

The City Council of the City of Charlotte, North Carolina convened for Council Committee Discussions on Monday, April 7, 2025, at 6:06 p.m. in Room 267 of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Government Center with Mayor Vi Lyles presiding. Council members present were Dimple Ajmera, Danté Anderson, Tariq Bokhari, Tiawana Brown, Ed Driggs, Malcolm Graham, Renee Johnson, Lawana Mayfield, Marjorie Molina, and Victoria Watlington.

ABSENT: Councilmember James Mitchell

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Mayor Lyles said okay, welcome everyone. This is the meeting of the Charlotte City Council. We're glad to have everyone participating, and those of you that are watching us online, thank you very much for taking an interest in what we're doing and how we can get better things in our community. I just want to start with introductions.

This is the meeting that we have as we dive into deeper problems and situations that we believe are important to the community. All of the Council members participate in what I would call the smaller groups where we would have committee forums, and discussions, and then this point that we come in and learn what everyone else has spoken about and what we're moving forward to do. So, today, I know that we have a number of people that are here that want to have presentations later on, but why don't we go ahead and start with some easier ones. How about mobility, Mr. Driggs, one of those easy ones.

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ITEM NO. 1: COUNCIL COMMITTEE DISCUSSIONS

Councilmember Driggs said okay. So, we had two topics today, and the big event is everybody got these. So, the Community Area Plan drafts are out. In Committee today, we heard some explanations about how this works in practice. It was part two of staff presentations. I think people are having individual meetings as well. So, I would just emphasize, you must read this. We have to know, as members of Council, what's in here. We're trying to inform the public. We're trying to get them onboard, but they will not read this book. People in the general public will read this book if it lands on their doorstep, for the most part. They're depending on us. So, I just encourage you to look at it, understand it. There were a lot of issues discussed about how it becomes effective, the process through which we roll these considerations into our land use decisions, but it's going to come back. You're going to be hearing about it. So, just encourage you to look at that.

The other thing that we heard about today was the Strategic Energy Action Plan, and this is a draft as well that has come out, an update to our plan. A lot of good things in here, big emphasis on greenhouse gases. I think we need also to pay attention to water and waste and trees, but this is a good plan, and we should all, again, be able to explain it to anybody that wants to know what Charlotte is doing about environment. So, I just recommend these reports, and Madam Mayor, that's all I have to say.

Mayor Lyles said alright. Are there any questions?

Councilmember Johnson said not a question, just want to add that I mentioned during the committee meeting that we want to be very intentional, Mr. Jones, about ensuring that we get community feedback. We know at the beginning of the Community Area Plans, there was less than one percent of the residents of the City that were engaged. So, I want to just be very clear and be intentional about being transparent. Mr. Driggs mentioned the City Council members' role in that, and we do have a role to communicate with our residents, but the City definitely has more resources than us as Council members. So, we just ask that we utilize all the resources and make sure that we're getting this information out to the public, because it does affect them, and we know we've all heard from residents that they don't know what's happening until it actually impacts them. So, we really want to be just proactive about that. Thank you.

Councilmember Molina said I'll just add to that. There was some small discussion, and Mr. Graham brought it up, about updating the public on the transportation tax. It wasn't a part of our agenda, but it was one of those things where just kind of ending the meeting, because there's some conversation around where we are with that, and Mr. Driggs did give an update on where we are. I don't want to try to mistake his words.

Mr. Driggs said you're right. I should've mentioned that. If you don't mind, I'll just sort of quickly recap what we discussed earlier.

Ms. Molina said I think it'd be important to.

Mr. Driggs said so, Mr. Graham did point out rightly that we need to be talking about our big mobility plan at every opportunity, because there's a lot going on right now, including a legislation that's pending in Raleigh, that's being worked on there, a portion of it in the Senate, some of it in the House. We are hopeful that in their current session, they will approve legislation that allows us to conduct a referendum in November 2025, if the Board of County Commissioners approves the referendum. That would be for a one cent sales tax to fund a \$20 billion mobility plan, a huge investment, distributed among rail projects, bus projects, and road projects, that will be our response basically to people who say to us, what are you doing about traffic? In all of our Zoning meetings, we are. This is huge. This is what we're doing about traffic. So, an update of the actual plan, the so called 2030 Plan that we've all been seeing, is also in the works, is expected out in May 2025, and that will give people a good basis to decide whether or not they think funding this sales tax is in the best interest of the public. At the end of the day, it will be a public decision whether the tax is implemented. So, that's the status of that, and there's no breaking news as such, but I think it's a good idea, as Mr. Graham suggested, for us to remind people at every opportunity that this is going on, and we are going to be going out to the public we hope later this year to say, will you support the plan? Thank you for bringing that up.

Ms. Molina said yes, thank you.

Mayor Lyles said I understand that there was a really easy task today, and it's from our Housing, Safety and Community Committee.

Councilmember Watlington said they make it look simple. Our staff is amazing. We got a chance to cover today in our Committee meeting a lot of the innovation work that's going on. So, you all know that last year the residents supported us in a \$100 million housing bond, and we're busy about the implementation. Just to remind you, out of that \$100 million, we've decided to invest in the following categories. Rental housing production, homeownership, rental housing preservation, supportive housing and shelter, housing rehab and emergency repair, innovation pilot fund, site acquisition, and administration and evaluation. So, with each one of those categories, there's actually an implementation plan of work that is either ongoing or work that is planned, in response to each one of those items. In particular, we dug into the innovation pilot fund, and talked a little bit about how we would prioritize that work. We learned more about the City's land development strategies. Not only will we be continuing to do the things that most folks are probably familiar with, as it relates to City-owned land and RFPs (Request For Proposal), but we've also been moving something like a developer, and that's been interesting as well, in exploring not only mixed-use, but what was the term, ACM (Assistant City Manager) Heath, where we've got housing and fire stations together?

Shawn Heath, Assistant City Manager said mixed purpose.

Ms. Watlington said mixed purpose, that's it, mixed purpose. So, some interesting work there. I'm excited about this, because you know I'm a data geek, this idea of implementing a housing policy simulator, so that we can start to really map out and understand the impact of our policies on the ground, and I think that'll be extremely powerful. So, we continue as a city to lead the way in those efforts as well. So, much more to come, but today we got a chance to get feedback on some of the things that stuck out to us, what we were interested in, and so I'll yield to my Vice Chair, if there's anything else you'd like to mention in regard to the discussion today.

Councilmember Mayfield said you covered it well, Madam Chair.

Mayor Lyles said are there any questions for the housing group?

Councilmember Anderson said more so just a statement, because I sat through the meeting, but love this idea of the housing simulator coming out of Berkeley University. Just thinking about the University of North Carolina at Charlotte receiving its R1 status, and being able to leverage them and employ them into a lot of the activities, it would be interesting, when we do the simulation, to have UNC (University of North Carolina) Charlotte be a part of it, so that they can hopefully be able to sustain future things that we might be interested in here locally, rather than going out to export the expertise. Thank you.

Mayor Lyles said so, I've had some conversations with the Chancellor, and she really has said, "We have the talent out here to do this work," and anything that we are looking at, we should probably try to inquire more often, is this something that the University would like to help us do and accomplish. So, thanks for that comment. Any other questions?

Ms. Johnson said speaking of the University, we do want to congratulate them on the R1 status. We are going to be working with UNC Charlotte Urban Institute to implement an evaluation plan, and that was one thing that was presented during the meeting. So, we are recognizing and utilizing the talent we have here in the City. Then, one of the questions I asked, and I hope we can get this information back, we talk about 30 and 50 and 60 percent AMI (Area Median Income). What do those numbers mean? So, I asked the question, what is the AMI that we're talking about, and what is the rent amount when we talk about 50, 60 and 70? Ms. Mayfield looked that up, and I believe the project that we were talking about, the rent is going to be \$1,271 at 50 percent AMI, and that's a lot of money still for a lot of people. We talk about the working class, and not just 30 percent, individuals at the airport, and everyone making under \$45,000, we need to think about that as we're looking at 50 percent AMI. So, \$1,200 is still a lot of money, and we can't forget that. It sounds more affordable based on the comparable amount or rate right now, but \$1,200 is still not affordable to a lot of people. Thank you.

Ms. Mayfield said I just want to make sure all of Council knows, that was a part of the conversation today where staff made a recommendation regarding a pilot of a loan product, basically a lower interest loan. So, it's a pilot opportunity for a current development that we have, but it's the community impact revolving loan fund. The benefits, if Council chooses to move forward, is the fact that, one, it will give us an additional 10 years on affordability for these ranges. Two, it would give this developer the ability to utilize the loan funds at a much lower interest rate, and we will receive those funds back, because you're going to repay your loan versus the grant model that we have. My colleague, I think what she shared was definitely a conversation that we had, but I just wanted to make sure everybody was on the same page for why we were having a conversation on housing prices. It's looking at, if we want to support the pilot of utilizing this low interest, and the funds will come through our home, not through our Housing Trust Fund. So, it's a separate line item, but that is a discussion that was started.

Mayor Lyles said thank you for that discussion. I appreciate I'm sure all of us understanding that. Alright, so, I also thought that there was a great committee meeting for the BGIR (Budget Governance and Intergovernmental Relations Committee) meeting. I think it was a very simple discussion about financial partners.

Councilmember Ajmera said I wish I could say it was simple. Let me start by recognizing our committee members starting with Councilmember Brown, Councilmember Mayfield, Councilmember Mitchell, and Vice Chair, Councilmember Bokhari. So, today, we had four topics, and we covered it all within one hour and 45 minutes, so great job committee members. First, we got an update on Medic Interlocal. I'm sure you all got a memo from Chief Johnson. So, he joined us, provided an update on the status of developing an interlocal agreement with Medic. As you all know, we were supposed to get some sort of contract from Medic this week, but that has not happened, so there is a concern for our Chief Johnson. They'll continue to work with them to negotiate, but at the end of the day,

we did provide that he might have to take some hardline approach here, and we have to make sure that we continue to support him. As you all know, the town of Huntersville has cancelled their contract with Medic. I'm not saying we are going to do that, but we will continue to negotiate with Medic to ensure that when someone calls 911, they are getting services on time within the standards that we have said we will follow. So, I'm hopeful that there will be some sort of finalized agreement, but Chief Johnson will continue to update us. So, that's on Medic.

The second topic we had was aviation budget. As you all know, there is significant growth at the airport. We are seeing where leadership is focusing on operational resiliency, leveraging technology and innovation. We are seeing a \$30 million increase in operating expenses, but at the same time, we are seeing an increase in revenue. As you all know, it's an Enterprise Fund. So, they're going to continue to do full cost recovery, even with the parking. So, there was some discussion about parking. We'll get more information on the benchmarking data that was requested by Committee members, and Hailey also provided us an update on the steps that the staff is taking to ensure that there is passenger safety always at the top. As you all know, innovation, there is a debate between passenger safety and continuing growth, especially what we have seen over at Washington D.C. airport, mid-air collision. So, Hailey's going to provide more update, but there have been several infrastructure investments that have been made to ensure passenger safety at all times. So, that's on aviation.

The third item we had was the CATS (Charlotte Area Transit System) budget. As you all know, under Cagle's leadership, there has been significant stability that's been made to the organization from passenger safety to capital investments, to address various concerns, to really addressing the vacancy rate and also addressing ghost bus rides. So, a lot of our committee members applauded his leadership. He did also share with us, there will be no fare increases. However, there is a fare study that is going to happen, and at the end of it there will be discussion if there is any fare impact. There are several capital investments that are being planned to increase additional measures to advance safety of our passengers, as well as our employees. So, that's on CATS.

Last, but not the least, we have financial partners funding policy review. I know you all gave us homework last time in our budget workshop. So, we provided additional feedback to staff around making sure that we are focusing on the value approach, value based, and also we are looking at gaps. If there are any organizations that are really addressing gaps that are there, we've got to make sure we continue to work with them as financial partners, but then also there are opportunities for us to have organizations like TreesCharlotte, to have a line item in the budget, rather than going through financial partners process. Also, Committee provided an update on the ranking. So, as you all know, there was a scoring done by staff. I did share my concerns that when we do score our financial partners, there is a perception out there that we are scoring them based on their services, and we will be working on that. Today, we did not get an opportunity to work on the policy, but certainly that's something that'll come back. Right now, I think we provided our feedback on financial partners, so I guess when the Manager proposes his budget, he'll incorporate that feedback for our financial partners.

So, Committee members, if I missed anything, feel free to chime in. Overall, I think we all agree that it's going to be a tough decision for us. There is a finite amount of money, and we have over \$8.2 million in funding requests, so there will be tough decisions that we'll have to make. So, I'm looking forward to Manager's recommendations based on criteria, and the input that our Committee provided. So, that's all I have. Thank you, Madam Mayor.

Councilmember Bokhari said I just want to follow up on one of the comments I made in Committee on that first topic relating to Medic, and what Fire Chief Johnson is trying to navigate. This should be on all of our radars. I know I've talked to many of you. It is on your radar, and it is critical. I think the punchline here is critical, unaddressed issues are not like fine wine, they don't get better with age. Right now, it's sitting out there, and despite the Chief's valiant efforts to solve this, he has been unable to do so. So, my encouragement to him and all of us is, it needs to be crystal clear, this needs to get

resolved, and it needs to get resolved in a timeline by which we don't jeopardize safety for Medic services, and things that happen in the public, and we're in the middle of our budget cycle, of which we need to understand these implications. So, we've put, I think, the pressure today out there of hearing the updates and letting everyone know how critical that all is, but I think there's a time where we need to continue to encourage, behind the scenes, the Chief, to take a hard line here and say, we're not going to let this just sit unaddressed anymore, and then be prepared as a Council to support that together, however it may materialize, because it's unbelievable we can't get this solved. It's a top priority for us, and everyone else that has a touch point, it needs to be a top priority for.

Ms. Anderson said I just want to underscore Mr. Cagle's performance as Interim CEO (Chief Executive Officer) of CATS. I was reminded in a discussion earlier in the Committee, just the tone and tenor of the topic around CATS and performance, on-time service, ghost buses, etc., was very different about a year and a half ago. There was a small group that was stood up to address this directly and intergovernmentally, and where we are, as it relates to that moment in time about a year and half ago, is vastly different. In the spirit of Councilmember Mitchell saying, "We've got celebrate the good things, the wins as well." I just want to lift up his performance and the performance of CATS in the wake of our overall strategic mobility discussion and the expansion thereof. Thank you, Madam Mayor.

Councilmember Graham said I just wanted to underscore the comments that my colleague, Councilmember Bokhari, said in reference to the importance of the issue that we're dealing with and ask the question, when does it bubble up from the Director's level, the Chief level, the Medic level, to the Management level, in terms of having some of those conversations or has it?

Marcus Jones, City Manager said so, thank you, Councilmember Graham. I would say at this point, until the news last week of the delay, it had been more or less at the level of the Directors. So, I hope that the discussion today allows them to have a bit more urgency in trying to get this resolved.

Mr. Graham said okay.

Mayor Lyles said alright. Any other comments? Alright, hearing no more additional comments, that is completing the Council Committee Discussions. Thank you for all of the effort that you put in. Most of these activities or comments that you're having will give us a lot more success as we move forward in this next budget year, so thank you very much for what you're doing. So, with that, I think the next thing that we're going to review is the Jobs and ED (Economic Development) Committee meeting.

Mr. Graham said we had a great meeting today. We had the opportunity to receive the annual updates provided by the City's Municipal Service District agencies, that would include Charlotte Center City Partners, where I serve as a board member; SouthPark Community Partners, I'm not sure if Councilmember Bokhari's a board member, but certainly he was there before the MSD (Municipal Service District); and then the third was University City Partners, where Councilmember Johnson is a board member. They presented their annual report. They're doing some tremendous work in the community, and I don't want to take their thunder away by providing my update. They're here today. Adam Rhew with SouthPark Community Partners, Keith Stanley with University City Partners, as well as Michael Smith with Charlotte Center City Partners to make their own case and share the good news.

This was for information purposes only, but out of the meeting came two newsworthy items that you will probably be reading about tonight in the newspapers and tomorrow, one being a \$21 million public/private partnership that's been announced today by SouthPark Community Partners that they want us to consider, that he will be here to talk more about that, as well as a tax increase, a millage increase, for the Municipal Service District and Charlotte Center City Partners, that Michael Smith will be here to talk about, in addition to their annual update, and Keith will talk about certainly what's happening in University City. You've heard on two or three occasions about to get work coming out of

University of North Carolina Charlotte, and their research status being upgraded, as well as all the tremendous work that he's doing over there. I will highlight, and I'm almost certain Councilmember Johnson will also highlight, some of the challenges that they have in terms of state roads and code issues that we're working hand-in-glove with, we the City and University City Partners, to address some of these ongoing issues. So, they are here today to make their presentations. I will allow them to do that. One, in particular, is the millage increase that has to be included in our budget, Mr. Manager, as I understand it, and so I'm pretty sure at some time the Manager will chime in too, and make sure that the Council members understand how that works as we move forward. So, would love to start with Charlotte Center City Partners.

Michael Smith, President & CEO of Charlotte City Partners said Madam Mayor, members of Council, Manager Jones, pleasure to be back with you to give an update. I'll move quickly through the update, and then get into a conversation about a new initiative that we're launching called the Uptown Vibrancy Collaborative. If you're not aware, Charlotte SHOUT is going on right now. This is 17 days of art, music, food, and ideas. It is virtually free to the public, thanks to the partnership that we enjoy with you, the City. There are 200 events, there are hundreds of artists that get paid. Anything that we do in production, we do not take any fee for. This is money that goes straight to the artists. We mix in a couple of international, but 90 percent is local. Please come out and enjoy.

Who we are? We're a 47-year-old partner of the City of Charlotte. We're proud of that partnership. We're organized as a C3. Our mission is all about our Center City being a welcoming, equitable, economically vibrant, culturally rich, and beloved place for all. We are values based. We are all about doing everything that we do with passion, innovation, tenacity, and excellence. This is our Service District, and it is Uptown, Midtown and South End. We've got an incredible board. We're fortunate to have such a great group that cares so deeply about our mission. As far as how we put together our budget and our program of work, we listen intently, and we listen a lot of different ways. We have a great board that provides us traditional governance, on program of work and on budget, but we use Uptown Small Business Association, advisory committees. We do primary research. We work very closely with our neighborhood associations, all of which to help us shape our work and our work fits into economic development. We've really had a great year considering the headwinds that every downtown is facing right now.

We've got a pipeline of \$5.4 billion of new investment. UNC Charlotte opened the CO-LAB this year. This is a center for entrepreneurship. It is a difference-maker for the students that go there and for the aspiring entrepreneurs of our community to have a mission-based place. You watch the difference it's going to make. It's going to become cornerstone to what makes our city great.

We've got 10,000 apartments in the pipeline in the Center City. That matters deeply on affordability, because we have to fix the supply/demand problem. With 117 people a day moving to our region, we have to keep building housing. Our Center City has been celebrated as a Central Business District, and it is transforming into a Central Activity District, where it's more than just work. It's hospitality. It's a destination. It's a great neighborhood, and it's a campus, particularly for UNC Charlotte, but also for JCSU (Johnson C. Smith University), for Johnson & Wales. So, we're excited about the way our Center City is responding.

If you'll take a look at this next snapshot, we love this graphic. What's in blue is what was built in this immediate completing economic cycle, and what is in purple is what has been announced to be groundbreaking by 2026, what is in green is under construction. Great places create the context for tomorrow's vibrancy, that is all about assemblages. We have 10 massive assemblages within our Center City that are ready for the next economic cycle, this is just identifying three. We do our work in economic development and in community development. We use long-term planning and near-term planning. Right now, we're operating under our partnership that created the 2040 Vision Plan, which is a 20-year vision that we renew every 10 years. There's also great aspirations within the South End Vision Plan. Our South End is the hottest submarket in the southeast, continues to

serve us so well, drawing talent, growing jobs and investment. This image that you're seeing here is the rendering of McColl Park, which is planned to open on June 18, 2025.

Regarding public safety, we did some great work this year in partnership with the City of Charlotte, one being our public safety working group, that has your Chief of Police serving on it, our DA (District Attorney), our Head District Judge. Shawn serves on that one with us, as does Anthony at the County, and then a variety of business leaders. We've used Affinity Groups to be able to inform that work.

The other piece I would draw your attention to just for a second highlight, is our Ambassador Program. So, the gentleman you see here in this picture in the orange and blue is one of our safety ambassadors. We completely reimaged the program about a year ago, and every ambassador now is a card-carrying private security professional. We raised their pay from the mid-to-high teens to the low 20s, and these are great jobs, and we've got a really talented team that we're proud of the work that they're doing, and look forward to what's next.

Marketing/communications is also part of the way we serve. There'll be more about that in the Uptown Vibrancy Collaborative. From a programming standpoint, it's small programs, but it's the large ones, it's the 17 days of SHOUT, it's the Novant Health Thanksgiving Eve Parade.

With regard to mobility, we stand ready to work with the City of Charlotte as you guys advance our aspirations for mobility expansion. The work on the Gateway Station. The Rail Trail Pedestrian Bridge, which should begin construction shortly. The addition of a new stop in the South End, and all our work on the Rail Trail. I moved through that quickly at the request of Alyson.

So, now if we jump in, though, to something we're really excited about. In the years that I've been in this role, I've never had a period where there's been better alignment by our major employers in wanting to support Center City, specifically Uptown. Now, that comes out of concern. This came from the CELC (Charlotte Executive Leadership Council), which is right now chaired by Gene Woods. Gene appointed Bill Rogers and Lynn Good to co-chair an initiative called the Uptown Vibrancy Collaborative. They asked us to staff it, and step one was defining the challenges, and those challenges are public safety, extraordinary experiences, perception issues, vibrancy. When you hear vibrancy, think the vintage office challenge that we have on older office buildings, and then a renewal of public infrastructure.

So, step one was, let's go out and let's raise some private money, let's have private money move first, and let's surge what we're trying to do with this program. This group of companies made commitments for two years, a million dollars a year. We're just shy of goal, but we're proud to have this group as a part of it, and what we asked of them was three things. We asked for them to commit to the investment, number one, to advocate for this initiative, and then to own your block, and the own your block concept is really as simple as it sounds. The idea is, please commit to taking your private security curb-to-curb. This was a [INAUDIBLE] idea that worked really well in the 1980s. We also asked of them, please take the beauty and cleanliness responsibility for your block, and then lastly, programming a couple times a month. This is incrementalism. We think if every major employer and every property owner on those 11 blocks of Tryon Street and a few of Trade, take responsibility for the experience that every guest has on their block, we're going to have an extraordinary experience through the way it comes together. An analogy was made to the storefront, the storekeeper, who every morning comes in at sunrise, sprays down the stoop and sweeps it off, and the kind of experience that their guests have.

So, the \$2 million was intended to be private money and to surge the initiative, but what we would like to do is, we feel like we have a challenge right now in downtowns that need additional resources to be able to meet the day and meet the challenge. Private money came first, but then they asked, "We want to sustain this effort going forward, and we'd like to find a way to make it so that we're not constantly raising money." So, their ask,

which came to you as an ask from our Executive Committee, was to raise the millage in MSDs two and three. If you look on this map, what it shows you is, this was decades ago, this map was drawn with MSDs two and three, and it was intentionally created this way to carve out the single-family homes, so that the single-family homes would not be asked to fund some initiatives, and these initiatives we feel are much better funded by commercial property owners. I've had conversations with 35 to 40 large property owners and major employers. This is what they would like us to be doing. We have not had any opposition. There are eight condo associations that are captured in MSDs two and three, and we have invited their leadership over and had a conversation with them sharing this information, what we plan to do, and we had support from all of them. We're beginning a process with the City to continue to seek more feedback to make sure that everybody's aware of this. The model that we're using is, we would like to raise a half million dollars a year from MSD three, and a half from MSD two. The increase is 0.0082 per hundred dollars of value. To make that real, the average value of the condos in those eight buildings is \$465,000, so it would increase their millage by \$38 a year. If it's \$100 million building, it would be an increase of \$8,200 a year. The beauty of your Center City is it has incredible tax value, so therefore, a small millage creates significant resources, an extra million dollars for us to focus primarily on marketing and on programming. Our aspiration is to have 52 weeks a year of programming, and to have resources also to lean in on solutions for vintage office and around public safety. I know I moved through a lot of information, but I hope that's helpful, and I am glad to answer any questions.

Ms. Ajmera said Mr. Smith, thank you for your leadership in bringing programs to Uptown. We were at Charlotte SHOUT yesterday, and I saw many families on Sunday night in Uptown going to Levine Arts Avenue, First Ward, so it's really bringing families to Uptown on weekends, even with this, because this is two weeks long festival or even more. So, I appreciate how you're using some of this MSD dollars to bring this traction to Uptown. I like the strategy behind Own Your Block. It's very powerful when it's done in collaboration where we bring that vibrancy back to Uptown, not just on weekends but even on weekdays, and also address underlying issue which is public safety. I hear about that from many residents, not just those that live in Uptown, but those that are visiting for games or events like Charlotte SHOUT. So, I look forward to supporting that and really addressing safety. We have to do everything in our power to invest in our Uptown. We've got to make sure it is safe for people and for families. The programs that you're doing, it might be small programs, but really they are making a large impact, because our goal is to bring traction in evenings, weekends, back to Uptown, so that it continues to be the thriving part of our community. That's all I have. Thank you, Madam Mayor.

Ms. Johnson said thank you, Mr. Smith, for the presentation. I wanted some more information about the programming. The goal for the 52 weeks of programming. What type of programming, and is part of the goal to increase tourism downtown?

Mr. Smith said so, thank you. We think programming is kind of urban magic, that if you provide programming, it creates a greater comfort in the space. It does often provide employment. It creates a safer environment, because the safest places are populated and active and highly programmed. They're not expensive. I mean, some will involve music, some will involve pop-up retail, some could involve food. We run the Food Truck Program Uptown and we run the Kiosk Program along Tryon Street, and then we also operate The Incubator, which is The Market at 7th Street. So, we have this deep bench of relationships of aspiring entrepreneurs, and we think that all of them will be great partners. There are some examples of programming that's going on right now. Duke Energy has done a lot of Jazz on Wednesdays at lunch. Truist does 5th Street Live on their plaza, which has been really popular. It's kind of like the old Live After Five that was done for so many years. Anyways, great partners along 5th Street that have brought that in with live music.

Ms. Johnson said okay, and do we have information or estimates or numbers of the amount of tourism Uptown? How much the economic driver, the tourism brings in, or do we have any of those numbers?

Mr. Smith said we do. So, if you use open table as a source, we're now about five percent above where we were pre-pandemic, and last year we had 330 days of professional sports in Uptown. It's amazing the way we're being transformed. We have owners right now that want to use Bank of America Stadium 60, 70 times a year. We've got an owner of the Spectrum Center that wants to use it 150 times a year, and what's so amazing about that is it's always the nth one. It's always the plus of coming early to get a meal, staying later to get a drink, pairing it with some shopping, and all of this is sales per square foot, and it all ends up in growth of jobs, and it ends up in an Uptown that is safer and more highly programmed and amenitized.

Ms. Johnson said okay. So, I guess, are there graphs or something where you're capturing tourism dollars for Uptown?

Mr. Smith said so, we'd be glad to give you some data on what's going on with tourism in Uptown. That'll be information. We'll be able to get some of that through a great data tracking tool that we have, but we'll also talk to our friends at the CRVA (Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority).

Ms. Johnson said okay, thank you. Thank you for the presentation.

Mr. Smith said you're welcome, absolutely.

Ms. Watlington said I've got a couple questions. I know that I was able to share several of mine with you last week, so I look forward to some of the follow-up to those. I'm curious to about just the numbers and how it works. I think that was what I was trying to convey last week in regard to the current MSD budget, and what the operation split out is, I know that you started with safety. That has been one very significant area that's been a challenge Uptown. So, I would like to understand exactly how we're investing in that, so I'll dig deeper into this piece, but if you can speak just briefly to your plan for safety beyond. I know you talked about the security officers and the increase. Are there any other items there that would sit within the MSD, not from the private partners that speak directly to safety?

Mr. Smith said yes. So, our Ambassador Program, which is right now a million dollars a year. It's a third party called Block by Block, which provides these security ambassadors. There's 16 of them. Our plan was always to want to take it to scale, once we were proud of the service being provided, and now I wish so much they were all in here with us. They are an incredible group that is so dedicated to service, and we've got great data on the interactions they've had, the services they've provided, but it probably needs to be 35 to 40 to really have the impact that we're seeking to have. We're in conversations with partners about how do we double that size? How do we make it into a \$2 million program?

Ms. Watlington said and so, is there a forecasted percentage of this new revenue that would be needed to expand to 35 to 40? I'm just trying to get a sense of what we get when it comes to safety for this increasing millage rate.

Mr. Smith said so, within the program, the part that we're trying to surge now and through the summer and through these next two years, is really about programming, which we think plays a role in public safety, and also in the storytelling, retaking the narrative. There will be a small portion of this that goes to the Ambassador Program, but the plan for the Ambassador Program is to bring other partners in to be able to double it in size. That's not what this request is for.

Ms. Watlington said okay. We'll continue conversations. When I think about core services for the City, safety is one of the major ones. So, I appreciate the proposal and certainly can understand how you got there. It's just important to me that if we are putting additional public dollars on an ongoing basis towards something, it's important to me that it's tied to our core services, especially in light of some of the conversation around yes, we know that increased visitors can improve safety tertiary, but really to me that feels like more of a tourism tout, which is also a good thing, but it just gives me a little bit of pause. I want to make sure that we are investing in the core services.

Mr. Smith said so, the plan from the beginning, when we introduced the Ambassador Program in 2018, was for the rate payers in Uptown to pay for half it, and for the other half to really be hospitality funded, because I think you're right. I think it is about the experience that our guests are having, and so we're having conversations with hospitality-related partners about how do we stand something like this up where it becomes a 35 to 40 Ambassador scale program. I think in order to have the super impact that we think we can have through the ambassadors, that's what it's going to take.

Ms. Watlington said yes, thank you. I'd like to spend a little bit more time on this one. I understand that there are a lot of different partners and a lot of different sources of funds. I just wonder if there's an opportunity to streamline and make sure that we are getting what on the public side is, for me, one of the most important issues. I don't want us kind of breaking off private/public on every single piece, and then we end up piecemealing it altogether, but I'm sure you're on top of that. Thank you.

Mr. Smith said okay.

Ms. Anderson said couple things on this Ambassador Program, which I think is a very good program. I know University City Partners, you're starting yours, but if the City Manager were here, I would pose this question to him around, how can we stand up, to Ms. Watlington's point, a program that we see is effective, but in areas of the City that A, need it, but B, are not homes to an MSD. Because I think there's an extension of public safety, of visibility, and we can manage the intensity and areas of focus of a broader Ambassador Program. So, I'd like to have a broader discussion about the Ambassador Program. However, one of the questions I wanted to ask you around the safety program, the vibrancy program, that you're effectively funding through the increased millage, and the work that's going on with A Home For All, and also, I know that the County has agreed to provide 24-hour safety/security in certain parks. The majority of them are Uptown, First Ward, I believe Romare Bearden, etc., but making sure that there's the coordinated effort between what you're doing, what A Home For All is doing, and the increased security in parks. I want to make sure that we're not being repetitive, but being supplemental in the amount of support and security being provided.

Mr. Smith said you have my commitment on that. I'll remind you guys that the Home For All project was one that we stood up and staffed. It was eventually adopted by the County Commission. We stay very closely involved, and my commitment is that we will not duplicate, and we'll look for all of those to be moving together, and yes, on July 1, 2025, Mecklenburg County is going to have armed private safety in all of our Uptown parks, which we think is a game changer.

Ms. Anderson said yes, I agree. I just want to make sure. Myself and a couple other Council members met with CMPD (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department) Metro Division to talk about public safety, the numbers, and they're doing a great job. However, one of their biggest hurdles, if you will, is being able to interface with the unhoused population, having a place for them to go and be safe and secure, and so that's why that intersection with A Home For All is important.

The other piece that I want to make sure that we're covering, especially for you for Center City, is the Third Ward Neighborhood Organization has just become revitalized, and they're under leadership of former Councilmember Austin. I went to that meeting, and I know that they're leaning into it, but want to make sure that all the Wards have a voice and visibility in the programming that's going on Uptown, and in the planning of it. I know that Third Ward now will be organized, but First Ward is another one where a lot of activities occur there in First Ward, and hopefully more in Fourth Ward and Second Ward as well. So, just leaning into the Ward leadership would be very helpful as you move forward with your planning. Thank you, Madam Mayor.

Ms. Mayfield said thank you for the presentation, Mr. Smith. Can you go back to your budget breakdown? Okay, Center City Partners, what is CCCP?

Mr. Smith said Charlotte Center City Partners.

pti:pk

Ms. Mayfield said okay, it didn't capture it at the first point. Twenty percent the CCCPCT (Charlotte Center City Partners Community Trust).

Mr. Smith said yes, so that is our Community Trust. That is a related entity that's organized as a C3, and that is a separate corporation that is part of our body of work, and it's where we do Charlotte SHOUT, it's where we do the parade, it's where we do the Small Business Innovation Fund.

Ms. Mayfield said so, the community events and festivals come out of your trust?

Mr. Smith said that's correct.

Ms. Mayfield said so, 20 percent of the trust, and then you also go out and seek additional funds for the trust?

Mr. Smith said yes. What we try to do each year is bring in \$7 million to \$10 million of additional private money to match the MSD dollars to do our body of work, and we do that through three corporations. There's the Center City Partners, which is most of what you just heard about, and then the two related entities are the Community Trust and The Market at 7th Street. Those both have their own Boards of Directors and their own tax statuses, C3's. The beauty of setting up C3's, is then you're able to get foundation money into them, whether that's private foundation or corporate. It's a great tool for us to get private money into public priorities.

Ms. Mayfield said okay, that helps. I just wanted to have an understanding of PCT. So, I wasn't aware that Center City Partners had a trust, so thank you for the explanation.

Mr. Smith said you're welcome.

Mr. Graham said just want to close it out before we bring up Adam. Mike did a great job in terms of articulating the goals, the vision, for Center City Partners. One of things that he really didn't touch on a lot is there's a lot of interaction between Center City Partners and residents. He talked a lot about the business relationships, but they do have a very, very hands on approach of working with the individuals that actually live in Uptown Charlotte for Second or Third Ward, all the Wards, so I don't want you to leave without saying that for sure.

Then, secondly, Center City Partners has been a great convener of the District Attorney's Office, CMPD, and other stakeholders, in terms of making sure, again, that from the public safety perspective that all these voices are being heard and are being coordinated, in addition to CMPD, but the private police with all the major corporations working Uptown. So, there is a lot of collaboration, a lot of coordination with a lot of entities, all based out of Charlotte Center City Partners that he didn't highlight, but I just thought that as a board member I need to really express that, because my first concern obviously is Uptown Charlotte, in which I represent along with Ms. Anderson, the residents of Uptown Charlotte. That's first and foremost, and certainly the corporations and their importance speaks for itself. So, thank you very much for the presentation.

Mr. Smith said thank you.

Ms. Watlington said this one's quick. The question that Ms. Mayfield asked put me back on here. Can you back to your pie chart, just so I understand? So, the Community Trust is a separate entity, but related for events, and you've got programming and events over here for 15 percent, and then I saw another set. Okay, I see programs, projects, placemaking for \$2 million, \$1 million for events, and then \$2.6 million for the Community Trust, which is also events?

Mr. Smith said it's events, it's the McColl Park, it's the Small Business Innovation Fund where we grant money to small businesses. In fact, rounds five and six are in partnership with the City, that's ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) dollars, that's been a really, really effective tool.

Ms. Watlington said okay, offline is fine. I'd just like to see a little bit more, so I can understand the difference between those buckets and how those are defined. Thank you.

Mr. Smith said love to dig deep.

Ms. Watlington said appreciate it.

Ms. Johnson said I'm sorry, last question. How many staff members do you all have?

Mr. Smith said 25.

Ms. Johnson said 25, okay. I just want to lift up one of them, Moira Quinn, I want to thank you. Yes, you do a great job, thank you. I think we should all give her a hand. So, it's a pleasure working with you both, but I really want to thank Moira for all of her help throughout the year, thank you. Alright, thank you.

Mr. Smith said just recognized as one of the 40 over 40 here in Charlotte, Ms. Moira Quinn.

Mayor Pro Tem Anderson said okay, are we ready for SouthPark? Come on up.

Mr. Smith said alright, thank you.

Ms. Anderson said thank you, Mr. Smith.

Mr. Graham said, and again, Adam if you can give us the cliff note version, and then get to the meat of the presentation, that'll be helpful.

Adam Rhew, President & CEO of SouthPark Community Partners said good evening, everybody. I will peel through the annual report quickly, so we can get to the Symphony Park portion. Just want to quickly remind you that SouthPark Community Partners serves MSD six, which Council established almost exactly three years ago and comprises one square mile in the commercial core of SouthPark. Our mission is to lead SouthPark's advancement by driving economic vitality, creating memorable experiences, and ensuring an extraordinary quality-of-life. Much like our peer organizations and University City and Center City, we do that through a range of activities. I won't list them all, but similar to our friends, marketing, programming, economic development, placemaking, all of that is in recognition that SouthPark is an economic engine for the Charlotte region, particularly, our visitor economy, and it's our team's job to create and nurture a place where people and businesses want to be.

As many of you know, last year we launched our SouthPark Forward 2035 Vision Plan. This is a blueprint led by the community to guide SouthPark's evolution, to help shape SouthPark from a collection of disconnected destinations into a more complete place. That vision plan and the 64 projects in it inform our annual program of work and budget, and the community's vision is for a more walkable, energetic SouthPark, where people connect, and businesses thrive. One of the vision plan's catalyst projects is completing the SouthPark Loop. This is a three-mile urban trail, a project that originated with the neighborhoods and with City staff, to really make SouthPark a more walkable destination. We've partnered with the City and with the private sector over the last year to install loop furniture and wayfinding signage, as well as to work on placemaking, public art, free community events, and activating underutilized greenspaces, as we work to find a dedicated funding source to finish the remainder of the Loop that is yet unbuilt.

One of things we're most excited about and most proud of is the SouthPark Skipper, our free micro-transit program, which we launched in mid-November 2024. This was a key recommendation of the vision plan. It was a top priority across stakeholder groups. I hope you've had a chance to come take a ride. It is within the MSD. It's at-based, but we also have a bilingual dispatch line, if people prefer or need to book by phone. This service, again free to use to the public. It is part of our commitment to making SouthPark welcoming and accessible, and to have low barriers of entry, so that we can use this

program as a test case and as a lab for innovation, so we can learn from it, and hopefully inspire more mobility innovation, both in SouthPark and across our community. After four and a half months, we're pleased with the progress we've made, nearly 16,000 rides by the end of March 2025, an eight-minute average wait time, which is better than our 10-minute benchmark, and really pleased with what we're learning from the program. We've got a great partnership with CATS, the City's team at C-DOT (Charlotte Department of Transportation), CRTPO (Charlotte Regional Transportation Planning Organization), and Centralina, to take all of the data that we're getting from the backend of this program, to analyze it, to understand it, how are people moving around, where are they going, what time of day are they moving, and share that with our partners, again, so we can learn about what's happening in SouthPark. We've had a great partnership with CATS, as they launched their micro-transit service in North Mecklenburg, sharing insights both ways. Our hope is that as this program matures, we can use the insights to help shape the rest of our transportation network, and begin to connect to it, and really create a system, rather than separate parts. One of the things that I would just highlight about this program in particular, as I mentioned, we published the vision plan last April 2024. This was on the street in mid-November 2024. It underscores our organization's commitment to come up with bold ideas, and then to put them into action quickly.

This brings me to Symphony Park, which is another priority identified in the vision plan as a catalyst for a more connected community. Earlier today, I shared with the Committee the framework for a public/private partnership to launch a new era for this beloved community asset. This is the result of years of hard work by a lot of people, a big team, but I do want to specifically thank Councilman Bokhari, as well as the Planning and Economic Development staffs for their partnership and work on this that precedes the existence of our organization. This has been happening for the better part of a decade, a lot of people around the table working on it, and it's our privilege to come to the table and help try to bring this partnership together and deliver this project. As I mentioned, this was a top priority of the vision plan, and the vision for Symphony Park comes directly from our community. They told us, through CNIP (Comprehensive Neighborhood Improvement Projects), and through the vision plan process, exactly what they want in this space. We know that the community wants a new place to gather for events big and small, a place to discover whether they're new to the neighborhood or whether they've been here for years, a place to create art, opportunity, and memories, a place to spark awe and wonder, and a place to connect with others, strengthening the fabric of our community. This is a \$21 million project that seeks to transform Symphony Park into a significant urban greenspace that will become an extraordinary community destination, home to frequent, high-quality programming, that invites those deeper connections with others. The design, again, informed by the community, leans into the park's location on the SouthPark Loop alignment, creating a true walkable destination for residents, workers, and visitors. The project calls for the addition of new access points and pedestrian infrastructure, enhancements to the park to facilitate a wider array of community programming, two anchor restaurants which will generate new tax revenue and create jobs, and micro-retail space to support emerging entrepreneurs. As you look quickly through the renderings, as I peel through them, what I hope you will take away is that the vision for this space is, it's where the community comes together. This is a place beloved by our nonprofit community as a venue for walks and runs and fundraisers, and we really see that community spirit as core to the identity of this public space.

So, let me walk you through quickly the capital stack and some key terms. Again, the total estimated cost of this project is \$21 million, with a commitment from the private sector for \$13 million, led by a significant investment from Simon Property Group to build those anchor restaurants. SouthPark Community Partners has committed to raise \$5 million from the private sector, and our request for the City is \$8 million in existing bond capacity for District Six capital projects. So, leveraging funds that have been obligated for our community to help us fund this project. During the Committee meeting today, we had several questions about the County's participation in this. We're continuing conversations with County staff and are hopeful that we can have the County as a participant in this project. As you can imagine, there's been some transition there, both at the County leadership level, but also in the parks department, and continue to work through our conversations with the County. This site is privately owned, and under the terms of this

framework, Simon would continue to own this site. They would design and construct those restaurant buildings and be responsible for any cost overages of that portion. SouthPark Community Partners would be a steward of the design and construction of those park improvements, the micro-retail, and that 500-foot SouthPark Loop segment. Our target construction date begins summer 2026 and delivers in 2027.

On the operations side, SouthPark Community Partners would operate and program this space as a public amenity through an Operating Agreement with Simon. Simon has an existing Easement Agreement with the City of Charlotte. They would amend and extend that easement to ensure perpetual public access to this space. I do want to mention, as many of you know, this is called Symphony Park for a reason. The Symphony has called this space home since it was built, and we've had great partnership with the Symphony, and they are committed, and we are committed, to have them in this space after its renovation and construction.

As I close out, I want to emphasize that the business community is really excited about this project, because of its ability to drive talent attraction and retention, the ability to steward SouthPark into its next chapter, as an important economic engine for our region. We know that communities that prioritize public space and high-quality programming consistently attract talent and investment. This is an incredible opportunity to advance the community's vision for SouthPark and deliver an asset that serves all Charlotteans. We look forward to working with you to bring this to fruition, and I'd be delighted to answer your questions, and I tried to move through that as quickly as I could.

Mr. Bokhari said I gave longer remarks that I won't make today, again earlier, but the two punchlines, I think, are important for everyone to understand the backstory. In 2018, after I came in for the first time into this role, we went through that budget process, and I appreciated all my colleagues, some of you that were here at that point, for the support of allocating this money for investment into that infrastructure. At that time, I thought it was going to happen a lot quicker than the 7½-year journey that it took to get to this point, but chalk that up to the life experiences, thanks to Adam and everyone, for helping kind of bring this through to the finish line, but that money doesn't need to be found. It's been allocated and approved by Council already in that process, and it's just about the process going forward, making sure that everyone's comfortable with what the project looks like, not necessarily finding the money somewhere and sacrificing other things.

The second point is, while it says Symphony Park, I personally believe this is much more than just a normal park. As you see in here, there's economic development aspects to this, a bridge into the retail area of what the mall will become. It's an opportunity to connect the walkability and a lot of the investments. We're starting with the SouthPark Skipper, we're taking that data, going more towards autonomous travel, all kinds of things that are going to be possible. This has a lot of those dynamics in it that will be an economic engine for this region, but we need to inspire others. With today's news, but then this move to get this first phase going, this is just the starting point of what I believe will be many phases of growth and building on top of this. The next step is to inspire the already nearly inspired private sector to fill their components, but the County is going to play a very important role in this going forward as well. I believe that this is the right step to get that moving from just a wish to an actual commitment, but hopefully that background is helpful.

Ms. Johnson thank you, Councilmember Bokhari for that clarification. So, you said this money has already been allocated since 2018. What is the scope of the project? Is it for the park and to boost retail at the mall, or?

Mr. Rhew said so, Council members, I described the scope of the project is a number of things. A new pedestrian infrastructure building, a SouthPark Loop segment integrated to the park, and access directly from the Loop into that space, facilitating ease of pedestrian and bicycle movement from the Loop into this space. The creation, which is privately funded, of restaurant buildings, permanent anchor restaurants, to drive daily activity, so that gets people moving around the space day to day, as well as some micro-retail space that we intend to use to support emerging entrepreneurs, and then some improvements to the topography and to the amenities inside the space to be able to help us more

effectively program it. One of the challenges with this space is that it is largely underutilized as a function of its design, which is outdated and sort of doesn't meet the needs of those who need to access it and program it. So, some of the moves we're making is to try to facilitate, through design, a space where we can drive daily activity across a wide range of uses.

Ms. Johnson said thank you. Mr. Manager, we can talk offline, because if we're going to set a precedent for assisting malls, there's a mall in District 4 that we can talk about. Thank you.

Ms. Ajmera said Adam, I really like how you are integrating the natural component, which is the greenspace and preserving beautiful tree canopy that's there. Certainly, I'm all for the programming, because it really activates the site, brings tourism, and also really brings jobs and opportunities, to Councilmember Bokhari's point. I appreciate how you are leveraging the private dollars to make this possible and expedite. I know this was allocated back in 2018, but without this, I don't know when we will be able to accomplish this project through completion. So, I certainly appreciate that we will be able to deliver this sooner, rather than later, because of this partnership. So, if we can leverage our public dollars to expedite improvements like this, and really revitalize the area, I think that's a no-brainer to me. That's all I have. Thank you.

Mr. Rhew said thank you, Council member.

Mayor Pro Tem Anderson said thank you. Any additional comments or questions? Hearing none, shall we move to Mr. Stanley?

Mr. Rhew said thank you.

Mayor Pro Tem Anderson said thank you.

Keith Stanley, President & CEO of University City Partners said I just want to say thank you to the Council and to the Mayor and City Manager and staff. It's been a great opportunity to lead University City Partners, and so I appreciate it. Also, Councilmember Renee, I really appreciate your support on a number of different things you've been helping us on, some things I'm going to talk about in the next few minutes. I'll try to keep my comments brief, so I don't get in between the game and people that want to go see. Also, this presentation is about University City, it's about the sights and sounds of what we're doing, which you've already tasted a little about University City. From my understanding, Councilmember Johnson said the food came from Cuzzo's, which is a University City business, so I hope you enjoyed that food coming from our University City. This presentation really boils down to the focus on the area of our vision plan that was released in July of 2021. We talked about public safety, economic development, marketing, our small business initiative, and this is outlining a lot of the work we're doing in our vision plan. Level set for those for University City, the biggest thing is that the growth that we have in University City, over 150 apartment units, close to 20 percent of all residential development permits within Mecklenburg County, are coming from University City. So, we're growing by leaps and bounds.

In the fall of last year, we pulled together our first public safety forum. We had over 60 individuals come, including CMPD, Charlotte Fire, businesses, residents, and what's come out of this is really that we want to continue to focus on keeping University City clean. You see these numbers up here. We have a team that's dedicated to addressing code violations, dealing with the shopping carts, dealing with the yard signs, and this is really key for the work that we do, because you want people to feel welcome, including around the lake. We heard this at the last session, how people had concerns about the lake, and so we've been able to address that through these programs.

I mentioned about the growth of University City. One thing I do want to point out is that we heard the news about Vanguard, but there's also some other stories in there, R.E. Mason, Pinnacle Financial, and of course, our beautiful University City Regional Library, all adding value and growth to University City.

A part of the vision plan that we talked about, as far as the brand of University City, and we see the value in how we carry the brand and carry the momentum and the story about University City. We talk about University City Research Park, this 2,200-acre park that we manage. We work closely with the Council, work closely with a number of our tenants to make sure we're getting the right mix in there. We also looked at Waters Edge with the library activation and the novel activation, but also activating the lake itself. We've been able to bring over 40,000 people to the Lake with our six signature events. We have a Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony, we have Kids Fest, we have Wine Fest coming up this weekend, so please get your tickets, and it's really about engaging the community around this beautiful asset that we have. It doesn't just stop there. We also have other events. We're excited to announce BOOM Charlotte coming to University City. We also have the Queen City Arts Festival, the Lowcountry Food and Culture Fest, Niner National Week, the New Year's Day 5K. These events activate, not just around the lake, but around the community, and they bring people to the community to bring dollars to the community, but it's all about data too. We don't just do anything just to do it. We want to make sure we understand we have the data that drives us to the work that we do. We were able to invest in Placer AI (Artificial Intelligence), which allows us to understand the foot traffic around University City. We know that 3.4 million people come to the lake. We know that the average stay time for people around the lake is 38 minutes. We also know that the more we have events, the more they stay and the more money they spend. Just like my colleagues who presented earlier, it's about activating the spaces and places for people to come and spend money. We said return on investment, but also return on emotion, making sure people are enjoying themselves. Also, as I mentioned earlier about the safety and clean area, we understand our residents see University City as a beautiful, clean place, and they want to keep it that way. That's why, hence, we're going to move forward with a couple projects.

Actually, as I wrap this up, for the future of University City, there's a couple categories we're going to be looking at. We mentioned earlier, I've heard my colleague, Michael Smith, talk about it, we're going to be looking at an Ambassador Program for University City. The shopping carts, some of the issues that we're seeing, it can't be done. We have a unique issue in University City. We have W.T. Harris and North Tryon, they are state-maintained streets. We put close to \$100,000 a year in maintaining them ourselves, but it's just not enough. So, our goal is to have conversations. We already started after the committee session today, having conversations with our colleagues and others about what will a University City Ambassador Program look like. We've got to get rid of those shopping carts. We've got to get rid of those yard signs. We got rid of the tires. We want this place to be a clean, inviting place. The future also includes our continued walkability. Although, we are three times the size, University City is about 10 square miles, we're probably one of the largest MSDs in the country. I want to repeat that, one of the largest in the country by size, not by budget, by size. We want to make sure that we are advocating for sidewalks and walkability and micro-transit. So, we're going to continue to work with Brent Cagle, I heard his name a little bit earlier, with CATS. We've had conversations with him. We're excited about this one cent sales tax. We understand that it will bring value to University City, because we are part of one of those zones, micro-transit zones, as we see that but also sidewalks. So, we want to make sure that we're increasing those sidewalks in University City. The big thing for us, as mentioned earlier, UNC Charlotte with our [INAUDIBLE] status. We're going to lean into that. We're working with our board members, working with administrators, because as they go through the research and development and go through prototype manufacturing, and go through intellectual property, we want some of those jobs and economic activity landing in University City, specifically University Research Park, and that wraps it up.

Ms. Ajmera said let me give you kudos for your leadership in addressing some of the issues around the lake. Thanks to your leadership, I have seen how lake space around that has transformed. Pretty much at our last year's conversation, there were four points that I had made, and you pretty much worked on all four and you delivered. I appreciate it. Lake area is very clean now. I do not see litter around the lake where it used to be litter. Now, it looks like a very well-kept, well-maintained, very clean environment, where we take care of our natural resources. So, thank you to you and your team. I see your team member is here.

Also, I appreciate how you have supported small businesses and have brought activation. Under your leadership, we have seen so many festivals, from BOOM Charlotte to family-friendly activities to Farmer's Market, I appreciate that, and just advocating for sidewalks and park. When you look at our park space for the University area, we certainly struggle with that. So, I appreciate your continued advocacy on the park space, greenspace, as well as sidewalks. I just can't thank you enough for your leadership, Keith, and you've just been a rock star, you and your team.

Mr. Stanley said thank you. I do want to say this. I thank you for last time I was here, you connected us with a number of different chambers, the Black Chamber, the Asian Chamber, allowing us to connect to have conversations. We have 1,500 small businesses in University City. Because of that partnership, working with those chambers, we've increased our engagement with 910 of them, so that was a big thing for us, thank you.

Mayor Pro Tem Anderson said Mr. Stanley, I'll go and allow the District Council member to close out, and Mr. Graham wants to speak as well. I gave you your congratulations earlier during the Committee meeting but just want to extend that. In your presentation from earlier today, your slide six and seven, it's not here this evening, but I believe it was slide six and seven that focused on public safety. That's a great template, if you will, of how we can attack and address public safety in other areas of the City, because as I continue to state, public safety does not equal CMPD alone. It takes partners and you are manifesting that in your approach at UCP (University City Partners), so thank you for that.

The two other points I want to make. One is these MSDs, you all have so much rich data. You just talked about Placer AI. You all have so much rich data around trips, around time spent, probably around spend, and the demographic and psychographics of your residents. I would love for us, as a part of the City of Charlotte, to be able to utilize that data, extrapolate it up, and see if there are other similar areas throughout the City that might have residents that look the same that we could be activating programs similar to what you're doing, but areas that don't have MSDs. I think there's a strong benefit to having MSDs to be able to activate in neighborhoods. However, we can't have that across the entire City, so Mr. Manager, we need to be leveraging that.

Finally, I'm going to lift up, again, the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. I had the opportunity to spend the weekend in Boston for a reunion, and I was exclusively on alma mater MIT's (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) campus. Many of my sorors, who I went to school with, it was a sorority reunion, we were all kind of trying to figure out where in the world are we. Because we've been there a million times, but the growth right there on East Campus, in particular, was clearly around economic vitality that was tied to the University, but also private industry. So, right there on MIT's campus, you have right across the street, Google, has a major office building, and other tech leaders there, and because of that, there are restaurants and bars and other things, that not only the students can take advantage of, but the private employees, but of course, they're pulling from the graduates from MIT to populate those entry-level jobs. You mentioned that you had a couple of board members thinking about the connectivity with the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. With this R1 status, I think it's an opportunity to be forward thinking around what a five, 10-year plan could look like, bringing private industry in, tapped into the research, as well as the economic vitality of UCP, and I think that's a part that the City can play a role in as well. So, I just really invite you to lean into how that could enhance and really put a view on University City around the University that we don't have today, that could truly elevate that area even more so than the work that you've been doing. So, thank you.

Mr. Stanley said I will say I really appreciate that. Over the past 60 days, I've had the opportunity to connect, not just with UNC Charlotte, but also with NC (North Carolina) State, even with Chapel Hill, about how they're working with, either MSDs or their economic development groups that they partner with, within their areas. We're starting to learn a lot of how this partnership between town and gown really could play out for University City. So, I definitely agree with you. We're a good team to lean in with UNC Charlotte, and with that R1 status, what that could potentially mean for us, as far as intellectual property, and just economic development around University City. Thank you.

Mayor Pro Tem Anderson said absolutely. It's also important to note that UNCC (University of North Carolina Charlotte) is the second largest university, and I would think within a matter of years, we'll take over North Carolina State University as the largest, and they also graduate the most engineers out of any university in the North Carolina University system. So, again, just thinking about economic development and vitality for that part of the city is important.

Mr. Graham said again, I just want to thank you for your leadership as well. As a resident of University City, I can see the changes in terms of the outreach and the commitment to placemaking in University City under your leadership and your team leadership. I want to thank Councilmember Johnson for sure for her advocacy for a wide variety of issues that you need help with from a City perspective, like the 18-wheelers and some of the code enforcement issues, even some of the campaign yard signs that's still out there after a year at-large that still stand, still. Those are real issues. Also talking about how this relationship between the MSD, the City, and more importantly, the State, which really is the crux, I think, that's limiting the growth, and a lot of your budget is being spent on maintaining state-owned roads, which is certainly not fair for sure. We've got to, I think, not let that be an issue for University City Partners, but an issue that we as a Council take up with some of our delegation members, in terms of really getting the type of support necessary for that area, because unlike the other two districts, I-85 is a blessing and a curse. Because we get all this incoming traffic coming through University City, and they throw things out of the window. They don't live in the area, and they really don't care, but the problem rests with the city code enforcement and with you, primarily as the gatekeeper for the City, to ensure that the quality of life of those who want to come up there to shop and play, the quality of life is great.

I won't touch on the University. I think the Mayor Pro Tem articulated clearly what I wanted to reiterate about that. I wish there was a way for us to open up the gates and allow those 26,000 students out there living in all the apartments over there, but to begin to have an experience, if we can get football games off campus onto, hypothetically, Harris and North Tryon Street, where you can kind of see and feel what's happening behind the gates of the campus. So, I know that's a work in progress. I know Betty has been really instrumental in trying to find a way to bleed outside the gates of the campus, so that we can experience the excitement, the growth, see the students. You've got to look really, really hard sometimes just to find students in the area, because they're behind the gates of the wall and there's close to 26,000 of them that come throughout the community each and every week, for one reason or another, whether it's for academic classes or sporting events, etc. So, working with the University, not only to leverage the research status, which will help fuel Research Park, but also the student experience and the experience of growing the University City area in a way that is impactful for all.

So, just wanted to thank you. I want to thank Councilmember Johnson, because I know some of the phone calls I get, and I try to help, and Councilmember Johnson has already done it, and so I really appreciate your support, and that's coming from me to you as a constituent.

Ms. Johnson said oh, thank you, thank you. I am truly honored to represent District 4. I mean, they're engaged and it's just a great district. I want to thank you and your team. How many employees do you have, Keith?

Mr. Stanley said four.

Ms. Johnson said four. Yes, I want to lift Janelle and Drew and Keith and Janet. So, thank you all for the great work that you do. I could just echo what the other members have said, you do a great job. You mentioned forward thinking, Keith is very progressive. You talked about AI. That is something that almost seems like we could require some of the organizations that we fund, to bring us that level of data and that level of details, so thank you. He has a podcast, and he's really big on branding the area. So, continue to do what you do. I am fighting for you, you know that. Keith has opened up the office. He allows the District Four Coalition to meet there, and just really engaged in the community, and I

think that has really helped to raise the level for District Four. Our partnership is working together, and just thank you for the work that you're doing, so keep up the good work.

Mr. Stanley said Councilmember Renee, I want to publicly thank you. The quick thing I want to share before we wrap us, is the fact that you called me about the Sol'Delish Restaurant. They were looking for a place. They grew out of their location in University City. We didn't want to lose them, and she said, "Call Keith. There might be an opportunity." I came running out of the office and we met with the ownership, met with the owner for a potential location. They are looking to be opening up their largest location, again, in University City, and keeping the small location open too, this May 2025. So, having that type of commitment to the community is so important, to see an African American-owned business that is growing by leaps and bounds, hiring locally from the community, absolutely amazing. So, I just want to thank you publicly for that.

Ms. Johnson said I am honored. It's going to be the hottest spot in the City. When they met with me, they wanted to move out of the district. I know, so we've got work. So, not only do we keep that one, he's expanding, and we're excited. When you talk about activate the lake. So, Sol'Delish is opening May 12, 2025, so we're excited. Thank you.

Mayor Pro Tem Anderson said excellent. Any additional comments? Hearing none, thank you, Mr. Stanley.

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ITEM NO. 2: CLOSED SESSION (AS NECESSARY)

No closed session occurred.

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ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Councilmember Ajmera, seconded by Councilmember Graham, and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting.
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The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 p.m.



Ariel Smith, Lead Clerk

Length of Meeting: 1 Hour, 39 Minutes
Minutes completed: April 28, 2025