Charlotte City Council
Housing Committee
Meeting Summary for January 5, 2026

COMMITTEE AGENDA TOPICS

1. Policy Referral – Pollinator Habitats and Naturalistic Landscapes
2. Affordable Housing Innovation: New Models and Strategies

COMMITTEE INFORMATION

Committee Members Present: LaWana Mayfield (CMGC), Renee' Johnson (virtual), Joi Mayo (CMGC), J.D. Mazuera Arias (CMGC), Kimberly Owens (CMGC)

Other Elected Officials Present: Vi Lyles, James Mitchell

Staff Resources:
Monica Allen, City Manager's Office
Rebecca Hefner, Housing & Neighborhood Services
Jerry Green, Housing & Neighborhood Services
Warren Wooten, Housing & Neighborhood Services

Meeting Duration: 9:00 – 10:30 AM

MEETING SUMMARY

City Council member Mayfield called the meeting to order and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Policy Referral: Community Safety – Pollinator Habitats and Naturalistic Landscapes

On December 17, 2025, the Mayor asked the Committee to explore how the city can further encourage the creation of pollinator habitats and naturalistic landscapes while also maintaining safe and sanitary neighborhoods and communities.

Staff provided an overview of the current Health & Sanitation ordinance regarding overgrown vegetation, reviewed the city's current registry program for pollinator gardens and naturalistic landscapes that exempts maintained habitats from code enforcement, and proposed an amendment to the current ordinance to codify the existing enforcement exemption when properties are registered and properly maintained. Property owners with unregistered but eligible maintained habitats that receive a code enforcement notice of violation (NOV) for nuisance vegetation will have an opportunity to register their maintained gardens with the city within 30-days of the NOV to be exempt from continued enforcement process. Staff will develop and implement a communications and outreach campaign about the enhanced program, including aligning it annually with the Spring planting season.

The Committee expressed support for the enforcement exemption for maintained habitats and emphasized the importance of training, education, clear communication including with Homeowner Associations (HOAs), accessible registration options—including for individuals with limited digital access (e.g., seniors)—and opportunities for collaboration with partners such as Mecklenburg County and Trees Charlotte.

MOTON AND VOTE: Council member Mazuera Arias made a motion to recommend updating the ordinance sections 10-1 and 10-155 to codify the code enforcement exemption. Council member Mayo seconded the motion. The Committee voted unanimously to support the motion.

Affordable Housing Innovation: New Models and Strategies

The Affordable Housing Funding Policy encourages innovative, scalable approaches to housing affordability and new incentives to activate private market participation in affordable housing development. Staff provided an overview of two potential new models/strategies for Committee discussion and feedback.

1. <u>Tax Review Supported Investment (TRESI)</u>. A collaborative City-County property tax grant that utilizes new property tax revenue generated by new market-rate developments to support affordable units and crate mixed-income housing. Eligible developments would provide a minimum of 20% of units to households earning 60% and below AMI (required to satisfy state statutes) and receive an annual grant from the City and County equal to a percentage of new property tax revenues.

2. <u>Public Development Model</u>. An innovative strategy for delivering diverse price-point housing for working families with reduced municipal funding. Highlights include: City issues tax-exempt revenue bonds for a development - no Housing Trust Fund or other city funding required; minimum of 20% of units to households earning 60% and below AMI (required to satisfy state statutes); City owns the project (land and improvements) and controls asset at the end of the debt period; City partners with experienced developer and subsequent asset and property managers; City assumes both upside and downside risk.

The Committee expressed interest in further evaluation of the models, noting opportunities to activate Council priorities around anti-displacement, transit-oriented development, and creating units that meet local priorities. Committee members provided feedback on potential program design, optimal affordability mix, and guardrails to protect the city and emphasized the opportunity to utilize local firms and explore applicability to single-family developments to create affordable homeownership opportunities.

Staff will continue to work with internal and external partners to explore and refine possible program parameters and return to Committee at a future meeting with additional information.

Adjournment
Meeting adjourned at approximately 10:30 a.m.

MEETING MATERIALS

All meeting materials are available online at the Charlotte Legistar Site. City Council Committee meeting videos and transcripts can be viewed on the City of Charlotte's YouTube channel . The *January 5, 2026 meeting link is Charlotte City Council Committee Meetings - January 5, 2026*.

Pollinator Habitats and Naturalistic Landscapes

HOUSING COMMITTEE
JANUARY 5, 2026

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Pollinator Habitats and Naturalistic Landscapes

Council Priority Alignment

▶ Great Neighborhoods and Well-Managed Government focused on the Environment

Purpose

▶ Introduce the policy topic referral related to pollinator habitats and naturalistic landscapes, including a summary of current exemptions to the nuisance vegetation ordinance.

Key Takeaways

▶ The city has a Registry Program that has provided exemption from the nuisance vegetation ordinance for maintained pollinator habitats since 2023.

▶ In 2025, staff worked with stakeholders to enhance the Program, including expanding the Program to include naturalistic landscapes.

▶ Updating the ordinance would codify the exemption and bring awareness to the importance of these habitats, however the process is not proposed to change.

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Policy Referral Summary

Description

► The Health & Sanitation Ordinance (Sec. 10-155 overgrown vegetation) requires property owners to cut grass, weeds and vegetation when it exceeds 12 inches in height. Violations of this section are subject to a civil penalty in the amount of $150.

► While the ordinance does not include exemptions for specialized landscaping, the city values and encourages the creation of pollinator habitats and naturalistic landscapes that help support and establish urban wildlife corridors. When properties are registered with the city and properly maintained, they are not considered overgrown vegetation, and are therefore not subject to enforcement under the City's health and sanitation ordinance.

Policy Question

► How can the city further encourage the creation of pollinator habitats and naturalistic landscapes while also maintaining safe and sanitary neighborhoods and communities?

Committee Charge

► Review current Health & Sanitation Ordinance regarding overgrown vegetation

► Explore best practices from other NC and peer cities

► Review current registry process and programs supporting pollinator habitats and naturalistic landscapes

► Determine any recommended policies or approaches for consideration by full Council

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What are Pollinator Habitats and Naturalistic Landscapes?

► **Green spaces designed to support the biodiversity and health of pollinators, birds, and other wildlife and native ecosystems**

► **Often have a diversity of plant species, sizes, forms, and textures, with a focus on the critical role of native species**

► **Benefits include support for pollinators and native wildlife, healthy ecosystem, and reduced environmental impact**

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Habitat Registry Program Background

▶ **The city launched a Pollinator Habitat Registry Program in 2023**

▶ **The Program is a collaboration between Landscape Management, Code Enforcement, Keep Charlotte Beautiful, and the Office of Sustainability**

▶ **Property owners with maintained habitats that are not currently registered and receive a Notice of Violation of the nuisance vegetation ordinance are given 30 days to complete the registration process**

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COMMUNITY
CONNECT + LEARN + EXPLORE

Pollinator Habitat and Naturalistic Landscape

Explore pollinator gardens and naturalistic landscape within the City of Charlotte

Community.charlottenc.gov

CLT Community Home / Pollinator Habitat & Naturalistic Landscape Registration

Pollinator Habitat & Naturalistic Landscape Registration

Join the movement to support pollinators and create natural spaces for wildlife in our city! By registering your maintained pollinator garden or naturalistic landscape with the City of Charlotte, you're helping to build vital urban corridors for pollinators, native wildlife and naturalistic landscapes. Plus, once your application is approved, your maintained habitat will be exempt from the City of Charlotte's nuisance vegetation ordinance.

You also have the option to put your habitat on our interactive map, which highlights our community's growing commitment to conservation. Simply let us know on the application if you'd like your site included. Whether you choose to be on the map or not, your approved maintained habitat or landscape is exempt from the city's ordinance.

Registration

Register a Habitat

You'll need a CLT Community account to register a habitat.
Create Account   **Sign In**

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Ensuring Safety & Sanitation

▶ **Landscape Management evaluates applications**
- If applicant demonstrates that habitat/landscape is designed and maintained with 50% or more native plant species, certification is approved

▶ **Nuisance complaints**
- <u>Unregistered Property</u>
  - ○ If complaint received for an unregistered property with possible qualifying landscape, Code Inspector proceeds with issuing notice of violation (NOV)/door hanger, and provides owner with program information. Owner then has 30 days to register property to qualify for exemption.
- <u>Registered Property</u>
  - ○ If complaint received for registered property, no NOV is issued; Complainant is notified of property status.
  - ○ If multiple complaints received or property appears unmaintained, Code can request review from Landscape Management.

▶ **Certification may be revoked due to:**
- Failure to maintain landscaping (e.g., turf grasses over 12")
- Changes in ownership

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Recent Program Enhancements

▶ **Program enhancements implemented in November 2025 in collaboration with stakeholders:**
- <u>Eligibility</u> - Expanded eligibility to include Naturalistic Landscapes
- <u>Updated Registry</u>: Streamlined registry process, added specific references to exemption from nuisance vegetation ordinance, and updated CLT Community for digital accessibility
- <u>Updated Program Resources</u> – Created new program handout and Frequently Asked Questions, added links to plant lists and planting tips and resources
- <u>Mapping Application</u> - Added the option for property owners to opt-out of inclusion in public-facing interactive map
- <u>Yard Signs</u> - Developed yard signs for participating properties to promote awareness and readily identify participation in city program
- <u>Code</u> – Added 'Registered Garden' banner in the field application for code inspectors

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1/5/2026

Program Outreach and Marketing

- ▶ **Enhance program marketing through the city's social, newsletters and other communication platforms**
- ▶ **Begin yard sign distribution to participants early 2026**
- ▶ **Schedule an outreach campaign in early Spring of each year to align with the planting season**
- ▶ **Community groups can also request staff presentations through the Need-A-Speaker program (cltgov.me/needaspeaker)**

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Municipal Pollinator Ordinances

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Proposed Ordinance Amendment

Sec. 10-155. – Overgrown vegetation.

(a) It shall be unlawful for the owner and/or occupants of a premises to fail to cut overgrown grass, weeds, and other vegetation when the grass, weeds, and other vegetation is of a heigh greater than 12 inches. A civil penalty in the amount of $150.00 may be issued to any person in violation of this section.

(b) Vacant lots adjacent to improved property, except as defined as heavily wooded lots, shall be cut in their entirety. A civil penalty in the amount of $150.00 may be issued to any person in violation of this section.

(c) Vacant lots over one acre shall have a 100-foot buffer area cut adjacent to the nearest premises. A civil penalty in the amount of $150.00 may be issued to any person in violation of this section.

(d) It shall be the duty of the owner and occupant to cut and remove all grass, weeds, and other overgrowth vegetation as often as necessary so as to comply with this provision of this division.

(e) *Exemption.* **This section shall not be construed to prohibit pollinator habitat and naturalistic landscapes when registered with the city and properly maintained by the owner.**

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Proposed Ordinance Amendment

Sec. 10-1. – Definitions.

The following words, terms and phrases, and their derivatives, when used in this article, shall have the meanings ascribed to them in this section, except where the context clearly indicates a different meaning:

Naturalistic landscape means a carefully designed and intentionally maintained area of vegetation that reflects an ecosystem native to the Southeastern United States using regionally native and adapted plant species.

Pollinator habitat means a landscape area designed to support pollinator species, including bees, butterflies, moths, and birds. It consists of a diverse selection of plants primarily native to the southeastern United States that provide nectar, pollen, and habitat across multiple seasons and is maintained without the use of pesticides to protect pollinator health.

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1/5/2026

Process for Amending City Ordinance

▶**If Committee directs staff to draft ordinance amendment:**
- Present topic and ordinance amendments to full City Council at an Action Preview meeting
- Place ordinance amendments with red-line attachment on Council Business Agenda for Council vote
- Speakers can sign up to speak on the Policy item, but a Public Hearing is not required

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Discussion

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Affordable Housing Innovation: New Models & Strategies

HOUSING COMMITTEE

JANUARY 5, 2026

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Topic

Council Priority Alignment

◁ Great Neighborhoods

Purpose

◁ The Affordable Housing Funding Policy encourages innovative, scalable approaches to housing affordability and new incentives to activate private market participation in affordable housing development. Two new models/strategies will be explored for Committee discussion and feedback.

Key Takeaways

◁ Existing housing tools are effective, but not sufficient for all sites or market conditions

◁ New models can increase the impact of public dollars and attract private investment

◁ These approaches support mixed-income development, financial stability, and long-term affordability

◁ Council feedback is requested to guide further evaluation and refinement

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New Models & Strategies

◁ **Where this comes from:**
- NEST Recommendations
- Affordable Housing Funding Policy
- Partner Feedback
- Emerging Opportunities highlighted in City Manager's Memo October 30, 2025

◁ **Why now?**
- <u>Mobility +:</u> Incentivize affordable units along transit lines
- <u>Strategic sites:</u> Leverage opportunities where public ownership already exists or is feasible
- <u>Constrained fiscal environment:</u> Current market conditions have reduced the effectiveness of current approaches

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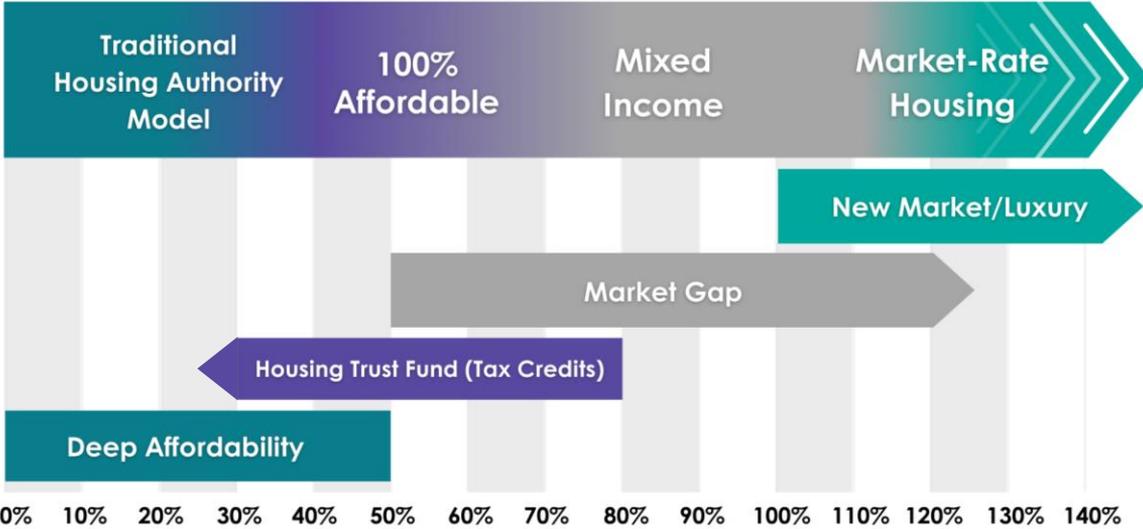
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Expanding Access

◁ **New models can advance City Council Funding Policy location priorities:**
- Locations that increase housing choice and create the greatest impact
- Transit-oriented development areas

◁ **At lower cost**

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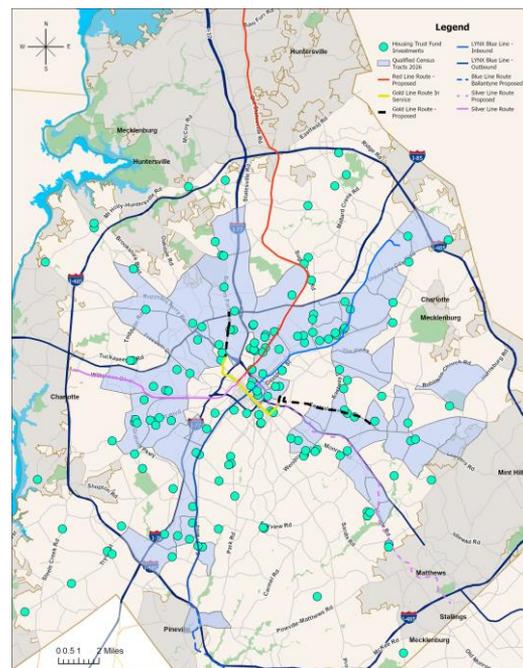
Activating Mixed-Income Housing

Tax Revenue Supported Investment

What Is Tax Revenue Supported Investment (TRESI)?

◁ **A property tax grant model (similar to a Tax Increment Grant) that utilizes new property tax revenue generated by the development to support affordable units and create mixed-income housing**

◁ **Collaborative approach with the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County, modeled after the existing NOAH Rental Subsidy Program partnership**

◁ **Under a TRESI agreement, new market-rate developments would:**
- Receive an annual grant from the City and County equal to a percentage of new property tax revenues
- Provide at least 20% of the units to households at 60% AMI and below

◁ **Affordability period extends through the life of the grant agreement**

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TRESI Model Example

◁ **Uses the change in taxable value to create a funding stream.**

Vacant Land Value: $500,000
Tax Payment: $3,834

Improved Value: $35,000,000
Tax Payment: $268,380

Improved Value: $35,000,000
Increased Revenue: $264,546
★ Grant Creates Affordability

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TRESI Model Example

◁ **An example:**
- Vacant Land Value: $500,000, Tax Payment: $3,834
- Improved Value: $35,000,000, Tax Payment: $268,380
  - *Mecklenburg County $172,445 and City of Charlotte $95,935*
- Increased revenue $256,725 - $3,667 = $264,546

◁ **Using 75% of the increase, $198,410 could be made available annually to support:**
- Fixed affordable units
- A local voucher style program
- Resident services that create economic mobility

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Public Development Model

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What is a Public Development Model?

◁ **A strategy for delivering quality, affordable rental homes for working families at diverse price points with reduced municipal capital funding**

◁ **The City:**
- Issues tax-exempt revenue bonds
- Owns the real estate
- Sets affordability goals and prioritization policy

◁ **Private-sector experts:**
- Developer: delivers the project
- Property manager: operates the building
- Asset manager: protects long-term performance

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How This Differs from What the City Typically Does?

◁ **City would act as <u>owner</u>, not lender**

◁ **Affordability is achieved through use of tax-exempt bonds rather than soft-loan gap financing**

◁ **Most development would have a mixed-income structure:**
- At least 20% of units at 60% AMI
- Up to 80% of units at market rents

◁ **The City assumes both upside and downside risk**

◁ **No city funding is required, and may even generate revenue at bond issuance**

◁ **City controls the asset at end of debt period, enabling reinvestment into deeper affordability or future projects**

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Managing Risk

◁ **Risk mitigation**
- Developer provides construction completion guarantee
- Performance benchmarks for fee developer and manager
- Conservative underwriting assumptions
- Third-party asset management oversight
- Ability to replace operators if performance falters

The City is not self-developing or self-managing—there are "layers" of protection.

City of Charlotte - Owner
Senior Asset Manager / Bondholder
Bondholder Representative
Active Asset Manager
Property Manager
Housing Development

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Assessing New Models

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Mixed-Income:
A Core Model Component

◁ **Market-rate rents:**
- Improve debt coverage and bond feasibility
- Reduce reliance on scarce subsidy dollars
- Cross-subsidize affordability

◁ **Mixed-income improves:**
- Financial stability
- Long-term asset condition
- Resident outcomes

Market-rate units are not the objective; they are the financing mechanism.

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New Tools Activate Council Priorities

◁ **Mobility, Affordability and Anti-Displacement**
- Increase options for affordability along transit lines

◁ **Preserve Housing Trust Fund dollars**
- Engage the private market in solutions so public dollars stretch further

◁ **Rent Stabilization**
- Communities are better positioned to create ongoing rent stability (lower rent escalation over time)

◁ **Unit Prioritization**
- Increase leasing flexibility
- Create units that meet local priorities

◁ **Increases Ability to Leverage Public Land and Partnerships**
- Fire and Police Stations
- Schools
- Libraries

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Flexibility, Options, and Opportunity

◁**Layering multiple approaches provides flexibility for development partners and multiple opportunities to activate city priorities**

- Activates the Affordable Housing Development Allowances in the Unified Development Ordinance (Section 16.4)
- Can layer with other funding sources to achieve deeper affordability (e.g., gap financing, vouchers/rental subsidies)
- Unlocks opportunity for TeamForce Housing by layering corporate or philanthropic investments

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Initial Exploration Underway

◁**Initial exploration underway with City Finance and Strategy & Budget Departments, Attorney's Office, Bond Counsel, Mecklenburg County, and Partners**

◁**TRESI Model:**

- What is the optimal percentage of units, AMI levels, and percentage of tax revenue to make this both financially feasible and fiscally sustainable?
- How might the City and County need to account for changes in projected tax revenue over time? What are the trade-offs involved?

◁**Public Ownership Model:**

- How would additional bond issuance impact other city bond activity and the city's bond rating?
- What are the risks and how would the city manage and mitigate those risks?
- In what ways can the city hold developed properties?

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Considerations and Discussion

◁**These are mixed-income models**
- Primarily creates affordable units at 60% AMI
- Requires additional subsidy for most vulnerable households

◁**There are trade-offs**
- TRESI doesn't require Housing Trust Fund investment, but does reduce future property tax revenue that could support other city and county services
- Public Development Model doesn't require any city investment but does carry new risks

◁**Today's Questions:**
- Do these models align with Council's housing policy goals?
- What parameters for affordability mix and appropriate guardrails?
- Is there interest in further evaluation and refinement of these models for Committee and Council consideration?

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Discussion

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