



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD

October 08, 2025, at 3:00 PM

www.fortlauderdale.gov/government/edab

Meeting Minutes

Board Members	Attendance	Present	Absent
Enrique Bargioni, Chair	P	10	0
Russ Klenet, Vice Chair	P	9	1
Jay Adams	P	9	1
William Feinberg	P	8	2
Nicholas Kollias	P	10	0
Marianna S. DeJager	P	9	1
Allyson Meyers	P	9	1
Jason Hughes	P	5	3
Haley Dowling	P	6	0
Kymrae Mizell Hill	P	4	1

Staff

- Von Howard, Administrative Supervisor (Present)
- Daphnee Sainvil, Intergovernmental Affairs Manager (Present)
- Ashley Dixon, Management Analyst (Not Present)
- Melissa Mata, Management Analyst (Present)
- Amber Cabrera, Project Manager I (Present)
- Michael Ferrera, Urban Planner II (Present)
- Jim Hetzel, Principal Planner (Present)

I. Call to Order & Determination of Quorum

Chair, Enrique Bargioni, called the meeting to order at 3:06 PM. Roll call was issued, and it was noted that quorum was established.

II. Approval of Minutes

Chair, Enrique Bargioni, carried out a motion to approve the EDAB Minutes from the meeting that took place on Wednesday, September 10, 2025. Motion moved by Member Feinberg and seconded by Member DeJager. Motion passed; EDAB Minutes were approved at 3:07 PM. Vice Chair Klenet arrived to the meeting.

III. Presentation from Downtown Development Authority

At 3:08 PM, guest speakers Jenni Morejon and Matthew Schnur from Florida Downtowns, Inc. presented an update on the organization’s progress, partnerships, and goals for Downtown Fort Lauderdale. They emphasized the importance of maintaining dialogue between the Downtown Development Authority (DDA), the Economic Development Department, and the Economic Development Advisory Board (EDAB) to advance shared priorities for economic vitality.

The presentation outlined that Downtown Fort Lauderdale currently comprises more than 15,000

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residential units and approximately 8 million square feet of mixed-use space. The DDA noted that downtown's once underutilized land has been transformed into key cultural amenities that now enhance the area's civic identity. The new federal courthouse and various redevelopment efforts are examples of how civic uses continue to shape the downtown landscape.

Fort Lauderdale was highlighted as one of the nation's top "live, work, and play" cities, with a growing population in the downtown area of approximately 27,000 residents. The DDA reported that downtown serves as Broward County's leading economic engine, generating an estimated \$43 billion in annual economic activity—a 44% increase primarily driven by high wage sectors such as finance, law, and technology. These industries represent nearly a quarter of the region's economic impact.

Looking toward the future, the DDA discussed growth opportunities and emerging drivers, particularly in the creative and technology sectors. Developments such as T3 FAT Village were highlighted as hubs for millennial and young professional talent, featuring innovative timber design and fostering a community of creators. The DDA also shared news of a groundbreaking partnership with Napster Corporation (formerly Infinite Reality), which will introduce immersive technology and media entertainment experiences to Fort Lauderdale. Guest Speaker, Ms. Morejon suggested inviting representatives from this project to a future EDAB meeting for a deeper discussion.

The DDA further emphasized the need for more corporate institutions to invest in downtown to reinforce Fort Lauderdale's position as a hub for innovation and growth. Another key point that raised concerns were downtown schools, which are currently under-enrolled and underutilized. The DDA expressed interest in exploring potential public-private partnerships (P3s) to enhance educational infrastructure and attract families to the downtown area.

Board members then discussed several related issues. Member Feinberg inquired about additional large companies that could be attracted to Fort Lauderdale. Member Adams expressed concerns about the accuracy of job data, emphasizing the need for better tracking of actual employment rather than projected economic impact. Vice Chair Klenet noted that one persistent challenge is the lack of nearby educational options for employees' children, suggesting the City explore consulting options to reimagine underused assets such as parking garages for mixed-use or educational redevelopment. Member Adams raised mobility as another significant issue affecting downtown growth, recommending that the City explore stronger advocacy for education and mobility improvements.

Board member Mizell Hill asked how Fort Lauderdale's growth compares to neighboring cities, including Miami and West Palm Beach. The DDA responded that while Miami remains the regional powerhouse with global recognition, West Palm Beach is increasingly attractive for residential

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~~growth, whereas Fort Lauderdale continues to serve as the region's central economic connector.~~

~~Members thanked Mrs. Morejon and Mr. Matthew Schnur for the presentation and the data.~~

IV. Presentation from Downtown Development Authority

After the presentation from the DDA, Michael Ferrera from the Development Services Department (DSD) presented an overview of the proposed Certificate of Use process. He explained that the certificate would verify whether a business is permitted to operate in a specific zoning district and would apply in situations involving a change of use, new building permits, or new business tax applications. In response to a question from Member Klenet, Mr. Ferrera clarified that the certificate would not replace the existing change of use or building permit processes but would function in conjunction with the Building, Planning, and Zoning divisions.

Board members discussed the implications of this new process. Member Feinberg noted that while this issue is not directly within EDAB's purview, it remains important for the Board to understand how it could impact local businesses. Member DeJager disagreed, stating that EDAB has previously requested updates on similar procedural matters. Mr. Ferrera confirmed that the Certificate of Use process has not yet been implemented and that amendments to City Code, application fees, and possible exemptions are still being developed.

Intergovernmental Affairs Manager, Daphnee Sainvil, addressed the Board, noting that feedback was being gathered to improve and streamline the process before presenting it to Assistant City Manager, Chris Cooper. She shared that draft language would be distributed to members for review and that comments would be consolidated for discussion at the next meeting to form unified recommendations. Several members expressed that while the Certificate of Use is valuable, the subsequent steps in the permitting process remain complex and need refinement. Member Feinberg agreed that the certificate is an important step forward and encouraged all members to review the materials and come prepared to discuss them at the next meeting.

V. Division Reports

~~There were no concentration updates presented at this meeting. Staff shared that legislative updates will be provided in future sessions and confirmed that the City Manager is expected to attend the next EDAB meeting scheduled for November.~~

VI. Areas of Concentration

~~No individual member reports were presented at this meeting.~~

VII. Member Reports

~~No individual member reports were presented at this meeting.~~



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VIII. Meeting adjourned at 4:53 PM.

With no further business, Chair Bargioni motioned to adjourn the meeting. The motion was made by Member Klenet and seconded by Member Meyers. The meeting was adjourned at 4:53 PM.

The next EDAB meeting will be on November 12, 2025, at DSD Building.

Any written public comments made 48 hours prior to the meeting regarding items discussed during the proceedings have been attached hereto.



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Board Members	Attendance	Present	Absent
Enrique Bargioni, Chair	P	11	0
Russ Klenet, Vice Chair	P	10	1
Jay Adams	P	10	1
William Feinberg	P	9	2
Nicholas Kollias	P	11	0
Marianna S. DeJager	A	9	2
Allyson Meyers	P	10	1
Jason Hughes	P	6	3
Haley Dowling	P	7	0
Kymrae Mizell Hill	P	5	1

Staff

- Von Howard, Administrative Supervisor (Present)
- Porshia Garcia, Community Services Department Director (Present)
- Katrina Johnson, Interim Asst. Community Services Department Director (Not Present)
- Melissa Mata, Management Analyst (Present)
- Michael Ferrera, Urban Planner II (Present)

I. Call to Order & Determination of Quorum

Chair, Enrique Bargioni, called the meeting to order at 3:02 PM. Roll call was issued, and it was noted that quorum was established.

II. Approval of Minutes

Chair, Enrique Bargioni, carried out a motion to approve the EDAB Minutes from the meeting that took place on Wednesday, October 8, 2025. Motion moved by Member Feinberg and seconded by Member Hughes. Motion passed; EDAB Minutes were approved at 3:04 PM.

III. Certificate of Use Discussion

Staff reintroduced the Certificate of Use (COU) initiative for Board feedback before its presentation to the City Commission. The discussion consisted of the purpose of COU as a front-end-zoning verification tool to prevent incompatible business uses before leases are signed. Community Services Department Director, Porshia Garcia, gave a brief explanation of the discussion as a reminder of the purpose of the requested feedback.

There were concerns from the Board about the complexities of the existing permitting structure, including unexpected inspection requirements, high impact fees, and change-of-use challenges. Member Adams highlighted that change-of-use processes often remain burdensome even when a business transitions between uses that appear similar on the front end.



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Examples included:

- A space cycling between office, retail, office again, still triggering full architectural drawings, fire review, and ADA upgrades.
- Businesses paying thousands in fees simply because of use classification changes that did not materially alter intensity.

Director Garcia and Mr. Ferrera clarified distinctions between zoning-based COU and state-regulated building code-driven Change of Use. They also informed the members that parking calculations and intensity-of-use triggers were reviewed. It was further explained that it is recommended that each business owner confirm that a proposed business use is permitted *before* the tenant signs a lease or proceeds with costly buildout investments.

The new process will help reduce the number of businesses unknowingly entering incompatible or non-permissible spaces. It will also improve efficiency by routing applications directly to the appropriate divisions (Zoning, Business Tax, Building).

Vice Chair Klenet proposed having staff consider integrating AI-driven pre-screening tools to modernize and expedite the permitting process.

A motion was made by Member Feinberg for EDAB to support the COU proposal and recommend forwarding it to the City Commission. Member Hughes seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

IV. 2026 Meeting Calendar Review

~~Staff presented the proposed EDAB 2026 schedule that would be submitted to the City Clerk's Office for implementation. Director Garcia suggested the board to have meetings held at the 101 Tower on the 11th floor as it is commonly used by other advisory boards and committees. The Board Members expressed they would like to continue having their meetings held at the conference rooms of the Development Services Department Building.~~

~~There was discussion amongst the Board to move the November 11, 2026, meeting as it would be conflicting with Veterans Day observance. Also, a possible implementation of a summer recess (June-August) due to typically lighter agenda needs.~~

~~Chair Bargioni motioned to accept the proposed 2026 meeting calendar with the proposed adjustments. Member Feinberg seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously. The Board Members will not meet during June and July and the November meeting has been rescheduled to November 4, 2026.~~

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There were no division report updates presented at this meeting. However, Member Feinberg inquired if Manager Williams would be attending a future meeting as previously requested. Director Garcia informed the members that she would inquire to see if Assistant City Manager Chris Cooper could attend in her stead.

VI. Areas of Concentration

Member Dowling stated that she would like to focus specifically on economic development through real estate. Member Feinberg will only concentrate on the restaurant industry. Chair Bargioni nominated Member Adams to concentrate on small business permitting. Member Adams accepted the change. Changes of the concentrations will be reflected in the December Agenda.

VII. Member Reports

No individual member reports were presented at this meeting.

VIII. Expanded Board Discussion Items**a. EDAB Request for Tour Discussion With local Marine Industries**

Vice Chair Klenet proposed that the Board revisit the idea of hosting a field visit to major marine economic centers such as Roscioli Yachting Center, Denison Yachting Center, Broward Marine, and Frank & Jimmy's Propeller Shop.

The trip to meet local marine industries would be with the purpose of gaining firsthand awareness of the operations, workforce pipeline needs, and economic contribution of the marine industry. Additionally, it will help strengthen the Board's understanding of infrastructure and space requirements associated with one of Fort Lauderdale's strongest economic engines.

b. School Board of Broward County Invite

Member Feinberg suggested inviting both City of Fort Lauderdale's Chief Education Officer and Broward School Board Member Dr. Allen Zeman to be a part of an upcoming meeting focusing on under-enrolled and underutilized school properties that sit on large parcels of land. These sites may offer long-term opportunities for public-private partnerships, mixed-use redevelopment, workforce housing, early childhood centers, or innovation-focused facilities.

Members emphasized that education, land use, and economic development are closely connected, affecting talent attraction, corporate relocation decisions, neighborhood stability, workforce readiness, and the City's long-range planning goals. Engaging education leaders would allow the Board to better understand which properties may be suitable for redevelopment, explore partnership models used in other cities, align school district assets with the City's



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~~economic development priorities, and ensure the City is prepared should the School District consider consolidating or repurposing any sites.~~

~~Member Feinberg stated that he would reach out to Dr. Zeman to inquire about his availability for the December 2025 meeting and include staff following his response.~~

IX. Meeting adjourned at 4:53 PM.

~~With no further business, Chair Bargioni motioned to adjourn the meeting. The motion was made by Member Hughes and seconded by Member Mizell Hill. The meeting was adjourned at 4:53 PM.~~

~~The next EDAB meeting will be on December 10, 2025, at DSD Building.~~

~~Any written public comments made 48 hours prior to the meeting regarding items discussed during the proceedings have been attached hereto.~~