



Charlotte City Council
Workforce & Business Development Committee
Summary
March 1, 2021

COMMITTEE AGENDA TOPICS

Strategic Employment Plan
Corridors of Opportunity – Employment Study
Chair’s Report

COMMITTEE INFORMATION

Committee Members Present: Tariq Bokhari (Chair), Malcolm Graham (Vice-Chair), Dimple Ajmera, Renee Johnson and Greg Phipps

Others: Mayor Vi Lyles
Councilmember Braxton Winston
Councilmember Victoria Watlington
Christina Thigpen, Economic Development Department
Denada Jackson, Office of Constituent Services

Staff Resources: Tracy Dodson, City Manager’s Office
Fran West, Economic Development Department
Pam Wideman, Housing & Neighborhood Services
John Lewis, Charlotte Area Transit System
Alyson Craig, Planning, Design & Development

Guests: Danielle Frazier, President & CEO, Charlotte Works
Amy Holloway, Partner/Principal/National Director, Economic Development Advisory, Ernst & Young LLP
John Rees, Director of Research, Economic Development Advisory Services, Ernst & Young LLP
Chris Engle, Associate National Director, Economic Development Advisory Services, Ernst & Young LLP

Meeting Duration: 12:00pm-1:41pm

ATTACHMENTS

1. Agenda – March 1, 2021
 2. Presentations – Strategic Employment Plan; Corridors of Opportunity – Employment Study
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DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHTS

Chairman Bokhari called the virtual meeting to order and asked committee members, City staff and guests to introduce themselves. He gave a high-level overview of the agenda topics and then turned the meeting over to Assistant City Manager Tracy Dodson to introduce the agenda topics.

Strategic Employment Plan

Mr. Bokhari shared the goal was to brainstorm and provide future policy direction on how jobs and workforce connect.

Tracy Dodson reminded the committee of the concept of the Strategic Employment Plan during discussions at the Council Summit in January and how this integrates into our work across City departments with other strategic plans as well as our workforce partners.

Fran West provided the committee with an update on the Strategic Employment Plan, which allows our community and businesses to create a framework that defines our employment ecosystem for job growth upward mobility, economic success as well as coordinating our existing strategies. Ms. West also shared how the Strategic Employment Plan will guide and inform how we support investments to date, help the unemployed and underemployed, grow key sectors, advance the City's job reputation, support talent acquisition and retention, reinforce competitive position, provide upskilling resources, achieve equity goals and future-proof the City.

The Committee, other Councilmembers, guests and staff shared their feedback on things we need to consider to lay the groundwork for the Strategic Employment Plan.

Danielle Frazier, Charlotte Works

Charlotte Works' goal is to align the ecosystem between workforce development councils (CPCC, Goodwill, CMS and others) for job seekers. With COVID, other issues to address have compounded for job seekers including food insecurity, housing, transportation, etc. The EY work has been a missing piece for them as a touch point on the work the City is doing in the Corridors of Opportunity to address the needs and gaps and where to invest more. They would also like to connect with the City long-term on talent sourcing partnerships and advocating and educating businesses on their untapped talent. Are there opportunities for the City to pull efforts together and advocate for data sharing?

CM Watlington asked about what metrics we're trying to impact as we look at the City's long-term role.

West: We would have to collaborate with our partners to address those metrics that are trackable.

We're already working on unemployment.

CM Johnson asked about the data study we did on barriers in the different zip codes and whether we could get the history and what we're doing now to share with Mayor Lyles and other Councilmembers who were not a part of the discussion.

Dodson: That information will be addressed during the Corridors of Opportunity discussion. We have been building on that data since the fall.

CM Phipps asked if the City has done an inventory on what kind of jobs are out there that companies need to fill so we can put an action plan around them and meet job expectations. What's the status of that effort?

West: Through our business retention efforts, the City and County work with existing companies to make sure they have the talent they need to be successful and to address their challenges. We connect them with Charlotte Works, Goodwill, CPCC, UNCC and others to find entry level talent. We also did a recent study on tech talent to bring in experienced tech talent for our city.

Frazier: Charlotte Works also looks at the hiring needs of existing employers through our data and research. We have seven key sectors in demand and have great partnerships with Novant Health, Atrium Health and other companies as well as our workforce provider councils.

Alyson Craig, Planning, Design & Development

Ms. Craig shared that conversations had already begun with the Economic Development Department on the Strategic Employment Plan and how this ties to the Charlotte 2040 Comprehensive Plan, particularly around increasing employment in targeted industries and looking at place type mapping in our community after the Comprehensive Plan is adopted. It's important to be strategic about what Charlotte needs in terms of access to careers, what those jobs are and what businesses we want to bring into our communities.

CM Winston spoke about his work in the arts and entertainment industry and some of the challenges facing the workforce around affordable housing and workspaces as well as cultural capital. He suggested creating infrastructure and an environment where arts and cultural can thrive in communities as businesses.

John Lewis, Charlotte Area Transit System

Mr. Lewis shared his thoughts on what we could do from a planning and development perspective to support economic development as it relates to the Transit System 2030 Plan. He talked about the rail and bus investments CATS has made in the corridors and how that connects people in our workforce who have jobs that require frequent and reliable transportation service. The City has begun to understand the opportunities that the future will provide so we have to be flexible in providing mobility options to our community to support housing, planning and employment training opportunities.

Pam Wideman, Housing & Neighborhood Services

Ms. Wideman spoke about Council's support around the Affordable Housing Plan to create family self-sufficiency and how we can align the Strategic Employment Plan to help low to moderate income working families obtain and sustain affordable housing. The City's current practices on locational guidelines speak to the amount of investment to put affordable housing in place. In terms of the scoring tool, they look at the metrics study around current job centers to determine proposed development. She sees this as an opportunity on the backend to be intentional about guiding those conversations as we recruit jobs and work with the community to build out the jobs plan.

CM Johnson asked about the average cost of a two-bedroom apartment in Charlotte.

Wideman: In terms of a market rate and location, that can range from \$1200 to \$1800 a month.

CM Johnson also expressed that we should be creating living wage jobs for our workforce so they can afford to live in Charlotte.

Ms. Dodson reiterated to the committee that the City is also looking at the Corridors of Opportunity to tie into the work of the Strategic Employment Plan to address the needs and the barriers. For example, staff is having conversations with Renaissance West to help create a pipeline for jobs.

Next steps for the Strategic Employment Plan include:

- Identifying key partners
- Building out shared vision and core strategic framework
- Determine budget for consideration
- Present to leadership for approval
- Target July 1 kickoff

Corridors of Opportunity – Employment Study

Fran West gave an overview of the work EY has been leading on employment in the Corridors of Opportunity and introduced guests from EY to start the presentation.

Amy Holloway provided an update on the process for the Corridors of Opportunity Employment Study. She shared with the committee EY's work is parallel to the Strategic Employment Plan and provided highlights of their data driven results.

John Rees gave an overview of EY's study focus on the three Corridors of Opportunity (Beatties Ford, Sugar Creek and Freedom/Wilkinson/West). EY looked at the employment dynamics where high poverty and unemployment rates are concentrated. They also conducted resident and employer surveys in their analysis.

Highlights to date include:

- Despite record levels of employment prior to the pandemic, in 2019 nearly 100,000 Charlotte residents continued to live in poverty.
- At the beginning of 2020, the Charlotte's unemployment rate was near its lowest level in a generation. By May 2020, the city's unemployment rate approached 14%.
- At the end of 2020, there were 15,000 additional unemployed Charlotte residents compared to the beginning of the year.
- Unemployment in all three Corridors is higher than the citywide average.
- Communities of color represent 85% to 90% of the population in each of the three Corridors. Corridor residents are also relatively young.
- Unemployment rates among residents between 16-24 years old ranges from 20% to 33% in the three Corridors examined.
- Corridor residents with higher levels of educational attainment are far less likely to be unemployed. Still, Corridor residents are more likely to be unemployed compared to other Charlotte regions, regardless of educational attainment.
- Real estate availability along the Corridors is mixed – typically older commercial buildings and/or small square footage.

From an industry perspective, each Corridor has areas of specialty:

- Beatties Ford Corridor - Transportation & Healthcare Support
- Wilkinson Boulevard Corridor - Transportation & Material Moving

- Sugar Creek Corridor – Production & Material Moving
- In recent years, employment in all three corridors has increased. Still, only gains in the Wilkinson Boulevard Corridor outpaced the citywide average between 2014 and 2019.
- There is relatively little alignment between those who live in the Corridors and those who work in the corridors. Corridor residents work in every part of Charlotte. They are also disproportionately reliant on public transport.
- There has been a lot of momentum in the Corridors. But even still, progress was relatively limited given Charlotte’s overall economic performance. There is concern that the gap could widen within the Corridors, even with progress.

CM Watlington asked if each corridor’s area of specialty was reflective of the businesses along the corridors or the people skill.

Rees: It’s actually the people skill.

CM Watlington also expressed her desire to see data on the future state versus the current state as we look at good fits for people to move to the next level who struggle with affordable housing. Can we broaden our work team to include the County in the wraparound services?

CM Johnson asked if we could include information on barriers regarding criminal justice.

Engle: EY is surveying residents to include this information in their report.

CM Ajmera asked what areas of specialty was EY able to find with the Eastland/Albemarle corridor. She wants to see this work tied in with the Office of Equity, Mobility and Immigrant Integration.

Dodson: For the deeper dive work, EY only looked at three corridors (Beatties Ford, Sugar Creek and Freedom/Wilkinson/West). We have done a high-level research on all the corridors, but we haven’t done the deep dive on Central and Albemarle, which will be next.

CM Phipps asked if we have any land capacity to bring in logistics/transportation jobs in the corridors.

Dodson: EY is looking at what’s for sale/lease in the (Beatties Ford, Sugar Creek and Freedom/Wilkinson/West) corridor for opportunities. We’re taking an assessment and having conversations with the UDO team on land use.

Chair’s Report

Councilmember Bokhari shared the chair report will be an opportunity for the committee to think of items that have bubbled up to a level to share with staff to take away but not to bog them down. Mr. Bokhari also has plans to meet with council members periodically to discuss their ideas.

Staff Introduction

Tracy Dodson circled back to introduce Christina Thigpen, new Deputy Director for the Economic Development Department. Ms. Thigpen started in February and comes to the City from Northwood Office. Ms. Thigpen shared her excitement to join the City and that her work at Northwood involved the Ballantyne Reimagined rezoning approval process. Prior to that, she was employed at the Bissell Companies in a similar capacity. Her background is in communications and marketing.

The committee welcomed Ms. Thigpen to Team Charlotte.

The meeting adjourned at 1:41pm