

The City Council of the City of Charlotte, North Carolina convened for Council Committee Discussions on Monday, January 6, 2025, at 6:07 p.m. in Room 267 of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Government Center with Mayor Vi Lyles presiding. Council members present were Tariq Bokhari, Tiawana Brown, Ed Driggs, Malcolm Graham, Renee Johnson, Lawana Mayfield, James Mitchell, and Victoria Watlington.

ABSENT: Councilmember Danté Anderson

ABSENT UNTIL NOTED: Councilmembers Dimple Ajmera and Marjorie Molina

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Mayor Lyles said welcome to 2025 and all the opportunities that we can have with this new time and date, and the work that we're doing in our community. I'd like to begin this meeting that we're having [inaudible], and I'd like to begin with our introductions. Thank you very much for being here. I want to say to everyone Happy New Year and may we all enjoy this time.

Councilmember Ajmera arrived at 6:09 p.m.

Councilmember Molina arrived at 6:09 p.m.

Thank you, everyone, for participating. Now I'd like to turn over the first item on our agenda to the City Manager.

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ITEM NO. 1: PUBLIC SAFETY UPDATE: QUALITY OF LIFE APPROACH

Marcus Jones, City Manager said thank you, Mayor, and members of Council. I also want to thank you for allowing us to deviate a little bit from our 6:00 p.m. report outs so that we could have a part two of a presentation we had on public safety at the last December 2024 Business meeting. If we go back a little bit over time, my commitment to you was to have a series of conversations around public safety. We began in early December 2024 with setting the stage of wholistic approach. We started to talk about the Quality of Life, and I think we had such a good discussion at the last Business meeting that we were only able to get through half of it. So, today we'll go through the second half. January 13, 2025, we will have a conversation about the SAFE (Safety and Accountability for Everyone) Charlotte Review and Update. The week of January 13, 2025, is also CMPD's (Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Department) Annual Crime Report. Then lastly where it all started, and this was pre-pandemic, the City and the County both agreed to a framework with Violence is a Public Health Crisis. So, we'd like to come back to that.

What I also would like to say is that you're seeing some information from me, I believe in your Thursday packet, about how we would go about providing you information for some of the speakers during the Public Forum. Maybe more importantly, one of the things that we're attempting to do with these discussions around public safety is have a running list of all the questions that you have given us and give you responses to those listed of running questions, even some of the questions that we receive outside of the discussion period. Lastly, what we're trying to do with these discussions, there may be some things that we haven't put out there that will tend to get enough traction during these discussions that maybe you want some more information. We'll make sure that we are flexible even with the Annual Strategy Meeting or the retreat if there's something that we need to come back and have a further discussion. So, I say this each time and maybe I won't say it anymore after this, we don't have to boil the ocean tonight because there are so many more opportunities if you think about this. We started early December 2024 going all the way into February 2025, including the Annual Strategy Meeting. So, with that said, Mayor, if you would indulge us and allow us to do this first before the Committee report outs, I think it would help us have a successful meeting tonight.

Mayor Lyles said I would agree that it will be of more value right now for us to be able to have that kind of conversation.

Mr. Jones said okay, great. So, I will ask that Debbie and Rebecca come back up and pick up where we left off last time with this Quality of Life Approach. Thank you. I also want to thank the Mayor and the Council because you've given us this opportunity to have the space to have these conversations and the dialogue. It also helps us think about some of the strategies that we've had and maybe there are some strategies that we double-down on and maybe there's some strategies that we abandon. So, this is very good for the team also. Thank you.

Rebecca Heffner, HNS Director said good evening, everyone. I'm Rebecca Heffner with Housing and Neighborhood Services. I love this 2025 energy. So, I'm glad to be here tonight to be sharing this presentation with you. I will say that Debbie and I are here to present and represent this work. The Quality of Life Approach that we're going to be sharing tonight is really an approach that takes many City departments and many departments working together with our residents. So, the Manager gave you the schedule. We're off and running today. The idea of this Quality of Life Approach is that creating safe neighborhoods takes more than law enforcement and the activities that create safe neighborhoods are more than just what we can see in the data of looking at our crime stats and things like that. We're really taking this wholistic approach, taking lessons that we learned and best practices from the way that we've been working in the Corridors of Opportunity. Those of you who were part of the Jobs and Economic Development Committee meeting today got to hear about some of the great successes of that work. The key to that approach is the wholistic work, the broad partnerships, and the integration of activities. So, when we think about creating safe neighborhoods from this Quality of Life lens, we're really looking at how are we, all of us, working together with police and C-DOT (Charlotte Department of Transportation), and Housing and Neighborhood Services, and others, but also in an intentional way with the community and our neighbors.

So, Neighborhood Engagement is really a foundational activity to this approach. The community engagement in that relationship management, they're essential to fostering collaboration and creating trust, then being able to work together to develop successful solutions. Often the challenges that our residents are facing are really complex in the sense of there are root causes and underlying issues. So, we really need to be able to work together to determine what needs to be addressed, what the residents want to see, what kind of neighborhoods they want to have. So, one of the things that we've done in Housing and Neighborhood Services over the last couple of years is we've been really strategic and intentional about how we're leveraging our resources. So, many of you know that we have a Neighborhood Engagement Services team. This team we have reorganized last year to really better serve our residents and also align with City priorities. So, each district has a Neighborhood Engagement liaison, and then we also have a team member who works specifically on Corridors of Opportunity. So, we're really trying to work through how we use these liaisons to best partner with neighborhoods but also bring forward to you all as Council what are some of the issues and community needs that are being presented.

Neighborhood safety is something that we have always worked on in partnership with our residents and neighborhood organizations. We've had an additional focus on that over this past year. So, you all may be familiar with some of the signature neighborhood programs, our neighborhood Board retreats and our neighborhood matching grants program. There are opportunities in these programs to really focus in on neighborhood and community safety. At one of the neighborhood Board retreats last year the team did a world café style retreat, really looking at community safety and thinking about a lot of the things that you all have been talking about as a Council. What are the community perceptions within our neighborhoods? Do people feel safe? What kind of community assets are already existing that can be leveraged? What are some innovative strategies to really create trust and belonging among residents in promoting a safer community? So, neighborhoods are working together to think through these exact same issues that you all have been talking about as a Council.

We've also been focusing in on apartment community engagement in a renewed way. For a long time, our neighborhood work was primarily focused in single-family neighborhoods and we've had very intentional outreach over the last couple of years to support residents who are also living in apartment communities. We've seen a lot of success in that engagement. Then, of course, CMPD does a lot of community engagement around neighborhood safety as well with some signature celebrations each year at National Night Out and their Neighborhood Watch Program. Another aspect beyond Neighborhood Engagement when we're thinking about a Quality of Life Approach to public safety is the work that we do in Code Enforcement. So, Code Enforcement activities can play a role in creating and maintaining neighborhoods that are safe, healthy, clean, and green. So, some of the things that we do within Code Enforcement help with both physical safety and also perceptions of safety in a community. So, we address a lot of illegal dump sites. Code Enforcement secures vacant and boarded-up properties, does a lot of junk vehicle removal, and nuisance abatement activities. So, alone these aren't necessarily safety activities, although some of them are around physical safety, but in combination with the other activities that we do, they are really helping to create a safe environment for the community.

In addition, we think about the Clean and Green part of this. The Keep Charlotte Beautiful and our partners in Code Enforcement and our Quality of Life team do a lot of work around graffiti abatement, removal of illegal signs, removal of litter, creating green spaces. All of this is around creating environments where people feel safe and feel pride in their surroundings. I will just note these numbers are for 2024, so a lot of work that happens on an annual basis. In addition, there's one new item on this list I want to flag for you. In the last year you may have been hearing from quite a number of constituents about the challenges of sticker bombing across the City of Charlotte and especially on the rail trail. So, we have added sticker removal kits for our Adopt-A-City street partners. After a variety of testing, which I kind of had an opportunity to think back to my science fair days, which method is best for removing stickers, it turns out it's WD-40 and a scraper. So, I graphed all the data for you. I'll share it in a separate presentation. Again, this is another way that we're able to contribute to that positive and safe environment in our community, and that one in particular along the rail trail.

In addition, we think about the connection between the resources we provide for unhoused neighbors and creating safe neighborhoods. In the last couple of years, Council, you have expanded the street outreach work that the City does, first through the work of the CARES team and then the Uptown street outreach that came out of the prior referral around the Code Enforcement in Uptown. Following the implementation of that Uptown street outreach, we've been able to add well check for our unhoused residents to CLT+. So, this is a resource. If y'all aren't aware, you can go into CLT+ and note that there's an unhoused resident, it might not be an emergency situation where you need to call 911, but you want someone to come out and do a wellness check. The street outreach team is available for that.

That street outreach also partners quite a bit with our Code Enforcement folks because they are often out in the community addressing nuisance abatement or other sites where they meet unhoused residents so then they have another resource available to them to really support our unhoused neighbors. The last piece of this that I'll address before I pass this over to Debbie is the work that we refer to as Neighbors Building Neighborhoods. So, for us this is just a way of bringing all of this work together in a comprehensive way in specific locations. So, you think about the relationship to the approach where we talked about this is similar to the Corridors of Opportunity approach. Those are enlarged geographic areas. Neighbors Building Neighborhoods is that integrated, collaborative, and comprehensive approach but in small geographic areas. That could range from a large neighborhood, like the work that we've begun recently in Plaza Eastway, or it could be as small as a singular apartment community like Little Rock Apartments. So, Neighbors Building Neighborhoods is really a way that we aim to bring together residents and community organizations, City partners, departments, and other non-profit partners to really work together to collaboratively address these challenges. So, we will pull in Code Enforcement and pull in C-DOT and pull in our folks at Solid Waste and work directly with the residents to try to problem solve in these

smaller areas. So, the places that we're actively working this approach are along Catherine Simmons and Lincoln Heights, within the Little Rock Apartments community, and just starting now an initiative at Plaza Eastway.

Mr. Jones said Rebecca, I'm sorry. Mayor. So, we try to allow people to get their presentations, so I'm breaking the rule myself, so I apologize. Mayor and Council, I think this is so important if you go back one more, Neighbors Building Neighborhoods, because a lot of times what we've talked about is, are there other opportunities if you're outside of a Corridor of Opportunity? Are there other opportunities if you're not in one of our 16 strategic investment areas? This creates, and I call it almost like a web, this opportunity for some of the other neighborhoods throughout the City that aren't a part of those areas, that there are opportunities to have an engagement at that level. I'm sorry.

Ms. Heffner said yes. I think it's a great point to make. These aren't areas where we're going to have a whole playbook, for example. There may be specific shorter-term actions where if we can respond quickly and put a more comprehensive approach together, we can really achieve those quick wins. We've seen that, and I will say specifically at Little Rock Apartments this one came from a public forum. We had a complaint that was raised in that environment and realized that we had the really great opportunity to better partner with INLIVIAN. We got our Neighborhood Engagement out there at Little Rock Apartments. That liaison was able to help them reform their resident association, ensure that CMPD could get out there, and also work really closely with our Youth Programs team. This is an apartment community with a lot of young people. So, we were able to find a partnership where the Alternatives to Violence team could actually have office space in the apartment community. They've been out there with Lowe's funding to do beautification. They did a Halloween event. So, it can really range from this very small area where an opportunity arises, and we can pull together the right resources very quickly to partner.

Another example would be Catherine Simmons. So, this is an area where we've been investing for a number of years where we've had a lot of vacant properties. We've partnered with DreamKey Partners and others to create new home ownership opportunities out there. We've worked with our Neighborhood Engagement folks to help form these new neighborhood associations. CMPD has been out there building community trust and rapport. Now we're moving into, with the expansion of the Housing Trust Fund, looking at other opportunities like with the Acquisition Rehab and Resale Program. So, where we have strategic opportunities to actually purchase properties and rehab and create new home ownership opportunities. So, it can look different in different places. That's the value of it, is that we're really able to work directly with residents and think about what is that they need. We talked about this a lot with the anti-displacement strategy. What's the right tool in the right place at the right time? So, Neighbors Building Neighborhoods is really thinking about working together to create safe neighborhoods, but bringing in the right partners and the right programs at the right time. With that, I'm going to turn the presentation over to Debbie to talk a little bit about truck parking and street lighting and how it all fits together.

Debbie Smith, C-DOT Director said thank you, Rebecca. Good evening, Mayor, City Council. Happy New Year. I'm Debbie Smith, Charlotte Department of Transportation. Happy to be here. I really want to continue on the theme set forth by Director Heffner. I want to share more on the work we're doing with education, enforcement and on these illegal parking issues. Just as a reminder, City Council, you approved in November 2023 increased fines for the illegal truck parking, blocking of bicycle lanes, and blocking of sidewalks. As those new fines were approved, both Code Enforcement, so on Rebecca's team, and C-DOT with our Park It group, we began issuing the warning citations. That's the yellow sign you see here. We really used that as an education opportunity to start with before we started enacting those increased fines. So, then shortly after that what we were finding was that people wanted more opportunity to let us know where the illegal parking was existing. So, we found the opportunity to add this to the CLT+ app. So, commercial vehicle citations make up about 80 percent of our illegal parking citations and blocking of the bike lanes make up about 20 percent or that. In 2024 we issued over 6,300 citations. So, the team really communicates in real time

so when we're out there and we're in the field, Rebecca's team is communicating with us in real time where there are maintenance issues and where we need quick resolution. So, that's a great partnership opportunity. We also found that businesses were very pleased with the work that we were doing and expressed their gratitude. Many of these commercial trucks were blocking some of their entrances to their businesses and they just thanked us for clearing the way.

So, in partnership with the North Carolina Department of Transportation we have been able to work with them and have them install "no parking" signs in four of our highest hot spot locations in Councilwoman Johnson's district. She's very aware of these locations, and I'm so pleased that we were able to get these going out there for her. This partnership allows for these hot spots to be signed, and then allows us to work together. This work speaks to the residents' safety concerns, navigating interstate ramps, and many of these were adjacent to residential communities. We also continue to hear from the truck drivers that they're really struggling with places and need for parking. We know that that's a nationwide issue, so we're working on a map of those locations that will be launching very soon on the CLT community hub. What that will do is allow parking providers the opportunity to register and update their locations on this site so that we have a one-stop resource for truck drivers to be able to find parking in the Charlotte area.

So, let's talk about street lighting. I get pretty excited whenever I get to talk about street lighting because it really significantly enhances safety in a number of ways. It improves visibility by deterring crime, promoting safer navigation for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists. So, we know lights enhance visibility, it helps drivers see pedestrians, cyclists, and obstacles more clearly. We know from the data that we can reduce crashes between 20 and 50 percent by adding street lighting. Lights provide that reassurance for pedestrians and cyclists. They provide that sense of security for people traveling at night, which increases the likelihood that more people will choose to walk or bike because they can do so at night. Lights help cameras do their job. So, we know adequate lighting enhances the effectiveness of traffic management cameras and surveillance cameras, making it easier to identify incidents. Lastly, lights lead to faster response times. Emergency services, police, fire, and medic can locate that incident much more quickly in the well-lit areas.

So, who lights our streets? So, this map shows you the blue lines are interstate streets, the North Carolina Department of Transportation, they are responsible for lighting the streets in that blue area. The red lines on the map represent State-maintained roadways, so think about streets like Sugar Creek, Albemarle Road, Providence Road, WT Harris, Billy Graham Parkway, Freedom Drive. Although those are State streets, the City is responsible for putting that street lighting out there and we work with Duke Energy to do that. The green lines show all of the City-maintained streets, and we are also responsible for lighting the streets on City streets. So, street lighting in Charlotte is done by commitment and collaboration. So, think about the community. You think about the Corridors of Opportunity. You think about CMPD, C-DOT, City Council, all of you, you're part of that connection. The street lighting map that I show here really shows the work that we've done on lighting our LED upgrades and City-initiated projects. So, we have nearly 70 miles completed and in progress and that's shown to you on this map by all of those green lines. We also work with our residents and when requested we add street lights on neighborhood streets. We receive hundreds of requests annually and we process those with Duke Energy. There's no upfront cost for that. It is we the City assume that lighting bill once those street lights are installed. The orange lines on this map show a project that we have in partnership on the Corridors of Opportunity to provide lighting on Equipment Drive, Reagan Drive, and Sugar Creek Road. We anticipate that to come online early this year.

So, this map also shows nearly 15 miles of new projects in purple. Thank you so much, Council, for the increased investment that you have in Vision Zero because that's where we do our street lighting from. CMPD also requests new or additional street lighting upgrades in areas where they have safety concerns. We've worked to install about 121 upgrades in eight locations based on their requests. So, I thought this was a really

informative picture just showing you how the difference looks between the older style lights that we call the High Pressure Sodium Vapor to the LED and just the difference that that makes. So, like I said, we work in partnership with Duke to change out those lights and they change out through their routine maintenance. We're working to continually prioritize locations Citywide.

So, I'll tell you just a little story. CMPD approached us at the beginning of last year talking about North Tryon Street specifically and they were very concerned about the lighting levels. They really were concerned that it was too dark in a lot of these locations. So, we did a quick inventory of all the street lighting and what we found was that we had plenty of lights. We prioritized changing those to LEDs and what a difference that made. So, Major Balamucki was bragging to me just before the holidays that he said he can't believe the brightness that it is today. So, we just want to continue to emphasize that those well-lit streets encourage outdoor activity, improve mobility, and safer events at night.

Last, here, I just want to tell you there's lots of ways to report street light outages. The fastest is always to contact Duke directly but you don't have to remember 1-800-POWERON. You call 311, the CLT mobile app, we take that anytime, whether it's on a City street or a State street. We will happily chase that down. I just want you to know that we're making and continuing that great progress to advance street lighting. It's the cross-department collaboration that really helps us make the difference. I appreciated just the positive comments that Rebecca had with the partnership and the Quality of Life team. It really is something that this group, we all knew our roles before, but this team coalesced around now we know the people to call when we have these situations arise. With that, I'll just end on the upcoming schedule that Manager Jones mentioned earlier. With that, Rebecca and I are happy to take questions.

Mayor Lyles said thank you so much for this presentation and the effectiveness and the things that are being done and how we're approaching it in a different way.

Councilmember Johnson said I want to say again, I said in an earlier meeting, but I want to give a shout-out to Jerry Green and his team with Code Enforcement. I used to work closely with Jane Taillon. Code Enforcement and just that team does a great job. Also, C-DOT, thank you so much, Debbie, to you and your team. You're right. Those were hot spots in that area, and I want to thank you for the responsiveness. I know we probably have an additional 100 signs, without exaggerating. Seriously, like on Mallard Creek and the entrances and the freeway ramps. So, thank you. That is a project that we started to work on and had solutions, I think, in February 2023. It's been a while. So, I want to thank you for all the work. I wanted to ask about the lighting. I know that there's eight miles of lighting on WT Harris that's in the hopper. Can you give me an update on that, please?

Ms. Heffner said absolutely. Yes, we were successful in receiving some additional grant money for those eight miles on WT Harris. We are in the design phase, wrapping up the design phase. This is our largest single street lighting project, eight miles along WT Harris, essentially from I-77 to I-85, representing a significant investment in street lighting along that segment. So, that is underway and hope to be rolling that out very shortly.

Ms. Johnson said thank you. You deserve a hand for that. You all deserve a hand. Thank you. Just thank you for the work that you all have done. There are some other areas that need some "no parking" signs. We'll talk about that offline. I did want to ask about truck parking because you're right, we know that 90 or 95 percent of the goods are transmitted via trucks. So, we do have to have a response. There needs to be a balanced approach. I know, Mr. Jones, we talked about a former weigh station on I-85. I've sent some information to you. Someone on your team, I think it was Alexis, did some research on where we were with that. So, I've sent that to someone. I know Senator Mohammed was included. So, I think there's been some research. If we can take a look at opening that up, I think it's important that we have a solution for the truckers while we're responding to our residents' need as well. It is a safety issue,

having those trucks on the side of the road and the entrance and exit ramps. That's all I have. I just really want to thank you all for the work that you've done and the Quality of Life team and Rebecca and your team, just all of you. Rodney Jamison. They're doing a great job in District Four. So, thank you, thank you.

Councilmember Molina said first of all, thank you guys for the work. I've been on a call with you, Rebecca, about one area in particular with regard to safe neighborhoods and some areas of specific emphasis that I'd like to focus on for 2025. I'm excited to see that there's kind of a road map that we can look at for the parts of East Charlotte that we've been meeting around. With that, adjacent to the Corridors of Opportunity program, I think it's important to mention that we have these details that are instructed by quantitative information that can be provided by CMPD that can instruct some of our outcomes without us having to come to the table. So, in other words, the idea around, for an example, Plaza, Milton Road, Eastway. Those areas have sufficient crime statistics where even if I didn't come forward, there would be something that would instruct an emphasis on those areas. So, I think from a proactive perspective when we think about what a safe neighborhood is, I think a lot of that detail comes specifically to us from our partners in CMPD who serve and protect us and keep our neighborhoods safe. So, that's just the beginning of where my mind starts when it comes to safe neighborhoods. I also personally am of the belief, for good or for bad, that a community is only the sum of its parts. That's an impediment and that's where people expect us to step in. It is the fact that we have communities where the resources just aren't available because the human beings that live there, they don't earn enough. There's not enough education. There's already a lack of access. There's a lack of details that can provide that. Even with those resources, you could put it right there and if the person don't know what to do with it, then it's still in vain. So, I personally believe that we're a vehicle of access and not outcome. That's just a personal detail. Outside of that, I'm a little jealous of my colleague here because she got all this lighting, and we need to talk about that, maybe offline. We do understand, we've talked about this, you know the places that I'm very interested in as far as lighting is concerned. I am absolutely in agreement with you that the LED lighting deters some of the issues that we have. Brighter light is just, it's one of the small things that we can implement to create a better atmosphere for safety in a community. So, I would love to borrow some of my colleague's energy right here and let's talk about East Charlotte, because I've got a list for you.

Councilmember Mitchell said Rebecca and Debbie, thank you so much for a great presentation. Thank you for taking these tough issues and quickly providing solutions to us. So, look forward to the upcoming schedule. Job well done.

Mayor Lyles said Ms. Ajmera, welcome back.

Councilmember Ajmera said thank you, Madam Mayor. I agree with what my colleagues have already said about Quality of Life Approach. I'm very proud of the work that Council had done last year in terms of the budget where we increased our investment in Vision Zero, significantly. We are seeing the results of it now. I know we have advocated for street lights on WT Harris from Old Concord Road to Plaza and I remember it was five years ago. It was number three on the list. I don't know where it stands now, but I would certainly like to elevate that because we do not have sidewalks on that major road where it connects to light rail, public transportation, no street lighting. It certainly creates a very unsafe environment, not just for drivers but for pedestrians, those who ride bikes. We really need to address that. Hopefully, it's probably at the top now because it's been six years since I made that request. When we look at just overall public safety framework, it's great to see the progress that's been made on street lighting, on illegal truck parking. I do see improvement off of WT Harris specifically where I do not see large trucks, semi-trucks, being parked. I think that's great. We know we can never be truly a great city unless our residents feel safe across the board. That's not something that falls in one department. It's not just CMPD. I think it's an issue that's broader. I would like to see more update on that. I do see that's coming up, Violence is a Public Health Crisis. I think that needs to be elevated because regardless of one's zip code, people really need to feel safe across the board. We have seen alarming rise in homicides and that is concerning. It is concerning. I read a story in one of the media

reporting where it said a woman did not feel safe standing by the window because she was afraid that stray bullet would hit her. That is concerning. So, I look forward to having more deeper dive discussion about homicides. How do we measure our success? Not just in terms of numbers but overall impact that we are making.

Also, I would like to see some sort of performance metrics. Mr. Manager, I know you are big on performance metrics. As we navigate this very challenging landscape, it's vital that we look at our effectiveness. How can we measure our success moving forward on overall impact of our community's safety? Just also look at more wholistically what are the things that are working currently in terms of Quality of Life Approach? What are the things that are not working? How can we do better? Where do we need to pivot from traditional approach to embrace new strategies where other cities, like Boston, so many other cities, where they have seen reduction in their crime, violent crime? So, I look forward to getting more update on that. I appreciate the work that team has done on other areas. Also, I would like to thank CMPD on addressing street takeovers. I know that's an issue that we have seen not just in one district or other district, we are seeing that across the City where at 2:00 a.m. and 3:00 a.m. select number of residents are taking over our streets and creating unsafe environment. So, I certainly appreciate the work that CMPD has done in terms of Quality of Life. What can we do more of? That's all I have. Thank you.

Councilmember Brown said Councilmember Ajmera, I'll follow back on you with the street takeovers. I had concerns with that in Steele Creek and I have seen that evaporate. So, I would like to applaud them. That was a big concern of mine coming out of Longhorn Steak House on NC-160 and they just go crazy out there. So, I'm so happy to see that. I want to go back to Rebecca. Please, if you don't mind. This is great for me when you say it's going to take more of neighborhood engagement. It really is. That is the scope of the work that creates a better neighborhood for all when you involve the people that are actually in the neighborhood. Getting them involved, bringing them to the table, seeing exactly what their mindset is, and what they would like to see for themselves is a way that you can resolve and make neighborhoods better and safer for all. Not just some people, but everybody. That's including everybody. So, this is great work. I would like to say I love to see the printout, the work that we're doing to create the neighborhoods, but a lot of times, and more often than not, where we fail at is that we leave out the people that should be at the table when we're creating a design for their life, how to move them forward, and we don't create an opportunity for them to come, so I really don't have a whole lot to say. My colleagues touched bases on what it looks like to have safe neighborhoods with the lighting and the parking, even on 45 where I live at off NC-160. I've seen the signs. I see the deer, too, but the signs are definitely out there. It's great to see the lighting increase. It makes it more visible and makes it more safe. Again, I can't express enough, when we talk about creating a neighborhood and engaging, let's not forget to engage the people that we're creating the neighborhood for. Thank you so much. That's all I have.

Councilmember Mayfield said happy New Year, again. Thank you for the presentation. I am also going to say thank you for, I had to zoom in on the iPad to look at the map, and I'm really happy about the new lighting that's in design that's all along Brookshire as we continue to approve a lot of new developments. We've had some challenges with the lighting, and I appreciate all the work and recognizing the importance of having good lighting. I would say, because I think she's probably still working and still listening for my staff liaison that I share with Councilmember Graham. Latoya, we're going to need to go ahead and schedule for us to get on Rebecca's calendar so we can work on some lighting in other areas along with my colleagues. Go ahead and throw that request out there. I appreciate also this map and you highlighting to let it be known. Because some people don't necessarily realize what is happening on a daily basis. They just hear the headline items that Council are trying to deal with and the fact that you all are also staying consistent, you're showing that we actually can walk and chew gum and every now and then have a conversation and/or thought simultaneously. So, this is amazing work. Really just wanted to say thank you for recognizing, for listening. Any way that Council can be more proactive when you're having a community engagement, also when you're reaching out to our community

liaisons as Councilmember Brown mentioned, let us know so that we can also share it through our own social media and in community to let Next Door, who'd probably love to get some good news instead of a lot of things that show up on there. So, it would be helpful to give us the opportunity to be able to support you all. Thank you, Madam Mayor.

Mayor Lyles said Ms. Mayfield makes me think about the town hall meetings and how so often we have these meetings but maybe this would be the time that the Council member especially can come out and talk with the staff. I think, it's just a thought, but I think the town hall meetings as we go into the next year, those could be important ways to address both our planning and design as well as the safety. So, let's keep that at our forefront.

Councilmember Driggs said I appreciate all the work that's being done. I think we need to keep sight of the fact that by far the biggest quality of life issue is a person's sense of physical safety. So, we need to maintain that emphasis. I guess I'll put it that way because I do appreciate what else is being done here. I'll mention the fact that on exit 59 off I-485 reflective signs were put up telling the trucks not to park. It's very effective. It doesn't look like it cost a lot of money. That has alleviated a big nuisance there. There are a couple of other places we might want to talk about. On the lighting question, Elm Lane. I don't know if Elm Lane is on your radar. It's been put on my radar over and over again by residents in that area, so if there's something I can do to get attention to Elm Lane and lighting. It's kind of a winding road. It has no shoulder. A portion of it at least is going to be developed by this Gillespie rezoning we did last year, so that might be an opportunity. It would be a big help if we could get an improvement there. Thank you.

Councilmember Graham said I, too, want to thank the staff for the tremendous work that you're doing on this. The Quality of Life Approach is really, really important and necessary because again, like I said earlier, the data is one thing but residents want to know what are you doing to help resolve issues in our community. So, these are tangible steps, not sexy steps. Hopefully, it'll get on the news right. Providing lighting is really, really essential and important for the sense of safety. If you don't feel safe, you're not safe. That's the core principle of what I believe. So, lighting helps. Alleviating the commercial parking illegally, and it is still an issue, I think me and Ms. Johnson would agree with that. A lot of progress has been made but it's like Whack-a-Mole, they pop up somewhere else. So, we have to continue to be vigilant in terms of the enforcement. That's the issue I want to lead the Council and staff and the Manager. It won't make anybody popular around this table, but I think as it relates to crime in our community, we really have to begin to be assertive in enforcing the laws that are currently on the book and in some cases be very aggressive in terms of protecting the rights of individuals, but at the same time protecting the rights of individuals who live on these corridors and these neighborhoods and these communities. It's a fine balance. It's a delicate tap dance. I think that's where we are in terms of trying to provide the type of impact that was mentioned earlier in terms of the strategies that we're putting in place to ensure that people not only feel safe but they are safe. One question I'll ask to you. You talked about a collaboration of City departments and all working together. I clearly understand what that means, but here I go again, have you guys talked to the other government in the building about the park and the Park Rangers, like the park in Catherine Simmons? You go there and people are afraid to go in the park. CMPD, it's not their core responsibility to monitor the parks, it's the Park Rangers' responsibilities. Part of that is the recreational centers. There aren't City agencies or departments but they're very critical to these Corridors of Opportunity community neighborhoods that the recreation centers are open, that they may be reprogrammed. The last one is the wrap-around services. So, walking down the street and getting hit in the head with a brick tends to be a mental health issue with somebody. That happened recently, last week, on Central Avenue. So, what's the collaboration with the County on some of these Quality of Life issues that we don't have direct authority over? Is there any collaboration, intercity council work groups that you guys are talking to one another?

Mr. Jones said so, Rebecca, would you mind if I jump in.

Ms. Heffner said please do.

Mr. Jones said so, Councilmember Graham, a great question. There is a level of collaboration. Maybe not as wide as we would want, but I will tell you that Shawn Heath and Anthony Trotman have been working together over the course of the last year or so with some of these issues around the unhoused. Some of that trickles into other things around public safety. There's always room for more collaboration. Again, I'll start off with where we were pre-pandemic, Violence is a Public Health Crisis, a lot of collaboration there. A lot of it occurs in the building and maybe it doesn't bubble all the way up to me or to this table, but it's not as if we're two governments that aren't talking with each other.

Mr. Graham said I think that's really critical and really important not only for us to understand that it's happening but for the community to be able to see it, feel it, and touch it, to know that it's happening. So, I think that's really important. Especially as we move forward, we started this year the same way we ended last year, or 2023, shooting in Uptown Charlotte. Last week three individuals died on our streets, murdered, relationship type of stuff. So, all of it dealing with substance abuse, mental illness, the inability to conflict resolute. So, I think, Mr. Manager, the more we can see it and be able to articulate it to our constituents that this collaboration is happening, that we can really tell people what wrap-around service means and again the impact of it, I think it will be a step in the right direction again to try and resolve or we'll never be able to resolve the perception issue that we're dealing with. I think that's a step in the right direction. One last thing then I'll be quiet. I just hope that throughout this year that we have stamina on this public safety issue. That we don't get tired talking about it and evaluating it, and looking at data, and talking to CMPD and talking to our neighbors in Mecklenburg County, and that we're not afraid to really begin to talk about enforcement on a wide variety of issues. I think that's what people are asking for in every neighborhood meeting I go to, when they see me in the bank, when they see me in the grocery store, what you guys are doing, notwithstanding the data that's been presented to Council, but I think the last three presentations given the Manager has been a very big step in the right direction.

Councilmember Watlington said much of what I want to discuss has already been brought to the table, which is fantastic because I think there's a lot of movement and a lot of unity around the dais. The thing that I would lean on is building upon what Councilmember Graham just mentioned in regards to the County is also the schools and the faith community. I've said this before during this discussion and it's the reason why this Neighbors Building Neighborhoods piece is particularly important to me. It's because it gets to the individual. So, when we talk about our homicides, often times we hear from our law enforcement that these are things, notwithstanding an innocent bystander, but these are things that are very personal and kind of inter-relational. So, when we start to talk about what we can do from a system standpoint, we're doing the right things. I think there's another component of how do we reach the individual and that does oftentimes fall on the County side. So, I'd love to see some additional intersectionality between who it is that we are seeing that is in need of particular services and then who also then may be coming out of our justice system that needs support in that space as well and tying that to the schools because we know that all of these people exist in the same neighborhoods and we want to make sure that the tax dollars that we're raising are being used in a wholistic manner. So, I think we've got an opportunity to even go further to do a very people-centered approach. Thanks so much.

Mayor Lyles said all right. I want to say on behalf of all of us that have talked around this topic is that I think it's been a real valuable conversation to believe that we are approaching something in a way where we're talking about our neighborhoods and not just a singular event or something that's happening to people. We're trying to figure out how to make it better for everyone. The only thing that I would really like to add, and I think Ms. Watlington and Mr. Graham hit it pretty well, there are a lot of opportunities to do more as a unified government. It's really tough to make some of those decisions because not everybody is always online for the same thing at the same time. So, I wonder as we are going through this kind of process if there's a way to prioritize where

we want to go working with the County? Where is that area that they feel just as valued as we feel, as CMPD being valued, and how do we do this? I say that because I think several of us in this room have an affiliation with a religious group and it's right across the street from Catherine Simmons. I think it's elderly housing that we're trying to keep people in and Catherine Simmons has been one of our most difficult changes that we have to have. There are probably many of those around the City that we don't have all the notice of. I think sometimes if we can figure out where the most difficult issues are and bring people in and they help solve it, I think that we'd be better off in the long-term. So, I just want to say thank you for the discussion and what's happening.

Mr. Jones said thank you, Mayor and members of Council. Then after this I'll turn it back over to you, Mayor, for the Committee report outs. This may be the easiest of the discussions that we're going to have around this topic. I think it only gets more difficult after this. What I will tell you is a lot will happen on February 10, 2025, in terms of the Violence is a Public Health Crisis because that is a framework that both the City and the County adopted or received, whatever the right word is, and there has been a lot of work around that. There's always the opportunity for more. What I would like to do is just lock back in today just for a second and think about what we're trying to do around the built environment and the lighting and things of that nature. What I don't want you to lose sight of is the bond that just passed, the \$400 million bond, we talk a lot about \$100 million associated with Affordable Housing, I think I'm right with this number, but we don't talk about the \$230 million that's related to transportation. So, that includes lighting, that includes sidewalks, that includes the strategic investment areas where we're trying to do something that's never been done before in the City where we can have multiple projects. Remember there's a list of 2,004, not the year, but 2,004 projects that are from roads to sidewalks to lighting, you name it. So, we're going to be able to test that a little bit and touch it a lot during the retreat. Maybe what's more important, there's \$2 million in this budget to deal with innovation around infrastructure. So, these are the conversations we'll have simultaneously with what's going on with the safety. Last thing I'll say is let's not forget the one cent sales tax. What it does is 40 percent of that is for rail, 20 percent is for bus, but 40 percent is for transportation that comes directly back to the jurisdictions and our cut on the first year is about \$102 million. So, think about \$102 million that can help support these strategic investment areas or the lighting or the sidewalks or things of that nature. So, again, this is just one piece of this three-month journey. Let's not forget about the things that seem to excite you tonight, a funding source is within the one cent sales tax.

Mayor Lyles said all right. Thank you. I'm really glad that you bring that forward, and I think that tells us our retreat is going to be really a place to think about this and bring your best efforts to that program and what we can do and make possible.

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ITEM NO. 2: COUNCIL COMMITTEE DISCUSSIONS

Mayor Lyles said all right Mr. Driggs, anything important coming out of Committee?

Councilmember Driggs said so, we had two topics today, and I'm not going to recite everything we were told, but there were a couple of comments I'd like to make about them. For one, we had a briefing on the Community Area Planning process, which as you know is kind of a next step in our whole UDO (Unified Development Ordinance). The goal of the staff is to have drafts of these area plans out to us in March 2025. What I want to stress to everybody here, particularly the district reps, is get started early. Look at this thing. Don't then say, "Oh, my God, nobody asked me" or whatever. The way I'm looking at it is the work that the staff is doing is quite technical in nature and there's a lot of process. It's good work, but in essence, if you think about the way the engineers design a car and all of the thought that goes into the car, and then you think about the consumer of the car. They sit down behind the wheel, and they drive it and they say, "Hey, this feels nice." So, I think we need to be ready to start interacting with the consumers, with the users of this plan. In my mind what that means is think about in practice, what am I going to see? I'm not interested in your outreach and this and that.

What am I going to see? How's it going to affect me? So, I would just encourage all of us, particularly the district people, to think about our districts, think about our knowledge of what matters to the people in our districts, and make sure that's reflected as these plans are developed. They will be offered with a lot of scope for continuing conversation and input, so we don't need to assume that when they're handed to us it's like a done deal. The earlier we get started in making sure that they go in a direction that's suitable for each district, I think the better.

The second topic we talked about was the UDO, but in particular, Senate Bill 382. Basically, the legislature passed a bill, and it was a big, kind of omnibus bill, under the general heading of Disaster Relief, but it had all kinds of other provisions in it. One of them that really got our attention and about which we got a briefing today was a couple of provisions related to our land use regulation. What they did in particular was they said you may not down zone, as they call it, without the consent of the owner of a property. So, it means that you can't go to a lower density use of a certain property unless the owner consents. Now that's probably not a problem for us because in our rezoning usually the owner is there asking us to do it. However, what that also includes, though, not removing what is now a permitted use. So, if you have a list of permitted uses today, you can't take them out. That gets trickier in terms of who's consent you need to do that. If we have text amendments, as we already had, you cannot make changes to your rules that result in certain properties becoming nonconforming. So, in simple terms, that's what it is. The staff is working on what it means. They're looking at the text amendment that we have already discussed that's pending. This goes back 180 days, so the question is is there anything that occurred in that time that we should be aware of? What I will say for now is we have concerns about this. I've had indications already, we've had indications already, that there is scope for discussion of it. I believe the legislators will entertain recommendations for changes and so on. So, the staff is going to report to us in greater detail about which particular places are impacted. I would encourage us at this point to avoid statements about the suitability of State intervention in these manners or issues like that. We want to stay on good constructive terms with the legislature in the pursuit of other goals that we have. I don't think the last word is in yet on 382. So, I'll just leave it at that. If you have questions than by all means talk to Ms. Craig or Mr. Pettine. Thank you.

Councilmember Graham said we had a really, really good meeting to kick off the year and I want to thank Councilmember Mitchell, Bokhari, Driggs, and Molina for their input. We had two agenda items. One that I really feel really, really good about, which is an update on our annual report on the Corridors of Opportunity. We're doing some amazing work throughout the City on the Corridor. It goes back to a conversation I had with the City Manager back in 2019, December 2020, about better ways to coordinate the services that we are providing to the Corridors. I was selfish. I was talking about Beatties Ford Road. We were able to turn a district issue into a City priority. Not only were we focusing on Beatties Ford Road but I-85 and Sugar Creek, North Tryon, and Graham Street, Freedom and Wilkinson Boulevard, other Corridors throughout the City. We made a huge, significant impact. These corridors are not changing; they have changed. The City over the last four years has provided resources in terms of putting our money where our mouth is to make sure that residents in those corridors are a part of the change and not victims of it. Over \$100 million of investment over the last four years, which is really, really significant. The City also has a goal in place to secure \$100 million of federal funding. I'm not sure if you heard, Mr. Manager, but today we were awarded \$1.2 million from the United States Department of Transportation for the Rozzelles Ferry Mobility Bike Path Early Design for 5.25 miles of the Corridor. So, we're continuing to march forward in terms of working with our federal partners to reach that \$100 million. Coordination of services with Code Enforcement, Housing, CMPD, all kind of working together to deliver the services, economic development, small business utilization, which is really, really powerful. The opportunity hubs. Now we have opportunity hubs in each and every Corridor where individuals can walk in and get services. These Corridors and what they offer are uniquely different based on the Corridor in question. So, it is so impactful now that folks can really work with their neighborhood association and business association, having someone on the Corridor actually doing the work and working hand in glove with the City which is really impactful.

The public/private partnership that we have. So, not only is the City trying to invest their \$100 million, getting \$100 million from the feds, but the private community, Lowe's in particular, United Way and other organizations, are investing in these Corridors. Wells Fargo, Fifth Third Bank and others have a tremendous. The Knight Foundation, the work that they're doing on Beatties Ford Road. It is tremendous in terms of what we're doing along the way. The active business associations. There were few active business associations five years ago in any of these Corridors. Now we had a presentation today about what's happening on Sugar Creek. I know Beatties Ford Road is actively working, Freedom Drive is actively working. These are businesses banding together trying to create a better outcome for their businesses and the neighborhoods around them. So, it's really, really, really good and I was just really, really pleased. I want to thank the staff. That's the other thing. It's just not like there's one or two or three people working on these Corridors. The City and the management team have devoted numerous individuals working on all these Corridors throughout the City. I just want to thank them for their leadership and their participation in doing that with us. So, all in all, I think we had a great presentation about the work that we're doing on the Corridors. Still a lot more work to be done for sure. Something that we didn't touch on, which was crime and public safety on these Corridors. That may be a part of the harder conversation we have next month with the Manager because it costs enforcement. We're to that point now where we really have to look at ourselves and ask some tough questions to our friends and our neighbors and protect the investment that the private community is making, private businesses are making in these quarters, as well as the City to protect the investment. We can't have someone throwing a brick into the Chase Bank window. They've already replaced that window four times already. So, we have to ask some tough questions. I'm willing to do that with the Manager as we talk about crime next month. So, that portion of the meeting was extremely, extremely good conversation.

Second topic is really hard. That topic was the office vacancy throughout the City, not just in Uptown Charlotte. University City, Ballantyne, Uptown Charlotte, South End. There are vacant buildings, and this is just not a Charlotte thing, it's a national thing that we're dealing with as a result of COVID-19, and major cities throughout the country are dealing with. The goal was really what's our responsibility in all of that. I think Mr. Bokhari and Mr. Driggs, Mr. Mitchell, all really kind of summed it up. We want to focus on public safety with these empty buildings. We want to identify the new tools that we can help with these businesses. We want to focus on recruitment and retention and steering folks who are interested in our City to these buildings with the emphasis towards data as Mr. Bokhari said. We really want to identify what our role is. It's all of our problem, the City, the County, landlords. Everyone has to be involved in helping us solve this problem and there has to be a framework that we all agree upon. So, it's a huge problem. It's a marathon issue. It's not a microwave solution. I think Mr. Bokhari was on his game today. He framed it really well – recruitment, retention, and growth. I took notes. I think he's correct. So, it is an issue that is going to be with this Council and the next Council for sure because it is a humongous issue that we have to deal with collectively as a community. We want to be able to see what they're doing nationally in other cities our size, dealing with this problem. Certainly, we want to collaborate locally with other stakeholders who are also trying to address the issue. So, two great agenda items. Very good input from Committee members. I'll pause and allow any members to add anything if I missed something.

Councilmember Ajmera said great to hear an update on Corridors of Opportunity and collaboration with our partners. I know that Mayor's Racial Equity Initiative had brought in key investments into the Corridors of Opportunity. Any update from that?

Mayor Lyles said there is actually a study being undertaken now that they are working through the Foundation for the Carolinas. They have that accountability for providing a where are we, coming up. My understanding is that they have hired someone to do that.

Ms. Ajmera said so, I know a couple of years ago when it was first launched, there was specific funding allocated to Corridors. So, are we seeing that recurring?

Mayor Lyles said those are still the same. The amount of money that was allocated at the beginning is still consistent with what they are. So, they haven't been transferred around or done anything differently. There have been a few people that have made additional contributions, but they had a choice of which bucket to put it in on their own.

Ms. Ajmera said so, those funds that were originally contributed to Corridors of Opportunity, is that part of our overall span? Or that's separate than what's being?

Mayor Lyles said I want to make sure that I don't over speak.

Marcus Jones, City Manager said yes. So, we can get you a breakdown of that, Councilmember Ajmera. I think where you're headed is there were some funds set aside specifically for the Corridors of Opportunity. For instance, the hotel purchase that was made by the City. There was a contribution from the Mayor's Racial Equity Initiative with that. I call it the C3 fund, but I know it's a different name to it than that. There are going to be some businesses that happen to be minority businesses in the Corridors that will benefit from that while it's not specific for those different businesses. As the Mayor said, within the Foundation for the Carolinas, I believe that's correct that there's an annual report, and it comes out for the four streams that were related to the Mayor's Racial Equity Initiative.

Mayor Lyles said okay. Ms. Ajmera. As you say. BGIR (Budget Governance and Intergovernmental Relations) Committee meeting.

Ms. Ajmera said yes, I'm Dimple Ajmera, serving as the Committee Chair for the Budget Governance and Intergovernmental Relations Committee. First, let me just introduce our Committee members, starting with Councilmember Bokhari, serving as Vice Chair, Committee members Councilmember Brown, Mayfield, and Mitchell. So, today's topic was on reviewing the City's current procurement and CBI (Charlotte Business INClusion) policies that is used for our capital project contracting. I know this is a topic that Councilmember Mitchell and Mayfield are very passionate about. They wanted us to have singular focus on the topic. So, this was the only item that was on our agenda today. So, staff, Mr. Coker and Ms. Anderson and their team have done so much work on this. They have created this MWSBE (Minority, Women, Small Business Enterprise) master utilization plan that focuses on early engagement, project development, targeted outreach, and removing barriers. This is really a comprehensive plan that's in place.

So, Mr. Coker and his team, CBI, they launched a pilot program in the summer of 2024, and they targeted MWSBEs for 10 capital projects. With that, seven of those projects have been awarded to MWSBE firms, so I think that's tremendous. That shows the early success of this pilot. So, with that, it will be coming to the Council now that we have seen success with this pilot. Staff are actively finalizing some details and input that was provided by our Committee based on just the lessons learned and how can we scale it at a much larger scale because we are looking at it across all City departments. I mean, we are talking about millions and millions of dollars. So, more to come on that. If you have any specific input on capital project contracting around procurement and CBI, please reach out to Mr. Coker. Mr. Heath has been doing an amazing job trying to coordinate. They are also working on compiling a Q&A guide. I know there are so many questions that are being asked. I know Councilmember Johnson had asked questions about MWSBE goals and contracting. So, you will see that guide probably end of January 2025 or beginning of February 2025 because this requires just some pre-reading in order to understand. It's a fairly complex process. So, you'll see more on that. I'm pretty pleased to see the Committee's input throughout this process. So, Committee members, feel free to chime in if I missed anything.

Councilmember Mitchell said great job, Madam Chair. I just want to add a special thank you to Shawn Heath and for Monica and Allen, who have really been committed to make sure that we're moving in the right direction. We took December 2024 off but they didn't. They engaged with Councilmember Mayfield and I on several meetings. So, I just want to say thank you to staff, for your commitment to make sure we're moving in the right direction.

Mayor Lyles said thank you. All right. Any other comments on that one? So, our next one is Housing and Safety.

Councilmember Watlington said indeed, we did have a lot, which is fine with us because I will say that our Committee is really made up of folks that are passionate about the work. My Vice Chair, Councilmember Mayfield, Councilmember Brown, Councilmember Johnson, Councilmember Ajmera. We left 2024 we felt like with a lot of momentum with some of the work that we did and today I think we set the stage for some meaty work along with ACM (Assistant City Manager) Heath, Director Heffner, and our incredible Housing and Neighborhood Services staff as it relates to our minimum housing code. As you all know, we are deep in the midst of trying to understand what we can do to ensure safe housing for residents of lodging establishments that may not be single-family homes. So, that's what we started today. We reviewed a little bit of the City's minimum housing code and what some of the common violations are. We understood a little bit more about the legal framework and what statutes govern our work and where our authority lies. We also covered our path forward as it relates to stakeholder engagement, benchmarking with other municipalities and other organizations. Then we finished with a discussion amongst the Committee members to understand where people's areas of focus are, many of which are really focused around how do we get more proactive? How do we make sure that the work that we're doing that comes at a cost to the City ends up being recouped from these property owners who are violating what we would consider how Councilmember Mayfield mentioned, "Would you let your momma stay there?" If not, we need to make sure that our code reflects our standard as a City.

Some of the things that we'd like to explore in particular are how we can increase resources to enable us to investigate more of the violations. We know that many go uninvestigated simply because we have to prioritize with the amount of resources we have. We also looked at how do we strengthen our tools like nuisance abatement. How do we ensure that our civil penalties actually have some teeth to it? How do we make sure that if the City is having to make an investment in a property that just like when property owners come and ask for voluntary participation from the City that there is some kind of tether, some kind of stake in the game, if you will, that the City is able to have. So, we want to explore that. Thank you to [inaudible] for supporting us on the legal standpoint because I think many of the things that we would like to do is going to require work and collaboration with the General Assembly, so to Mr. Driggs' earlier point, we want to make sure that as we're having these conversations as the long session gets under way that we're fostering that kind of environment, because we have plenty of priorities of which this is one. So, as we look forward to the next couple of months, we're going to be doing continuous stakeholder engagement. I believe Councilmember Brown brought up a couple of organizations in the community that we want to make sure that we're walking with the residents on. We'll do our bit to walk in it and we'll come back. So, we'll take any suggestions that you may have. We're always looking, I say this not just for those around the dais but those that may be watching, we're looking to innovate. So, absolutely if you are privy to some things that are happening around this country, around this state, we would love to hear what your approach is. So, with that, I'll open it up to my Committee members if they want to add anything.

Mayor Lyles said first, I want to say thank you for all of the work that you've done to make it possible for us to get through those terribly difficult hotels and to get people where they are. It is a true testament to this City's and your particular confidence that we're going to do this kind of work and we're going to get it right. What I heard out of all of the things that you said is there's going to be a process that will make it work. The only thing that I would suggest is that I know sometimes I think that Ms. Molina calls me OG, so I'm going to go for that one tonight. I'm going to go with it. I think what you're doing is you're going to put together a process that will monitor places that we can identify as getting on that slippery slope. That slippery slope will be the ability for us to look at code issues and repairs. We're not trying to put people out of business. We're trying to just make sure that people have a safe place to live. So, I really think that you

captured exactly what needs to go. Of course, with the three of you, I can't imagine anything less. So, thank you very much.

Ms. Watlington said one thing that I do want to add just as a nod to the Economic Development Committee is that we do acknowledge that in addition to housing we want to help people get to the next level economic mobility wise. So, we want to make sure that as we're having this conversation, we're connecting the dots to what our workforce development programs are and how do we really reach in and help residents move the needle in their own lives. So, just wanted to make sure that was connected.

Mayor Lyles said yes, we're trying to move up.

Councilmember Johnson said as a member of the team, the wonderful five of us, I'm just happy to be a part of the this team. I can remember Dr. Blanch Penn talking about Lake Arbor, six years ago, so it's nice to be addressing this issue finally. I wanted to know, Councilmember Graham brought up a great point about the safety. This is an opportunity to really look at this from a broad perspective. I know we looked at the housing, the minimum housing code, but we also need to look at the ordinances that help us with nuisance projects. So, I didn't know if that was an opportunity to widen the scope, because we are the safe neighborhood, housing and safety and community Committee, so I didn't know if we could broaden that and really take a look, because when we address those nuisance properties, it helps with the safety as well. So, I think that's just an opportunity for us to broaden the scope or take a look at that.

Mayor Lyles said I think that this issue on the nuisance property is a lot more difficult because you end up taking people's property from them and that's kind of what Mr. Driggs was saying we may not want to get out there in the front like that, but we know that that's the problem. We need to figure out something to do, but right now I think, when we're starting to look at how we are working with the State and how we can do this, maybe there'd be some way that we can incorporate that idea. I see Mr. Graham saying a way that he thinks it might happen. It's okay. It's already under determine applicable ordinances, changes, and/or policy recommendations as needed. So, you got it. It's already in the referral.

Mr. Graham said that goes with, Madam Mayor, what I said earlier about the enforcement. We're not going to change Catherine Simmons by doing what we've done for the last 20 years. It just won't happen. So, there has to be strong enforcement and even if it means we have to relieve people of their property because they haven't been good citizens. I know that's a long time, Mr. Attorney, to do something like that but the journey of a thousand miles starts with the first step. We shouldn't be afraid to take that first step.

Ms. Johnson said we agree, if it's for the safety of our residents. Can you repeat what you said as far as the referral?

Mr. Jones said within the referral, there's the Committee charge, review the City's minimum housing code, review existing enforcement tools and the applicable legal framework. Review enforcement tools used by other large North Carolina cities, and determine if any applicable ordinance changes and/or policy recommendations are needed.

Ms. Johnson said okay, so that's good to know. Okay.

Councilmember Brown said Housing and Safety Committee today was just amazing. The work from staff, the presentation today, and just the engagement to be able to move forward. I just want to go on record to say it's not easy and I did acknowledge how the City stepped up in a major way. People on the outside looking in don't get to see that. They don't know what's going on. So, we have to open up our vocals. I don't have a problem doing that, letting them know that the City stepped up in a major way with the lights, the water, not doing business hours. It was closed. There were phone calls made behind the scene, executive level management team got the water back on, got it

running. The end goal is though, to make sure that it doesn't happen again and that it's not a reflection of us. It's not, but it is because the people look at us as the Council, the leadership for the City, and they're expecting more. Then with all of the rumors and the rhetoric and the media don't help. So, we have to do what we're doing, put this framework out here, write this policy, make it work, pay it forward for those that are going to benefit from it.

I don't want us to ever forget about the people that are affected, to somehow create their voices in a residents' council forum, something where they can represent themselves because there's a lot of intelligent and smart people. They go to work every day. Some of them may not want to be there but that's their home. Although we might go and cringe at those conditions, those conditions were the conditions that they tolerated to call their home in that moment, in that season or whatever they were going through. So, I like where we're going. I think that if we stay on this path, I know if we stay on this path and put our best foot forward and implement and show action. I know we said something about maybe enforcement, but just implementation and moving forward with progression and showing people that we're going to take some type of action and then put that action into play, we can restore what we have in this Council because there's a lot of great people that sit around this dais.

Mr. Jones said I appreciate what you said, Councilmember Brown. It really helps us as administration when these Committees are working on policy so you can address those. We're very happy about the referrals that are in the Committees because we really think they can help move the needle.

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ITEM NO. 3: CLOSED SESSION (AS NECESSARY)

No closed session occurred.

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ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Councilmember Mayfield, seconded by Councilmember Mitchell, and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting.
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The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.



Ariel Smith, Lead Clerk

Length of Meeting: 1 Hour, 33 Minutes
Minutes Completed: March 11, 2025