



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD

June 11, 2025, at 3:00 PM

www.fortlauderdale.gov/government/edab

Meeting Minutes

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

Staff

Von Howard, Administrative Supervisor (Present)

Daphnee Sainvil, Public Affairs Division Manager (Not Present)

Ashley Dixon, Management Analyst (Not Present)

Melissa Mata, Management Fellow (Present)

Communication to the City Commission

Vote made by Chair Bargioni to send the recommendation to the City Commission. Vote was approved with a majority vote of 8 to 2.

The Economic Development Advisory Board (EDAB) recommends that the City Commission implements improved communication and online tools to assist small business owners and entrepreneurs in navigating the steps to open a new business or location within our City such as SizeUpFTL, which we are impressed by and look forward to seeing its success. These recommendations may not all be accomplished immediately so we tried to list them in the order of our recommendations for implementation. We feel SizeUpFTL was a huge step in the right direction and think the below can help the small business development in our community continue to grow. We would like the Commission to specifically understand that these are long-term goals to be implemented over time and in stages. We believe these are good ideas to be thinking about as we consider economic development in Fort Lauderdale.

I. Call to Order & Determination of Quorum

Chair, Enrique Bargioni, called the meeting to order at 3:10 PM. Roll call was issued, and it was noted that quorum was established.

II. Motion to Approve Virtual Participation

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Chair, Enrique Bargioni, carried a motion to approve the virtual participation of Member, Haley Dowling. No member opposed; motion passed. Member Dowling was able to join the meeting virtually without any issues.

III. Approval of Minutes

Chair, Enrique Bargioni, carried out a motion to approve the EDAB Minutes from the meeting that took place on Wednesday, April 14, 2025. Motion moved by Member Feinberg and seconded by Vice Chair Klenet. Motion passed; EDAB Minutes were approved at 3:14 PM.

IV. Draft Recommendation to the City Commission

The meeting moved to the next agenda item which is the discussion of reviewing the drafted recommendation to the City Commission drafted by Member DeJager. A vote was made to approve the draft language of the written recommendations to improve communications to the business community. Chair Bargioni set a vote to send the recommendation to the City Clerk for submission to the agenda. Vote was approved with a majority vote of 8 to 2. The Communication presented to the City Commission will begin with the following statement:

"The Economic Development Advisory Board (EDAB) recommends that the City Commission implements improved communication and online tools to assist small business owners and entrepreneurs in navigating the steps to open a new business or location within our City such as SizeUpFTL, which we are impressed by and look forward to seeing its success. These recommendations may not all be accomplished immediately so we tried to list them in the order of our recommendations for implementation. We feel SizeUpFTL was a huge step in the right direction and think the below can help the small business development in our community continue to grow. We would like the Commission to specifically understand that these are long-term goals to be implemented over time and in stages. We believe these are good ideas to be thinking about as we consider economic development in Fort Lauderdale.

Background: *Small businesses are the backbone of our local economy, and it is crucial that we provide them with the necessary resources and support to thrive. Currently, many entrepreneurs face challenges in understanding the regulatory requirements, permits, and processes involved in starting a business in Fort Lauderdale. Enhancing our communication and online tools can significantly streamline these processes and foster a more business-friendly environment.*

Recommendations:

1. **Centralized Online Portal:** *Develop a centralized online portal or information website that consolidates all information related to starting a business in Fort Lauderdale. This portal should include step-by-step guides, downloadable forms, and links to relevant departments and resources. It should be user-friendly and accessible on both desktop and mobile devices. SizeUpFTL addresses some of this, in its current stage, but we feel there is*

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a lot of opportunity here to slowly implement more stages and capabilities.

2. **Interactive Checklists and Tutorials:** *Create interactive checklists and video tutorials that guide entrepreneurs through the various stages of business setup, from obtaining permits to complying with zoning regulations. These tools can help demystify the process and ensure that business owners are well-informed.*
3. **Social Media Marketing:** *Continue to leverage social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, Next Door, etc.) to disseminate information about SizeUpFTL and updates about the business setup process. Regular posts, live Q&A sessions, and success stories of local entrepreneurs can engage the community and provide valuable insights. Social media can also be used to promote upcoming webinars, workshops, and other resources available to business owners. In addition, we've found it would be beneficial to allow neighbors to repost these online.*
4. **Regular Webinars and Workshops:** *Continue to organize regular webinars and workshops in collaboration with local business organizations and chambers of commerce. These sessions can cover topics such as business planning, financing options, and regulatory compliance, providing valuable insights and networking opportunities for entrepreneurs.*
5. **Feedback Mechanism:** *Establish a feedback mechanism that allows business owners to share their experiences and suggestions for improving the city's business processes. This feedback can be used to continuously refine and enhance the resources and support provided.*
6. **Virtual Assistance and Chat Support:** *Implement a virtual assistant or chat support feature on the city's website to provide real-time assistance to business owners. This service can answer frequently asked questions, provide guidance on specific issues, and direct users to the appropriate resources.*

Conclusion: *By implementing these recommendations, the City of Fort Lauderdale can create a more supportive and efficient environment for small business owners and entrepreneurs. This will not only encourage economic growth but also strengthen our community by fostering innovation and job creation.*

Thank you for considering these recommendations. We are confident that with your support, we can make Fort Lauderdale an even more attractive destination for business development."

City Liaison, Melissa Mata and Von Howard, explained the process of the recommendation. Majority voted to send the recommendation to the City Commission with Chair Bargioni and Vice Chair Klenet stating reservations about immediately sending the recommendation to the City Clerk's office. Chair Bargioni suggested giving the SizeUp FTL platform a chance to produce a report to determine whether it can remain as is or be improved. Vice Chair Klenet stated the advisory board could focus on other things. Ms. Mata asked who would be able to represent the Board at the City Commission meeting in case of any questions. Member DeJager agreed she would represent the advisory board in front of the City Commission.

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V. Member Discussions

Chair Bargioni opened the discussion by congratulating City Liaison, Von Howard, for sending the Spotlight FTL page to the board members. The Spotlight FTL page includes highlights such as the Aquatic Center, business growth initiatives, a movie studio proposal, and the Las Olas Marina and the upcoming Sistrunk Empowerment Summit. Chair Bargioni expressed how the public can have access to all the major projects on one city page. Chair Bargioni continued his remarks and mentioned a recent Forbes article that dubbed Fort Lauderdale "the city of the future," noting the city's anticipated 40–50% growth over the next 5 to 7 years.

Chair Bargioni continued the conversation urging the board to focus on attracting innovative companies to Fort Lauderdale. He emphasized the importance of targeting emergent, not just large, companies and suggested board members brainstorm company names that would be a good fit in the City. Examples mentioned included Citadel and multiple hedge funds that have relocated to Florida. Member Meyers noted that many of these opportunities are "low-hanging fruit" that don't require substantial public investment. She continued to state companies are now being impacted by tariffs. She continued to question the board how much business growth there has been since COVID. Chair Bargioni underscored the potential to double the impact in the City by attracting innovative companies to anticipate the future and increase attraction.

Vice Chair Klenet acknowledged the innovative ideas but cautioned that significant financial incentives are often required to attract cutting-edge companies. He pointed out that Fort Lauderdale faces tough competition from other regions including municipalities nearby. He referenced delays in city hall development and the recent issuance of an RFI for a designed criteria architect to align with the City Hall's planning goals. Vice Chair Klenet mentioned there are other developments the City Commission is focusing on than the attraction of innovative companies.

Chair Bargioni revisited his initial request and suggested discussing innovative companies with the Commission in the future, supported by a curated list of potential prospects. Vice Chair Klenet recommended to have the Broward Alliance be a guest speaker to clarify which companies have been contacted. Member DeJager mentioned Broward Alliance has a list of potential companies and agreed on having them be a guest speaker for the next meeting. Vice Chair Klenet also suggested to have President and CEO of the Downtown Development Authority of Fort Lauderdale, Jenni Morejon, as a guest speaker to speak on downtown

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developments and projects. Member Feinberg supported inviting the DDA first, followed by the Broward Alliance. Additional potential partners include the marine and boat industries. The board recognized the value in understanding where funds are being allocated to better align objectives. Chair Bargioni went back to the initial request to ask members to submit one or two company names to consider attracting to the city.

To strengthen credibility and foster strategic planning, Vice Chair Klenet suggested conversations with regional economic organizations. City of Fort Lauderdale, Public Affairs, Daphnee Sainvil, was identified as a valuable resource to provide a debrief on how the state budget will affect Fort Lauderdale. Once legislation concludes, Ms. Sainvil would be invited to brief members.

VI. Areas of Concentration

There were no reports or updates provided by the members.

VII. Division Reports

During the division updates, the Sistrunk Empowerment Summit was highlighted as a key initiative to gather community input with the overarching goal of promoting economic revitalization and development. EDAB members voiced their support for the summit. Member Adams expressed interest in seeing more emphasis on the business side of programming, while Member Feinberg advocated greater focus on arts and culture. No additional questions were made and the city liaisons ended their reports.

VIII. Meeting adjourned at 4:15 PM.

With no further business, Chair Bargioni motioned to adjourn the meeting. The motion was made by Member DeJager and seconded by Member Meyers. The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 PM.

The next EDAB meeting will be July 9, 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.