**Economic Development & Workforce Committee Meeting Summary – November 2, 2026**

**COMMITTEE AGENDA TOPICS**

1. HIIVE Update – Market at 7th Street
2. Policy Referral – Economic Mobility Strategies
3. Charlotte's Got a Lot – November 2026

**COMMITTEE INFORMATION**

**Committee Members Present:** James Mitchell, Chair (arrived 11:07 a.m.), J.D. Mazuera Arias, Victoria Watlington (virtual), Dante Anderson (virtual)

**Committee Members Absent:** LaWana Mayfield

**Other Council Members:** Kimberly Owens, District 5

**Staff Resources:** Alyson Craig, Deputy City Manager
Shahid Rana, Economic Development
Monica Allen, Deputy City Manager
Holly Eskridge, Economic Development
Cheryl Wright, Contracting & Procurement
Steven Coker, Charlotte Business INClusion

**Guest Presenters:** James Labar, Charlotte Center City Partners
Chef Aliyah Wilson, HIIVE Cohort 4 Participant

**Meeting Duration:** 11:08 a.m. – 12:05 p.m.

**MEETING SUMMARY**

The meeting was scheduled for 11:00 a.m. Council member Mitchell arrived at 11:07 a.m. and called the meeting to order at 11:08 a.m. All three agenda items were informational.

**HIIVE Update – Market at 7th Street**

HIIVE (Hub for Inclusivity, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship) is a partnership of the City, Charlotte Center City Partners, and The Market at 7th Street that Council launched with CARES Act funds. A City grant funded the Market kiosk and curriculum, and the City fully funded the first two cohorts; additional partners now sustain the program. HIIVE will have 84 graduates by December 2026, representing more than $6 million in combined revenue and over 200 employees, and 100% of surveyed participants would recommend it.

Cohort 4 includes 23 businesses selected from more than 60 applicants, averaging four years in business, $50,000 in annual revenue, and two employees, with food and beverage making up 54%. The program pairs businesses at different maturity levels for peer learning and connects them to capital (Aspire, Mecklenburg County) and sales opportunities through the Uptown and South End farmers markets. Cohort 4 graduates December 16 at UNC Charlotte's CoLab space. Chef Leah, a Cohort 4 participant, described the program as invaluable for finding resources, building leadership skills, and networking.

**Committee Discussion Highlights:**

- Council member Owens proposed exploring a faith and small business initiative that would package HIIVE's lessons for churches and other faith-community properties to host small businesses through negotiated rents.
- Council member Mitchell welcomed the idea, likening it to the Faith and Housing model, and recognized HIIVE staff.

**OUTCOME.** Informational. No vote taken.

**Policy Referral – Economic Mobility Strategies**
Staff updated the Committee on the July 28, 2026, referral. Following S.L. 2026-41, which eliminated the State's MWBE program effective July 1, the City continues its race- and gender-neutral SBE program under City Charter Section 8.88. The revised CBI Policy, unanimously recommended by this Committee on October 5, was adopted by Council on October 26, and administrative procedures have been updated. SBE goals are reviewed on every eligible Council action, and negotiated goals on CMAR and Design-Build projects are in progress.

The certified SBE pool reached 830 firms as of October 19, up from 805 in August, with about 19 more in process. The certification campaign has approved 36 new certifications and 16 recertifications, and 311 reached 99 businesses, 75 of which expressed interest. The September 10 Business Connections event drew 114 businesses, with 58 booking certification consults.

Economic Development reported that AMPup and REDI are now open to all, guided by the Small Business Ecosystem Assessment. Skilled to Build launched September 22; the technical assistance grant solicitation closed October 30 with more than 22 applicants, and five to six will be funded. The workforce component carries more than $2 million, targeting 1,100+ residents and 55+ businesses. The Business District Support Program will launch with $600,000, awarding $60,000 to $125,000 by tier in exchange for district data and business intelligence.

**Committee Discussion Highlights:**
- Council member Mitchell thanked staff for moving the business district policy from budget approval to rollout in under six months.
- Council members Watlington and Anderson commended staff for pivoting quickly.
- Visiting Council member Kimberly Owens asked whether the workforce gap analysis and impact report are being used to track progress; staff confirmed they guide targeted procurement outreach and workforce training. Staff were also asked to work with Community Relations and the Office of International Relations to identify untapped talent in growing industries such as healthcare.
- Council member Mitchell asked for stronger coordination with transit-related small business initiatives and one central point of contact for small businesses. Deputy City Manager Allen noted early conversations with Chair Howard on streamlining communication and certification.
- Visiting Council member Owens requested a list of HIIVE graduates and other business programs Council members can use for town halls and events; staff agreed to compile it with CBI and Procurement.

**OUTCOME.** Informational. No vote taken. The referral remains open for continued discussion.

**Charlotte's Got a Lot – November 2026**
Staff shared notable events taking place across the city in November 2026:
- Society of American Military Engineers (SAME) Small Business Conference; November 4-6
- Checkers vs. Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins; November 6-7
- Ally Tipoff; November 8
- Banking Transformation Summit; November 9-10
- Leonardo vs. Michelangelo Opens (Bloom Studios); November 12
- Novant Health Charlotte Marathon; November 14
- Global Entrepreneurship Week Kickoff (The Market at 7th Street); November 16
- Charlotte Auto Show; November 19-22

- University City Winter Celebration; November 21
- Carolina Panthers vs. Baltimore Ravens; November 22
- 80th Annual Novant Health Thanksgiving Eve Parade; November 25
- Dick Vitale Invitational; November 27
- South End Shop Small Saturday; November 28

Staff also highlighted Global Entrepreneurship Week, Charlotte's sixth year hosting, with nearly 20 free events listed at charlottenc.gov/GEW.

**OUTCOME.** Informational. No vote taken.

**Adjournment**
Meeting adjourned at approximately 12:05 p.m.

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**MEETING MATERIALS**

All meeting materials are available online at the Charlotte Agendas Site. City Council Committee meeting videos and transcripts can be viewed on the City of Charlotte's Gov channel. The direct link to the November 2, 2026 meeting video is: City Council Economic Development & Workforce Committee - November 2, 2026.