

## **An Open Letter to Mayor Jack Seiler: A World Class Community Must Have Open Data Governance**

January 22, 2016

Dear Mayor Seiler,

Access to information is a key to involving citizens in identifying and delivering services our community desperately needs. For the last two years, Code for Fort Lauderdale has been voluntarily working to address and overcome barriers to the lack of available information. It is our mission to better understand and interact with the data about the places we live. On a county-wide level, for example, we created a [Broward County mayoral map tool](#). On the municipal level, to a game of Fort Lauderdale [Click that 'hood](#), the application of open data has become a unique way one can give back to fellow citizens. Now, the undersigned members of Fort Lauderdale's tech community ask that you continue your commitment to innovation, transparency, and citizen engagement by adopting an Open Data Policy that governs the maintenance of a proposed Open Data Portal, and ensures the reliability of its data.

Across the country and as close to home as Miami-Dade County, Open Data Portals have been launched as a central point of access for data. Making city and county data routinely and freely available to the public means it is also available internally across agencies, empowering city and municipal employees to more effectively monitor and improve services. In Miami, local volunteers have even created tools using the County's Open Data Portal to help Miamians [predict flooding patterns](#), [track public transportation services](#), and streamline the County's [permitting process](#). By providing access to data in a direct way, via data portal, the conversation changes from "what should we make" into "what can I make with the data we have already."

We appreciate the city's existing civic technology outreach efforts, as several staff members of the IT department have attended Code for Fort Lauderdale meetings past and have graciously provided space for discussion at City Hall. The department has worked hand in hand with the growing civic tech community to develop more accessible, user friendly solutions to civic challenges through technology. The IT department's willingness to collaborate demonstrates why they should play a key role in the implementation of an Open Data Policy and an Open Data Portal. We therefore recommend that your office empower city staffers to work directly with county agencies to open their data sets in ways that are responsive to community needs, and to measure success by its ability to demonstrate to agencies how they can procure and deliver services more effectively through the smart leveraging of open data.

We all share a commitment to building a strong civic ecosystem and ensuring that government technology benefits all residents. As members of this community, we will continue developing projects and hosting hack nights, trainings, and meetups to promote government transparency, technological innovation, and civic problem solving. We'll collaborate, compete, and share

expertise to help Broward County, and especially Fort Lauderdale, address our most pressing civic challenges. And we'll train a new generation of citizens to be civically engaged and to put their considerable skills to work for our community. We invite you, our commissioners and our city staff to join us at a meetup, workshop, or hackathon to work through the next steps together and to see this commitment fulfilled.

Throughout your term as mayor, you have worked for economic opportunity, for transparency, for efficiency, and for accountability. We support these goals and believe that a robust Open Data Policy and your continued commitment to vital technology collaboration between community and government will accelerate our county's progress toward them.

Thank you,

Code for Fort Lauderdale