

**Phoenix City Council
Economic Development and Housing (EDH) Subcommittee
Summary Minutes
Wednesday, April 9, 2025**

City Council Chambers
200 W. Jefferson Street
Phoenix, AZ

Subcommittee Members Present

Vice Mayor Ann O'Brien, Chair
Councilwoman Debra Stark
Councilwoman Kesha Hodge Washington

Subcommittee Members Absent

Councilman Kevin Robinson

CALL TO ORDER

Chairwoman O'Brien called the Economic Development and Housing Subcommittee to order at 10:12 a.m. with Councilwoman Stark and Councilwoman Hodge Washington present.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC

None.

MINUTES OF MEETINGS

1. Minutes of the Economic Development and Housing Subcommittee Meeting

Councilwoman Stark made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 26, 2025, Economic Development and Housing Subcommittee meeting. Councilwoman Hodge Washington seconded the motion which passed unanimously, 3-0.

INFORMATION ONLY (ITEMS 2-3)

2. Naloxone Program Quarterly Update (December 2024 to February 2025)

Information only. No councilmember requested additional information.

3. Head Start Birth to Five Monthly Report - February

Information only. No councilmember requested additional information.

INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION (ITEMS 4-6)

4. Phoenix Public Library's 2025 Summer Reading Program

Library Services Director Erin MacFarlane and Librarian IV Wendy Resnik presented the item.

Councilwoman Stark expressed appreciation of the program.

Councilwoman Hodge Washington stated she hopes there is greater participation in the program this summer.

Chairwoman O'Brien highlighted the 1,000 Books Before Kindergarten program and noted that Culture passes, which grant free admission to various cultural performances and exhibits, available for free in the libraries.

5. Mental Health Awareness Month

Human Services Director Jacqueline Edwards presented the item.

Councilwoman Hodge Washington said it was important to highlight mental health, and said the campaign was needed and will address stigma around seeking help for mental health.

6. Urban Street Activation Development Codes and Retail Vacancy Rates

Deputy City Manager Alan Stephenson, Planning and Development Director Josh Bednarek, Community and Economic Development Director Christine Mackay, and Deputy Community and Economic Development Director Xandon Keating presented the item.

Councilwoman Stark stated while the focus on development has been to occupy the ground floors of buildings with retail, it needs to shift towards creating a lively and safe atmosphere for pedestrians in the Downtown and Midtown area.

Ms. Mackay agreed the ground floor of building development should not be filled with solely commercial retail, but more of the space should be filled with commercial retail with greater activation of the ground floor space with greater level of pedestrian traffic.

Councilwoman Stark said it was not realistic to occupy ground floor spaces with solely commercial. She also noted the importance of maintaining flexibility in what is placed on the ground floor spaces and ensuring safety for pedestrians.

Councilwoman Hodge Washington asked if there was anything the City should do to reduce the vacancy rate in the areas discussed in the presentation.

Ms. Mackay answered there were several dense residential complexes in the process of development which will help reduce the vacancy rate. She said in the interim, staff will develop ideas for activating the area around 7th Street. Ms. Mackay added she is working with Mr. Stephenson to discuss with the owners of the building to create a more comfortable environment for pedestrians.

Mr. Stephenson explained the Midtown area has seen a natural evolution of urban areas with standalone buildings getting redeveloped into high-rise, mixed-use developments.

Chairwoman O'Brien asked if it is a requirement for ground floor of these buildings to be occupied by retail.

Mr. Bednarek answered it is not a requirement to have retail on the ground floor for these buildings.

Chairwoman O'Brien inquired if a gym or leasing office can be placed on the ground floor.

Mr. Bednarek said it can be.

Chairwoman O'Brien asked what level of density would lead to a greater placement of retail on the ground floors of buildings.

Ms. Mackay answered while it is difficult to point to a threshold number, the typical density nationwide is 36 square feet of retail per capita, while City of Phoenix has 54 square feet of retail per capita.

Chairwoman O'Brien inquired if businesses take the Phoenix Convention Center, Phoenix Suns, and Arizona Diamondbacks into account when deciding on where to locate their retail.

Ms. Mackay explained there is a significant amount of activity in retail around the Phoenix Convention Center and downtown area when there is an event in the Convention Center and sports events.

Chairwoman O'Brien asked what steps are needed to start and expand business in the downtown area.

Ms. Mackay answered the entertainment district study approved by the City Council will give direction on how to help further expand business in the downtown area.

Mr. Stephenson added the adoption of the Downtown Redevelopment Plan, and the Downtown Code text amendments addressed some of the challenges that existed around the development of the downtown area, which is the result of the Council providing directions on this matter for the past few years.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION (ITEM 7-8)

7. Phoenix ToolBank Partnership

Deputy City Manager Alan Stephenson, Deputy Neighborhood Services Director Yvette Roeder, Neighborhood Services Program Manager Greg Gonzales, and Phoenix ToolBank Executive Director Jana Ferraro presented on the item.

Councilwoman Stark asked if the partnership would lead to cost savings for the City.

Ms. Roeder answered the City will see cost savings and data from the partnership will help compile information and shed light on the cost savings from the program.

Councilwoman Stark stated this partnership will be beneficial for neighborhood associations that can take advantage of the program.

Councilwoman Hodge Washington expressed appreciation for the partnership established for the program.

Mr. Stephenson recognized Greg Gonzales for championing the idea and forming the partnership with the Phoenix ToolBank.

Councilwoman Stark made a motion to approve Item 7. Councilwoman Hodge Washington seconded the motion which passed unanimously, 3-0.

8. GPEC Amendment

Community and Economic Development Director Christine Mackay, Economic Development Program Manager Bryan Smith, GPEC Senior Vice President of Business Development Thomas Maynard, and GPEC Vice President of Corporate Development & Community Engagement Tim Bourcet presented on the item.

Councilwoman Stark made a motion to approve Item 8. Councilwoman Hodge Washington seconded the motion which passed unanimously, 3-0.

CALL TO THE PUBLIC

None.

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Councilwoman Hodge Washington requested an update on eviction legal services to be on the agenda for the next EDH meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairwoman O'Brien adjourned the meeting at 11:17 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Seo
Management Fellow