when. The sessions were recorded and, over time, opened to some public visibility, which meant that an excuse that might satisfy a closed-door meeting had to also survive contact with daylight.

What made CitiStat different from an ordinary reporting requirement was the combination of frequency and consequence. A quarterly report can be produced, filed, and forgotten. A weekly or biweekly meeting where a commissioner has to explain the same lagging number twice in a row creates a different kind of pressure. It is not the pressure of a punishment handed down from above so much as the discomfort of being visibly unprepared in front of peers and superiors who all have the same data in front of them. Baltimore's agencies began fixing potholes faster, closing abandoned properties faster, and tracking overtime costs more carefully, not because a law had changed, but because the habit of being asked, in public, with numbers on the table, changed what got attention inside each department.

This is the deeper mechanism worth understanding, because it applies well beyond Baltimore. Bureaucracies do not usually improve because someone writes a better policy memo. They improve when the people running them know that specific, verifiable facts about their performance will be examined on a predictable schedule, by someone with the authority to ask a second and third question. Measurement without accountability is just data collection. Accountability without measurement is just complaining. CitiStat worked, to the extent it worked, because it fused the two: agencies had to produce honest numbers, and those numbers had to be defended out loud.

Other cities noticed. Governments in different states adopted similar performance-management systems under different names, often citing Baltimore's experience as the model that proved the concept could survive contact with an actual city government rather than remaining a management-school theory. The core insight traveled well because it was not really about crime statistics or trash collection specifically. It was about building a habit of institutional self-examination into the ordinary rhythm of governing, rather than leaving self-examination to election years or scandals.

None of this means the approach is beyond criticism, and the honest version of this story has to include the pushback, because the pushback is serious and well documented. The central complaint, made by researchers and public administration scholars who studied CompStat-style systems in policing and elsewhere, is that any system built around a narrow set of measured indicators creates an incentive to manage the indicator rather than the underlying problem. If a police department is judged heavily on the reported crime rate, there is a temptation to reclassify offenses into categories that count less, or to discourage victims from filing reports at all, so the number improves without the underlying safety of the city actually improving. If a public works department is judged on the number of closed work orders, there is a temptation to close orders prematurely, on paper, before the work is actually finished. The number gets better. The problem does not.

This is sometimes summarized as the idea that what gets measured gets gamed, and it is not a cynical throwaway line. It reflects something real about how people respond to being watched through a narrow lens. Any single metric, no matter how well chosen, is a simplification of a much messier reality, and a simplification that carries consequences for the people being measured will eventually be gamed by someone, somewhere, if the system around it is not built carefully. The lesson from Baltimore and from the cities that followed its example is not that measurement is a trap to be avoided. It is that measurement has to be paired with judgment, with multiple overlapping indicators rather than a single score, and with leadership willing to ask why a number looks good rather than simply accepting that it does.

There is also a more mundane risk, which is that these meetings can calcify into theater. A department head learns how to present numbers persuasively without the underlying work changing much at all. The antidote to this is not more meetings but more attention paid to whether the meetings are actually producing verified change on the ground, checked by people outside the room and not just by the department reporting on itself.

The lesson for a city like Aventura is not that Baltimore's exact system should be copied line for line, and it would be a mistake to promise that any particular structure will produce a particular result. The lesson is about a posture toward government. A city government that routinely, publicly, and honestly examines its own performance, using real data and real questions, tends to behave differently than one that only examines itself when forced to by a crisis or an election. That habit of self-examination, done carefully enough to resist becoming theater and honest enough to resist becoming propaganda, is a discipline worth building into how any city governs itself, ours included.

*Chapter 9*

# New York's 311 and the Mayor Who Treated the City Like a System

When Michael Bloomberg became mayor of New York in 2002, he brought with him a habit of mind rather than a specific policy. He had spent his career building a company that lived and died by information, by knowing faster than competitors what was actually happening, and he came into City Hall with the conviction that a city government could be run the same way. Not every idea from that instinct worked, and not every New Yorker loved the results, but one piece of it became a genuine model for cities everywhere, including cities far smaller than New York: the 311 line.

Before 311, a resident with a pothole, a noise complaint, a broken streetlight, or a question about garbage pickup had no reliable place to call. They might try the police non-emergency line, or a council member's office, or a city agency whose number they had to hunt for, and often they gave up before finding the right desk. Each agency kept its own records, in its own format, answering to its own chain of command. The city could not see itself clearly because its own complaints were scattered across dozens of disconnected systems.

311 replaced all of that with one number, staffed around the clock, that a resident could call for any non-emergency city matter. The genius of it was not the phone bank itself. It was what happened behind the phone bank. Every call became a record, tagged by type, by location, by date, and routed automatically to whichever agency actually handled that kind of problem. Over time those records piled into an enormous, continuously updated map of the city's own complaints, block by block. Where were the noise complaints clustering. Which streets kept generating the same pothole reports. Which neighborhoods called about rats, or heat, or illegal conversions, far more than others.

That map turned out to be more valuable than almost anyone expected when the system launched. City agencies could see patterns instead of guessing. A council member could look at real data instead of anecdote when arguing for a resurfacing crew. A commissioner could see that one sanitation district was drowning in missed pickups while a neighboring one had capacity to spare. Bloomberg's team used the same underlying instinct across many other functions of government, from public health to policing to school performance, always asking for the measurement first and the argument second. But 311 became the most visible and most durable piece of it, because every resident could use it and every resident could feel the difference of a government that answered the phone.

It is easy for a small city to look at this and conclude the lesson does not apply. New York had resources that Aventura does not have and never will. But the actual lesson of 311 has very little to do with money. It has to do with two much simpler ideas that any city government can adopt regardless of its size. The first is a single point of contact for residents. The second is treating every complaint as data rather than as noise to be cleared and forgotten.

A small city does not need a call center with hundreds of operators to capture the spirit of this. What it needs is a commitment that a resident should never have to guess which department to call, and should never be bounced from one office to another trying to find someone who will take responsibility for a pothole or a broken sign or a drainage complaint. That commitment can be delivered through a modest website intake form, a shared inbox monitored by someone with authority to route requests, or a simple non-emergency phone number that connects to the same tracking system regardless of which department eventually handles the issue. The technology involved is unremarkable and inexpensive. What matters is the discipline of having one door in, so that no complaint disappears into a department that never reads its own mail.

The second idea, treating complaints as data, is where the real payoff sits, and it costs even less than the first. Every complaint a city receives already contains information about the city, whether anyone bothers to use it or not. A resident calling about a flooded street corner is not just reporting a nuisance. They are telling the city something about its drainage infrastructure that might otherwise take an expensive engineering study to discover. A cluster of noise complaints on a single block over several months is not just an annoyance to be managed. It is a signal about a business, a party house, or a traffic pattern that deserves attention before it becomes a bigger problem. None of this requires expensive software. It requires the discipline to log every complaint by category and location, and the discipline to actually look at the resulting pattern once a month rather than let it sit in a filing system nobody revisits.

A city the size of Aventura could build a rough version of this with tools it likely already owns or could obtain cheaply. A spreadsheet that records the date, location, category, and resolution of every resident complaint is not glamorous, but it is 311 in miniature, and it works. The point is not the sophistication of the system. The point is that someone in city government treats resident complaints as a resource for understanding the city rather than as paperwork to be closed out and forgotten. Bloomberg's insight was that a government which cannot see its own patterns is flying blind, no matter how well-intentioned its individual employees are. That insight scales down just as easily as it scales up.

There is also a trust dimension to this that matters especially in a small, tightly connected city like Aventura, where residents often already feel they know exactly who to call informally, whether it is a friend on staff or a familiar face at the commission. A formal single point of contact does not replace those relationships. It protects residents who do not have them. It ensures that the retiree who has lived in a condominium for twenty years and the newcomer who moved in last month have the same access to city government, the same clear channel, and the same confidence that their complaint became a record rather than a conversation that evaporated.

What New York taught, in the end, was not that big cities need big technology to function well. It taught that the discipline of listening systematically, recording consistently, and looking at the pattern rather than only the individual complaint is available to any city willing to adopt it. Aventura does not need Bloomberg's budget to borrow Bloomberg's habit of mind. It needs the will to build one door in, and the discipline to read what comes through it.

# New Orleans After Katrina: Rebuilding as a Management Problem

When Mitch Landrieu became mayor of New Orleans in 2010, the storm itself was nearly five years in the past. What he inherited was not the hurricane. It was the wreckage of an administration that had never been rebuilt to function after it. Blighted properties numbered in the tens of thousands. Basic permitting was a maze that could take months for a simple repair. The city's finances were in a condition that outside auditors and credit rating agencies described in blunt terms. Katrina was the disaster. The years that followed were a test of something else entirely: whether a city government could manage its way back to competence.

This distinction matters because it is easy, watching footage of a storm, to think of resilience as something that happens during the event and immediately after it. The truth is less dramatic and more important. The hardest part of New Orleans's recovery was not the flood. It was the unglamorous work of fixing procurement rules, tracking federal reimbursement dollars line by line, rebuilding a workforce that had been hollowed out, and restoring the basic trust that when a resident called the city, someone would answer and something would happen. That work is management. It is budgeting. It is the kind of thing that never appears in a disaster movie and rarely appears in a campaign speech, and it is exactly where recoveries succeed or fail.

Landrieu's administration made blight removal an early priority, not because abandoned houses were the most photogenic problem, but because they were a visible, measurable symptom of a city that could not execute. Every boarded-up house was also a data point about permitting backlogs, code enforcement capacity, and the coordination between city departments that either existed or didn't. The administration set public targets for reducing blighted and abandoned properties and reported progress against them regularly. Whether or not every target was hit precisely on schedule, the discipline of setting a measurable goal and publishing the results against it was itself a form of governance repair. It told residents and outside observers that the city intended to be judged by outcomes, not by intentions.

The money question was even less forgiving. Federal disaster recovery funds come with extraordinary documentation requirements, audit trails, and eligibility rules that punish sloppiness. New Orleans had to prove, dollar by dollar, that recovery spending matched approved scopes of work, that contracts were competitively bid, that conflicts of interest were disclosed and managed. This is not exciting material. It is also the difference between a city that can draw down the resources it is entitled to and a city that leaves money on the table or, worse, has to return funds after the fact because of documentation failures. Landrieu's team invested in building internal capacity to manage grants and contracts professionally, because a recovery run on improvisation cannot survive contact with a federal inspector general.

None of this happened without scrutiny, and the scrutiny was appropriate. A city recovering from catastrophic loss, spending enormous sums under public pressure to move fast, is a natural setting for waste, favoritism, or outright fraud. National reporters, watchdog organizations, and federal auditors all had reason to look closely at New Orleans in this period, and they did. The administration's ability to survive that scrutiny, and in many cases to improve its practices in response to it, was itself part of the recovery. Transparency was not a public relations exercise. It was a management tool. Publishing data on blight reduction, on contract awards, on service response times, gave the administration a way to catch its own failures before an auditor or a journalist did it for them, and it gave residents a way to see whether promises were being kept.

The lesson for a coastal Florida city is not that we should wait for a storm and then hire the right people afterward. It is the opposite. New Orleans's experience shows that the management systems a city needs during recovery are the same systems it needs every ordinary year: honest budgeting, competent procurement, clear performance measurement, and a workforce with the training and authority to execute. A city that cannot process a routine building permit efficiently in a calm year will not suddenly acquire that capacity in the chaotic weeks after a hurricane makes landfall. A city that cannot track its own spending against its own budget in normal times will not be able to satisfy federal auditors when recovery funds start flowing under emergency pressure. Resilience, in this sense, is not primarily an engineering problem or even a planning problem. It is a management and budgeting problem, and it has to be solved years before the crisis, when nobody is watching and there is no emergency to justify the investment.

For a city like Aventura, sitting on the coast and subject to the same category of storm risk that devastated New Orleans, this means the relevant questions are not only about seawalls and evacuation routes, though those matter. The relevant questions are also about whether the city's permitting department can absorb a surge of rebuilding applications without collapsing into backlog. Whether the finance department has the internal controls to manage a sudden inflow of federal or state disaster assistance without losing eligibility to technical noncompliance. Whether the city has built relationships with contractors and vendors before an emergency, rather than trying to establish them for the first time under duress. Whether elected officials and staff have practiced the discipline of reporting honestly on progress and setbacks in ordinary times, so that residents already trust the numbers when a crisis makes those numbers matter more than ever.

New Orleans did not choose its catastrophe. But it did choose how it would be governed afterward, and the choice to treat recovery as a serious management exercise, not just a moral or emotional one, is what allowed the city to make measurable progress under conditions of extreme scrutiny and limited patience. A coastal city that wants to avoid finding itself in the same position, learning these lessons in real time while the cameras are rolling, should learn them now, in the quieter years, when good management is simply good government and nobody yet calls it resilience.

# Small Cities That Punch Above Their Weight

Small cities do not win by outspending anyone. A municipality of modest size cannot compete with a major metropolis on the scale of its budget, the depth of its bureaucracy, or the size of its marketing apparatus. What it can compete on is something harder to fake: whether the trash is picked up on time, whether the police respond quickly, whether the parks are clean and safe, whether a permit gets processed in weeks rather than months, and whether a resident who calls City Hall gets a real answer from a real person. These are not glamorous achievements. They rarely make headlines. But they are the difference between a place people trust and a place people merely tolerate.

Across the country, the small and mid-sized cities that have built strong reputations did so by treating basic competence as a discipline, not an accident. They measured how long it took to answer a call, how long it took to fill a pothole, how long it took to approve a small business license. They made those numbers public and held themselves to them. None of this required enormous budgets. It required leadership willing to focus on fundamentals instead of chasing headlines, and staff empowered to fix problems instead of routing residents through endless layers of process. The lesson is simple and portable: a city government's most valuable product is predictability. People do not just want good outcomes. They want to know what to expect.

Coastal South Florida adds its own particular pressures to this equation. This is a region where the population shifts seasonally, where storm risk is a permanent planning variable rather than an occasional emergency, where insurance costs and building codes shape everyday decisions for homeowners and condo associations, and where a dense mix of high-rise residential towers sits close to retail corridors, schools, and waterways. A city here cannot treat public safety, drainage, and building oversight as separate departments operating on separate timelines. They are connected in the daily experience of residents, and they need to be connected in how the city plans and budgets.

Aventura sits inside this reality with real advantages. It is compact enough that a mayor and a city commission can actually know their infrastructure block by block rather than through summary reports. It has professional staff and existing systems already in place. It does not need to invent city government from scratch. What it needs is discipline in how those existing tools are used, and clarity about which problems are genuinely within a city's power to solve.

That distinction matters more than it might seem. A city like Aventura does not control interest rates, does not control global insurance markets, does not control state or federal policy on immigration or trade, and cannot single-handedly fix regional traffic patterns that originate far beyond its own boundaries. Any honest civic leader has to say this plainly instead of pretending otherwise. What a city like Aventura can control is much narrower, but it is also much more immediate to daily life. It can control how quickly police and fire respond to a call. It can control the condition and safety of its parks and public spaces. It can control the responsiveness and transparency of its permitting process for a small business owner trying to open or expand. It can control the reliability of drainage and flood mitigation projects that protect streets and property during the seasonal rains that define life here. It can control how clearly it communicates with residents before, during, and after a storm. It can control the tone and professionalism of every interaction between city staff and the public.

None of these things are abstractions. They are the substance of daily governance. A resident does not experience the regional housing market directly. She experiences whether her street floods after a hard rain, whether the crossing guard is there when her kids walk to school, whether the local park bathroom is clean, whether the code enforcement officer treats a small landlord fairly, whether the city commission meeting she attends actually addresses her question instead of deflecting it. These small, repeated interactions accumulate into a broader sense of whether a city is well run. That sense is often more important to a resident's daily quality of life than any single large policy decision made at the state or federal level.

Small business owners experience city government the same way. A restaurant owner does not need dramatic economic development announcements nearly as much as she needs a predictable and fair permitting process, clear code requirements, and a city that treats her as a partner instead of an obstacle. A commercial property owner considering an improvement does not need slogans about being business-friendly. He needs to know that if he follows the rules, the process will move at a reasonable pace and won't be subject to arbitrary delay. Predictability of process is itself a form of economic development, even though it rarely appears on a campaign brochure.

Public safety follows the same logic. Aventura's relatively compact size and existing police infrastructure are real assets, but assets only matter if they are actively maintained, well trained, and properly resourced for the specific risks of a dense, high-rise, coastal community. That includes traffic safety on major corridors, coordination during hurricane evacuations, and steady, visible community policing rather than reactive policing that only shows up after a problem has already occurred.

Schools present a more complicated picture, since the city government does not directly operate the public school system serving its children. But a city can still support education in meaningful ways within its own authority. It can maintain safe routes to school. It can support after-school and recreational programming through its own parks and community centers. It can coordinate with school administrators on traffic and safety issues near campuses. These are modest tools, but modest tools used consistently accumulate real value over time.

None of this is glamorous. There is no dramatic transformation promised here, no single sweeping fix. The honest case for a small city is quieter than that. It is the case that competence, consistency, and a clear sense of what falls within a mayor's actual authority are themselves a form of leadership. A city that governs its own house well, within the real limits of its size and legal power, earns something larger cities often struggle to buy: the simple trust of the people who live there.

# The Failures: How Cities Get Into Trouble

Cities do not usually fall apart overnight. They erode, slowly and quietly, through decisions that each seemed reasonable in isolation. By the time a city's distress becomes visible to ordinary residents, in the form of a sudden tax increase, a credit downgrade, or a service that simply stops working, the underlying causes have often been building for a decade or more. Understanding those causes is not an academic exercise. It is the most practical form of civic literacy a resident can acquire, because it tells you what to look for before the crisis arrives.

The first and most common cause of municipal distress is unfunded long-term obligations, particularly pension and retiree health care promises made to public employees. These promises are earned over an entire career but often not fully paid for as they accrue. A city can appear balanced on paper year after year while quietly accumulating a liability that will not come due until long after the officials who approved it have left office. Detroit's bankruptcy in 2013 remains the most widely studied example of how legacy costs, compounded over decades, can overwhelm a city's operating budget. The warning sign for a resident is straightforward: look at whether your city's pension system is described as fully funded or only partially funded, and ask how that percentage has moved over the past several years. A number that is falling, even slowly, deserves attention long before it becomes a headline.

The second recurring cause is over-reliance on a single revenue source. Many municipalities lean heavily on one category of revenue, whether property taxes, a single large employer's tax base, or a narrow slice of sales and tourism activity, because it is the path of least resistance. Stockton, California, is often cited for how dependent its finances had become on a housing boom that could not last. When that single pillar weakens, whether through a market downturn, a change in state law, or the departure of a major taxpayer, the city has no cushion. Residents can check this by asking what share of general fund revenue comes from any one source and what would happen to core services if that source dropped by even a modest percentage. A budget that cannot answer that question is a budget built on hope rather than analysis.

The third cause, deferred maintenance, is the least dramatic and therefore the most dangerous. Roads, drainage systems, water and sewer lines, public buildings, and vehicle fleets all wear out. Every year a city delays a needed repair to save money in the current budget, the eventual cost of that repair tends to grow, and the risk of a sudden failure grows with it. Flint, Michigan's water crisis is frequently discussed in the context of how underinvestment in basic infrastructure, combined with poor decision-making under fiscal stress, can produce a public health emergency, not just an accounting problem. Deferred maintenance is often invisible in a city's annual budget because it does not show up as a debt. It shows up only as an absence, the repair that was not made, the replacement that did not happen. Residents can look for a capital improvement plan and ask whether it is fully funded or whether major projects are perpetually pushed back year after year. A pattern of repeated postponement is itself the warning sign.

The fourth cause is borrowing for operations rather than for capital investment. Debt is not inherently dangerous. Cities reasonably borrow to build a bridge, a fire station, or a water treatment plant, assets that will serve residents for decades and that fairly should be paid for over time. The danger arises when a city borrows, or uses budget maneuvers that function like borrowing, to cover ordinary day-to-day expenses such as payroll or routine operating costs. This pattern shows up in the fiscal histories of cities that have gone through state oversight or bankruptcy, and it is a reliable indicator that a government has stopped living within its recurring revenue. A resident can watch for this by asking whether new debt issuances are tied to specific capital projects with defined useful lives, or whether they are vaguely described as covering general fund shortfalls. The former is ordinary municipal finance. The latter is a warning sign that should not be ignored.

The fifth cause, weak internal controls, is less about the size of a city's obligations and more about whether anyone is actually watching them closely. Weak internal controls include infrequent or delayed audits, a lack of separation between the people who approve spending and the people who record it, and budget documents that are difficult for an ordinary resident to understand or that arrive well after the fiscal year has already begun. Bell, California, is a widely reported example of how a small city with minimal oversight and low public engagement allowed a handful of officials to extract enormous personal benefit before anyone outside city hall noticed. The lesson is not that every city official is dishonest. It is that oversight cannot depend on trust alone. A resident can look for whether the city publishes timely, independent audits, whether those audits contain repeated findings that are never resolved, and whether budget hearings are genuinely accessible or merely procedural.

None of these five causes operates in isolation, and that is precisely what makes municipal distress so hard to reverse once it takes hold. A city with weak internal controls is less likely to notice that its pension liability is rising. A city that has borrowed to cover operating costs is less able to fund the capital maintenance it has been deferring. A city dependent on a single revenue source has less flexibility to absorb any of these pressures when they finally converge. This is why the residents best positioned to protect their own community are not necessarily accountants or bond analysts, but people willing to ask a few consistent questions year after year: is our pension funding improving or declining, how diversified is our revenue base, is our infrastructure plan actually funded, is our new debt tied to real assets, and are our audits timely, clean, and taken seriously. A city that can answer those questions honestly is a city with a fighting chance. A city that cannot is already further down the road toward trouble than most of its residents realize.

*Chapter 13*

# Aventura Today: What I See From the Street

I have spent years walking into homes across this city, sitting at kitchen tables, listening to what people say when the cameras are off and the meeting has adjourned. I have shown condos on the water and small rentals off Biscayne, negotiated with landlords and first-time buyers, sat with retirees on fixed incomes and with young families trying to make the numbers work. That vantage point, the street level, is different from the podium, and it has taught me things no report can.

Aventura works. That has to be said plainly, because it is true. The parks are clean and well maintained. The police respond. The schools carry a strong reputation, and people move here specifically because of it. Compared to much of South Florida, and frankly to much of the country, this is a city that has been run competently for a long time. Anyone who tells you otherwise, that Aventura is somehow failing, is not being honest with you. I am not here to tell you the house is on fire. I am here to tell you what the people who live in it are quietly worried about.

The first thing I hear, from renters and owners alike, is the cost of staying here. Rents have climbed to a point where longtime residents, people who raised families here, who worked here for decades, are doing the math and wondering if they still fit. For owners, it is not just the mortgage anymore. It is the HOA statement that arrives thicker and heavier each year, and the insurance premium that follows right behind it, both driven by forces well beyond any single building or board, but landing squarely on the family that has to pay it. I have sat with people who love their home and are genuinely afraid of what the next renewal notice will say. That fear is real, and it deserves to be named, not managed with a slogan.

The second thing is traffic, and anyone who drives Biscayne Boulevard at the wrong hour already knows this without me saying it. The mall is a genuine asset, a driver of tax base and jobs and civic pride, and it should be talked about as an achievement, because it is one. But success has a traffic pattern, and ours shows up every afternoon and every weekend, at the mall, along the Boulevard, at the turns onto the side streets where people actually live. Residents are not asking for the mall to be smaller or for growth to stop. They are asking whether the roads, the signals, the turn lanes, were built with today's volume in mind, or yesterday's.

That question connects directly to the third pressure, which is density and redevelopment. Aventura was largely built out fast, in a good era, and now faces the next stage that every mature city faces: what happens on parcels that get sold, that get proposed for something taller, something denser, something that changes the skyline a resident has looked at for twenty years. I do not think density is automatically bad, and I would not insult anyone's intelligence by pretending redevelopment can simply be stopped, or that stopping it would be free of cost either. But I have sat in enough living rooms to know that people do not feel like partners in these decisions. They feel like they find out after the fact, at a meeting, from a rendering, rather than from a real conversation that happened while the decision was still open. That gap, between when people learn about a project and when they can actually shape it, is itself a policy problem, separate from whatever the project turns out to be.

The fourth thing is less visible on a spreadsheet but just as real on the street, and it is the question of who feels heard. Aventura is a genuinely diverse, multilingual city, built by people who came from Latin America, from the Northeast and Canada, from all over, who speak Spanish and Russian and Hebrew and Portuguese and English at home, sometimes several of these in the same household. That diversity is one of the city's real strengths, and it shows up in the restaurants, the synagogues and churches, the small businesses, the everyday friendliness that visitors notice. But strength on paper is not the same as feeling included in practice. I have talked to residents, particularly older ones and newer arrivals, who say plainly that they do not feel city communications reach them, that public meetings assume a comfort with process and language that not everyone has, that the loudest rooms in this city are not necessarily the most representative ones. That is not a criticism of any one person or administration. It is a structural gap, and structural gaps can be closed with intention.

None of this amounts to a city in crisis. I want to be clear about that, because exaggeration is its own kind of dishonesty, and I have no interest in telling residents their home is worse than it is in order to make a case for myself. Aventura's fundamentals are sound. Its finances are stable, its services are strong, its reputation is earned. What I am describing are the pressures of success, the kind of strain that shows up precisely because a city has grown, matured, and become desirable, not because it has failed.

But pressure ignored does not stay pressure. It becomes displacement, gridlock, distrust, quietly, block by block, if nobody names it honestly and starts working the problem while it is still manageable. That is what I hear from the street, from the people I sit across from at kitchen tables rather than podiums. They are proud of this city. They also want someone to say out loud what they already know, so that the next chapter is written with their voices in the room, not just their taxes on the ledger.

*Chapter 14*

# My Proposals for Aventura

Every city makes promises. Fewer cities keep them, because the promises were never built to survive contact with budgets, staff time, and the ordinary friction of governing. I want to be honest with you about what I am proposing, and honest about what it would take to do it. These are not slogans. They are commitments I am prepared to be held to.

The first is a residents-first standard for development decisions. Aventura was built, in large part, on the strength of good planning, and it will keep its character only if that planning stays disciplined. What I mean concretely is this: before any major zoning change, variance, or density increase comes up for a vote, residents in the affected area should receive notice that is actually useful, not a technical legal notice buried in small print, but something that tells a person in plain language what is being proposed, where, and what it could mean for their block. And the public hearing that follows should be a real hearing, not a formality that happens after the outcome has already been settled in private conversations. This is not a promise to say no to every project. Growth is not the enemy. The problem is when residents find out about a change after it is functionally decided. Doing this right means more work for city staff, more lead time on applications, and occasionally slower approvals than developers would prefer. I think that trade is worth making, and I think most residents would agree once they see how it changes the tone of these meetings.

The second is a budget that a resident can actually read. Municipal budgets are, by nature, complicated documents, full of fund transfers and line items that mean something to an accountant and very little to anyone else. I am not proposing to make the underlying accounting simpler than it is. I am proposing that the city produce, alongside the formal budget, a plain-language version, published where people will actually find it, that lays out what departments are funded, what major categories of spending look like year over year, and where the money for big projects is coming from. This exists in some form in well-run cities already; it is not an exotic idea. The honest caveat is that transparency is not the same as popularity. A budget that is easy to read is also easy to criticize, and that is the point. A city that is confident in its choices should not be afraid of a resident understanding them.

The third is practical attention to the cost of living, because a beautiful city that people can no longer afford to live in has failed at something basic. This is not something a city government controls the way it controls zoning or parks. Insurance rates are set by state regulation and national markets, not by a mayor. But local government is not powerless either. A city can work with condo and HOA boards, many of whom are volunteers doing their best with information they were never trained to interpret, and offer real education on reserve requirements, structural inspections, and how to plan for these costs before they become emergencies. A city can also look honestly at where it has room to encourage a wider range of housing options, including for the people who work in Aventura every day, in its stores, restaurants, and schools, but who increasingly cannot afford to live near their jobs. I will not promise a program will lower anyone's premium or dues by a specific amount, because I do not control those markets and it would be dishonest to suggest otherwise. What I can promise is that the city will treat this as a governing priority rather than someone else's problem, and will use whatever tools of education, advocacy, and land use policy are actually within its authority.

The fourth is traffic, and I want to describe it as what it actually is: a measurable problem, not a permanent condition we simply endure. Aventura sits at a crossroads of regional traffic that no single city can fully solve on its own, but that does not mean local government should shrug and do nothing. What it can do is set clear, published targets for specific corridors and intersections, track performance against those targets publicly, and adjust when something is not working instead of quietly moving on. It can also be honest about the limits of any single fix, whether that is a signal timing change, a turn lane, a bus route, or a bike connection, and commit to trying more than one thing rather than betting everything on a single project. I am not going to promise a commute time or a percentage reduction, because anyone who does that without control over county roads and regional transit is not being straight with you. What I will promise is that the city will treat mobility as something to be measured and reported, not something to be talked about only when an election comes around.

The fifth is a city that serves its residents in the languages they actually speak. Aventura is one of the more linguistically diverse communities in South Florida, and that diversity is part of what makes it strong, not a complication to be managed around. City communications, public notices, and services at counters and by phone should reflect that reality. This is a matter of basic fairness. A resident should not need a translator in the family to understand a notice about a zoning hearing that affects their street, or to get a straight answer from city hall about a permit or a service request. Some of this is already underway in various forms across South Florida governments, and it is neither expensive nor exotic to expand it here. It requires deliberate staffing and translation practices, consistently applied, not an occasional gesture.

None of these five commitments will make Aventura perfect. They will not eliminate traffic, freeze insurance costs, or end disagreement over development. What they will do, if I keep my word, is give residents a city hall that tells them what is happening before it happens, that explains its choices in language they can understand, that treats affordability and mobility as ongoing responsibilities rather than talking points, and that speaks to every resident in a way they can trust. That is the standard I am asking you to hold me to.

Chapter 15

# What I Will Not Promise

There is a temptation in every campaign to promise the moon, and I want to resist it here in plain terms. A mayor of Aventura does not set property insurance rates. A mayor does not control the Federal Reserve or the bond markets that determine what it costs the city to borrow. A mayor cannot override the Florida Legislature when it decides, as it often has in recent years, to preempt local authority over everything from short-term rentals to zoning to building requirements. And a mayor does not sit on the Miami-Dade County Commission, which controls transit funding, major infrastructure decisions, and much of the regional planning that shapes daily life in a city like ours. I will not pretend otherwise, because doing so would be a form of dishonesty I am not willing to practice, even if it might poll well.

Insurance is the clearest example. Homeowners and condominium owners across Aventura have watched premiums rise to levels that strain household budgets and complicate the resale of units, particularly in older buildings facing new structural inspection requirements. This is a real crisis, and it deserves a mayor who understands it, speaks about it honestly, and advocates loudly at the county and state level for reform. But the mayor of Aventura does not regulate insurance carriers, does not set reinsurance markets, and cannot legislate lower premiums by executive will. Any candidate who tells you they will bring your insurance bill down is either confused about the office they are seeking or is counting on you not to notice the difference.

Interest rates present a similar problem. When borrowing costs rise, it becomes more expensive for the city to finance capital projects, and it becomes more expensive for developers to build, which in turn affects housing supply and prices. These rates are set by national monetary policy, not by city hall. A mayor can be prudent about when and how the city borrows. A mayor can avoid unnecessary debt and structure financing conservatively. But a mayor cannot promise you lower rates, and should not try to take credit for national economic cycles that have nothing to do with local governance.

State preemption is perhaps the least understood constraint, and the most frustrating one for those of us who believe in local control. Over the past decade, Florida has increasingly centralized authority in Tallahassee, limiting what cities and counties can regulate on their own. This has affected short-term rental rules, certain zoning powers, and various regulatory tools that local governments once used to shape their own communities. I happen to believe this trend has gone too far, and that Aventura, like every city, is best governed by people who live here and understand its particular character. But believing that does not give me the power to reverse it unilaterally. A mayor can join with other municipal leaders, testify before legislative committees, and build coalitions to push back. A mayor cannot simply declare state law void within city limits.

County decisions add another layer. Major roads, mass transit corridors, and many public health and social service functions are governed by Miami-Dade County, not by the city of Aventura. When people ask why a particular intersection remains congested, or why certain regional projects move slowly, the honest answer is often that the decision-making authority does not rest with the mayor's office at all. It rests in a much larger and more complex governmental structure. A mayor who claims otherwise, who promises to fix county roads or county transit through sheer force of local will, is either uninformed or is hoping you are.

I raise all of this not to lower expectations for what this office can accomplish, but to be precise about what it can. A mayor sets the tone and priorities for city staff. A mayor can push for responsible budgeting, transparent contracting, and a development review process that treats neighbors as stakeholders rather than obstacles. A mayor can advocate, publicly and persistently, on issues that lie partly or wholly outside city control, using the visibility of the office to apply pressure where direct authority does not reach. A mayor can build relationships with state and county officials that make Aventura's voice harder to ignore. These are real tools, and I intend to use every one of them. But they are tools of influence and persistence, not command.

What I am willing to promise instead is a standard of honesty about the difference between what I control and what I do not, and a willingness to be judged by that standard. If elected, I will tell residents plainly when an issue they raise falls outside city authority, rather than pretending to have power I do not possess. I will document what advocacy efforts look like on preemption fights or insurance reform, so residents can see whether their mayor showed up to state hearings, joined coalitions with other municipalities, or simply stayed quiet. I will accept scrutiny on the things that are genuinely within the mayor's control, such as how city contracts are awarded, how development applications are reviewed, and how transparently the budget is presented to the public.

This kind of honesty is not a rhetorical strategy. It reflects something I believe about how trust in local government gets rebuilt, one plain statement at a time. Residents are not naive. Many of them have lived through cycles of promises that outran the actual authority of the office making them, and they have grown skeptical, sometimes cynical, about political language in general. I would rather earn a smaller amount of trust through accuracy than a larger amount through vague and inflated promises that later collapse under the weight of reality.

So this is what I will not promise: lower insurance premiums, lower interest rates, unilateral reversal of state preemption, or control over county infrastructure decisions. What I will promise is candor about those limits, sustained and visible advocacy where direct control does not exist, and full accountability for the areas where the mayor's office genuinely does have the power to act. I believe that distinction, honestly maintained, is worth more to the people of Aventura than any number of promises I could not keep.

*Chapter 16*

# A Letter to My Neighbors

Dear Neighbor,

By the time you read this, you have likely already formed some opinion of me. Maybe you have seen my name on a sign, or shaken my hand at a farmers market, or heard from a friend that I am running for mayor. I hope this letter finds you somewhere quieter than a campaign event, because what I want to say to you is not a speech. It is closer to what I would say if we were sitting on your porch, or mine, with the ceiling fan going and no cameras around.

I am asking for your vote because I love this city in a way that is hard to explain unless you have watched it grow the way I have. I have sold homes here, sat across kitchen tables here, listened to hundreds of families tell me what they were hoping for when they signed on the dotted line. That work taught me something simple: people do not want grand promises from their local government. They want their streets to be safe, their taxes to make sense, their kids to have a good school and a place to play, and their calls to city hall to be answered by someone who actually intends to help. That is the whole job, as I understand it. Not glamorous. Not complicated in its aims, even if the execution takes real work.

I am not running because I think Aventura is broken. It isn't. It is a good city, built by people before me who cared enough to do the unglamorous work of planning, zoning, and budgeting with some discipline. But every city, no matter how well built, needs steady hands and open windows. It needs someone willing to say plainly what is working, what isn't, and why, without turning every disagreement into a battle. I have tried to write this book in that spirit, and I want to govern in that spirit too.

So let me tell you plainly what I intend to do in the first year, if you give me the chance.

First, I will make the workings of city hall easier to see and easier to reach. That means clearer public notice before decisions are made, not after. It means meetings scheduled at hours when working residents can actually attend, and agendas written in language a neighbor can understand without a law degree. I cannot promise you will always like what you see. I can promise you will be able to see it.

Second, I will sit down, early and often, with the people who actually run our departments — public works, code enforcement, police, parks — and ask them honestly what they need to do their jobs well, and what has been getting in the way. Not press-conference conversations. Working conversations. My guess, based on years of dealing with permitting and inspections as a broker, is that some of our frustrations as residents come down to process problems that nobody has had the patience to fix. I want to find those and fix what can be fixed.

Third, I will treat growth and development the way I believe most of you actually feel about it, which is neither reflexively against it nor blindly for it. Aventura became what it is through development, and it will keep changing. The question that matters is whether that change happens with real regard for traffic, density, drainage, and the character of neighborhoods that people chose deliberately. I know this industry from the inside. I know how projects get approved and how they sometimes get pushed through without enough scrutiny. I intend to bring a broker's practical eye to that process, not a developer's interest in it.

Fourth, I will be honest with you about money. I will not promise tax cuts I cannot deliver or spending I cannot justify. What I can promise is that I will ask, in public, why every significant expense is necessary, and I will expect department heads and contractors to answer those questions in plain terms. If something does not make sense to me, I doubt it will make sense to you either, and I will say so.

Fifth, and maybe most important to me personally, I want to make it easier for ordinary residents to be heard between elections. Not just at podiums with a three-minute clock running down, though those meetings matter too. I am thinking of something more like what I do now as a broker: showing up, listening, following up, being reachable by phone or email without a wall of staff in between. I do not expect to solve every problem that reaches my desk. I do expect to acknowledge it and tell you honestly what I can and cannot do.

None of this is a grand vision. I am not going to tell you I will reinvent Aventura in twelve months, or that I have some formula the people before me missed. What I am telling you is that I intend to work the job the way I have tried to work every job in my life: carefully, honestly, and with respect for the people I am serving. If I get something wrong, I would rather hear it from you directly than read about it later.

That is really the heart of this letter. I am asking you to hold me to what I have said here. Not in some abstract way, but literally. If a year from now the meetings are still scheduled at times nobody can attend, or the agendas are still impossible to parse, or my phone stops ringing back, I want you to say so, publicly, and expect an answer. I would rather be measured against a short, specific list I actually control than against vague hopes I cannot deliver.

I have lived and worked in this community long enough to know that most of you are not looking for a hero. You are looking for someone who will show up, do the work, tell the truth, and treat your time and your money like they matter, because they do. That is the mayor I intend to be. I would be honored to earn your vote, and more than that, I would be honored to earn your trust, one ordinary Tuesday city council meeting at a time.

Thank you for reading this far, and thank you, in advance, for holding me to my word.

With respect and gratitude,

Alberto Zaltzberg