

Committee of the Whole

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

City Hall, Room 400
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Tuesday, April 29, 2026
10:00 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCIL PRESIDENT KENYATTA JOHNSON
COUNCILWOMAN RUE LANDAU
COUNCILWOMAN NINA AHMAD
COUNCILWOMAN KENDRA BROOKS
COUNCILWOMAN JAMIE GAUTHIER
COUNCILWOMAN KATHERINE GILMORE-RICHARDSON
COUNCILWOMAN QUETCY M. LOZADA
COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS
COUNCILMAN MICHAEL DRISCOLL
COUNCILMAN CURTIS J. JONES, JR.
COUNCILMAN NICOLAS O'ROURKE
COUNCILMAN JEFFREY YOUNG, JR.
COUNCILMAN ANTHONY PHILLIPS

HELEN LOUGHEAD, The Clerk

Committee of the Whole

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

3 Good morning, everyone. Good
4 morning, everyone.

5 This is the public hearing
6 and public meeting of the Committee
7 of the Whole regarding Bills No.
8 260199, 260200, 260201, 260202,
9 260203, 260204, 260205, 260208,
10 260209, and Resolution Number
11 260227.

12 Ms. Loughhead, will you
13 please take attendance?

14 THE CLERK: Councilmember
15 Squilla.

16 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA:
17 Present.

18 THE CLERK: Councilmember
19 Gauthier.

20 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
21 Present.

22 THE CLERK: Councilmember
23 Jones. Councilmember Young.

24 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG:

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1 Present.

2 THE CLERK: Councilmember
3 Driscoll.

4 COUNCILMEMBER DRISCOLL:
5 Present.

6 THE CLERK: Councilmember
7 Lozada.

8 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA:
9 Present.

10 THE CLERK: Councilmember
11 Bass.

12 COUNCILMEMBER BASS:
13 Present.

14 THE CLERK: Councilmember
15 Phillips.

16 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:
17 Present.

18 THE CLERK: Councilmember
19 O'Neill, Councilmember Gilmore-
20 Richardson, Councilmember Thomas,
21 Councilmember Harrity.

22 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:
23 Here.

24 THE CLERK: Councilmember

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1 Ahmad.

2 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: Here.

3 THE CLERK: Councilmember

4 Landau.

5 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

6 Here.

7 THE CLERK: Councilmember

8 Brooks, Councilmember O'Rourke.

9 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

10 Present.

11 THE CLERK: Council

12 President Johnson.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

14 Present.

15 A quorum of this committee

16 is present, and this hearing is

17 officially now called to order.

18 Ms. Loughhead, will you

19 please read the title of the bills

20 and resolution.

21 THE CLERK: Bill No.

22 260199, an ordinance adopting the

23 operating budget for fiscal year

24 2027.

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1 Bill No. 260200, an
2 ordinance to adopt the fiscal year
3 2027 capital budget.

4 Bill No. 260201, an
5 ordinance to adopt a capital program
6 for the six fiscal years 2027
7 through 2032 inclusive.

8 Bill No. 260202, an
9 ordinance amending chapter 19-2400
10 of the Philadelphia Code entitled
11 Hotel Room Rental Tax by providing
12 for an additional excise tax on
13 hotel room rentals, all under
14 certain terms and conditions.

15 Bill No. 260203, an
16 ordinance amending Subcode A in the
17 Philadelphia Administrative Code of
18 Title 4 of the Philadelphia Code,
19 the Building Construction Occupancy
20 Code, by adding and revising zoning
21 board of adjustment fees and
22 provisions regarding hearing
23 scheduling, all under certain terms
24 and conditions.

1 Bill No. 260204, an
2 ordinance amending Title 3 of the
3 Philadelphia Code entitled Error
4 Management Code to modify the
5 amounts of license and permit fees,
6 all under certain terms and
7 conditions.

8 Bill No. 260205, an
9 ordinance amending section 19-1806
10 of the Philadelphia Code entitled
11 Authorization of Realty Use and your
12 Occupancy Tax to clarify the
13 imposition of the tax on the use and
14 occupancy of real estate with
15 respect to cell towers, all under
16 certain terms and conditions.

17 Bill No. 260206, an
18 ordinance amending chapter 6-600 of
19 the Philadelphia Code, asbestos, by
20 adding revising provisions related
21 to various fees, all under certain
22 terms and conditions.

23 Bill No. 260208, an
24 ordinance amending chapter 19-1800

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1 of the Philadelphia Code entitled
2 School Tax Authorization to add a
3 new section 18 -- 19-1808 entitled
4 Authorization of Rideshare Use Tax
5 to authorize the Board of the School
6 District of Philadelphia to levy tax
7 on the use by passenger of a
8 transportation network company for
9 pre-arranged ride that originates in
10 Philadelphia, all under certain
11 terms and conditions.

12 Bill No. 260209, an
13 ordinance amending Title 19 of the
14 Philadelphia Code entitled Finance
15 Taxes and Collections to add a new
16 chapter 19-4800 entitled Retail
17 Delivery Tax to establish a tax on
18 orders for the delivery in
19 Philadelphia of retail consumer and
20 other tangible goods, all under
21 certain terms and conditions.

22 Bill No. 260227, providing
23 for the approval by the Council of
24 the City of Philadelphia of a

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1 revised five-year financial plan for
2 the City of Philadelphia, covering
3 fiscal years 2027 through 2031 and
4 incorporating revisions with respect
5 to fiscal year 2026, which is to be
6 submitted by the mayor to the
7 Pennsylvania Intergovernmental
8 Cooperation Authority pursuant to an
9 Intergovernmental Cooperation
10 Agreement by and between the city
11 and the authority.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
13 Thank you very much, Ms. Loughead.

14 Today we will hold the
15 public hearing of the Committee of
16 the Whole to consider the bills read
17 by the clerk that constitute
18 proposed operating and capital
19 spending measures for fiscal year
20 2027, a capital programing -- a
21 forward-looking capital plan for
22 fiscal year 2027 through fiscal year
23 2032.

24 This morning we have

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1 scheduled testimony from the City's
2 Department of Planning and
3 Development and Commerce Department.
4 This afternoon we'll have testimony
5 from the Office of Property
6 Assessment.

7 Ms. Loughhead, will you
8 please call the first panel to
9 testify.

10 THE CLERK: Karen Fegely,
11 acting Commerce Director, who's also
12 joined by Deputy Directors of the
13 Commerce team; Dawn Summerville,
14 Dennis Murphy, Helloise Jettison,
15 Salim Wilson, and Yvonne Boye.

16 Also, requesting Jessie
17 Lawrence, director of Planning and
18 Development, who is joined by John
19 Mondlak, first deputy director; Mark
20 Dodds, deputy of the Division of
21 Housing and Development, Kathleen
22 Grady, deputy of Strategic
23 Initiatives and Executive
24 Administration; Octavia Howell,

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1 deputy of the Division of Planning
2 and Zoning; and Emily Persico,
3 deputy of the Division of
4 Development Services.

5 Also, joined by Angela
6 Brooks, chief Housing and Urban
7 Development officer; David Thomas,
8 president and CEO of the
9 Philadelphia Housing Development
10 Corporation; and Angel Rodriguez,
11 the executive director of the
12 Philadelphia Land Bank and senior
13 vice president of Land Services at
14 PHDC.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
16 Thank you very much, Ms. Loughead.

17 At this time I'm going to
18 ask to state your name and begin
19 your testimony. I'm going to start
20 off with Ms. Fegely.

21 MS. FEGELY: All right.
22 Good morning, President Johnson and
23 members of Council. My name is
24 Karen Segley. I'm the acting

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1 Commerce director. I'm here to
2 testify on the Department of
3 Commerce's fiscal year 2027
4 operating budget.

5 I'm joined today by
6 Commerce leadership and our buddies
7 at Planning and Development. The
8 Department of Commerce is the
9 economic catalyst for the city of
10 Philadelphia.

11 We create wealth-building
12 opportunities through strategic
13 investments. We pursue ecosystem
14 partnerships to grow quality jobs.
15 We build capacity in communities
16 with historic disinvestment. We
17 make it easier to do business and
18 promote Philadelphia as a premier
19 business destination. In short,
20 Commerce delivers on the mayor's
21 vision of access to economic
22 opportunity for all.

23 A few of our FY-26
24 accomplishments are as follows: In

1 partnership with the mayor's office
2 and other agencies, we launched PHL
3 PRIME, that's Project Review and
4 Infrastructure Made Easy.

5 The first cohort includes
6 four companies making historic
7 investments into Philadelphia.
8 These are DrinkPAK, TerraPower
9 Isotopes, Hanwha Philly Shipyard,
10 and Rhoads Industries. PHL PRIME
11 signals that Philadelphia is open
12 for business and prepared for
13 serious growth opportunities. But
14 beyond PRIME, we help attract,
15 retain, and grow businesses every
16 day. For example, Liberty Coca-Cola
17 is expanding its operations, Legend
18 Biotech established its operations
19 with a new facility, and Stateside
20 Brands, a local company, expanded
21 its operation and relocated its
22 corporate headquarters to Market
23 East.

24 Notably, Commerce

1 implemented the \$38.5 million
2 jumpstart small business initiative
3 this year. This is to support small
4 businesses navigating the changing
5 tax environment. During year one of
6 jumpstart funding, we're proud to
7 expand access to capital for small
8 businesses. For example, the
9 incentive grant for the Philadelphia
10 Business Lending Network increased
11 from \$35,000 to a \$50,000 cap. And
12 the Catalyst Fund also awards
13 businesses up to \$50,000 to grow.

14 Later this year, we're
15 excited to launch a simplified
16 single application for our grant
17 programs. Commerce launched
18 Weeknights Live as an opportunity to
19 support local musicians and to bring
20 culture and entertainment to
21 commercial corridors across the
22 city. The first cohort includes
23 Baltimore Avenue, East Passyunk, and
24 hotels in Center City.

1 The Open for Business
2 Initiative continues to improve
3 systems across departments to make
4 it easier to do business in
5 Philadelphia. Examples of some of
6 our recent projects include; we
7 worked with Health to create
8 accessible food safety inspection
9 checklist for business owners and
10 inspectors in English, Spanish, and
11 Mandarin. We worked with Special
12 Events to create a new permitting
13 system to make it easier for
14 neighborhood events. We worked with
15 L&I to reopen the Center City
16 vending lottery to open up business
17 opportunities.

18 Sanitation developed a new
19 commercial waste and recycling
20 portal to make that process easier.
21 And Revenue and L&I repealed
22 outdated license requirements with
23 Council's support.

24 You know that the Mayor's

1 Business Action Team serves as our
2 front door to support all businesses
3 accessing resources or navigating
4 city rules. In 2025, MBAT served
5 over 7,000 businesses, including
6 over 500 complex cases. The Taking
7 Care of Business program continues
8 to expand its operations.

9 We now work with 51
10 organizations and have 420 cleaning
11 ambassadors around the city. Our
12 litter index continues to improve
13 with its lower score -- lowest score
14 to date. Since the first evaluation
15 in 2022, there has been a 50 percent
16 reduction in observed litter in the
17 TCB served areas.

18 And Ring It On provided
19 \$3.5 million for corridor
20 activations, beautification, and
21 celebrations, ensuring that we bring
22 the 2026 excitement to our
23 neighborhoods with commemorative
24 bells, benches, banners, festivals,

1 and more. Bottom line, we're making
2 it easier for businesses to start,
3 stay, and grow in Philadelphia.

4 If we set aside the \$15
5 million for convention center
6 subsidy, the proposed FY-27 general
7 fund budget totals 106 million.
8 That is a decrease of 11 million
9 over FY-26. I'm rounding off, by
10 the way.

11 The FY-27 budget reflects a
12 number of one-time supports for
13 community organizations and 2026
14 related investments that won't be
15 continued. Plus a \$250,000
16 reduction in economic stimulus which
17 will be spread among our Grow Philly
18 external partnership contracts. It
19 also reflects continued investment
20 of 38.5 million for jumpstart small
21 business supports, continuation of
22 PHL open for business to reduce the
23 cost and complexity of business
24 experience, and the final expansion

1 of Taking Care of Business by 1
2 million to hire additional staff for
3 program oversight as well as
4 building capacity of our TCB
5 community partners.

6 To reiterate, we are open
7 for business. Thank you for your
8 continued support and input. My
9 team and I will be happy to take
10 your questions.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
12 Thank you very much. Jessie, state
13 your name for the record and please
14 begin your testimony, sir.

15 MR. LAWRENCE: Good
16 morning, everybody. My name is
17 Jessie Lawrence, director of
18 Planning and Development, here in
19 the city of Philadelphia. Good
20 morning, Council President, members
21 of Council, joining me today, in
22 addition to myself, are divisional
23 leaders from different divisions and
24 units within the Department of

1 Planning and Development.

2 I'm also joined by Angela
3 Brooks, our chief in housing --
4 chief housing and urban development
5 officer; David Thomas, the president
6 and CEO of PHDC; and Angel
7 Rodriguez, who is the executive
8 director of the Philadelphia Land
9 Bank and also the senior VP of Land
10 Services at PHDC. I'm pleased to be
11 here today to provide the testimony
12 on behalf of the Department of
13 Planning and Development and its
14 fiscal year of 2027 operating
15 budget.

16 When it comes to our
17 mission DPD, what we're known by is
18 partners -- we are partners with
19 communities who promote, plan,
20 preserve, and develop safer,
21 cleaner, greener neighborhoods that
22 offer economic opportunity for all.

23 By aligning these city
24 agencies that are focused on the

1 built environment, DPD fosters
2 vibrant, thriving, and accessible
3 housing in a dynamic public sphere
4 and a resilient economy. Through
5 thoughtful planning, sustainable
6 development, housing production and
7 preservation, as well as housing
8 stabilization and incentive
9 programs, the department helps build
10 intergenerational wealth and
11 strengthen community wellbeing. DPD
12 includes the divisions of executive
13 administration, planning and zoning,
14 development services, housing and
15 community development, known as DHCD
16 as well.

17 DPD also collaborates
18 closely with PHDC, the city's full-
19 service community development
20 organization in order to create
21 neighborhoods that are safe and
22 inclusive for all Philadelphians.

23 In terms of our plans for
24 this upcoming fiscal year, the

1 Department of Planning and
2 Development will work across
3 multiple areas of expertise to
4 implement the mayor's housing --
5 excuse me, Housing Opportunities
6 Made Easy initiative, known as
7 H.O.M.E, and will continue to make
8 strides toward ensuring that
9 Philadelphia is the safest,
10 cleanest, and greenest big city in
11 the nation with the access to
12 economic opportunity all -- to all
13 -- for all.

14 This work will be formed by
15 a robust and intentional engagement
16 across stakeholders. Specifically
17 in FY-27, DPD will implement the
18 H.O.M.E initiative to advance those
19 goals of 30,000 units; new and
20 preserved housing while leveraging
21 funding from federal, state, and
22 local philanthropic sources -- and
23 philanthropic sources. DPD will
24 continue its work to implement the

1 H.O.M.E initiative and creation of
2 these target goals for 30,000 units.

3 New programs to launch
4 include facade improvement, curbside
5 appeal, home service, clearing house
6 and concierge, and the acquisition
7 fund. The city will also work with
8 private lending institutions to
9 establish that One Philly Mortgage
10 program that you've heard of, which
11 reduces the mortgage interest rates
12 and eliminates the private mortgage
13 insurance requirements for
14 participants.

15 Existing programs will also
16 be maintained, enhanced, and/or
17 scaled, including but not limited to
18 the production and preservation of
19 affordable rental housing, the
20 adaptive modification program, basic
21 systems repair program, eviction
22 diversion and targeted financial
23 assistance, mortgage assistance,
24 permanent housing for individuals

1 experiencing homelessness,
2 investments in the Philadelphia
3 accelerator fund and also Philly
4 First Home.

5 We're also here to raise
6 awareness this year and increase the
7 reach and utilization of new and
8 expanded housing programs as
9 mentioned through the investments in
10 the marketing specifically of the
11 H.O.M.E initiative. The marketing
12 campaign will initiate and engage a
13 public process via earned -- excuse
14 me, engage the public via earned
15 media, paid advertising across
16 outdoor transit, broadcast, and
17 digital channels.

18 Also, along with print and
19 promotional materials, video
20 content, and social media. We will
21 leverage the vacant land to advance
22 the housing and greening priorities
23 via implementation of the
24 recommendations of the Land Bank

1 assessment, which is expected to be
2 finalized by the end of this current
3 fiscal year. With a proposed
4 increase FY27 investment, DPD will
5 work in partnership with the Land
6 Bank to increase its operational
7 capacity and enhance transparency
8 through increased staffing and the
9 addition of new reporting tools,
10 including a new customer
11 relationship management system.

12 That proposed increase in
13 funding will also support additional
14 acquisition, which will be aligned
15 with the vacant land strategy that
16 is under development for
17 acquisition, maintenance, and
18 disposition of properties.

19 We'll also complete the due
20 diligence for the Modular Housing
21 Factory Effort which will -- which
22 will create family sustaining jobs
23 within the city and contribute to
24 reduced construction periods for

1 housing. We also plan to engage
2 communities and stakeholders in the
3 planning of the future of
4 Philadelphia.

5 Particularly, the vision of
6 planning and zoning will be
7 completed -- will complete two
8 significant planning efforts
9 including the Market East Revival
10 Initiative and also the Philly --
11 the Philadelphia 2050 citywide
12 vision. Both of these efforts were
13 focused on broad engagement, data-
14 driven insights, and pathways to
15 implementation, which also include
16 the establishment of partnerships
17 and grant opportunities for
18 implementation.

19 We are also committed to
20 boosting residential production and
21 preservation by streamlining the
22 development process, which you've
23 heard through the executive charge
24 of executive order number 325 last

1 year. DPD will continue its
2 partnership with Philly STAT 360 to
3 utilize a data-driven approach,
4 shrinking that time tax to
5 incentivize the creation and
6 preservation of safe, healthy,
7 quality housing for buyers and
8 renters at all levels of cost.

9 And finally, DPD will
10 monitor the progress that provide
11 the capacity and expertise where
12 applicable to assist in the
13 coordination of reporting that work.
14 This year's proposed fiscal 2027
15 general fund budget totals \$30
16 million, just over \$30 million,
17 which is an increase of \$2.8 million
18 over fiscal year 2027 -- 2026's
19 estimated obligation levels.

20 This increase is primarily
21 due to the increase for the
22 Philadelphia Land Bank, support on
23 the micro-street revival effort, and
24 also funding marketing for --

1 funding for marketing for the
2 H.O.M.E initiative. The Department
3 of Planning and Development also
4 receives allocations from the US
5 Department of Housing and Urban
6 Development, as you know as HUD,
7 including the community -- the
8 Community Disaster Block Grant, CDBG
9 -- the CD -- Community Development
10 Block Grant, excuse me, CDBG,
11 Community Disaster Recovery, Housing
12 Opportunities for Persons With AIDS,
13 otherwise known as HOPWA home, not
14 our home, but the other home, and
15 HOME American Rescue Plan. The
16 department will continue to pursue
17 other funding and state funding
18 resources were available and
19 applicable.

20 And quickly, I'll try to
21 summarize the remainder of our
22 testimony, which is going to get
23 into the programmatic-based
24 budgeting sections. More detailed

1 explanations of this section is
2 provided for every program strategy
3 and funding component within the
4 written testimony that was submitted
5 to Council.

6 For program No. 5, housing
7 development; the proposed general
8 fund amount for FY-27 is just over
9 \$10 million. That program anchors
10 the city's housing production
11 preservation, home ownership
12 assistance, and eviction prevention
13 work. It houses many of the major
14 initiatives that we know -- that
15 live within home, including the core
16 expansion of that initiative, facade
17 improvement as we heard, the Home
18 Repair program such as BSRP, the
19 acquisition fund, Philly's First
20 Home and Turn the Key programming,
21 One Philly mortgage and eviction
22 program -- prevention programs as
23 well.

24 The goals there are to

1 prevent at least 850 foreclosures,
2 repair over 8,000 homes, deliver
3 over 1200 homeowner assistance --
4 homeowner assistance programs,
5 grants, and also create over 300
6 units to preserve even more.

7 The community development
8 program, which is program number 4,
9 FY-27 general fund budget is \$11
10 million. That program focuses on
11 the community engagement piece,
12 neighborhood stabilization, and also
13 land management, including the
14 cleaning and greening.

15 In that program, we'll
16 continue to work off the proven
17 model of greening and stabilizing
18 under land care. Our curbside
19 appeal will also be uplifted.
20 Special land disposition plan; we
21 have a FUSE fellow that is
22 redesigning the public land process
23 to improve speed, predictability,
24 and access the affordable and

1 workforce develop -- and access for
2 the affordable and workforce
3 developers -- workforce, housing
4 developers. Land Bank gets
5 enhancements as mentioned before.

6 And also support for
7 continued efforts and supporting
8 affordable housing within our
9 development finance compliance,
10 public art, and capital support
11 registers.

12 Program No. 3, development
13 services, the proposed budget there
14 is just over \$400,000. And
15 development services is responsible
16 for coordinating across the agencies
17 to improve our development processes
18 in the city. Again, referencing
19 executive order number 325 mapping
20 and housing -- mapping and
21 development processes for housing
22 and reducing those delays.

23 Coordination continues with Philly
24 STAT 360.

1 Our development services
2 committee modernization, adapting
3 some practices from other cities to
4 improve that coordination. And also
5 collaborating with our law
6 department to standardize leasing
7 and compliance procedures with our
8 mixed income housing bonus and
9 overlay programs.

10 And finally, our executive
11 administration. Executive
12 administration provides a core
13 operational and strategic support
14 across the department. Here, our
15 key programs and functions are
16 making sure that we are supporting
17 the staffing that is tied to the
18 H.O.M.E program amongst other things
19 and scaling, including cross
20 training coaching and onboarding
21 improvements for recruitment,
22 hiring, and retention, performance
23 management and data systems,
24 advancing the departmental culture

1 of transparency across the board,
2 innovation and evidence-based
3 decision making.

4 And also communications and
5 public engagement as we lead major
6 H.O.M.E outreach efforts and public
7 communications for things like
8 Market East and the Philadelphia
9 2050 plan.

10 More detailed explanations
11 as I provided are in the -- for each
12 program are in the deliverable that
13 was provided to Council ahead of
14 time. And we are here to address
15 any question that you may have based
16 on this testimony. Thank you.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
18 Thank you very much. Appreciate
19 your testimony and we'll allow
20 questioning of both departments
21 throughout this session. One, I
22 just want to -- as always, I want to
23 acknowledge you and your team for
24 the work that we have done working

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1 together on the historical billion-
2 dollar investment when it comes to
3 addressing the issue of housing and
4 equality here in the city of
5 Philadelphia.

6 That includes Angela
7 Brooks, that includes Rob Thomas,
8 that includes Angel Rodriguez,
9 individuals who I talk to on a daily
10 basis, as well as John Mondlak. And
11 so I just want to thank the team as
12 a whole as we walk through the
13 process. At the end of the day,
14 what I'll always stand on is that
15 this is a historical and significant
16 investment.

17 The problem never will get
18 done in our lifetime again.
19 Particularly on this issue of
20 housing, and housing as addressed to
21 those who are vulnerable and are at
22 the end of the day making sure that
23 the city of Philadelphia is a place
24 where people can live regardless of

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1 their checkbook and/or the
2 applicable. So I just want to start
3 off by acknowledging that.

4 MR. LAWRENCE: Thank you,
5 Mr. President.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
7 I also want to thank Karen Fegely as
8 always, for the work she's continued
9 to do with the Commerce Department
10 from an economic development
11 standpoint. I think you're doing a
12 good job as the interim director, so
13 continue to -- keep doing the work
14 that you're doing.

15 And I also want to
16 acknowledge Dawn Summerville. She
17 worked with me when The Bellwether
18 District came to the 2nd
19 Councilmanic District and made sure
20 we got that project right when it
21 comes -- came to supporting our
22 young people and making sure there's
23 a pipeline for our young people,
24 when it comes to internships. And

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1 so, Dawn, as always continue to keep
2 up the good work.

3 And with that being said,
4 the Chair recognizes Councilmember
5 Cindy Bass.

6 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Thank
7 you, Mr. President. So good
8 morning.

9 MR. LAWRENCE: Good
10 morning.

11 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: How's
12 everybody doing?

13 MR. LAWRENCE: Doing well.

14 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Let me
15 start with Commerce. Can you talk
16 to us -- and first of all, let me
17 say -- just say it's a pleasure to
18 work with the Commerce Department.
19 Karen, you've been there for many
20 years, not to date you, but, you
21 know, you've been here and so you
22 know this lane and you do it very
23 well. But you don't just do it by
24 yourself, you have a great team that

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1 I've worked with for many, many
2 years.

3 And so I just really wanted
4 to applaud each and every one of you
5 and say, you know, a big thank you
6 for all of the work that you all do.
7 We wouldn't be able to work without
8 Commerce. And so I wanted to drill
9 down, though, on community -- like,
10 local businesses, neighborhood
11 businesses particularly, sort of,
12 like corner store establishments.

13 One of the things that is
14 happening right now, and it has been
15 happening for a while and we've been
16 talking about it, it's sort of,
17 like, the wrapping around the
18 building and, you know, that you
19 can't see -- you walk into a store,
20 you can't see what's going on.

21 And we know that this is
22 primarily regulated through L&I, but
23 does the Commerce -- like how does
24 commerce interact or work with L&I

1 on these kinds of issues? Not just
2 -- you know, something like the, you
3 know, the window coverings and all
4 that, but just to really beautify
5 and enhance our neighborhood's small
6 businesses.

7 MS. FEGELY: Yeah. Thank
8 you for that. I'm sort of smiling
9 because I literally just walked into
10 my neighborhood corner store and was
11 talking to them about why do you
12 have all these posters up on the
13 window? It actually makes you less
14 safe, and it makes your store not
15 even -- it's a nice store on the
16 inside and it doesn't look like it
17 from the outside.

18 So -- but what do we really
19 do about that, right? So one, we do
20 work with L&I, we go out with them
21 on corridor walks where we do --
22 it's a -- it's an educational walk,
23 right? So L&I is there -- the --
24 this is Bridget's team; the Quality

1 of Life team, go out and they're
2 just looking for things that are,
3 like, quality of life type
4 violations or anything that's really
5 dangerous.

6 But our team -- the
7 important part is the Mayor's
8 Business Action Team is there with
9 them. So it's very much an
10 educational visit. And while we're
11 there, we can talk to them about how
12 we can help them.

13 So the storefront
14 improvement program is the one clear
15 way we can actually incentivize them
16 to take a different look at their
17 storefront. And what's nice when
18 you apply to that, is you actually
19 get free advice too, right? We have
20 a design team that actually helps
21 people think through what things are
22 going to look like. People are too
23 busy running a business, they're not
24 really thinking about what their

1 sign looks like or what their
2 windows look like. They're just
3 running their business.

4 And so when we can use that
5 incentive to give them some advice.
6 And we just encourage best
7 practices. Again, having your
8 windows clear actually makes your
9 business safer. If there's, you
10 know, something criminal happening
11 in there, you want people on the
12 outside to be able to see --

13 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: To be
14 able to see. Right.

15 MS. FEGELY: If there's a
16 fire in there, you know, you want
17 people on the outside to be able to
18 see. And so we always encourage
19 that. But I know it's a constant
20 challenge, I think we just have to
21 constantly stay up on it. And we're
22 happy to go out and talk with any
23 business, like, if you have
24 particular ones --

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1 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: I got
2 a whole list.

3 MS. FEGLEY: -- you know,
4 we can do that.

5 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: I got
6 plenty of them.

7 MS. FEGLEY: I know. I
8 know.

9 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: I got
10 all of them.

11 MS. FEGLEY: And as you
12 know, we rely on -- right. Well,
13 they're everywhere, yeah. We rely
14 -- you know, we rely on our partners
15 too. So the corridor managers are
16 having these conversations.

17 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: I
18 mean, I'm glad you all go out on the
19 walks, but specifically around
20 enforcement, because we just don't
21 see any enforcement. You go tell
22 them to take the, you know, the
23 window coverings down. They say,
24 okay, I guess. And then nothing

1 happens. It never changes.

2 And so the enforcement, I
3 think, is what we need. We need
4 some enforcement on these rules. It
5 doesn't make sense for us to, you
6 know, promulgate all these rules and
7 regulations and then nobody is
8 following them. Yeah.

9 MS. FEGELY: I hear you.
10 Right. Creating new rules if --
11 like, we can just enforce the ones
12 we have. I don't want to say --
13 those first walks are educational.
14 I wanted to stress that, because
15 that's sort of Commerce's side. But
16 L&I and I does follow up in -- and I
17 don't remember, 30 days or 60 days,
18 whatever the exact time is, I'm not
19 sure.

20 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: And I
21 -- and I heard the bell ring, so
22 I'll honor the clock. I'll come
23 back on a second round. But is
24 there -- so they're made aware when

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1 you do the walk; that's the
2 educational component. And then
3 there's enforcement that should
4 happen through L&I afterwards, and
5 then if it doesn't happen -- I guess
6 what I'm trying to say is that I
7 think that Commerce is really the
8 arm to do that kind of follow up and
9 coordination with L&I to make sure
10 that it happens. And I'll come back
11 because I have some questions for
12 Mr. Lawrence as well, but I'll get
13 on the second round.

14 MS. FEGELY: All right.
15 I'll just say we have to walk a fine
16 line of -- we always go out and tell
17 businesses we are not the
18 enforcement agency because we try to
19 do that; build that relationship.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
21 Did you --

22 MS. FEGELY: I hear what
23 you're saying --

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

1 Say it again.

2 MS. FEGELY: -- I'm not
3 saying you're wrong; I just want to
4 say that's -- we'll talk about that
5 more.

6 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Well
7 --

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT: Did you
9 say that you have to tell the
10 business that you're not an
11 enforcement agency? I didn't hear
12 your last comment.

13 MS. FEGELY: Yeah. When
14 Commerce talks to businesses, we try
15 to make it clear, like, we are --
16 you know, we are -- we, Commerce,
17 are not an enforcement agency. We
18 are part of the city of Philadelphia
19 that clearly has enforcement, but
20 when we go out, we're going out to
21 instruct, to educate, to help to
22 connect to resources. Yeah. But
23 that doesn't mean we don't partner
24 with L&I.

1 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: I
2 think that they're just not getting
3 the memo. Because it feels like a
4 lot of these small businesses,
5 commercial corridors, the stop-and-
6 go's, nuisance businesses, they do
7 what they want to do. They do
8 whatever they want to do. And we
9 have to figure out how --

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
11 They don't just do what they want to
12 do, it depends on what neighborhood
13 they in.

14 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Say
15 again?

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
17 It depends on what neighborhood
18 they're in. They allowed them to do
19 what they want do.

20 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: You're
21 right, it depends on what
22 neighborhood you're in.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
24 Yes.

1 COUNCILMEMBER BASS:

2 Because if you're in certain
3 neighborhoods, like if you're
4 downtown, oh, no, that's not
5 working. Listen, I represent
6 Chester Hill, you're not doing that
7 up in Chester Hill, so you shouldn't
8 be doing it anywhere else.

9 MS. FEGELY: Absolutely.

10 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: But,
11 you know, like the level of
12 enforcement that you get in certain
13 neighborhoods, it varies. And I --
14 again, I recognize that that's L&I
15 but I guess what I'm asking is for
16 commerce to sort of --

17 MS. FEGELY: Yes, and we do
18 --

19 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: --
20 step up and step in. And to feel
21 free to be an enforcer because these
22 are some of the same businesses that
23 want, you know, help with their
24 facade improvements, the camera

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1 programs, all the goodies that the
2 city offers, they want all of that.
3 And, you know, they have to be good
4 players too, so.

5 MS. FEGELY: Yeah,
6 absolutely.

7 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Thank
8 you, Mr. President.

9 MS. FEGELY: Thank you.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
11 Thank you, Member Bass. Always on
12 the case on that particular issue.
13 I said Rob Thomas, but I want to
14 clarify for the record, Dave Thomas.
15 We've done a million Turn the Key
16 projects together. Matter of fact,
17 we are in Cindy Bass' District next.
18 So it's the very Dapper Dan Dave
19 Thomas over there. Wanted to make
20 sure I acknowledge him as well as
21 Nadir Jones who is working with my
22 DEI task force to transition us into
23 a new arena of how we address local
24 and small businesses to make sure

1 there's equity and they have a seat
2 at the table.

3 With that being said, the
4 Chair recognizes Councilmember Jim
5 Harrity.

6 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

7 Thank you, Council President. Good
8 morning, everybody. Thank you for
9 coming today. I'm going to ask my
10 questions that way I can get them on
11 the record for the sake of time.
12 Trying to stay on time.

13 Planning and Development;
14 how many units of housing are
15 projected for 2027? What type of
16 units will they be? And then for
17 Commerce; how has the transition to
18 the removal of the BIRT exemption
19 gone thus far? Have we run into any
20 issues with businesses not being
21 aware of the changes and fighting
22 them? How many new businesses have
23 started in Philadelphia this past
24 year, and how many have left?

1 And finally, what is the
2 Commerce Department's opinion on the
3 new taxes the administration
4 proposed for FY-27's budget? Thank
5 you.

6 MS. FEGELY: To hear this,
7 he's saying I go first so he has
8 time to pull his numbers so. Thank
9 you, Councilmember.

10 I'm going to start with --
11 you talked about the change -- the
12 unfortunate removal of the BIRT
13 exemption and how that's been going.
14 We've worked -- we've done a lot of
15 outreach.

16 We've worked with the
17 Revenue Department, and I can speak
18 for Revenue. They've then --
19 they've sent out 120,000 postcards.
20 They've, you know, met -- they meet
21 regularly with tax professionals.
22 They've issued official notice
23 letter to over 80,000 BIRT accounts.
24 And they were sending a mailer to

1 anyone who was a \$0 filer in the
2 past, like, with a specific
3 instruction that the rules have
4 changed.

5 Commerce has also worked
6 with Revenue to do 40 plus
7 workshops; we've reached over 1,000
8 businesses. And some of them were
9 in person in different neighborhoods
10 all around the city, some of them
11 were virtual.

12 We also contracted with --
13 we have a marketing firm who has
14 done paid ads through Meta and
15 LinkedIn. And we've done some paid
16 ads on -- in El Sol and WURD Radio
17 and used our own social media, of
18 course. We also really rely on our
19 partners to get words out to
20 businesses. We -- I mean, our team
21 is out talking to businesses every
22 day, but we can't get everybody. So
23 we really rely on our partners.

24 We started a new -- we have

1 new contracts this year with groups
2 that we're calling affinity groups,
3 another -- the way to reach more
4 businesses. So every one of our
5 partners is, you know, responsible
6 for telling people about this. We
7 have over 210 community and
8 nonprofit partners and about 40 --
9 and then we did our free tax rep
10 Program. So we really let people
11 know about that. I think we've
12 served about 2000 people --
13 businesses so far through the Free
14 Business Tax Prep Program.

15 Are there still businesses
16 that don't know about it? Yes, of
17 course.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
19 Can I get a --

20 MS. FEGELY: And so all I
21 can say is we're going to continue
22 this work.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
24 Can I get a point of information

1 though? How many businesses have
2 taken advantage of the actual funds
3 that we put aside? The health
4 businesses that were dealing with
5 the BIRT exemption going away?
6 What's the actual number of
7 businesses served? And how much of
8 that budget is still -- how much was
9 allocated in the budget? And then
10 how much of that budget has actually
11 been exhausted?

12 MS. FEGELY: Uh-huh. So
13 again, the specific program -- the
14 most specific direct program was the
15 Free Business Tax Prep Program,
16 which we're at 2000 to date. Plus
17 the 24 businesses that are -- the
18 tax prep professionals who are --
19 who are doing that work and getting
20 paid for it.

21 I am looking for my
22 jumpstart numbers. We have numbers
23 on every program we have funded with
24 these dollars, and the number of

1 businesses we are tracking very
2 closely; the number of businesses
3 that are assisted. If you recall,
4 there's a portion of the funding
5 that we're putting towards training,
6 education, and capacity building
7 through our partners. And then
8 there's a portion that is going
9 direct dollars into businesses'
10 pockets.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
12 I'm a fan, but I need you to work
13 with me. We just want the specific
14 numbers because that's what we are
15 -- we're -- want to go through this
16 process to figure out how many more
17 people want to help --

18 MS. FEGELY: You got it.
19 Ah, here's my numbers.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
21 -- who were impacted by the tax
22 going away. And we know it was a --
23 38.5 million was allocated. We want
24 to also know how much of the money

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1 is left and then how many people,
2 total, was serviced out of that
3 money? And I relax the time back to
4 Harrity.

5 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

6 Thank you, sir.

7 MS. FEGELY: I'll have to
8 -- I do have the numbers about how
9 much money is left. I will need
10 another minute on that. I can tell
11 you the number of businesses that
12 we've served so far. Mayor's
13 Business Action Team has reached
14 3,300 businesses. Our Business
15 Technical Assistance Program has
16 reached 921, Targeted Corridor
17 Management program around 2200.
18 This is all the assistance things --
19 business affinity group, 166. The
20 task prep program, like I said, is
21 about 2000.

22 Our grant programs, we are
23 at -- with the Catalyst Fund, we've
24 done 123 businesses so far. In

1 store, we have -- we have -- this
2 isn't -- this number is not right;
3 it says one done. This is all -- an
4 old number. So I know we have a --
5 there's about 10 of those; that's a
6 small program.

7 Storefront Improvement
8 Program; there's only 18 completed,
9 but we have about a 100 that are
10 literally in process right now.
11 Those -- that -- you know, it's a
12 construction project, that takes a
13 little longer.

14 The acquisition loan fund,
15 we've only done two this year so
16 far, but we have an RFP, we're
17 hiring another -- or we're bringing
18 on another partner to move more of
19 those. That's the program that
20 helps people buy their property, so
21 small business owners can buy their
22 commercial property. So we look to
23 do about 10 of those a year.
24 Through the Business Lending

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1 Network, we are at about 15 so far
2 with -- again, we've just increased
3 the cap and increased the pipeline,
4 so we expect to do a lot more on
5 that.

6 In the emergency grant
7 fund, we've only funded 43, but I
8 know that all the 20 -- the \$2.5
9 million is pretty much accounted
10 for.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
12 Member Harrity.

13 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:
14 Thank you, Council President. Thank
15 you for that. If you could just
16 tell -- how many new businesses
17 started in Philadelphia in the past
18 year and how many left? And then,
19 you know, of course, what's the
20 Commerce Department's opinion on the
21 new taxes that are proposed?

22 MS. FEGELY: I don't have
23 the numbers of how many new
24 businesses and how many businesses

1 left. That's something that we can
2 work with Revenue to get.

3 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

4 Okay. I'll accept that. If you
5 could, please try to get that to the
6 Chair. And then just -- your
7 opinion on the taxes, and then we
8 can get to Planning what their house
9 is.

10 MS. FEGELY: Yeah. I mean,
11 as the Commerce Department, we know
12 -- you know, we never know want to
13 see the new taxes, but I do feel
14 like these are very nuanced direct
15 taxes to meet very specific -- you
16 know, meet very specific needs that
17 are things that we hear about as
18 complaints from businesses, right?

19 We know that our schools
20 need more support and funding. I
21 mean, that's -- that goes directly
22 towards our workforce and our talent
23 for our business community. We know
24 that businesses are concerned about

1 street homelessness and want more
2 services for them. For example, we
3 know that businesses want our
4 streets to be in good condition so
5 that their customers and employees
6 and trucks can get through.

7 So, you know, we are -- we
8 are not hearing a lot of specific
9 complaints about -- or concerns
10 about the taxes.

11 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: All
12 right. So is -- you're feeling that
13 it's sustainable? In other words,
14 that the projections that they're
15 projecting that we're going to get
16 are going to stay that way? Because
17 again, we -- there were projections
18 for other taxes that they had put up
19 in other administrations that --
20 where taxpayers are now paying at
21 least half of whatever it was going
22 to fund. So --

23 MS. FEGELY: Yes, I hear
24 what you're saying, but yes, I'm --

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1 I mean, I'm comfortable with what --
2 with Finance's projections.

3 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

4 Thank you.

5 MS. FEGELY: Yeah. Thank
6 you.

7 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

8 Jessie.

9 MR. LAWRENCE: Thank you,
10 Director, Councilmember, your
11 question was, what is the
12 anticipated target for development
13 of new homes and -- is also
14 preservation or repair? What was --
15 just to clarify.

16 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: No.
17 Well, I mean, really, I want to know
18 how many new housing units for '27
19 -- FY-27 and what type of units will
20 they be like what --

21 MR. LAWRENCE: Got you. So
22 I'll give you the best breakdown I
23 can on the spot right now. So our
24 objective for meeting production and

1 goal -- well, we're looking to meet
2 a production goal of over 3,900
3 units in new construction.

4 Just to break that down a
5 little bit, based on the different
6 divisions doing the different work,
7 and, kind of, expanding off my
8 opening testimony. We have about
9 1900 units of multifamily units that
10 are in pre-development right now.
11 Approximately 1500 or under
12 construction as we speak. That's
13 actually a combination of
14 preservation and new construction.

15 To give you a little bit
16 more of a breakdown in terms of the
17 -- what's been kind of coming under
18 the Turn the Key roster. There is a
19 -- we have over 1000, approximately
20 -- actually 1,048 units that have
21 been approved for development for
22 Turn the Key right now. And there
23 are 200 units specifically in Turn
24 the Key under construction right

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1 now.

2 So we anticipated to look
3 for that to be done this -- within
4 this next fiscal year. And as of
5 now, there are 392 units seeking
6 permits as we speak.

7 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

8 Okay. Yeah. Are there affordable
9 units in there? I -- you said 1900
10 multifamily?

11 MR. LAWRENCE: Yeah.

12 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

13 What's the --

14 MR. LAWRENCE: We can get
15 you in writing the proportion of
16 what those affordable units are. I
17 mean, based on our disposition
18 policy and the work that we do, most
19 of that inventory is going to be for
20 affordable opportunities at varying
21 income land -- income bands. But we
22 can get you that breakdown more
23 elaborated and expanded.

24 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

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1 Thank you. Thank you.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

3 Thank you very much. The Chair of
4 Housing and Neighborhood Services
5 and the Homeless, Councilmember
6 Jamie Gauthier.

7 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

8 Thank you, Council President. Good
9 morning, Director Fegely. Good
10 morning, Director Lawrence and to
11 you and your teams. And thank you
12 for the work that you do on behalf
13 of the city and our communities
14 every day.

15 I have questions for both
16 of you, but I'm going to start with
17 Planning and Development. And so
18 obviously we spent a lot of the fall
19 discussing housing spending
20 priorities through the H.O.M.E
21 initiative budget process, but I
22 want to make sure that we are still
23 keeping our eye on the prize and
24 making the most of the great

1 opportunity that this program will
2 provide.

3 And so, first, do you have
4 written down anywhere a full
5 breakdown of how soon the H.O.M.E
6 money will start getting spent on
7 each housing program it funds? How
8 long we think each funding allotment
9 will last? And what other funding
10 sources are being used to supplement
11 H.O.M.E in FY-27?

12 MR. LAWRENCE: So thank you
13 for that question. As you know, we
14 literally just got the money not too
15 long ago, and we are waiting to
16 spend that money out as we -- as we
17 speak. As you know, our H.O.M.E
18 program is -- it secured the bond
19 fund -- bond funding, but it also is
20 in combination with other forms of
21 funding that we have access to, such
22 as CDBG, housing trust fund, so on
23 and so forth. But I would like to
24 call Angela to talk about where the

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1 status -- what the status of
2 spending is across the different
3 programs.

4 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
5 Thank you so much.

6 MR. LAWRENCE: Sure.

7 MS. BROOKS: Good morning.
8 Angela Brooks, chief housing and
9 urban development officer at the
10 mayor's office. Thank you for the
11 question, Councilmember Gauthier.
12 As Jessie mentioned, we did just
13 receive funds. We anticipate we
14 will start seeing some of the first
15 requisitions any day now. I'm sure
16 Dave Thomas --

17 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
18 That's exciting.

19 MS. BROOKS: -- is sending
20 his staff -- will be sending over
21 BSRP and adaptive mod requisitions
22 over momentarily. But he's here
23 right now. I think your question
24 was, do we have it in writing? I

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1 don't at this moment; we can
2 certainly follow that up and get
3 that to you.

4 We do have projections on
5 what we think that spend down will
6 be. There is -- I'm not sure if
7 it's been in -- if it's been
8 transmitted already, there will be a
9 bill coming -- a resolution coming
10 to make the fiscal year of the year
11 one H.O.M.E bond aligned. So it'll
12 go from April 1st, 2026 through June
13 30th of 2027. So following -- so
14 here I'm following the bond years;
15 will go with the city fiscal year.

16 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
17 Thank you.

18 MS. BROOKS: So that's
19 coming, so.

20 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
21 Thank you. If you could get that
22 information to us in the next week
23 or so, it -- we would appreciate it.
24 And I'm asking this because it gets

1 to how we're operationalizing this
2 historic investment and initiative
3 that we're all very proud of. We
4 knew even in the fall that many
5 programs were not going to be fully
6 funded through H.O.M.E.

7 And so I think we need to
8 make sure that we aren't knowingly
9 leaving any initiatives with less
10 than -- well, I was going to say 12
11 months, but this is starting in
12 April, so it's a little more than 12
13 months' worth of support.

14 So one example is the 1.8
15 million for PHLHousing+, which is an
16 incredibly effective and, and
17 important program. That was never
18 meant to get PHLHousing+ all the way
19 through FY-27. So that means that
20 if we want to keep this program
21 going through to the next fiscal
22 year, it's going to need to be
23 supplemented. And we're taking a
24 big risk if we don't plan for that

1 eventuality right now in the budget
2 process.

3 Another is the tenant based
4 shallow rent program. The city
5 committed about \$6.2 million to this
6 program, 3.5 million of that coming
7 through H.O.M.E. But there haven't
8 been any new opportunities for more
9 LIHTC building owners to apply -- to
10 participate in this program yet.

11 So, you know, it's also an
12 incredibly effective and important
13 program, and we don't want that
14 money to sit. Other programs like
15 the Home Repair Programs, TFA,
16 housing counseling, and many others
17 were getting supplemented with
18 funding sources such as CDBG and the
19 Housing Trust Fund.

20 And so, I think we want to
21 make sure that we as council,
22 understand the full spending
23 picture, an operational plan for
24 each of these critical programs as

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1 we go through and deliberate, and I
2 -- and at the end of this process,
3 approve this budget.

4 MR. LAWRENCE: Council
5 President, we would like to take the
6 opportunity to follow up on that.
7 As you remember and recall this
8 body, we was a lot of -- there was
9 an extensive conversation and
10 dialogue about what the cash flow of
11 proposed programs would be, right?
12 So we certainly are okay with
13 helping you have -- well, helping
14 have that conversation; continuing
15 to have that conversation to be able
16 to dive deeper into what that cash
17 flow looks like as a result of just
18 receiving that money.

19 But I would like to also --
20 I would like to also call up
21 Director Dodds -- Mark Dodds, who
22 can speak a little bit more about
23 exactly what we're doing as we
24 speak, anticipating everything

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1 you've just described.

2 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

3 Thank you so much.

4 MR. DODDS: Good morning.

5 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

6 Good morning, Mark Dodds, deputy
7 director, DHD. I just wanted to
8 touch on two of the programs you
9 referenced. PHLHousing+. We're
10 looking -- you're right, there's not
11 enough funding to fully fund the
12 program all the way through FY-27.
13 We're looking at different scenarios
14 working with PHDC to crunch the
15 numbers and thinking about ways in
16 which potentially the Housing Trust
17 Fund might be able to help
18 supplement that program.

19 In the past, funding for
20 this program has -- seems to be in
21 jeopardy nearly every year. In the
22 past, we've also looked at different
23 transition plans to make sure that
24 participants, if there is a need to

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1 exit, will be able to do so as
2 smoothly and gracefully as possible.

3 Also, around the shallow
4 rent, the property based program,
5 that did receive a sizable increase
6 under the home bond. I believe we
7 work -- working with our partners at
8 PHDC that they anticipate releasing
9 another RFP as soon as this spring,
10 hopefully to increase the number of
11 participants, obviously.

12 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

13 Thank you so much. I look forward
14 to receiving that detailed
15 information hopefully in the next
16 week. But certainly in time for us
17 to make these budget decisions on
18 our critical housing programs. Do I
19 have Chair privilege or do I -- is
20 that it? Do I have privilege to ask
21 more questions?

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

23 A brief one.

24 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

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1 Okay. I wanted to spend a little
2 bit of time talking about housing
3 production and preservation. These
4 are some of the highest dollar
5 amounts in our housing budget, and
6 also the areas where we have the
7 best opportunity to be creative and
8 respond to changes in the market.
9 You all know that I am championing a
10 very specific opportunity --

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
12 Ask the question.

13 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER: --
14 neighborhood restorations which
15 could get Mayor Parker a 1,000 of
16 her 30,000 units. And so my
17 question is, how are we setting
18 ourselves up to really take
19 advantage of the production and
20 preservation money in H.O.M.E from
21 an operational perspective? We've
22 been really backed up on RFPs, and
23 if we get this infusion of cash to
24 these programs, we have to be able

1 to get it out in the street.

2 What are we doing that's
3 like -- what are we planning to do
4 that's different from an operational
5 perspective than we're doing now?
6 And with just -- there has to be an
7 acknowledgement that we've really
8 been struggling to put up our RFPs
9 and get money out on the street.

10 MR. LAWRENCE: So there are
11 a couple of things -- and I
12 appreciate that question. There are
13 a couple of things that have been in
14 the works even prior to now that
15 really allow us to think about and
16 actually attack the fact that there
17 are things like a time tax on
18 development, and understanding that
19 there -- you know, we should be
20 positioned to spend money as swiftly
21 as possible, as fast as possible, to
22 meet these goals as soon as
23 possible.

24 That's exactly why the

1 HomeOps process is important;
2 understanding that the streamlining
3 of development processes is whether
4 it's, you know, DPD-specific or
5 DPD-adjacent or development-
6 adjacent. Understanding that there
7 are different departments that play
8 a role in the development process is
9 important.

10 So, you know, we're
11 positioning ourselves to make sure
12 that we are equipped to streamline
13 approvals much more swiftly than we
14 are right now.

15 In terms of preservation,
16 we recognize that that is also
17 something that is of the utmost
18 importance. Looking at that in a
19 couple of different ways in the --
20 on the competitive RFP side, we
21 recognize that there needs to be
22 some reconciliation of the timing.
23 You know, a lot of these projects
24 that come to us for RFPs ultimately

1 go on to the state for PHFA, for
2 other tax credits, right? And we
3 really kind of fill that -- we fill
4 that gap, right?

5 So understanding that when
6 we put these projects, when we put
7 these competitive opportunities out,
8 we need to make sure going forward
9 that they are aligned specifically
10 with the ability to fulfill an --
11 complete an application with the --
12 proper awards that ultimately go to
13 PHFA.

14 And basically, you know,
15 there has been kind of an
16 inconsistency in the timing of it
17 all. So, department-wise, our
18 director of DHCD is looking at and
19 actually exploring even moving
20 forward with putting out RFPs in a
21 time that's much more ideal to be
22 able to sync up with some
23 opportunities when folks go to PHFA
24 for credits and so on and so forth.

1 In terms of the
2 preservation effort, again,
3 recognizing that there is an
4 opportunity at neighborhood's
5 preservation portfolio to dive in
6 and swoop in and really kind of
7 save, you know, and preserve
8 affordable housing that's coming out
9 of a period of compliance. But, you
10 know, again, I -- and I stressed
11 this before, recognizing that that
12 needs to be a comprehensive strategy
13 citywide is very important to us.

14 And even -- you know, and
15 throughout the H.O.M.E process, one
16 of the big take-aways was
17 understanding that if folks are all
18 coming to different funding
19 opportunity -- different funders
20 that would be willing to participate
21 in this with different strategies
22 all from the different -- from the
23 same administration, it's a little
24 hard for them to kind of commit to

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1 something that seems to be
2 fragmented on the delivery, on the
3 pitch.

4 So I think that this is not
5 a portfolio specific approach, but a
6 comprehensive kind of approach that
7 looks like, you know, something
8 that's a structure that can be
9 applied across the board is what
10 we're gaming for.

11 So, I mean, we look forward
12 to continuing those conversations
13 about that portfolio, but then also
14 bringing it into the larger
15 conversation that we're having with
16 different implementation partners
17 that are also looking at the same
18 exact thing and how to bring it
19 together under one strategy.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
21 Thank very much.

22 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
23 When will the operational program --
24 operational plan be completed? And

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1 when can you get that to Council?

2 MR. LAWRENCE: I can't give
3 you a date at this moment because
4 conversations are still in play, but
5 we would like to deliver that as
6 soon as possible. Because please
7 understand that we are absolutely
8 committed to figuring out some sort
9 of strategy that allows us to move
10 forward sooner than later. This is
11 not something we want to delay at
12 all.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
14 Thank you. Thank you, Council
15 President.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
17 Thank you. Chair recognizes
18 Councilmember Dr. Anthony Phillips,
19 Councilmember Rue Landau,
20 Councilmember Nicholas O'Rourke.

21 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:
22 Thank you, Council President. So
23 the H.O.M.E. initiative is rolling
24 out as a major investment in

1 housing, and to me it's really
2 important that we are really strong
3 with effectively and efficiently
4 rolling out this plan.

5 It's incredible and it's
6 important, but a responsive
7 government is major and essential.
8 Will the department provide a clear
9 public-facing one-pager explaining
10 how wait lists, priorities, and
11 timelines will work under H.O.M.E.?

12 MR. LAWRENCE: We can get
13 you something in writing that
14 specifies what our strategy around
15 that is.

16 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:
17 That would be -- that would be
18 incredible. And what is the
19 expected timeline for residents who
20 have already been waiting for
21 services?

22 MR. LAWRENCE: So I'm going
23 to defer to David Thomas, who is
24 managing obviously PHDC's roster of

1 applications for BSRP and other home
2 repair programs.

3 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

4 Well, as he comes up, time is
5 ticking. So I just want ask, will
6 Council receive district level data
7 showing how many homes are repaired,
8 preserved, and built through H.O.M.E
9 in each councilmanic district?

10 MR. LAWRENCE: So I believe
11 that's a requirement -- it's a
12 reporting requirement for the
13 H.O.M.E plan, and we certainly will
14 get that information to you. And
15 David Thomas can talk a little bit
16 about what the shift in strategy has
17 been for our wait list to date.

18 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

19 Yeah, and just a reminder, David, I
20 just want you to explain how you're
21 going to make sure residents clearly
22 understand what programs are
23 available to apply to and what to
24 expect in terms of the timelines.

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1 And then are you going to provide a
2 one-pager explaining how wait list,
3 priorities, and timelines -- no, no.
4 It was what is expected for the
5 residents who are already waiting
6 for services. Sorry about that.
7 That's the one.

8 MR. THOMAS: David Thomas,
9 president and CEO for PHDC, I'm not
10 clear on your question.

11 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:
12 The question, what is the expected
13 timeline for residents who have
14 already been waiting for services?
15 That was --

16 MR. THOMAS: For anybody
17 that applies for services related to
18 BSRP --

19 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:
20 Yeah.

21 MR. THOMAS: -- my wait
22 list is anywhere from six to nine
23 months, depending upon the type of
24 services that you're seeking.

1 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS: Is
2 that something that can be reduced
3 at this point? What would -- what
4 would be needed to make it -- to
5 reduce that wait -- that wait time?

6 MR. THOMAS: Honestly? I
7 don't know that it can be reduced
8 much more because of the process of
9 determining eligibility and the time
10 that it takes for us to gather the
11 documentation and do the assessment
12 on the property and also assign the
13 work.

14 I think six months is
15 probably the best I can probably get
16 to. I would like -- now, in
17 emergency cases, we get to that a
18 lot sooner, like sewage in the
19 basement and things of that nature.
20 We probably get to that within two
21 months.

22 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:
23 And every resident who applies --

24 MR. THOMAS: If it's a --

1 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS: --
2 they know that; they know it's six
3 to nine months?

4 MR. THOMAS: Yes,
5 absolutely.

6 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:
7 Okay. I heard the bell. I have
8 other questions, but I'll save it
9 for the second round. But just -- I
10 just want you to -- you did say just
11 on the record that we're going to
12 get a one pager where we can get a
13 clear outline on the timeline for
14 application; start time to finish.

15 When it comes to -- when
16 someone applies the timeline on, you
17 know, execution of the whole
18 projects and also how it works with
19 the programs, you can do a one-pager
20 just explaining all the programs you
21 were eligible for as well as giving
22 them a service level agreement on
23 timelines of when they should
24 receive the service. Is that

1 something you can do, you said?

2 MR. LAWRENCE: That detail
3 will pretty much spell out what the
4 process is and the time associated
5 with the different steps. I think
6 it's important to recognize the
7 different steps that are taken
8 between that six-to-nine-month
9 process, right?

10 We can certainly elaborate
11 on review times, the times it takes
12 to procure contractors, so on and so
13 forth, the times it takes to
14 schedule visits. initial
15 inspections, backend inspections.
16 But I think that we can provide an
17 itemized timeline of what those
18 different steps spell out over a
19 six-month period.

20 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:
21 Thank you. That would be really
22 helpful. I look forward to that.
23 And I'll save the rest of my
24 questions for the next round.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

2 Thank you, Dr. Phillips.

3 Councilmember Rue Landau.

4 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

5 Thank you. Thank you all so much
6 for being here. I'm going to start
7 with some housing questions, and
8 we'll come back to Commerce in the
9 second round.

10 First, I wanted to talk
11 about a Fresh Start. One of the
12 programs we talked about during this
13 -- the -- it was one of the big ones
14 we talked about during the H.O.M.E
15 budget. It provides support for
16 moving expenses for Philadelphians
17 seeking housing, maybe to get out of
18 a situation where there -- they must
19 transition.

20 Mark, thank you for all the
21 work you've done on this and for
22 talking to me through it. But my
23 question is about the current status
24 of that program; the expected

1 expenditures going forward. What
2 was ultimately spent on Fresh Start
3 programs in FY-26? What's budgeted
4 for 27? And how much will come from
5 H.O.M.E program funds, and how much
6 from other sources?

7 MR. LAWRENCE: Do we have
8 that information? I think we can
9 give you a high-level initial
10 answer, and we'll talk about what we
11 can break down in writing for you to
12 follow up.

13 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:
14 Sure.

15 MR. DOBBS: This tight
16 court is up here. Good morning. So
17 in FY-27, there's \$4-million
18 budgeted for the program. All of
19 that funding comes from the H.O.M.E
20 budget in FY-26. The exact
21 breakdown we can provide, but many
22 -- the entirety of the funding in
23 FY-26 came from, I believe,
24 reallocated emergency rental

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1 assistance funding which is -- which
2 is no longer available,
3 unfortunately.

4 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

5 Great. That makes total sense and
6 probably rings a bell for something
7 you've told me in the past. I
8 appreciate you. How many people do
9 you think will be served -- while
10 you're here. How many people do you
11 think we can serve with the
12 \$4-million for this year?

13 MR. DOBBS: That's a good
14 question. So we do have projections
15 and I don't have them right in front
16 of me, but I will say that I believe
17 the average payout is around \$3,500.
18 So I think it would be the 4 million
19 divided by 3,500.

20 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: We
21 got calculators for that. We got
22 that. Thank you. Thank you for
23 that. I wanted to --

24 MR. DOBBS: And I just want

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1 -- it could be a little bit higher
2 so we can follow up with more exact
3 figures. We do have projections for
4 that program.

5 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

6 Great. Thank you. Thank you. Just
7 a little bit more about the housing
8 repair programs too. The budget --
9 your budget detail says that you'll
10 serve 8,000 households through BSRP,
11 AMP, and the Heater Hotline. And I
12 know you're going to come back with
13 a timeline on that, but how many
14 households were served last year and
15 how many more will be served this
16 year as the result of H.O.M.E
17 funding?

18 MR. THOMAS: David Thomas,
19 President, CEO of PHDC.
20 Councilwoman, last year, I can give
21 you BSRP's numbers on average. So
22 somewhere around -- with the funding
23 that we received, and it floats over
24 fiscal period. So this is going to

1 be confusing for me. I want to say
2 just under 4,500 last year for BSRP.
3 AMP is a lot smaller because the
4 funding is a lot lower, and that --
5 and my goal for AMP this year has
6 been 500, but I think my number last
7 year was like 350.

8 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: And
9 --

10 MR. THOMAS: And what was
11 the other?

12 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:
13 Heater Hotline.

14 MR. THOMAS: Heater
15 Hotline. That's very interesting.
16 Because we work with ECA, and a lot
17 of that is predicated, so over a
18 thousand, but I don't know my
19 specific numbers right now.

20 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: What
21 about for this year? So we have
22 BSRP just under 4,500; AMP, 350.
23 You said the goal this year is 500
24 and the Heater Hotline was over a

1 thousand.

2 MR. THOMAS: Yeah. You
3 want to know what the numbers are
4 for this year?

5 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: Yes.
6 What your -- what your expectations
7 are, your goals.

8 MR. THOMAS: Well, my goal
9 is always to get to everybody that
10 has a need. Okay. So I think it's
11 really going to --

12 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:
13 That's all our goals, right? Yeah.

14 MR. THOMAS: So I think
15 it's really going to be predicated
16 on funding. Because I think I can
17 try to get to everyone if I have the
18 resources. But my goal will stay
19 the same. I would love to be at
20 3,500 to 5,000. And that's all
21 going to be predicated on funding,
22 so.

23 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: But
24 your budget testimony said that

1 you're going to serve 8,000
2 households through this and that.
3 8,000 is much more than last year.
4 Last year was about, it looks like,
5 5,800.

6 MR. LAWRENCE: Those
7 projections -- those projections are
8 based on -- that projection in the
9 testimony is based on a combination
10 of all the different programs under
11 the Home Repair days. The Whole-
12 Home Repair.

13 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: All
14 of them?

15 MR. LAWRENCE: Yes.

16 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:
17 Okay. One more? Homelessness?
18 Excellent. Wanted to move on to --
19 for fear -- I need to come back with
20 multiple. I'm going to throw in
21 homelessness and tech real quick. I
22 wanted to know what the
23 administration has planned to move
24 more chronically homeless

1 Philadelphians into permanent
2 housing, particularly permanent
3 supportive housing.

4 And while I'm at it, I also
5 want to put my tech question out
6 here, which is, when can we -- we
7 want to -- I wanted to -- what
8 effort has been made to publish the
9 data about the funding that's been
10 allocated to the H.O.M.E. program?
11 What funding's been obligated?
12 What's been spent? And when are we
13 going to get our quarterly reports?

14 MS. BROOKS: Angela Brooks,
15 Chief Housing and Urban Development
16 Officer. Thank you for that
17 question. I'll start with the
18 quarterly reports. Per the
19 legislation, the quarterly reports
20 are due when we start spending. So
21 we will probably have our first
22 quarterly report in probably the
23 next three months. So that's the
24 short one.

1 We have been working with
2 the Office of Homeless Services. I
3 know these questions came up during
4 their budget hearing. So we are
5 working together to think about how
6 we will allocate the 8.8 that's
7 allocated in year one H.O.M.E.
8 spending. Certainly, we are
9 committed to supporting not just
10 transitional housing, but permanent
11 supportive housing.

12 As you know, that's what I
13 did before I got here. So we are
14 working closely with both the Office
15 of Homeless Services and Department
16 of Behavioral Health to really think
17 about how we work together as well
18 with the Philadelphia Housing
19 Authority. So stay tuned; we are
20 working on that, but we are thinking
21 about how they'll allocate the year
22 one funds, and they have some ideas.

23 So I won't say, I'll defer
24 to Sheryl, but the priority really

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1 is utilizing PSH funding to really
2 -- or the year one funding to
3 support development of permanent
4 supportive housing.

5 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

6 Okay. And as I've been hearing from
7 constituents throughout the city,
8 why can't we pay for the thousand
9 new homeless beds through the
10 H.O.M.E. money that we allocated
11 versus adding a new tax on the hotel
12 rooms?

13 MS. BROOKS: That is a
14 question I would have to follow up
15 in writing because that's not a
16 perspective that we've been thinking
17 of. But I will say that the year
18 one H.O.M.E. budget allocation, we
19 are projecting to spend it as it was
20 approved and allocated. So any
21 shifting of that, we'd probably have
22 to have the conversation with the
23 committee that Council designated in
24 the -- in the legislation on how we

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1 reallocate that. So --

2 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

3 Okay. Thank you very much.

4 MS. BROOKS: But I will
5 follow up with a more detailed
6 answer in writing.

7 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

8 Appreciate that very much.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

10 Thank you. Member O'Rourke, Lozada.

11 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

12 Thank you, Mr. President. Blessings
13 and morning to all. Thank you for
14 being with us today. This past
15 week, we passed -- this body passed
16 a few bills. The Safe Healthy Homes
17 Act, which modernizes our landlord-
18 tenant laws in a number of critical
19 ways. The Safe Healthy Homes Act is
20 a huge step forward for our city, I
21 believe.

22 And the debate around it
23 raised some very important issues
24 that I spoke to a little bit

1 yesterday in a previous hearing, and
2 I'd like to discuss a little bit
3 more today.

4 What we learned in the
5 many, many conversations that we
6 had, from small landlords, is that
7 they're struggling. End of
8 sentence. In reality, my
9 legislation does not contribute to
10 that Struggling for good actors,
11 though it was framed that way
12 incessantly. But the legislative
13 process did expose cracks in our
14 current system.

15 The primary complaint that
16 we heard is that landlords are
17 struggling with the sheriff's office
18 and with the courts. We discussed
19 that at length yesterday. However,
20 second on their list was red tape.
21 I am not an expert on all the steps
22 needed to complete a repair, a new
23 development, all the in-betweens on
24 that.

1 So I want to ask you, what
2 are we doing to make it easier for
3 responsible, equitable and
4 affordable development and
5 preservation to move more quickly in
6 Philadelphia? And it should be as
7 easy as possible, I think, for
8 reasonable and responsible
9 developers to build and to preserve
10 truly affordable housing in this
11 city. I want to start there. Was
12 that the bell? Okay. Great. We'll
13 start there. Yes.

14 MR. LAWRENCE: So I mean,
15 the response that I gave earlier
16 about what we're doing to expedite
17 the process still stands. It really
18 is making sure that we are looking
19 to our departmental partners to not
20 necessarily circumvent processes.
21 You know, we want to make sure that,
22 you know, the process moves faster.

23 I know L&I is pivoting in a
24 way to be able to streamline their

1 process a little bit faster already.
2 We're doing the same thing at PHDC
3 as we speak, as far as virtual
4 inspection, so on and so forth, to
5 move that wait list process on a
6 little bit faster. But, you know,
7 it's a matter of making sure that we
8 look within our processes to move it
9 faster. You know, we can commit the
10 funds, we can talk about securing
11 that money, but we also have to look
12 into our HomeOps process.

13 So, you know, the answer
14 lies within that process. And
15 looking at not just our ability to
16 approve projects faster on the DHCD
17 and planning and development side.
18 You know, same thing goes with that
19 answer earlier about being able to
20 pivot and issue these funding
21 opportunities much more swiftly.
22 Not one time a year, two times a
23 year, whatever the case may be,
24 right?

1 But then also making sure
2 that aligns with the other parts
3 that are ultimately going into
4 capital stack. So I think it's
5 making sure that we're aligning with
6 the timelines to make sure that
7 development is responding to the
8 open opportunities for funding. But
9 it's also, you know, doing things
10 like not just our L&I, but also our
11 ZBA, right? That -- the process of
12 getting projects approved with
13 variances.

14 We're minimizing the intake
15 process timeline, making sure that
16 folks are getting something -- you
17 know, applicants, excuse me, are
18 getting some sort of response from
19 our ZBA within a -- within the week
20 of business days. But it's --
21 that's where it lies. And just kind
22 of minimizing the barriers
23 historically that have elongated the
24 process going forward.

1 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

2 Another lesson that we learned is
3 that there's a very broad concern
4 among landlords, among tenants,
5 community members, members of this
6 body, with outside corporate
7 investors purchasing and increasing
8 share of our single-family homes and
9 Naturally Occurring Affordable
10 Housing, NOAH, that folks have been
11 on my neck about.

12 What steps is the
13 administration planning to take to
14 resist this particular trend,
15 preserving affordable housing
16 opportunities and local control of
17 property?

18 MR. LAWRENCE: Well, I'm
19 sorry, I missed the part about the
20 NOAH. Can you just repeat the back
21 end of that question please?

22 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

23 Yeah. What steps is the
24 administration planning to take to

1 resist this particular trend of this
2 particular --

3 MR. LAWRENCE: Can you
4 recapture the trend for me please?
5 I'm sorry. I missed that.

6 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
7 Yeah. About these particular
8 developers coming in and buying up a
9 lot of the single-family homes, like
10 big swathes of it or what have you.
11 That is a trend. That's a thing
12 that's often repeated. When folks
13 say that what we were doing was
14 somehow choking out the naturally
15 occurring affordable housing, and
16 that it's going to displace all
17 these folks, and you're going to
18 have all these corporate folks
19 coming and buying up.

20 So that is a thing that's a
21 refrain we consistently heard about
22 the entirety of the process. And we
23 did -- we could to kind of mitigate
24 those particular concerns. But I do

1 want to ask from a strategic
2 standpoint, from the administration,
3 if we're aware of this being a
4 trend, what is the administration
5 particularly doing to resist that
6 particular trend?

7 MR. LAWRENCE: Thank you
8 for making that clarification. We
9 certainly are aware of it, and in a
10 number of different ways that we're,
11 you know, actively responding to it.

12 One, for purposes of being
13 able to position landlords to make
14 those repairs, things like the
15 Rental Improvement Fund are really
16 important, right? Being able to
17 rely on a resource, that is the
18 alternative to just simply selling
19 to somebody that's a predatory
20 buyer, right?

21 But at the same time, it's
22 not just about the landlord, it's
23 the small landlords. It's about the
24 actual home buyers too -- I mean,

1 homeowners too, right?

2 So understanding that
3 tangled title is increasingly
4 important so that people who have
5 the titles to their home, but not --
6 might not recognize -- might not
7 officially have the title to their
8 home, but are the owner occupants to
9 a certain extent.

10 Making sure that we are
11 positioning the funding for programs
12 like that; to be able to position
13 owners to be able to take advantage
14 of the programs that allow them to
15 get their affairs in order so that,
16 you know, the option or the easiest
17 option isn't to just sell the
18 property.

19 The home repair programs
20 are also important to that as well,
21 right? Making sure that people have
22 the access to the grants and the
23 loans, whether it's Basic Systems
24 Repair or even Restore, Repair,

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1 Renew, which is something that's a
2 low-interest loan, but you have a
3 little bit more control about what
4 you do there, right? And you're
5 moving -- you have options at this
6 point.

7 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
8 Yeah.

9 MR. LAWRENCE: But that
10 kind of array of options is meant to
11 be able to respond to predatory
12 buying. Whereas, it's keeping
13 people hopefully in their
14 neighborhoods that they've lived and
15 owned, you know, a home for the last
16 40, 30, whatever the case may be.

17 But that arrangement, you
18 know, the H.O.M.E. plan is about
19 stabilizing. I think it falls into
20 that stabilization effort. Being
21 able to put all of those together as
22 potential options to keep homeowners
23 in their homes, whether it's owner
24 occupants --

1 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

2 Sure.

3 MR. LAWRENCE: -- or
4 whether it's the small Rental
5 Improvement Fund for the landlords
6 that have a handful of properties.

7 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

8 The admonition of all those programs
9 kind of creates that stability. I
10 got one more and then I'm off of it,
11 Mr. President. Kind of in that same
12 spirit.

13 Lastly, the Safe Healthy
14 Homes package, folks may remember
15 this was a year-long process. So we
16 got the last two passed this past
17 week. The first part actually was
18 passed last year, back in June. The
19 bill authorized an Anti-Displacement
20 Fund. And we talked about this, I
21 think, before, which was included in
22 that first year of funding for
23 H.O.M.E.

24 The point of this fund is

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1 very specific and particularly
2 important to the whole package that
3 we were trying to do over the course
4 of the year. It creates a backstop
5 when a cease operations order comes
6 down and leads to a tenant actually
7 being displaced, and then it funds
8 their relocation, because we do not
9 believe that renters, when they have
10 to be displaced, should bear the
11 cost burden of finding relocation
12 monies.

13 That being said, when will
14 the Anti-Displacement Fund be
15 operational and how will I be able
16 to direct our constituents to it?

17 MR. LAWRENCE: So I think
18 it still merits the conversation. I
19 can't commit to a time so to speak
20 right now on the spot. But I think
21 that talking about it further would
22 be more ideal at this point. But I
23 can't commit to --

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

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1 Can I get a point of information
2 while we're at it in terms of that
3 line of questioning.

4 MR. LAWRENCE: We -- yeah.
5 Sorry.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
7 Do you have in front of you the list
8 of amendments that came from Council
9 that was added to the H.O.M.E. plan,
10 and can you give us an update on the
11 status of the things that we amended
12 to the H.O.M.E. plan?

13 MR. LAWRENCE: Yeah, we
14 definitely have that list. And I'll
15 defer to Angela to speak a little
16 bit more, but to answer your
17 question properly. Excuse me. I
18 believe -- I can't remember if we
19 have year -- year one -- does year
20 one have Anti-Displacement Fund?
21 FreshStart. Yeah.

22 So, I mean -- and my
23 inclination is to lean on FreshStart
24 as the tool there. But I'll let

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1 Angela talk a little bit further
2 about where --

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
4 And Jessie, a point of information
5 to be clear, the Anti-Displacement
6 Fund, that was a part of --

7 MR. LAWRENCE: That's
8 correct.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
10 Okay. I just wanted to be clear.

11 MS. BROOKS: And to further
12 clarify for everyone -- Angela
13 Brooks. The Anti-Displacement Fund,
14 and I'm pulling it up now, was a
15 part of several items in one bucket.
16 So there's about five other things
17 that are in that. I am currently
18 pulling that up. John, did you come
19 up to say -- address something? So
20 while --

21 MR. JOHN: I actually came
22 up to address a different question
23 that's already answered. So --

24 MS. BROOKS: Okay.

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1 MR. JOHN: If it comes back
2 around, I'm here.

3 MS. BROOKS: There we go.
4 Sorry.

5 MR. LAWRENCE: I think it's
6 important to recognize how it was a
7 part of a larger --

8 MS. BROOKS: Right.

9 MR. LAWRENCE: That's what
10 I was trying to get at.

11 MS. BROOKS: And so, there
12 are several things in that bucket,
13 and I don't even remember which one
14 it came under. But generally, to
15 answer your question, we are in the
16 process of going line by line
17 through every of -- each one of the
18 buckets in the H.O.M.E. budget and
19 allocating how that'll be spent and
20 when that's done.

21 So when we do the follow up
22 to Councilmember Gauthier, we can
23 provide that for you in writing and
24 kind of do a breakdown. So we can

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1 do that. And Councilmember
2 Phillips, I can't promise that it'll
3 be a one-pager, because what you
4 asked for is a lot of information,
5 but you will get something that has
6 all of that in a shorter version
7 than what you are used to getting.

8 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

9 Mr. President had a -- the request
10 for the -- all the H.O.M.E.
11 amendment pieces. So I just want to
12 buttress his request. I understand
13 it's part of a lot --

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

15 I just wanted to see.

16 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

17 Yeah.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

19 We submitted it, it was voted on,
20 and then just the timeline that it
21 actually become reality, that's all.

22 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

23 Yeah.

24 MS. BROOKS: Yeah. And a

1 lot of the changes that Council did
2 was just increasing budget items
3 that we already had. So we have
4 already started having meetings. We
5 met with Councilmember Gilmore-
6 Richardson about the Wheels program.
7 So working -- we are working on
8 operationalizing that, and we're
9 having individual meetings with
10 councilmembers that specifically had
11 those, just so we can get a little
12 bit more background for those that
13 are not intuitive.

14 So we do want to make sure
15 we are taking in some of the
16 thoughts of the councilmembers on
17 the why and the what they wanted to
18 see in that. So those are
19 happening.

20 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
21 I'm done, Mr. President. I was just
22 wanting to say -- I just -- I have a
23 particular interest in the -- in the
24 Anti-Displacement Fund. So I do

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1 look forward --

2 MS. BROOKS: I got a
3 feeling you did.

4 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
5 Yes, indeed. Thank you so much.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
7 Thank you. Councilmember Quetcy
8 Lozada, Nina Ahmad, then Mark
9 Squilla.

10 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA:
11 Thank you, Council President. Good
12 morning. I guess my question -- I'm
13 going to start off with Jessie. Do
14 you believe that the public should
15 have a say in how we use public
16 land?

17 MR. LAWRENCE: Fast answer
18 is yes.

19 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA:
20 Okay. And do you -- and do you
21 believe that the HUD AMI is not --
22 or doesn't speak to the realities of
23 many people in our community?

24 MR. LAWRENCE: I'm sorry.

1 You went in and out for me.

2 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: Do
3 you believe that the HUD -- the way
4 that HUD determines a person's AMI,
5 that it doesn't respond to the
6 realities of some in our community?

7 MR. LAWRENCE: I do believe
8 that there is a misalignment between
9 what the metro area designates as
10 HUD numbers or HUD AMIs, based on US
11 federal census data, whatever the
12 case may be.

13 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: But
14 do you believe that they speak to
15 the realities of people on the
16 ground?

17 MR. LAWRENCE: No. I think
18 there is a gap between that for
19 sure.

20 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA:
21 Okay. And do you understand or do
22 you believe that as a government, we
23 should protect and respond to
24 preventing gentrification in certain

1 neighborhoods?

2 MR. LAWRENCE: I do believe
3 that, which is why I think the
4 public conversation is in fact
5 important to your point earlier.

6 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA:

7 Okay. And so, if you believe that,
8 why do districts like mine continue
9 to receive projects that don't
10 respect community input, don't speak
11 to the realities of our communities'
12 AMI and will further gentrify
13 neighborhoods and displace people.
14 Why is that okay?

15 MR. LAWRENCE: I believe
16 that we have a mission and
17 commitment to improve communities
18 where we can with the activation of
19 publicly owned land specifically.
20 And I believe in aligning that
21 particular effort with the tools in
22 the -- in the toolbox that we have
23 when it comes to the different
24 programs that we have uplifted over

1 time.

2 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: But
3 do you believe that there are --
4 that every program doesn't believe
5 -- belong in every neighborhood?

6 MR. LAWRENCE: I do think
7 that is -- you can't unilaterally
8 apply programs across the city. And
9 I do think that on a case-by-case
10 basis, you do have to make some
11 determinations about what's
12 appropriate and what is in fact not
13 appropriate.

14 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: So
15 why do you all continue to ignore --
16 if you believe that, why do you all
17 continue to ignore neighborhoods
18 like mine that tell you that certain
19 parts of your H.O.M.E. initiative do
20 not work in neighborhoods where --
21 that have been quickly gentrified
22 and have vastly displaced people
23 that cannot afford programs like
24 Turn the Key?

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1 MR. LAWRENCE: I wouldn't
2 say that we have ignored that,
3 because if we ignored that, we would
4 have development within the 7th
5 District that responds to Turn the
6 Key. And we haven't seen that yet.

7 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: You
8 haven't received that yet, you said?

9 MR. LAWRENCE: We haven't
10 seen Turn the Key development take
11 off in your particular district. If
12 we're talking about your
13 neighborhood and your district, I
14 won't co-sign the fact that we're
15 pushing people out because we
16 haven't developed home ownership
17 opportunities to Turn the Key in the
18 7th District just yet.

19 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: And
20 why have you all -- why do you
21 believe that we have not responded
22 or have allowed for Turn the Key
23 projects to take place in the 7th?

24 MR. LAWRENCE: I do know

1 that your constituency, specifically
2 your representation, your
3 constituency has very specific
4 thoughts about how to develop and
5 what to develop and what the cost to
6 develop is, too.

7 So, I mean, that's why
8 we're in active conversations with
9 the collective in your district to
10 talk about what exactly the
11 resources would be needed for them
12 to take the lead to develop the
13 other communities. Again, I -- we
14 are not here to gentrify. We are
15 here to reactivate land based on the
16 tools we have in our toolbox of
17 housing programming. And whether
18 it's home ownership --

19 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: And
20 you don't think that you haven't
21 seen Turn the Key projects in my
22 neighborhood because developers have
23 not been respectful enough to come
24 and appropriately respond to the

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1 needs of that neighborhood? Would
2 you say that?

3 MR. LAWRENCE: I would say
4 that I know that developers have met
5 with your constituency to talk about
6 what they would like to do in your
7 district.

8 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: But
9 -- and you think that the -- that
10 they have responded to the needs of
11 that community through the program
12 or the projects that they have
13 offered my community? Is that what
14 you're saying?

15 MR. LAWRENCE: I think that
16 it is responding to different
17 elements of your community. Again,
18 we are talking about a very large
19 geography that has many, many
20 different blocks in many, many
21 different specifics that pertain to,
22 you know, a case-by-case basis. I
23 don't -- I respectfully push back on
24 us unilaterally trying to develop

1 the same type of housing throughout
2 your entire district.

3 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: I
4 would respectfully push back on you
5 saying that you allow for my
6 community to have a say in what they
7 want to see in their neighborhood.
8 Because every project that has come
9 into the neighborhood, my community
10 has been willing to sit down with
11 the project person, and they have
12 not been able to deliver what they
13 need in their community.

14 If there are reports that
15 say that residents in my community
16 make under 35,000, and you have a
17 project that starts at a minimum of
18 45,000, then obviously you're not
19 responding to the need of my
20 community. And when you have
21 developers or you send developers
22 our way that feel that it is okay to
23 lie to my community and come back
24 four times without making a change

1 in their proposal, it is a problem.

2 And the public should be
3 able to determine what they want to
4 see in their neighborhood. And so,
5 I'm trying to figure out how do we
6 come to a place that is fiscally
7 responsible, responds to the needs
8 of the community and does not
9 displace people that have
10 generationally called neighborhoods
11 home.

12 MR. LAWRENCE: So to your
13 point earlier, you asked if there
14 was a connection between the census
15 data that specifies what the HUD AMI
16 is for the area, based on numbers
17 that come from Washington versus
18 what your average Philadelphian is.
19 And if we point to Turn the Key in
20 the work that it has done, it has
21 served households at or below around
22 60 percent of AMI, which is where
23 your average Philadelphian comes in.
24 Even to dive down a little

1 bit more deeper, at least 150 of the
2 Turn the Key homes have been sold to
3 those between 31 percent of AMI and
4 50 percent of AMI. So again, I
5 think that it is unfair to
6 generalize that we aren't taking
7 consideration about where Turn the
8 Key opportunities are coming,
9 because those are all RFPs, those
10 are all very specific locations in
11 which there have been conversations
12 with Council about where those RFPs
13 are coming out. So under --

14 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: We
15 can't even get to the point of
16 having a conversation with -- about
17 RFPs, because you all don't respect
18 neighborhood. You don't respect
19 what public -- you don't respect
20 what the public wants to see and how
21 we use public land. You all have to
22 be willing to come to the table and
23 have an honest conversation.

24 MR. LAWRENCE: So again --

1 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: And
2 that's not what has happened with
3 your -- I'm going to say department
4 division. It is not what has
5 happened, right? The community
6 consistently says, this is what
7 we're looking for. This is what we
8 need in order for us to stay in our
9 neighborhoods. And you all continue
10 to push back on it. You all
11 continue to send people to meet with
12 them that don't want to negotiate.

13 MR. LAWRENCE: I
14 respectfully disagree, but okay.

15 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: Then
16 we're going to continue to be here
17 because at the end of the day, I was
18 sent here to protect my community.

19 MR. LAWRENCE: And --

20 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: I
21 was sent here to not allow -- we
22 have a responsibility not to allow
23 people to be displaced in their
24 neighborhoods.

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1 MR. LAWRENCE: I completely
2 understand.

3 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: We
4 have a responsibility to keep people
5 in their homes. We have a
6 responsibility to make sure that
7 people are not house broke.

8 MR. LAWRENCE: Yeah.

9 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: We
10 have a responsibility, Jessie.

11 MR. LAWRENCE: Listen, we
12 are actually talking about the same
13 thing. We all -- we are all
14 committed to the same exact thing.
15 And I --

16 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA:
17 Yeah. But you all talk to us about,
18 and what actually happens, what
19 actually comes to the table are two
20 different things. And that I think
21 is my frustration. And I believe
22 that that is my community's
23 frustration as well. When you meet
24 with the community and when you meet

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1 with us, you say, we understand,
2 Councilmember.

3 Yes, community, we
4 understand you need affordable
5 housing. Yes, we understand you
6 live under -- with an income of
7 under \$45,000 a year. Yes, we
8 understand you need affordable
9 rentals, but when you all put
10 proposals on the table, they speak
11 completely the opposite. And so how
12 are we supposed to take you serious?

13 MR. LAWRENCE: There are
14 very specific ways that we do
15 business. There is the unsolicited
16 route and there is the solicited
17 route. The solicited route is the
18 RFP process. The unsolicited route
19 is just not RFP process. So again,
20 we will not -- we will continue to
21 work with you about that unsolicited
22 process -- and both the RFP and the
23 unsolicited process.

24 But again, contrary to what

1 you're providing here, I do want to
2 just express that we have a billion
3 -- nearly billion-dollar H.O.M.E.
4 plan that is -- that is committed to
5 providing housing for folks of all
6 different income vans and all
7 different neighborhoods. And even,
8 you know, whether Turn the Key is
9 something that's not prevalent in
10 your particular district, there are
11 tax credit projects that are
12 prevalent in your district.

13 So again, I just don't want
14 to understate the commitment that
15 this department has to promoting
16 affordable housing throughout the
17 entire city.

18 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: I
19 would appreciate it if you were to
20 show -- I'm willing to continue to
21 work together, right?

22 MR. LAWRENCE: And you know
23 I am too, Councilmember.

24 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: I'm

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1 willing to continue to work
2 together. But it has to be -- it
3 has to be in a way that protects
4 neighborhoods like mine.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
6 See, here's what I would like to do.

7 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: I
8 have more than one neighborhood that
9 is being gentrified, and that is not
10 going to --

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
12 Here's what I would like --

13 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: --
14 continue to happen in my
15 neighborhood.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
17 Here's what I would like to do. And
18 Jessie, I know you have to work with
19 the Councilmember. And when this
20 plan was brought to us for us to be
21 supportive of us, to us to give up
22 our Councilman prerogative, right?
23 It was made; a commitment upfront
24 that we would work lockstep together

1 with the district council person,
2 right?

3 Not pushing stuff in front
4 of the Land Bank, grabbing up
5 support and opposition to the
6 member. Because that's contrary to
7 working with the member in good
8 faith. That's just my personal
9 opinion from being here, right?
10 And I've always seen that even
11 happen depending on where you're
12 from and who you are, to just being
13 quite frank.

14 I think she's just saying,
15 it was asked of us to give up our
16 rights over a certain land -- I'm
17 not even going to say our rights,
18 but our ability to hold off on the
19 disposition of land to work in
20 partnership with the administration.

21 And so -- and that's a good
22 faith thing. Because we could have
23 went the other way and just said,
24 no, under no circumstances shall we

1 not give up their right to dispose
2 of land. And I think -- not I
3 think, but I know for a fact with
4 Member Lozada just saying through
5 this process, she's looking for a
6 level of good faith in trying to
7 figure out a home that we may do for
8 Turn the Key at this AMI, it may not
9 be best for her immediate community.

10 And I've been around
11 Philadelphia long enough to know
12 certain neighborhoods probably won't
13 even be having a conversation.

14 MR. LAWRENCE: Yeah.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
16 So she's saying, don't treat me no
17 different than we are in Bella
18 Vista, than we are in Northeast, but
19 we ain't Rittenhouse Square, afford
20 me that same level of respect. And
21 it may be agreements to
22 disagreements, but the reality is
23 that bill is not going anywhere.

24 MR. LAWRENCE: Yeah. Yeah.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
2 So that doesn't get anything
3 accomplished. And then the response
4 will say, well, we're just doing
5 what we supposed to do. No. So we
6 all will make this process
7 successful if we figure out some
8 medium for us to work together. And
9 councilmembers, specifically
10 district councilmembers, deserve the
11 right to chart the path for their
12 own community, because they're the
13 ones that's responsible to that
14 community.

15 And so, hopefully we can
16 continue that dialogue and I'll be
17 more active --

18 MR. LAWRENCE: I look
19 forward to it.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
21 -- seeing how me and my team could
22 be supportive of making sure what
23 she wants to accomplish gets done.

24 MR. LAWRENCE: Absolutely.

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1 Look forward to continuing the
2 dialogue.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
4 Chair recognizes Councilmember Nina
5 Ahmad, Squilla, Young and Brooks.

6 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: Thank
7 you, Council President. Good
8 morning still to all of you. My
9 first question is to the Commerce
10 Department. Thank you so much for
11 being here. I want to really
12 address the issue of very small
13 businesses, the pop-up businesses,
14 the ones that start up in a street
15 corner to do proof of concept,
16 right?

17 And many big companies
18 actually do a lot of pop-ups to test
19 their products as well. But I'm
20 talking about the really small, sort
21 of cottage industry folks who are
22 entrepreneurs trying to do this.
23 They face significant hurdles,
24 primarily navigating complex multi-

1 agency permitting, sometimes 40
2 steps high -- and in addition to
3 their high cost of so many things
4 going on, I wanted to know in this
5 money that was allocated for the
6 BIRT exemption impact, the 38 to 43
7 million, is there a way to use some
8 of that to support this permitting
9 process and this -- all this
10 barriers that these pop-up
11 businesses experience to drive our
12 economy? They can -- they can be
13 significant in our economy. So if
14 you would address that, please.

15 MS. FEGELY: Sure. Thanks,
16 Councilmember. Totally agree with
17 you first of all, that we need to --
18 and Commerce is very committed to
19 supporting businesses at every size
20 and stage. And you're right, our
21 local entrepreneurs are often, you
22 know, tomorrow's employers.

23 And so, we really want to
24 support that; their creativity and

1 their grit and determination to
2 build a business. We are using some
3 of the -- what we're calling --
4 under that Jumpstart investment,
5 small business investment, to
6 support very small businesses. We
7 are working on making what -- the
8 Catalyst Fund more -- it's currently
9 -- small businesses are applying and
10 are being awarded.

11 We are working on sort of a
12 new and improved version, a 2.0, if
13 you will, that is going to make it
14 even easier. What one of the --
15 some of the feedback we got was that
16 the application asked the same of a
17 bigger business and a small
18 business.

19 And it's like we need to
20 make it a little easier and
21 streamlined for the smaller
22 businesses. And so, we are working
23 on that. And you'll see that this
24 summer.

1 We also are just -- are in
2 the process right now of doing a
3 round of grants towards vending
4 markets so that the markets can
5 support their vendors.
6 Understanding that that's -- you
7 know, vending is one of those low
8 barrier to entry type of businesses.

9 And we want to support
10 entrepreneurs that want to do that.
11 And we are also looking to hire a --
12 one of our next hires in Commerce is
13 going to be somebody really focused
14 on vending markets and vendors.

15 Also, our Open for Business
16 initiative has tackled a few of the
17 challenges around licenses and
18 permits that are required to sort of
19 streamline that process.

20 And we actually just did --
21 this is somewhat related, so bear
22 with me. We did a -- just did a
23 project with ULI on the vending
24 market technical assistance panel,

1 where they bring in ULI's models.
2 You know, they bring in experts from
3 all over. And we looked at how can
4 we do more, how can we support more
5 of those opportunities. So there
6 should be a report coming soon that
7 we will be working with all of you
8 on.

9 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: I
10 look forward to that report. And
11 more importantly, to convene these
12 folks, these local small
13 entrepreneurs who seem to be lost in
14 the sauce basically. And so, I
15 would have to -- happy to partner
16 with you to amplify that, but we --
17 they don't hear about it. They
18 don't know.

19 So streamlining that, not
20 just for them, for everybody is
21 important, but particularly them.
22 So I thank you for that.

23 MS. FEGELY: Okay.

24 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: Do I

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1 have time to ask a --

2 MS. FEGELY: We'd love to
3 partner with you on that.

4 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: --
5 question of --

6 MS. FEGELY: No.

7 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD:
8 Jessie -- sorry, Jessie. I was
9 calling you Jessie. Just wanted an
10 update on the Market East revival
11 status. What is going on? How well
12 are people being included? I know
13 you have a committee, and I know we
14 have a member on that, but we have
15 no information, because at one point
16 they were going to break everything
17 down and then they reversed it. And
18 it seems -- I know this is -- these
19 are private entities. I just wanted
20 to know how much oversight you have
21 outside of zoning approvals. What
22 else do we have in terms of watching
23 what exactly is happening there?

24 MR. LAWRENCE: So -- and

1 thank you. I appreciate that
2 question, Councilmember. So right
3 now, we are -- as you alluded to,
4 there is a committee that meets on,
5 at this point, a kind of bimonthly
6 basis, right? And much of the year
7 has really been spent on just
8 understanding what folks see when
9 they look at Market East, what
10 stands out to them as far as
11 opportunities, things and assets
12 that can be anchored.

13 We -- it's really been a
14 lot of foundational stage setting
15 with a lot -- a lot of different
16 information. Kind of how we got to
17 where we are today, right? What
18 we're at the process of doing right
19 now is we're shifting into a big
20 public engagement push right now,
21 right?

22 So there have been
23 subcommittees broken up amongst
24 those different committee members,

1 things along the side -- along the
2 lines of activation of land use, you
3 know, also public safety being a
4 critical thing there.

5 But ultimately what this
6 has all been kind of surmounting to
7 is a very informed conversation
8 about what economic development
9 incentives would be needed to move
10 something forward, right? So our
11 target for the end of the year is to
12 produce a report that packages such
13 a thing. But what we're doing
14 between now and then, the summer
15 will be really dedicated toward
16 engagement, round tables, bringing,
17 you know, we -- outside of that
18 committee -- outside of that
19 advisory group, is what it's called.

20 Outside of that advisory
21 group, there have been a lot of
22 different one-on-one stakeholder
23 conversations with folks that aren't
24 on that group. Property owners,

1 civic representatives, so on and so
2 forth, right? But as we're kind of
3 pivoting at, literally as we speak,
4 we are getting into the public
5 engagement component, right?

6 So we are making plans to
7 have some sort of engagement hub on
8 the corridor for folks to be able to
9 see things like development
10 scenarios, things that basically
11 have stood out in the conversations
12 and the subcommittees and round
13 tables and focus groups.

14 All of that information is
15 being packaged as we speak, to be
16 able to be presented in an
17 engagement hub. And all that
18 information is going to ultimately
19 solidify a couple of different
20 things. Well, prior to that we'll
21 have the development scenarios, but
22 we want that to funnel into a market
23 study.

24 So we're taking a

1 temperature on what the market could
2 sustain right now. And the real
3 kind of stand by this that -- I
4 stand by the fact that, you know,
5 there have been iterations of a
6 Market East, so to speak, a study, a
7 report, so on and so forth.

8 But the time that we're
9 taking out is really to bring all
10 this information in a post pandemic
11 world, thinking about how people
12 recreate differently, and thinking
13 about how people shop differently.
14 You know, it's a main street, but
15 what's on this main street, right?
16 Where's the opportunity for housing?
17 How does this coincide with not just
18 our comprehensive planning update
19 but also the H.O.M.E. plan, right?
20 It's all coming together as we
21 speak.

22 The community feedback,
23 public engagement phase is where
24 we're entering right now. The fall

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1 will be where it's all packaged up
2 as we speak. So what -- we can have
3 some sort of report by the end of
4 the year.

5 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: Thank
6 you. I just want to make sure
7 economic diversity is something
8 that's kept in mind when we are
9 planning what sorts of economic
10 enterprises will go there. The
11 small, the big, including how
12 housing is done to have mixed use.

13 MR. LAWRENCE: Yes. Sure.

14 COUNCILMEMBER AHMAD: 80/20
15 works in New York. It works. So
16 let's see Philadelphia do that. So
17 thank you so much.

18 MR. LAWRENCE: Sure.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
20 Thank you. Councilmember Mark
21 Squilla, then Councilmember Young
22 and Councilmember, Minority leader,
23 Kendra Brooks.

24 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA:

1 Thank you, Mr. President. Real
2 quick, I have a couple -- well, I
3 got many questions that I'll ask in
4 a second. Where -- real quick,
5 where do you stand with the citywide
6 survey for the historic properties
7 that was going to be looked at and
8 done that we could do for as far as
9 preservation and part of the task
10 force -- historic task force
11 recommendations. The city was
12 proposing a survey. Do you know if
13 that had started or if it's going to
14 start?

15 MR. LAWRENCE: I believe
16 that has begun. I'm looking at a
17 couple of deputies that might know,
18 but we -- I don't know that it has
19 started, but we can get back to you
20 on a specific status update
21 specifically for that effort.

22 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA:
23 Okay. Thank you. And also, that
24 Neighborhood Economic Development,

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1 the NED, we understand that, you
2 know, since the cost of the
3 properties have increased, we're
4 looking to see, would we be able to
5 support an increase in grant level
6 funding to support the work, given
7 the challenges of increasing values
8 of properties for this year?

9 MR. LAWRENCE: I'm not sure
10 I followed the question. Sorry.
11 What's that?

12 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA:
13 It's for Commerce.

14 MR. LAWRENCE: Oh, okay.
15 You were looking at me.

16 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA: I'm
17 sorry. Looking right through to
18 Karen.

19 MS. FEGELY: Hi,
20 Councilmember. So I'm sorry. Is
21 the question -- is are we in -- how
22 are we dealing with rising costs?

23 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA:
24 Cost, and would we support increase

1 in grants?

2 MS. FEGELY: Yeah. Given
3 Yvonne and I had to come up here,
4 but yes, we have -- we have
5 reallocated and we have increased
6 the amount. I think we still
7 advertise our grants as up to
8 \$500,000 for neighborhood economic
9 development. But we do make a --
10 that's a -- that's a guideline, not
11 a rule. And we make exceptions as
12 needed.

13 Again, the bigger our
14 grants, the fewer we can do. And
15 so, we are always trying to balance
16 that issue.

17 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA: And
18 the answer would be -- so the
19 question would also be, yes, can we
20 give more? But then also are we
21 looking to add more into the pot so
22 that we can make it viable?

23 MS. BOYE: Thank you,
24 Councilman Squilla. Yvonne Boye,

1 Deputy Commerce Director. I'm glad
2 you brought it up. I think we had
3 -- most of the funding that we have
4 that is available for the
5 Neighborhood Economic Development
6 grant is the CDBG federal funds,
7 with its accompanying hurdles.

8 I think we had a reduction
9 in hard funds this year. And so, we
10 do not have a resource to increase
11 it by much. However, because of the
12 Jumpstart, we are able to reallocate
13 the funding a little bit so that
14 other programs that were solely
15 funded through CDBG can now be
16 funded through the Jumpstart, right?

17 And so, that has released a
18 little bit more funding for us to
19 use for this year. We also had the
20 Neighborhood Preservation Initiative
21 funding, which kind of supported it,
22 but that is gone. And so, we've
23 been able to increase the CDBG
24 funding allocated this year to 3.3

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1 million, which -- and it was usually
2 just about 1.2 million.

3 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA:

4 Okay.

5 MS. BOYE: However, it is
6 federal funding and it comes with
7 these accompanying hurdles.

8 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA: So
9 it is possible then?

10 MS. BOYE: Yes.

11 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA:
12 Through this to increase the amount
13 of the grants to do this?

14 MS. BOYE: Yes, we are able
15 to do that. But basically, just
16 because, you know, of the Jumpstart
17 funding that we have, the
18 allocations worked this year.

19 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA:
20 Okay. Thank you so much. And I'm
21 going to go back to Adaptive
22 Modification Program. Do we know if
23 there's a current waiting list for
24 the grants for Adapt Mod?

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1 MR. LAWRENCE: There is a
2 current waiting list. Give me a
3 minute and I can tell you
4 specifically how much. And as he
5 pulls it up, Councilmember, just
6 clarification. We will still follow
7 up with the Historical Commission
8 survey, but I think what you're
9 referring to is Treasure Philly,
10 which was originally Broad and Erie,
11 it has now moved to Frankford. It's
12 a pilot phase right now, but we'll
13 get you the clarity to get you the
14 status update on that for sure.

15 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA: So
16 it's not doing a citywide survey?

17 MR. LAWRENCE: It's not
18 citywide at the moment, but we will
19 -- we will break that down for you.

20 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA:
21 Okay.

22 MR. LAWRENCE: Yeah.

23 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA: All
24 right. Thank you.

1 MR. LAWRENCE: Current wait
2 list for Adaptive Modification is
3 just under 2000.

4 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA:
5 2000. And do we know how many of
6 them are for handicap accessibility,
7 of those 2000 to --

8 MR. LAWRENCE: Physical.

9 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA:
10 Physical accessibility to their --
11 to homes, to be able to access their
12 homes?

13 MR. LAWRENCE: No. I can't
14 say for certain what that number
15 would be.

16 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA: If
17 we could ask that for the -- if we
18 could find out what that is and get
19 that for the Chair. Because I think
20 that's something too that we really
21 need to look at. If people need to
22 have access to their homes or access
23 in their homes, how we can make sure
24 that happens.

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1 MR. LAWRENCE: Yeah, I have
2 to see whether or not even have that
3 data. I can certainly tell you the
4 numbers of folks that we are working
5 with and the ones that we've
6 completed. But some of the folks
7 that have applied may not be
8 answering that question because I
9 don't know that we have a question
10 that speaks to that.

11 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA:
12 Well, you would -- you know who's on
13 the waiting list, right? The -- but
14 you --

15 MR. LAWRENCE: Yeah. I can
16 call them, yes.

17 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA: All
18 right. Thank you.

19 MR. LAWRENCE: I'll take
20 care of it.

21 COUNCILMEMBER SQUILLA:
22 Thank you.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
24 Thank you very much. Just want to

1 spin the block real quick. Back to
2 Jessie. I just was thinking about
3 this process as well. The highest
4 population of public land is in the
5 7th Councilmanic District and the
6 5th Councilmanic District.

7 And I know we support our
8 Mayor's H.O.M.E. Plan, that's why
9 the majority of members voted the
10 bill out, right? With some
11 additions, but for the most part,
12 the bill out. And I know she has a
13 goal to rehab and produce 30,000
14 units. And so, it's really
15 imperative that there's a good
16 relationship between those two
17 district members in order for our
18 mayor to be successful throughout
19 her term.

20 And so, I was just sitting
21 there thinking about how we
22 establish that stronger partnership,
23 but ultimately her success lies
24 within those two district

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1 councilmembers, because ultimately
2 if there are no partnerships, the
3 bills just sit.

4 If there is no input from
5 the community, there's no way to
6 progress to move forward. And we
7 would like for her to be successful.
8 First woman Mayor, large, big city
9 of America. And so, we want to be
10 supportive of that. And so that's
11 something I just want to say. It's
12 imperative that we figure that part
13 out, particularly with those two
14 members. I have significant
15 development. Jamie has significant
16 development. Them two have the
17 largest, and I think yours as well.
18 Point of information. I mean, you
19 have? Point of information.

20 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

21 Yes.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

23 Go ahead.

24 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

1 I've been thinking a lot about this
2 too. And I'm sensitive to what
3 Councilmember Lozada brought up.
4 And it seems to me that the issue is
5 that we are very skilled in one type
6 of housing typology with our public
7 land. We know how to do Turn the
8 Key. We're comfortable with the
9 developers that apply again and
10 again.

11 And so, it feels like we've
12 gotten into the mode of that's what
13 we are doing with our public land.
14 And I talked to you all about this
15 last year when you came to my
16 office, we were talking about
17 putting up the thousand parcels, and
18 kind of giving you guys
19 pre-approval, but even at that time
20 I was asking you questions about
21 what other housing typologies can we
22 do, right? I don't -- I love Turn
23 the Key.

24 I'm doing a significant

1 amount of them in my district, but I
2 also don't think it's fair that that
3 is the only product that we can
4 reliably turn out. And that there's
5 this public pressure for district
6 councilmembers to move on Turn the
7 Key with frankly the same developers
8 that apply again and again and
9 again. And they're just going
10 across the city shopping. They're
11 shopping at this point for where
12 there's vacant land that they can
13 continually do this model, whether
14 they know our neighborhoods or not.

15 So the charge I would put
16 to you all is let's continue to do
17 Turn the Key. It's awesome, but
18 there needs to be more than one
19 housing typology that we know how to
20 fund and to deliver and that are
21 tailored to the needs of our
22 communities. And so, I kind of have
23 talked to you guys about this
24 before, but I truly think that

1 that's the issue. Absolutely.

2 MR. LAWRENCE: So I just --
3 if I may, everything you said, it
4 still stands. There is absolutely a
5 commitment to figure out other
6 typologies that work, which is why
7 we've made things like zoning
8 changes to account for, or accept,
9 or at least allow for things like
10 duplexes in certain parts of the
11 city, right?

12 So we recognize that we
13 need to set the stage to allow for
14 different types of housing as well.
15 Philadelphia, as you know, as
16 everyone in here knows, is a
17 predominantly row house city. And
18 that is the predominant typology,
19 which is why we are leveraging that.

20 We also, in terms of public
21 inventory, we don't have a lot of
22 assemblages either, which is why the
23 sheriff's sale process is so
24 important, and jump starting that a

1 year ago was really pivotal to
2 making sure that we can in fact
3 pivot to everything you've just
4 described.

5 So I don't want to dispute
6 the fact that that is something that
7 is still on the table. As we find
8 these assemblages that are a little
9 bit more opportune to diversify the
10 housing type, that continues. And
11 when it comes to the -- you know,
12 the commitment to working with the
13 -- this particular body on that --
14 the thousand properties, that still
15 stands. That has not gone anywhere.
16 We just haven't gotten to the point
17 of briefing you all yet.

18 Angela can talk a little
19 bit more if we need to about the
20 FUSE Fellow that has really
21 dedicated the time and effort. To
22 your point earlier about those
23 applications that came in and were
24 kind of discussed, and you know, the

1 developers coming in, to be honest
2 with you, that is a process that
3 predates where we are when it comes
4 to this special 1000-unit list,
5 right? Excuse me, 1000 property
6 list, right?

7 We intend every -- we've
8 recognized where the majority of
9 those properties are on. It's the
10 3rd, it's the 5th and it's the 7th.
11 And we know that even with this
12 specialized process, there's still a
13 part of the process that you still
14 -- I mean, again, we call it
15 repositioning the approvals process
16 on the front end.

17 There's still a tool or a
18 step that we have to come to you to
19 work with. So we certainly aren't
20 trying to circumvent the process.
21 We recognize that we're just
22 repositioning it, and we know that
23 can't happen without the
24 conversations. We just want to make

1 that very clear.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

3 Can I have a point of information?

4 Councilmember Quetcy Lozada.

5 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: I
6 appreciate your words. I think that
7 for many people, for some reason,
8 this has become about a number.

9 This has become about delivering a
10 number, and we are forgetting that
11 we are impacting people's lives.

12 That we are -- that we -- that if we
13 don't do this right, we are going to
14 have an impact, a negative impact on
15 neighborhoods, on communities.

16 And so, can we stop -- let
17 us move away from the number. If we
18 get 30,000, if we get 50,000, if we
19 get 100,000, great. Amen. But if
20 we don't, then we all should be able
21 to look back and say that we
22 delivered housing for Philadelphia
23 for people, safe, affordable, real,
24 affordable houses for people. We

1 can't say that we want people to
2 choose Philadelphia if we are making
3 it unaffordable for them to choose
4 Philadelphia.

5 And so, I just ask us to
6 move away from looking at the number
7 and the timeframe in which we all
8 have to deliver this number. Let us
9 think about the people and the
10 children and the families that we
11 will impact negatively if we don't
12 do this right.

13 MR. LAWRENCE: And I just
14 actually want to also put on record
15 that there is a component -- there's
16 an important partner, just has not
17 been mentioned just yet. PHA has
18 that ability to dive into that
19 deeper affordability that -- where
20 we have to think a little bit more
21 strategically or deeper about,
22 right?

23 So I just -- you know, I
24 know -- I recognize what you just

1 said about the numbers not being the
2 guiding factor here, but I just want
3 to recognize that they're in this
4 just like the administration is in
5 this, right? So when we talk about
6 diversifying the housing types, we
7 have a partner in PHA to think about
8 that and the tools that they have at
9 their, you know, disposal, things
10 that we don't have. But I mean,
11 just know that it's a coordinating
12 effort.

13 Again, we are leveraging
14 in-fill opportunities because that
15 is the predominance of our
16 inventory. But I agree with you, it
17 should not limit and it will not
18 limit where we look at and how we
19 consider housing going forward.

20 Again, home ownership is
21 key, but everyone is not supposed --
22 everyone is not supposed to be a
23 homeowner. Everyone wants to be --
24 you know, everyone is not wanting to

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1 be a homeowner, excuse me, to get my
2 word correct.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

4 Excuse me, sir.

5 MR. LAWRENCE: Yeah.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

7 Point of information. Councilmember
8 Cindy Bass.

9 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Thank
10 you, Mr. President. You know, I
11 just wanted to say -- and I know
12 that you all do great work and
13 you're working really hard at this.
14 But the idea that we should sort of
15 look to PHA to do this particular
16 component, you know, like if you're
17 low to very low income, that somehow
18 we should shift this over to PHA.
19 But when we voted on these bills, we
20 weren't told that -- yeah, you know
21 what -- but you know what I'm
22 saying.

23 MR. LAWRENCE: I know what
24 you're saying.

1 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: When
2 we -- when we were presented with
3 these options through planning and
4 through the city of Philadelphia, it
5 was not, you know, we're going to do
6 X, Y, and Z and PHA is going to do,
7 you know, X, Y, and Z, we're going
8 to focus on, you know, Turn the Key
9 and they're going to focus on low
10 income. It wasn't presented to us
11 at all that way.

12 So I just want to just be
13 careful that that's not what we're
14 suggesting, because right now it
15 looks like Turn the Key is very much
16 a one size fit all outfit. And if
17 you ever get a one size fit all, it
18 doesn't fit anybody. And so, the
19 idea that we're doing one size fit
20 all in North Philly, it doesn't
21 work. So we have to go back to the
22 drawing board and find a new tool
23 that's going to work.

24 MR. LAWRENCE: Yeah.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

2 Thank you.

3 MR. LAWRENCE: And I just
4 -- I completely agree with you. I
5 just want to make sure that we are
6 on the same page about PHA not being
7 pigeonholed into just low-income
8 opportunities because that's not all
9 that they do. And we recognize
10 that. I just wanted to make sure
11 that we were recognizing that there
12 was another partner in play.

13 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Right.
14 But still --

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
16 I grew up --

17 MR. LAWRENCE: Yeah.

18 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Right.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
20 I grew up in public housing, and the
21 new -- the new PHA is not the old
22 PHA.

23 MR. LAWRENCE: It's not
24 your grandma's PHA.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

2 No. Not no three stories with a
3 deck. You're looking outside the
4 back. No, I didn't grow up like
5 that. No.

6 MS. BROOKS: Councilmember
7 Johnson, can I just also just --

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
9 Chair recognizes Angela Brooks.

10 MS. BROOKS: Thank you.
11 Angela Brooks again. And I just
12 want to make sure we haven't talked
13 about -- and I think to
14 Councilmember Gauthier's point and
15 the other councilmembers,
16 particularly you Councilmember
17 Lozada, we are in the process of
18 going through the vacant land
19 strategy, that will be finalized
20 soon.

21 And that's where we will
22 get a better idea of how we should
23 be using our public land and having
24 a real strategy. We will be having

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1 individual meetings with each
2 district Councilmember, certainly
3 with starting the ones that have the
4 most vacant land, the legislation
5 specifically for the special
6 disposition process, which is not
7 removing prerogative; it's just
8 putting it on the front end.

9 And to your point,
10 Councilmember Lozada might make more
11 sense because then the councilmanic
12 decision is made before it comes to
13 the Land Bank. But we are going to
14 start having those meetings.

15 We've briefed the Council
16 technical staff, we're starting with
17 you, Council President Johnson, and
18 you will start seeing those. But
19 the goal is within the H.O.M.E.
20 plan to really address the full
21 housing continuum from zero to a
22 hundred, and to make sure -- well,
23 really to any income level. And we
24 do want to work with each of you as

1 partners, the Office of Homeless
2 Services, PHA, we want to be a
3 partner and we want to look at how
4 the H.O.M.E. funds are icing to
5 really supplement all of the housing
6 needs that we need in Philadelphia
7 and not exclude anyone. And so, we
8 look forward to working with all of
9 you.

10 Certainly, we have a lot of
11 work to do in District 7. We
12 recognize that and we look forward
13 to working with you and continuing
14 figuring out some of the hard work.
15 This is not going to be easy. We're
16 here for hard. We're easy to have
17 -- we're here to have the hard
18 conversations, and we look forward
19 to working with you to come up with
20 an equitable solution on what works.
21 But that does mean things might have
22 to look different, and we recognize
23 that.

24 But Turn the Key is not the

1 only solution we're thinking of, but
2 as far as the special disposition,
3 we're limited to 1500 square feet.
4 So that kind of really is either
5 Turn the Key or a two-family type
6 development.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
8 Like, I know we have the modular
9 proposal, right? Let's say the
10 modular proposal goes through. How
11 is those units going to be different
12 than the typical Turn the Key unit?

13 MR. LAWRENCE: That's
14 actually one of the things that are
15 -- you know, this -- that's a
16 question that needs to be answered,
17 right? We put this RFI out to
18 understand, like, what folks that
19 are on the operating side can match
20 with the opportunity as they
21 understand it here in Philadelphia,
22 right? I think that we -- by
23 nature, we defer to an infill
24 opportunity, because again, that is

1 what the prevalence of our inventory
2 is.

3 However, we know that there
4 are several projects in the city
5 that have been built on a
6 multifamily basis on modular
7 housing. So it is intended to be a
8 flexible opportunity -- a flexible
9 tool for building not just single-
10 family opportunities, but for also
11 some multifamily stuff.

12 But I think that we want to
13 understand if in fact, one, there's
14 a competitive advantage that we can
15 tap into for modular housing,
16 whether that is, you know, building
17 a site that -- or excuse me,
18 building a facility that allows us
19 to crank these modules out.

20 What the reception for
21 something like that would be in the
22 market. How that is differentiated
23 from grabbing these boxes and
24 modules from, you know, rural PA or

1 South Jersey, whatever the case may
2 be. But there is a level of
3 flexibility that comes with modular
4 housing in terms of development,
5 housing type -- housing development
6 types.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
8 Before I call our next member, I do
9 remember when I was in Member
10 Phillip's district, it was the 9th
11 District, they called it middle
12 neighborhood, right? And we had a
13 town hall up there.

14 And I remember constituents
15 coming up and saying, can we also
16 build -- can we consider building
17 the one floor flat buildings?
18 Because it was an older woman, she
19 had seniors. She said, I don't have
20 no children, right? And I don't
21 need a two story or a three-story
22 home. And could we take that in
23 consideration as being a senior, I
24 guess it's called a flat. I guess

1 that's what it is.

2 For us to maybe look at
3 another different type of model for
4 that type of individual who don't
5 want to go -- our issue was going up
6 and down the steps, I remember.

7 And so, just having a one
8 level unit was also beneficial for
9 her. Just something to think about
10 if we're talking about diversifying
11 on what options are available.

12 MR. LAWRENCE: Yeah. And
13 also, one other thing that I want to
14 make it clear is that, you know, as
15 we understand those, the need for
16 diversity types, I mean, we're
17 talking -- we're home to a Center
18 City that has probably one of the
19 largest residential populations in
20 anywhere else in the country, right?

21 So, you know, the
22 prevalence of housing in Center City
23 is not the row house, right? So we
24 certainly need to position

1 ourselves. If we're talking about
2 trying to get housing on the Market
3 East, we have to figure out what
4 that looks like, right? We have to
5 be able to diversify that.

6 We also talked about zoning
7 earlier. You know, one thing that
8 we have is, again, the duplex
9 zoning, but we're also trying to
10 push out the transit-oriented
11 communities as well, right? Being
12 able to incentivize the development
13 of multifamily opportunities around
14 transit centers.

15 And, you know, that speaks
16 to the elders who may not, you know,
17 enter on the first floor, but could
18 certainly enter through a lobby, get
19 on the elevator and be in their
20 flat. You know what I mean? So I
21 think that, you know, we're trying
22 to package this and kind of situate
23 ourselves to be able to take
24 advantage of several different

1 options.

2 By nature, again, it's a
3 single-family opportunity that
4 comes, that rises to the top,
5 because it's the easiest. And if
6 we're talking about expediency,
7 we're going to the low hanging
8 fruit, but we're also setting the
9 stage and paving the way for things
10 to be a little bit more different,
11 diverse and responsive to -- if
12 we're talking about a recruitment
13 tool, everyone that moves to
14 Philadelphia doesn't live side by
15 side with people, everybody doesn't
16 want to live or own a home.

17 Some people do want
18 apartments. So being able to allow
19 for some zoning changes that allow
20 for that to happen and incentivize
21 that kind of development aspect on
22 the developer instinct is important
23 to us.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

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1 Thank you very much. I want to
2 acknowledge the presence of Majority
3 Leader, Katherine Gilmore-
4 Richardson. And so, Member Young,
5 Brooks, Richardson, then we get into
6 our second round.

7 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Thank
8 you, Mr. President. My colleagues,
9 kind of, you know, touched on many
10 of the questions that I've had, but
11 I have a direct question for the
12 Housing and Planning Department. Do
13 you support increasing the Turn the
14 Key subsidy to \$100,000?

15 MR. LAWRENCE: So there is
16 some thoughts that has been
17 presented to us. I'd like to call
18 up Angel Rodriguez to talk about the
19 timeline associated with the thought
20 process there. Right now, Turn the
21 Key is --

22 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: It's
23 okay, I don't need to hear from
24 Angela on that, right? Because you

1 just answered my question, right?
2 Because if we got to have a timeline
3 to think about it, the answer is no
4 to me. So we're going to go to my
5 next question, because my time is
6 limited.

7 MR. LAWRENCE: All right.

8 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG:

9 Right? So my colleagues are talking
10 about the Turn the Key and the
11 different types of housing products
12 that we could offer to our
13 communities. And we have to think
14 about the market for the people,
15 right? And so, in Councilmember
16 Lozada's district and parts of my
17 district, Turn the Key products
18 actually cause -- can create
19 gentrification because of the
20 number.

21 And so, what we're asking
22 for is to invest in the people,
23 right? When I look through around
24 my district and I see all these home

1 ownership opportunities that were
2 subsidized for the homeowner, I look
3 at Yorktown, I look at the area that
4 is near Tenth Memorial Church,
5 through the all-home ownership
6 opportunities that were subsidized
7 for the people that were there,
8 right?

9 Nehemiah Homes, right?

10 There were opportunities for home
11 ownership that were subsidized for
12 the people there. And so, we're
13 asking like, if the market doesn't
14 work, right, then it's up to
15 government to create that subsidy,
16 to push that subsidy in place so the
17 people there can afford it, and the
18 developer is still going to get
19 their number at the end of the day,
20 right?

21 But if we invest in the
22 people, we provide the people with
23 that higher subsidy, that \$100,000
24 subsidy, that can give them that

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1 opportunity to afford these houses.
2 You won't get so much pushback from
3 the community when we're trying to
4 put these products out there.

5 So we're -- we have
6 \$800-million, right? That's what
7 the -- that's what the number that
8 the community, the public hears when
9 we talk about housing in the city of
10 Philadelphia. They hear
11 800-million, right? And so --

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
13 Point of information, sir. They
14 hear a billion --

15 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG:
16 Excuse me.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
18 -- dollars from City Council.

19 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Thank
20 you, Mr. President.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
22 Actually, 2-billion of the
23 investment of the land --

24 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG:

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1 2-billion, excuse me, Mr. President,
2 thank you.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
4 -- just to be clear.

5 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Thank
6 you. They hear that we're
7 leveraging up to \$2-billion, right?
8 So I'm just curious on why we can't
9 put that number, right? Why we got
10 to have a meeting to have a meeting,
11 to have a meeting to think about it,
12 right? I mean, it is either, do we
13 do or we don't.

14 And I think that for
15 investing in people in the city of
16 Philadelphia and some of the
17 neighborhoods that Councilmember
18 Lozada represents, that I represent,
19 that Councilmember Gauthier
20 represents, having that higher
21 number for the subsidy is that
22 partnership we're asking for. It
23 makes a huge difference in these
24 projects.

1 And at the end of the day,
2 the developers who people like are
3 going to get their number. They're
4 going to meet their spread. They're
5 going to meet their mark.

6 So if we're -- if Council
7 is asking for this, you know, this
8 help, and this to be that -- our
9 partnership, I don't think we need
10 to have a meeting to have a meeting,
11 to have a meeting to talk about it,
12 right? It's like, all right, let's
13 just increase it.

14 We got a billion --
15 \$2-billion, excuse me, right? Let's
16 just -- let's just do it. Let's
17 just do it. Let's stop the
18 pushback. Let's stop organizing
19 opposition against councilmembers,
20 right? Because they're fighting for
21 their communities, and let's just
22 get it done and work together.

23 I think that that's just --
24 that's a no-brainer if we want to be

1 able to provide housing
2 opportunities. Because you've
3 already acknowledged that the AMIs
4 don't work for real Philadelphians,
5 right? You've acknowledged that.

6 So let's increase that
7 subsidy for real Philadelphians to
8 have home ownership opportunities.
9 Because, again, I'm -- I look around
10 my district -- and you mentioned
11 PHA. PHA Turn the Key houses
12 actually cost more than the city's,
13 right? So that don't really --
14 that's not -- that's not really a
15 real option, right, when it comes to
16 their home ownership stuff. So --
17 and you ask people in my district,
18 they say PHA is the biggest slumlord
19 too. So that's a different --
20 that's a different conversation,
21 right?

22 So I think that we, as the
23 city, as Councilmember Bass alluded
24 to, we shouldn't have to rely on

1 other entities. We should just be
2 able to do the work ourselves. We
3 vote as a support, \$2-billion worth
4 of -- worth of work.

5 And I think that the city
6 -- if the administration wants to be
7 a partner with us as councilmembers
8 who represent individuals in our
9 specific districts, who have
10 specific living conditions that are
11 only unique to them and their
12 neighborhoods, then we should be --
13 we should work together to figure
14 out how we can help those people
15 living in their specific conditions,
16 in their individual unique
17 neighborhoods in the city. And
18 that, you know, that's it,
19 Mr. President.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
21 Thank you very much. Chair
22 recognizes Councilmember Kendra
23 Brooks and Councilmember Katherine
24 Gilmore-Richardson.

1 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS:

2 Thank you. This is for Commerce.
3 I've asked this question directly to
4 your office, and I have not received
5 an answer, so I want to put this on
6 record.

7 One of the pieces of
8 legislation that makes up an
9 important protection for
10 uncategorized workers in our city is
11 Fair Workweek Bill. My
12 understanding is that there has been
13 ongoing discussions within Commerce
14 and the administration about
15 potential changes.

16 I want to be clear; I'm not
17 in favor of changing this law. Can
18 you give me any updates on where we
19 are in this process and what
20 potential changes are being
21 considered for Fair Workweek Law? I
22 understand that there has been
23 outreach to a number of labor unions
24 about this law as well, and I would

1 like to know what unions and worker
2 advocacy organizations have you been
3 consulting with on this potential
4 change, and what is the state of the
5 outreach?

6 MS. FEGELY: Okay. Thank
7 you, Councilmember Brooks. We have
8 been having conversations. Commerce
9 has been contacted for the past two
10 -- probably going on two years now
11 from some businesses, specific
12 businesses, and some industries
13 around challenges they have with the
14 Fair Workweek laws. There's
15 questions about -- you know, there's
16 some -- there's things they would
17 like to be made more clear. There
18 are -- that -- there are changes
19 that they want. Nothing has been
20 promised or offered to them.

21 Our team at Commerce has
22 been meeting with them to gather
23 information. This bill has been in
24 -- it's been law for five years now,

1 or is now -- are we now past five
2 years? I think -- around that,
3 right? So we see this as a good
4 time, as good government, to, like,
5 go and just revisit. Are there
6 things that need to be tightened up?
7 Are there things that need to be
8 better explained? Are there things
9 to be -- need to be cleared up?

10 There are conversations,
11 you are right, going on. The
12 administration is having
13 conversations both with the
14 businesses and industries, as well
15 as with labor groups. I don't have
16 the names. I can't tell you right
17 now, but I -- and I'm sorry if you
18 said you've asked this and haven't
19 gotten information.

20 I think we can follow up
21 and get you specifics of who has
22 been talked to and what the current
23 status is. No, bill has been
24 drafted. There's -- this is all

1 conversations at this point.

2 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS:

3 Yeah. I would like for my staff to
4 be considered as part of that
5 conversation. Just like we've been
6 working with eviction diversion
7 program and the concerns that we had
8 about another contentious piece of
9 legislation that we passed. We've
10 been working through those concerns
11 directly with the landlords, big and
12 small, to build a relationship, to
13 make sure that we get on the -- what
14 we get on the outside, or on the
15 other side, is equitable for both
16 parts of this conversation.

17 So I would love to be a
18 party of that conversation. My team
19 would like to know what's going on,
20 so we don't have to, you know, play
21 this back-and-forth game around
22 something that, you know, we fought
23 very hard to get in the city. You
24 know, people are benefiting from it.

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1 And I just want to make sure that we
2 are working together to make sure we
3 have the best possible outcome.

4 MS. FEGELY: Understood.
5 Thank you.

6 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS: My
7 next question is for Planning and
8 Development. Did they -- when can
9 we expect to hear more on this
10 20-year abatement and how it
11 intersects with the H.O.M.E plan?
12 And last year, as part of the
13 discussion around the H.O.M.E
14 initiatives, City Council authorized
15 a revolving loan fund. And this
16 fund would provide low-cost
17 construction loans to build houses.
18 I want to understand what are the
19 barriers for implementation and what
20 the administration's stance on
21 implementation is.

22 MR. LAWRENCE: So I would
23 like to call up John Mondlak, who
24 can give you the status of where we

1 are on the tax abatement. We
2 certainly announced it, I believe,
3 at the end of last year. But what
4 we also recognize is that there are
5 some things that, you know, we're
6 following the boundaries of the
7 enabling legislation at the state
8 level, trying to figure out how it
9 can speak to Philadelphia
10 specifically for development, but
11 also just kind of within those
12 guidelines. So, John, you want to
13 provide some insight?

14 MR. MONDLAK: Sure. John
15 Mondlak. I'm first deputy and chief
16 of staff in the Department of
17 Planning and Development. The -- we
18 are hoping to share an ordinance
19 with Council very, very soon. I
20 think conversations might already be
21 in the works to be scheduled to have
22 those.

23 And at that point, we're
24 going to have probably a more robust

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1 conversation. I might be able to
2 answer some questions right now. I
3 don't think that I can answer the
4 revolving loan fund question.

5 MR. LAWRENCE: Could you
6 clarify on that? I'm sorry. Or
7 maybe restate your question.

8 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS:
9 Yeah. I want to understand what are
10 the barriers for the implementation,
11 but -- and what is the stance on the
12 -- on the implementation for --
13 yeah, just the barriers. What are
14 the barriers to implementation
15 around a revolving loan fund? Is it
16 moving forward?

17 MR. LAWRENCE: Well, I
18 think what we've moved forward with
19 is specifically funding the
20 Accelerator Fund in that particular
21 funding source for pre-development
22 costs. That is something that has
23 been a tool for a while now.
24 Something that specifically is

1 getting some funding from H.O.M.E.
2 It is meant to do some bridge --
3 some gap financing, and bridging for
4 the financing of development
5 projects, specifically around
6 pre-development costs.

7 But, I mean, everything as
8 far as loans, I mean, we're in the
9 process of putting something like
10 that together. I think we're still
11 crafting what that could look like
12 in terms of an actual loan fund.

13 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS:
14 Okay. And one other, is there
15 currently a waiting list for
16 adaptive modification programs
17 grant? If so, how many households
18 that included -- that include a
19 person with a disability are on the
20 waiting list to make their homes
21 more accessible?

22 MR. LAWRENCE: I think
23 Mr. Thomas answered that question
24 earlier.

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1 MR. THOMAS: David Thomas,
2 president, CEO, PHDC. I don't have
3 those specific information, but I
4 believe Councilmember Squilla asked,
5 and I'm supposed to get that to you,
6 so I'll make sure that you get a
7 copy as well.

8 COUNCILMEMBER BROOKS:
9 Okay.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
11 Thank you very much, Member Brooks.
12 Chair recognizes Member Katherine
13 Gilmore-Richardson.

14 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
15 RICHARDSON: Thank you. Thank you
16 very much, Mr. President, and thank
17 you, colleagues. I'll start with
18 Commerce, since you all are still
19 there.

20 First, thank you so very
21 much to your teams. Let me start
22 with our thank yous. Karen Fegley,
23 Heloise Jettison, Anna Breece,
24 Justine Bolkus, Ariana Ford,

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1 Michelle Gumbs. Thank you, Michelle
2 Gumbs, Michelle Price, and Dawn
3 Summerville. Thank you very much.
4 And to everyone at the Commerce
5 team, we appreciate each and every
6 one of you.

7 We know that the CTE
8 Teacher Certification program lives
9 and rests in Commerce's budget. And
10 we know this is the first year I was
11 able to receive a midyear report
12 from the School District of
13 Philadelphia relative to the impact
14 of the program.

15 And during the fall
16 session, you know, we have only two
17 schools; Temple University and Point
18 Park University. Twenty-eight
19 teachers have been assisted to
20 receive their CTE certification.
21 And also, we have 50 additional
22 teachers for the spring. And we
23 anticipate another 35 classes for
24 coverage for this summer.

1 And so I bring that up
2 because I was able to be in the
3 great Northeast in the 10th Council
4 District this morning for a labor
5 breakfast/union experience fair with
6 our young people for National
7 Apprenticeship Week. And I had so
8 many teachers at Swenson come up to
9 me to say thank you from the bottom
10 of their hearts for the grant
11 assistance -- teacher tuition
12 assistance program that we've
13 instituted.

14 I know that in this
15 proposed budget, that program is
16 cut. And I wanted to put that on
17 the record because, like I stated,
18 so many teachers came up to me this
19 morning. One teacher who he said he
20 is almost 30. This is his 5th year
21 with the district. He has three
22 children under the age of five. And
23 the program was of great help to him
24 and to his family.

1 So I wanted to put that on
2 the record. If I can get a very
3 brief response, because I must
4 proceed to my questions for Planning
5 and Housing.

6 MS. FEGELY: Yes,
7 Councilwoman. I mean, I -- we are
8 all glad to hear the -- of those
9 results. We all understand the
10 importance of CTE teachers,
11 especially as, again, we're building
12 our, you know, our talent and our
13 pipeline of students and ensuring
14 that they're trained for the jobs
15 that we have to offer in
16 Philadelphia. So I'm glad to hear
17 it's going well.

18 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
19 RICHARDSON: Thank you. Thank you
20 very much. So I am going to be
21 pushing for that. I'm saying that
22 on the record to Council President
23 and amongst my colleagues, as well
24 as to Commerce and the

1 administration. And that is a very
2 important program for a pipeline for
3 our young people in our CTE programs
4 to get them trained for the jobs of
5 the future.

6 And so that'll be
7 exceedingly important to me that we
8 continue supporting that program,
9 which, in turn, supports our
10 teachers. I know that we have a
11 focus on education in particular
12 this year. And obviously, based on
13 all of the proposals that we have
14 received in this body, we know that
15 education is our number one
16 priority. And so, if that's the
17 case, we must invest in our CTE
18 teachers. Council President, I hear
19 the bell. If you'll allow, may I
20 just get questions on the record for
21 Planning.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
23 Absolutely, Majority Leader.

24 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE -

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1 RICHARDSON: Thank you. Thank you
2 very, very much. Hold on one
3 moment. Thank you. I was having a
4 quick senior moment, but I saw you,
5 Mr. Wilson, in the corner next to
6 Helloise. So thank you so much for
7 all you do on our behalf. I really
8 appreciate you and especially being
9 in the community.

10 We were up in your end last
11 night as well for the town hall. So
12 thank you.

13 Very quickly, I wanted to
14 proceed to Planning. And I just
15 wanted to get these questions on the
16 record. I was reviewing your budget
17 detail, and I know you think I'm
18 going to tangle title, but I'm not
19 going there today, Mark. Okay? I'm
20 not going there today.

21 I'm going to start with the
22 thank yous, okay? Angela, let's
23 start with those thank yous again.
24 So thank you, Jessie Lawrence, Mark

1 Dodds, Angela Brooks, Ami Patel,
2 Michelle, and the entire team. We
3 appreciate each of you.

4 So I wanted to know what
5 your vacancy rate is, how many
6 positions you have budgeted versus
7 filled, and your vacancy rate
8 allowance. And in -- and I've been
9 asking every department that, okay?
10 And in addition to that, I need you
11 to walk me through this, because I
12 was going through your budget
13 detail, and section 56 in
14 particular. And I need you all to
15 tell me who is who for these
16 positions and what's being
17 eliminated or replaced, or if it's
18 just a title change.

19 Section 56, page 8,
20 Department of Planning and
21 Development Executive Administration
22 -- and this is not a -- this is just
23 a true question of who is who and
24 what is what. Deputy mayor under

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1 executive administration, who is
2 that?

3 MR. LAWRENCE: The Deputy
4 Mayor under the executive
5 administration will probably be me.

6 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-

7 RICHARDSON: Received. Okay. So --
8 okay, I see what's happening here.
9 So is it that the title deputy mayor
10 is now going to the title director?
11 Is it -- is it title changes that
12 are happening? I don't understand.

13 MR. LAWRENCE: I can get in
14 the weeds for you on -- in form of
15 writing, but what I do know is that
16 my predecessor had the same title as
17 me, but the designation was deputy
18 mayor.

19 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-

20 RICHARDSON: Okay --

21 MR. LAWRENCE: It does fall
22 under the classification.

23 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-

24 RICHARDSON: Walk me through,

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1 because I -- okay. I -- okay. I
2 receive what's happening here. So
3 the director role is technically the
4 former deputy mayor role, and then
5 it's -- right? Because I see an
6 increase and a decrease here. So
7 the new title technically for
8 director is director? And that
9 would be you?

10 MR. LAWRENCE: That's me.
11 That's me.

12 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
13 RICHARDSON: Okay. Hold on. Let me
14 just write this down. And first
15 deputy director, which was formerly
16 the first deputy commissioner, who
17 is that individual?

18 MR. LAWRENCE: That is John
19 Mondlak. First deputy chief of
20 staff.

21 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
22 RICHARDSON: That's John Mondlak.
23 Okay. Hold on one second. Okay.
24 And who is the deputy director?

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1 MR. LAWRENCE: We have
2 several. That would include Mark
3 Dodds -- I mean, I don't know which
4 line you're looking at specifically,
5 but there's Mark Dodds, who is
6 deputy director of house -- DHCD.
7 Emily Persico is the deputy director
8 for Development Services.

9 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
10 RICHARDSON: No, no, no, because in
11 the -- under this tab, this -- I'm
12 on -- I'm on section 56, page 8,
13 schedule 100. This is under general
14 fund, so it's not a grant funded
15 position. It's only one deputy
16 director budgeted here.

17 MR. LAWRENCE: So I'm
18 sorry, Councilmember, Kathleen just
19 tapped me. That's Kathleen, our
20 deputy director for Executive
21 Administration and Strategic
22 Initiatives.

23 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
24 RICHARDSON: Okay. And tell me your

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1 name again, I'm sorry.

2 MR. LAWRENCE: Kathleen
3 Grady.

4 MS. GRADY: Kathleen Grady,
5 deputy director for Strategic
6 Initiatives and Executive
7 Administration.

8 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
9 RICHARDSON: Okay. Hold on one
10 second. All right. And then you
11 have a deputy chief information
12 officer?

13 MS. GRADY: That is Darshna
14 Patel. She oversees our IT.

15 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
16 RICHARDSON: Okay. And then you
17 have executive administrative
18 assistant?

19 MS. GRADY: Yes. That is
20 Letitia McNeil.

21 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
22 RICHARDSON: Okay. And then you
23 have transfer from other funds
24 \$125,000. It does not say a title

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1 or who or what that is?

2 MS. GRADY: That is the
3 transfer between -- it's a labor
4 allocation that assists in the
5 funding of our executive admin team
6 is related to some -- our deputy
7 director for communications.

8 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
9 RICHARDSON: Okay. So is the comms,
10 deputy director of comms?

11 MS. GRADY: It's -- she's
12 reflected in a different budget
13 line, but it is a transfer of funds
14 between CDBG and our general fund.

15 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
16 RICHARDSON: Received. Okay. So
17 you're -- so you're taking it from
18 grants funds and putting it into the
19 general fund?

20 MS. GRADY: We do labor
21 allocations.

22 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-

23 RICHARDSON: Okay.

24 MS. GRADY: We can provide

1 more explicit detail in writing.
2 It's a -- we have to allocate our
3 time and effort to the grant. And
4 then when other time and effort is
5 outside of the CDBG eligible, we
6 then transfer it to general fund.

7 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE -
8 RICHARDSON:

9 Received. Okay. I
10 received that based on the work that
11 has to be done with the grant
12 programs. So let me ask this
13 question, where is Angela reflected
14 here?

15 MR. LAWRENCE: She would be
16 reflected under the mayor's office
17 budget.

18 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE -
19 RICHARDSON: Okay. So one of the
20 new or the -- one of the 51 plus new
21 positions?

22 MR. LAWRENCE: I believe
23 that's the mayor's office number,
24 but yes, she will be reflected under

1 that budget.

2 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE -

3 RICHARDSON: Okay. So you're not
4 here. Okay. I'm only asking
5 because when you initially look at
6 this page, one through seven, those
7 lines, it is -- that's considerable.
8 I'm just going to leave it at that.
9 I'm not going to put the numbers on
10 the record out of respect for all of
11 you sitting here. But when you're
12 looking at it, it is considerable.

13 For one, you know,
14 executive administration. But I see
15 what you're saying is that there's
16 an increase and a decrease in the
17 first four, so that's technically
18 the two. And then it's in addition
19 of the one. And then the other is a
20 transfer from grants to class 100,
21 correct?

22 Okay. All right. Thank
23 you very much for that explanation.
24 I just -- reading the detail -- when

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1 you read the detail, it is --
2 sometime you have to get an
3 explainer about exactly how you all
4 are moving the money, okay? All
5 right. I appreciate the
6 explanation. Thank you.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
8 Majority Leader, you good? I just
9 got here, you are all right?

10 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE -
11 RICHARDSON: Thank you.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
13 All right. We're officially in the
14 second-round. Chair of Neighborhood
15 Services and the Homeless,
16 Councilmember, Jamie Gauthier.

17 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
18 Thank you so much, Council
19 President. This is also for
20 Planning and Development. Now that
21 the AMI eligibility levels have been
22 increased for basic systems repair
23 and adaptive modifications, can you
24 explain to us operationally how

1 staff are tracking new applications
2 that come in to make sure that
3 homeowners at 60 percent AMI or
4 below are receiving 90 percent of
5 the funding?

6 We spent a lot of time and
7 a lot of debate on that during the
8 H.O.M.E spending plan process, and I
9 just want to make sure that we're
10 actually putting those systems in
11 place?

12 MR. LAWRENCE: So I'll let
13 Dave Thomas speak to that, but I
14 just want to get on the record and
15 make -- for point of clarity that
16 that was expanded, but only
17 dedicated to 10 percent of the funds
18 for funding.

19 So again, we can't spend
20 anything beyond 10 percent of annual
21 funds for anything other -- outside
22 -- beyond the current income limit
23 right now.

24 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

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1 I'm sorry, what is that?

2 MR. LAWRENCE: Ten percent
3 of funding for BSRP and AMP, I
4 believe, can only be spent above 60
5 percent of AMI for applicants at or
6 above 60 -- above 60 percent of AMI.

7 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
8 Yes. We're saying the same thing
9 kind of flipped. I'm saying that 90
10 percent has to go to 60 percent AMI
11 or below. And yes, you are saying
12 that the flip side of that is 10
13 percent.

14 MR. LAWRENCE: I'm sorry.
15 I didn't hear the 90 percent.

16 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
17 How are we tracking that, however
18 way you look at it?

19 MR. THOMAS: Thank you,
20 Councilwoman. David Thomas,
21 president, CEO. I'm tracking it on
22 a weekly basis right now. I've
23 segregated the money because I need
24 to make sure that I have the right

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1 buckets for the right folks. I
2 currently have 60 applications for
3 people 60 percent and above, at the
4 moment, and that's as of March 1st.

5 So I'm not -- I don't have
6 a large number of folks applying.
7 So I'll be monitoring it on a
8 monthly basis with my staff, as I do
9 with everything. And as I get
10 closer, I will raise the red flag
11 and let you know that I'm having
12 some challenges meeting some of
13 these objectives. But I'm not there
14 yet.

15 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

16 Okay. I do think it behooves us to
17 have these processes on paper. I
18 know you all are going to follow up
19 with --

20 MR. THOMAS: Sure.

21 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER: --
22 the sort of H.O.M.E. spending by
23 program. What sources beyond
24 H.O.M.E, like the Housing Trust Fund

1 and CDBG, are funding each program
2 in total so that we have a sense of
3 how much we really need to, you
4 know, put in this budget.

5 And we do need that
6 operation plan from, like, a process
7 perspective, how we're getting money
8 on the street, but also, like, from
9 a staffing perspective, we need to
10 understand what's going to change.

11 And so I would add to that
12 information request a documented
13 process around how we're tracking to
14 ensure that we meet the amendments
15 that Council put forward. And the
16 -- I have one more question, my last
17 question. Now that monies through
18 the mixed income housing density
19 program are going straight to the
20 Housing Trust Fund, as opposed to
21 just going to the general fund, and
22 that's thanks to a charter change
23 effort that I led with the support
24 of my colleagues.

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1 Now that we have, you know,
2 that in place, can you let us know
3 how much money is in the FY-27
4 Housing Trust Fund from the density
5 bonus payment specifically, and
6 which council districts the money
7 will be spent in?

8 MR. LAWRENCE: So we are
9 tracking that in a couple of
10 different places. One, I believe
11 DHCD can speak to that, but also our
12 director of Development Services can
13 speak to the trajectory of the
14 housing bonus.

15 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
16 Thank you.

17 MR. LAWRENCE: I'm calling
18 up Emily Persico.

19 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
20 Okay. Thanks.

21 MR. LAWRENCE: Mark Dodds
22 as well. Mark can start off with
23 the rundown for HDF.

24 MR. DODDS: Sure. In

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1 total, the estimates we got from the
2 city's Department of Finance or
3 Office of Finance is a slight
4 reduction, I believe, in recording
5 fee and a slight increase in general
6 funds from the -- from the two
7 different sub funds. And they --
8 it's pretty much a wash. It's
9 almost exactly the same level in
10 FY-27.

11 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
12 And just remind me what the level
13 is?

14 MR. DODDS: Total, it's
15 about 50 million.

16 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
17 Excuse me?

18 MR. DODDS: In total, both
19 sub funds equal about 50 million.

20 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
21 Okay. And what districts will that
22 -- you know, the part of the charter
23 change was we will allocate like the
24 last year's funding for the density

1 bonus program straight to the
2 housing trust fund. The other
3 change that we did through an
4 ordinance was that those monies will
5 be allocated to the council
6 districts where they were generated.
7 Do we have a sense of that?

8 MR. DODDS: I think we
9 would have to run some analyses to
10 figure out exactly where the funding
11 is going, yeah.

12 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
13 Okay. I would request maybe a
14 meeting with you guys offline. As
15 we know, the legislative part is
16 sort of the first part and then the
17 next part is implementation. And so
18 I really would want to see how we're
19 tracking that, and staying on top of
20 it.

21 MR. DODDS: And what I can
22 say -- so we just released a
23 biannual Housing Trust Fund report.
24 It doesn't -- you know, it's --

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1 there -- it's geographic based in
2 the sense that there are maps in the
3 report to show where we're investing
4 certain services. We also have
5 figures through FY -- the first two
6 quarters of FY-26. So we'll be able
7 to let you know where we're
8 investing currently, and then that
9 will help us to project where we're
10 going, going forward.

11 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

12 Thank you so much.

13 MR. DODDS: Sure.

14 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

15 Were you going to add something?

16 MS. PERSICO: Sure. Yeah.

17 Good afternoon. Emily Persico,
18 deputy director for Development
19 Services. We do track spending and
20 kind of receive -- payments received
21 under the Mixed-Income Housing Bonus
22 Program. In fiscal year 26, we
23 received two payments totaling
24 \$285,000. Just about -- we've been

1 seeing fewer payments under the
2 mixed income housing program since
3 that change in the cost of the -- of
4 the payment in lieu -- program back
5 in 2021.

6 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

7 Yeah.

8 MS. PERSICO: So that
9 number has been going down. We are
10 working right now on our mixed
11 income housing report which we hope
12 to be getting out in the coming
13 months. And we're happy to provide,
14 kind of, that trajectory of this
15 funding that we have been receiving
16 through that program.

17 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

18 Thank you. Look forward to
19 continuing working with you all on
20 these initiatives.

21 MR. LAWRENCE: Thank you.

22 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

23 Thank you, Council president.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

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1 Thank you. Second round officially.
2 Councilmember Dr. Anthony Phillips,
3 then Councilmember Rue Landau, then
4 Squilla.

5 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

6 Thank you, Council President. You
7 know, I too have been analyzing this
8 operating budget around the
9 Executive Administration, which is
10 why, you know, this whole responsive
11 government idea that I've been
12 talking about is really, really
13 essential for me.

14 There's no reason why the
15 city of Philadelphia, we should not
16 have service level agreements and a
17 clear understanding for neighbors
18 and to be able to provide a resident
19 with a timeline from application of
20 service, start, to the delivery of
21 the progress.

22 And what I -- I've been
23 asking for this since last budget,
24 and I was hoping that you all would

1 have it together by now, and it's
2 still not together. And I'm looking
3 at -- we have all of these chiefs,
4 essentially, who are being well,
5 well funded by city taxpayer funds,
6 and there should -- you should be
7 working day and night to make sure
8 residents have a clear understanding
9 of a timeline on when they're going
10 to get their service. I just can't
11 accept that. That's important for
12 my support, you know.

13 So I just want to ask
14 again, what should a resident expect
15 in terms of timeline from
16 application to service delivery
17 under H.O.M.E. programs?

18 MR. LAWRENCE: Well, again,
19 I think President Thomas spoke to
20 what PHDC is committed to at the
21 moment. And looking at how he can
22 pivot for purposes of getting
23 services out the door quicker. I do
24 think that the consistent funding

1 stream for services will play a big
2 role in consistently being able to
3 roll that out.

4 But again, we are taking
5 the stance of making sure that we
6 can be as transparent in our
7 processes as possible. We are
8 taking that deeper dive on the Land
9 Bank side, on the application side.
10 As that begins to map out on the
11 customer -- CRM perspective, we'll
12 be able to mirror that in a way
13 however possible with PHDC's attempt
14 to make that process a little bit
15 faster. But I do think that we are,
16 you know -- you know, I think we
17 remain committed to making sure that
18 we stay in touch with PHDC's
19 applicants in terms of their
20 services. But --

21 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS: If
22 it's six to nine months, what I'm
23 asking, which I was trying to ask
24 from him, is that could he provide

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1 us with -- residents should know in
2 month one, this is what's happening
3 in month two, this is happening in
4 month three.

5 There should be a sense of,
6 if it's going to be six to nine
7 months, what is transpiring, as
8 opposed to just wait six to nine
9 months. They should have a clear
10 understanding of what all the
11 processes are going to -- how
12 they're being reviewed, how they're
13 being -- it's just transparency,
14 right? We have a chief information
15 officer, what is the role of the
16 chief information officer?

17 MR. LAWRENCE: She is our
18 chief information officer for our
19 department. She's --

20 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:
21 For the website, the like --

22 MR. LAWRENCE: Website, One
23 Front Door, so on and so forth.

24 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS: So

1 that's their role. That person
2 should be solely dedicated to making
3 sure that residents are getting this
4 information in real time, similar to
5 when they're ordering Amazon and
6 DoorDash.

7 And I talk to Melissa Scott
8 all the time about this. I was
9 like, I don't understand why. And
10 she -- you know, her hands are tied
11 in some ways, but why does every
12 department have, like, an
13 information technology person
14 dedicated to this work, and then
15 they're not delivering in a way that
16 they should be when it comes to
17 interfacing with residents?

18 MR. LAWRENCE: I just want
19 to be clear about the steps that we
20 have taken toward that, which is One
21 Front Door. It's being able to
22 consolidate, you know, one website
23 that gives people the opportunity to
24 know what they qualify for.

1 So that does ease
2 operations, or begin to ease
3 operations, for us to be able to,
4 you know, compartmentalize and
5 collate what people want is -- or
6 what people -- what services certain
7 people or certain constituencies are
8 entitled to. But we recognize that,
9 you know, we've committed to getting
10 you this one pager that's going to
11 itemize what the steps are in that
12 six to nine-month process. We are
13 obviously committed to -

14 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:
15 What do you think we --

16 MR. LAWRENCE: We want to
17 get to that six and not to the nine.
18 But we're definitely, you know,
19 we're committed to this one pager.
20 If it could be more than one page.
21 I think we alluded to you, we want
22 to get you that information.

23 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS: Do
24 you think you can give me a timeline

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1 on where we can get the multiple
2 pager, one pager, whatever. I just
3 want to walk to neighborhoods and
4 say, this city has an efficient
5 process with this.

6 MR. LAWRENCE: I think that
7 we --

8 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS: I
9 don't want to have to call you
10 Jessie. Like last night, there was
11 a neighbor who was saying that they
12 need home services. I want to be
13 able to say to you, Hey, ma'am, if
14 you apply by this date, here's the
15 process. Here is how you all are
16 going to get updated. And I'm not
17 getting that. I can't guarantee
18 that from her. And I'm looking at
19 this -- the Executive
20 Administration's salaries.

21 I mean, you guys are doing
22 well, you know, for the most part.
23 And I feel like there's no reason
24 why this shouldn't be the most,

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1 most, most, most, most, most
2 important thing out of all the
3 things, like, being clear with
4 people and being fair, because a
5 Councilmember shouldn't have to call
6 and ask to jump a line because
7 there's -- we're inefficient, you
8 know what I mean?

9 Like, I just -- you're not
10 proving to me again, Jessie and I --
11 and I respect you. I do. But I
12 just -- I just want us to do -- I
13 just want you to prove me -- prove
14 to me, that you can -- you can --
15 that you can be -- you can provide
16 residents with that clarity, you
17 know, that's all.

18 MR. LAWRENCE: Yeah. Sure.

19 MS. BROOKS: I'm just going
20 to jump in and let you know, one of
21 the technological assessments that
22 we're, or improvements we're working
23 on as part of H.O.M.E. is having a
24 dashboard where you will have

1 application tracking, similar to
2 what you're referencing from some of
3 the other kind of companies that do
4 that.

5 I don't have a timeline on
6 that, but we are constantly working
7 on that, as well as an app that will
8 allow all of that. So I believe the
9 app is to debut in the fall. So OIT
10 is working with us on that. So it
11 is coming. I know it's probably not
12 in the timeline you want, but
13 there's a lot of nuanced things that
14 go with the applications, and we
15 want to make sure it's functioning,
16 and we're not just rolling out with
17 something just to roll it out. So
18 --

19 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:
20 Yeah.

21 MS. BROOKS: -- we are
22 working on having an app-based
23 website and app that can sync those
24 in a better way.

1 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

2 Thank you. I appreciate it. But
3 that -- but that makes me feel like,
4 until everything is ready, you
5 shouldn't be taking -- you shouldn't
6 be taking new applications, you know
7 what I mean? Like, it's like -- it
8 -- you're creating a wait list and a
9 process. You're going to be taking
10 applications, causing confusion. I
11 don't know. I just -- it's not
12 ready yet. And I feel like you have
13 to have this ready to go in.

14 MS. BROOKS: Well, the app
15 and the readiness of the dashboard
16 isn't ready, but the programs are
17 implemented and they are flowing.
18 So two different kinds of tracks.

19 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:
20 Yeah. The programs are ready, but
21 I'm saying the transparency of the
22 -- is that -- is that ready? Like
23 the transparency --

24 MS. BROOKS: The

1 transparency of the process, because
2 we are going to -- we are producing
3 on Philly STAT 360 where we at on
4 completions, but you want more
5 transparency from application
6 through actual work being done.

7 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

8 Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am.

9 MS. BROOKS: That is what
10 we're working on. So it is coming
11 and the app for sure is scheduled to
12 be done by the end of Q -- calendar
13 year Q3.

14 COUNCILMEMBER PHILLIPS:

15 Okay. All right. Thank you. And I
16 just wanted to, just for the record.
17 I want to thank the Commerce
18 Department for working for our
19 district, Salim Wilson, and Karen
20 Fegely. Thank you so much. I --
21 you know, I trust the fact that, you
22 know, when we provide questions,
23 that you all will always respond, so
24 we appreciate. No further

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1 questions, Council President.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

3 Thank you, sir. Councilmember Rue
4 Landau.

5 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

6 Okay. Great. Thank you again. One
7 last quick housing question, and I
8 -- sorry if this was already asked
9 and answered, but one of the
10 conversations we were having about
11 the H.O.M.E bond was ensuring that
12 these resources were reserved in
13 part for low-income households, even
14 as the eligibility for these
15 programs were expanded to moderate-
16 income households as a result of the
17 H.O.M.E funds. Of the funds
18 dispersed last year, how many were
19 for households under 30 percent, and
20 how many under 80 percent of AMI?

21 MR. LAWRENCE: I believe we
22 do have that information for you,
23 Councilmember. Mark is going to
24 come up here to --

1 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

2 Excellent.

3 MR. LAWRENCE: -- give you
4 that clarity.

5 MR. DODDS: Good afternoon,
6 Mark Dodds, deputy director of DHCD.
7 So of the -- of the programs that we
8 have available through Q2 --

9 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:
10 Anybody need to borrow these?

11 MR. DODDS: 60 -- about two
12 thirds went to zero to 30 percent
13 AMI. And about 20 percent went to
14 30 to 50 percent AMI.

15 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:
16 Anything over 50 percent?

17 MR. DODDS: Yes.

18 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: The
19 rest --

20 MR. DODDS: Looks -- 13
21 percent, 30 -- or 50 to 80 percent
22 AMI and then a small portion, it
23 looks like 3 percent or maybe 4
24 percent for -- from 80 percent AMI

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1 and above.

2 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

3 Okay.

4 MR. DODDS: These are
5 figures that we have available
6 through Q2.

7 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

8 Thank you very much for that. Ready
9 to move to Commerce. I don't want
10 to get cut off. Commerce, first
11 follow-up question on -- you talked
12 a lot about what you did for the
13 businesses that were faced with the
14 BIRT tax for the first time this
15 year, but what we never got was how
16 many businesses do you believe were
17 affected; total number of businesses
18 affected? You told us the
19 businesses that you reached out to
20 and who have responded.

21 MS. FEGELY: Revenue has
22 been using the estimate of 50,000
23 businesses.

24 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: But

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1 -- so out of 50,000 businesses, you
2 told us many things, but it seems
3 like you've touched about 4,000.

4 MS. FEGELY: Yeah, I
5 actually -- I have the updated. The
6 number -- our number is 12,395
7 through the first three quarters.
8 So -- and I can get you the
9 breakdown to show how I kind of get
10 those.

11 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: But
12 those are businesses that you've
13 reached out to offer just free tax
14 prep or?

15 MS. FEGELY: They've gotten
16 an assistance in some way, whether
17 it's right, one-on-one assistance or
18 -- and/or funding. And you know, we
19 did have a -- we did have a slow
20 start as we were staffing up. We
21 had to RFP some new partners, we had
22 to put some technology in place. So
23 we feel like those numbers are even
24 picking up at this point. But --

1 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

2 These businesses, we've heard from
3 so many of them. They are hurting
4 so badly. And I just, you know,
5 things like free tax prep just
6 doesn't do it for them. It's just
7 -- we've only touched a fraction of
8 them. And then they're hurting
9 really, really badly from the
10 changes. I wanted to ask some
11 outdoor dining, and I also want to
12 touch on the ports real quick.

13 So with outdoor dining,
14 thank you so much for all of the
15 help that you've given us in the
16 expansion of outdoor dining. And
17 you said we're going to get the
18 outdoor dining guidebook, make sure
19 it's up to date.

20 MS. FEGELY: Yes.

21 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: How
22 are we doing with the outdoor dining
23 book? The guidebook?

24 MS. FEGELY: Good. It is

1 -- it's -- the draft is in place.
2 It's going to create -- the
3 encouragement is right. We want
4 people to look not just at
5 streeteries, but at sidewalk cafes,
6 at all the different types of
7 outdoor dining.

8 And again, I thank you for
9 your leadership and in creating the
10 sidewalk cafe extensions or for --
11 and as well as, you know, more areas
12 that don't need variances for -- in
13 order to do sidewalk cafes. So the
14 book is coming along. I don't --
15 I'm not sure where we can get you a
16 draft, or we'll definitely share it
17 soon. We're doing the book to
18 encourage outdoor dining -- or to
19 encourage sidewalk cafes.

20 And then we're also doing,
21 as you know, the -- we're partnering
22 with Streets and MDO, and we have a
23 experienced design-build firm
24 working on a kit of parts right now

1 that will help with both streeteries
2 and sidewalk cafes.

3 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

4 Great. And can we -- can we -- can
5 you proactively get that to BIDs and
6 other business partners? So we
7 proactively are sending this out to
8 the restaurant community and all of
9 our key partners so that they don't
10 have to come to you?

11 MS. FEGELY: Yes. Yes,
12 absolutely. We'll rely on all our
13 partners for that.

14 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: So a
15 couple quick questions about the
16 ports, which I've introduced a
17 resolution. We're going to have a
18 hearing just to see how we're doing
19 down at the ports. Can we increase
20 the work that we're doing? I took a
21 tour with the maritime pilots, and
22 it was really -- very eye-opening to
23 see what's happening down there, but
24 I saw so much potential of what we

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1 could do. I think that ports are
2 such an important asset, and what is
3 currently being done to modernize
4 our ports?

5 And also, would love to
6 know -- that's a good start, and I'm
7 going to come up with a second one.
8 Thank you. What do we -- what is
9 the city doing to modernize our
10 ports right now? And is Commerce
11 invested and involved in this?

12 MS. FEGELY: We are not
13 directly involved. I mean, we
14 partner with the ports, as they're a
15 huge part of our, you know, economic
16 growth. And we are -- so we sort of
17 work side by side, but we are not
18 directly involved in their -- in --
19 yeah, in their upgrades and
20 activities.

21 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: What
22 -- I know that PhilaPort is a
23 partner on -- it's on your website.
24 It says that you can connect local

1 businesses to international
2 businesses, and I think for the --
3 us is this is important for
4 everything from, like, groceries to,
5 you know, laptops to get goods off
6 of the ports. It's just a --

7 MS. FEGELY: Yeah, I mean,
8 we are -- we are uniquely
9 positioned, like, literally
10 geographically positioned right
11 within a day's drive of 40 percent
12 of the U.S. population. The
13 Philadelphia ports just -- we -- are
14 our main destination for food and
15 for other goods.

16 And then we're also seeing
17 all this growth with all the other
18 industries along, sort of, all the
19 maritime industries. And so I think
20 there is a lot of opportunity there.
21 And we are -- we are convening, we
22 are, you know, sort of facilitating
23 things to ensure that that growth
24 continues.

1 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: Will
2 you -- I believe our hearing will be
3 in the fall. Will you come to our
4 hearing? I really think --

5 MS. FEGELY: Absolutely.

6 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: --
7 this is a moment. The things that
8 we need in Philadelphia are coming
9 off of ships in the port, and I
10 think it's such a great opportunity
11 for Commerce.

12 MS. FEGELY: Absolutely.
13 Yeah.

14 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:
15 Thank you.

16 MS. FEGELY: And there is a
17 lot -- you're right, that there's a
18 lot of spin off businesses that
19 happen because we have the ports
20 here as well as all of the
21 manufacturing that's related, yeah.

22 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:
23 Great. Thank you guys so much. I
24 appreciate it.

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1 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-

2 RICHARDSON: Thank you. Thank you
3 very much, Councilmember Landau.
4 Thank you for your work on -- we're
5 all so excited that cruising has
6 returned.

7 MS. BROOKS: Councilmember
8 Gilmore --

9 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-

10 RICHARDSON: I'm so excited. And
11 thank you so much to the
12 longshoreman.

13 MS. BROOKS: Councilmember
14 Gilmore-Richardson, can I just
15 circle back to a question
16 Councilmember Landau asked earlier
17 --

18 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-

19 RICHARDSON: Sure. Very briefly as
20 we have a few members in the crew.
21 Okay. Thank you.

22 MS. BROOKS: It is very
23 quickly, and it was about your hotel
24 tax question you asked in the first

1 round. And the short answer is just
2 simply that while the home dollars
3 that we allocated for homeless
4 prevention were specifically for
5 prevention dollars, not necessarily
6 operational costs.

7 So the taxes was really to
8 support the thousand bed shelter
9 initiative. We don't generally
10 borrow funds to pay for operating
11 costs and things like maintenance
12 and staffing. So that's kind of the
13 distinction there. So we do -- we
14 will be working with the Office of
15 Homeless Services around some of the
16 other things, but that's the
17 specific delineation of why we're
18 not using home bonds for some of
19 those specific costs that the hotel
20 tax will be paying for.

21 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE -
22 RICHARDSON: Thank you. Thank you
23 very much. The Chair now recognizes
24 Councilmember Bass.

1 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Thank
2 you very much, Madam Chair. So I
3 just had a quick question for
4 planning retaining walls.

5 MR. LAWRENCE: Your
6 question?

7 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: When
8 are we getting them done? So -- and
9 I say that because maybe you missed
10 it. There was an article in the
11 Inquirer on Sunday, your name wasn't
12 in it, I don't think.

13 MR. LAWRENCE: No, it was
14 not.

15 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: My
16 name was, but you're responsible.
17 So when are we going to get some
18 movement on some of these retaining
19 walls?

20 MR. LAWRENCE: So my
21 understanding is that the last \$50
22 million in NPI is for infrastructure
23 and those retaining walls. I don't
24 know the status of the conversation,

1 specifically around that one. I do
2 know there have been some -- and I'm
3 talking to you as if you don't know
4 this, but, like, there are some
5 complexities specifically with that
6 wall.

7 And I also recognize that
8 that article came out a week before
9 you and I sat next to each other to
10 have the opportunity to talk about
11 it. I would love to dive in deeper
12 with you about that specific wall.
13 But my understanding is that we are
14 committed -- or NPI's last \$50
15 million has been committed to
16 addressing the current roster in
17 queue of retaining walls.

18 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Okay.
19 I appreciate that. Thank you very
20 much. But we've been talking about
21 this wall for years now. The same,
22 same wall. It's only gotten worse.
23 To be honest, I don't want to talk
24 about it anymore.

1 You know, with the
2 administration, I just want to go
3 ahead and get it done. Because we
4 have -- you know, the administration
5 has, I won't say we, the
6 administration has said that they
7 were going to tackle this project,
8 that this was going to get done.
9 It's been years. It's a massive
10 project, I understand that, but it
11 has to be done. It just has to be
12 done.

13 MR. LAWRENCE: I think
14 there -- we recognize the
15 commitment, and we're still
16 committed to it. I also know that
17 there've just been some curve balls,
18 if you will, that really have --

19 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: There
20 have been some curve balls, but on
21 the -- looking at the other side of
22 it, you know, people are losing the
23 access to homeowner's insurance.
24 People can't use the rear of their

1 homes. You know, like, it's also a
2 tight block. You know, you can't --
3 people can't park like they have,
4 you know, driveways and all. They
5 can't use any of that.

6 And so we've really
7 diminished what the value of their
8 house is -- their homes are because
9 we haven't done or addressed this
10 wall. Years ago, the city came out
11 and did some preliminary work and
12 went away and never came back. And
13 that was before I was in Council.
14 So that's how long this story is.

15 You know, I would just like
16 a resolution to this, and the
17 resolution being that the wall is
18 fixed, that we have a date for it.
19 We just cannot allow this to
20 continue on. And God forbid if
21 somebody gets hurt, if something
22 begins to crumble, it's very
23 unsteady. And we all know this.
24 This is information that the

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1 administration has.

2 We've had engineer after
3 engineer, after engineer. And so
4 the project has to be completed.
5 So, David, I know -- I'm sorry?

6 MR. THOMAS: Is this Janice
7 Street?

8 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: This
9 is Glen Echo.

10 MR. THOMAS: Glen Echo?

11 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Glen
12 Echo Road.

13 MR. THOMAS: I don't know
14 that I have that one, but I
15 certainly can put eyes on it and get
16 back to you in terms of what can be
17 done. I tried to send an engineer
18 out recently for your other wall,
19 Janice Street, I believe it is.

20 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Yes.

21 MR. THOMAS: But I can't
22 get to -- I can't -- he can't access
23 the area to assess. So if you can
24 help me get that area cleared --

1 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: I can
2 help you --

3 MR. THOMAS: -- and
4 cleaned.

5 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: --
6 that's not a problem. We can help
7 you with that.

8 MR. THOMAS: And then I can
9 give you some answers on that wall
10 and I'll work on your Glen Echo
11 wall.

12 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Okay.
13 We will -- it has to be done sooner
14 rather than later. It's been delay
15 after delay after delay. It cannot
16 wait really a second longer. It has
17 to be done. Because if something
18 happens to someone or someone's
19 property, ultimately the City of
20 Philadelphia bears the brunt of that
21 responsibility because we know that
22 it's in really bad shape. So thank
23 you very much.

24 MR. THOMAS: Thank you.

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1 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Thank
2 you, Madam Chair.

3 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
4 RICHARDSON: Thank you. Thank you
5 so much Councilwoman Bass and we
6 support your efforts relative to the
7 retaining wall. We have very many
8 as well in the 4th, so we thank you.

9 COUNCILMEMBER BASS: Thank
10 you. I appreciate that. And I hope
11 that it's picked up by the press
12 that ran the first article in terms
13 of saying that I was the responsible
14 party for preparing this retaining
15 wall. So thank you.

16 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
17 RICHARDSON: Received, and duly
18 noted. Thank you. Thank you very
19 much. The Chair now recognizes
20 Councilmember O'Rourke.

21 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
22 Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm sorry,
23 I failed to ask a question earlier
24 that I meant to raise. I know that

1 there had at one point been a
2 partnership that had been
3 formulating between the Building
4 Trades and, I think, PHA to acquire
5 Brith Sholom.

6 And I just wanted to kind
7 of get an update on the status of
8 that particular project and how
9 things are coming along with that.

10 MR. LAWRENCE: I Believe
11 we're navigating through the MOU.
12 John Mondlak has been managing that
13 process specifically with PHC --
14 PHA, excuse me. John, can give you
15 the latest update on that.

16 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
17 Beautiful. Thank you so much.

18 MR. MONDLAK: Thank you,
19 Councilman. John Mondlak, deputy in
20 Planning and Development. We are
21 still continuing to work with PHA.
22 The Trades have offered to lend
23 money to do the -- probably the
24 first mortgage. I'm not a 100

1 percent sure the position, but I
2 believe it's critical money that
3 they need. We're working through
4 the terms of that agreement.

5 And in addition to that, we
6 also have \$8 million of our money to
7 put into that deal to make sure that
8 it happens. And so, as soon as we
9 reach agreement on the terms, we,
10 the City, would be guaranteeing that
11 loan, which is enticing the Trades
12 to do it at a very reasonable rate
13 that allows it to be affordable for
14 PHA to make the project work. I
15 believe they have a GM -- a
16 guaranteed maximum price contract,
17 and it's just a matter of working
18 out the financing.

19 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
20 Got it. So it's -- this is still a
21 deal in the works; this is not a
22 thing that was set?

23 MR. MONDLAK: Very much so.

24 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: I

1 see. Okay. Understood. You get
2 the sense that it will happen, it's
3 going to come to pass, or, you know,
4 any -- barring any crazy things
5 taking place, you feel like that
6 will be something that will be
7 completed?

8 MR. MONDLAK: Yeah.
9 Assuming that markets don't go off
10 the rails, the -- this is just a
11 matter of reaching an agreement on
12 terms.

13 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
14 Thank you very much. Thank you,
15 ma'am.

16 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
17 RICHARDSON:
18 Thank you. Thank you,
19 Councilmember O'Rourke. And to your
20 question, you know that Brith Sholom
21 is in my ward, in the 52nd Ward.

22 And so I wanted to put on
23 the record and thank PHA for
24 answering the call relative to some

1 of the concerns of the neighbors
2 that live in the adjacent property
3 regarding ensuring that that
4 building stays secure, particularly
5 in the rear.

6 So in the front -- you
7 know, you can see that it's all
8 boarded up in the front, but in the
9 rear, we had folks breaking in
10 there. I know we had one
11 unfortunate incident relative to
12 someone passing away, but even after
13 that, we had individuals entering
14 the rear of the property.

15 And so I happened to be out
16 on a Sunday morning walking over
17 there, and I was stopped by two
18 residents in the housing complex,
19 which is directly next door. And
20 they spoke to me about that issue.
21 And so I want to uplift and
22 appreciate PHA for responding to
23 that call and for sending their
24 security officers to the site to

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1 ensure that the building was secure.
2 And I just wanted to repeat what you
3 were saying and help me. Did I
4 understand this correctly, the city
5 is guaranteeing the loan?

6 MR. MONDLAK: Correct.

7 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
8 RICHARDSON: Okay. So the city
9 guarantees the loan. So then I
10 guess the terms; will Council
11 approve those terms? Will
12 everything come back to us for a
13 review?

14 MR. MONDLAK: I honestly
15 don't know if that guarantee comes
16 back to city council, but we could
17 find out.

18 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
19 RICHARDSON: Can you find out --

20 MR. MONDLAK: Sure.

21 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
22 RICHARDSON: -- and just let us
23 know. Okay. I would be interested
24 to find out. Are there --

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1 MR. MONDLAK: We could
2 certainly keep you updated for sure
3 --

4 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
5 RICHARDSON: Of course.

6 MR. MONDLAK: --
7 regardless.

8 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
9 RICHARDSON: Yeah. And I know if
10 Councilmember Jones were here, he
11 would say the same thing on behalf
12 of the entire 4th Council District.
13 Now, is this included in the
14 H.O.M.E. dollars?

15 MR. MONDLAK: No.

16 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
17 RICHARDSON: Or is this separate?
18 Okay.

19 MR. MONDLAK: The
20 commitment --

21 MR. LAWRENCE: This is an
22 investment from the Trades, the
23 Trades pension -- pensions for the
24 Trades community.

1 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE -
2 RICHARDSON: But meaning -- but
3 we're guaranteeing the loan on the
4 city side? That's what I'm talking
5 about.

6 MR. MONDLAK: Yeah. The
7 guarantee of the loan, if all goes
8 well, it doesn't cost us anything.
9 So we're essentially putting our
10 credit into that loan. And so the
11 goal is not to spend a penny on that
12 guarantee. It's a risk that the
13 Finance Department will have to
14 manage, but it's not a cash
15 infusion.

16 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE -
17 RICHARDSON: I'm asking for two
18 reasons.

19 MR. MONDLAK: Okay.

20 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE -
21 RICHARDSON: One, you know, I'm
22 Chair of Finance, but also, two, we
23 just did our line of credit that we
24 probably won't use, right? But we

1 had to still approve it through
2 Council.

3 So that's why I'm asking
4 that question. It still had to come
5 through Council; we still had to
6 have a hearing. It was, you know,
7 brought before the full Council for
8 consideration, and we approved it.
9 The chances of us utilizing the line
10 of credit is very slim; I'm talking
11 about the DNC line of credit. But
12 the approval still had to come
13 through Council.

14 So that is why I'm asking,
15 particularly, because this is an
16 unprecedented financing package
17 relative to a housing complex in the
18 city. So typically, that would come
19 back to us. So I just need you all
20 to work with Finance and with Law to
21 help us understand how that process
22 will work. Okay?

23 MR. MONDLAK: Understood.

24 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE -

1 RICHARDSON:

2 All right. Thank you very
3 much. The Chair now recognizes
4 Councilmember Gauthier. Oh, I'm
5 sorry. I didn't even see that you
6 were going. I'm like, I know she
7 came back. Okay. We'll give
8 Councilmember Gauthier an
9 opportunity to return.
10 Councilmember Jones. Councilmember
11 Jones, do you have any questions?

12 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: I
13 heard you mention me.

14 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
15 RICHARDSON: I already knew what
16 time it was.

17 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: And
18 you were talking about Brith Sholom,
19 which is one of my favorite most
20 important examples of what should
21 not happen and what should happen.
22 And you can -- two things can be
23 true at the same time. What should
24 not happen is that most of -- a lot

1 of the properties now are
2 underwater. They have exceeded
3 their agreements on their rents.
4 Their agreements with the federal
5 government are coming to a closure.

6 The values of the property
7 went up. They have not invested in
8 them, and they're ready to
9 transition them and take whatever
10 profits they can out of it. We, as
11 a city, are going to see more of
12 this, and I see it in the 3rd. I
13 see it in the 4th. Germantown is
14 going to be ripe for that because of
15 the magnificent structures. And I
16 don't know what our plan is. Okay.

17 MR. LAWRENCE: I guess, I
18 missed the actual question. Is it
19 that you're just trying to figure
20 out what the plan for preserving
21 opportunities like this going
22 forward?

23 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: No.
24 My plan is preventing -- so what

1 saved Brith Sholom was PHA and \$23
2 million. They don't have that to
3 continuously build out. So we have
4 to develop, either at the federal
5 level or at the local level, some
6 type of fund that rescues properties
7 like that. Because at the end of
8 the day what you always point out to
9 us is that we can either preserve or
10 we create a new group of homeless
11 that we have to support anyway.

12 So six in one hand and half
13 dozen in the other, out of one
14 pocket to another. We need to jump
15 in front of this and create a fund
16 and, kind of, identify properties
17 that fit that category. At Brith
18 Sholom, they took a 20 -- a \$35
19 million equity loan out and never
20 put any investments in --

21 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE -
22 RICHARDSON: Excuse me,
23 Councilmember Jones, the Chair now
24 recognizes Councilmember Gauthier

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1 for a point of information.

2 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: I
3 hear you.

4 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
5 Quick point of information. You're
6 absolutely right. We have to get
7 ahead of this. We already have the
8 tools in place; many of them, and we
9 just have to move. So after this
10 situation with the University City
11 Townhomes, I created a law that not
12 only says that owners wanting to opt
13 out of their affordability contracts
14 have to wait a year before they put
15 it on the market.

16 It also gives the city,
17 affordable housing companies, and
18 tenant groups first right of
19 refusal. We came behind that with
20 H.O.M.E, and we put \$50 million,
21 almost, into an acquisition fund,
22 which can be used to purchase these
23 properties, right? Or to help other
24 responsible owners to purchase these

1 properties.

2 And in return for our loan
3 money, they have to keep these
4 properties affordable, I think, for,
5 like, 42 years or something. So I
6 just wanted to point out that we
7 have a lot of tools in place. \$50
8 million is not enough because this
9 is a big problem, but it's a good
10 amount for year one.

11 The other thing that we
12 developed, that also came out of
13 that same law, is a directory. So
14 we now are putting in place -- I
15 think it's about to go live, a
16 directory of every multifamily
17 low-income unit funded with LIHTC or
18 other sort of expiring funds. And
19 we know when they're going to
20 expire. We know where they are in
21 the city. We have a lot of tools at
22 our disposal. If we want to attack
23 this problem, we just have to decide
24 to use them, right?

1 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: So I
2 appreciate the law that you created,
3 and it is at least a vessel that we
4 can put resources in. However, \$53
5 million is half of -- is one -- one
6 half of that went to Brith Sholom.
7 The other half will go to another
8 identifiable spot in my district.
9 And that fund will be, just like a
10 lot of other funds; exhausted.

11 So We have to have, just
12 like with the school district, a
13 predictable funding plan. It cannot
14 just be one-time rescue dollars. We
15 will run out of that quickly.

16 So what is the plan that we
17 can develop so that we have a
18 recurring, revolving amount of
19 money? Whether it is to take that
20 loan program and to actually have it
21 come into a refundable fund that can
22 be replenished and then reloaned.
23 We have to figure that plan out.
24 And right now, we are -- we are

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1 creating donut tires that will only
2 get us to the next gas station.

3 MR. LAWRENCE: So, yeah.

4 And just to kind of -- I think there
5 are two different things being
6 talked about here. Councilmember is
7 actually -- absolutely right, there
8 is almost \$50 million set aside for
9 preserving affordable opportunities
10 that might be coming out of
11 compliance along those lines.

12 But what also I think
13 you're talking about is a little bit
14 more about the kind of bad actor
15 tracking and being preventative
16 about that. And John can talk about
17 that, how that has been kind of
18 coordinating with development
19 services.

20 MR. MONDLAK: Yeah. And
21 actually, credit to Councilmember
22 O'Rourke, who brought it up earlier,
23 prior to you arriving. It's a very
24 serious problem, and it's a very

1 difficult problem to solve. And
2 it's not a Philadelphia problem;
3 it's a nationwide problem. And the
4 reason it's a problem is because
5 there are laws that allow people to
6 buy property. And so you can't stop
7 them. Everybody would love to just
8 stop them.

9 The President of the United
10 States is talking about a plan to do
11 that. Now, we'll see if anything
12 ever comes of that, but it's
13 recognized as a national problem.
14 But you can't stop them from buying.
15 Then the bad action is what you have
16 to try to stop.

17 And so what we are trying
18 to do -- there's a number of
19 departments that are coordinating an
20 effort. Philly Stat 360 is probably
21 the focus of it, to try to collect
22 as much data as you can. Because
23 generally, Brith Sholom is a little
24 bit of a unique situation where it

1 was a out-of-town developer.

2 I don't know -- I don't
3 know that they bought very many
4 properties, but they did exactly
5 what you said; they -- they
6 overextended, borrowed money, didn't
7 -- collected rents, put nothing
8 back, didn't pay the mortgage back,
9 didn't do repairs, didn't do
10 anything. They just kept all the
11 cash. It was criminal. They went
12 to jail. I don't know if they went
13 to jail for that particular
14 property, but I think they went to
15 jail for a different property where
16 they did the same exact thing.

17 So the situation where it's
18 a coordinated -- what -- the goal
19 for these investors is to buy up and
20 corner the market in an area. If
21 they just bought uniformly across
22 the city, they would not be able to
23 exert market forces. They would
24 just be one other landlord, and they

1 would collect whatever the market
2 rents is. But when they cluster and
3 they buy in an area, now they create
4 a monopoly; an illegal monopoly.
5 But it's really hard to prove
6 because they use different names.
7 And you have to really pierce the
8 corporate shell and figure out who
9 they are.

10 And we are using AI; we're
11 using as much technology as we can
12 to try to get to that. But the
13 answer is, it's a little bit of
14 everything. It's -- it's the money
15 to fix the problem, but it's also
16 the enforcement before it gets to
17 that point.

18 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: Now,
19 that is exactly -- so Member
20 Gauthier did a good thing by
21 creating the vessel that needs to go
22 into it is L&I, that we should have
23 known that Brith Sholom was on the
24 brink well before the time it did.

1 So when they stop putting in fire
2 suppression systems, when they stop
3 having elevators that worked, that
4 should have set off a flag that we
5 need to watch this building, and
6 that is in distress.

7 And so there are things
8 that we should have as indicators
9 that we know that we're going to pay
10 attention to these future distressed
11 properties. So I like what my
12 colleague did. I want some of that,
13 but also the end, what we need to do
14 is have a strategy that says L&I is
15 involved in this. Because what they
16 really wanted to do, which was
17 diabolical, was not make the repairs
18 and make us make them evacuate that
19 property. That would have solved
20 their problem.

21 They would have been --
22 those 300 people would have been our
23 problem, your problem, homeless
24 shelter problem. So we got to come

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1 up with a game plan that doesn't
2 enrich them and doesn't impoverish
3 us.

4 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE -
5 RICHARDSON:

6 Thank you. And thank you
7 very much for your great work,
8 Councilmember Jones. Not just on
9 Brith Sholom, but going all the way
10 back to The Dane, which is the new
11 name --

12 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: The
13 Dane, right?

14 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE -
15 RICHARDSON: -- not the old name.
16 So thank you.

17 COUNCILMEMBER JONES: Thank
18 you.

19 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE -
20 RICHARDSON: The chair will now
21 recognize Councilmember Gauthier for
22 the last three minutes of this
23 hearing. Thank you.

24 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

1 Thank you, Madam Chair. The
2 remainder of my questions are for
3 Commerce. Director Fegely, I know
4 that you know, because I've known
5 you since I started out in community
6 development when I was 25, right?
7 At least. I know that you know how
8 critical community development
9 corporations are.

10 And I was really excited
11 that we were able to, last budget
12 year, secure \$3.5 million to support
13 those organizations with operating
14 support. And so my question for you
15 is, is that operating support
16 funding for our community
17 development corporations that we
18 secured last budget in your budget
19 for FY-27? And why or why not?

20 MS. FEGELY: Thank you.
21 The additional funding you secured
22 last year is not in this year's
23 budget. That was a one-time budget
24 addition in FY-26. As you know, we

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1 do have numerous other programs that
2 support the operations of CDCs as
3 our -- as our partners. We -- we
4 very much rely on them to help us
5 get the work done, yes.

6 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER: I
7 look forward to continuing to work
8 with you guys. I also have a bill
9 that I'm hoping to move through
10 Finance. This was -- we took the
11 one-year sort of appropriation.
12 We're grateful for it, but we all
13 know that our CDCs need more support
14 than they're currently able to get,
15 and that philanthropic funding has
16 dried up in this area. So I look
17 forward to continuing to work
18 together.

19 MS. FEGELY: Yep.

20 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
21 And then, lastly, we are seeing
22 increased demand for multiple
23 Commerce programs, as well as
24 existing dollars just not getting to

1 small business owners as much as
2 they used to.

3 So my questions are, how
4 much funding would Commerce need to
5 fully fund all eligible applications
6 for the Neighborhood Economic
7 Development Program and the Targeted
8 Corridor Management Program?

9 And will the city commit to
10 increasing the per-project allowance
11 for storefront improvement grants to
12 small business owners from \$15,000
13 to \$30,000 per project? Because we
14 all know inflation, construction
15 costs have gone up significantly,
16 while those program allocations have
17 not.

18 MS. FEGELY: Okay. I'll
19 start backwards because I forgot
20 your first question already.

21 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
22 How much would it cost us to fund --

23 MS. FEGELY: Oh, to fund
24 it, right?

1 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER: --
2 all eligible applications for
3 neighborhood economic development
4 and the targeted corridor --

5 MS. FEGELY: And you were
6 getting to -- yeah, and I did just
7 want to -- I'm glad Yvonne is
8 joining, but give some context. I
9 mean, you're absolutely right. I
10 mean, it's a really challenging time
11 for our neighborhood groups, as well
12 as for small businesses.

13 And that is why, like, as
14 far as the small business programs
15 go, that's why this has been super
16 important to have these jumpstart
17 dollars this year, because there are
18 lots of challenges on the -- you
19 know, with federal support. SCORE
20 has gone away. The SBDCs are
21 struggling. Our CDFIs are
22 struggling.

23 And then the small
24 businesses are struggling because of

1 tariffs and inflation and
2 immigration enforcement and all of
3 those things. So to Jumpstart
4 programs, we are ready to, like --
5 we're really hitting the ground
6 running, and we'll be doling out
7 those dollars.

8 But you're talking about
9 dollars for the community
10 organizations through corridor
11 management, Neighborhood Economic
12 Development Programs, which are also
13 important. And the costs, as you
14 said, are also going up. We have
15 increased corridor management this
16 year using some jumpstart dollars
17 because we rely so much on those
18 corridor managers to help serve the
19 small business community.

20 I want to let Yvonne talk
21 about thank you NED grants again.

22 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

23 Thank you.

24 MS. BOYE: Thank you so

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1 much for your work with us. And
2 thank you for the question. We just
3 finished our NED RFPs, and we had
4 requests that totaled \$11 million.

5 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

6 Okay.

7 MS. BOYE: And we have
8 about \$3.3 million, as I said
9 earlier. Which is what we can do.
10 So I hope that answers the question
11 for that. We did not have an RFP
12 for the TCMP right now, and so I
13 cannot tell you who else is on the
14 radar. We do have another half a
15 million dollars that we kind of use
16 also as general operating dollars
17 that mirrors the tax credit program.
18 And we do have the tax credit
19 program that also supports the CDCs
20 and their work.

21 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

22 Thank you. Quickly, would you
23 consider going from 15 to 30,000 for
24 neighborhood storefront improvement?

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1 MS. FEGELY: Yes. How is
2 that?

3 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
4 Great.

5 MS. FEGELY: I was going to
6 say we are - we are talking about
7 it, but I heard earlier that's not a
8 good answer, so I'm just going to
9 say yes.

10 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER: I
11 love that answer, but I will follow
12 up. Thank you, Madam Chair.

13 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE -
14 RICHARDSON:

15 Thank you. Thank you very
16 much, Councilmember Gauthier, and
17 thank you to our Planning and
18 Development and Commerce teams for
19 your work this morning and
20 throughout the year.

21 This committee will stand
22 in recess until 2:30 p.m. Have a
23 great day.

24 (Recess.)

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1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

2 Good afternoon.

3 Councilmembers: Good

4 afternoon.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

6 Just state your name for the record
7 and please begin your testimony.

8 MR. AROS: Sure. Good

9 afternoon, Council President Johnson
10 and members of City Council. My
11 name is James Aros, Jr., and I'm the
12 chief assessment officer for the
13 Office of Property Assessment.

14 Joining me today here at the desk is
15 Monica Williams, our deputy chief
16 assessment officer.

17 Also in attendance is chief
18 deputy city solicitor, Drew
19 Aldinger, as well as members of
20 OPA's senior staff.

21 I'm pleased to provide
22 testimony for the Office of Property
23 Assessment's Fiscal Year 2027
24 operating budget. For Tax Year

1 2027, OPA has completed a
2 revaluation of the entire city. OPA
3 expects to mail the notices of
4 proposed valuation and publish the
5 values online next month.

6 As part of the 2027
7 revaluation process, OPA will retain
8 an outside firm to evaluate how the
9 Tax Year '27 revaluation of
10 properties in Philadelphia measures
11 against industry standards for key
12 mass appraisal statistics.

13 Specifically, OPA will be
14 evaluated using the coefficient of
15 dispersion, or COD, which measures
16 the uniformity of assessments; the
17 price-related differential, or PRD,
18 which measures equity between high
19 and low-valued properties; and the
20 median ratio, which measures how
21 closely assessments compare to sale
22 prices.

23 In addition to the OPA
24 ratio study that I just mentioned,

1 the Office of the Director of
2 Finance will retain an external firm
3 to conduct an independent,
4 comprehensive evaluation of OPA's
5 mass appraisal practices,
6 procedures, and overall operations.
7 The evaluation will include an
8 analysis to assess whether
9 modifications to the current
10 valuation model could reduce
11 disparate impacts without
12 compromising accuracy or equity.

13 For the last revaluation,
14 which was conducted in Tax Year
15 2025, OPA also retained an external
16 consulting firm to conduct a ratio
17 study. That report on the Tax Year
18 '25 revaluation of properties in the
19 city found that OPA continues to
20 meet industry standards for each of
21 the three previously mentioned mass
22 appraisal statistics and that the
23 performance improved across each of
24 these metrics compared to the Tax

1 Year '23 revaluation.

2 Additionally, for Tax Year
3 '27 -- I'm sorry, for Fiscal Year
4 '27, OPA will focus on addressing
5 the first-level reviews that result
6 from the reevaluation as efficiently
7 and accurately as possible.

8 Additionally, OPA will
9 continue implementing
10 recommendations from the 2022
11 International Association of
12 Assessing Officers audit and
13 continue working towards achieving
14 the IAAO's Certificate of Excellence
15 in Assessment Administration.

16 In April of 2024, Mayor
17 Parker announced a partnership with
18 the OPA, Community Legal Services,
19 and the Reinvestment Fund to create
20 the Philadelphia Residential
21 Property Assessment Task Force. The
22 task force, which also includes
23 subject matter experts and
24 representatives from City Council,

1 convened monthly meetings to
2 identify best practices, develop
3 recommendations, and create
4 implementation frameworks.

5 A report containing these
6 recommendations is currently being
7 finalized. OPA will continue to
8 collaborate with CLS and the
9 Reinvestment Fund to lead Mayor
10 Parker's Philadelphia Residential
11 Property Assessment Task Force and
12 to implement OPA-related
13 recommendations from that report.

14 OPA is committed to
15 implementing the recommendations
16 from the task force report, which
17 include regular reassessments;
18 expanding and improving specific
19 property-level data, such as
20 property condition; and enhancing
21 transparency, as well as increased
22 public outreach and education
23 regarding the assessment process.

24 For Fiscal Year '27, OPA's

1 budget includes funding to implement
2 customer relations management
3 software, which will streamline the
4 public's ability to electronically
5 obtain and submit OPA documentation;
6 increased funding for the
7 reassessment service call center,
8 which handles inquiries related to
9 reassessments, as well as calls for
10 real estate tax relief programs and
11 exemptions; and also additional
12 funding for mailing services, all of
13 which strengthen the public outreach
14 and enhance customer experience.

15 For Fiscal Year '27, OPA
16 will continue to maintain staffing
17 levels in accordance with industry
18 recommendations and fill vacancies
19 for evaluators and clerical staff
20 with qualified applicants at both
21 the entry and experienced levels as
22 needed and will work to fill the
23 current and pending vacancies in
24 senior staff positions caused by

1 attrition in the department.

2 As part of this effort, OPA
3 will continue to work with the
4 Office of Human Resources to ensure
5 a large and diverse candidate pool
6 for evaluation positions and will
7 work with OHR on recruitment for
8 specialized positions. OPA will
9 continue to offer training and
10 professional development
11 opportunities for employees to
12 ensure that the department can
13 develop future leaders in our
14 industry.

15 And finally, during Fiscal
16 Year '27, OPA will continue to
17 collaborate with several other large
18 jurisdictions across the United
19 States in requesting access to data
20 contained in the federal
21 government's Uniform Appraisal
22 Database. The Uniform Appraisal
23 Database contains parcel-level data
24 on property characteristics on

1 millions of U.S. homes that were
2 appraised for mortgages.

3 Currently, most of this
4 data is inaccessible to assessment
5 offices. Access to this data would
6 allow the OPA to verify existing
7 data and potentially add additional
8 data points that OPA does not have
9 direct access to, such as whether a
10 basement has been finished.

11 The remainder of my
12 testimony has been submitted for the
13 record. I thank you for the
14 opportunity to testify before this
15 body, and I'm here to answer any
16 questions that you may have.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
18 Thank you very much. Thank you for
19 your testimony. Just brief question
20 before I turn it over to my members.
21 You're still interim director? Are
22 we going to close it out and just
23 make you the guy? Because this
24 started since I first became Council

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1 President, which was two years ago.
2 Any update from the administration?
3 My good friend Rob Dubow, so we can
4 make this thing official.

5 MR. AROS: I see -- I see
6 the finance director stepping up,
7 so.

8 MR. DUBOW: I'm Rob Dubow,
9 finance director.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
11 Hey, Rob. How are you doing?

12 MR. DUBOW: Good. How are
13 you doing?

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
15 Always good to see you, sir.

16 MR. DUBOW: Good to see
17 you. I think we did send over the
18 nomination probably two years ago;
19 nothing happened, and we would be
20 happy to send it again.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
22 Okay. All right. So there is still
23 a conversation that needs to be had
24 with members of Council to close it

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1 out?

2 MR. DUBOW: Yes.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

4 Okay. All right. Majority, let's
5 make sure we have that discussion as
6 we decide to move forward or not.

7 All right. Just want to get an
8 update on that process. All right.
9 Thank you very much. You went --
10 you talked about this year being a
11 year we are going to be doing
12 reassessments, correct?

13 MR. AROS: Correct.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:

15 Do we have an idea what those
16 assessments going to look like
17 across the city of Philadelphia?

18 MR. AROS: So we're in the
19 process of compiling all the data to
20 give a thorough briefing to Council
21 and have information by Council
22 District, so that will be coming in
23 short order. As I said, we're on
24 schedule to mail around the end of

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1 May. So Council will be briefed
2 before those mailings go out so that
3 way each Councilmember knows what
4 the potential impact is in the
5 district.

6 So at this point, while I
7 won't speak to specific numbers
8 until we have those briefings, the
9 level of change -- we still do see
10 an increase in the overall value of
11 property in the city, but it is
12 significantly lower than either of
13 the last two reassessments we have
14 undergone in Tax Year '23 and Tax
15 Year '25.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
17 Okay. I am going to call on
18 Majority Leader Katherine Gilmore-
19 Richardson.

20 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE -
21 RICHARDSON: Thank you.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT JOHNSON:
23 Then Member Harrity.

24 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE -

1 RICHARDSON: Yes. Thank you very
2 much, Council President. And thank
3 you very much to OPA, in particular
4 to Drew Aldinger, who has always
5 been very, very helpful going back
6 many years.

7 I wanted to just get all of
8 my questions on the record for this
9 hearing. And I will say to your
10 point, Council President, that I,
11 too, look forward to those continued
12 conversations regarding Mr. Aros.

13 And you're still here, Rob?
14 Okay. Great. I look forward to the
15 continued conversation because you
16 all know that I have continued
17 consternation as it relates to OPA.
18 So I'm going to put additional
19 questions on the record.

20 First, your testimony
21 mentions investment in technology
22 and using more data-driven
23 efficiencies. Developers have
24 indicated that there are significant

1 delays with OPA finalizing lot
2 consolidation and subdivisions.

3 When there is a delay in
4 OPA finalizing lot consolidation and
5 subdivisions, which we've heard can
6 sometimes take years, is the city
7 only collecting taxes on the vacant
8 unimproved lots rather than the
9 subdivided and improved lots? And
10 as a result of this, is the city
11 missing out on collecting the full
12 taxes due to these delays?

13 Second question, is there a
14 large difference in taxes that would
15 be collected by the city if a
16 vacant, unimproved lot was actually
17 being taxed as if it was subdivided
18 into individual lots? And as an
19 example, would a 20-acre unimproved
20 and vacant lot have a lower assessed
21 value than if that property was
22 subdivided and improved into 100 --
23 150 individual home lots?

24 Third question, developers

1 and homeowners have complained about
2 the timeline to update ownership
3 records in the OPA system after a
4 change in ownership occurs. Does a
5 delay in updating ownership
6 information prevent a property owner
7 from filing zoning or building
8 permit applications or obtain rental
9 or high-rise licenses? And does
10 this result in lost revenue to the
11 city in the form of application and
12 licensure fees?

13 Fourth question, does the
14 failure to timely update ownership
15 records result in new owners not
16 receiving their real estate tax
17 bills and prior owners mistakenly
18 receiving the tax bills? Is it
19 difficult to collect a property tax
20 payment from an individual who no
21 longer owns the property? Are new
22 owners ultimately charged interest
23 and penalties for tax bills they
24 have not received because of the

1 failure of OPA to timely update the
2 ownership records? And is it fair
3 for new owners to have to pay
4 interest and penalties for tax bills
5 they have not received?

6 My fifth question is, in
7 the property owner -- in -- if the
8 property owner does not pay the full
9 tax bill because they are waiting
10 for their account to correctly
11 reflect the abatement, will Revenue
12 send the property's account to
13 collections and liens threatened?

14 And I know that's a dual
15 question, so I know you're still
16 here, Rob.

17 The sixth question is, what
18 is the process for a property owner
19 who paid the full tax amount due to
20 the threats of collections and liens
21 to receive a refund of their
22 overpayment? And then what is the
23 current time that it takes from a
24 day a deed is recorded to when OPA

1 updates its records?

2 And then finally, and this
3 one is important: How many
4 commercial appeals were filed in FY
5 '24 and FY '25? On average, how
6 many commercial appeals led to a
7 lower assessed value for the said
8 property?

9 Can you provide data to the
10 Chair that shows all commercial
11 properties per year for the last
12 five fiscal years that were
13 appealed? What was the outcome of
14 the appeal, including the change in
15 valuation? And may you also include
16 the comparables that were utilized
17 to make the determination? And how
18 do we assume commercial appeals will
19 change the amount of property tax
20 revenue the city receives?

21 And I'll submit the balance
22 of my questions, of which I have 1,
23 2 -- seven more, for a written
24 response.

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1 MR. AROS: Okay. So some
2 of that is Revenue; some of that is
3 us. Let me start with the very last
4 question you mentioned. So you had
5 mentioned fiscal years. If we say
6 -- for our purposes, we say tax
7 year, because a tax year encompasses
8 two fiscal years. Is that -- is
9 that okay?

10 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE -
11 RICHARDSON: That's fine. That's
12 fine.

13 MR. AROS: Got it. Okay.
14 All right. So we will take that
15 commercial -- that request for the
16 commercial data and compile that.
17 We don't estimate loss, so that
18 would be a Finance Director
19 question.

20 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE -
21 RICHARDSON: Yeah. That's why I
22 said Rob is still here.

23 MR. AROS: He's -- he'll be
24 here -- he'll be here as long as

1 we're here. So going back to the
2 start on developers finalizing. So
3 there had been a backup a while ago.
4 We met several times with the BIA
5 and talked through -- in -- you
6 know, in their mind they want stuff
7 done as quickly as possible.

8 We have not been able to
9 meet what -- as quickly as they were
10 hoping for, partially because some
11 of the developments are quite
12 complex and have hundreds of units
13 that have multiple amendments
14 recorded, which has to be done in a
15 very particular process.

16 So that way, the chain of
17 the accounts is not lost with
18 Revenue and being billed for
19 something that they shouldn't and
20 all that. So obviously that's part
21 of their strategic plan as far as
22 when they do developments like that,
23 but it does complicate things on our
24 end because we can't just say, we'll

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1 delete this one and create these
2 400.

3 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
4 RICHARDSON: Right.

5 MR. AROS: If there's three
6 pieces in between, we have to follow
7 that chain on the -- on the deeds.

8 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
9 RICHARDSON: And I think my concern
10 with this is, we are losing millions
11 and millions and millions of dollars
12 of revenue for the city.

13 MR. AROS: Yeah.

14 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
15 RICHARDSON: Millions.

16 MR. AROS: So --

17 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
18 RICHARDSON: And so as -- just
19 pardon me one moment.

20 MR. AROS: Sure.

21 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
22 RICHARDSON: As we are looking for
23 additional revenue, as we are
24 seeking to ensure that we're doing

1 all that we can being fiscally
2 responsible as a city, we have a
3 situation here where we are losing
4 millions and millions and millions
5 of dollars, and no process
6 improvement has occurred in order to
7 update this process to ensure that
8 we are able to get those dollars in
9 more quickly to the city.

10 And then you have folks
11 turning around asking us to check
12 the couch cushions for change, and
13 you're talking about a millions and
14 millions and millions of dollar
15 issue that is a result of this
16 process not being fixed by OPA.

17 MR. AROS: Sure. So let me
18 respond to the last part of that
19 first question. When you mentioned
20 the taxes for lots versus improved,
21 so from our end, you know, we're
22 just looking at assessment on actual
23 taxes.

24 But what I can tell you is

1 that once a building is on there, if
2 it's new construction, they're going
3 to have the abatement. It's no
4 longer vacant land. The land value
5 for properties with the buildings
6 and residential is 20 percent of the
7 overall value. That's an industry-
8 standard measure. That could
9 actually, depending on what the
10 value of the lot was, that could
11 result in a decrease in taxes owed.

12 So it's not necessarily a
13 city missing money if that building
14 is not on, because the abatement and
15 the 20 percent could -- we can't
16 value it as vacant land because it's
17 no longer vacant; it's part of that.
18 So the taxable amount could go up or
19 down. It's not one way or the other
20 --

21 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE -
22 RICHARDSON: And I agree, not every
23 case is the same. But what I'm
24 saying is, you can agree that there

1 have been a number of cases on these
2 commercial property developments
3 where we have lost millions and
4 millions of dollars as a city. You
5 -- can you agree that that is
6 correct?

7 MR. AROS: I -- no, I can't
8 -- I can't--

9 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
10 RICHARDSON: You can't?

11 MR. DUBOW: I can't dispute
12 that or agree with it, so.

13 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
14 RICHARDSON: Okay. Okay. I receive
15 that. However, I'm going to
16 respectfully disagree with you,
17 because it is a process improvement
18 that needs to take place in order
19 for us to collect these dollars.
20 And I know not every time, you know,
21 it's a situation where we are losing
22 dollars, but it's too many times.

23 MR. AROS: Okay.
24 Understood. And we do have some

1 process improvements that we are
2 intending to implement once we have
3 a new batch of hires that will be
4 coming in. So we have some ideas on
5 the table for new hires to sort of
6 learn the process and assist with
7 stuff across the city with new
8 accounts that we think will give
9 them a valuable learning tool, as
10 well as assist with getting these on
11 the books.

12 Because one other important
13 thing to remember is, in
14 residential, our assignments are
15 done geographically. Once a
16 neighborhood becomes the hot
17 neighborhood, or -- you could get
18 hundreds upon hundreds, if not more
19 accounts dumped on one evaluator.
20 So we try to help out and distribute
21 as much as possible, but where
22 there's -- our development spikes in
23 the city, it's obviously not uniform
24 across the city.

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1 Some evaluators, we won't
2 have any, you know, consolidations
3 or subdivisions or court all have
4 one or two, and those get turned
5 around pretty quickly.

6 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE -
7 RICHARDSON: Okay.

8 MR. AROS: So we're
9 constantly changing assignments to
10 make sure no one is overloaded, but
11 when developers pick a neighborhood
12 that they're going after, it piles
13 up.

14 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE -
15 RICHARDSON: Okay.

16 MR. AROS: For your second
17 question, vacant unimproved. So
18 that scenario, again, similar to my
19 first response, it would be more --
20 it needs more factors such as
21 location, zoning, and all that. So
22 it could be possible that the
23 hundred lots in aggregate could have
24 a higher total value than the larger

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1 lot. It could stay the same; it
2 could go down. There's other
3 elements that would be part of that,
4 but for the value to go up in
5 aggregate is certainly plausible.
6 It's absolutely possible.

7 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
8 RICHARDSON: Okay.

9 MR. AROS: Ownership with
10 Revenue. So Revenue maintains
11 ownership separately from OPA. So
12 they're billing -- they're billing
13 the owner they have on record.

14 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
15 RICHARDSON: Right.

16 MR. AROS: Which in some
17 cases is slightly ahead of OPA. So
18 in most cases, the delay in
19 ownership on OPA is not impacting
20 the Revenue bill going to the right
21 person, because they have their own
22 data set, and they're sending stuff
23 out to who they have on record, not
24 pulling directly from us.

1 And then property owner in
2 general. So one improvement we have
3 made recently is that most deed
4 changes come through to us, no
5 problem. There were review measures
6 put in place with the Office of
7 Innovation and Technology, where if
8 -- and for instance, if a deed comes
9 over where the grantor does not
10 match the grantee on the previous
11 deed, it gets flagged for review.

12 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
13 RICHARDSON: Okay.

14 MR. AROS: It was a very
15 strict protocol that we've worked on
16 loosening up. So if there's a
17 slight -- so for instance, if
18 somebody's last name is Mc Uhugh,
19 M-C space U-H-U-G-H, and then on the
20 next deed, it's one word --

21 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
22 RICHARDSON: Right.

23 MR. AROS: -- that gets
24 flagged.

1 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE -

2 RICHARDSON: Got you.

3 MR. AROS: So we've kind of
4 gone through growing pains on that,
5 and we've worked to loosen those
6 restrictions so that that will come
7 through easier, but that was getting
8 flagged to make sure there wasn't a
9 missing deed in between or some sort
10 of fraud being committed potentially
11 that somebody didn't have a chance
12 to flag.

13 And then the other one was
14 about paid in full ahead and then
15 receiving a refund. So I would
16 defer to Rob on that.

17 MR. DUBOW: Yeah. I think
18 that there were a couple of non-OPA
19 questions. One, I remember the one
20 I would ask you to repeat, please.

21 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE -

22 RICHARDSON: Yeah.

23 MR. DUBOW: One was about
24 commercial --

1 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-

2 RICHARDSON: It was earlier this
3 year, remember? It was the first or
4 second day. I said I was going to
5 come back to this.

6 MR. DUBOW: Yeah. Yeah.
7 One was about commercial appeals,
8 and I think it was for the last five
9 years?

10 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-

11 RICHARDSON: Yes.

12 MR. DUBOW: Yes.

13 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-

14 RICHARDSON: Tax years.

15 MR. DUBOW: Tax years and
16 how much they were and what that
17 meant in terms of revenue change.
18 So we'll have to get back to you on
19 that. I don't have it off the top
20 of my head, but we'll get back to
21 you. And then what was the other
22 question? Sorry.

23 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-

24 RICHARDSON: No. And for Revenue,

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1 what is the process for a property
2 owner who paid the full tax amount
3 due to the threats of collections
4 and liens to receive a refund if
5 it's an overpayment?

6 MR. DUBOW: Got it. Okay.
7 So let me talk to Revenue. We'll
8 get you that in writing.

9 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
10 RICHARDSON: Okay. And I'll submit
11 all of the questions in writing, but
12 I wanted to get this on the record
13 because we received very many
14 complaints. And when I heard
15 specifically about this issue
16 relative to these lot consolidation
17 and subdivisions, but also this
18 challenge around these commercial
19 appraisals, you know, I was very
20 concerned because I feel like we are
21 -- are leaving millions and millions
22 of dollars on the table.

23 And I get not every case is
24 an issue, but it's enough of a

1 challenge where we have to put some
2 process improvements in place to
3 ensure that we are condensing the
4 process, so that we're not losing as
5 much money as a city. And like I
6 said, I know not every case we lose,
7 but it's enough of them where it's
8 millions of dollars, and it's piling
9 up. Particularly, because of the
10 type of development that we know is
11 going on in certain sections, in
12 certain pockets of the city.

13 And I just respectfully
14 request that all of those -- that we
15 receive those answers, as well as
16 the ones that I brought up two years
17 ago before we go down this process.
18 And I want -- I would like to be a
19 part of those meetings; I would like
20 to meet with you.

21 You know, the challenges
22 that I had even brought to you all
23 relative to the deed changes, and,
24 you know, how quickly it goes to

1 Revenue, and then you still have to
2 wait months and months for OPA.

3 Like, you can't handle
4 business that way. You can't even
5 handle business that way because
6 then you have to try to go back and
7 get a rental license; it's just a
8 big mess.

9 MR. DUBOW: Right.

10 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE -
11 RICHARDSON: And I went through it
12 personally, so I'm not speaking --
13 you know, I'm speaking from
14 experience. Okay? Because in '21,
15 I bought two houses on one day from
16 my parents' estate. So I'm not
17 speaking from a place of no
18 knowledge, okay, on this. Okay?

19 MR. DUBOW: Okay. So we
20 will -- and I heard you say that we
21 should meet, so we will set up a
22 meeting within the next week or two
23 to discuss that.

24 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE -

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1 RICHARDSON: Please. Okay. Thank
2 you. I'll submit the balance of my
3 questions for the record. Thank
4 you, Mr. Chair.

5 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS:
6 Thank you, Madam Leader. The Chair
7 recognizes Council Member Harrity,
8 followed by Council Member O'Rourke.

9 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:
10 Thank you. Good afternoon,
11 everybody.

12 MR. DUBOW: Good afternoon.

13 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:
14 Let's get right into it. In 2026,
15 you budgeted for 226 full-time
16 positions. As of November of '25,
17 you only had 183 of those positions
18 were filled. Your 2027 request
19 remains at 26 positions. Can you
20 explain how you plan to fill these
21 positions and what types of
22 positions make up these vacancies?

23 And when the -- when the
24 district, the School District,

1 closes a school building, the
2 vacancy can suppress surrounding
3 property values and affect OPA's
4 assessment in that neighborhood.
5 Has the OPA tracked the assessment
6 impact in corridors where school
7 closures have occurred or plan to
8 occur? And is the data informing
9 2027 assessment priorities?

10 MR. DUBOW: Okay. So for
11 your first question around the
12 positions, so we'll be -- we have
13 positions -- those vacancies are at
14 each level of the department. So we
15 currently have one promotional test
16 that was scored, another it's in the
17 process of being scored, so we're
18 going to be making internal
19 promotions.

20 So that overall number will
21 stay the same, but the vacancy will
22 shift to more entry-level positions
23 as we fill the higher-level
24 positions that can only be filled

1 through promotion within the
2 department.

3 And then at the entry
4 level, we have an active list that
5 we've requested from OHR to be able
6 to start conducting interviews.
7 There's going to be another --
8 that's for entry-level Evaluator 1
9 positions.

10 So we have, I believe, 11
11 names on that list that passed that
12 we are -- have requested the
13 permission from OHR to start that
14 interview process. There will be
15 another test coming. We get the --
16 OHR gives that test about twice a
17 year. So we get anywhere from five
18 to 15 new positions typically from
19 that list.

20 And then other vacancies,
21 we have struggled a little bit
22 because our clerical and our
23 management trainee positions are
24 from the citywide lists. So

1 depending on when we go to that
2 list, if there's not an active list
3 or the test has -- is -- hasn't been
4 given yet, and other departments
5 have exhausted that, it does hinder
6 us from getting those numbers up as
7 quickly as we would like.

8 But those are the other two
9 classes that we're going to be
10 looking to fill. But those tests
11 come for the citywide purpose, and
12 we're also competing with other
13 departments for those potential
14 candidates.

15 So that makes it a little
16 more, I don't want to say difficult,
17 but I mean there -- it's more of a
18 competition because, especially for
19 say, management trainee where
20 somebody's coming in like, "I want
21 to work in city government, but I
22 don't know what department is right
23 for me."

24 And so those folks that

1 come in that we interview typically
2 don't have real estate experience,
3 which is a prerequisite for some of
4 the other entry-level positions. So
5 we spend that first year training
6 them up and teaching them
7 everything.

8 Some folks come in and love
9 it; some folks get an offer from
10 another department as well, and they
11 say, you know what? This is more in
12 line of what I'm thinking. So thank
13 you, but no thank you. So when
14 you're competing within the city for
15 positions that could fill a number
16 of departments, you know, that --
17 it's not as easy as people coming
18 directly to you.

19 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: I
20 get it. But what -- what's the
21 actual number of positions that you
22 have vacant right now that make it
23 easy?

24 MR. AROS: Right now? Let

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1 me -- let me get that back to you in
2 writing. We just did our --

3 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

4 That's fine.

5 MR. AROS: We just did our
6 Quarter 3 numbers, which might be
7 slightly different than what was
8 submitted previously.

9 And then for the school
10 closures, it's not a specific data
11 point that we have done any analysis
12 on. And the recent announcements
13 would have been made after the
14 evaluation process was already
15 pretty much through.

16 What I will say is, you
17 know, there are -- there are things
18 that we look at that at a block-to-
19 block level, we can intuitively say
20 this might have an impact, but we
21 can't automatically make an
22 adjustment until we actually see
23 data that says, Okay, this area,
24 these properties in this sector here

1 are selling for less.

2 When we see that data, for
3 instance, come in and say, okay.
4 This isn't -- they're not
5 transacting for the same prices that
6 they were before, that's when we use
7 that data to make informed decisions
8 and adjustments on our estimates of
9 value.

10 So it certainly makes sense
11 to say, Well, if a school is closing
12 down the street, that might make my
13 property value lower, depending on,
14 you know, the school. We can't
15 blanketly make that until we get the
16 actual data that supports that. So
17 the study -- the announcements that
18 were just made, it's too fresh for
19 that to have any -- there's no data
20 that we would have yet that would
21 have impacted this current round of
22 assessments, but stuff like that are
23 things that would be part of the
24 consideration moving forward in any

1 future assessments.

2 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

3 Okay. Yeah, it goes back to, again,
4 us being reactionary instead of, you
5 know, taking actions to deal with it
6 ahead of time.

7 MR. AROS: And so -- and to
8 go back, my excellent Deputy Chief
9 just informed me it's 46 vacancies.

10 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: 46
11 vacancies. Okay. All right. Thank
12 you, Councilman.

13 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS:
14 Thank you, Councilman. We
15 appreciate you, sir. The Chair
16 recognizes Council Member O'Rourke,
17 followed by Council Member Gauthier.

18 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
19 Good afternoon. Thank you for being
20 here with us today. I have a couple
21 of questions. First one jumping in,
22 it's clear that property tax
23 increases are a huge burden for
24 working families in Philadelphia.

1 While they're tough for homeowners,
2 we also have a great tax relief
3 program -- several of them,
4 actually, like the Homestead
5 Exemption, we have LOOP, the senior
6 tax relief programs that exist, but
7 we have zero tax relief for renters.
8 And I think that that's important to
9 note because they pay the burden of
10 increased taxes through their higher
11 rents.

12 One of the things that we
13 have been pointing out to folks in
14 my office's effort to address
15 questions of affordability here in
16 the city is that the Commonwealth,
17 apparently for at least the last 20
18 years, has affirmed that about 20
19 percent of property taxes by some
20 property managers or landlords are
21 being passed down to the tenant.
22 That's part of the reason why their
23 rents are so freaking high.

24 So as -- and so with --

1 part of that is that we actually
2 want to address some things by
3 providing like some mirror
4 legislation at the city level to
5 provide like a senior tax refund
6 that the Commonwealth kind of
7 already does and make it some --
8 make it sort of automatic to the
9 city. That's less the point. The
10 question I actually have is, as the
11 taxes continue to increase, what is
12 the administration doing to provide
13 property tax relief directly to
14 renters in particular?

15 MR. AROS: I was looking
16 for Mr. Dubow. OPA does not deal
17 with property taxes, so I could not
18 speak on behalf of the
19 administration as far as that goes.
20 We're just handling the assessment,
21 so the assessment could result in an
22 increase/decrease based on other
23 measures. So we do not -- we do not
24 handle the relief measures, so I

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1 will defer to --

2 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: If
3 he were here.

4 MR. AROS: Somebody else
5 that can answer that question,
6 because that's not under our
7 umbrella.

8 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
9 Okay. You guys don't do property
10 taxes?

11 MR. AROS: What's that?

12 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
13 You don't do property taxes?

14 MR. AROS: No, we do
15 assessments, which are part of the
16 equation that generates property
17 taxes, but we don't -- we don't
18 bill, collect, or tell somebody what
19 their taxes are going to be, and
20 Mr. Dubow is now here.

21 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
22 I'll come back to you in a second.
23 Thank you. Did -- Mr. Dubow is
24 here. Hello, sir.

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1 MR. DUBOW: Hello. So the
2 question is about relief programs.
3 Those relief programs are run out of
4 the --

5 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
6 For renters.

7 MR. DUBOW: Yeah, no, I
8 know. I know. Yeah. I was -- I
9 was getting there.

10 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
11 Okay.

12 MR. DUBOW: So relief
13 programs are run out of the Revenue
14 Department. And as you said, those
15 are all for homeowners. On the
16 renter side, I mean, really, it's
17 hard to get at property tax relief
18 for renters because they don't pay
19 the tax directly, which is why we
20 kind of have rent relief programs,
21 and that is kind of the way we get
22 at that.

23 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
24 Okay. I -- yeah. More of those

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1 would be great, some rent -- I just
2 think that -- yeah, half the city
3 rents, and that's a bit of an
4 overestimation, but it's not that
5 far over. So --

6 MR. DUBOW: Sorry?

7 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: I
8 said half the city rents, and that's
9 a bit of an overestimation, but
10 that's not that far over. And I
11 think given that mass of people, it
12 might be worth our time to find out
13 ways that we can provide more relief
14 programs for them, whatever that's
15 worth --

16 MR. DUBOW: Always happy to
17 discuss that.

18 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
19 Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Dubow. This
20 kind of -- the second question I had
21 is with OPA, and I apologize for
22 assuming that you did the same
23 things.

24 MR. DUBOW: Not a problem.

1 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

2 It's been raised -- it's been
3 brought to my attention by a couple
4 of different groups, namely, the
5 National Coalition of 100 Black
6 Women recently shared with me that
7 they have had some concern. I know
8 that they're not the only ones
9 around a disparity in assessments.
10 That it does seem to be the case
11 that when assessments happen,
12 oftentimes there's like an over-
13 assessment generally around, you
14 know, not cheaper properties, but
15 properties that are possessed by
16 left -- less affluent people who
17 tend to be black or brown or
18 otherwise.

19 And oftentimes in the
20 pockets of the city that might have
21 more focus on like West Philly or
22 North Philly. And so I think the
23 question is how -- you know, folks
24 are tracking that. Are you tracking

1 that? And what can we be doing at
2 the local level to assure -- to, you
3 know, mitigate any disparity in how
4 assessments are happening?

5 This was also brought up
6 several times last night in
7 Dr. Phillips's town hall by folks up
8 there Uptown in the 9th Councilmanic
9 District. So this is a thing that
10 is top of mind for a lot of people.
11 I'm curious what your thoughts are
12 on this matter.

13 MR. AROS: Sure. So just
14 as a general concept, the highest
15 and lowest ends of your property
16 ranges in any jurisdiction tend to
17 be the most difficult to get as
18 perfect as you would like. On the
19 low end, because if a property is,
20 let's say, \$100,000 and you have a
21 couple of properties and there's a
22 \$5,000 or \$7,000 purchase price
23 difference, and people are using
24 that for points of comparison,

1 that's a huge percentage of the
2 overall property.

3 That amount of money could
4 be down to negotiating skills, or it
5 could be given in givebacks that
6 we're not privy to. A \$5,000
7 difference on a \$500,000 sale is
8 very minimal.

9 So when we run these
10 statistical measures that I was
11 speaking about earlier and you're
12 looking at percentages, when it's on
13 the lower end, because the small
14 dollar amounts make up a larger
15 percentage of that, you will see
16 some numbers that come up a little
17 more out of line than you will see
18 for most of the properties in that
19 like 80 percent range in the middle.

20 As far as what we're aware
21 of, as I mentioned earlier, the
22 Mayor created the task force two
23 years ago that we've been active
24 participants in, along with the

1 member -- the folks that I
2 mentioned. And then there is the
3 Revenue Department's -- I'm sorry,
4 the Finance Department's audit that
5 I mentioned that Mr. Dubow can speak
6 to.

7 MR. DUBOW: So in the
8 proposed '27 budget for Finance,
9 there is funding for a study to look
10 exactly at this issue. It's
11 something that's been brought up in
12 prior hearings and something that
13 we're concerned about. So we're
14 bringing in a consultant to look at
15 OPA's overall processes and to look
16 at whether there are any processes
17 that unintentionally create biases
18 and whether there are things we can
19 do about that.

20 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
21 This report or the task force that
22 was convened to address this,
23 there's a report coming out sometime
24 soon that you all are expecting --

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1 MR. DUBOW: There's a
2 report coming out soon, yes.

3 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE: Do
4 you have a general idea about when
5 that is? And are there other -- or
6 do you anticipate actionable items
7 to this?

8 MR. DUBOW: Yes, it is. It
9 will have recommendations, and we
10 will look to -- look at the
11 recommendations and, you know,
12 implement the recommendations that
13 we can.

14 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
15 I'm done, but anytime soon is when
16 this is happening? Like, you have
17 --

18 MR. DUBOW: It will be out
19 later this spring.

20 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:
21 Later this spring. Okay. Thank you
22 so much, Mr. Chair, for the time.
23 Thank you.

24 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS:

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1 Thank you, Member. The Chair
2 recognizes Council Member Gauthier,
3 followed by Council Member Landau,
4 and then we'll close out with
5 Council Member Lozada.

6 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

7 Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to
8 follow up on my colleague's line of
9 questioning. And yes, the Coalition
10 of 100 Black Women did bring this
11 up, but this is not just a feeling,
12 right, or something that we're
13 seeing at the high and low ends of
14 property values.

15 There was an actual report
16 that came out two years ago that
17 quantifiably proved that our
18 property assessment methodology is
19 racially biased. And so I think we
20 have to acknowledge that.

21 And I wanted to ask a bit
22 more specifically about the task
23 force that was created to kind of --
24 to look into that and to see what we

1 would do differently. So you all
2 said that you expect the task
3 force's report to come out in late
4 spring?

5 MR. AROS: Yes, before the
6 end of the fiscal year.

7 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
8 Okay. So we should receive that
9 report before we vote on the budget,
10 yes?

11 MR. AROS: It's not OPA's
12 task force. My assumption is yes,
13 but I can't put my hand on the Bible
14 and tell you because we're not the
15 ones writing it.

16 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
17 OPA has a huge stake in looking at
18 this issue.

19 MR. AROS: Absolutely.
20 We're involved in the process. We
21 are not the ones writing the report,
22 but we have every indication that
23 the report will be out before the
24 end of the spring.

1 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

2 Okay. Of the task force
3 recommendations, and I know we're
4 still waiting on the final report,
5 but it sounds like it's almost
6 completed. Are there any sort of
7 initial findings that are
8 implemented in the FY-27 budget?
9 And also, are there any initial
10 findings that you can talk about
11 that will require future budget or
12 legislative action?

13 MR. AROS: Future it would
14 be -- it would be improper for me to
15 speak on the report itself until
16 it's actually out there, I would
17 just say. Because I would not want
18 to speak on behalf of anybody else
19 that is compiling the report or the
20 Reinvestment Fund. So I will defer
21 regrettably to a later date to
22 provide some answers to those
23 questions, once the report is out.

24 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

1 Thank you. I look forward to
2 receiving that information. Tax
3 Year 2027 notices will go out in May
4 of 2026, essentially now. And the
5 Five-Year Plan references a 4.2
6 percent citywide increase in
7 residential value.

8 My constituents in West and
9 Southwest Philadelphia have
10 historically seen sharper increases
11 than the citywide averages during
12 reassessment cycles. And I want to
13 be prepared to support them when the
14 time comes again for the
15 reassessments.

16 So could you share how the
17 anticipated change in reassessment
18 breaks down by Council District,
19 income level, and neighborhood? And
20 is OPA in a position to provide
21 those breakdowns to Council before
22 the notices are mailed so that we
23 have time to prepare constituent
24 communications and identify

1 residents who may need relief?

2 And I'll just kind of
3 remind us; I'm sure my colleagues
4 remember every time this happens, it
5 is traumatic. Particularly, if
6 you're in an area like the Third
7 District or the Eighth District, or
8 areas where we see increases that
9 are higher than any other part of
10 the city. So we're asking for your
11 partnership in allowing us to
12 communicate with our constituents
13 ahead of time.

14 MR. AROS: Yep. So,
15 absolutely. So as I mentioned
16 speaking earlier to the Council
17 President, so we're in the process
18 of compiling all those reports.
19 We're going to have a district-by-
20 district breakout for every
21 Councilperson and for the At-Large
22 members.

23 So you'll get information
24 at a citywide and a district-by-

1 district level. Those -- we'll work
2 to schedule those briefings as
3 quickly as possible, but certainly,
4 in advance of the notices going out
5 so that the offices have the ability
6 to kind of know where the changes
7 are coming. What you will see in
8 the analysis and in some mapping is
9 what we call our geographic market
10 areas within a district.

11 So those are the markets
12 that we create ourselves from. So
13 it can be compiled into a larger
14 neighborhood if you want to look at
15 it that way for your constituents or
16 -- but we have almost 600 of them
17 across the city, so we get very
18 granular as far as that goes.

19 So the analysis as far as
20 percentage of change, amount of
21 overall market value, of taxable
22 market value, that will all be
23 included in the information that is
24 given to the councilmembers. We do

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1 not keep income data, so we would
2 not provide a breakdown by income
3 levels, but we can -- we'll provide
4 the income based on location and
5 existing market value and the rates
6 of change, both as a percentage of
7 median and an actual taxable dollar
8 amount.

9 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:

10 Thank you so much. Thank you,
11 Mr. Chair.

12 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS:

13 Thank you, colleague. The Chair
14 recognizes Council Member Landau,
15 and we will close out with Council
16 Member Lozada.

17 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: Hi,
18 how are you? Thank you for being
19 with us. I wanted to talk a little
20 about timeline of mailings and
21 notices, which I usually ask about.
22 I asked about this in 2024, to say
23 that the notices are mailed late.
24 They were mailed in August, leaving

1 taxpayers fewer than 60 days to file
2 appeals before the October BRT
3 deadline. Then I asked when they
4 would be mailed and published online
5 for 2025.

6 So when were the -- I'm
7 looking for the results of this.
8 When were notices actually mailed
9 and posted online last year? Did
10 homeowners get more than 60 days to
11 appeal? Will -- and when will OPA
12 complete mail notices this year,
13 2026? I think I'm saying this
14 right. What's the target mailing
15 date, and when will they be posted
16 -- will they be posted online before
17 the mailing goes out?

18 Last question for that is,
19 will you commit to a May 31st
20 deadline for mailing and online
21 posting? Is that something you
22 would consider?

23 MR. AROS: So going back to
24 -- so for last year, Tax Year '26,

1 those were -- I don't have the exact
2 date they were posted online, but
3 they were posted in the spring.
4 There was no citywide revaluation,
5 so they -- for last year they had --
6 taxpayers would have had well in
7 advance of -- you said 68 days or
8 whatever it was.

9 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: 60
10 days, yeah.

11 MR. AROS: Yeah. So it was
12 -- it was three or four months at
13 the very least, I believe. As far
14 as back to '25, in conjunction with
15 the Mayor's Office, that mailing was
16 slightly delayed because the Mayor
17 wanted to make sure there was a
18 robust outreach program coming from
19 her office and from Revenue around
20 the tax relief measures.

21 So that did push our
22 intended mailing back a little bit.
23 We don't have any indication that
24 that's going to be the case this

1 time around. So as I sit here
2 today, barring any factors that are
3 beyond our control as a department,
4 we are very much geared toward
5 getting these out before the end of
6 May.

7 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

8 Awesome. That's great.

9 MR. AROS: So we're -- you
10 know, if there's a problem on the
11 vendor side like we had a couple
12 years ago, that could always delay
13 things. But our internal calendar
14 for OPA is to get it out before the
15 end of May.

16 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:

17 Excellent. So you -- we've also --
18 I've also talked to you about how
19 confusing the letter is for people,
20 that we talk about a First-Level
21 Review and an appeal in the same
22 letter.

23 I see some really easy
24 fixes there that I would love to

1 talk to you about either fully
2 distinguishing them or making just
3 one deadline. Give everybody a
4 First-Level Review, for example,
5 before there's an appeal, because
6 some people miss their appeal
7 deadlines because they think they're
8 filing an appeal and they're
9 actually only filing for a First-
10 Level Review.

11 MR. AROS: Yeah, we're
12 happy to take any recommendations
13 into consideration. We've tried to
14 distinguish as hopefully as clear as
15 possible, but there's always a
16 chance it could be done more
17 clearly.

18 There are two separate
19 things that you can file both, but
20 you just need to meet the respective
21 deadlines. And so I do think that a
22 couple years ago when our deadline
23 was closer to the BRT's, there was
24 some confusion around that.

1 The other thing I know in
2 talking with the BRT, the earlier we
3 can have an FLR deadline, it allows
4 people to get results from that
5 without having to worry about the
6 BRT. So we don't want to
7 necessarily be -- we're open to any
8 suggestion because, unlike the BRT,
9 their filing deadline is set by the
10 state.

11 Ours is -- the state has no
12 regulations around an informal
13 first-level review. So we can sort
14 of accommodate -- we've accommodated
15 Council a few times in the last few
16 evaluations about moving that date
17 to allow for more outreach on the
18 Council part. So yeah, we are --
19 we're open to any and all
20 suggestions, and there are benefits
21 and negatives to either scenario,
22 but, you know, we're certainly open
23 to whatever's going to work best for
24 the tax payers.

1 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: So
2 here's a good suggestion. Your
3 letter gives people an estimated
4 property increase. Would you give
5 people an estimated property tax
6 bill in the letter? Years ago, the
7 City Controller's Office did this.
8 You could plug into their system and
9 say, "Here's what my property taxes
10 projected at. This is how much I'll
11 have to pay in taxes." People are
12 getting this letter; they don't know
13 what their projected tax increase
14 would be. They might not even know
15 that they should appeal.

16 MR. AROS: I mean, does --
17 so where I would -- so from OPA's
18 perspective, that we're not -- I
19 think the confusion of taxes versus
20 assessment; they're related, but
21 they're separate. So we're not
22 telling anybody what their taxes
23 are, especially in consideration of
24 when we're mailing.

1 Ideally, it's before any
2 relief measures or tax rate changes,
3 if they're ever under consideration,
4 are being finalized on the budget.

5 I will say that the level
6 of conversation that you just
7 mentioned, I've had dozens of times
8 at the workshops that we've done
9 around the city in conjunction with
10 the Mayor's Office and with the
11 Council offices, where people
12 basically come in and say, "This is
13 what this is saying. Are my taxes
14 going up?" My response to those
15 people is, if you think the value is
16 wrong, no matter what the tax burden
17 is, we want to know.

18 So don't let a tax decrease
19 even preclude you from challenging
20 it if you think it should be more of
21 a tax decrease. Or if in some cases
22 with the last Homestead, if people
23 were at \$80,000 and they went up to
24 \$95,000, percentage-wise that's, you

1 know, 20 percent.

2 But then when the Homestead
3 goes to \$100,000, they're like --
4 and, you know, say, Well, the
5 Homestead will cover this
6 assessment, but if you think the 95
7 is wrong, please let us know,
8 because that's how we get better
9 data. Then they say, "Well, if the
10 Homestead covers it, I'm good.
11 Thank you." Let me --

12 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: Got
13 you. Would you -- let me ask
14 another question. Would you
15 consider giving people a plain-
16 language, simple explanation as to
17 why you believe their property taxes
18 went up?

19 MR. AROS: We would not
20 speak to anything specific about
21 property taxes.

22 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: I'm
23 sorry. Would you give people a
24 plain-language, simple statement as

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1 to why you believe their property
2 valuation went up?

3 MR. AROS: So it would --
4 so to have a blanket, not everybody
5 property's valuation goes up. Some
6 remains the same and some goes down.

7 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: I'm
8 asking you a specific question.
9 Here's hypothetical person A, a
10 hypothetical person A's is about --

11 MR. AROS: I understand.
12 Hypothetically, no, we would not
13 have two types of letters for
14 increases, decreases, or anything
15 with an explanation --

16 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:
17 Would you add to your letter of the
18 increase, "Your property value was
19 \$100,000. We now believe it is
20 \$200,000. Here's three sentences as
21 to why we believe it went from
22 \$100,000 to \$200,000?"

23 MR. AROS: We -- I think --
24 I don't want to -- I want to

1 understand better exactly what those
2 sentences -- what you would expect
3 those sentences to contain, so we
4 can -- we can have that.

5 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: Here
6 I am living in my house for many,
7 many years. My house was valued at
8 \$100,000; you're now telling me it's
9 \$200,000, and you want to know what
10 I think when I open the letter, why?
11 I also would like to know how much
12 will this increase my taxes. It is
13 a very simple thought. It is a
14 very, very --

15 MR. AROS: So the taxes
16 thing is outside of my scope. I
17 can't speak to that. I understand
18 it completely.

19 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:
20 Understood. You made that very
21 clear.

22 MR. AROS: Our letter does
23 -- our -- the general letter does
24 give reasons why a property value

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1 may change. In most cases, it's the
2 market for similar properties in
3 that area. But --

4 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: That
5 does not help the individual person
6 who is opening -- who is opening up
7 their letter to find out their
8 taxes. Last one.

9 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Hold
10 on. I know we have a -- we have a
11 short window --

12 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU:
13 Okay.

14 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: And
15 Council Member Lozada --

16 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: Yes.
17 Thank you.

18 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: --
19 needs to go. No, no. So what
20 Council Member Landau is asking,
21 right, because we were all together
22 last night. The woman comes up to
23 us, she says, "I haven't done any
24 repairs to my house in the last 10

1 years, but my property taxes --"
2 What did she say? Double, triple,
3 something like that. The woman
4 said, "I don't understand why my
5 property taxes has doubled --
6 tripled. Yeah, doubled.

7 MR. AROS: Yes.

8 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: And
9 she said, "I don't know why it has
10 if I haven't done any repairs to my
11 house." So she asked 11 members of
12 City Council, "Can you help me
13 understand why my house went up?"
14 Now, all of us looked at each other
15 because we didn't have an answer.
16 Council Member Landau is doing what
17 the constituents of the City of
18 Philadelphia literally asked us to
19 do last night. Can you just do me a
20 favor so we can move on?

21 MR. AROS: Sure.

22 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Can
23 you just give her a better answer
24 than that?

1 There are a lot of people
2 that's watching, and there's a
3 chance that this clip make it --
4 make -- this conversation make it
5 clip and go on social media. Can we
6 just represent Philadelphia a little
7 bit better than the response you
8 gave to Council Member Landau, and
9 then we'll move on to Council Member
10 Lozada.

11 MR. AROS: So the response
12 that I gave to Council Member
13 Landau, I guess let me expound upon
14 that. In the case of that, without
15 knowing the specifics of that
16 property. And it's a conversation
17 that my staff, the department, I
18 personally have with folks at these
19 meetings, and they're kind of asking
20 how this can happen.

21 Property values are -- you
22 know, we estimate property values
23 based on what properties are selling
24 for in the market. What a willing

1 buyer and a willing seller are able
2 to pay for a specific type of
3 property. Somebody not making
4 improvements to their home doesn't
5 mean that the value does not
6 increase, decrease, or if they don't
7 do improvements, it may stay the
8 same.

9 So in the case of this
10 individual as a hypothetical
11 property, the most likely reason for
12 a valuation change is that
13 properties similar to theirs have
14 been selling for certain prices, and
15 our estimate is that their property
16 is comparable to those, and that
17 price might be going up or it might
18 be going down.

19 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: So
20 we can move on. You can't put that
21 in writing like the Council Member
22 said and give that to people when it
23 happens? That's not realistic?

24 MR. AROS: I mean, I think

1 that's -- I think that's contained
2 somewhere, but we will -- I -- we
3 will -- we can revisit that, yes.
4 So we can absolutely -- we can
5 absolutely do -- we can absolutely
6 revisit that.

7 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: For
8 the purpose of time, and I'm not the
9 Council President, but I know that
10 the Majority Leader is here, and I'm
11 sure that the Council President is
12 hearing this, I'm going to ask the
13 Council President -- I'm not
14 officially making a request, I'm
15 going to ask the Council President
16 to listen to this dialogue and to
17 see if you guys should be called
18 back at another time, so we can have
19 a much deeper conversation, so that
20 the constituents in the City of
21 Philadelphia can understand what's
22 happening with their property and
23 their property taxes.

24 MR. AROS: Sure.

1 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: And
2 so let me -- let me -- I can't do
3 that. I'm going to have that
4 conversation with the Council
5 President, and that may be an
6 option. Colleagues, I don't want to
7 lose a quorum. I know Council
8 Member Lozada has her time, but
9 Council Member Harrity, I hear you.
10 Can you go quickly, Council Member
11 Harrity? Go ahead quickly,
12 Councilmember.

13 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:
14 Third part of that conversation --

15 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Hold
16 on, Council Member Harrity. The
17 Chair recognizes Council Member
18 Harrity.

19 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: I'm
20 sorry. The other part of that
21 question for that lady was she
22 appealed and then had to appeal the
23 appeal and was charged \$300 for
24 that.

1 COUNCILMEMBER O'ROURKE:

2 And couldn't get it back.

3 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY: And
4 couldn't get the money back. That
5 was the other part of that. Thank
6 you.

7 MR. AROS: Yeah. And so
8 that sounds like that would have
9 been a decision made by the Board of
10 Revision of Taxes, which is separate
11 from us. So anybody has a right to
12 appeal that, but that's not an OPA
13 fee.

14 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: So
15 maybe what we should do is talk to
16 the Council President about bringing
17 both back together, so we could do a
18 deep dive for the constituents in
19 the City of Philadelphia, because we
20 can't just brush this stuff under
21 the rug. People cannot afford.

22 People cannot afford the
23 cost of living right now in the
24 city, and we have to examine

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1 everything we can to make
2 Philadelphia more affordable for our
3 constituents that we all work for
4 and represent. The Chair recognizes
5 --

6 MR. AROS: Understood.

7 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: The
8 Chair recognizes Council Member
9 Landau, then we can get ready to
10 adjourn for the day.

11 COUNCILMEMBER LANDAU: I'll
12 cede my time to Council Member
13 Lozada.

14 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: Oh,
15 I'm so sorry. The Chair recognizes
16 Council Member Lozada.

17 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: I
18 think we have to add this
19 conversation here, and that is that
20 it is called gentrification. Can we
21 be honest and say that that is
22 gentrification? That's exactly what
23 it is.

24 I mean, in order for us to

1 fix what is happening in our city,
2 we have to have an honest
3 conversation. There is no reason
4 why we should not be able to tell
5 people why and how we got to
6 whatever the number assessed value
7 was, or how they -- we came about
8 their assessment.

9 My questions were along the
10 same lines as Council Member Landau,
11 because consistently in the southern
12 part of my district, I get asked the
13 same question: "I've done
14 absolutely nothing. I've lived in
15 my house for 40-something years, and
16 I have all of these new houses
17 around me, and now I'm paying -- I
18 went from paying \$1,300 of a
19 property tax to \$6,000 of a property
20 tax. How and why?"

21 And then I ask the city to
22 explain it to me, and there's no
23 response. It's-- it's not fair.
24 And again, we can't keep telling

1 people that we want them to choose
2 Philadelphia as their place to raise
3 their families if we can't keep it
4 affordable.

5 And okay, maybe we're
6 building houses that for some people
7 they call it affordable. They call
8 Turn the Key affordable to some
9 people. In my neighborhood in the
10 southern part of the district, Turn
11 the Key doesn't work because it's no
12 longer affordable. And it's not
13 because of the cost of the house;
14 it's the taxes. They can't pay the
15 taxes, and they can't pay to
16 maintain the property. And we as a
17 government are doing absolutely
18 nothing to help explain that.

19 And then you ask for an
20 appeal. Your appeal -- the woman
21 yesterday said to us, "My appeal --
22 I appealed it in 2025, I just got a
23 date, and it's at the end of the
24 year." How does that happen? Are we

1 behind? Are we -- are we not sure
2 what the response is? How is the
3 appeal process? How do we -- can
4 you explain the appeal process to
5 us?

6 MR. AROS: So that specific
7 appeal process you're referring to
8 is the Board of Revision of Taxes,
9 so I would not speak on their
10 behalf, as they're an independent
11 department.

12 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: Oh,
13 my God.

14 MR. AROS: They schedule --
15 they schedule hearings as they're
16 able to, but we don't schedule
17 hearings for them --

18 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA:
19 Okay. How do you come up with the
20 assessed value?

21 MR. AROS: I can't -- I
22 can't speak for them.

23 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: What
24 is the equation? What is -- how do

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1 you come up with how a property is
2 assessed?

3 MR. AROS: So there's --

4 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: And
5 there's this thing apparently called
6 a certification process, the
7 assessed value certification
8 process.

9 MR. AROS: Yes.

10 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: What
11 is that?

12 MR. AROS: So the
13 certification process is when we
14 close the rolls on the tax -- on
15 assessment rolls for one year and
16 roll into the next year. So that's
17 the conclusion. So with the state,
18 that's March 31st, and then we roll
19 into the next tax year after that.
20 For how the properties are valued,
21 we publish data after every
22 reevaluation.

23 We have a report that goes
24 -- the Council is published publicly

1 after every reevaluation that
2 includes the information on all of
3 the data points and how the values
4 are formulated as a general process.
5 But obviously, just to hit some of
6 the quick points, it's location,
7 it's type of property, it's the
8 condition of the property, it's the
9 size of the property. Those are the
10 biggest factors, typically.

11 So what properties that are
12 similar to your subject property,
13 whatever you want that to be in
14 terms of location, size, condition,
15 age. Those are the value -- those
16 sales are used in to help estimate
17 the value of any one given subject
18 property that matches up with that.
19 And we have -- how many sales do we
20 have? We have tens of thousands of
21 sales throughout the city that are
22 broken into specific neighborhoods
23 and specific areas to come up with
24 those values. So it's not one sale

1 making a market in any case; it's
2 multiple observations, multiple
3 transactions, and data from those
4 transactions.

5 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: So
6 development drives is a driver, or
7 part of the driver in your
8 assessment process?

9 MR. AROS: I'm sorry, what
10 was that first part?

11 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA:
12 Development in a neighborhood also
13 is taken into consideration when you
14 are coming up to that assessed
15 value?

16 MR. AROS: Well, it's what
17 -- it's what properties are selling
18 for. So development in terms of we
19 would not take a sale of a brand-new
20 home that is across the street from
21 a home that's half as large and
22 twice -- I'm sorry that's twice as
23 old; 100-plus years old and say,
24 "Well, this sold for this; we're

1 going to apply a factor of this, and
2 that's how we get your value."

3 It's what the house across
4 the street, what those properties
5 are transacting for, whatever the
6 drivers are for that, that we use to
7 estimate that value. So whatever
8 factors, whether it's catchment
9 area, whether it's wanting to be in
10 a specific part of the city, any --
11 whatever buyers and sellers are
12 taking into consideration when they
13 purchase a property in an arm's-
14 length transaction, that all goes
15 into what --

16 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: So
17 development is taken into
18 consideration when you guys are
19 coming up with these assessment
20 values?

21 MR. AROS: I would say --

22 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: It
23 has to be.

24 MR. AROS: I mean, we don't

1 have a variable for development. If
2 people want to buy a property
3 somewhere because they see
4 development, that's in their
5 internal process of --

6 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: This
7 is crazy.

8 MR. AROS: So it could be
9 -- it could be a potential factor,
10 just like if somebody wanted to live
11 in the Penn Alexander catchment
12 area, that's going to be a factor of
13 what they're willing to pay for a
14 property.

15 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: We
16 absolutely need a hearing on how OPA
17 comes up with assessment evaluations
18 of properties.

19 MR. AROS: Sure.

20 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: It
21 is crazy, and it is unacceptable for
22 us not to be honest in this chamber.
23 Development has a lot to do with how
24 people's properties are evaluated in

1 neighborhoods. It's called
2 gentrification. It's called
3 gentrification.

4 MR. AROS: So I'll say, you
5 know, we're obligated to value based
6 on what the market is saying. If
7 the market is including development,
8 we can't take development out --

9 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: But
10 you've got to develop it in order
11 for you to sell it, don't you?

12 MR. AROS: Excuse me?

13 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA: You
14 have to develop in order for you to
15 sell. And it say -- based on that
16 sales price is how you're going to
17 determine whether the values of
18 other houses in the area.

19 MR. AROS: Well, when you
20 talk about development specifically,
21 if it's new construction, those
22 sales will only be used to value new
23 construction. There is a distinct
24 difference in our process.

1 And I'll say this, you
2 know, we -- whether it's a hearing
3 or an informal session with Council,
4 we can sit and give a two-hour
5 presentation on everything we do.
6 Council Member Gauthier's office
7 took advantage of that. I sit here
8 every year and offer it. We will
9 always offer it. We -- you know,
10 there's nothing we're trying to hide
11 here. We will walk through that
12 whole process from soup to nuts.

13 And we have -- we have some
14 of the best people in -- literally
15 the world that work on this stuff.
16 They speak all over the world. They
17 are active in this industry; they
18 are active in their communities in
19 Philadelphia. They are boots on the
20 ground, not only in the assessment
21 process, but in the real-life
22 actions that Philadelphians are
23 living day to day.

24 So I understand there could

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1 still be confusion. We will walk
2 through that whole process with any
3 Council office that wants to have
4 that presentation.

5 COUNCILMEMBER LOZADA:

6 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

7 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: So I
8 would say -- and I'm going to let
9 Council Member -- so let me do -- so
10 let me just say this real quick. I
11 think that the concern is not
12 necessarily understanding the
13 process, I think the concern is
14 partly understanding the process,
15 but it's making it transparent to
16 the public, right? That's the
17 biggest concern.

18 So a briefing to make sure
19 staff and councilmembers understand
20 what's going on is always great, and
21 we appreciate you making yourself
22 available for that. But I don't
23 think that that will answer some of
24 the transparency issues that we

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1 have, that we need to get on the
2 record so the public can hear that.

3 Let me -- let me let
4 Council Member Gauthier go, then
5 Majority Leader Gilmore-Richardson,
6 and then we can get ready to close
7 out.

8 MR. AROS: Okay.

9 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS:
10 Councilwoman. Remember we got a
11 short window, you-all. We don't
12 want to lose our quorum.

13 COUNCILMEMBER GAUTHIER:
14 Thank you. Very quickly. We thank
15 you for the -- on the session with
16 my staff. We appreciated that. But
17 I think what we're looking for is
18 transparency, but ultimately change.

19 And I also think a
20 recognition that you as a head of
21 OPA understand, even though you
22 don't control every piece of this
23 directly, that you understand what a
24 big issue this is, particularly for

1 those of us who represent Black and
2 Brown communities, poor communities.
3 That it has been -- it's on record
4 that our process is biased, and we
5 have not done anything meaningful to
6 change that dynamic.

7 And so I think it also is
8 unhelpful to -- we don't expect you
9 to know everything about every
10 department, but we do expect you to
11 recognize what a big issue this is,
12 not just for Council and our
13 constituents. And we expect OPA to
14 come together with BRT and Revenue
15 and whoever else needs to be at the
16 table towards change, right?

17 So we look forward to the
18 report, your study that you're
19 doing, but we have to see something
20 concrete that allows us to recognize
21 that you recognize what a strain
22 this is on our constituents. Thank
23 you.

24 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS:

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1 Thank you, colleague. Council
2 Member Young, please, we got to go
3 quickly; we got to close out.

4 COUNCILMEMBER YOUNG: Thank
5 you, Mr. Chair. Very, very quickly.
6 What type of marketing does OPA do
7 to, I guess, proactively market that
8 not -- that the abatements are not
9 just for developers but for anyone
10 who's like kind of rehabbing their
11 house substantially? Like, what do
12 you do to let people know that?

13 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS:
14 Quickly respond because we have to
15 get ready to adjourn.

16 MR. DUBOW: So we publish
17 the information about the abatement
18 on our websites, we take the forms
19 out to community meetings, we don't
20 run commercials or anything like
21 that. I mean, if there's additional
22 outreach that we're not hitting to,
23 we're happy to help out with that,
24 because if it's available to anyone

1 and, you know, we are open to any
2 ideas that will help get that word
3 out there.

4 It hasn't been -- it hasn't
5 been on the OPA's side. We manage
6 it, but the marketing for that for
7 the city was -- has not been
8 directed towards us specifically.

9 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS:

10 Council Member Young, we're going to
11 be calling OPA back. So today, it
12 won't be your only bite at the
13 apple.

14 With that being said, the
15 Chair recognizes Councilmember
16 Gilmore-Richardson for a motion that
17 the public hearing and meeting on
18 the bills and resolutions before the
19 committee today stands in recess
20 until Monday, May 4th, 2026, at
21 10:00 a.m. in Room 400, City Hall.

22 COUNCILMEMBER GILMORE-
23 RICHARDSON:

24 Mr. Chairman, prior to the

Committee of the Whole

1 motion, I'm respectfully requesting
2 on the record that we have a
3 callback for OPA for this budget
4 season.

5 And to that point, I move
6 that this committee stand in recess
7 until Monday, May 4th, 2026, at
8 10:00 a.m. in Room 400, City Hall.

9 COUNCILMEMBER HARRITY:

10 Second.

11 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS: It's
12 been moved and properly seconded
13 that the public hearing and meeting
14 on the bills and resolutions before
15 the committee today stands at recess
16 until Monday, May 4th, 2026, at
17 10:00 a.m. in Room 400, City Hall.

18 All those in favor of the
19 motion will signify by saying aye.

20 COUNCILMEMBERS: Aye.

21 COUNCILMEMBER THOMAS:
22 Those opposed? The ayes have it,
23 and the motion carries.

24 The committee will stand in

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1 recess until Monday, May 4th, 2026,
2 at 10:00 a.m, in which we will
3 reconvene in Room 400, City Hall.

4 Thank you, everybody.

5 (Committee of the Whole public hearing concluded
6 at 3:40 p.m.)

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Committee of the Whole

C E R T I F I C A T I O N

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I hereby certify that the proceedings and
evidence are contained fully and accurately in the
notes taken by me of the above case, and this copy is a
correct transcript of the same.

Samanda J. Rios

Samanda J. Rios

Court Reporter
Notary Public of PA & DE

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