



CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

TO: City Council

DATE: August 10, 2026

DEPARTMENT: Administration Department

PREPARED BY: Adelaide La Torre, Public Experience Liaison

PRESENTER: Adelaide La Torre, Public Experience Liaison and City Interns.

AGENDA TITLE: Leading the Next Wave of Leaders: 2026 Summer Internship Program Update and Introduction of Expanded Youth Engagement Initiatives

RECOMMENDATION

Receive the staff report and the presentation from interns in the Leading the Next Wave of Leaders Summer Internship Program summarizing their learning experiences and accomplishments during the 2026 program.

BACKGROUND

The *Leading the Next Wave of Leaders* Summer Internship Program was established to provide local youth with meaningful exposure to municipal operations, career development opportunities, and hands-on project experience. Over the past weeks, the program has grown in intern dedication, department involvement, and project complexity.

Interns were placed in multiple City departments, where they contributed to administrative support, community engagement initiatives, research projects, and operational tasks. Departments reported that the interns' work offered valuable assistance during a period of high seasonal workload. The program aligns with the City's broader goals of workforce development, youth engagement, and community capacity-building as referenced in the adopted Strategic Plan.

This report provides an overview of the 2026 program and presents a recommendation to continue the internship initiative due to its demonstrated benefits for both participants and City operations.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The 2026 internship program successfully met its objectives by offering structured mentorship, project-based learning, and exposure to municipal services. Interns gained practical skills, developed professional competencies, and expressed increased interest in public sector careers. Staff noted strong engagement, initiative, and adaptability among participants.

City departments benefited from the interns' contributions, which supported project advancement, improved internal workflow efficiency, and enhanced community-facing initiatives. The cross-department collaboration strengthened internal teamwork and provided interns with a well-rounded experience.

During the City Council meeting, some of our summer interns will speak briefly on what they learned throughout the program, highlighting key projects, skills developed, and insights gained from working within City departments.

Program continuation is consistent with City goals related to youth empowerment, community investment, and workforce pipeline development. Maintaining the existing structure is recommended due to its effectiveness, and positive feedback.

To further elevate youth voices and leadership, staff is advancing the next phase of the program: The Youth Council. The upcoming Fort Bragg Youth Council will serve as a youth-driven advisory body, creating leadership roles for local teens and giving them a platform to influence City priorities.

Members will provide insight on issues affecting young people and help guide youth-centered programs and activities. The Youth Impact Fund will support projects that benefit Fort Bragg's young people and the broader community. Youth Council members will help determine funding priorities, ensuring decisions reflect authentic youth perspectives. Teen-Created Community Development Survey As part of the internship program, Community Development interns designed a "by teens, for teens" survey to inform Youth Council decision-making. The survey invites Fort Bragg youth to share what they believe the city needs and what improvements, activities, or opportunities would make a meaningful difference.

Youth Council Recruitment Teens interested in running for a position on the Youth Council are encouraged to contact Public Experience Liaison Adelaide La Torre at alatorre@fortbraggca.gov. Updates on the program and opportunities for involvement will be shared through the City of Fort Bragg's social media channels and local schools.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The internship program and upcoming Youth Council launch have been promoted through social media, and coordination with schools. Early feedback has been positive,

emphasizing excitement for greater youth representation in City initiatives and appreciation for teen-led survey development. The Youth Council will follow the same pattern.

FISCAL IMPACT

The adopted Fiscal Year 2026–27 Budget includes \$12,000 to support the Leading the Next Wave of Leaders Summer Internship Program, which provides paid internship opportunities for local students at an hourly rate of \$16.50. Funding supports intern wages and is included within the Administration Department budget.

In addition, the City allocated \$3,000 for the Youth Impact Fund, which provides financial support for youth-led community projects selected through the Youth Council process and approved by the City Council.

The total annual program budget is \$15,000. Existing City staff provide program coordination, mentorship, and oversight as part of their regular duties; therefore, no additional staffing or ongoing operational costs are anticipated beyond the approved budget.

STRATEGIC PLAN/CONSISTENCY

The Leading the Next Wave of Leaders Summer Internship and Youth Council Program is consistent with the City of Fort Bragg's Strategic Plan and advances several of the City's long-term organizational priorities, including:

- Sustainable Organization: Develops a pipeline of future public sector professionals by exposing local youth to careers in municipal government, while supporting succession planning and workforce development.
- Community Engagement: Strengthens civic participation by connecting students directly with local government, encouraging youth leadership, and fostering a greater understanding of public service and community decision-making.
- Economic Opportunity: Invests in the development of local talent by providing paid work experience, professional mentorship, and career exploration opportunities that prepare students for future employment.
- Innovation: Encourages creativity and problem-solving through the Youth Impact Fund, empowering students to develop and present community improvement projects while gaining experience in collaboration, budgeting, and project implementation.
- Service-Oriented Organization: Reinforces the City's commitment to investing in its residents by creating meaningful educational and leadership opportunities that benefit both participants and the broader Fort Bragg community.