

Committee of the Whole
5/9/2022

COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Remote location using Microsoft® Teams
Monday, May 9, 2022
10:00 a.m.

PRESENT:

COUNCIL PRESIDENT DARRELL L. CLARKE, CHAIR
COUNCILWOMAN CHERELLE L. PARKER, VICE-CHAIR
COUNCILWOMAN CINDY BASS
COUNCILWOMAN KENDRA BROOKS
COUNCILMAN ALLAN DOMB
COUNCILWOMAN JAMIE GAUTHIER
COUNCILWOMAN KATHERINE GILMORE RICHARDSON
COUNCILMAN DEREK S. GREEN
COUNCILWOMAN HELEN GYM
COUNCILMAN KENYATTA JOHNSON
COUNCILMAN CURTIS JONES, JR.
COUNCILMAN DAVID OH
COUNCILMAN BRIAN J. O'NEILL
COUNCILWOMAN MARIA D. QUINONES-SANCHEZ
COUNCILMAN MARK SQUILLA
COUNCILMAN ISAIAH THOMAS

BILLS: 220240, 220284, 220285, 220286, 220287,
220288

RESOLUTION: 220300

1 - - -

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
3 morning. Thank you for joining us this
4 morning. We're going to get started.

5 But before we begin the public
6 hearing, I'll make the following
7 announcement: Due to the continuing
8 threat from public health of COVID-19,
9 City Council Committees are currently
10 meeting remotely. We are using Microsoft
11 Teams to make these remote hearings
12 possible.

13 Instructions for how the public
14 may view and offer public testimony at
15 public hearings of Council Committees are
16 included in the public hearing notices
17 that are published in the Daily News, the
18 Inquirer and Legal Intelligencer prior to
19 the hearings and can also be found on
20 PHLCouncil.com. I now note that the hour
21 has come.

22 Mr. McDermott, will you please
23 call the roll to take attendance. And
24 Members that are in attendance, say a
25 couple of words to make sure your image

1 is displayed on the screen. Thank you.

2 THE CLERK: Councilmember Bass.

3 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good

4 morning, Mr. President, colleagues and
5 the City of Philadelphia. I am present.

6 Good morning, everyone.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
8 morning.

9 THE CLERK: Councilmember
10 Brooks.

11 (No response.)

12 THE CLERK: Councilmember Domb.

13 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Good morning,
14 Council President, colleagues and
15 attendees. I'm present.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
17 morning.

18 THE CLERK: Councilmember
19 Gauthier.

20 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER:

21 (No response.)

22 THE CLERK: Councilmember
23 Gilmore Richardson.

24 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE RICHARDSON:
25 Good morning, Council President. Good

1 morning, colleagues. I am present.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good

3 morning.

4 THE CLERK: Councilmember Green.

5 (No response.)

6 THE CLERK: Councilmember Gym.

7 COUNCILWOMAN GYM: Good morning,

8 Council President. Good morning,

9 colleagues. I'm present.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good

11 morning.

12 THE CLERK: Councilmember

13 Johnson.

14 (No response.)

15 THE CLERK: Councilmember Jones.

16 (No response.)

17 THE CLERK: Councilmember

18 O'Neill.

19 COUNCILMAN O'NEILL: Good

20 morning, everyone.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good

22 morning.

23 THE CLERK: Councilmember oh.

24 COUNCILMAN OH: Good morning.

25 I'm present.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
2 morning.

3 THE CLERK: Councilmember
4 Parker.

5 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Good
6 morning, Mr. President. Good morning,
7 colleagues.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
9 morning.

10 THE CLERK: Councilmember
11 Quinones-Sanchez.

12 COUNCILWOMAN QUINONES-SANCHEZ:
13 Good morning, Mr. President. Good
14 morning, colleagues. I'm present.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
16 morning.

17 THE CLERK: Councilmember
18 Squilla.

19 (No response.)

20 THE CLERK: Councilmember
21 Thomas.

22 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Good
23 morning, Council President. Good
24 morning, colleagues. Good morning to the
25 public. I'm present.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
2 morning.

3 THE CLERK: And, Council
4 President Clarke.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
6 morning --

7 COUNCILMAN GREEN: And, Council
8 President, I'm also present.
9 Councilmember Green.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
11 you. Thank you, Councilman. Good
12 morning.

13 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Good morning.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Okay.

15 We've established our quorum. This is
16 the continued public hearing of the
17 Committee of the Whole regarding Bill
18 Nos. 220284, 220285, 220286, 220287,
19 220288, 220240 and Resolution No. 220300.

20 Mr. McDermott, please read the
21 titles of the bills and all the
22 resolutions -- and the resolution. I'm
23 sorry.

24 And let the record reflect
25 Councilwoman Gauthier is present.

1 Mr. McDermott.

2 THE CLERK: Bill No. 220284, an
3 ordinance to adopt the Capital Program
4 for the six Fiscal Years 2023 to 2028
5 inclusive.

6 Bill No. 220285, an ordinance to
7 adopt a Fiscal 2023 Capital Budget.

8 Bill No. 220286, an ordinance
9 adopting the Operating Budget for Fiscal
10 Year 2023.

11 Bill No. 220287, an ordinance
12 amending Section 10-1001 of The Philadelphia
13 Code, entitled "Fees of Commissioner of
14 Records," to increase certain fees for the
15 recording of deeds and mortgages and related
16 documents, under certain terms and
17 conditions.

18 Bill No. 220288, an ordinance
19 amending Section 19-1403 of The Philadelphia
20 Code, entitled "Imposition of Tax," by
21 creating a Philadelphia County Demolition
22 Fund to increase and encourage economic
23 development by demolishing blighted
24 properties within the City, imposing a
25 related fee for recorded documents and

1 related items; and making technical changes;
2 all under certain terms and conditions.

3 Bill No. 220240, an ordinance
4 substantially increasing the budget and
5 number of areas and neighborhoods around the
6 City served by the Community Life
7 Improvement Program, CLIP, to improve the
8 health, safety and cleanliness of every
9 neighborhood and enhance the quality of life
10 for all residents.

11 And Resolution No. 220300,
12 resolution providing for the approval by
13 the Council of the City of Philadelphia,
14 a Revised Five Year Financial Plan for
15 the City of Philadelphia covering Fiscal
16 Years 2023 through 2027 and incorporating
17 revised changes with respect to Fiscal
18 Year 2022, which is to be submitted by
19 the Mayor to the Pennsylvania
20 Intergovernmental Cooperation Authority,
21 pursuant to the Intergovernmental
22 Cooperation Agreement, authorized by an
23 ordinance of this Council approved by the
24 Mayor on January 3, 1992 by and between
25 the City and the Authority.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
2 you. Today we continue the public
3 hearing on the Committee of the Whole to
4 consider the bills read by the Clerk that
5 constitute proposed operating and capital
6 spending measures for Fiscal 2023, a
7 Capital Program and a Forward-looking
8 Capital Program for Fiscal 2023 through
9 Fiscal 2028.

10 Before we begin to hear
11 testimony from the witnesses that we have
12 for today, everyone who has been invited
13 to the meeting to testify should be aware
14 that this public hearing is being
15 recorded. Because the hearing is public,
16 participants and viewers have no
17 reasonable expectation of privacy. So by
18 continuing to be in the meeting, you are
19 consenting to being recorded.

20 Additionally, prior to
21 recognizing Members for questions and
22 comments they have for witnesses, I will
23 note for the record at this time we will
24 be using the chat feature available in
25 Microsoft Teams to allow Members to

1 signify that they wish to be recognized.

2 In order to comply with the Sunshine Act,
3 the chat feature must only be used for
4 this particular purpose.

5 This morning we will hear
6 testimony from the Office of Property
7 Assessment and the Board of Revision of
8 Taxes. And some time this afternoon,
9 we're scheduled at 3:00, that may be
10 altered, we will hold public testimony.

11 So, Mr. McDermott, our first
12 person to testify is?

13 THE CLERK: The first one to
14 testify is James Aros, Chief Assessor for
15 the Office of Property Assessment.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
17 you.

18 Mr. Aros, are you connected?
19 There you go. Thank you very much and --

20 MR. AROS: Yes. Good morning.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: --
22 please state your name for the record and
23 please proceed with your testimony.

24 MR. AROS: Sure. Good morning,
25 Council President Clarke, members of

1 Council. My name is James Aros, Jr. I'm
2 the Chief Assessment Officer at the
3 Office of Property Assessment. Joining
4 me today are Monica Williams, OPA's
5 Deputy Chief Assessment Officer and Maria
6 Holmes, OPA's Administrative Services
7 Director.

8 I am pleased to provide
9 testimony on the Office of Property
10 Assessment's Fiscal Year 2023 operating
11 budget. For Tax Year 2023, OPA has
12 completed a reassessment of the entire
13 City with the goal of continuing to
14 improve through regular reassessments the
15 level of accuracy and uniformity of
16 Philadelphia's real property assessments.

17 This was the first comprehensive
18 reassessment since Tax Year 2020 and the
19 first reassessment in which the OPA
20 utilized the new CAMA, standing for
21 Computer-Assisted Mass Appraisal System.
22 Since the last reassessment, OPA has
23 implemented key process and procedure
24 changes that were suggested by industry
25 expert Robert Gloudemans as well as

1 recommendations made by an external audit
2 commissioned by City Council.

3 These implementations include
4 creating and staffing a dedicated
5 professional sales validation unit that
6 is responsible for the timely screening
7 and validation of all real estate
8 transfers in the City, hiring additional
9 data analysts and contracting with an
10 outside vendor to assist in the review
11 and data collection of all
12 classifications of residential and
13 nonresidential properties, construction
14 grades and condition codes.

15 With this reassessment, most
16 parcels have seen some change in either
17 the value, land to building allocation or
18 taxable status and owners should expect
19 that the assessment will be more accurate
20 and will reflect the changes that have
21 occurred in the real estate market over
22 the past several years. The assessments
23 for Tax Year 2023 are now available on
24 the City's property search website.

25 OPA is currently putting

1 together information for City Council
2 staffers who provide constituent services
3 to help them answer questions and will
4 provide a briefing for them later this
5 week. Additionally, OPA's working in
6 conjunction with Revenue, Finance and the
7 City's Office of Information Technology
8 to provide an online tax calculator for
9 property owners, which has been available
10 for previous reassessments.

11 OPA expects to spend much of
12 FY23 reviewing and responding to First
13 Level Review applications and market
14 value appeals filed as a result of the
15 reassessment, while simultaneously
16 preparing for the next reassessment.
17 During FY22, OPA contracted with the
18 International Association of Assessing
19 Officers also known as IAAO to conduct an
20 audit of the Department.

21 The goal of the audit was to
22 ensure that OPA is meeting certain
23 industry standards and to provide
24 recommendations on additional
25 improvements the Department can make.

1 Last week the IAAO issued their final
2 report. And I am pleased to report that
3 their independent ratio study found that
4 OPA's 2023 reassessment met industry
5 standards for uniformity, appraisal level
6 and equity.

7 OPA will begin implementing the
8 recommendations of the IAAO audit in
9 FY23. OPA expects that the audit will
10 assist in planning future data quality
11 initiatives and to recommend optimal
12 business processes and staffing levels.
13 Additionally, OPA intends to increase the
14 number of training and professional
15 development opportunities for employees
16 with the IAAO and other professional
17 organizations to ensure that the
18 Department can develop future leaders in
19 the industry.

20 Both the audit and the
21 commitment to professional development
22 are the first steps of the OPA's goal of
23 achieving the IAAO's Certificate of
24 Excellence in Assessment Administration
25 also known as the CEAA. The CEAA is

1 awarded to jurisdictions that
2 successfully integrate the best
3 assessment practices in the workplace.

4 In FY23, OPA will begin working
5 on several additional data quality
6 projects. OPA was awarded funding from
7 the Operations Transformation Fund to
8 work with an outside vendor to collect
9 and verify building square footage data
10 as well as create sketches that can be
11 used in the CAMA system. These
12 initiatives will improve OPA's data,
13 which will improve the quality of
14 assessments and ensure that OPA is using
15 the CAMA system to its full capacity.

16 OPA is also in collaboration
17 with several other large jurisdictions
18 across the United States in requesting
19 that the Biden Administration grant
20 access to data contained in the Uniform
21 Appraisal Database. This database
22 contains information on millions of U.S.
23 homes that were appraised for mortgages.
24 Access to this data would allow the OPA
25 to verify existing data and potentially

1 add additional data elements that OPA was
2 unable to collect previously.

3 OPA will continue to work to
4 maintain a staffing complement in
5 accordance with industry recommendations
6 and fill vacancies for evaluators and
7 clerical staff with qualified applicants
8 at both the entry and experience levels
9 as needed. OPA will continue to work
10 with OHR to develop strategies that
11 increase the size of the candidate pool
12 for the Evaluator 1 title, in addition to
13 using the Management Trainee title to
14 find qualified candidates and ensure
15 diversity in OPA's candidate pool.

16 Communities of color are
17 unrepresented in some jobs in the private
18 sector, private real estate and provide
19 the experience needed to qualify for
20 OPA's evaluator positions. Utilizing the
21 Management Trainee job title will give
22 the OPA an opportunity to ensure
23 diversity by offering an additional
24 pathway into the evaluator positions.

25 The remainder of my testimony

1 has been submitted previously. I thank
2 you for the opportunity to testify and I
3 will gladly answer any questions you
4 have.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
6 you. Thank you very much for your
7 testimony. We'll jump right into a
8 couple of questions and then I'll turn it
9 over to my colleagues.

10 So it will be an interesting
11 conversation today, as I'm sure you're
12 anticipating. So last week the
13 Administration announced an average
14 increase in the assessments of 31 percent
15 for Philadelphia homeowners. So a
16 question about information and the
17 availability of information as people
18 figure out what they're going to do, what
19 its impact will be. I'm a little
20 concerned.

21 So what's OPA's plan to ensure
22 homeowners, particularly those who has
23 less digital access because, yes, in 2022
24 we still have a significant number of
25 people who do not have digital access,

1 and also, when will the homeowners
2 receive their property reassessments?
3 And then another part of that question is
4 how much time will they have to file an
5 appeal? They have some concerns about
6 that also.

7 MR. AROS: Sure. Let me try to
8 go through those as you asked them. So
9 as far as the digital access, that's
10 obviously something we've been mindful
11 of. As I mentioned, the values went up
12 earlier this morning I believe. So those
13 that have the digital access can start
14 looking at those now. We also have the
15 OPA hotline which is 215-686-9200. Folks
16 that don't have digital access or find it
17 a little confusing can call that number
18 and get what the preliminary value is for
19 their property if they have any
20 questions.

21 Looking towards the actual
22 notice mailing, so right now we have said
23 that we expect to mail by September 1st.
24 Preliminary estimates are -- that we
25 would be likely able to mail before that,

1 so we're probably looking at some time
2 over the summer. We don't have an exact
3 date for that as the vendor that handles
4 our mailing like many industries out
5 there have run into some supply chain
6 issues, so they have not been able to
7 guarantee us an exact time when they were
8 able to do a mailing.

9 We did recognize that having
10 homeowners wait that long to sort of see
11 what their numbers would be, we would
12 have to make a trade-off so we did decide
13 to post digitally because that was the
14 one avenue we had currently to be able to
15 put the values out to the public.

16 As I mentioned, I've spoken with
17 Council representatives last week to
18 coordinate briefing sessions for staff
19 members for Council offices that deal
20 with constituent services, so that way
21 there's another avenue that folks can get
22 some of the information from. And
23 obviously, we'll be available to go to as
24 many community meetings and discussions
25 as possible over the next few months.

1 As far as the assessment -- I'm
2 sorry, the appeals, so the First Level
3 Review deadline will be contingent on
4 when the actual mailing goes out, but
5 folks will not have a shorter time than
6 before. Typically, it's been at least
7 four weeks from the time the notices are
8 mailed that they have the ability to file
9 the First Level Review, so we wouldn't be
10 shortening that.

11 And for those that can look at
12 their assessment on the web, they will
13 actually have more time than normal to
14 see what their assessment is as there
15 will be more time leading up to the
16 mailing. Usually the notices -- excuse
17 me, the values are posted online
18 simultaneously with the mailing. And
19 then the BRTs for formal appeals is the
20 first Monday in October.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Okay.
22 So let me ask you a question. Starting
23 with the hotline, this phone number,
24 what's the likelihood that -- I'm getting
25 an echo. What's the likelihood that a

1 person can call that hotline and get an
2 answer within an hour? I mean, you're
3 talking about a lot of folks that are
4 going to have concerns. I mean, is the
5 hotline capable of handling that volume?

6 MR. AROS: So that's the number
7 we've used. Traditionally it's our --
8 it's an offsite-hosted call center that
9 takes care of calls for both OPA and
10 Revenue. That number is the one that
11 goes out on the notices every year, so it
12 serves as OPA information, Homestead
13 hotline and also some Revenue issues.
14 And traditionally, I have not gotten
15 feedback that that number has caused
16 issues as far as folks not being able to
17 get through.

18 But typically as a start, you
19 would expect there might be an uptick in
20 volume of calls, but that's the number
21 we've used consecutively --

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Have
23 you --

24 MR. AROS: -- for a decade or
25 so. I would think they should be able to

1 answer to the requests.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Not
3 to cut you off, Mr. Aros, so I understand
4 typically what it's been used for, other
5 issues. But I mean, we anticipated,
6 should have anticipated a significant
7 level or higher level volume of calls
8 based on the significant increase. So
9 have we staffed up or have you contracted
10 out to be able to accommodate this? I
11 mean, you knew this was coming so.

12 MR. AROS: Yes, that's a
13 contracted call center that we've had
14 like I said for close to a decade now.
15 And we've been in communication with them
16 to let them know the process and how
17 that's changing for us this year. So,
18 therefore, they would be able to staff up
19 accordingly or reallocate resources
20 accordingly with the expectation that
21 there could be an increased call volume
22 as the notices -- I'm sorry, the values
23 get posted on the web.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: All
25 right. Okay. I guess we'll have to see

1 on that one. In terms of our
2 capabilities of mailing, and you talk
3 about supply chains and I understand we
4 may not even have enough envelopes, I
5 guess that's pretty much a global issue,
6 have we given any thought to bundling the
7 notices with water bills or some other
8 type of mailing that we do? I tend to
9 get my water bill on time. It doesn't
10 seem to be a problem from the Water
11 Department, Water Revenue.

12 MR. AROS: Yeah. So the main
13 issue with the supply chain as you
14 mentioned is envelope shortage. I know
15 it's affecting a couple of City
16 departments here and other governmental
17 agencies across the country which has
18 caused some concerns with elections
19 coming up and mail-in balloting. So it's
20 not local to Philadelphia, but
21 unfortunately it is affecting all across
22 the country really.

23 We have not had any specific
24 discussions with bundling it with other
25 mailings that go out. Obviously, some

1 cases the water bill may go to a
2 different person, then will get the
3 notice. We can certainly look into that,
4 but that's not something we have
5 specifically had any conversations about
6 as of this point.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: All
8 right. I just ask that you look at every
9 possibility because this is a challenge
10 and we like people to be able to get
11 notification sooner than later. The fact
12 that people don't have digital access may
13 be somewhat of a disadvantage because
14 they will get theirs later. We should
15 make every effort to make sure everybody
16 has an opportunity.

17 MR. AROS: Yes, we agree on
18 that.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: So as
20 soon as you can have that conversation
21 with others, the better. And I
22 understand why we have a large
23 reassessment -- and this will be my last
24 question for this round -- because of the
25 prior two years us basically not doing

1 anything based on COVID and a number of
2 other issues and CAMA, I guess.

3 Is there a strategy as we move
4 forward that we will not have these
5 significant increases in assessments in
6 the future, like being able to do
7 assessments every year which was actually
8 a conversation that was had some time
9 ago; is that a likelihood?

10 MR. AROS: Yeah. So it's
11 certainly my commitment that OPA will
12 continue to do regular reassessments and
13 that certainly could be reassessments
14 every year. We will value each year on a
15 year-by-year basis and either market
16 factors of if the market ever becomes
17 flat or operational issues could affect
18 whether a reassessment is completed in
19 one year or not, but our goal is to have
20 the opportunity to not have to have these
21 kind of three-year waits, especially with
22 the kind of market we've seen which
23 exacerbates the changes in value.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Okay.
25 All right. I'm going to turn it over to

1 my colleagues now for this first round.

2 Chair recognizes Councilwoman

3 Gilmore Richardson.

4 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE RICHARDSON:

5 Good morning. Thank you so much, Council

6 President.

7 And thank you, Mr. Aros, for

8 your testimony. I just wanted to start

9 with a couple of questions first around

10 equity in this assessment process. And

11 so, if you could explain to us in detail

12 how you all ensure that the assessment

13 was done equitably and that the brunt of

14 this assessment does not fall on our most

15 disadvantaged constituents.

16 And I bring that up because

17 early on in the process the

18 Administration talked very clearly about

19 equity in this budget. And so, can you

20 talk to us about how you all with this

21 implementation of CAMA, which is a new

22 system for the City of Philadelphia, how

23 you ensured there was equity in this

24 assessment?

25 MR. AROS: Sure. So I think one

1 of the improvements I spoke to earlier in
2 the creation of a dedicated professional
3 sales validation team speaks towards
4 equity for the whole City. In the sense
5 that previous to that, sales were done
6 throughout the Department by a number of
7 individuals handling the accounts. And
8 not that that created an equity problem,
9 but the more people that are doing it, it
10 can be a little hard to ensure certain
11 standards and procedures are met by
12 everybody that's doing it. So that was
13 one of the recommendations that we were
14 given I think in both the Council audit
15 and from our external consultant.

16 And we think that will certainly
17 help improve some of the equity, because
18 the same set of people will be looking at
19 the sales from throughout the City and we
20 expect that if there's any unconscious
21 bias that might be related with either
22 doing sales for properties you're valuing
23 or knowing things about certain
24 neighborhoods, that would eliminate that
25 in the process.

1 As far as -- I'm sorry. Did you
2 have a follow-up to that?

3 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE RICHARDSON:

4 No, no. Go ahead.

5 MR. AROS: As far as the
6 impacts, obviously we're trying to get
7 the assessments as accurate as possible
8 without necessarily looking at the level
9 of change because we want to get the
10 number right. And obviously, there's
11 whatever that may be and then the impact
12 obviously of those do affect the
13 homeowners. As far as some of the
14 measures on the tax side, I can certainly
15 defer to the Director of Finance on
16 speaking to those.

17 But for us, if it was a focus on
18 just getting the number as accurate as
19 possible throughout the City, and I think
20 as I mentioned with the ratio study that
21 was done externally, I think that speaks
22 to the overall work that we've done
23 improvement for the City. But we
24 recognize that obviously some of the
25 neighborhoods that might feel the biggest

1 brunt might not see the largest dollar
2 increase as far as value, but percentage-
3 wise could be up some significance. And
4 I think that's why from the tax side, the
5 Administration has been working on what
6 kind of relief measures could be
7 available to help those constituents.

8 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE RICHARDSON:

9 And I agree, the relief measures will be
10 vitally important. And I look forward to
11 working with the Administration and our
12 leadership and my colleagues on that. I
13 wanted to go back to a recent report from
14 the Philadelphia Fed, and it found that
15 while equity in our property assessments
16 are much improved following AVI, and I
17 have to say I was here for AVI. I was an
18 LA in Council then.

19 But it found, for example, that
20 the improvement in uniformity of
21 assessments was lower in majority Black
22 low-income and lower property-valued
23 neighborhoods. The report even stated
24 that quality of assessment in majority
25 Black neighborhoods even became slightly

1 worse post-AVI. It also found that
2 Philadelphia's PRD, and you know that's
3 the Price-Related Differential, remained
4 above the threshold of 1.03 in 2019.

5 And so, can you provide us with
6 the Coefficient of Dispersion and the PRD
7 for this year's assessments? And if so,
8 do they remain below industry-recommended
9 thresholds? If they do not, what are we
10 doing to address these ongoing issues
11 with our reassessments? And lastly,
12 there have been concerns raised about the
13 office's transparency about methodology
14 of these ratios. And can you make the
15 methodology publicly available to us?

16 MR. AROS: Sure. Just give me a
17 second as I pull those numbers for you.
18 So these were the final numbers from the
19 external audit, which were calculated
20 based on the numbers from the completion
21 of the '23 reassessment. So there were
22 two sets here. I'll use the final market
23 value ratio statistics stat for those
24 that have the -- we passed this document
25 along, but it will be Page 11 on the

1 audit for anybody in Council that does
2 have this.

3 So breaking the single family
4 properties out into row, single and twin
5 properties. Coefficient of Dispersion
6 for rowhomes city-wide 13.4 percent.
7 Price-Related Differential on rowhomes,
8 1.025 --

9 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE RICHARDSON:

10 You said 1.025?

11 MR. AROS: Correct.

12 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE RICHARDSON:

13 So only .005 difference from 2019?

14 MR. AROS: I don't have the 2019
15 number in front of me at this point, but
16 if the 2019 number was .03, I think that
17 math would be correct.

18 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE RICHARDSON:

19 Okay.

20 MR. AROS: So .03 being the
21 higher end of acceptability so we're
22 under within standards on that. Single
23 homes, Coefficient of Dispersion was
24 11.3. Price-Related Differential, 1.026.
25 And twin homes Coefficient of Dispersion

1 10.7; Price-Related Differential, 1.014.
2 And all of those metrics for both the COD
3 and the PRD as mentioned in the report do
4 meet industry standards.

5 We will be doing --

6 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE RICHARDSON:

7 Mr. Aros, and apologies for the
8 interruption, but you would agree that it
9 is very slightly under the 1.03; would
10 you agree with that?

11 MR. AROS: I mean, I would say
12 it's closer to the high end of
13 acceptability, yes, but we did get in the
14 level of acceptability for this
15 reassessment.

16 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE RICHARDSON:

17 And for the record based on this report
18 would you say that as this report states,
19 the quality of assessment in majority
20 Black neighborhoods in Philadelphia even
21 became slightly worse post-AVI? Would
22 you agree with that assessment that was
23 made in the report?

24 MR. AROS: I would not
25 necessarily agree with that, per se.

1 When we -- we have done some internal
2 studies. But obviously when we do the
3 valuations, we're not considering any
4 demographic information as far as who
5 lives in what neighborhoods. We can't
6 consider that. One of the things that
7 the industry has been prevalent over the
8 last two-plus years now is kind of
9 looking into some of these issues of
10 inequities in the assessments along the
11 lines of what you're mentioning so --

12 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE RICHARDSON:

13 And I heard the bell, Mr. Aros. And so,
14 what I'll do is I will come back on the
15 second round to ask the additional
16 questions that I have. My concern is
17 that you talked about in your testimony
18 how communities of color are
19 underrepresented in a lot of the roles
20 that are sort of a tee-up to the roles
21 that are in your department, which will
22 be the individuals working with you all
23 on the implementation of this CAMA
24 system. And we know that minorities,
25 particularly African Americans are

1 underrepresented around appraisals in
2 general. That's all over in real estate.

3 And so, my concern is that as we
4 are moving forward in this process that
5 we have, again going back to this equity
6 term that is being utilized by the
7 Administration, that we have equity in
8 this assessment process. And that's with
9 every single person that lives in the
10 City of Philadelphia because times are
11 tough. We're dealing with inflation.
12 We're dealing with a pandemic that we're
13 on the heels of coming out of this
14 pandemic. And so, many individuals in
15 our City live below the poverty level and
16 are not able to afford such a large
17 increase.

18 And so, I think it's important
19 that we utilize this equity lens in the
20 process, number one. Number two, I'll
21 come back to talk about the deadlines and
22 the opportunity for first review and the
23 opportunity for appeal because saying
24 that you're going to get it to
25 individuals in the mail by September and

1 the deadline is October 3rd for the
2 appeal is just not good enough for me.
3 It's not good enough because we won't
4 have time to get the word out to our
5 constituents.

6 We won't have time to reach
7 every person to help them with this
8 process because everybody is not Internet
9 and digitally savvy and will need
10 assistance for this process. So I look
11 forward to coming back on the second
12 round and respect my colleagues, but know
13 that I'll have additional questions.

14 Thank you, Mr. President.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
16 you, Councilwoman.

17 Chair recognizes Councilwoman
18 Parker.

19 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Good
20 morning, Mr. President. Thank you for
21 your line of questioning and
22 Councilmember Katherine Gilmore
23 Richardson.

24 And the reason why the education
25 was so important to me, and I'm glad we

1 got that hotline number out, is because
2 many homeowners who received the notice
3 of proposed valuation do not understand
4 how OPA arrived at the assessed value for
5 their property. And so, they don't
6 understand the impact that that value is
7 going to have on their next tax bill.

8 The actual tax bills are not
9 sent to homeowners usually until many
10 months after the notices are sent. And
11 as a result, they don't even not just
12 understand the increased assessments, but
13 the urgency of filing a timely appeal.
14 And then when the tax bill arrives, I
15 know you will agree, Mr. Aros, homeowners
16 are faced with tax sort of sticker shock,
17 right. But then they often miss the
18 deadline to appeal their valuation.

19 So with that being said, I
20 believe there is going to be a record
21 number of First Level Reviews. Tell me,
22 if you will, what is OPA's plan to
23 efficiently process the large number of
24 First Level Reviews that will be filed
25 this year. And then second, after the

1 last city-wide reassessment what
2 percentage would you say of newly
3 assessed properties requested a First
4 Level Review? Do you expect similar
5 numbers with the release of the new
6 assessment and how long does the First
7 Level Review take?

8 MR. AROS: Sure. So let me try
9 to go through those one-by-one. Let me
10 know if I miss anything. So we
11 anticipate hopefully hiring some more
12 staff in the coming months. And although
13 some of that staff will not be able to
14 make judgments on the FLR process, we
15 think from at least a clerical and
16 organizational perspective, they can
17 almost jump right in and sort of assist
18 the existing evaluators in organizing,
19 going through and processing the First
20 Level Reviews.

21 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Aros,
22 listen, when you say hire some more
23 staff, can you give me an approximate
24 number that you're thinking that you will
25 need to be able to handle the capacity?

1 MR. AROS: So in our budget
2 we're proposing hiring 15 additional
3 Evaluator 1s, 3 Management Trainees and
4 some additional clerical staff. That
5 would be not including anybody that is
6 either planning or unexpectedly retires
7 over the next few months. So that's what
8 we're budgeted for and we would try to
9 fill all those slots in the coming
10 months, if possible.

11 One of the things that the
12 Council audit pointed out that they
13 thought worked pretty well was the FLR
14 process. But they said if anything, it
15 was perhaps a little slow so we've been
16 kind of thinking about that over the last
17 few years so --

18 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: How long
19 does it take?

20 MR. AROS: For the First Level
21 Review process?

22 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Yes.

23 MR. AROS: It depends on really
24 almost the property-by-property basis.
25 If an evaluator has 10 requests, they

1 usually get through those pretty quick.

2 In some neighborhoods that --

3 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: So I just
4 want to get this straight for the record,
5 is there an average amount of time when
6 it works accurately, what's the timeline
7 for that? When it works the way it's
8 intended to, how long does a First Level
9 Review take?

10 MR. AROS: I don't have a number
11 off the top of my head, but we can
12 certainly provide one to the Chair.

13 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Okay.
14 Based on the last time we assessed
15 properties, we did the city-wide
16 reassessment, how many properties
17 requested a First Level Review, how many?

18 MR. AROS: So I'll give you two
19 numbers. For 2019 we had approximately
20 22,000 FLR requests I believe. For 2020
21 which was a trending year, that number
22 dropped in half. That was I believe
23 about 11,000 requests.

24 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: 11,000.
25 Okay. And I also want to get this right

1 for the benefit of our residents. From
2 OPA's website, it appears that the review
3 request has to be mailed; is that
4 accurate?

5 MR. AROS: The request for a
6 First Level Review, it's more efficient
7 if folks mail it. But once the forms are
8 available, they do have the opportunity
9 to drop it off at the office. We bring
10 them out -- once they're available, which
11 they won't be available closer to mailing
12 time, we bring them to community events
13 so folks can have a blank form there and
14 fill out. And we would certainly provide
15 blank forms for anybody such as Council
16 offices that wants to have some available
17 to help constituents. The --

18 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: So again
19 just for the record, the request it
20 either has to be mailed or they can hand
21 deliver it in. Right now we don't have a
22 vehicle available online for residents to
23 file. I just want to make sure I'm
24 clear.

25 MR. AROS: No, there is no

1 electronic filing for that.

2 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Okay. All

3 right. I just wanted to get that in. I

4 also wanted to -- let me see here. Okay.

5 I'm happy that it's up. We just had

6 somebody to check. Because if we were

7 following the letter of the law, I want

8 to just note for the record that the

9 Philadelphia Code, and this is Section

10 2-305(u), it requires OPA to make

11 underlying supporting data, the

12 documentation, the methodology and any

13 other information that is used to certify

14 each property assessment publicly

15 available by May 1st. And that

16 information is up now, right, because

17 we --

18 MR. AROS: No. So what's up

19 right now is the individual property

20 values. The documentation you're

21 speaking about and speaks to the previous

22 question that Councilmember Gilmore

23 Richardson had. We are in the process

24 now of compiling that information and we

25 will be publishing that. But since the

1 reassessment did not finish up until May
2 1st, that documentation is not posted as
3 of yet. We need to in the next few weeks
4 compile all that so we can have that out
5 there. And that will be out before folks
6 get their physical notices in the mail.

7 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Now, just
8 for the record and we get it, again it
9 was COVID. We understand why we didn't
10 conduct these assessments. And I know
11 along with all of my colleagues we
12 partner with you all at our town hall
13 meetings and I like to get as much
14 information out as we possibly can. But
15 what I want to note for the record is
16 that there's been many complaints by
17 homeowners that their homes were
18 overvalued in the assessment.

19 And again, I want to reiterate
20 that was a problem as it related to a
21 lack of uniformity. And when you all
22 come, because you know I'm going to have
23 you out, the staff out at the meeting
24 that I'm hosting, I want us to be
25 prepared to talk about the uniformity

1 associated with the assessment criteria,
2 what you've done over the past three
3 years to address those recommendations,
4 the assessment modeling, all of that be
5 made public and right now what's being
6 done to increase the transparency of this
7 whole process. And I will come back on
8 the second round.

9 Thank you so much,

10 Mr. President.

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
12 you, Councilwoman.

13 Chair recognizes Councilman
14 Jones.

15 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,
16 Mr. President.

17 Probably during this budget
18 process, I think I can say without
19 successful contradiction that at this
20 moment in time you're the most hated
21 member of the Administration for a period
22 of time. Taxes are never popular so I
23 get it, and thank you for your service to
24 do it. I want to say that whenever
25 called upon, your office has gone out to

1 the community and actually walked the
2 streets, looked at valuations so I am
3 satisfied with the level of service,
4 one-on-one, community group-by-community
5 group that you do, so I want to thank you
6 for that.

7 A couple of questions: What is
8 the amount of taxable properties, real
9 estate taxes in the City of Philadelphia?
10 What is the value of it? I remember when
11 you first started what that number was.
12 What is it today?

13 MR. AROS: So I can give you the
14 preliminary numbers which we've passed
15 along to Council last week. City-wide
16 overall preliminary market value, and
17 this was taken towards the end but not at
18 the completion of the reassessment so
19 these numbers will change slightly, but
20 we'll have those -- we'll have that
21 information to Council hopefully later
22 this week. Total market value for the
23 City approximately \$203.8 billion.

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: So that's up,
25 Mr. President, from 99 billion when we

1 first started this process?

2 Mr. President; is that about right?

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Yes,

4 sir.

5 COUNCILMAN JONES: Do you

6 remember that?

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Yes,

8 sir. That sounds like the ballpark that

9 we addressed earlier, yes, sir.

10 COUNCILMAN JONES: So we are

11 literally doubled in the amount of value

12 in the City of Philadelphia. My second

13 question --

14 MR. DUBOW: One point of

15 clarification. I think Mr. Aros answered

16 a slightly different question for you

17 guys. You asked the taxable value, and I

18 think he gave you taxable and exempt.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Yeah.

20 MR. AROS: I apologize, yes.

21 Let me --

22 MR. DUBOW: I believe the

23 taxable is --

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: I

25 believe that's all the universities and

1 everything else which aren't taxable.

2 MR. AROS: I don't have that
3 number rolled up right in front of me,
4 but we will certainly get that as quickly
5 as possible.

6 MR. DUBOW: It's around 153
7 billion.

8 COUNCILMAN JONES: So we're
9 maybe 50 percent higher than we were when
10 we first started along this process. And
11 is that due to real sales, comparable
12 sales and things like that that you're
13 basing that on?

14 MR. AROS: The current value as
15 compared to that first number, the 99
16 million?

17 COUNCILMAN JONES: Yes.

18 MR. AROS: So that's based on
19 changes in the market from when this
20 process first started so comparable
21 sales, also income information for
22 income-generating properties, what kind
23 of rents and income those properties are
24 bringing in, data corrections and
25 updates, so as we fix and correct data

1 throughout the years. And some property,
2 new construction goes up, those sort of
3 things, that all adds value to that total
4 number there. So there's a couple of
5 different things rolled in there.

6 But the number is primarily
7 obviously generated by sales of
8 comparable properties and for those
9 income or specialty properties, the
10 income they generate or the cost of
11 construction for properties.

12 COUNCILMAN JONES: So I say that
13 to say that it would have been preferable
14 that we had this information maybe a
15 week, two weeks ago so we could do our
16 bellwether testing in neighborhoods
17 within our respective parts of the City
18 and in particular parts of our District.
19 But just on a quick cursory review, there
20 are places that I got the most amount of
21 complaints, the upper Wissahickon area
22 where a lot of notable Commissioners live
23 in the City of Philadelphia.

24 The values are all over the
25 place. And I know the neighborhood well

1 enough to know that a lot of them are
2 single ranch-style homes. I cannot
3 understand the variance in some of those
4 properties. If you look at that, that's
5 one neighborhood. The second
6 neighborhood is Wynnefield, one that is
7 near and dear to Member Gilmore. And in
8 some of those areas like on Wyndale
9 Avenue, the property values on the same
10 block are so different that I cannot
11 understand having walked those blocks how
12 they can be that different.

13 So to that extent, there is not
14 a uniformity that I can understand that
15 your appraisers are putting on certain
16 properties. And I know if you go to a
17 neighborhood such as Germantown where
18 each block is eclectic, you can walk on
19 one block in Germantown and have
20 compacted rowhouses and in another part
21 of Germantown have single Victorian
22 homes. How do you then in those kinds of
23 close proximity take account the
24 differential in value?

25 On other blocks in Overbrook

1 Park, you have homes located in
2 industrial, not industrial, but school
3 areas that those properties may have
4 different valuation. But how do you then
5 drill down to make sure you're not
6 throwing the baby out with the bath water
7 by way of values? When I say to you that
8 in certain parts of my District just on
9 the random sampling I've done, those
10 increases are moderate, \$53 a year is not
11 going to make or break people.

12 But when you start talking about
13 50 percent increases and I'm looking at
14 them, now I won't say they're exact
15 blocks, but almost since '19 closing in
16 on 80 percent increases, I cannot
17 understand how the real estate market has
18 varied that much. Redfin and other
19 places don't suggest that type of
20 increase. So my final part of that is
21 equity. My colleagues have talked about
22 equity in neighborhoods and things like
23 that, appraisals, how they can change the
24 trajectory of entire families and
25 communities based on their fairness or

1 discriminatory aspects.

2 Finally, how much money have you
3 put aside, we usually do about 30 million
4 for those kinds of -- how much have we
5 put aside for those challenges?

6 MR. AROS: So let me go back to
7 some of the points you made. Obviously,
8 we're getting some of our data to Council
9 as quickly as possible, and we submitted
10 some initial data last week and we expect
11 to hopefully have some more this week.
12 And traditionally, we've met with the
13 Council folks that wanted to go through
14 some of their own districts individually.
15 They've been in person before.

16 I don't know if we would be able
17 to accommodate in person, but we are
18 absolutely open to having those kinds of
19 meetings as we had traditionally had to
20 kind of walk through what Council folks
21 are seeing with their Districts and walk
22 them through the process and any concerns
23 they may have seen that jump up.

24 As far as variance between the
25 property type in the neighborhood, when

1 we look at sales of singles versus
2 rowhomes, we try to group those in their
3 own units so that way we're comparing
4 rowhomes to rowhomes, single Victorians
5 as you mentioned to those individual
6 properties and we have -- the City's
7 drawn up into about 570 market areas. So
8 in some cases while we don't look at
9 school catchment districts for instance,
10 you mentioned schools, specifically but
11 if we can see there's an influence in a
12 certain geographical area that causes
13 prices to separate even across the street
14 or within a neighborhood, we try to group
15 those properties together as best as we
16 can.

17 And as far as the numbers you
18 mentioned at the end, I think that's more
19 of a tax policy issue so I'll defer to
20 Mr. Dubow.

21 MR. DUBOW: Yeah. I think that
22 question was what we built in for appeal
23 losses; is that correct?

24 COUNCILMAN JONES: Yeah.

25 MR. DUBOW: So we built in a

1 substantial increase, but I'll have to
2 get back to you with the exact number,
3 but we are assuming that it's a big loss.

4 COUNCILMAN JONES: All right.

5 Two things, know that I'm going to
6 request a callback as we start to
7 solidify these numbers to get a better
8 handle on it. You know, the same thing
9 that makes you laugh makes you cry.
10 Property value is going up on one end.
11 It's a good thing when you start to look
12 at your investment in a home, whether
13 it's your personal home or other homes
14 that you might find as investments, but
15 it's the same thing that will make you
16 cry if you live in Wynnefield, you're a
17 retiree on a fixed income and you have
18 this big property and now you want to ask
19 the City to do Airbnb, which I'm pretty
20 much not so much for.

21 But if you're telling me that
22 because of the fixed cost of your income
23 and cost to have that big house, I may
24 have to consider some of those cases
25 because they have to pay the piper, the

1 tax man. And so, I'm looking forward to
2 more information and drill down into
3 these 500-plus marketplaces to make sure
4 it is equitable.

5 Thank you, Mr. President.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
7 you, Councilman.

8 Chair recognizes Councilman
9 Domb.

10 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Thank you,
11 Council President. Good morning.

12 And good morning, Director Aros.

13 MR. AROS: Good morning.

14 COUNCILMAN DOMB: I think you
15 have a tough job. But I think I view
16 your job as just trying to report the
17 facts, and the Administration and Council
18 have to deal with those facts and how we
19 can help our residents afford these
20 increases.

21 But I think as Council President
22 mentioned, a lot of this angst is coming
23 from the fact that we haven't done much
24 in the last three years in the way of
25 doing our assessments and this is a huge

1 catch-up. I think it really will hurt
2 many of the people that are on fixed
3 incomes, senior citizens, lower income
4 and we have to figure out how to help
5 them as best we can and make sure they
6 don't lose their home.

7 So having said all that, my
8 question is from the increases which
9 looks like about 31 percent of
10 residential over this time period, how
11 much of the increases in assessments are
12 from actual appreciation or correcting
13 assessments that weren't accurate back in
14 2019 that we're fixing now with the CAMA
15 system? Any idea of that percentage of
16 what was pre-appreciation versus what was
17 fixed based on incorrect assessments of
18 in 2019?

19 MR. AROS: Yeah. We don't have
20 an exact break-out of that. That would
21 be quite hard to calculate to be honest.
22 It's a combination of a couple of things
23 which you mentioned and which I sort of
24 spoke to with Councilmember Jones. I can
25 say that if you look at the additional

1 years of sales that we added in as part
2 of this analysis and then look at, you
3 know, I studied maybe five or six
4 independent studies between average sale
5 price, medium sale price throughout the
6 City, that 31 percent number is pretty
7 much in line with most independent
8 analysis.

9 Now, again we don't do exactly
10 the way they do it, but there is some
11 external verification in general of that
12 number we certainly think. So it's the
13 last two years in some cases, some
14 external experts and economists have had
15 double digit growth city-wide and 20-plus
16 percent growth in certain neighborhoods
17 in the City in one particular year, which
18 is unprecedented in many ways.

19 And even when in 2018 into early
20 2019 I was reading a HUD report that
21 mentioned that City growth was slowing
22 down and their overall estimate at that
23 point was 7 percent, which was slowing
24 down at that point. And then the two
25 years after that, supply was down but

1 demand was strong enough that the values
2 really went higher in individual years.
3 And I can remember seeing it in the last
4 decade certainly. So that number is
5 reflective I think quite close to what
6 (inaudible) --

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: All
8 right. Mr. Aros, you froze for a moment.
9 Could you I guess repeat the last part of
10 your response.

11 MR. AROS: Last part was
12 essentially I believe saying the
13 different items that Councilmember Domb
14 mentioned kind of rolled into it. But
15 just looking at an appreciation, our
16 number is fairly close to what some
17 external analysis has said about the
18 market over the last few years.

19 COUNCILMAN DOMB: So let me ask
20 this question, Director Aros, because I
21 was looking at the numbers and it looks
22 to me we have four Council Districts that
23 overall have seen 25 percent or greater
24 increases in assessments and we have four
25 that are below 20. But when you look at

1 the four below 20, three of them at least
2 have a lot of commercial real estate in
3 there so I think it's blended together
4 that lowers the residential percentage.

5 But in Councilmember Sanchez and
6 Councilmember Bass's Districts, the
7 increases seem really strong including
8 Councilmember Parker's, they're over 30
9 percent. I think Parker was 30 overall
10 and Councilmember Bass was 32 and
11 Councilmember Sanchez was 42 or 43. Has
12 that in three years gone up that much
13 money in those neighborhoods?

14 MR. AROS: So one other part of
15 the process that would have been a little
16 different from where we last did our
17 reassessments in '19 and '20 would be
18 that we as I've mentioned earlier the
19 500, almost 600 geographic market areas
20 that we have throughout the City, so we
21 look at those with every reassessment and
22 we drew up new zones that included one
23 new zone was primarily Kensington,
24 Fishtown areas, that space, because that
25 was really reacting different than

1 anything else in those zones that we
2 previously had. And also, we're a
3 dedicated zone for Graduate Hospital.

4 So there could have been some
5 change where in the larger group those
6 values had been depressed a little bit
7 and since that, they were being grouped
8 with other homes that weren't alike and
9 those sale prices were moving them down a
10 little bit by moving into their own sort
11 of variant so that way they act the same
12 and not like some of the other
13 neighborhoods that perhaps are not
14 developing at the same rate, if at all at
15 the moment. That can account for some of
16 the change as well.

17 But I will say that not for
18 residential properties exactly, but the
19 number I saw a few years ago prior to the
20 pandemic, I think Kensington, Fishtown
21 was one of the top 10 neighborhoods in
22 the country that one of the magazines
23 wrote as far as land appreciation in a
24 year or two's worth of time.

25 So when you're looking at

1 percentage depending on where the values
2 are starting, if your value is starting a
3 little lower, it's easier to get 40
4 percent appreciation than if you're \$1
5 million property, let's say. Doesn't
6 mean the impact is any less significant.
7 But we have seen on a national level
8 Philadelphia reported out as having
9 neighborhoods that are among the hottest
10 in the country as of -- and this was
11 again prior to the pandemic, but
12 definitely some rapidly changing markets
13 in certain sectors of the City.

14 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Okay. Thank
15 you. One other question: The office
16 market, we're still not seeing the office
17 workers return and it's now May. I don't
18 know what the number is, but maybe we're
19 at 50 or 60 percent of the office workers
20 optimistically back in their offices.
21 Are we concerned about appeals of office
22 buildings, because when you have the
23 vacancies in office space, it devalues
24 the building immediately.

25 And my question is, A, are we

1 concerned and, B, have we had a set-aside
2 for potential appeals from that office
3 market?

4 MR. AROS: You know, I don't
5 know if concern is the word I would use.
6 But we always look at that because we
7 obviously don't get the exact rent rolls
8 year over year, so there could be
9 individual change within the building
10 that we just don't have until the appeal
11 process when that comes in. We did have
12 overall office go up some. That probably
13 would reflect some catching up in value
14 from the last reassessment and then any
15 changes over the couple of years since we
16 did the last one.

17 Certainly, I think that the lack
18 of folks coming back to the office could
19 be a long-term concern, but a lot of
20 those buildings do have long-term leases
21 so if they haven't stopped seeing that
22 income as of yet we wouldn't see the
23 immediate impact on that, but those
24 buildings a lot of times will appeal most
25 of the time because they have the funds

1 to be able to put a case on and have law
2 firms on retainer as-needed.

3 So we haven't built into any of
4 our numbers anticipated reduction in
5 assessments for the assessment portion of
6 it, but we recognize that we're
7 projecting to January 1, 2023, and in any
8 sector of the market there's a lot of
9 things that could change in the next
10 seven months or so.

11 COUNCILMAN DOMB: All right.
12 Thank you very much, Director Aros.

13 Thank you, Council President.
14 Thank you.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
16 you, Councilman.

17 Chair recognizes Councilman Oh.

18 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
19 much, Council President.

20 Good morning, Director.

21 MR. AROS: Good morning.

22 COUNCILMAN OH: Council did an
23 independent audit and the methodology of
24 OPA was determined to be below industry
25 standard, and then you are reporting that

1 the IAAO issued some type of report.

2 What report is it that said the

3 methodology meets industry standard?

4 MR. AROS: Sure. So in Fiscal

5 Year '22, we commissioned -- we put an

6 RFP out for an external audit. IAAO

7 responded and was awarded the contract.

8 So they looked at a number of things in

9 the office, including processes and

10 procedures, staffing levels, integration

11 with the new CAMA environment, and we

12 also had them do a ratio study which it

13 just recently produced numbers from the

14 '23 reassessment.

15 That was sent over to Council

16 last week. We just got that in last

17 week, so I know some folks over there may

18 not have gotten it yet. We can provide

19 that to anybody that hasn't seen it yet.

20 But the IAAO as the primary publisher,

21 educator and leader of industry standards

22 and mass appraisal and administration,

23 they're the ones that set the guidelines

24 that if anybody is doing the study,

25 they're using this organization's

1 standards and methodology to make a
2 determination as to whether certain
3 metrics meet industry standards or not.

4 So we were able to bring them in
5 and they did an independent ratio study,
6 several different ratio studies similar
7 to what was done in the Council audit.

8 And that's what I speak to specifically
9 when I say that certain performance
10 metrics, the ones that they reviewed,
11 they say that we do meet industry
12 standards based on the most recent
13 assessment that we just finished.

14 COUNCILMAN OH: Okay. I haven't
15 seen that. I would like to see that and
16 I have a lot of concerns about this
17 entire process ever since I got elected
18 for the last 10 years. The assessment
19 and the property tax and all the
20 disastrous things that occur,
21 particularly the fact that things are so
22 inconsistent. One house right next the
23 other exactly the same, such great
24 differences. And I find that so very
25 troubling.

1 When a property is assessed,
2 particularly a structure, a structure on
3 the real estate, you're looking at actual
4 value which is not necessarily the sales
5 price or anything like that, but you come
6 up with a value and that value is in many
7 cases very high. You're now saying that
8 city-wide there's going to be a 31
9 percent increase in the assessed value of
10 the structures.

11 But what I never hear is that in
12 the process there is taken into
13 consideration that the prices are
14 artificially high. In other words, a
15 10-year tax abatement means that someone
16 is willing to purchase a structure and
17 put a lot of money into it and then that
18 entity, the price or assessed value is
19 higher because the taxes are offset for
20 10 years, but the buildings next to them,
21 the houses next to them end up getting a
22 very high assessment, although nothing
23 has happened with them. It just happened
24 to be in the same geographic area.

25 Do you take those programs into

1 consideration when you come up with the
2 assessed value because I don't think that
3 you do?

4 MR. AROS: Yeah. So there is no
5 specific variable in our modeling process
6 that says sell a property that has
7 abatement or does not, but it is
8 accounted for in another way. So we have
9 condition codes, condition factors on
10 every property that we model. So
11 properties that are newer construction
12 which are the ones that again they may or
13 may not have abatement, but most new
14 construction in the City that's 10 years
15 old or newer does have an abatement.

16 There's very few that for some
17 reason don't have that. Those sales are
18 in the same model, but those sales are
19 not used to generate the value of, say,
20 an average condition property which may
21 not have been updated or renovated in 20
22 or 25 years or a property that maybe is
23 50 years really before any major upgrades
24 and what we would call as below-average
25 condition. Meaning that if somebody else

1 were to move in, they probably would want
2 to upgrade most of everything in there,
3 but it's a livable property.

4 When we do our sales analysis,
5 sales of the properties and conditions
6 that I mentioned are used as a factor to
7 determine those values and what people
8 are paying for those properties that are
9 average or below average condition is
10 what's used to generate those values.

11 The sale price of a brand new
12 construction whether it's abated or not,
13 it is not a factor we take out of that or
14 apply it to other homes in the
15 neighborhood that are not new
16 construction, similar for properties that
17 are renovated. That one blends a little
18 more because we come across a fair number
19 of unpermanent renovations throughout the
20 City. And if you don't take out a
21 permit, you can't have an abatement.

22 So there are renovations where
23 we would code it as a renovated property
24 that may get grouped in with abated
25 properties because somebody did not go

1 through the proper procedures to be able
2 to apply for the abatement in the first
3 place. But because we have seven
4 different condition codes, those
5 properties that have the abatements are
6 sort of in their own groups and they're
7 not, those sales are not used to extract
8 a price for anything in separate
9 condition codes.

10 COUNCILMAN OH: I always point
11 out University of Penn because I think
12 that's a great example of this problem.
13 There's a tax abatement, plus if you work
14 for University of Penn and you purchase
15 within a certain catchment area, they
16 assist you, they give you assistance in
17 purchasing a home. And on top of that,
18 if you can try to get your child into
19 Penn Alexander or any of the other
20 charter schools that Penn or Drexel is
21 identifying as a public school entity
22 that they're going to invest in, those
23 are all calculated into why you would pay
24 more than you should for a house.

25 And the people who do those

1 calculations are pretty smart and they're
2 usually well-educated and they have a
3 pretty good income, but they live in a
4 neighborhood surrounded by people who
5 have less education, less income and many
6 of whom have been living in those
7 neighborhoods for such a very long time,
8 this type of thing pushes them out of the
9 neighborhood.

10 And again, if they could get the
11 money for their houses, okay. But
12 they're not going to get the money for
13 their houses because they're overassessed
14 and they are going to be subject to
15 sheriff's sale and other things. And I
16 have such a problem with this entire
17 process in this City.

18 There are things about
19 Philadelphia, particularly being a city
20 of neighborhoods, being a city that has
21 such old infrastructure and where, yes,
22 there are homes that are really worth
23 that much and there are homes that are
24 underappreciated and people with an
25 astute eye will pay more for that. But

1 there seems to be a very large geographic
2 area where the population does not have
3 the money. They don't have the ability.
4 The homes when we look at them, they're
5 not worth anything like they are assessed
6 to be.

7 And I think many of the
8 Councilmembers, and particularly District
9 Councilmembers, have an inventory of
10 contradictions and discrepancies. And
11 myself being an At-large Councilperson, I
12 look at them as well. The appeal process
13 is so problematic when so many people
14 have to appeal these inconsistencies of
15 just shockingly different values on
16 identical properties, and I'm not sure
17 what else could be done. But I do think
18 at the end of the day there is something
19 that Council has to do about this
20 situation. But thank you very much.
21 Thank you.

22 Thank you, Council President.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
24 you, Councilman. And there will be
25 something that this Council will do about

1 this situation, trust me. Thank you,
2 Councilman Oh.

3 Chair recognizes Councilwoman
4 Bass.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Good
6 morning. Thank you.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
8 You're welcome.

9 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: And I just
10 really want to follow up on Councilman
11 Oh's line of questioning because -- and
12 I'll tell you a really quick story that
13 I've told before, but I remember when I
14 purchased my first home in Mount Airy, it
15 was a rowhome and it's a great little
16 block. And I remember the neighbor, a
17 neighbor coming over who has long since
18 passed in case anybody asks, but who has
19 long since passed came over and said to
20 me, oh, you know, Cindy, you really
21 missed it, we had a guy who worked on
22 this block who worked for the BRT or OPA
23 and he really made sure that our values
24 stayed low so our taxes never went up.
25 And it was kind of like a situation of

1 who you knew, and that was how taxes were
2 assessed in the City of Philadelphia
3 seemingly for a very long ago, which came
4 out really too long ago.

5 And so, we had the sort of
6 historic systemic problem in the City of
7 Philadelphia when it comes to real estate
8 taxes and assessments and fairness. And
9 I don't think that anybody would disagree
10 with that. And I think you would
11 probably -- would you agree with that as
12 well?

13 MR. AROS: Oh, sure. Going
14 back -- I've been here almost 20 years
15 and I think the last decade has been,
16 approximately the last decade has been
17 significantly different than that first
18 part that I was here. Absolutely.

19 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Absolutely,
20 I would agree. I would agree completely.
21 So let me just go into a couple of
22 questions because I have a great amount
23 of concern. And as Councilman Oh said,
24 you have some properties where folks
25 really don't have the means to maintain

1 their property and in a lot of those
2 neighborhoods, those neighborhoods are
3 gentrifying now.

4 And so, what that means is that
5 there is a large number of folks
6 throughout the City who are being
7 displaced. And they're being displaced
8 because you have landlords who are in
9 some cases, not all cases, but in some
10 cases who are raising rent to take
11 advantage of a very robust market, and
12 then you have folks who are unable to
13 maintain their properties and housing
14 values are going up, assessments are
15 going up. And in the 8th District,
16 assessments seem to be going at a very
17 quick pace in terms of just the value
18 really skyrocketing is the way I would
19 describe it.

20 So I have a few specific
21 questions and I'm probably going to have
22 to come back on Round 2 to get all of my
23 questions in. So the first is I wanted
24 to know if you would go back over that
25 hotline number and say it if you could

1 again, and throughout your conversation
2 maybe if there's a way to post it.

3 So one of the things that I
4 noticed is you mentioned the hotline
5 number. I wasn't really familiar with
6 it. I don't know how many people really
7 are familiar with it. And I think that
8 this is very important information
9 because as it was mentioned early on, a
10 lot of people still don't have access,
11 Internet access to be able to just go
12 online and look this information up. So
13 if you would, could you give us that
14 number again?

15 MR. AROS: Sure. That number is
16 215-686-9200. And folks that may not
17 have digital access can call that number
18 and get the preliminary posted 2023
19 market value for their properties. And
20 that number has traditionally been on the
21 assessment notices and documentation that
22 has gone out with the assessment. If
23 folks have called what was known as the
24 Homestead hotline, they may have used
25 that number before. So it serves a

1 couple of different purposes. But today
2 obviously I think most folks will be
3 looking for the preliminary value that
4 just got posted.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. All
6 right. Thank you very much. And I also
7 want to ask you just around notification
8 again. How are you going about it? If
9 you could highlight that again, how you
10 are notifying communities, particularly
11 underserved communities about what's
12 happening?

13 I noticed that you said that
14 your office is available, which suggests
15 that if we host something that you'll
16 come out, you'll present, you'll inform
17 the community which we always do
18 appreciate. But I really would like to
19 see because of the importance of the work
20 that you do, I would really like to see
21 something that's proactive on your part
22 beyond what is already happening to touch
23 the community and touch folks, because
24 just to be clear the assessment changes,
25 the resulting tax changes are going to

1 have some people saying I can't afford to
2 live here anymore.

3 And so, this is really important
4 that you're touching as many people as
5 possible to let them know what may be
6 coming down the pike so that they can
7 prepare to file their appeal or do
8 whatever is necessary to hold onto their
9 homes.

10 MR. AROS: Sure. So as I
11 mentioned earlier, I think we have good
12 working relationships with I think most
13 of the Council offices --

14 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Yes.

15 MR. AROS: -- you know, we have
16 several meetings on the books already for
17 Majority Leader Parker's District. She's
18 every year, pretty much we have folks out
19 there. And we have existing
20 relationships with a number of the RCOs
21 where every time there's a reassessment,
22 they have us come out.

23 In addition to what we typically
24 send in the mail, post online, the
25 Mayor's digital team has put additional

1 digital-centered information out there
2 between social media, blog posts, but
3 obviously understanding that a lot of
4 folks may not really be making use of
5 those kind of avenues.

6 In our meetings with the AVI
7 Committee, Council's AVI Monitoring
8 Committee, we said we're happy to
9 coordinate with any avenues that Council
10 thinks that we are perhaps not making use
11 of. And there's some additional funding
12 being put aside for overall outreach
13 which I would defer to Mr. Dubow if he's
14 available to say some more about that.

15 MR. DUBOW: Sure. One of the
16 things that we assumed that we want to be
17 doing additional outreach over the next
18 couple of months and the money that we
19 set aside, we put aside money for
20 outreach, including money to let us work
21 with each Councilmember so we have funds
22 available for that too. So we are eager
23 to work with everyone on that outreach.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. Like
25 I said, I'm really glad to hear that

1 you're willing to work with all of us on
2 outreach efforts and try to reach our
3 constituencies. But I think that it's
4 important that there's a gameplan that
5 inclu -- that's really driven by OPA that
6 really is a little more independent of
7 what we're doing, of what we may be
8 doing.

9 Some members may be doing a lot
10 of activities around this. Some may not
11 be doing as much, but just to ensure that
12 there is that contact, that there's that
13 touch in every single district I think is
14 just very important. We're certainly
15 going to be having you guys out and
16 hosting events. And particularly now
17 that the summer is here, we have events
18 almost every single night so we'll be
19 expecting you all to be there on a
20 regular basis.

21 But beyond that, how are we
22 going to make sure that you all are
23 connecting because a lot of the folks who
24 will be most negatively affected are
25 going to be Black and Brown families,

1 Black and Brown folks often living in
2 neighborhoods that are gentrifying. But
3 you're also going to have a significant
4 effect on people who are not minority and
5 who are middle income and who are barely
6 hanging on.

7 So the idea that you can sort of
8 hook onto a couple of events here and
9 hook onto a few events here, I would just
10 really like to see something from you
11 guys that says we're going to do this, we
12 include Councilmembers but it's driven by
13 OPA. So I think that that's really
14 important, particularly in light of the
15 impact that we know it's going to have
16 and particularly in light of the fact
17 that we know that it's going to be a lot
18 of people who are going to be negatively
19 impacted, and there's no doubt about
20 this. So I'll come back around for the
21 second round of questions.

22 Thank you, Mr. President.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
24 you, Councilwoman.

25 Chair recognizes Councilwoman

1 Quinones-Sanchez.

2 COUNCILWOMAN QUINONES-SANCHEZ:

3 Good morning. Good morning folks.

4 Director, I want to go to a
5 particular issue in light of some of the
6 conversation that's been happening around
7 general market areas and how you
8 established them in the City. In May of
9 2017, I introduced a bill that passed in
10 2019, Bill 170467. The bill specifically
11 went to Title 2 around the City County
12 consolidation, and it required that OPA
13 promulgate regulations and standards and
14 practices to set standards around
15 something that you talked about and I
16 think you were talking with Councilmember
17 Gilmore Richardson, that we wanted to
18 make sure that your common level ratio
19 and your predetermined ratio as you've
20 been talking about it had a Coefficient
21 of Dispersion, the COD, that did not take
22 in -- Councilman Oh alluded to this --
23 did not overinflate artificial value
24 based on abated properties.

25 And I would argue that this is

1 the case in Norris Square and Kensington.

2 So clarify for me, is Fishtown and

3 Kensington together or are their own

4 separate areas?

5 MR. AROS: I don't know if those

6 two groups at large are completely in the

7 same area, but that general area was

8 broken out from some of the surrounding

9 zones around it because those markets as

10 you well know is kind of behaving

11 differently than a lot of stuff on the

12 periphery, so we didn't want those to

13 impact one way or another some of the

14 other neighborhoods that were not seeing

15 the same sort of market --

16 COUNCILWOMAN QUINONES-SANCHEZ:

17 It is not apples to apples. Putting

18 Kensington in the Fishtown general area

19 is not fair, all right. So speak to me

20 how we're going to make sure -- as I look

21 at the some of the values, the increase

22 of 40 plus percent in my District is

23 extremely problematic because for

24 instance in Norris Square because where

25 the average long-term resident's income

1 is about \$20,000, as you can imagine
2 these values of these abated properties
3 at \$600,000 coming in, how are you making
4 sure and explain it to us because I want
5 people to understand, how do you take a
6 block where you have \$400,000, \$500,000
7 \$600,000 abated properties and how do you
8 add that value or subtract that value in
9 your GMA to determine what the level is?

10 MR. AROS: Right. So when we're
11 talking about \$400,000, \$500,000 or
12 \$600,000, whatever new construction
13 homes, as we go through the modeling
14 process what are homes that are new
15 construction selling for and values them
16 appropriately based on sales of other new
17 construction homes, if a property is
18 built 1925 in what we would say is
19 average condition, sales of those
20 properties are compared with each other
21 to see what people are paying, what kind
22 of prices folks are paying for those
23 particular properties, and then they're
24 valued accordingly.

25 So there isn't a specific

1 adjustment from the new construction
2 homes that is applied or deducted, added,
3 whatever to homes that are at this point
4 about 100 years old or give or take 25
5 years either way, but those homes are
6 valued separately of the sales. I would
7 say the new construction are valued using
8 sales of new construction. Sales of
9 older properties are valued using sales
10 of older properties. So it's what
11 somebody's willing to pay for that, not
12 what they're willing to pay for the new
13 construction up the street or around the
14 corner or whatever, because we have a lot
15 of infill construction and some blocks
16 themselves are essentially all new
17 construction. So we differentiate
18 between year built and the condition of
19 the properties when we do the sales
20 analysis.

21 COUNCILWOMAN QUINONES-SANCHEZ:
22 So will people be able to see that? For
23 instance, one of the problems in the
24 initial assessment going back to 2019 was
25 that when you create these market areas

1 then it becomes an average of bulk value.
2 How are you making sure that that average
3 bulk value which is inflated or
4 unrealized value of abatement is not
5 getting smoothed over to the long-term
6 resident next door? What is the formula
7 that you use?

8 MR. AROS: So the overall
9 modeling process we'll be posting as part
10 of the documentation that I mentioned, a
11 little more detail about that which can
12 get very detailed. But in general,
13 there's no smoothing from an abatement to
14 an average condition property. It's what
15 are --

16 COUNCILWOMAN QUINONES-SANCHEZ:
17 But don't you have --

18 MR. AROS: -- folks --

19 COUNCILWOMAN QUINONES-SANCHEZ:
20 -- a general area that you determine a
21 value? When you've lumped some together,
22 right, in gentrifying areas where you
23 lump them together, how are you keeping
24 them apart if you're saying that the area
25 value, your GMA is based on bulk? How

1 are you making sure that it is
2 individualized?

3 MR. AROS: So the GMA is part of
4 the larger zone. We have 16 zones
5 throughout the City for residential where
6 we do models because we couldn't do 570
7 models. A lot of times there's not
8 enough sales in an individual area that
9 would allow us to get any sort of
10 determination or delineation of
11 separation of values there.

12 So as I've mentioned, the
13 primary factors when you're talking about
14 the abatements would be the year the
15 property is built and the condition we
16 have it in. But also, newer properties
17 for the most part is broad-brush, but
18 they tend to be larger in some of the
19 older neighborhoods. So three-story
20 properties are not grouped with two-story
21 properties, for instance. And we talk
22 about the actual square footage. There
23 are different buckets for larger
24 properties that are new construction that
25 are three-story versus two-story older

1 rowhome.

2 Again, we're trying to very much
3 say if someone is paying this much for
4 this type of property and that's what the
5 market, willing buyer, willing seller are
6 paying for these specific properties,
7 we're not smoothing out a value. That's
8 extracted from a different type of
9 property and applying it to that. It's
10 what are the sales saying for this
11 specific type of property.

12 And the common property that we
13 find in these zones are these older homes
14 because the zones are large and
15 Philadelphia is natively an older city.
16 What's older in the Northeast may not be
17 what's older in Center City or the River
18 Wards. So there's an average year built,
19 but in those cases new construction
20 pretty much anymore is not the typical
21 property. It's not treated as such.
22 There's not a value extracted from that
23 that's applied to other properties in
24 that area that aren't larger, newer
25 construction little to no depreciation of

1 the actual improvements of the property.

2 COUNCILWOMAN QUINONES-SANCHEZ:

3 You're saying there's 16 zones. And
4 you're going to confirm with me whether
5 Fishtown and Kensington together, because
6 again I will argue that you cannot put,
7 you know, for South Kensington in
8 particular --

9 MR. AROS: So --

10 COUNCILWOMAN QUINONES-SANCHEZ:

11 -- who gets hit hard, if you're doing
12 your comparables, Northern Liberties and
13 Fishtown, we've already overinflated this
14 market because of that, right, because of
15 the new construction.

16 MR. AROS: Yeah. So I use
17 Kensington as a very overall general
18 term. Obviously, there's Old Kensington,
19 East Kensington, so anything that might
20 fall into the Kensington bucket may not
21 be in the same grouping as say Fishtown
22 or whatever, but that River Wards area
23 down there was separated out from some of
24 the surrounding areas where we knew we
25 could see in the market that the market

1 was not behaving the same and they should
2 not be in the same model.

3 As I mentioned earlier, we can
4 brief individual Councilmembers in the
5 coming weeks. We can certainly get into
6 the specific market delineations with you
7 or anybody else that's interested for
8 their particular areas.

9 COUNCILWOMAN QUINONES-SANCHEZ:

10 Thank you, and I'll come back in the
11 second round. Let me use this
12 opportunity to pitch the importance of us
13 fully funding our housing counseling and
14 other agencies, which we're going to
15 need, right, to get to all of these long-
16 term residents in South Kensington where
17 we see this 40 percent growth, which is
18 going to be impacted, as I said long-term
19 residents here.

20 And so, we need to make sure as
21 Councilmember Bass said, that there is an
22 aggressive plan by OPA, but we need to
23 look at who our partners are who have
24 done this work and we need to properly
25 fund them because we're going to need to

1 go to the streets and make sure that
2 people are Homestead, LOOP and OOPA and
3 all the other plans that we have, and
4 that plan has to be hugely aggressive.

5 This is going to be devastating
6 for South Kensington. So I'm going to
7 drill down on those numbers because I
8 think if again what we saw in 2019 comes
9 to fruition now, we will be displacing
10 many of the long-term residents as I said
11 whose income is \$20,000 and have lived
12 here 30, 40 years and who have faced all
13 this infill housing at an inflated value
14 of \$600,000 for comparables.

15 One of the issues in Kensington
16 is size. Because we have a lot of blocks
17 that are three stories, that is what's
18 being built, the three stories plus the
19 rooftop deck and that creates a disparity
20 in square footage and should impact the
21 value, but it could negatively impact the
22 older homes that are three stories and
23 might be 1100 and 1300 square feet. So
24 I'll come back on the second round, but
25 let me make that plea that our housing

1 counseling agencies have to be prepared
2 to help us as we educate folks through
3 this process.

4 Thank you, Council President.
5 I'll be back.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
7 you, Councilwoman.

8 Chair recognizes Councilman
9 Thomas.

10 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank you,
11 Council President.

12 Good morning, everybody. I'm
13 going to jump right into my questions
14 just so I can be as efficient as
15 possible. When we looked at the numbers
16 in where we are right now, I think one of
17 our biggest concerns is basically how OPA
18 confirmed the underlotting data that
19 you're using to essentially assess the
20 properties.

21 And when we look at certain
22 situations, I'm wondering how did the new
23 assessments that we have take into
24 account sales that happened during the
25 last year, right? So when we think about

1 someone let's say buying their property
2 or a certain value amount and the amount
3 that they purchased their house for
4 within the last year or so, our
5 assessment has the value of the house
6 being significantly less. So can you
7 explain that because that's a significant
8 concern of mine?

9 MR. AROS: Sure. So sales in
10 the last year, and I'll say Calendar Year
11 2021 if that's make sense, so we cut off
12 our analysis at a certain point. So
13 there's limited data from 2021, virtually
14 no data from the second half of the year,
15 that was used to value for this
16 assessment. So the additional sales that
17 we were able to use this time around came
18 from 2018, 2019 and 2020.

19 So in some cases if there's been
20 sales more recent than that, that show
21 growth in the market, those would not
22 necessarily have been captured in the
23 values that we have because we would have
24 stopped -- we had to stop our analysis in
25 order to start producing the assessments

1 so there's a little bit of a lag between
2 that which is talked about in the IAAO
3 report as a recommendation as well, but
4 limited 2020 -- I'm sorry (inaudible).

5 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: No, okay.
6 It's still a little confusing. I get
7 what you're saying to a certain extent,
8 but I think the confusing part is when
9 we -- well, with that being said, do you
10 plan to have another because we're
11 supposed to do this annually so will
12 there be another assessment next year
13 looking at what's happening in inflation
14 and what's happening with the market?

15 MR. AROS: So as I think I
16 mentioned in my opening testimony and
17 moving forward, we will be preparing for
18 the next reassessment which at this point
19 we will be looking at potentially doing a
20 reassessment for 2024.

21 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Okay. So
22 talk to me a little bit about developing
23 in the City. So when you have spaces
24 where maybe the last time it was assessed
25 it was maybe a vacant land or vacant

1 property and we've seen some development
2 since then, what percentage of those type
3 of properties do you feel like you've
4 gotten wrong? Because I can tell you
5 that just based on playing with the
6 website myself and knowing some
7 neighborhoods and areas that has had a
8 lot of development, we've already seen
9 some mistakes.

10 So think about somewhere that
11 might have been valued for low 20,000
12 because development hadn't taken place
13 and over the last couple of years, we've
14 seen a lot of development. What are you
15 doing around those situations where your
16 assessment is completely off and you're
17 assessing something as if it's still a
18 lot?

19 MR. AROS: Right. So similar to
20 what I was just mentioning, there is a
21 lag in assessments. So as development
22 happens we usually aren't able to pick it
23 up until it's completed and it's a little
24 bit further down the process --

25 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: How long

1 does that normally take you to pick up?

2 So if someone completed a development

3 project today, when do you think you

4 would pick it up on your end?

5 MR. AROS: It would vary, but I

6 would hope we would pick this up in the

7 next four to six months tops. There's

8 not a specific timeline that I would say

9 it has to be picked up by this or that,

10 but we certainly try to react as quickly

11 as possible when we know that work has

12 been completed on a property. So there

13 are some assessments that may be out

14 right now that reflect the status of the

15 vacant land.

16 But even with these being posted

17 now, there's continual work that will be

18 done on the 2023 assessments post-

19 certification, including adding

20 improvements and revaluing new

21 construction, recently renovated

22 properties. If a property is torn down,

23 so sort of the opposite of what you're

24 talking about, so if there's a

25 catastrophic loss, a significant fire,

1 those kind of things, along with any
2 clerical errors or subdivisions,
3 consolidations, new accounts created from
4 a larger account let's say, we will
5 continue to pick those up.

6 Again, our effective date of
7 assessment is January 1, 2023, so we're
8 putting this out there now with the
9 ability to sort of update our records as
10 necessary prior to that January 1, 2023
11 date. So there will be some cases where
12 a property may be reflected currently as
13 vacant land that we are in the process or
14 will shortly thereafter be putting new
15 construction and a new value on it.

16 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Can we just
17 challenge you on that one a little bit?
18 And the reason I'm saying that is because
19 clearly as somebody who represents the
20 entire City, I spend a lot of time in a
21 lot of different parts of the City, and
22 my team and I, we've been waiting for
23 these numbers to come out for some time
24 because we knew that Philadelphia would
25 see an increase as it relates to their

1 real estate taxes because we haven't done
2 it in some time. Hence, why I put out my
3 recommendation on what should we do
4 around taxes as far as putting some money
5 back in the pocket of the people of
6 Philadelphia.

7 But outside of that, I just
8 really want to challenge the idea that it
9 would take four to six months. I'm well
10 aware of places where development has
11 happened over a year ago or I should even
12 say more than a year ago honestly in some
13 situations. And the value of that
14 particular space in some of those areas
15 is still valued as if it's vacant. We
16 want to make sure that we're getting this
17 thing right.

18 I think I heard one of my
19 colleagues talk earlier about how you can
20 walk through an area in Germantown and
21 one house can be fully renovated and
22 developed nicely and another house still
23 be vacant. I know we have a lot of
24 protections in place for long time
25 homeowners as well too. But I think

1 similar to what some of my colleagues
2 talked about, I think we have an equity
3 issue that we're looking at.

4 And I'm not saying this is
5 intentional, right. But what we're
6 looking at is we're looking at situations
7 where often people who don't have the
8 resources or ability to essentially fight
9 for themselves or recognize what's going
10 on are unintentionally displaced while
11 others who do have resources for whatever
12 reason, we're not assessing everything
13 the right way we should.

14 So I'm hoping that you can at
15 least give us a plan for how to
16 specifically attack this idea of new
17 development and make sure we're getting
18 it right because that's one area that
19 I've seen where we essentially have this.
20 So if you're open to that, my office
21 would love to work with you to help
22 identify some of these places to make
23 sure that we're getting it right and
24 we're doing it through an equitable lens.

25 MR. AROS: Absolutely. We have

1 a standing relationship with a number of
2 Council offices on issues like that and
3 they want to reach out and bring some
4 stuff to our attention just to touch base
5 and see where we are and happy to start
6 that relationship with your office.

7 COUNCILMAN THOMAS: Thank you.
8 Thank you, Council President.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
10 you, Councilman.

11 Chair recognizes Councilman
12 Squilla. Councilman Squil --

13 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Hello.
14 Yes, I'm here. How are you, guys.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: How
16 are you, sir. You're on --

17 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you,
18 AJ, for testifying. I see it's a ton of
19 questions out there and a lot of
20 concerns. Some of these are going to
21 seem duplicative. But as we do the AVI
22 and as we see these numbers coming in and
23 we see these large increases, what is the
24 percentage of people that are 50 percent
25 increasing and more for assessment?

1 MR. AROS: I --

2 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: For
3 residential?

4 MR. AROS: I don't have that
5 number handy, but we can get that to the
6 Chair quickly.

7 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Okay. The
8 reasoning is that 50 percent triggers the
9 requirements for LOOP, Long-term Owner
10 Occupant Program. Understanding that
11 those people are going to be eligible if
12 they're there 10 years or longer and
13 depending on their income, that also is
14 going to be money that comes out of the
15 total budget. Do we know how much we
16 have budgeted for increase in LOOP?

17 MR. DUBOW: Yeah. As you know,
18 LOOP has a cap of 25 million a year. One
19 of the proposals we have on the relief
20 side is to take that up to 30 million so
21 there would be an additional 5 million a
22 year.

23 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: My question
24 is do we know how many people have
25 increased 50 percent so that we don't

1 know if that's enough money or not? And
2 if we include a large number of people,
3 that's going to cut off all the people
4 who are in LOOP now, they're going to pay
5 an increase in taxes also.

6 MR. DUBOW: Yeah. And that's
7 exactly why we're raising the cap and
8 agree with you that's a conversation we
9 need to continue to have as we figure out
10 what the appropriate mix of relief is.

11 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: All right.
12 So we will be getting those numbers then
13 shortly, because I did see city-wide and
14 it seemed like it looked like 152,000
15 were greater than 50 percent increase.

16 MR. AROS: I think the
17 preliminary number I had seen was a
18 little bit less than that, but we're in
19 the process of rolling up the final
20 values now. So we'll have a better
21 estimate of that in the next few days.

22 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: All right.
23 Well, even say it's 100,000. If you have
24 100,000 households eligible for LOOP,
25 that's going to be a big increase in the

1 maximum number for -- I'm sorry. I
2 didn't realize my camera was on.

3 MR. DUBOW: You're back.

4 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thanks.

5 That's going to be a big increase, and
6 we're only adding \$5 million to the
7 total. So we have to somehow figure that
8 out, what that assessment would be and
9 what the tax value would be on just for
10 people who are eligible for LOOP, so I
11 think that's one thing.

12 The other thing is we talked
13 about and you heard about senior freeze
14 and the increase of PACENET. Do we know
15 what the eligibility for Senior Freeze
16 would increase with the PACENET number
17 being moved higher?

18 MR. DUBOW: So we're assuming
19 that the Senior Freeze cost goes up on
20 the city-wide about 6.5 million a year,
21 so about 32 million over the life of the
22 plan.

23 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: All right.
24 And that's for people who will be
25 eligible that we see there?

1 MR. DUBOW: Yes.

2 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: And that's
3 a guesstimate, right?

4 MR. DUBOW: Yes.

5 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: All right.

6 And I heard people mentioning the amount
7 of appeals. You had said First Level
8 Review is going to be -- you have at least
9 30 days from the time that the people
10 receive their mailer, right. And then
11 October 3rd is the last day to appeal,
12 the BRT appeal. Are we projecting a 20
13 percent appeal rate on this year's
14 assessment?

15 MR. DUBOW: Roughly, yes, in
16 dollar amounts. And this goes back to
17 the question that Councilmember Jones
18 asked. That's about right and it's about
19 a \$19 million hit.

20 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: All right.
21 So these numbers are being incorporated
22 into --

23 MR. DUBOW: Into our
24 projections, that's right.

25 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Right. And

1 what is the average median income from
2 this assessment where we can base our
3 Homestead off of -- I'm sorry. I was
4 meaning income --

5 MR. DUBOW: You mean average
6 median value.

7 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Value.

8 MR. AROS: We're in the process
9 of calculating that now. That number we
10 should have soon, but we don't have the
11 final number as of yet.

12 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Because
13 that would determine how high we could
14 increase the Homestead, correct?

15 MR. DUBOW: Right. Homestead
16 can be up to half of the median value of
17 assessed values.

18 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Right. And
19 right now our Homestead is 45 and
20 projection from the Administration was
21 60?

22 MR. DUBOW: Our proposal was to
23 take it to 65.

24 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: 65, so that
25 would be for people who -- just for the

1 record, so people whose assessment
2 happens to increase by \$20,000, if the
3 Homestead was increased by \$20,000 it
4 would be a net equal?

5 MR. DUBOW: That's right, if
6 they have a Homestead. If they --

7 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: If they
8 have a Homestead.

9 MR. DUBOW: -- don't have a
10 Homestead yet, they could see a \$65,000
11 in their assessment. If they had a
12 Homestead and not see an increase.

13 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: In the past
14 we had spoke about during the challenges
15 with AVI initially, we talked about
16 phasing in and we also talked about
17 having a cap on how high assessments
18 could go per year. And both of them, at
19 least from the Administration's
20 standpoint saying that they were illegal
21 or they would be challenged somehow.

22 How would a cap in this case,
23 and the cap said it wasn't necessary --
24 and the Administration, Rob, you were
25 there at the time -- it wasn't necessary

1 because after the first initial increase
2 we were told that the maximum would be 3
3 to 4 percent per year, so you would never
4 have to need to cap because it would not
5 go over that amount. Now, when we see
6 these large increases this year, why
7 would a cap not be illegal to put so that
8 we could protect our residents from these
9 large increases that we're seeing now?

10 MR. DUBOW: I will defer to Drew
11 Aldinger who's actually a lawyer. I
12 would just be pretending to know the law,
13 so I'll ask Drew to weigh in.

14 MR. ALDINGER: Thank you,
15 Mr. Dubow, Councilmember Squilla. So the
16 concern would be there's the Uniformity
17 Clause, the Constitution of the
18 Commonwealth that requires uniformity of
19 taxation which basically means the
20 assessment ratio has to be uniform for
21 properties throughout the City of
22 Philadelphia.

23 So for the properties -- all
24 properties that are worth \$100,000 would
25 be assessed at \$100,000 and should be

1 taxed the same. And there is no -- and
2 that would be true, so if a property was
3 \$100,000 before and stayed at \$100,000,
4 it should be assessed and taxed the same
5 as a property that went from \$50,000 to
6 \$100,000 because they're both worth
7 \$100,000.

8 The Constitution does have --
9 the Uniformity Clause does have
10 exceptions that allow for abatements,
11 that allows for the Homestead Exemption
12 and it allows for the LOOP exemption, but
13 there's no such exception in the
14 uniformity clause that I'm aware of that
15 will allow for a cap or for a phase-in.

16 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: All right.
17 And I know that we need a state authority
18 to put these exemptions in, so therefore
19 state enabling legislation was necessary.
20 So are you saying that if the state had
21 enabling legislation that would allow us
22 to do that, that we could then proceed
23 with some form of a cap on our
24 assessments?

25 MR. ALDINGER: Sure. I'm not

1 certain that state enabling legislation
2 would be enough. It might have to
3 actually be an amendment to the
4 Constitution, to the Uniformity Clause,
5 just like that's in there for LOOP and
6 the Homestead Exemption.

7 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Yeah. They
8 did that for them also. So I'm sure if
9 they can do one, they could do both. All
10 right. I know that a lot of people have
11 second round questions. I'll come back
12 on the second round and be happy to
13 continue the conversation. Thank you.

14 MR. AROS: Just one point of
15 information I mentioned earlier,
16 Councilmember Squilla, that whatever that
17 number, we'll use \$100,000 for the
18 increases, that would include potentially
19 properties that are already in LOOP that
20 have increased people as new construction
21 or abatements or other exemptions that
22 would therefore not make them LOOP
23 eligible. So the universe is smaller,
24 but we didn't break those out when you
25 kind of look at those numbers of people

1 who are already in or would not be
2 eligible.

3 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Yeah. And
4 I think we need to know those numbers
5 before we can actually sit down. That's
6 a problem of having these numbers so late
7 and then having a short time period to
8 review and then also have a short time
9 period to review, we have to really get
10 in touch with our constituents and get
11 that information out there so they are
12 prepared to handle this the best they
13 can. So I'll come back in the second
14 round. Thank you.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
16 Sorry. Thank you, Councilman.

17 Chair recognizes Councilwoman
18 Gauthier.

19 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
20 you, Mr. President.

21 Good afternoon, Mr. Aros.

22 MR. AROS: Good afternoon.

23 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Before I
24 ask you some questions, I want to note
25 for the record how disappointed I am by

1 how little we know about OPA's 2023 tax
2 year assessment and by the communication
3 to the public around the roll-out of new
4 assessments for Tax Year 2023.

5 First, although it feels like
6 OPA has been working on these assessments
7 for over two years, we've not received
8 OPA's updated methodologies on property-
9 level assessment data. Today many 3rd
10 District residents will see their new
11 assessments online and will be blown away
12 by the on-average 50 percent increase.

13 They will have questions about
14 how this happened and my office will not
15 be able to effectively respond because
16 OPA has not provided us with a requisite
17 level of detail necessary to analyze and
18 understand these updated assessments.
19 And Council's ability to do its job today
20 in this hearing is also severely
21 hampered.

22 On top of that, I understand
23 that we don't know when letters to
24 residents will go out. So tech-savvy
25 residents will know their assessments

1 today while others will wait some other
2 unknown number of months to receive their
3 assessment in the mail. This is poor
4 government transparency and public
5 communication about assessment increases
6 that will have serious impacts on our
7 residents. And as a government, we have
8 to do better particularly if we want to
9 keep saying that we care about racial
10 equity.

11 The residential assessments for
12 the 3rd Councilmanic District has
13 increased by 50 percent. Broken down
14 94.97 percent for land and 42.64 for
15 buildings. City-wide the residential
16 increase is 31.12 percent. Broken down,
17 that is 19.87 percent for land and 34.28
18 percent for buildings. Can you explain
19 why residential assessments increased
20 astronomically in my District, especially
21 in light of the fact that the sales comps
22 you used didn't even take account the
23 super hot property sales in '21 and now
24 '22?

25 MR. AROS: Sure. So I can speak

1 a little bit to some of the numbers that
2 you just mentioned. Obviously, as I
3 mentioned to some of the other questions
4 your colleagues had, there's three
5 approximately additional sales years of
6 data where use of these assessments that
7 were not previously. And so, new
8 assessments for any District, but
9 obviously concerning yours would have
10 captured change over those years as well
11 as any I would say underassessment if
12 those existed in some areas, that would
13 also kind of be caught in the increases
14 that we see here.

15 Specifically on the -- you
16 mentioned the land assessment. So one of
17 the concerns that Councilmembers had and
18 I think it was mentioned in the report
19 from a few years ago was the methodology
20 for valuing land as it's considered
21 attributed to a property that has a
22 building on it. So in order to simplify
23 and still meet industry recommendations,
24 this year OPA moved to assessing -- we
25 start with the overall value, but then

1 allocate 20 percent of the value to the
2 land for residential properties.

3 So in an area where the average
4 say percentage was 15 percent going to 20
5 would see some shift. It's not an
6 individual increase in the overall market
7 value because that's taken from the
8 overall at the start, but that could
9 account for if you do some of the math
10 what the average was before an average
11 now. At 20 percent it could explain some
12 of that individual shift that you
13 mentioned.

14 But overall, again capturing
15 sales data, updating some characteristics
16 on properties and viewing our market
17 areas are the three main reasons that
18 would speak to most of the differences
19 that folks are seeing right now.

20 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.
21 Thank you. I'm glad to hear more money
22 is set aside for outreach and Rob's point
23 about setting aside funds to work with
24 Council Offices, but to Councilmember
25 Bass's and Councilmember Sanchez's point

1 we need OPA and the City to spearhead
2 your own community outreach that is more
3 systemic than a community event here or
4 there. This is something that Council
5 also pushed several months ago in a
6 hearing about property taxes.

7 There are huge equity issues
8 here as it relates to having the time and
9 the means to appeal values. So will OPA
10 and the City commit to developing a more
11 robust outreach plan?

12 MR. DUBOW: Yes, we will and we
13 have -- we have set aside funds for that
14 too. So part of it we want to do with
15 Councilmembers and part we want to do on
16 our own to take the lead as you
17 suggested.

18 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: And what
19 is that going to look like?

20 MR. DUBOW: We're still putting
21 that together. We will give you all the
22 details as we have them.

23 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.
24 Well, I will argue that the outreach
25 should be as aggressive as the assessment

1 increases, but okay.

2 MR. DUBOW: Understood.

3 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: I'm very
4 concerned with our ability to do targeted
5 outreach to homeowners. Is the City able
6 to cross-reference different departmental
7 databases to figure out which residential
8 households should be eligible for various
9 property tax relief programs?

10 MR. DUBOW: So the one part that
11 is particularly hard about that is the
12 LOOP eligibility because we don't get
13 individual's tax returns on wage
14 taxpayers. We get them from employers,
15 so we'll have to get that through
16 people's applications.

17 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: But for
18 other programs are we going to be -- for
19 that and other programs, are we going to
20 be doing all we can to figure out who is
21 available for relief so that we can
22 have --

23 MR. DUBOW: Yes.

24 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.
25 Following up on Councilmember Quinones-

1 Sanchez's point, I'm putting on the
2 record that I'd like to receive a
3 detailed breakdown of the geographic
4 zones in the 3rd Councilmanic District as
5 well as the Coefficient of Dispersion and
6 the Price-Related Differential for the
7 geographic zones in our District across
8 property classes. After this hearing,
9 can you give us these figures in writing
10 for the 3rd District?

11 MR. AROS: Yeah, we can provide
12 that for the 3rd District for each zone
13 and for any District that requests that.

14 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
15 you so much. As a follow-up to your
16 conversation with Councilmember Parker,
17 after this hearing can you provide a
18 better estimate for how long it will take
19 OPA to evaluate a First Level Review? We
20 need this estimate for our constituents.

21 MR. AROS: Yes, we will try to
22 get some sort of estimate as quickly as
23 possible.

24 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
25 you. Following up on the points by

1 several of my colleagues, do you agree
2 that we -- this is my last question. Do
3 you agree that we should extend the
4 deadline for First Level Review to a date
5 that is significantly later than four
6 weeks after the receipt of mailing?

7 MR. AROS: I think we can
8 definitely have that conversation. The
9 issue with saying when the deadline will
10 be would be -- we don't know exactly when
11 our vendor will be able to send these out
12 yet. But the earlier the better and the
13 earlier it is, the longer we may have to
14 be able to extend that deadline as well
15 as the BRT -- well, we can't extend BRT
16 deadline, but they will also have that
17 deadline in October as well.

18 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Do you
19 agree that it's not our residents fault
20 that we don't have envelopes?

21 MR. AROS: I would not blame the
22 residents for that, no.

23 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.
24 Well, I think that we should
25 significantly consider extending that

1 deadline given that it's not the
2 residents fault that they're going to
3 receive the mailing late. Thank you.

4 Thank you, Council President.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
6 you, Councilwoman. That is definitely
7 not the residents fault, I tell you.

8 Chair recognizes Councilman
9 Johnson.

10 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Hey. Thank
11 you, Council President. Good morning.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
13 morning.

14 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Just have a
15 couple of questions regarding the recent
16 2022 International Association of
17 Assessment Officers audit of the OPA. We
18 just received a copy of it at the end of
19 the day last Friday. And so, there's a
20 couple of things that stuck out that I
21 wanted to get some clarity from you. And
22 I remember a couple of years ago I did a
23 hearing regarding the formula for OPA and
24 how that formula is published and how
25 accurate the formula is that we're using.

1 And so, some of my questions I
2 want to zero in on is training all staff
3 members. And the audit of OPA from the
4 IAAO talked about how staff members
5 require additional training and staff
6 also want additional training. I want to
7 get an idea of what plans do you have to
8 provide that training, how will you
9 accomplish that despite the additional
10 workload associated with the bump in
11 assessment that comes with the
12 reassessment?

13 MR. AROS: Sure. So one of the
14 things mentioned in the audit is that
15 long-range planning document. So we just
16 got the audit ourselves. So we'll be in
17 the preliminary stages very soon of
18 starting that. Training with the
19 pandemic, it's giving us the opportunity
20 to do things virtual which makes it a
21 little easier to schedule. But sometimes
22 folks might need a refresher course if
23 they're virtual learning is not as strong
24 as inperson. But we do have the ability
25 to schedule trainings more frequently.

1 So over the next coming weeks, I
2 know we've gotten a couple of requests
3 for some retaining and some additional
4 classes that we haven't offered yet.
5 We're in the process of scheduling those.
6 And as I mentioned in my original
7 testimony, we also plan to offer the
8 ability to have those that are interested
9 on the staff the chance to take some
10 classes that are offered outside of
11 normal training here in the Department
12 for our processes and for their state
13 certification, so a lot of those would be
14 offered by the IAAO, but they do not
15 necessarily need to all be IAAO classes,
16 but we have allocated funds in the budget
17 this year to pay for some of that.

18 Previously that kind of training
19 and education would have been paid for
20 mostly out of pocket by the individual,
21 so we don't want that to be a barrier for
22 anyone here who wants some additional
23 training. And as I said in my original
24 testimony, we want to be able to develop
25 future leaders of this department and of

1 this industry here. So we --

2 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Awesome.

3 And I think that's key for us to build
4 confidence with the constituents that we
5 represent, particularly around this
6 issue. Some people think that again the
7 process was flawed because on one side of
8 the street a house is valued at one
9 amount and across the street another
10 house is valued at another amount or
11 we've had people talk about how there's
12 drive-by assessments, right. And without
13 going into a person's home, how can you
14 really tell the value or just pulling
15 permits or not, does that really give you
16 the true value of a person's individual
17 property.

18 So I think that training
19 component from a transparency and
20 accountability standpoint for the
21 constituents in which you represent I
22 think is key. But also, let's talk about
23 the issue of accuracy. One particular
24 issue regarding accuracy found by past
25 audits is that assessments were evaluated

1 as acceptable, accurate on a city-wide
2 scale. But once you looked at individual
3 areas within the City, accuracy fell well
4 below industry standards. So give me an
5 idea how you have successfully addressed
6 this specific problem.

7 MR. AROS: Sure. If you look at
8 our performance metrics prior to this
9 reassessment which I believe we included
10 in our original budget submission, you
11 can see the numerical difference of the
12 city-wide overall. We're still in the
13 process of doing them on an area-by-area
14 basis. And while I say that the
15 assessment of the overall assessment is
16 to be done at a city-wide basis, we
17 certainly look to drill down into each
18 area and see where we've made
19 improvements.

20 Preliminary indication is we've
21 made improvements in most areas of the
22 City, but we'll be running those final
23 numbers very shortly and that will be all
24 part of the documentation that we publish
25 that wraps up and include some of the

1 methodology you were speaking to
2 regarding the reassessments that will be
3 coming in the next few weeks.

4 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: And let me
5 ask you this before I get to the next
6 round. So if property values, we're
7 going to do an increase for 31 percent,
8 right, and when you look at the last
9 assessment which was homes value going up
10 on average of 16 percent, how do you
11 explain that jump?

12 MR. AROS: So last assessment
13 was at 2019 you're speaking about?

14 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Yes.

15 MR. AROS: So I would say that
16 the last few years -- well, again this is
17 one of the reasons why we preferred the
18 regular reassessments because if there's
19 drastic changes in the market in any
20 particular year and if it happens in
21 successive years, it's sort of propounds.

22 But again, as I was mentioning
23 earlier with Councilman Domb's questions
24 from what we've seen and from a number of
25 external analysis, the residential market

1 in the City overall and particularly in
2 certain sections of the City has been --
3 the changes have been historic some might
4 describe it over the last few years since
5 the last reassessment. So part of that
6 is what's being captured in those
7 numbers.

8 If you have a market that's flat
9 year over year or slightly changing year
10 over year, those numbers even if you
11 don't do assessments for a few years will
12 be increasing. But it may not be as
13 dramatic as some other ones. But when
14 you see double digit growth in some
15 estimates year over year within the City
16 overall and in certain neighborhoods,
17 that leads to a change around the number
18 that we have talked about so far, that 30
19 percent.

20 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Let me ask
21 you this: Are you concerned about the
22 accuracy of sales comparisons given that
23 last year there were unprecedented low
24 interest rates and unprecedented low
25 supply of homes for sale which led to

1 bidding wars, especially because those
2 bidding wars ended once interest rates
3 went up again?

4 MR. AROS: So any changes on the
5 market that we can predict and certainly
6 over the last of couple of years would
7 certainly not have predicted, make you
8 stop and think. But the reality is we
9 have to look at the data that's there and
10 that's what's available and that's what
11 we have to do our analysis on.

12 So whether a property was
13 subject to a bidding war or somebody told
14 somebody they were going to sell their
15 house and they came in and was on the
16 market, was on the market for a day and
17 they came in at overasking price, we have
18 to look at what the sales are being
19 reported as. We can't artificially back
20 out a number just because we think
21 somebody paid too much for it and use
22 that as a number to base our valuations
23 for us. So it does make it a little
24 difficult.

25 And I think from now and

1 projecting to January 1st if there are
2 continued changes in the rates and more
3 supply on the market that might meet some
4 of the demand, you can see some changes
5 from what we've seen over the last couple
6 of years between now and the affected
7 date of appraisal. But we're using the
8 best data we have available as of the
9 time we need to prepare these
10 assessments.

11 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: And one
12 last thing, and I know my time is short,
13 and you can just be brief answering this
14 question because I know this reassessment
15 is going to be huge, tell me about the
16 staff. Because the audit, right, they're
17 talking about the backlog and workflows
18 like CAMA data, sales data uploads,
19 right. So in general, what type of staff
20 will you have going into this process?
21 Are you doubling? What does that look
22 like?

23 MR. AROS: So we didn't double.
24 We didn't have that kind of allocation in
25 the budget. So we've been -- we have a

1 staffing level that has been pretty I'd
2 say flat over the last couple of years in
3 that we've been able to bring new folks
4 on and also kind of just meet the level
5 of retirements that have happened.

6 I think one of the things I
7 mentioned earlier with opening up to the
8 management trainee position is we can
9 bring people on that may not have some of
10 the real estate knowledge that has
11 traditionally been required to take and
12 pass the evaluator 1 test, but those are
13 folks that we can get in and give them
14 their state classes and offer them some
15 of these other learning opportunities.

16 It's a position we've used in
17 the past about a decade ago and had some
18 success there, so we think that's a
19 really good pipeline to get talent into
20 the Department that we can develop to
21 fill some of the vacancies that we've had
22 for budgeted positions.

23 COUNCILMAN JOHNSON: Thank you
24 very much. Thank you.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank

1 you, Councilman.

2 Chair recognizes Councilman

3 Green.

4 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Thank you,
5 Council President.

6 And thank you, Mr. Aros. And I
7 know Mr. Dubow is also here. Because I
8 have a limited amount of time, we
9 appreciate it if you could answer the
10 questions in very brief answers, yes or
11 no, specific to the question.

12 Mr. Aros, when did the Office of
13 Property Assessment finalize the
14 assessments for the City of Philadelphia?

15 MR. AROS: April 30th.

16 COUNCILMAN GREEN: I'm sorry.
17 What was the date?

18 MR. AROS: April 30th.

19 COUNCILMAN GREEN: April 30th.
20 Okay. Thank you.

21 Mr. Dubow, you are a part of the
22 Tax Reform Working Group?

23 MR. DUBOW: Yes.

24 COUNCILMAN GREEN: And the Tax
25 Reform Working Group, we had our first

1 meeting August last year?

2 MR. DUBOW: I don't remember the
3 date, but I believe you.

4 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay. And
5 also, I know in several times during our
6 conversation as part of the Tax Reform
7 Working Group you stated that the
8 Administration would use whatever
9 suggestions or guidelines that come out
10 of the Tax Reform Working Group for our
11 ideas for tax policy, correct?

12 MR. DUBOW: I said that was our
13 goal.

14 COUNCILMAN GREEN: That was the
15 goal. Okay. And then the Mayor's budget
16 address, my understanding from my
17 recollection and correct me if I'm wrong,
18 the Mayor stated that they would be
19 working with City Council in reference to
20 tax policy also based on information
21 coming out of the assessments?

22 MR. DUBOW: That's correct.

23 COUNCILMAN GREEN: And --

24 MR. DUBOW: And we still plan on
25 doing that.

1 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Still
2 planning on doing that. Okay. So I
3 guess my question is when did the
4 Administration come up with the proposals
5 regarding tax policy in reference to wage
6 tax reductions and other policies that
7 was submitted the same day that I learned
8 and I think other members of Council
9 learned that OPA assessments came out?

10 MR. DUBOW: Yeah. After we got
11 the information from OPA, we had
12 discussions about what we thought the
13 best mix of relief would be. So I think
14 we probably finalized that last week.

15 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Okay. And
16 you finalized that last week?

17 MR. DUBOW: Finalized our
18 recommendations, which I should also say
19 that we view as obviously not the end of
20 the conversation, but the start of the
21 stage of the conversation.

22 COUNCILMAN GREEN: And so, when
23 did the Administration start working on
24 those ideas?

25 MR. DUBOW: Well, we've been

1 talking about ideas since the Tax Reform
2 Working Group started. But really in
3 terms of honing in on this set of
4 proposals is when we got a better sense
5 of what the increases would look like.
6 So really in terms of what this set looks
7 like it really wasn't until the last
8 couple of weeks when we saw what
9 increases would be.

10 COUNCILMAN GREEN: When you say
11 the Administration was talking about
12 ideas regarding its policies, that was
13 internal to the Administration because in
14 our various meetings both with members of
15 Council who are part of the Tax Reform
16 Working Group and members of the public
17 that were part of that discussion, the
18 ideas from the Administration were not
19 presented because they said on numerous
20 occasions, you, yourself on behalf of the
21 Administration said on numerous occasions
22 that you would be working with this group
23 and members of Council before any
24 policies came out.

25 MR. DUBOW: There were lots of

1 suggestions that came through the Tax
2 Reform Working Group. And so, when those
3 suggestions came through, we did talk
4 about those as an Administration.

5 COUNCILMAN GREEN: Right, as an
6 Administration, but not with members of
7 the Tax Reform Working Group or with
8 members of Council.

9 MR. DUBOW: We were involved --
10 if you remember during the Tax Reform
11 Working Groups, there were break-out
12 groups and we had discussions with
13 members of those break-out groups about
14 ideas for tax reform. So, yes, we did
15 talk about it with portions of the group.

16 COUNCILMAN GREEN: I
17 participated in a number of those
18 break-out discussions. And for the most
19 part, those discussions were made by
20 either professionals others who were a
21 part of that group and the position of
22 the Administration was from a listening
23 posture, not presenting ideas, but more
24 of a listening posture because the
25 perspective was we work collaboratively

1 together to come up with policies and
2 ideas.

3 That's why I was somewhat taken
4 aback when this proposal came forward
5 from the Administration, even though on
6 multiple occasions it was stated that we
7 were going to work collaboratively on
8 these policies. So I don't really see
9 how we're going to work collaboratively
10 if internally there's discussions made by
11 the Administration on tax policy, but not
12 being shared with members of Council or
13 with the Working Group.

14 MR. DUBOW: Yeah. So we thought
15 that it was important to put proposals
16 out there to get the conversation moving.
17 As you said, that Tax Reform Working
18 Group started in August and did not have
19 proposals by March, so we did think that
20 putting forward proposals would help move
21 the conversation along.

22 As I said, we don't view this as
23 the end of the conversation. We do think
24 that we want to work collaboratively to
25 get to what the best form of relief looks

1 like.

2 COUNCILMAN GREEN: But in the
3 Mayor's budget address, I believe there
4 was a perspective that there would be a
5 4.5 increase in reference to real estate
6 tax revenue coming to the City of
7 Philadelphia based on some thoughts or
8 perspectives. So if there was an idea
9 regarding certain policies, wouldn't it
10 have been that time to provide some of
11 that information in reference to putting
12 forth a proposal?

13 MR. DUBOW: What we said at the
14 time was that we're using 4.5 percent in
15 the Five Year Plan, but that we assumed
16 that there would be more growth than that
17 and that we try to use that increase in
18 growth for relief and what that relief
19 looked like would depend on what the
20 growth was, and then it would be a
21 combination of relief on the real estate
22 side and other relief, and that's what we
23 have put forward in our proposal.

24 COUNCILMAN GREEN: When you made
25 a projection of 4.5 percent increase,

1 that also could have been an opportunity
2 to start the conversation of how you
3 would use that increase in reference to
4 some of the policy ideas and suggestions
5 that the Administration would have
6 regarding how those dollars would be used
7 as opposed to having a situation where
8 both members of Council and the public
9 learned about some of these ideas and
10 suggestions from the Administration,
11 which was being discussed obviously
12 internally but not putting forth
13 publicly.

14 MR. DUBOW: Yeah. As I said
15 again, we view this as not the end of the
16 conversation, as something to kind of
17 jumpstart the conversation to help us all
18 get to what we think is the right array
19 of relief measures.

20 COUNCILMAN GREEN: I just have a
21 concern in reference to, you know, I
22 thought we were working collaboratively
23 on these issues and trying to come up
24 with a plan on how we move forward. A
25 number of people, myself included and

1 other members of Council, the general
2 public had spent a considerable amount of
3 time trying to work on developing policy
4 ideas to how we move forward the City and
5 how we come up with the resources to
6 address all of the quality-of-life issues
7 we have from public safety, from economic
8 development and then to have information
9 presented that was obviously being
10 discussed and debated internally because
11 the Administration did have a 4.5 percent
12 projection in increase in real estate
13 taxes. So clearly there was an
14 understanding and idea of what type of
15 policy was going to be set forth.

16 I just think it was very
17 unfortunate to send that information out
18 publicly without having information
19 provided to members of Council where
20 constituents were calling and raising
21 questions and concerns about their real
22 estate taxes and how they were going to
23 be able to address these issues
24 considering all the challenges that we
25 have in the City at this time.

1 Thank you, Council President.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
3 you, Councilman. Thank you.

4 That concludes the first round
5 of questions. We will now go to our
6 second round. And the Chair recognizes
7 Councilwoman Gilmore Richardson.

8 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE RICHARDSON:
9 Thank you. Thank you so much, Council
10 President.

11 And thank you, Mr. Aros. I
12 wanted to quickly talk about an issue
13 that I had previously brought up last
14 year relative to the OPA property search
15 website and the information that was made
16 available. I know we've had some
17 additional conversations around this
18 issue, but I do have relative concern
19 regarding the issue around the proper
20 owners being shown on the OPA website
21 which would then potentially possibly
22 impact individuals that are eligible to
23 receive Homestead Exemption.

24 And so, could you talk to me a
25 little more about that part of the

1 process? I wanted to ask that question
2 on the record because we will have to
3 look at additional property tax relief
4 measures for Philadelphians across the
5 City. So can you give us an update
6 regarding that portion of the website,
7 how you all are working in tandem with
8 OIT and Records to ensure information is
9 accurately reflected? Because the first
10 thing you're telling us today is that
11 individuals will be able to access the
12 website to get that information and in
13 all instances or not in all instances is
14 that information correct.

15 MR. AROS: Sure. So as we've
16 discussed I think with your office and
17 other offices, we're regularly getting
18 deed information from Records. We just
19 did a very large import about a week ago
20 I believe to update some ownership and
21 we're also making ad hoc ownership
22 changes and pushing them to the website
23 based on somebody calling us and saying,
24 hey, I was supposed to be the owner, we
25 researched it, yes, that's correct or all

1 property mailing information.

2 So in general, the information
3 that's posted as far as ownership is
4 pulled from OPA data, but that does not
5 constitute the official owner if you want
6 to call about the property. It's not a
7 disclaimer, but the official owner is
8 who's the last owner of record on the
9 deed and sometimes there is a lag with
10 that. I know we have --

11 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE RICHARDSON:

12 So what's the current backlog? My
13 apologies for the interruption. What is
14 the current backlog?

15 MR. AROS: I don't know the
16 exact number. We can try to find that
17 out of deeds that we just imported, but
18 it was at least two or three months I
19 think worth of deeds that we imported
20 last week that would have updated
21 ownership, and then there are some
22 pending manual changes we made that
23 haven't been pushed out yet. I'll see if
24 we can provide the Chair with a number on
25 those.

1 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE RICHARDSON:

2 Sure, that will be helpful. If you can
3 provide that information to the Chair for
4 all of my colleagues, that will be
5 exceedingly helpful. We just want to
6 know where you are in the process. And
7 so, you said it's two to three months.
8 Is that two to three months ending in
9 January of 2022 or just where we are in
10 process because that will help us get a
11 better idea of what we need to do.

12 I wanted to quickly talk about
13 generational wealth because that's an
14 issue that has come up a lot over the
15 last several years, particularly how
16 Philadelphia is changing looking at the
17 current market conditions, how certain
18 subsets of individuals are able to access
19 equity in their property to sort of help
20 them. This is especially true I believe
21 from our seniors all across the City,
22 particularly seniors who are long-time
23 owner occupants of properties here in
24 Philadelphia.

25 And so, I don't know if you have

1 this information. If you do, if you can
2 give it to us today for the record. If
3 not, submit the information to the Chair,
4 but do you have any sense on how many
5 seniors own homes in the City of
6 Philadelphia and if there's any way you
7 can give us an estimate on the average
8 assessment increase by neighborhood for
9 seniors in particular?

10 And then LOOP is one of the
11 programs that really allows us to help
12 our long-time residents stay in their
13 neighborhoods, particularly as a number
14 of our neighborhoods experience
15 gentrification. I know the last time
16 when we were talking about the onset of
17 AVI, folks were really focusing on my
18 colleagues like Councilmember Squilla's
19 area, Councilmember Johnson's area,
20 Council President Clarke's area. But if
21 you look around the City, it's really
22 everywhere at this point and it's all
23 urban centers around the country.

24 And so, if you could give us any
25 data by zip code and also by Council

1 District where the highest increase in
2 assessments are and which neighborhoods
3 and which zip codes in each of those
4 Council Districts, that will be helpful.

5 MR. AROS: Sure. So on I think
6 your first ask around the seniors, OPA
7 does not maintain any specific
8 information about the owners of a
9 property, whether that's age, income
10 level or anything along those lines, so
11 we would not be able to perform that kind
12 of analysis internally. I don't know if
13 there's other resources in the City that
14 would have that, but we would not be able
15 to provide that --

16 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE RICHARDSON:
17 Or even -- I hear the bell, and I know
18 it's the second round. Even if you can
19 give us information if it breaks it down
20 by long-time owner occupants. So if we
21 know how long those residents have been
22 in those particular homes, can we get
23 some type of information around long-time
24 owner occupants, folks that have been in
25 homes past a certain period of time so we

1 can get a better idea of the areas and
2 the neighborhoods and the zip codes that
3 will see the highest increase in
4 assessments this time around?

5 MR. AROS: Yeah, we'll look into
6 what kind of data that we have that would
7 be available and might be able to provide
8 some information on that.

9 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE RICHARDSON:
10 Okay. And my concern is for this time
11 we're coming off the heels of our Census.
12 And so, we should be able to blend some
13 of that data to help us tell a better
14 story. So we have the latest Census data
15 that has been released. We have
16 information relative to this proposed
17 property tax increase, so we should be
18 able to overlay some of that data to help
19 us tell a story, right, because I think
20 it's important people will think, oh,
21 City Council's raising your taxes. But
22 really, this is a property assessment
23 that is done on the Administrative side
24 of government. We are not increasing the
25 tax rate.

1 And so, we need to have a better
2 picture so we can explain this to our
3 constituents, because I will tell you
4 since I've been on this hearing, my phone
5 has been ringing off the hook already
6 from people calling about this.

7 MR. AROS: Understood. Yeah,
8 there may be a chance for a blending of
9 some of the Census or other data from
10 other departments overlaid again with the
11 OPA data, but separate, but we can
12 separately see what we might be able to
13 provide for that. And if we need any
14 clarification we can certainly reach out
15 for any details that we may not be
16 capturing.

17 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE RICHARDSON:
18 Okay. Thank you, Mr. Aros. Thank you,
19 Council President.

20 And really quickly, I just
21 wanted to get on the record the
22 administrative proposal around Homestead
23 Exemption, if you all could just tell us
24 about that and your thought process
25 there.

1 MR. DUBOW: Yes. The current
2 Homestead is \$45,000. And looking at the
3 increases we thought we needed to
4 substantially increase that to help
5 offset some of the impact of some of
6 these increases, so we are proposing to
7 increase the Homestead from \$45,000 to
8 \$65,000. And as you know the way the
9 Homestead works is that value just gets
10 subtracted from the assessed value.

11 So if a home was assessed at
12 \$150,000 and they had a Homestead before
13 this change, that 150 would have gone
14 down to 105. After, it would go down
15 another 20,000.

16 COUNCILWOMAN GILMORE RICHARDSON:
17 Okay. I heard the bell. Thank you,
18 Council President.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
20 you, Councilwoman. Thank you.

21 Oh, you know what, before we
22 continue I got a quick one I want to get
23 in. We're likely going to have a
24 significant number of appeals obviously
25 on First Level of Review, but at the BRT.

1 Have you all put significant amount of
2 resources or proposed resources for the
3 BRT? I know they can answer for
4 themselves, but I just wanted to get that
5 in there.

6 MR. DUBOW: So during this year
7 they asked for additional funding that we
8 put in and I mean, our kind of consistent
9 stance is anything they do ask for, we
10 will put in. So they haven't asked for
11 an increase in '23. If they did, that's
12 something that we would seriously
13 consider.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Yeah,
15 but we didn't know the -- when the
16 original --

17 MR. DUBOW: Correct.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: --
19 you didn't know or have a sense of what
20 the likelihood would be.

21 One other question, marginally
22 related, so a lot of these values
23 obviously increased by the unprecedented
24 level of development in the City of
25 Philadelphia. Neighborhoods that, you

1 know, people, existing homeowners 20, 30
2 years have been living there actually
3 hadn't done anything to their properties,
4 you know, traditional maintenance, but a
5 new house gets built, significant new
6 houses and that's not supposed to impact
7 the existing home, but then all of a
8 sudden as the value increases on the
9 existing homes, people sell them for more
10 money and then that does impact the
11 existing homeowners because it's a comp,
12 right.

13 So in this neighborhood normally
14 there's some request for zoning for these
15 new houses that are being built not as
16 much as it should be, but it is what it
17 is. And we're actually increasing the
18 value of property by virtual of us
19 approving the zoning variance
20 automatically. It's rare that you get
21 something zoned and you downzone the
22 value.

23 Do we, one, look at that when a
24 property has been upgraded in terms of
25 its zoning and not before it's actually

1 sold and then there's a comp established.
2 But people are basically getting an
3 increase in value because of zoning and I
4 don't think it's reflected in the
5 assessment; am I correct or am I not
6 correct?

7 MR. AROS: So if you're talking
8 about as an example of an existing parcel
9 that's currently a single family home or
10 small multi-family, underlying zoning is
11 generally not used as a factor or as an
12 attribute for the value. Zoning does
13 tend to play more of a factor when you
14 get into vacant land as far as what can
15 be the highest and best use to build a
16 50-story skyscraper or multi-family or
17 smaller single family home, so that does
18 play into the vacant land value and maybe
19 so part in the commercial. But for
20 existing residential homes, zoning is not
21 a variable that we specifically consider
22 when doing the values.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: So
24 the person gets an upgrade in the value,
25 but does not have the subsequent increase

1 in tax liability?

2 MR. AROS: If we -- so if
3 nothing changed about the property but
4 the underlying zoning changes which
5 could inherently increase the value of
6 what somebody might pay and develop
7 something different, we wouldn't capture
8 that until the property is sold and
9 redeveloped. So we're kind of capturing
10 existing use with the residential homes
11 for the most part. And zoning changes
12 with that, there may not be enough --
13 again, we don't use it as a variable and
14 those changes, there may not be enough
15 data to accurately add or subtract value
16 until something changes and we can assess
17 it as a different type of property. But
18 traditionally, it has not been a factor
19 in the residential values for existing
20 properties.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: All
22 right. I actually like you to give it
23 some thought. And I only bring this up
24 because the bottom line is that the
25 values of existing homeowners have gone

1 up dramatically because of the
2 significant level of increasing new
3 development, but for that you wouldn't
4 have these increases. And then
5 subsequently, an existing home gets sold
6 for a substantial amount.

7 MR. AROS: Yeah. I mean, we're
8 always open to added elements and
9 improvements. So I think particularly in
10 the past when there's been a variance
11 that isn't part of the regular record,
12 it's been hard to pick those up. I know
13 L&I has moved to a new system as well as
14 us, so it's certainly an avenue we can
15 look at as maybe we can get some better
16 realtime information on changes of zoning
17 and variances, so fairly open to that
18 possibility.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: And
20 one last thing relating to that note,
21 fingers crossed, next week one of the
22 questions is reforming the Zoning Board
23 to include local residents in the more
24 significant level of compliance, should
25 be hardships and all the like. And

1 sometimes when people make decisions
2 about whether or not they should support,
3 and I don't want the developers to freak
4 out, Clarke's trying to stop development,
5 whatever, you know, I'm just looking out
6 for the people that's getting these crazy
7 tax bills.

8 Could there potentially be a
9 conversation or would the folks be
10 available from your office if during the
11 course of the conversations and the
12 questions the availability of people from
13 your office if somebody says, well, we're
14 going to support this development and how
15 will it impact the local taxes. Now,
16 people speculate that it might, but we
17 would like to have some sort of a process
18 that at a minimum, particularly the two
19 representatives on the Zoning Board that
20 are from the community, they may need to
21 lean on you all for a little more
22 information because people need to know
23 if something's going in the neighborhood,
24 it impacts it across the board, not just
25 either increasing or decreasing the

1 density or providing a good service,
2 whatever, but it will more impact more
3 values and subsequently potentially the
4 taxes.

5 MR. AROS: Yeah. I mean, it's
6 not obviously something we've thought
7 about at this point, but I think there's
8 an opportunity to work out a process
9 where if there's input or information
10 requested from OPA, we can look to figure
11 out a way that that will work for
12 everybody.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Okay.
14 Thank you.

15 Chair recognizes Councilwoman
16 Bass.

17 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you,
18 Mr. President.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
20 You're welcome.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: And so, I
22 have a question. Just following up on
23 the Council President's comments, which
24 the thought from developers that if we
25 say anything that they don't like, and we

1 often do, that somehow we're an anti-
2 development City Council, and I think
3 that that's not a correct assessment --
4 speaking of assessments, that's not a
5 correct assessment of exactly who we are
6 and what we think and what's going on.

7 I think the development
8 community needs to recognize that every
9 development has an impact on the
10 neighborhood, and what we try to do is
11 address those impacts in a way that
12 minimizes the quality of life for the
13 people who have been living there in many
14 cases for generations, so we certainly
15 hope that you all get that to.

16 My question is as the
17 assessments were coming together, was
18 there a plan to reach out directly to
19 District Councilmembers to talk to them
20 about the changes that were happening and
21 what was that going to look like? I
22 guess specifically I'm wondering if you
23 saw, and let's say for example, if you
24 saw in Nicetown that there was a
25 particular percentage increase in value,

1 what would that look like in terms of,
2 uh-oh, ring the alarm, raise the red
3 flag, we need to talk to the
4 Councilperson to figure out what can we
5 do to address these increasing values
6 that are going through the roof in a
7 neighborhood that's beginning to gentrify
8 in her District.

9 MR. AROS: Sure. So as I think
10 I mentioned in a couple of previous
11 questions, traditionally prepandemic
12 before my taking this role, this specific
13 role here, I know there's been as we've
14 certified assessments, there's data that
15 we kind of roll out and give on a
16 district-by-district basis to all the
17 Council folks.

18 The last time we did a
19 reassessment I was over at City Hall and
20 we sat in one of the rooms and people
21 came in and out. We had maps by district
22 to kind of break out. So we want to
23 offer -- well, let me back up for one
24 second. We talked at a higher level and
25 gave some district-by-district numbers to

1 the AVI Monitoring Group last week when
2 we spoke to them --

3 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: To who?

4 MR. AROS: The AVI Monitoring
5 Group.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. Who
7 is the AVI Monitoring Group?

8 MR. AROS: There's a number of
9 Councilmembers that are on the AVI
10 Monitoring Group.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. The
12 information didn't trickle down. I
13 apologize.

14 MR. AROS: Okay. But anyway as
15 I mentioned earlier, we're open and
16 committed to doing a similar level of
17 going over information with the different
18 Councilpeople, whether that looks like an
19 inperson thing or a virtual thing,
20 obviously we would have to sort of figure
21 out. But the level of detail that
22 Councilmembers are traditionally used to
23 getting after a reassessment, we're
24 absolutely available to try and put that
25 kind of information together and have

1 those meetings.

2 And I see Mr. Dubow has popped
3 up, so I'll let him jump in.

4 MR. DUBOW: Yeah --

5 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Before
6 Mr. Dubow, before you go, Rob, I would
7 just say as one of the Districts that's
8 seeing significant increases, I
9 appreciate that you went through this
10 particular group and had meetings with
11 them, but certainly you should have had
12 Members whose Districts were adversely
13 impacted in a much more significant way
14 be a part of the conversation other than
15 Members -- like, I don't know who was in
16 the group. I don't know who was at the
17 table, so I don't know how much their
18 Districts are impacted or not. But I
19 certainly think that because my District
20 is going to be heavily impacted by these
21 changes, then you know --

22 MR. AROS: So in general,
23 Councilmember, I would say that any time
24 we do a reassessment, we want to be
25 available to have the conversation,

1 whether it's 20 percent or 2 percent. So
2 are we throwing up a red flag to say,
3 well, this District says this and we
4 definitely want to talk to them, it's
5 more of from my perspective every time we
6 do a reassessment we want to be available
7 to talk to anybody. So that conversation
8 we would have at any level of change in
9 assessment.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Well, I hear
11 you. I'm sorry, Rob, let me just -- I
12 hear you and I understand your viewpoint.
13 You want to make sure that you talk to
14 everyone. But what I'm saying to you is
15 if somebody has a 2 percent or a 3
16 percent increase versus someone who has
17 over a 30 percent increase in their
18 District, there's a big difference there
19 and they need to be treated differently
20 and we have to recognize that.

21 MR. AROS: Understood.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you.
23 Rob.

24 MR. DUBOW: The only thing I
25 want to add as Mr. Aros mentioned in his

1 testimony, we want to set up meetings for
2 this week to talk to Council staff to go
3 through the exact kind of discussion
4 you're talking about.

5 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: It's a
6 little late, Mr. Dubow, I'm just saying.
7 I appreciate that. I look forward to
8 talking to you all, but the numbers are
9 out. The calls are going to start
10 coming. The concern is going to start
11 and we're like, you know, a split
12 backwards hair. We got to make sure that
13 we're in front of what we know is coming.
14 And you've certainly been on that hot
15 seat long enough that you know it's
16 coming, Rob. You know it's coming --

17 MR. DUBOW: Yes.

18 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: So we needed
19 to be more aggressive I think in reaching
20 out to the hotspots, but I'll come back
21 around. Respecting the bell, I'll come
22 back around for a third round of
23 questions. Thank you.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
25 you, Councilwoman.

1 Chair recognizes Councilman

2 Jones.

3 COUNCILMAN JONES: Thank you,

4 Mr. President.

5 From the time we started this

6 meeting and the time before when those

7 assessments came back, I cannot tell you

8 how many constituents are going into your

9 system, looking at their properties and

10 automatically calling me back, you let

11 this happen. They don't know you. They

12 know Squilla. They know Bass. They know

13 Parker. They know Clarke. They know

14 Johnson, and they are calling us saying,

15 we did this.

16 And we are, as Member Bass

17 talked about, almost as shocked -- in

18 some places that's good news. I can walk

19 on some blocks in my District and say \$43

20 over the course of a year is what you're

21 going to have to pay, but things are

22 good. And one of the blocks, 50 percent

23 and above is just unreasonable. And to

24 think that we're going to have to do this

25 again next year and the year after, we

1 have to put some safeguards, guardrails
2 in place so that this doesn't come the
3 day of your hearing, and that's why you
4 will be called back. It shouldn't happen
5 as a surprise and say guess what, we got
6 a package to unveil, we're going to do it
7 right at this hearing. That's not the
8 way communication should happen between
9 the 4th floor and the 2nd floor. We can
10 do better.

11 And you may have -- I agree with
12 Member Bass. There are some areas, and
13 I'll go with Upper Wissahickon is one
14 example and parts of Wynnefield and
15 Overbrook Farms that are going to get
16 sticker shock. And for some people, it's
17 not a big deal, they'll write it off.
18 For other people on fixed incomes and not
19 necessarily people who are
20 income-eligible for some things, this
21 massive increase may be the difference
22 between them selling their historic
23 family home and moving in with other
24 relatives so they can afford to live.

25 These kinds of consequences,

1 whether intended or unintended need to be
2 discussed in advance, planned for in the
3 future and that's the way -- we owe our
4 citizens that much. So you're going to
5 hopefully -- my colleagues have asked you
6 a number of questions, some of them take
7 longer to answer than others, but in that
8 time between now and maybe mid-June we
9 can come up with some answers so that we
10 can give some people in our District so
11 that they aren't sticker shock with these
12 mailings, but also are really clear about
13 what their recourse and response should
14 be. So it's not a question. It's a
15 comment.

16 And as soon as you get this
17 information, please provide it to the
18 President of Council so he can distribute
19 it. And as important, chop it up by the
20 400-plus market areas that you mentioned.

21 Thank you, Mr. President.
22 President Clarke.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
24 you, Councilman. Yeah, sorry. I was
25 trying to take myself off of mute. Thank

1 you, Councilman.

2 Chair recognizes Councilman

3 Squilla.

4 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you,
5 Council President.

6 I want to go back to the First
7 Level Review. And I know we're going to
8 probably expect a lot of that because a
9 lot of people are doing the First Level
10 Review thinking that it actually is the
11 appeal. When we send out that notice,
12 are we letting people know that the First
13 Level appeal takes some time to be
14 responded to? Are we going to allow
15 people to reapply for a BRT appeal after
16 their First Level Review is beside it or
17 are they still going to have to do it
18 given the October 3rd date?

19 MR. AROS: So the BRT appeal,
20 that deadline isn't governed by OPA so
21 OPA wouldn't have the ability to waive or
22 alter that. As far as the First Level
23 Review, we typically don't put anything
24 on the notice saying that you will have a
25 response by this date. It's usually just

1 this is the date to file by, but we do
2 include information or we have in the
3 last couple of years of please be mindful
4 that the BRT deadline is whatever
5 specific date it is for that year, and
6 you may not -- if you do not receive a
7 response by this point or if you're
8 unhappy with the response, you should go
9 ahead and file with the BRT by this date
10 or that you don't need to file the FLR to
11 file the BRT. Some folks just skip that
12 process, but we laid all that information
13 out in the material that goes out with
14 the change of assessment notice.

15 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Because I'm
16 going to suggest that anybody who would
17 do an FLR will do an appeal right to the
18 BRT because there's no way we're going to
19 get those responses back in time. Now,
20 you said the letters are going to go out
21 in August or September?

22 MR. AROS: We're saying we would
23 have them out by September 1st. We had
24 hoped to be out sooner than that, but
25 that's contingent on when we're told the

1 vendor is able to do the mailing.

2 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Because
3 there's a possibility that it will be
4 less than 30 days to appeal at that point
5 even though the deadline is the first
6 Monday in October and there's no -- we'll
7 have to look at that and see if we make
8 sure that we can get letters out to our
9 constituents ahead of time to really pay
10 attention to this mailer. Now, this
11 mailer is coming out in a City of
12 Philadelphia Department of Revenue
13 regular letterhead paper?

14 MR. AROS: It wouldn't be
15 Department of Revenue. Anything from the
16 City for this particular item would be
17 labeled Office of Property Assessment,
18 but it'll come out similar to the notices
19 in the past, the format overall look will
20 be similar. Some of the data elements on
21 the notice may look a little different
22 and some of the details will obviously be
23 different and specific to this year in
24 particular. But the overall look and
25 feel of the FLR form and the notice

1 itself will be very similar to what folks
2 are used to getting in the past.

3 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: All right.
4 And we know that it's going to put last
5 year's assessment compared to this year's
6 assessment in that notice so they will be
7 able to appeal directly to the BRT once
8 they do receive that. The --

9 MR. AROS: And if I can
10 interrupt for one second, Councilmember,
11 in theory if somebody's assessment did
12 not change, they will not get this
13 letter. The letter does not allow or
14 prohibit them from appealing the BRT.
15 That's a separate processing of itself
16 that folks can do at any time.

17 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: And how
18 about if their assessment went down for
19 some reason?

20 MR. AROS: They can file a First
21 Level Review or a BRT appeal for that as
22 well.

23 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: But they
24 wouldn't get a notice?

25 MR. AROS: No, any change in the

1 assessment, either the overall market
2 value or the allocation within the
3 overall market value, those folks will
4 get a change of assessment notice. If
5 everything is identical, they won't get a
6 change of assessment notice because there
7 would be no change to the assessment.

8 But anybody that gets a notice for
9 whatever reason, up or down, to file the
10 FLR and then any owner in the City
11 whether they get a notice or not can file
12 with the BRT by that first Monday in
13 October deadline.

14 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Because
15 even people that don't have their overall
16 tax assessment change, it looks like the
17 land values have changed because you took
18 the 20 percent model off the board here.

19 MR. AROS: Yes, they would get
20 notices from us because the assessment
21 allocation has changed.

22 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: All right.
23 Thank you. I'll come back.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
25 you, Councilman.

1 Chair recognizes Councilman Oh.

2 COUNCILMAN OH: Thank you very
3 much, Council President.

4 Among the things that I find
5 problematic is Philadelphia is such a
6 city of neighborhoods. That means
7 there's one street that separates
8 similarly-looking housing, one street
9 separates one neighborhood from another
10 and it makes a huge difference. For
11 example, there is a street that separates
12 Southwest Philly from University City.
13 And even though the houses look the same,
14 when you come to the end of that street,
15 that's University of Penn and people have
16 bought homes and they've created shops
17 and all that.

18 You cross that street and go a
19 block, two blocks down, it's a completely
20 different neighborhood and that's based
21 on crime. What I mean is when you're on
22 this side of the street, you're unlikely
23 to get shot. When you're on that side of
24 the street, you better be careful. And
25 there are a lot of shootings, violent

1 crime and other things. But the
2 assessments are treating those homes like
3 they're the same because they look the
4 same.

5 Anywhere that you have high
6 crime, I mean you have gunfire, you have
7 violent crime, you have people being
8 shot, the houses don't sell well. In any
9 place have you taken into account those
10 factors of violent crime in assessing the
11 difference between one house and another
12 house?

13 MR. AROS: No, we would not be
14 allowed to factor demographic or
15 statistical information like that into
16 our assessments. What I can tell you on
17 a broader level to what you were saying
18 was that the 500, almost 600 market
19 geographical market areas that we have,
20 we literally draw those down to the
21 street line level and in some cases to
22 the parcel level. So if we have picked
23 up variances even from across the street
24 to where this side of the street sells
25 for significantly different, we can draw

1 that neighborhood, that geographic market
2 area line down the center of a street.

3 If they behave the same, we can
4 put a line behind the properties so that
5 way we capture the full street. So when
6 we see influences like perhaps as an
7 example some of the catchment districts
8 where one side of the street may be in it
9 and one may not and we can tell that one
10 side is selling differently even if the
11 properties look alike, we can draw that
12 subneighborhood, that market area
13 literally down to the parcel boundaries
14 of any parcel or a street center line to
15 where one side is in one group and one
16 group is in another.

17 COUNCILMAN OH: I think that
18 information is very important. I mean, I
19 just looked at the assessment on my
20 house. And where I live, a lot of people
21 would not live. I'm just saying that
22 frankly. I've lived there my whole life.
23 And my assessment is almost doubled, but
24 we have a lot of crime in my
25 neighborhood. And along with that comes

1 illegal dumping, illegal tractor
2 trailers, prostitution, harassment, all
3 that type of stuff.

4 My neighbors don't come out of
5 their house after dark. They don't use
6 the park and they cannot afford to pay
7 the almost doubling of property values.
8 They cannot do it and I don't think they
9 should, you know. There are a lot of
10 problems in that neighborhood that comes
11 with high crime, and those houses are
12 not -- they're not going to sell for that
13 amount unless it's a whole gentrification
14 effort, you're just going to push people
15 out of entire blocks, which I don't think
16 is the purpose here.

17 Anyway I will just ask my
18 colleagues, many of them, to reflect on
19 the difference between one home and
20 another home just based on crime. The
21 homes look the same, but this block and
22 that block is a completely different
23 situation. We had a young man shot to
24 death right at the bus stop on the corner
25 of my block, that was over the summer.

1 The other young man ran into my backyard.
2 I mean, that is a common problem in many
3 parts of our City that distinguishes the
4 value of one home based on neighborhood
5 and quality of life and crime to another.
6 But it doesn't seem to be factored into
7 the assessment. You're telling me
8 because a law doesn't allow it, but I'm
9 thinking there must be some other way to
10 determine that. But I'll leave it at
11 that.

12 Thank you very much, Council
13 President.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
15 you, Councilman.

16 Chair recognizes Councilwoman
17 Gauthier.

18 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
19 you, Council President.

20 I'm sorry if I missed this
21 before, but can you clarify how soon a
22 resident can file a First Level appeal
23 and when OPA will start reviewing these
24 appeals?

25 MR. AROS: So the ability to

1 file First Level Review will be tied into
2 when we're able to mail the notices.
3 Each notice come with a First Level
4 Review form. And once we know what the
5 mailing date is, we will know what the
6 deadline is and everything else. For
7 those that get the notice, it's very
8 easy. It has a barcode that identifies
9 your property, so it doesn't require
10 manual entry. But we will have blank
11 forms for folks that either don't get it
12 or lose it or whatever. But those forms
13 will be available as we prepare to do the
14 mailing.

15 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.
16 Thank you. Are OPA and the City going to
17 work with the BRT to extend the formal
18 property tax appeal deadline beyond
19 October 1st?

20 MR. AROS: I think as I
21 mentioned a little while ago to
22 Councilman Squilla, that's a state -- set
23 by the state. OPA does not have the
24 authority to ask or waive that deadline
25 for the BRT.

1 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.

2 Are you going to work with the state to
3 do that?

4 MR. AROS: I --

5 MR. DUBOW: We can discuss that
6 with the BRT and with our state lobbyists
7 and see what we can do.

8 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.

9 Has the City certified Philly's property
10 tax assessments to the state?

11 MR. AROS: The state has not
12 asked for our submission yet. So when
13 they ask for the '23 certified roll, we
14 will provide that.

15 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Okay.
16 Can you describe the key differences in
17 OPA's methodology for conducting
18 assessments in Tax Year '23 as compared
19 to the methodology used for conducting
20 assessments in Tax Year '20?

21 MR. AROS: Tax Year '20 did you
22 say?

23 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: (Nodded
24 affirmatively).

25 MR. AROS: So Tax Year '20 was

1 what was known as a trending
2 reassessment. So in a year like 2023, we
3 build new models, we recalibrate models,
4 draw up new zones and basically your
5 value starts from scratch. It's not
6 based or predicated on a previous value.
7 We put all the data elements in, we put
8 all the sales in and like I said,
9 recalibrate the models and build them
10 from the start.

11 For 2020, it was a much broader
12 scope in the sense that we analyzed
13 changes over one-year period of time as
14 opposed to using sales that would go back
15 a little further than that in a full
16 modeling process and we applied them more
17 broadly to properties at the time I
18 believe it was 14 geographic zones
19 throughout the City.

20 So the sales analysis was
21 shorter just to pick up the changes from
22 the previous year since we had done a
23 reassessment the previous year, and also
24 a factor was applied to a larger scope, a
25 larger area of properties than we

1 normally would do, so there wasn't an
2 individual value we calculated. It was
3 taking a previous assessment and applying
4 an adjustment for sales that were
5 analyzed from the previous certification.

6 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: And
7 sorry. Can you just clarify how that's
8 different than your methodology for Tax
9 Year '23?

10 MR. AROS: Sure. So trying to
11 put it as simple as possible, we didn't
12 take a previous number and add a factor
13 to it. That's what 2020 was. 2020 we
14 took a previous assessment, added a
15 factor which took in, it didn't take in
16 all the characteristics of properties
17 that we normally do when we build the
18 model from the start. So this assessment
19 analyzed more years of sales and it
20 analyzed a number of different features
21 and characteristics about a property that
22 were not analyzed as part of the trending
23 which was placed on top of a previous
24 value, and this one was built from
25 scratch.

1 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: And when
2 do you expect to get us a more detailed
3 description of that methodology?

4 MR. AROS: So normally, I think
5 the Philadelphia Code has a month after
6 our certification date. So just
7 certifying now, we're working to get that
8 as quickly as possible. But hopefully in
9 the next month we will have that detailed
10 methodology required by the Philadelphia
11 Code.

12 COUNCILWOMAN GAUTHIER: Thank
13 you.

14 Thank you, Council President.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
16 you, Councilwoman.

17 I understand that we are in the
18 process of receiving the data? Mr. Aros,
19 do you know anything about that?

20 MR. AROS: Sorry. I went on
21 mute for a second. Yes, so we spoke with
22 representatives of Council last Friday as
23 to get some of the data as quickly as
24 possible. And so, we'll be working on
25 that this week now that the values have

1 been finalized and produce a file so that
2 Council can have the ability to do some
3 of their own analysis as requested.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: All
5 right. That will be helpful. Thank you.

6 Chair recognizes Councilman
7 Domb.

8 COUNCILMAN DOMB: Thank you,
9 Council President.

10 Thank you again for your
11 testimony today, Director Aros. I just
12 have a comment that I want to maybe ask
13 the Administration if they can handle
14 this one. Because I think what I've been
15 listening to and what I've been hearing
16 from our residents is the frustration and
17 also from my colleagues.

18 And I think that -- I know you
19 don't necessarily, Director Aros, have an
20 answer for what I'm about to say, but I
21 think it's a part of the frustration that
22 we're hearing from residents and
23 businesses since this information, the
24 assessment information was released. The
25 real issue here is that our budget in the

1 last seven years has increased over 40
2 percent. We're like 1.6 billion. And
3 now, we're telling people their taxes are
4 going up even higher.

5 And the overall frustration is
6 that we are missing a value proposition
7 that speaks to our residents, basically
8 does the value residents receive for the
9 taxes they're currently paying meet or
10 exceed their expectations and would
11 increasing their taxes further enhance
12 the City's ability to achieve results
13 that matter to them like public safety,
14 like quality of life, like improved
15 skills and other City services.

16 So the question here, in the
17 last seven years after investing 1.6
18 billion, are we a safer city, a greener
19 city, cleaner and more efficiently run
20 city than seven years ago? And what can
21 the Mayor and the Administration
22 communicate as to why we should levy even
23 more taxes from our residents and
24 property owners after they have already
25 increased our budget by 1.6 billion in

1 the last seven years without it seems
2 meaningful advancement towards the
3 city-wide goals for a public safety,
4 quality-of-life issues and innovative
5 city? So, Rob, do you want to answer
6 that one?

7 MR. DUBOW: I do, because it's
8 important to communicate that every
9 single penny that will come to the
10 General Fund through this property
11 assessment is going back in the form of
12 relief, either through the increased
13 Homestead, through proposed reductions in
14 the wage tax, through increases and cost
15 of the Senior Citizen Tax Freeze, through
16 increasing the cap on LOOP, if we're
17 putting more money into outreach. None
18 of this is coming back to the General
19 Fund. It's all going back to relief.

20 COUNCILMAN DOMB: All right. So
21 now I guess the question remains the
22 other 1.6 billion, people are saying
23 seven years when the budget was closer to
24 4 billion and now it's closer to 5.6
25 billion, and in any of the surveys that

1 we've all seen, do I feel the City is
2 safer, do I feel the quality of life is
3 better, do I feel our trash is being
4 picked up on time better, do I feel in
5 general that the City feels better.

6 And I think if you ask the
7 majority of the people, the answer might
8 not be yes, might be no. So how do we
9 change that and how do we fix it because
10 I think people will pay for things if
11 they feel they're getting the services?

12 MR. DUBOW: Yeah. And that
13 is -- aside from this part of discussion,
14 that is what we tried to do our budget
15 proposal this year. If you look at where
16 the increases were, they were in things
17 like the anti-violence initiatives, there
18 was additional funding for this the
19 Streets Department to make sure trash
20 collection is on time, that we attack
21 illegal dumping. They were for things
22 like increasing education, both the
23 School District and Community College, so
24 that's really what this budget was about,
25 about getting to improved outcomes.

1 COUNCILMAN DOMB: And I really
2 think and I was listening and I heard
3 Councilman Oh talk about his neighbors.
4 You can't have people living in the City
5 who are afraid to go out at night. That
6 just isn't going to keep them here long.
7 You have to fix those issues and they
8 have to be fixed quickly. So I just
9 wanted to share that because I think
10 that's some of the frustration that's
11 going on or most of the frustration. So
12 anyway thank you to the Administration
13 and thank you, Director Aros, for your
14 testimony.

15 And thank you, Council
16 President.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
18 you, Councilman.

19 We have one last question by
20 Councilman Squilla, I believe.
21 Councilman Squilla.

22 (No response.)

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
24 Councilman Squilla.

25 (Background interruption.)

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

2 Hello, Councilman?

3 (No response.)

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Okay.

5 I think Councilman --

6 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: I'm here.

7 I don't know if you can hear me.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: I

9 hear you now. Go ahead.

10 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you.

11 I know this is going to be a continued

12 conversation. And I guess my question

13 would be will we be able to bring back

14 OPA and obviously Revenue to deal with

15 these questions because we're already

16 getting inundated? We have received

17 emails, at least one constituent whose

18 property value assessment went through

19 \$70,000 to \$560,000 in this one year,

20 which as you can imagine would be a

21 shock.

22 So we're going to get more and

23 more as people start to now go online to

24 look at their assessments and more and

25 more questions will be inundated with our

1 offices. But my fear is not only the
2 people who know how to do it, but the
3 people who do not know how to do it, so
4 we need to be able to get the data
5 necessary that we can notify people who
6 have large increases, how we can inform
7 them of what's going on before they get
8 the letter in September? And we're going
9 to need your help in OPA to get that
10 information. You guys -- do we have
11 house-by-house data at this point? Rob
12 or AJ?

13 MR. AROS: That's part of the
14 file we're currently putting together for
15 Council that we hope to have over the
16 next few days.

17 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Okay. That
18 may help us.

19 And then, Council President,
20 we'll probably need some help to reach
21 out to these folks because not everybody
22 is going to be savvy enough to go on
23 online and to look at what their
24 assessments are. And I think we're going
25 to need to get to them before they get

1 this notice so we can inform them what
2 they need to do ahead of time and what
3 protections we need to put in place.

4 So thank you and looking forward
5 to a possible callback to answer
6 additional questions.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Yes.
8 Thank you, Councilman. Yeah, we're going
9 to do what we need to do at a minimum to
10 make sure that people get all the
11 information and what assistance.

12 And, Mr. Aros, you may have to
13 add an additional hotline because we're
14 going to be referring a lot of people
15 over to your office also.

16 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: And real
17 quick, Council President. They did last
18 year have the calculator. I don't know
19 if it was mentioned earlier. I don't see
20 that on the OPA site. Is that something
21 they're looking to add again this year?

22 MR. AROS: Yes. I mentioned it
23 briefly in my opening testimony, but
24 we're working with Revenue, Finance and
25 OIT to have that calculator added to the

1 web in the coming days and weeks. Based
2 on the conversation that we have had with
3 the AVI Group last week we already
4 started working on that.

5 COUNCILMAN SQUILLA: Thank you.

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
7 you. Thank you, Councilman.

8 Chair recognizes Councilwoman
9 Bass.

10 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Thank you,
11 Mr. President.

12 So I just had a couple other
13 questions and I wanted to talk about your
14 requests for additional funding,
15 particularly in light of what we just
16 heard from my colleague Councilman Domb
17 and what's been expressed here today.
18 There's a real problem with providing
19 additional funds with the amount of
20 increases that are going to be coming,
21 and people really don't see any value in
22 what they're paying already in taxes.

23 As my colleague mentioned,
24 people do not feel safer, they do not
25 feel the streets are cleaner -- well, the

1 fact of the matter is it's not safer,
2 it's not cleaner, it's not what it should
3 be or could be, and the budget has grown
4 significantly, yet the services have
5 dropped off also significantly. So it's
6 very hard to advocate for any increase.

7 Let me ask you about the
8 increase that was requested. Would any
9 of that increase be going towards
10 supporting staffers who would identify
11 properties that were overappraised during
12 these assessments, properties that were
13 inappropriately appraised? Would any of
14 that money be for hiring for those
15 particular positions, those types of
16 positions?

17 MR. AROS: Yeah. The increase
18 that we see, which is the original
19 appropriated funds that's requested last
20 year is virtually identical. The
21 increases that we -- we had some
22 vacancies we knew we wouldn't fill. So
23 throughout the FY22, we did reduce the
24 target budget. So the increase would be
25 asking for the funding back to fill those

1 positions, which are staffing at all
2 levels, but particularly evaluator
3 vacancies and the incorporation of the
4 management training position, which will
5 be able to help a number of aspects of
6 the Department, but particularly
7 assisting those that are doing the
8 reviews and looking at the First Level
9 Reviews and doing some of the other
10 assessments.

11 Those aren't necessarily things
12 we would throw a new employee in because
13 they need to have their certification and
14 their training for their state
15 certification, but they would be able to
16 pick up some other work or some other
17 details that would free up some time for
18 folks that would normally be doing a
19 multitude of things to sort of focus on
20 those reviews and that process.

21 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. And
22 let me ask you. So the total expenditure
23 for contracts in Fiscal Year '23 is
24 almost 1.5 million. How much of that
25 could be dedicated to hiring and training

1 City employees to do that same work so
2 that we're hiring staff rather than going
3 to outside contracts as a way of getting
4 our work done?

5 MR. AROS: Yeah. So most of
6 that I think would be for things that we
7 kind of identified that current employees
8 are bringing additional staffing would be
9 able to do. So some consulting services
10 that we use, for instance, they get
11 market data that's typically unavailable
12 to us for instance, and then there are
13 some -- the call center which we
14 mentioned a couple of times, that's
15 staffed offsite and that's a necessity.
16 We wouldn't have the room or space to
17 have that in the Department --

18 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Where is it
19 staffed at?

20 MR. AROS: The exact location I
21 don't know off the top of my head, but
22 it's offsite. It's contracted out --

23 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Is it in the
24 City of Philadelphia?

25 MR. AROS: I believe so, yes.

1 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: If we could
2 affirm that, that would be great. I'd
3 like to know.

4 MR. AROS: And I'm just looking
5 through a couple of other things here.
6 Primarily we'd obviously for as much of
7 the contracting we do we want to bring as
8 much of it inhouse as possible. But some
9 of it, it's more efficient from a
10 turnaround perspective with the work and
11 cost-efficiency to have that done through
12 external vendors.

13 Most of the -- I don't know that
14 reallocating that money would -- down the
15 line it may be more helpful, but we're
16 trying to fill some of these vacancies
17 now, so I don't think that's an immediate
18 concern. We don't have enough money in
19 the Class 100 to bring people on board,
20 but down the line I think the Class 200
21 is something we could evaluate and make
22 some changes if we're able to staff up as
23 much as I would like.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BASS: Okay. Well,
25 we'll look for the additional details.

1 Thank you, Mr. President.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
3 you, Councilwoman.

4 I don't see any other Members
5 requesting questions of these witnesses.
6 So with that, Mr. Aros and Dubow, I want
7 to thank you for your testimony today.
8 Probably should anticipate participating
9 in a callback once all of the numbers are
10 done and the analysis is done on behalf
11 of City Council, and we shield all those
12 phone calls. I'm sure that we're going
13 to have a lot of other questions and
14 hopefully some solutions. But thank you.
15 Thank you very much for your testimony
16 today.

17 MR. DUBOW: Thank you.

18 MR. AROS: Thank you.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: By
20 the way, colleagues, I think we have
21 around 40 individuals testifying, members
22 of the public today, so please prepare
23 yourself for that later on this
24 afternoon.

25 At this time we're going to be

1 calling the Board of Revision of Taxes.

2 Are you connected -- Mr. McDermott, who's
3 the next person to testify?

4 THE CLERK: The next person to
5 testify is the Executive Director of the
6 Board of Revision of Taxes, Carla Pagan.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
8 afternoon. How are you?

9 MS. PAGAN: Good afternoon,
10 Council President and Councilmembers and
11 peers. Good morning. I can be brief and
12 open the floor to questions. I'll start
13 by reading our testimony. With me today
14 is Executive Assistant Linda Tucci. The
15 Board of Revision of Taxes will end
16 Fiscal Year 2022 in a good position.

17 The Board and Operation staff
18 exceeded our expectations to recover from
19 COVID delays in staffing shortages to
20 hear appeal balances from Tax Year 2020
21 and Tax Year 2021 appeals. We're also
22 pleased to be ahead of schedule with Tax
23 Year '22 appeals. Also, 1,186 appeals
24 filed for Tax Year 2022, the Board is 57
25 percent. The remaining appeals have been

1 scheduled between today and the end of
2 September.

3 The Department will use a few
4 hearing dates between October and
5 December of this year to hear appeals of
6 continued parties and those special cases
7 follow by the School District of
8 Philadelphia. The Department's focus for
9 Fiscal Year 2023 will revolve around
10 anticipated heavy appeal-filing volume of
11 course due to the 2023 city-wide
12 reassessment. We are expecting a process
13 anywhere between 15,000 to 18,000 appeals
14 which is 100 percent increase from our
15 2020 filings.

16 Since the implementation of CAMA
17 and the shift to remote work, several BRT
18 processes have changed. The Department
19 has updated appeal filing forms that are
20 friendlier to onscreen users. We will
21 also improve our website for ease of use
22 and to simplify the appeal filing
23 process, and we are testing and trying
24 new methods to process emailed appeals
25 and to shorten the time between filing

1 and our first hearing date.

2 We've also reconfigured our
3 hearing room to easily accommodate hybrid
4 hearing sessions. Even though we face
5 new challenges and stresses related to
6 this new COVID work environment, the BRT
7 is excited about the technological
8 advances that have come from it. We have
9 been forced to think outside the box to
10 find new methods for continued production
11 and efficiency while still serving the
12 property owners of the City.

13 In this first quarter of Fiscal
14 Year 2023, we plan to sharpen and
15 fine-tune those methods and be ready for
16 this upcoming 2023 appeal season. So
17 with that, I'll open the floor to
18 questions from Council.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
20 you. Thank you very much for your
21 abbreviated testimony. Appreciate it.

22 MS. PAGAN: Sure.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: A
24 couple of quick questions that I have
25 before I turn it over to colleagues. So

1 in light of your FY23 reassessment, you
2 obviously want to receive a significant
3 number of inquiries for one reason or
4 another.

5 A lot of people still remember
6 the good ol' BRT. Now, your in the loop
7 in a different capacity as part of a
8 BRT/OPA team. But a lot of folks, many
9 homeowners are probably going to be
10 notified as these proposed changes later
11 than usual based on the concerns that
12 were raised, mailing, lack of envelopes,
13 all of the things that we talked about
14 earlier.

15 What steps are you guys going to
16 be taking to ensure that the process is
17 smooth for the Philadelphia homeowners?
18 And by the way, we put a plug in for
19 potential increase in resources
20 earlier --

21 MS. PAGAN: Yes, I heard.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: We
23 want to make sure our citizens are given
24 every possible consideration as it
25 relates to you all's process.

1 MS. PAGAN: Absolutely.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Can
3 you talk about how you may have to
4 respond to this?

5 MS. PAGAN: Sure. Because of
6 the timing of the 2023 assessments, we
7 are actually encouraging all property
8 owners to appeal now. And I know that
9 the concern is, well, who has Internet
10 access, who doesn't have Internet access.
11 So we do have one employee in our office
12 on standby to take all the phone calls,
13 to retrieve property owners' 2023
14 assessed values and to actually mail them
15 a BRT appeal form if it's needed.

16 We can also support Council at
17 any kind of summer outreach that you do
18 to notify residents of the appeal process
19 in the 2023 assessments. We're working
20 with the OIT to update our website to
21 show that same information and we've also
22 put that information on all of our email
23 signatures and on our Department
24 voicemail. So we are trying to get the
25 word out and reach as many people as we

1 can to appeal now rather than waiting
2 until you get that assessment notice in
3 the mail.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
5 you. I want to make sure I heard you.
6 You said you are recommending that they
7 appeal now?

8 MS. PAGAN: We are -- appellants
9 can file both the FLR and the BRT appeal.
10 But the FLR process is not an interactive
11 process. The appellants fill out the
12 form, submit evidence to support their
13 appeal argument and they get an answer in
14 writing. So if you get reduced from that
15 process, people are very pleased. But if
16 you get denied, you don't -- there's no
17 voice from the property owners, and we
18 have found that the greatest thing about
19 the BRT is we're ears, if people want to
20 share, we are here to listen to their
21 arguments and to their concerns.

22 So just in case we do recommend
23 that people file their formal appeal now,
24 just in case the FLR mailing notice is
25 late or if it's not filed by October 3rd,

1 and like you heard Mr. Aros say, our BRT
2 filing deadline is always the first
3 Monday in October, and that's a deadline
4 that we don't set as a City department,
5 but from the state. It's a Pennsylvania
6 statute. So it's not the Board or even
7 myself determining that filing deadline.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Okay.

9 All right. Another question: What's the
10 average time that a filer must wait
11 between filing and receiving their first
12 hearing date, assuming that time is of
13 notice, that FY23 property assessments
14 for residents do you feel that the BRT
15 can get through all applications before
16 the FY23 property taxes are due?
17 Everything's been somewhat pushed back as
18 you know, so we're a little concerned.

19 MS. PAGAN: So in a typical
20 year, the BRT filing deadline would be
21 October 3rd, and the Board would start
22 hearing those appeals in January of 2023.
23 And we would usually allow all of
24 Calendar Year 2023 to hear those appeals.
25 The one great thing about us being ahead

1 of the game going into this fall season
2 is that if people can file their BRT this
3 summer, then we're in a good position to
4 start our appeal hearings in late October
5 and then November and December so the
6 hearing starts sooner. But typically, we
7 do not start until January 1 of that tax
8 year.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Okay.

10 MS. PAGAN: So about 4 to 11
11 months between when you would file and
12 you would have your hearing.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Okay.

14 Thank you.

15 Any additional questions by
16 members of the Committee for this
17 particular witness?

18 (No response.)

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: I
20 can't believe I'm not seeing any --

21 MS. PAGAN: They probably went
22 to lunch.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: You
24 must know a lot -- you know somebody.
25 All right. Well, I want to thank you for

1 your testimony. We'll probably be
2 getting back to you all because there's a
3 lot of uncertainty around the OPA and the
4 assessments. I understand the numbers
5 are actually coming in as we speak adding
6 some additional categories. So once
7 that's in place, this whole issue with
8 respect to the appeals process as it
9 relates to the BRT, so we can get a
10 little more clarity on the timing and
11 what level of resources that you all may
12 need. So I anticipate that we'll be
13 reaching back out to you.

14 MS. PAGAN: Okay. Thank you.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: I
16 want to thank you all very much for your
17 testimony and look forward to the process
18 that will hopefully provide some level of
19 relief because this is going to be a very
20 challenging year for the citizens of the
21 City of Philadelphia, to say the least.
22 Thank you. Thank you so much.

23 MS. PAGAN: Thank you.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: To
25 the Members, we are scheduled to have our

1 public testimony at 3 o'clock so we'll
2 come back then. So until then, we will
3 take a break and we will reconvene the
4 hearing this afternoon at 3 o'clock. So
5 I'll see you all at 3 o'clock. Thank
6 you. Thank you very much.

7 (Afternoon recess.)

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
9 you very much. We're going to get
10 started. First of all, I want to thank
11 you all for your patience. We are going
12 to reconvene from this morning's hearing.

13 So we will resume the public
14 hearing and begin taking testimony from
15 the public on tax bills related to the
16 Mayor's proposed budget. Before
17 proceeding however, I want to lay out a
18 few ground rules on how we will proceed
19 with the public testimony.

20 Before we hear the testimony
21 though, I would like to note one item for
22 the record. I want to offer an amendment
23 to the Capital Program and Capital Budget
24 that requires no vote of this body today.
25 This amendment restores the funding for

1 improvements to existing facility also
2 known as ITEF to preCOVID levels.
3 Improvements in existing facilities exist
4 in Parks and Recreation and the
5 Department of Finance.

6 The reason why these amendments
7 are being offered at this time is that
8 the Philadelphia Home Rule Charter spells
9 out the requirements for any changes that
10 are to be made to the Capital Program
11 before Council can enact an amendment to
12 the Capital Program other than an
13 amendment to delete a project.

14 We must first request through
15 the Mayor the recommendations of the City
16 Planning Commission. The Commission has
17 30 days in which to respond with this
18 recommendation. So I want to start the
19 clock running now and to ensure ample
20 opportunities for this body to
21 incorporate any potential capital
22 amendments before passage of the budget.

23 If all Councilmembers have a
24 copy of the proposed amendments, if not,
25 please let me know. I believe everyone

1 does. So the Chair -- Councilwoman
2 Quinones-Sanchez is going to offer this
3 amendment on my behalf and we're not
4 requesting a vote again on the
5 amendments. My intent is to get the
6 amendment on the record.

7 We will now briefly recess our
8 public hearing and go to our public
9 meeting for the purpose of introducing
10 these amendments and to the capital --
11 I'm sorry, and to the official record.

12 Chair recognizes Councilmember
13 Quinones-Sanchez.

14 COUNCILWOMAN QUINONES-SANCHEZ:
15 Thank you, Mr. President.

16 I offer amendments to Bill Nos.
17 220284 and 220285 and request that no
18 vote be taken on them at this time.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
20 you very much. We'll see that the
21 stenographer receives a copy of the
22 amendments so that they will be made a
23 part of the record.

24 And we will now go back into the
25 public hearing. Thank you very much for

1 your patience. Okay. We will start our
2 public testimony and lay out a few ground
3 rules.

4 We're here today to hear from
5 you about the City's proposed budget and
6 where you believe the City should focus
7 its priorities in regards to taxes. Due
8 to the COVID-19 emergency, we have
9 implemented special procedures with
10 respect to public comment which was
11 advertised and posted on Council's
12 website and sent out in a press release.

13 Speakers interested in giving
14 testimony were asked to call or email us
15 by 3:00 p.m. yesterday so that we can
16 take the technical steps necessary to
17 provide an opportunity for public comment
18 in a virtual environment. To ensure that
19 there is an opportunity for everyone here
20 to be heard, certain ground rules have
21 been established as follows:

22 Your testimony should be about
23 the City's budget and proposed taxes.
24 All those who signed up to give public
25 comment were telephoned at the beginning

1 of this hearing and invited to join the
2 hearing. Please make sure that your
3 phone is muted at this time and you will
4 be called in the order in which you were
5 signed up.

6 Once your name is called, please
7 unmute your phone. You will then have up
8 to -- today because of the volume -- two
9 minutes to testify, so please adjust your
10 testimony to reflect the two-minute time
11 limit. In order to be fair, we're
12 willing to hold faithfully to the three-
13 minute limit. So once you ask to begin
14 your testimony, a timer will be started.
15 And when there are 30 seconds remaining
16 to your time, you will be reminded of
17 this.

18 Once your allotted time is
19 passed, you will be asked to conclude
20 your remarks. And at that time, please
21 mute your phone and stay on the line
22 until the hearing is concluded. I want
23 to thank you very much for your
24 willingness to participate. We really
25 appreciate you taking time out of your

1 busy day.

2 Mr. McDermott, will you please
3 read the name of our first speaker.

4 COUNCILWOMAN BASS:

5 Mr. President, I apologize. This is
6 Councilwoman Bass. I am present.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
8 you, Councilwoman. The record shall
9 reflect.

10 Good morning, are you connected,
11 the first person?

12 THE CLERK: Our first witness is
13 Mo Rushdy.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
15 morning -- actually good afternoon. I'm
16 sorry. State your name for the record
17 and please proceed with your testimony.

18 (No response.)

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
20 Mr. Rushdy.

21 (No response.)

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Mo
23 Rushdy, are you connected?

24 MR. RUSHDY: Can you hear me?

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Yeah,

1 we can now. Please proceed with your
2 testimony.

3 MR. RUSHDY: My name is Mo
4 Rushdy and I'm testifying today as both
5 the Vice-president of the Building
6 Industry Association of Philadelphia and
7 as a founding member of the Philadelphia
8 Real Estate Alliance, which was recently
9 formed to utilize skills, tools and
10 resources in our industries to impact the
11 future of development, investment and job
12 creation in the Philadelphia region.

13 I want to thank the Council
14 President and all the members of Council
15 for allowing me to testify today. Our
16 City is at a major crossroads and the
17 need for services and programming has
18 never been greater. Fortunately, tax
19 revenue is coming in at a higher amount
20 than expected and the 1.4 billion in
21 federal American Rescue Plan funds allow
22 Council and the Administration the
23 opportunity to take a step back and
24 consider its priorities as it debates
25 this last budget before the next year's

1 Mayoral election.

2 For too long, to borrow Paul

3 Levy's phrase, Philadelphia tax what can

4 leave instead of what must stay. It is

5 past that time that we shift more of the

6 tax burden away from the income and

7 business taxes. The Mayor's proposal is

8 a good start. The BIA is in the business

9 of building and rebuilding Philadelphia

10 and City Hall is our partner in doing so.

11 But our partner cannot keep up.

12 L&I and the Planning Commission

13 are severely understaffed and in need of

14 additional budget funding in order to

15 ensure that projects are properly planned

16 and reviewed for safety and neighborhood

17 appropriateness, which while allowing us

18 in the developing community the ability

19 to move forward with our projects on time

20 and on budget.

21 We recognize that there's an

22 urgent need in Philadelphia for

23 affordable housing options for a great

24 many people and we've been seeking to

25 collaborate and craft policies with

1 Council that help all residents in the
2 City share in its prosperity. The NPI,
3 Neighborhood Preservation Initiative, and
4 its new Turn the Key program are steps in
5 the right direction that the BIA supports
6 wholeheartedly.

7 The best opportunity to generate
8 significant quantities of affordable
9 housing for Philadelphians would be to
10 list all the red tape on all public land
11 dispositions and allow the private sector
12 with its financing capabilities to take a
13 leading role to get the solution
14 implemented. We as a City also have a
15 huge opportunity in investing close to
16 \$40 million to unlock thousands of vacant
17 lots with U.S. Bank liens with the
18 majority of it being vacant and clustered
19 in Council Districts 3rd, 5th and 7th.

20 These Districts also have the highest
21 poverty rates in the City. It is time to
22 put these properties to productive use.

23 The BIA is sincere in its desire
24 to be part of the solution and to be in
25 solutions that work for all. Thank you

1 for the opportunity to testify today.

2 Thank you.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
4 you for your testimony. We appreciate
5 it. Next name.

6 THE CLERK: Our next witness is
7 Lauren Gilchrist.

8 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
9 afternoon. State your --

10 MS. GILCHRIST: Can you hear me?

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Yes,
12 we can. Please proceed with your --

13 MS. GILCHRIST: Hello.
14 Wonderful. Thank you so much, Council
15 President. My name is Lauren Gilchrist
16 and I'm here today on behalf of the
17 Greater Philadelphia Chapter of NAIOP
18 where I serve as the Co-Chair of the
19 Government Affairs Committee. NAIOP is a
20 501(c)(6) organization that represents
21 the commercial real estate development
22 community in Philadelphia and it is also
23 a founding member of the Philadelphia
24 Real Estate Alliance.

25 Thank you so much and to the

1 rest of your Committee as a Whole for
2 permitting us to provide testimony on the
3 budget. The membership of NAIOP
4 recognizes that there are many important
5 issues to be addressed in the current
6 proposed budget, from housing to crime
7 and basic issues of public health. The
8 City and budget must address a host of
9 challenges that impact neighborhood
10 communities and businesses alike.

11 From our perspective, the City needs to
12 broaden and grow its tax base through
13 equitable and inclusive development to
14 meet these compelling budgetary needs and
15 improve the quality of life in our
16 communities.

17 It is this growth and the City's
18 built environment that has been driving
19 the tax resources necessary to invest in
20 a high quality of life in all
21 neighborhoods of the City, whether real
22 estate, wage or business taxes. Stifling
23 or stopping this growth will restrict tax
24 revenues that are critical to making the
25 investments necessary to provide quality

1 services to all neighborhoods.

2 Chief among the things most
3 squarely within City government's control
4 to address are the processes that govern
5 planning and development in the City. In
6 order to invest in equitable growth, the
7 process of planning and development and
8 the investments that will support them
9 must be streamlined and adequately funded
10 to ensure that developers of all shapes
11 and sizes in all communities and in all
12 scales can seamlessly move their projects
13 through our City's processes in order to
14 get to completion.

15 One of the significant
16 challenges in this system is capacity
17 within the Department of Planning and
18 Development. Even prior to the backlog
19 of applications that was precipitated by
20 the sunseting of the 10-year tax
21 abatement, the Department of Planning and
22 Development had needed significant
23 additional human resources to accomplish
24 its mission.

25 In today's budget one additional

1 head count for the Department has been
2 proposed by the Administration despite a
3 demonstrated need for 10 to 14 additional
4 staff. Unlike other departments
5 providing required reviews and issuing
6 permits, very little of the staff time
7 provided by the Department of Planning
8 and Development is reflected in the
9 calculation of fees associated with
10 building permits. As a result, P&D is
11 not allocated sufficient personnel and
12 technology support to process
13 applications for reviews and permits
14 resulting in long lead times to move
15 projects through to full building
16 permits.

17 By way of example, it takes
18 approximately 70 hours of staff time to
19 review and manage one midsize commercial
20 development project through the civic
21 design review process. These staffing
22 costs were not factored into the fees for
23 building permits since building permit
24 fees were set prior to the establishment
25 of the current CDR requirement.

1 Fees generated through the
2 building permit process should fully
3 cover the extensive staff time to review
4 a new project. Without fully funding
5 Planning and Development, less
6 sophisticated developers and some
7 neighborhood communities struggle to
8 navigate the permitting and entitlement
9 process successfully due to lack of
10 ability to withstand extended time frame
11 and less than adequate technical support
12 from Planning and Development staff.

13 This is a long-term issue that
14 will require creative problem-solving and
15 process change and NAIOP and the
16 Philadelphia Real Estate Alliance are
17 happy to lend our technical capabilities
18 of solving this challenge. Our
19 comprehensive review of all City services
20 required to provide Planning and
21 Development reviews and approvals should
22 be conducted to assure that the City is
23 being compensated for the direct cost of
24 services provided to developers.

25 For now, however, it's

1 imperative that you increase Class 100
2 funding --

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:

4 Ma'am, ma'am, you got to wrap it up.

5 MS. GILCHRIST: Okay. I have
6 one more sentence and then it's all back
7 to you. So your full commitment to the
8 Department will be greatly appreciated.
9 We would love to solution with you and
10 let's work together. Thank you for the
11 time and consideration.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
13 you so much for your testimony. We
14 appreciate it.

15 THE CLERK: Our next witness is
16 Jamal Johnson.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
18 afternoon. State your name for the
19 record and proceed with your testimony.

20 MR. JOHNSON: Hello. My name is
21 Jamal Johnson. I'm the General Manager
22 of the Comcast Technology Center. I'm
23 here today in my capacity as Chair of the
24 Building Owners and Managers Association
25 of Philadelphia commonly referred to as

1 BOMA. I would like to thank
2 Councilmember Clarke and the Committee of
3 the Whole for this opportunity to testify
4 on the proposed FY23 budget.

5 The past two years have been
6 challenging for a number of fronts. Now,
7 that things appear to be in a turning
8 point in the (inaudible) as the pandemic
9 is concerned, it is clear that we as a
10 community must come together and
11 clarify -- and carefully examine both
12 where we are and where we want to go.
13 For too long the City of Philadelphia is
14 reliant upon revenue streams such as City
15 wage tax, U&O and BIRT that are all
16 portable.

17 If the pandemic has taught us
18 nothing else, it is that we become too
19 reliant on fragile revenue sources.
20 Exhibit A, the City wage taxes. In March
21 of 2022, Center City office workers were
22 sent home. For approximately 40 percent
23 of these high wage office workers' home
24 is the suburbs, not in the City, which
25 means that those workers are not

1 responsible for City wage tax for two
2 years now.

3 Furthermore, if neither reports
4 are to be believed, there is a
5 possibility that some, perhaps even many
6 of these workers will continue to work
7 remotely from their homes in the suburbs.

8 At present, BOMA buildings are at best 33
9 percent occupied with no estimated
10 timetable for when other workers will
11 return to the office. However, we
12 acknowledge the recently proposed budget
13 offers a slight wage tax reduction. We
14 hope this reduction makes it through to
15 the process and is the type of message
16 businesses and residents need to hear.

17 As employers have been bringing
18 work back to their downtown offices,
19 they've been met with resistance. Many
20 of those employees have theoretically
21 enjoyed a 3.45 pay increase. They have
22 not had to incur increasing
23 transportation costs nor have they
24 experienced the time burdens associated
25 with twice daily commute. The Daily News

1 reports of shootings, crime and unchecked
2 illegal sidewalk behavior compound the
3 return to office narrative. Having these
4 perceptions are hard to break.

5 We have grave concerns that this
6 resistance will (inaudible) in the City
7 and/or leave the City all together in
8 favor of locations closer to their
9 (inaudible). This will have devastating
10 consequences not only to the commercial
11 real estate, but in the City as a whole.

12 The value of our buildings are
13 tied in large part to the revenue streams
14 they provide. When that revenue becomes
15 anemic, it will no doubt cascade to the
16 City's tax rolls into real estate.

17 BOMA's longstanding position for a budget
18 that has been assessed to support growth,
19 at worse do now harm. On the surface,
20 one can argue that this --

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Can
22 you please wrap up.

23 MR. JOHNSON: One more and then
24 I'm done. What happens to the 1.4
25 billion when ARP funds are exhausted.

1 After the transition plan where are we.
2 What does the future look like for the
3 next Administration. Make no mistake our
4 recovery period will be measured in
5 years, not in months. To repopulate our
6 office building is the first step to
7 recovery.

8 In addition to the tax revenue
9 stream, office workers stimulate our
10 local business economy --

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: All
12 right. Sir, you're going over -- I hate
13 to limit the time but we have a
14 significant number of people. We want to
15 make sure everybody gets a chance to
16 testify. And we will have additional
17 time, so we're going to have to wrap it
18 up.

19 Before we proceed, members or
20 people that are on the list, witnesses,
21 in the event that you didn't hear, we're
22 going to have two minutes for individuals
23 to testify. And I'd ask that you please
24 adjust your testimony to reflect the
25 two-minute limit.

1 When you hear the first bell,
2 you have 30 seconds to conclude your
3 remarks. On the second bell we're going
4 to ask that you please summarize and wrap
5 up for your remarks. Again, sometimes we
6 adjust this but today we have a
7 significant amount of people. We want to
8 make sure everybody gets a chance to
9 testify.

10 Next witness, Mr. McDermott.

11 THE CLERK: Our next witness is
12 Ben Connors.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
14 afternoon. State your name for the
15 record. Please proceed with your
16 testimony.

17 MR. CONNORS: Good afternoon.
18 I'm Ben Connors, President and CEO of the
19 General Building Contractors Association,
20 which has a membership of over 300
21 commercial, industrial and institutional
22 general contractors, subcontractors and
23 construction service firms throughout the
24 Greater Philadelphia region. I'm here on
25 behalf of both the GBCA and the

1 Philadelphia Real Estate Alliance. I
2 would like to thank you, Council
3 President and all members of Council for
4 allowing me to testify.

5 First, let me say the Mayor's
6 proposal of reducing wage tax is a good
7 start. We believe City Hall has the
8 opportunity now to get businesses to
9 locate here and grow our job base,
10 lifting Philadelphians out of poverty
11 with those new jobs. When it comes to
12 accomplishing these goals, tax policies
13 matter.

14 But second, I ask that you
15 allocate funds to improve City services
16 and especially by increasing the funds
17 available to L&I to hire and train more
18 inspectors. Philadelphia has been
19 growing and we hope to continue to do so.
20 But as GBCA members build, L&I has not
21 been able to keep up due to lack of
22 staff. As a result, important
23 job-creating projects are delayed and
24 their funding is in danger.

25 Meanwhile unscrupulous

1 contractors are incentivized to not file
2 permits and use misclassified labor which
3 result in unsafe construction sites and
4 less tax revenue for the City. GBCA ask
5 that L&I be given additional resources to
6 proactively attempt to remedy this
7 situation. Finally, I implore City
8 Council to stop imposing additional
9 restrictions on construction.

10 In recent years City Hall has
11 significantly increased regulatory
12 imposed costs on construction and at a
13 pace that has not been conducive for
14 growth. The truth is Philadelphia has
15 dramatically less construction than other
16 cities and suffers greatly as a result.
17 We implore Council to work with the real
18 estate industry to come up with
19 commonsense solutions that encourage
20 construction while addressing your public
21 policy goals as well.

22 If properly nurtured (inaudible)
23 hoping Philadelphia is a city that grows
24 equitably. We are eager to work together
25 to help accomplish this. Thank you for

1 your time and consideration.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
3 you for your testimony. We appreciate
4 it.

5 THE CLERK: Our next witness is
6 Sue Jacobson.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
8 afternoon. State your name for the
9 record and please proceed with your
10 testimony.

11 COUNCIL TECH SUPPORT: She is
12 not connected on Teams, Council
13 President.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Not
15 connected. Next witness.

16 THE CLERK: The next witness is
17 Regina Hairston.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
19 afternoon. Please state your name for
20 the record and proceed with your
21 testimony.

22 MS. HAIRSTON: Good afternoon,
23 Council President Clarke and members of
24 the Philadelphia City Council. My name
25 is Regina A. Harrison, President of the

1 African American Chamber of Commerce of
2 Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware.
3 Today in my testimony I'd like to speak
4 about Black business growth and why
5 investment in Black business is crucial.

6 As the second largest city for a
7 majority diverse population, including
8 42.2 percent African American, we should
9 be leading the nation in Black-owned
10 businesses. Yet we have the lowest
11 Black-owned businesses per capita rate of
12 any major U.S. city at 1.8 Black-owned
13 businesses per every 1,000 Black
14 residents.

15 Additionally, according to an
16 Annual Disparity Study, Philadelphia
17 allocated 68 percent of its contract
18 dollars to businesses owned by White
19 males in 2017. We must do better. As we
20 continue to collaborate and work together
21 to build an inclusive business community,
22 we must remain focused and reinforce
23 intentional and targeted investments to
24 build Black and Brown businesses in
25 neighborhoods across the City.

1 While we have seen some
2 encouraging and intentional legislation
3 come out of this body, we cannot stop
4 here. We should continually look to
5 implement best practices from our other
6 major cities like Chicago, Los Angeles
7 and Milwaukee to create a more equitable
8 and inclusive environment for Black
9 businesses.

10 One such practice is to focus on
11 an intentionally distributed American
12 Rescue Fund dollars as well as other
13 forms of federal funding. Philadelphia
14 has allocated 575 million of the 1.4
15 billion received from the American Rescue
16 Plan for FY22 and 335 million for FY23.
17 As 41 percent of Black businesses
18 nationally during the pandemic, we must
19 ask ourselves how much of this funding is
20 gone towards supporting those local and
21 minority-owned Black businesses who need
22 it most.

23 Other cities like Los Angeles
24 has implemented equity formula to ensure
25 that funding from the ARPA is going

1 towards communities and small businesses
2 disproportionately affected by the
3 pandemic. Majority diversity Milwaukee
4 has allocated 20 percent of its ARPA
5 funding towards supporting communities,
6 small businesses and industries impacted
7 by the pandemic.

8 We as a city should emphasize
9 the importance of investing in diverse
10 businesses and that includes taking an
11 indepth look at the policy such as tax
12 reform and contracting requirements have
13 on our diverse businesses, more
14 specifically with tax reform that
15 provides relief from burden on small
16 businesses growth, particularly and
17 especially Black and Brown businesses.

18 Moreover a recent FY23 survey
19 conducted by the Diverse Chambers
20 Coalition of Philadelphia indicated that
21 a reduction in the BIRT would have a
22 positive or highly positive impact on
23 their businesses. By taking the time to
24 holistically look at all of our options
25 and impacts our actions have, we will

1 strengthen our local economy in our Black
2 community.

3 Other cities have made a
4 critical point in priority to support
5 Black businesses. We must follow suit.
6 We have the responsibility and
7 opportunity to make Philadelphia a more
8 equitable place for all small businesses
9 by investing in them and the time is now.

10 Thank you for your time and
11 consideration.

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
13 you for your testimony. We appreciate
14 it.

15 THE CLERK: Our next witness is
16 Greg Wendell.

17 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
18 afternoon. State your name for the
19 record and please proceed with your
20 testimony.

21 COUNCIL TECH SUPPORT: The
22 participant is not connected to Teams,
23 Council President.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Next
25 witness.

1 THE CLERK: The next witness is
2 Reverend McKinley L. Simms.

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
4 afternoon. State your name for the
5 record and please proceed with your
6 testimony.

7 COUNCIL TECH SUPPORT: This
8 participant is not connected as well.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
10 you. Next speaker.

11 THE CLERK: Next speaker is
12 Ramah McKay.

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
14 afternoon. State your name for the
15 record and please proceed with your
16 testimony.

17 MS. MCKAY: Can you hear me?

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Yes,
19 we can. Just proceed with your testimony
20 please.

21 MS. MCKAY: Thank you. So I'm
22 calling as a resident of Philadelphia and
23 an employee at the University of
24 Pennsylvania. I'm the parent of two
25 children that attend Philadelphia public

1 schools. I'm concerned about the chronic
2 underfunding of those schools and I'm
3 calling about one important piece of the
4 solution, which is ensuring that Penn and
5 other wealthy nonprofits make payments in
6 lieu of taxes or pilots to the public
7 schools in an amount equal to 40 percent
8 of what they would pay in property taxes.

9 So Penn is the largest private
10 property owner in the City. But as a
11 tax-exempt institution, it pays no taxes
12 on billions of dollars worth of
13 noncommercial property. And we know that
14 property taxes are a primary source of
15 local revenue for our school. When
16 wealthy institutions don't pay their
17 share, the result is that students,
18 teachers and staff go without.

19 So for this reason, I and many
20 others are calling on Penn to pay 40
21 percent of what it would owe in property
22 taxes to the School District, and I'm
23 urging the City Council to work with
24 Penn, including the Board of Trustees to
25 get this commitment written into this

1 year's City budget. I want to
2 acknowledge that two years ago Penn did
3 agree to pay \$10 million per year to the
4 school for a limited period of 10 years.
5 This was an important step.

6 Yet if Penn paid 40 percent of
7 what it owes in property taxes, based on
8 figures in the University's own budget,
9 that would be at least \$40 million per
10 year, about four times the current
11 pledge. Finally, I want to note that
12 Penn has an endowment of over \$20
13 billion. It's not right that such a
14 wealthy institution should be subsidized
15 through the act of tax exemption by the
16 poorest big city in the United States.

17 Paying pilots is a matter of
18 justice and is a fundamental civic
19 responsibility. So as a parent,
20 University employee and City resident, I
21 hope that the City Council will enact to
22 ensure that Penn pays its fair share this
23 year and every year. Thank you so much
24 for your time.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank

1 you for your testimony. We appreciate
2 it.

3 THE CLERK: I've been told that
4 Sue Jacobson is now available.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
6 afternoon. State your name for the
7 record and pro --

8 MS. JACOBSON: Good afternoon,
9 Council President -- oop, good afternoon,
10 Council President and good afternoon,
11 members of City Council. I have been
12 listening the whole time. I'm in now
13 which is terrific. I'm Sue Jacobson,
14 founder and CEO of Jacobson Strategic
15 Communication and also Board Chair for
16 the Chamber of Commerce for Greater
17 Philadelphia.

18 So first of all, thank you for
19 this opportunity to testify regarding
20 this really important matter,
21 particularly during this recovery period
22 to grow our economy and to reduce poverty
23 and maintain quality services and make
24 our City safer. It is really imperative
25 as my colleague Regina said earlier that

1 we increase the number of gainfully
2 employed people in Philadelphia either
3 working for themselves or for others, and
4 the urgency of this moment, it just can't
5 be understated. At no other time in
6 recent history have we had a more
7 pressing need and confluence of available
8 options to do so.

9 The facts are that Philadelphia
10 as we know it is being outpaced in terms
11 of job creation and has fewer business
12 establishments per capita than comparable
13 cities, and these factors they contribute
14 to significantly less money being
15 circulated locally. And now, what's
16 happened is that it's exacerbated by
17 rising inflation, interest rates and
18 other costs on individuals and business,
19 including property taxes.

20 However, we can reverse these
21 statistics and mitigate these effects by
22 substantially reducing the City's -- it
23 is the highest in the nation tax on
24 workers and it is a horrible double tax
25 on people who run businesses in every

1 neighborhood city-wide, essentially
2 giving these hard-working Philadelphians
3 a raise at this critical time.

4 And this is not an either-or
5 moment. The City can maintain and even
6 improve services going forward by
7 investing in job and business growth.

8 You know, you got the American Rescue
9 Plan, right. You got reasonable growth
10 projections and now, property tax
11 revenue. And the bottom line is
12 Philadelphia is to realize true and
13 inclusive growth in changing its
14 designation as the largest poorest city
15 in America. We got to give Philadelphia
16 a raise and invest in our workers, our
17 businesses and our City. So thank you so
18 much for letting me speak, Council
19 President and members of City Council.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
21 you for your testimony. We appreciate
22 it.

23 THE CLERK: Our next speaker is
24 Tonya Ladipo.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good

1 afternoon. State your name for the
2 record and please proceed with your
3 testimony.

4 MS. LADIPO: Great. Thank you.

5 Tonya Ladipo here. I'm the CEO of the
6 Ladipo Group. First, let me thank you
7 for the time to be able to testify. I
8 come to you as the CEO of the Ladipo
9 Group as well as a resident of
10 Philadelphia. The vision of my company
11 is to be a premier provider for therapy
12 services, equity and diversity and
13 inclusion consulting.

14 And I say that because we are a
15 Black female-owned business in
16 Philadelphia and have been since 2004.
17 We provide therapy, mental health
18 services to the Black and African
19 American community and then we work with
20 organizations throughout the country and
21 world about equity, diversity and
22 inclusion consultation.

23 As a small business owner -- and
24 we are small, we have a team of about 25
25 people. The way the tax structure is in

1 Philadelphia is very painful. Equity is
2 important in the work that we do and to
3 live and do business in the City that
4 does not have equitable tax structures is
5 very challenging. And so, I would
6 implore Council and in the budget to pass
7 that business owners are taxed one time,
8 not twice, which is how it currently
9 stands.

10 I do know that there is a lot of
11 perception that when we're talking about
12 businesses we're talking about businesses
13 that are bringing in billions and
14 billions of dollars in revenue that have
15 thousands and thousands of employees. So
16 I'm speaking as a very small business
17 owner, that when my company is taxed
18 twice, what that prevents from doing is
19 hiring another local person in
20 Philadelphia, that they can then pay rent
21 or buy a property, invest in Philadelphia
22 and keep the dollars here. So I would
23 like first that to be changed. That
24 would significantly help me and my
25 company.

1 And then I would also say I
2 think when we're talking about equity and
3 inclusion, that when I watch my taxes
4 that I pay as a business owner and as a
5 resident and I'm not having clean streets
6 and I'm not having safe streets to walk
7 on throughout the City of Philadelphia
8 versus a couple of neighborhoods, that is
9 beyond frustrating. The City can do
10 better. And I will appreciate all of
11 Council support in making Philadelphia
12 the city that it can be if we make some
13 of these important changes. Thank you.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
15 you so much for your testimony. We
16 appreciate it.

17 THE CLERK: Our next witness is
18 Whitney Harris.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
20 afternoon. Please state your name for
21 the record and proceed with your
22 testimony.

23 MS. HARRIS: Hello. My name is
24 Whitney Harris and I appreciate the
25 opportunity to speak with you today. I

1 come to you as the owner of Welford HR
2 consulting. We are an HR Consulting
3 practice based here in Philadelphia that
4 supports area businesses with their human
5 capital strategy. I can attest to the
6 challenges that we as a small business
7 face in addition to the struggles of our
8 clients.

9 Post-pandemic recovery has been
10 a long and arduous chapter for us as
11 we're looking for ways to enhance benefit
12 offerings, increase base salaries in
13 hopes of attracting more solid talent and
14 reworking current compensation plans to
15 weather what everyone else is calling the
16 Great Resignation.

17 In addition to running Welford
18 HR Consulting, I'm a wife of a business
19 owner and a parent to two future
20 taxpayers. We believe that these days of
21 rebuilding beyond the pandemic are
22 crucial and they really dictate whether
23 or not we will continue to stay and fight
24 to do business here in Philadelphia. I
25 came here in 1997, a time when you really

1 didn't want to be out on Market Street
2 after 6:00 p.m., and now Philadelphia is
3 a bustling destination for people my age,
4 people who are dynamic, people who are
5 entrepreneurial and people who are
6 talented.

7 I would love to stay here and
8 take part in what feels like a new
9 version of Philadelphia. However, I do
10 not want to sacrifice quality of life for
11 just nostalgia nor will I ask my children
12 to live (inaudible) while their parents
13 work as hard as we do. We implore you to
14 give Philadelphia a raise and ensure
15 inclusive growth in job creation for the
16 residents and business owners who do
17 business here. Thank you.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
19 you for your testimony. We appreciate
20 it.

21 MS. HARRIS: Thank you.

22 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Our
23 next witness is Blane Stoddart.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
25 you. Good afternoon. State your name

1 and please proceed with your testimony.

2 MR. STODDART: Mr. President?

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Yes,
4 sir. Please proceed.

5 MR. STODDART: My name is Blane
6 Stoddart. And to the President and
7 Councilmembers, many of whom I work with,
8 BFW is a construction project management
9 company, Black-owned at the Philadelphia
10 Navy Yard. We have 21 employees. We've
11 been in business 13 years. I just wrote
12 some notes down so I wouldn't go over.

13 Obviously, we would like for the
14 City Council to consider a reduction in
15 the wage tax and a reduction in the gross
16 receipts tax, easing of doing business in
17 the City, zoning and permitting and doing
18 business with the Land Bank. We'd also
19 like City Council to consider not putting
20 up any more unfunded mandates where
21 businesses have to pay more to do
22 business in the City because as you can
23 see, businesses and people are folding
24 with their feet, and we have a 40 percent
25 vacancy rate in Center City, which is the

1 lifeblood of the City.

2 Finally, a couple of things.

3 I'd like the City to consider more with
4 the monies you have now and as you go
5 through the budget process to consider
6 creating more jobs and job-training
7 programs so that we can deal with the
8 level of poverty we're now seeing.

9 Finally, in terms of building affordable
10 housing, the City knows how to build
11 affordable housing.

12 The Poplar homes were 185 units
13 of affordable housing built I think in
14 the '90s. The Nehemiah homes was 135
15 units of housing built by the City. So
16 we're asking the City to not just
17 consider giving land to developers, but
18 subsidizing so that we in the development
19 community can build both rental and
20 homeownership units so that people that
21 are of meager means will have a decent
22 place to live. Thank you so much,
23 Mr. Chairman.

24 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
25 you for your testimony. We appreciate

1 it.

2 THE CLERK: Our next witness is
3 Souvier Kahl.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
5 afternoon. State your name for the
6 record and please proceed with your
7 testimony.

8 (No response.)

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
10 afternoon. Are you connected?

11 (No response.)

12 THE CLERK: That was Souvier
13 Kahl.

14 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Next
15 witness.

16 THE CLERK: Our next witness
17 is --

18 COUNCIL TECH SUPPORT: I believe
19 he dropped off from the call, Council
20 President.

21 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Okay.
22 Next speaker.

23 THE CLERK: Our next witness is
24 Will Carter.

25 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good

1 afternoon. State your name for the
2 record and please proceed with your
3 testimony.

4 MR. CARTER: Do you guys hear
5 me?

6 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Yes,
7 we can. Please proceed.

8 MR. CARTER: All right,
9 Councilman. William Carter, Vice-
10 president of Local Government Affairs for
11 the Chamber of Commerce of Greater
12 Philadelphia. Good afternoon, Council
13 President and members of the Committee of
14 the Whole. Once again William Carter,
15 Vice-president of Local Government
16 Affairs for the Chamber of Commerce of
17 Greater Philadelphia.

18 I want to thank you for this
19 opportunity to testify on the budget
20 today. As many of you are aware, I spent
21 16 years working in City Council as a
22 Legislative Director and ultimately a
23 Chief Operating Officer. For the past
24 three years, I've served as Vice-
25 president with the Chamber of Commerce

1 for Greater Philadelphia. And I believe
2 I have a unique perspective just on both
3 sides of the public-private issue.

4 But I will be straight up. For
5 our City to really prosper in addition to
6 reducing gun violence and ensuring
7 quality education, we have to help more
8 people make more money, and that's
9 inclusively whether they work for
10 themselves or they work for others.
11 Honestly it's that simple. I travel
12 often and speak to counterparts in other
13 cities.

14 They're investing in hard-
15 working people who either work for
16 themselves or for others. They recognize
17 more money being made, the more people
18 are getting paid, the better overall
19 climate the city's in. But you don't
20 have to take my word for it. You can
21 look at the real data and facts that show
22 for decades Philadelphia has not
23 performed well in terms of growing local
24 businesses and creating good-paying jobs.

25 The facts show in the past four

1 decades report after report and study
2 after study that Philadelphia has double-
3 digit declining job growth numbers while
4 our regional competitors have double-
5 digit increases. A major reason for this
6 is because we have the nation's highest
7 wage tax and tax on workers, and the only
8 major city that double taxes hard-working
9 business owners. Business owners in
10 Philadelphia therefore have less money to
11 grow their companies and hire employees,
12 and likewise workers in Philadelphia have
13 less money to save or spend locally.

14 If you pass by Conshohocken
15 lately like I do when I go out to KOP
16 sometimes, you probably see more company
17 signs on those buildings out there.
18 Oracle is out there now. They used to be
19 on the West Coast. They didn't relocate
20 in Philadelphia. They relocated out
21 there in Conshohocken where they can pay
22 less and (inaudible) and still enjoy the
23 region's benefits.

24 So right now we're just making
25 it easier for too many companies that are

1 already here to move rather than stay in
2 Philadelphia. When they relocate outside
3 the City, it hurts our ability to grow
4 local jobs, enhance business-to-business
5 commerce and increase our tax base for
6 health care, education and public
7 service.

8 So in closing, I'd just like to
9 say our City can substantially improve
10 its economic standing with initiatives
11 and policies that will grow all
12 businesses and jobs city-wide (inaudible)
13 and job growth, including meaningful ways
14 in terms of tax reform that will help
15 grow and attract employees of all sizes
16 and put more money in working people's
17 pockets. Thank you.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
19 you. Thank you for your testimony. We
20 appreciate it.

21 THE CLERK: Our next witness is
22 Zach Wilcha.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
24 afternoon. State your name for the
25 record and please proceed.

1 MR. WILCHA: Good afternoon,
2 Councilmembers. I'm Zach Wilcha. I'm
3 Executive Director of the Independent
4 Business Alliance Greater Philadelphia
5 LGBTQ+ Chamber of Commerce. I'm here
6 today speaking on behalf of
7 Philadelphia's LGBTQ+ business community
8 which is comprised of all races, ethnic
9 backgrounds, sexual orientation, gender
10 expressions and highly varied in
11 industry.

12 In October of 2021, we came
13 together with our local African American,
14 Asian American, Hispanic American
15 Chambers of Commerce to develop and
16 launch the Diverse Chambers Coalition of
17 Philadelphia. The purpose of this first
18 of its kind local partnership is to work
19 collectively as a community to meet the
20 unique challenges diverse business
21 enterprises face when they engage with
22 our local economy.

23 With the goals of economic
24 uplift for and within diverse minority
25 business community, we will speak with a

1 unified voice on issues where we
2 unanimously align. One of the goals of
3 our partnership is to regularly conduct
4 surveys to convey the experiences and
5 challenges of our business constituents
6 to those who can make an impact like our
7 City Council.

8 Our businesses main concerns can
9 be distilled to four Cs, namely, cost of
10 doing business with Philadelphia, clarity
11 of doing business in the City, lack of
12 cleanliness to a barrier to business and
13 being personally and affected by crime.
14 As for the cost of doing business in our
15 City, the main thrust of the complaints
16 is around the business-killing BIRT tax,
17 which our businesses overwhelmingly
18 identify as their most onerous expense.

19 The double taxes, which do not
20 occur in similarly-situated cities to
21 Philadelphia are grinding away at
22 businesses at a historical moment when
23 resources are thinner than ever. More
24 dangerous for our City's future is the
25 fact that these practices simply do not

1 exist in neighboring municipalities and
2 makes the prospect of moving one business
3 out of the City quite compelling.

4 Regarding clarity of doing business with
5 the City of Philadelphia, our business
6 relates to how difficult it is to
7 navigate the ever-changing and labyrinth
8 codes and regulations that exist to keep
9 a business running.

10 This is not to mention the
11 difficult customer service, outdated
12 technology and the complicated rules that
13 require person power that our small
14 businesses simply do not possess to
15 navigate successfully. An example of
16 this is the Streeter bill which once
17 represented a lifeline for our
18 hospitality-focused businesses to survive
19 a pandemic, but have now turned into a
20 nightmare of bureaucracy for businesses,
21 especially those that operate outside of
22 Center City. This is not an either-or
23 moment to prioritize either City services
24 or create inclusive growth of businesses,
25 and therefore jobs in the tax base.

1 The City can maintain services
2 while investing in job and business
3 growth, particularly with the 1.4 billion
4 of revenue from the American Rescue Plan.
5 Regional and national competitors are
6 outpacing Philadelphia when it comes to
7 growing jobs and attracting new
8 employers, which is due in part to the
9 fact that Philadelphia has the City's
10 highest wage tax, the only city that
11 double taxes its business through a BIRT
12 tax. These taxes are a major reason why
13 employers choose to locate right outside
14 of Philadelphia.

15 We believe in the City of
16 Philadelphia. Our LGBTQ+ community
17 businesses know that it's a world-class
18 city, and we want to stay here and be
19 successful. They deserve investment as
20 part of the values that our latest budget
21 will represent. Our City can
22 substantially improve its economic
23 standing with initiatives and policies
24 that grow all businesses and jobs city-
25 wide.

1 The key to this is real
2 investment in private sector growth,
3 including meaningful wage and BIRT tax
4 reform that will help grow and attract
5 employers of all sizes. Thank you so
6 much for your time and consideration
7 today. We look forward to working with
8 you to forge solutions to the recovery of
9 the City we all love to call home.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
11 you very much for your testimony. We
12 appreciate it.

13 THE CLERK: The next witness is
14 Jennifer Rodriguez.

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
16 afternoon. State your name for the
17 record and please proceed with your
18 testimony.

19 MS. RODRIGUEZ: Good afternoon.
20 I'm Jennifer Rodriguez, President and CEO
21 of the Greater Philadelphia Hispanic
22 Chamber of Commerce. For the past three
23 decades, GPHCC has been the leading voice
24 developing, promoting and advocating for
25 12,000 Hispanic businesses in

1 Philadelphia while encouraging the
2 advancement and economic growth of the
3 Hispanic community.

4 In Philadelphia building an
5 inclusive economy has become the top
6 priority of both the private and public
7 sector. This priority has become ever
8 more critical in light of the
9 disproportionate impact of COVID-19 in
10 the communities of color and the Hispanic
11 community in particular. At GPHCC, we
12 firmly believe that entrepreneurship is
13 one of the keys to solving the inequity
14 that impedes the growth and development
15 of poor and underrepresented communities
16 and should be a priority of City
17 government as it forms the new City
18 budget.

19 Research shows that families who
20 own a business have higher median net
21 worth than families who do not, and
22 Hispanic families who own a business have
23 four times the net worth of Hispanic
24 families who do not. Entrepreneurs are
25 the backbone of the economy and across

1 the country, the majority of new jobs are
2 created by small businesses. But here in
3 Philadelphia, entrepreneurship is on life
4 support. We rank at the bottom of
5 comparable cities for many key indicators
6 of economic health, whether it is cost of
7 doing business, ease of doing business,
8 business creation or job growth.

9 It is more expensive to do
10 business here than in Los Angeles,
11 San Francisco or Washington D.C. Decades
12 of decisions made by our leaders have
13 changed Philadelphia's reputation from a
14 world-class small business city, an
15 innovation hub referred to as the
16 workshop of the world into a place that
17 has earned a reputation as a place in
18 which it is difficult to conduct
19 business.

20 Entrepreneurs have many location
21 options and increasingly they're deciding
22 against Philadelphia. In fact, the
23 majority of respondents to a survey from
24 the Diverse Chambers Coalition indicated
25 that they would not recommend the City as

1 a place in which to do business due to
2 the relative high cost and difficulty of
3 doing business, coupled with the alarming
4 increase in gun violence.

5 As City Council and the
6 Administration look for ways in which you
7 can use the budget process to support the
8 recovery of businesses, it should be
9 noted that wage tax relief by itself
10 without a complementary reduction in BIRT
11 would be an incomplete effort. The past
12 three surveys conducted by the Diverse
13 Chambers have confirmed that by far the
14 BIRT is the most burdensome tax for
15 businesses with less than 1 million in
16 revenue and with five or four employees,
17 which comprises the majority of diverse
18 businesses.

19 At GPHCC, we're committed to
20 supporting Latino-owned businesses as
21 they emerge from the pandemic. We thank
22 you for holding today's hearing and the
23 leaders and staff of our Chamber are
24 ready to work with you to build a
25 stronger and safer Philadelphia for all.

1 Thank you.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
3 you very much for your testimony. We
4 appreciate it.

5 THE CLERK: Our next witness is
6 Ida Garcia.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
8 afternoon. State your name for the
9 record. Please proceed with your
10 testimony.

11 MS. GARCIA: This is Ida Garcia.
12 I'm an insurance agent in Philadelphia.
13 I own my business, my own business. I'm
14 speaking on behalf of the Hispanic
15 Chamber of Commerce also, but mostly on
16 my own behalf and on behalf of all small
17 businesses owned by minorities, but
18 mostly by Latinos. I am a risk
19 consultant, very proud of being an owner
20 of this agency in North Philadelphia.

21 I currently have six full-time
22 employees. I have been in business
23 protecting mostly minority families and
24 their businesses for the last 10 years.
25 One of my main goals is to grow my

1 business and to hire at least five more
2 team members by the end of the year.

3 These are well-paying, meaningful jobs.

4 Salaries my team members receive are
5 spent in our community.

6 Philadelphia has one of the
7 highest combined business income tax
8 rates among big cities in the country.
9 Only second to New York City, I believe.

10 The fact that we are taxed on gross
11 receipt and also net income makes it much
12 more expensive and difficult to stay and
13 grow businesses in the City. I'm here
14 today to ask you to consider lowering the
15 business tax rate as well as wage tax
16 rate for workers living in the City.

17 That will allow me and also all
18 business owners to grow at a much higher
19 pace because I will be able to hire more
20 team members. I would finally like to
21 mention three issues that are badly
22 affecting the quality of life of
23 Philadelphians and need immediate
24 attention, the high crime rate, streets
25 full of trash and also (inaudible) and

1 the low quality of education. So I
2 appreciate your time. I'm really glad
3 that I had the opportunity to speak with
4 you. Thank you.

5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
6 you for your testimony. We really
7 appreciate it.

8 THE CLERK: Our next witness is
9 Joe Santiago.

10 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
11 afternoon. State your name for the
12 record. Please proceed.

13 MR. SANTIAGO: How are you? Can
14 you hear me there?

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Yeah.
16 You have a lot of background noise. So
17 if you can eliminate that, that will be
18 helpful.

19 MR. SANTIAGO: Sure. Let me
20 help you out. Good afternoon, City
21 Councilmembers and all attendees. My
22 name is Joe Santiago, proud owner of JJS
23 Property Services LLC. The truth is JJS
24 wouldn't be as successful as it is today
25 if it weren't for several City

1 Councilmembers, so I want to take the
2 time to take the opportunity to thank you
3 and your guidance and you guys know who
4 you are.

5 Today I want to talk about the
6 impact small businesses bring to the City
7 of Philadelphia. There are obstacles
8 that minority business owners have to
9 endure simply to keep our businesses up
10 and running, hiring new employees to be
11 able to offer them better pay, benefits,
12 et cetera. It is a challenge for us all
13 to say the least.

14 I'm sure you know the City of
15 Philadelphia has the highest wage tax and
16 it is the only major city that double
17 taxes businesses through business income
18 tax and business receipt tax. Together
19 they are called the BIRT tax. We need
20 this changed so that small businesses
21 have a better chance to survive and offer
22 our employees a higher income and
23 benefit. With that, I want to thank you
24 for giving me the opportunity of speaking
25 today.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Okay.

2 Thank you. Thank you, sir. Thank you
3 very much for your testimony. We
4 appreciate it.

5 THE CLERK: Our next witness is
6 Bram Fenua.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
8 afternoon. State your name for the
9 record and please proceed with your
10 testimony.

11 MR. FENUA: Hello?

12 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Yes.
13 Are you connected?

14 (No response.)

15 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Who's
16 the next --

17 MR. FENUA: Good afternoon.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: There
19 you go. Okay. Go ahead. Please proceed
20 with your testimony, sir.

21 MR. FENUA: Yeah. Good
22 afternoon. My name is Bram and I own the
23 small store, Asian store, grocery at the
24 South 7th Street. Since the pandemic two
25 years ago, I've been struggling a lot

1 because the people just not shopping at
2 the store. People going online and the
3 rent is going up so high. There's a
4 killing on all the businesses here,
5 so I see so many of my friends just are
6 closing the store and leaving the state.

7 So, one, I believe that the main
8 thing that because the rent's so high and
9 the business is just going up like crazy
10 everywhere, so I hope this year after a
11 few years of saving and all the permits
12 that we've been doing, we're going to
13 open the new kitchen. We're going to
14 renovate the back of our store and
15 hopefully everything will be done this
16 year. And once it's done, I hope that we
17 can hire more people, we can generate
18 more profit and more revenue for the City
19 and better serve the community.

20 So I've been around for like 10
21 years in Philly. I've been looking at a
22 place to live and I love Philadelphia. I
23 want to raise the kids here. Please
24 don't leave us alone, just help us.
25 Let me stay in Philly and please help us.

1 Thank you very much for your time.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
3 you very much for your testimony. We
4 appreciate it. We want you to stay here
5 in Philly also, sir.

6 Next witness.

7 THE CLERK: Our next witness is
8 Khine Zaw.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
10 afternoon. State your name for the
11 record. Please proceed with your
12 testimony.

13 MS. ZAW: Good afternoon,
14 Council President. My name is Khine Zaw.
15 I am President and CEO of Asian American
16 Chamber of Commerce of Greater
17 Philadelphia. First of all, thank you so
18 much for giving me this opportunity. Our
19 Chamber represents more than 13,000 small
20 businesses in Greater Philadelphia area.
21 The Asian American Chamber of Commerce
22 especially have been active in helping
23 the businesses, especially the small and
24 micro businesses throughout the pandemic
25 helping them get grants and finding job

1 opportunities. And as you have heard
2 from many of our members, the most
3 burdensome tax that they have been
4 carrying is Business Income and Receipts
5 Tax also known as BIRT.

6 We understand that wage tax is
7 just as problemsome for many of these
8 businesses, but without doing anything to
9 lower the BIRT tax, it will drive these
10 businesses out of Philadelphia. We have
11 1 out of 5 small businesses in
12 Philadelphia that are owned by Asian
13 Americans and they want to live and grow
14 with the City of Philadelphia, but the
15 crime and the safety are the number one
16 issues for businesses to operate and also
17 get staff members to come and work,
18 especially at restaurants and grocery
19 stores.

20 So with this public hearing, I
21 would like to request the City Council to
22 consider lowering BIRT and also please
23 visit the business corridors and also
24 look at what these businesses are
25 bringing in for the City. Thank you so

1 much for this opportunity.

2 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
3 you for your testimony. We appreciate
4 it.

5 THE CLERK: Our next witness is
6 JoJo Pierce.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
8 afternoon. State your name for the
9 record. Please proceed with your
10 testimony.

11 MS. PIERCE: Hello. Can you
12 hear me?

13 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Yes,
14 we can. Please proceed with your
15 testimony.

16 MS. PIERCE: Okay. My name is
17 JoJo Pierce. I am a (inaudible).
18 Because the business tax is too high in
19 Philly, this is why I moved to Swarthmore
20 to be online business. I mean, I do want
21 to rent a store in the downtown. But
22 after checking to pay the rent, to pay
23 the employee and pay the tax, I feel I
24 will not make money and we are a small
25 business. So if we don't make money, we

1 just move, find the place and have the
2 low tax. This is what I do. That's
3 okay. Thank you.

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
5 you so much for your testimony. We
6 appreciate it.

7 THE CLERK: Our next witness is
8 Anna Lee.

9 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
10 afternoon. State your name for the
11 record. Please proceed with your
12 testimony.

13 COUNCIL TECH SUPPORT: This
14 participant is not connected, Council
15 President.

16 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
17 you. Next witness.

18 THE CLERK: Our next witness is
19 Tila Bawie.

20 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
21 afternoon. State your name for the
22 record and please proceed with your
23 testimony.

24 MR. BAWIE: Hello. Good
25 afternoon.

1 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
2 afternoon.

3 MR. BAWIE: Can you hear me?

4 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Yes,
5 we can. Please proceed.

6 MR. BAWIE: My name is Tila
7 Bawie. I'm a barber's people. And I'm
8 own a small business in Philadelphia.
9 Before pandemic is running good, but
10 after pandemic is slow. And the tax is
11 too high too. And yeah, I hope you can
12 help to drop down the tax for the small
13 business is running good. I hope about
14 in this year or next year it might be
15 better to your help. And, yeah, thank
16 you very much for this opportunity.
17 Thank you.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
19 you. Thank for your testimony. We
20 appreciate it.

21 THE CLERK: The last witness is
22 Nora Farida.

23 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Good
24 afternoon. Please state your name for
25 the record. Please proceed.

1 MS. FARIDA: My name is Nora.

2 Hello?

3 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Yes.

4 Go ahead. We can hear you.

5 MS. FARIDA: Yeah, my name is

6 Nora Farida. I'm a business owner in

7 South Philadelphia. I opened my business

8 during the COVID (inaudible). It's a

9 small business. It is very difficult to

10 grow my business because tax is so high,

11 and then right now the customer, also

12 they told everything right now high. The

13 customer also come so slow right now. My

14 business is so slow. So please help us

15 to grow our business by reducing tax and

16 making our community safer. Thank you so

17 much.

18 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank

19 you. Thank you for your testimony. We

20 appreciate it.

21 A number of people did not

22 respond or dropped off the call, so

23 hopefully we'll be able to get their

24 testimony in written form at a later

25 date. For those that are still

1 connected, just want to say that this is
2 the start of the process. We appreciate
3 you all's participation and we'll be
4 further discussing with respect to
5 aspects of the proposal and the tax
6 proposal.

7 Any statements by Members they
8 would like to make before we recess?

9 COUNCILWOMAN QUINONES-SANCHEZ:

10 Yes, Council President. May I quickly?

11 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Yes,
12 please do, Councilwoman Sanchez.

13 COUNCILWOMAN QUINONES-SANCHEZ:

14 Yes. Thank you. I just wanted to thank
15 some of the small businesses, Ida Garcia,
16 Joe Santiago and others. Many of these
17 folks have been very active small
18 businesses in District 7, but they
19 service throughout the City.

20 And I just wanted to thank them
21 for taking the time. I know that there
22 is an expectation that is part of this
23 budget process. We will have some sort
24 of BIRT reform and some wage adjustments
25 to get money back into the hands of

1 people. And I just want folks to know
2 that we're just as serious on that work
3 as we were when we started the work
4 group. And I want to thank them for
5 their time.

6 Thank you, Council President.

7 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE: Thank
8 you, Councilwoman.

9 If there are no other comments
10 or questions by members of the Committee,
11 thank you very much. There being none,
12 this Committee will stand in recess until
13 Tuesday, May 10th at 10:00 a.m., at which
14 time we will reconvene on Microsoft's
15 Teams. Thank you all very much. We
16 appreciate it.

17 COUNCILWOMAN PARKER: Thank you,
18 Mr. President.

19 COUNCIL PRESIDENT CLARKE:
20 You're welcome.

21 (Committee of the Whole
22 concluded at 4:05 p.m.)

23
24
25

1 C E R T I F I C A T I O N

2 I, hereby certify that the
3 proceedings and evidence noted are contained
4 fully and accurately in the stenographic notes
5 taken by me in the foregoing matter, and that
6 this is a correct transcript of the same.
7

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TANEHA CARROLL
Court Reporter - Notary Public

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18 (The foregoing certification of this
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<u>WORD</u> <u>INDEX</u>					
< \$ >	10 38:25	20 56:25 57:1,	220284 1:1	4.5 132:5, 14,	80 49:16
\$1 59:4	58:21 63:18	17 65:21	6:18 7:2	25 134:11	8th 72:15
\$10 227:3	64:20 65:14	71:14 101:12	200:17	4:05 264:22	< 9 >
\$100,000	98:12 210:3	111:1, 4, 11	220285 1:1	40 59:3 80:22	9 1:1
104:24, 25	227:4 251:24	145:1 155:1	6:18 7:6	87:17 88:12	90s 237:14
105:3, 6, 7	256:20	164:18 171:20,	200:17	176:1 188:21	94.97 109:14
106:17	10.7 32:1	21, 25 223:4	220286 1:1	213:22 226:7,	99 44:25
\$150,000	10:00 1:1	20,000 92:11	6:18 7:8	20 227:6	46:15
143:12	264:13	143:15	220287 1:1	236:24	< A >
\$19 101:19	100 82:4	200 187:20	6:18 7:11	400-plus	a.m 1:1
\$20 227:12	187:19 190:14	2004 231:16	220288 1:1	159:20	264:13
\$20,000 81:1	212:1	2017 79:9	6:19 7:18	41 222:17	aback 131:4
88:11 103:2, 3	100,000 99:23,	221:19	220300 1:1	42 57:11	abated 66:12,
\$203.8 44:23	24	2018 55:19	6:19 8:11	42.2 221:8	24 79:24 81:2,
\$40 206:16	10-1001 7:12	90:18	23 30:21	42.64 109:14	7
227:9	105 143:14	2019 30:4	62:14 144:11	43 57:11	abatement
\$400,000 81:6,	10th 264:13	31:13, 14, 16	171:13, 18	45 102:19	64:15 65:7, 13,
11	10-year 64:15	39:19 54:14,	173:9 185:23	4th 158:9	15 66:21 67:2,
\$43 157:19	209:20	18 55:20	2-305(u 41:10	< 5 >	13 83:4, 13
\$45,000 143:2,	11 30:25	79:10 82:24	25 56:23	5 98:21	209:21
7	196:10	88:8 90:18	65:22 82:4	258:11	abatements
\$5 100:6	11,000 39:23,	121:13	98:18 231:24	5.6 177:24	67:5 84:14
\$50,000 105:5	24	2020 11:18	2nd 158:9	50 46:9 49:13	105:10 106:21
\$500,000 81:6,	11.3 31:24	39:20 90:18	< 3 >	59:19 65:23	abbreviated
11	1100 88:23	91:4 172:11	3 8:24 38:3	97:24 98:8, 25	191:21
\$53 49:10	12,000 247:25	173:13 189:20	104:2 155:15	99:15 108:12	ability 20:8
\$560,000	13 236:11	190:15	198:1, 4, 5	109:13 157:22	69:3 94:9
180:19	13,000 257:19	2021 90:11, 13	3.45 214:21	500 57:19	96:8 108:19
\$600,000 81:3,	13.4 31:6	189:21 243:12	3:00 10:9	166:18	113:4 117:24
7, 12 88:14	1300 88:23	2022 1:1 8:18	201:15	500-plus 53:3	118:8 160:21
\$65,000	135 237:14	17:23 116:16	30 50:3 57:8,	501(c)(6	169:25 175:2
103:10 143:8	14 172:18	138:9 189:16,	9 88:12 98:20	207:20	176:12 205:18
\$70,000 180:19	210:3	24 213:21	101:9 122:18	50-story	211:10 242:3
< 0 >	15 38:2 111:4	2023 7:4, 7, 10	145:1 155:17	146:16	able 18:25
005 31:13	15,000 190:13	8:16 9:6, 8	162:4 199:17	57 189:24	19:6, 8, 14
03 31:16, 20	150 143:13	11:10, 11	202:15 217:2	570 51:7 84:6	21:16, 25
< 1 >	152,000 99:14	61:7 73:18	300 217:20	575 222:14	22:10, 18
1 16:12 61:7	153 46:6	93:18 94:7, 10	30th 126:15,	5th 206:19	24:10 25:6
94:7, 10	16 84:4 86:3	108:1, 4 172:2	18, 19	< 6 >	34:16 37:13,
125:12 196:7	121:10 239:21	190:9, 11	31 17:14 54:9	6.5 100:20	25 50:16 61:1
250:15 258:11	170467 79:10	191:14, 16	55:6 64:8	6:00 235:2	63:4 67:1
1,000 221:13	18,000 190:13	193:6, 13, 19	121:7	60 59:19	73:11 82:22
1,186 189:23	185 237:12	195:22, 24	31.12 109:16	102:21	90:17 92:22
1.014 32:1	19 49:15	2024 91:20	32 57:10	600 57:19	108:15 113:5
1.025 31:8, 10	57:17	2027 8:16	100:21	166:18	115:11, 14
1.026 31:24	19.87 109:17	2028 7:4 9:9	33 214:8	65 102:23, 24	118:24 125:3
1.03 30:4 32:9	19-1403 7:19	20-plus 55:15	335 222:16	68 221:17	134:23 136:11
1.4 204:20	1925 81:18	21 109:23	34.28 109:17	< 7 >	138:18 140:11,
215:24 222:14	1992 8:24	236:10	3rd 35:1	7 55:23	14 141:7, 12,
246:3	1997 234:25	215-686-9200	101:11 108:9	263:18	18 142:12
1.5 185:24	1s 38:3	18:15 73:16	109:12 114:4,	70 210:18	162:1 163:7
1.6 176:2, 17,	1st 18:23	22 62:5	10, 12 160:18	7th 206:19	170:2 180:13
25 177:22	41:15 42:2	109:24 189:23	194:25 195:21	255:24	181:4 185:5,
1.8 221:12	124:1 161:23	22,000 39:20	206:19	< 8 >	15 186:9
	170:19	220240 1:1	< 4 >		187:22 218:21
	< 2 >	6:19 8:3	4 104:3		231:7 252:19
	2 72:22 79:11		177:24 196:10		254:11 262:23
	155:1, 15				

absolutely 50:18 71:18, 19 96:25 153:24 193:1	add 16:1 81:8 147:15 155:25 173:12 182:13, 21	Administration 14:24 15:19 17:13 26:18 29:5, 11 34:7 43:21 53:17 62:22 102:20 103:24 127:8 128:4, 23 129:11, 13, 18, 21 130:4, 6, 22 131:5, 11 133:5, 10 134:11 175:13 176:21 179:12 204:22 210:2 216:3 250:6	217:14, 17 220:8, 19, 22 224:18 225:4, 14 228:6, 8, 9, 10 231:1 233:20 235:25 238:5, 10 239:1, 12 242:24 243:1 247:16, 19 251:8 253:11, 20 255:8, 17, 22 257:10, 13 259:8 260:10, 21, 25 261:2, 24	alike 58:8 167:11 208:10 ALLAN 1:1 Alliance 204:8 207:24 211:16 218:1 243:4 allocate 111:1 218:15 allocated 118:16 210:11 221:17 222:14 223:4 allocation 12:17 124:24 164:2, 21 allotted 202:18 allow 9:25 15:24 84:9 105:10, 15, 21 160:14 163:13 169:8 195:23 204:21 206:11 252:17 allowed 166:14 allowing 204:15 205:17 218:4 allows 105:11, 12 139:11 all's 192:25 263:3 alluded 79:22 alter 160:22 altered 10:10 amending 7:12, 19 amendment 106:3 198:22, 25 199:11, 13 200:3, 6 amendments 199:6, 22, 24 200:5, 10, 16, 22 America 230:15 American 204:21 221:1, 8 222:11, 15 230:8 231:19 243:13, 14 246:4 257:15, 21 Americans 33:25 258:13 amount 39:5 44:8 45:11 47:20 71:22 90:2 101:6	104:5 119:9, 10 126:8 134:2 144:1 148:6 168:13 183:19 204:19 217:7 226:7 amounts 101:16 ample 199:19 analysis 55:2, 8 56:17 66:4 82:20 90:12, 24 121:25 123:11 140:12 172:20 175:3 188:10 analysts 12:9 analyze 108:17 analyzed 172:12 173:5, 19, 20, 22 and/or 215:7 265:21 anemic 215:15 Angeles 222:6, 23 249:10 angst 53:22 Anna 260:8 announced 17:13 announcement 2:7 Annual 221:16 annually 91:11 answer 13:3 17:3 21:2 22:1 126:9 144:3 159:7 175:20 177:5 178:7 182:5 194:13 answered 45:15 answering 124:13 answers 126:10 159:9 anti 151:1 anticipate 37:11 188:8 197:12 anticipated 22:5, 6 61:4 190:10 anticipating 17:12 anti-violence 178:17
access 15:20, 24 17:23, 25 18:9, 13, 16 24:12 73:10, 11, 17 136:11 138:18 193:10	adding 93:19 100:6 197:5 addition 16:12 75:23 216:8 234:7, 17 240:5 additional 12:8 13:24 15:5 16:1, 23 33:15 35:13 38:2, 4 54:25 75:25 76:11, 17 90:16 98:21 110:5 117:5, 6, 9 118:3, 22 135:17 136:3 144:7 178:18 182:6, 13 183:14, 19 186:8 187:25 196:15 197:6 205:14 209:23, 25 210:3 216:16 219:5, 8	Administrative 11:6 141:23 142:22 adopt 7:3, 7 adopting 7:9 advance 159:2 advancement 177:2 248:2 advances 191:8 advantage 72:11 adversely 154:12 advertised 201:11 advocate 184:6 advocating 247:24 Affairs 207:19 239:10, 16 affect 25:17 28:12 affirm 187:2 affirmatively 171:24 afford 34:16 53:19 75:1 158:24 168:6 affordable 205:23 206:8 237:9, 11, 13 afraid 179:5 African 33:25 221:1, 8 231:18 243:13 afternoon 10:8 107:21, 22 188:24 189:8, 9 198:4, 7 203:15 207:9 212:18	age 140:9 235:3 agencies 23:17 87:14 89:1 agency 251:20 agent 251:12 aggressive 87:22 88:4 112:25 156:19 ago 25:9 47:15 58:19 71:3, 4 95:11, 12 110:19 112:5 116:22 125:17 136:19 170:21 176:20 227:2 255:25 agree 24:17 29:9 32:8, 10, 22, 25 36:15 71:11, 20 99:8 115:1, 3, 19 158:11 227:3 Agreement 8:22 ahead 28:4 161:9 162:9 180:9 182:2 189:22 195:25 255:19 262:4 Airbnb 52:19 Airy 70:14 AJ 97:18 181:12 alarm 152:2 alarming 250:3 Aldinger 104:11, 14 105:25 Alexander 67:19 align 244:2	allotted 202:18 allow 9:25 15:24 84:9 105:10, 15, 21 160:14 163:13 169:8 195:23 204:21 206:11 252:17 allowed 166:14 allowing 204:15 205:17 218:4 allows 105:11, 12 139:11 all's 192:25 263:3 alluded 79:22 alter 160:22 altered 10:10 amending 7:12, 19 amendment 106:3 198:22, 25 199:11, 13 200:3, 6 amendments 199:6, 22, 24 200:5, 10, 16, 22 America 230:15 American 204:21 221:1, 8 222:11, 15 230:8 231:19 243:13, 14 246:4 257:15, 21 Americans 33:25 258:13 amount 39:5 44:8 45:11 47:20 71:22 90:2 101:6	104:5 119:9, 10 126:8 134:2 144:1 148:6 168:13 183:19 204:19 217:7 226:7 amounts 101:16 ample 199:19 analysis 55:2, 8 56:17 66:4 82:20 90:12, 24 121:25 123:11 140:12 172:20 175:3 188:10 analysts 12:9 analyze 108:17 analyzed 172:12 173:5, 19, 20, 22 and/or 215:7 265:21 anemic 215:15 Angeles 222:6, 23 249:10 angst 53:22 Anna 260:8 announced 17:13 announcement 2:7 Annual 221:16 annually 91:11 answer 13:3 17:3 21:2 22:1 126:9 144:3 159:7 175:20 177:5 178:7 182:5 194:13 answered 45:15 answering 124:13 answers 126:10 159:9 anti 151:1 anticipate 37:11 188:8 197:12 anticipated 22:5, 6 61:4 190:10 anticipating 17:12 anti-violence 178:17
accommodate 22:10 50:17 191:3 accomplish 117:9 209:23 219:25 accomplishing 218:12 account 48:23 58:15 89:24 94:4 109:22 111:9 166:9 accountability 119:20 accounted 65:8 accounts 27:7 94:3 accuracy 11:15 119:23, 24 120:3 122:22 accurate 12:19 28:7, 18 40:4 54:13 116:25 120:1 accurately 39:6 136:9 147:15 265:1 achieve 176:12 achieving 14:23 acknowledge 214:12 227:2 Act 10:2 58:11 227:15 actions 223:25 active 257:22 263:17 activities 77:10 actual 18:21 20:4 36:8 54:12 64:3 84:22 86:1 ad 136:21	add 16:1 81:8 147:15 155:25 173:12 182:13, 21 added 55:1 82:2 148:8 173:14 182:25 adding 93:19 100:6 197:5 addition 16:12 75:23 216:8 234:7, 17 240:5 additional 12:8 13:24 15:5 16:1, 23 33:15 35:13 38:2, 4 54:25 75:25 76:11, 17 90:16 98:21 110:5 117:5, 6, 9 118:3, 22 135:17 136:3 144:7 178:18 182:6, 13 183:14, 19 186:8 187:25 196:15 197:6 205:14 209:23, 25 210:3 216:16 219:5, 8 Additionally 9:20 13:5 14:13 221:15 address 30:10 43:3 127:16 132:3 134:6, 23 151:11 152:5 208:8 209:4 addressed 45:9 120:5 208:5 addressing 219:20 adds 47:3 adequate 211:11 adequately 209:9 adjust 202:9 216:24 217:6 adjustment 82:1 173:4 adjustments 263:24	Administration 14:24 15:19 17:13 26:18 29:5, 11 34:7 43:21 53:17 62:22 102:20 103:24 127:8 128:4, 23 129:11, 13, 18, 21 130:4, 6, 22 131:5, 11 133:5, 10 134:11 175:13 176:21 179:12 204:22 210:2 216:3 250:6 Administration' s 103:19 Administrative 11:6 141:23 142:22 adopt 7:3, 7 adopting 7:9 advance 159:2 advancement 177:2 248:2 advances 191:8 advantage 72:11 adversely 154:12 advertised 201:11 advocate 184:6 advocating 247:24 Affairs 207:19 239:10, 16 affect 25:17 28:12 affirm 187:2 affirmatively 171:24 afford 34:16 53:19 75:1 158:24 168:6 affordable 205:23 206:8 237:9, 11, 13 afraid 179:5 African 33:25 221:1, 8 231:18 243:13 afternoon 10:8 107:21, 22 188:24 189:8, 9 198:4, 7 203:15 207:9 212:18	217:14, 17 220:8, 19, 22 224:18 225:4, 14 228:6, 8, 9, 10 231:1 233:20 235:25 238:5, 10 239:1, 12 242:24 243:1 247:16, 19 251:8 253:11, 20 255:8, 17, 22 257:10, 13 259:8 260:10, 21, 25 261:2, 24 age 140:9 235:3 agencies 23:17 87:14 89:1 agency 251:20 agent 251:12 aggressive 87:22 88:4 112:25 156:19 ago 25:9 47:15 58:19 71:3, 4 95:11, 12 110:19 112:5 116:22 125:17 136:19 170:21 176:20 227:2 255:25 agree 24:17 29:9 32:8, 10, 22, 25 36:15 71:11, 20 99:8 115:1, 3, 19 158:11 227:3 Agreement 8:22 ahead 28:4 161:9 162:9 180:9 182:2 189:22 195:25 255:19 262:4 Airbnb 52:19 Airy 70:14 AJ 97:18 181:12 alarm 152:2 alarming 250:3 Aldinger 104:11, 14 105:25 Alexander 67:19 align 244:2	alike 58:8 167:11 208:10 ALLAN 1:1 Alliance 204:8 207:24 211:16 218:1 243:4 allocate 111:1 218:15 allocated 118:16 210:11 221:17 222:14 223:4 allocation 12:17 124:24 164:2, 21 allotted 202:18 allow 9:25 15:24 84:9 105:10, 15, 21 160:14 163:13 169:8 195:23 204:21 206:11 252:17 allowed 166:14 allowing 204:15 205:17 218:4 allows 105:11, 12 139:11 all's 192:25 263:3 alluded 79:22 alter 160:22 altered 10:10 amending 7:12, 19 amendment 106:3 198:22, 25 199:11, 13 200:3, 6 amendments 199:6, 22, 24 200:5, 10, 16, 22 America 230:15 American 204:21 221:1, 8 222:11, 15 230:8 231:19 243:13, 14 246:4 257:15, 21 Americans 33:25 258:13 amount 39:5 44:8 45:11 47:20 71:22 90:2 101:6	104:5 119:9, 10 126:8 134:2 144:1 148:6 168:13 183:19 204:19 217:7 226:7 amounts 101:16 ample 199:19 analysis 55:2, 8 56:17 66:4 82:20 90:12, 24 121:25 123:11 140:12 172:20 175:3 188:10 analysts 12:9 analyze 108:17 analyzed 172:12 173:5, 19, 20, 22 and/or 215:7 265:21 anemic 215:15 Angeles 222:6, 23 249:10 angst 53:22 Anna 260:8 announced 17:13 announcement 2:7 Annual 221:16 annually 91:11 answer 13:3 17:3 21:2 22:1 126:9 144:3 159:7 175:20 177:5 178:7 182:5 194:13 answered 45:15 answering 124:13 answers 126:10 159:9 anti 151:1 anticipate 37:11 188:8 197:12 anticipated 22:5, 6 61:4 190:10 anticipating 17:12 anti-violence 178:17

anybody 31:1 38:5 40:15 62:19, 24 70:18 71:9 87:7 155:7 161:16 164:8 anymore 75:2 85:20 anyway 153:14 168:17 179:12 apart 83:24 apologies 32:7 137:13 apologize 45:20 153:13 203:5 appeal 18:5 34:23 35:2 36:13, 18 51:22 60:10, 24 69:12, 14 75:7 101:11, 12, 13 112:9 160:11, 13, 15, 19 161:17 162:4 163:7, 21 169:22 170:18 189:20 190:19, 22 191:16 193:8, 15, 18 194:1, 7, 9, 13, 23 196:4 appeal-filing 190:10 appealing 163:14 appeals 13:14 20:2, 19 59:21 60:2 101:7 143:24 169:24 189:21, 23, 25 190:5, 13, 24 195:22, 24 197:8 appear 213:7 appears 40:2 appellants 194:8, 11 apples 80:17 applicants 16:7 applications 13:13 113:16 195:15 209:19 210:13 applied 82:2 85:23 172:16, 24	apply 66:14 67:2 265:19 applying 85:9 173:3 Appraisal 11:21 14:5 15:21 62:22 124:7 appraisals 34:1 49:23 appraised 15:23 184:13 appraisers 48:15 appreciate 74:18 126:9 154:9 156:7 191:21 202:25 207:4 212:14 220:3 224:13 228:1 230:21 233:10, 16, 24 235:19 237:25 242:20 247:12 251:4 253:2, 7 255:4 257:4 259:3 260:6 261:20 262:20 263:2 264:16 appreciated 212:8 appreciation 54:12 56:15 58:23 59:4 appropriate 99:10 appropriated 184:19 appropriately 81:16 appropriateness 205:17 approval 8:12 approvals 211:21 approved 8:23 approving 145:19 approximate 37:23 approximately 39:19 44:23 71:16 110:5 210:18 213:22 April 126:15, 18, 19 arduous 234:10	area 47:21 51:12 64:24 67:15 69:2 80:7, 18 83:20, 24 84:8 85:24 86:22 95:20 96:18 111:3 120:18 139:19, 20 167:2, 12 172:25 234:4 257:20 area-by-area 120:13 areas 8:5 48:8 49:3 51:7 57:19, 24 79:7 80:4 82:25 83:22 86:24 87:8 92:7 95:14 110:12 111:17 120:3, 21 141:1 158:12 159:20 166:19 argue 79:25 86:6 112:24 215:20 argument 194:13 arguments 194:21 Aros 10:14, 18, 20, 24 11:1 18:7 21:6, 24 22:3, 12 23:12 24:17 25:10 26:7, 25 28:5 30:16 31:11, 14, 20 32:7, 11, 24 33:13 36:15 37:8, 21 38:1, 20, 23 39:10, 18 40:5, 25 41:18 44:13 45:15, 20 46:2, 14, 18 50:6 53:12, 13 54:19 56:8, 11, 20 57:14 60:4 61:12, 21 62:4 65:4 71:13 73:15 75:10, 15 80:5 81:10 83:8, 18 84:3 86:9, 16 90:9 91:15 92:19 93:5 96:25 98:1, 4 99:16 102:8 106:14	107:21, 22 109:25 114:11, 21 115:7, 21 117:13 120:7 121:12, 15 123:4 124:23 126:6, 12, 15, 18 135:11 136:15 137:15 140:5 141:5 142:7, 18 146:7 147:2 148:7 150:5 152:9 153:4, 8, 14 154:22 155:21, 25 160:19 161:22 162:14 163:9, 20, 25 164:19 166:13 169:25 170:20 171:4, 11, 21, 25 173:10 174:4, 18, 20 175:11, 19 179:13 181:13 182:12, 22 184:17 186:5, 20, 25 187:4 188:6, 18 195:1 ARP 215:25 ARPA 222:25 223:4 array 133:18 arrived 36:4 arrives 36:14 artificial 79:23 artificially 64:14 123:19 Asian 243:14 255:23 257:15, 21 258:12 aside 50:3, 5 76:12, 19 111:22, 23 112:13 178:13 asked 18:8 45:17 101:18 144:7, 10 159:5 171:12 201:14 202:19 asking 184:25 237:16 asks 70:18 as-needed 61:2 aspects 50:1 185:5 263:5 assess 89:19 147:16	assessed 36:4 37:3 39:14 64:1, 9, 18 65:2 69:5 71:2 91:24 102:17 104:25 105:4 143:10, 11 193:14 215:18 Assessing 13:18 92:17 96:12 110:24 166:10 Assessment 10:7, 15 11:2, 3, 5 12:19 14:24 15:3 20:1, 12, 14 26:10, 12, 14, 24 29:24 32:19, 22 34:8 37:6 41:14 42:18 43:1, 4 61:5 63:13, 18 64:22 73:21, 22 74:24 82:24 90:5, 16 91:12 92:16 94:7 97:25 100:8 101:14 102:2 103:1, 11 104:20 108:2, 9 109:3, 5 110:16 112:25 116:17 117:11 120:15 121:9, 12 126:13 139:8 141:22 146:5 151:3, 5 155:9 161:14 162:17 163:5, 6, 11, 18 164:1, 4, 6, 7, 16, 20 167:19, 23 169:7 173:3, 14, 18 175:24 177:11 180:18 194:2 assessments 11:16 12:22 15:14 17:14 25:5, 7 28:7 29:15, 21 30:7 33:10 36:12 42:10 53:25 54:11, 13, 17 56:24 61:5 71:8 72:14, 16 89:23 90:25	92:21 93:13, 18 103:17 105:24 108:4, 6, 11, 18, 25 109:11, 19 110:6, 8 119:12, 25 122:11 124:10 126:14 127:21 128:9 140:2 141:4 151:4, 17 152:14 157:7 166:2, 16 171:10, 18, 20 180:24 181:24 184:12 185:10 193:6, 19 195:13 197:4 Assessment's 11:10 Assessor 10:14 assist 12:10 14:10 37:17 67:16 assistance 35:10 67:16 182:11 Assistant 189:14 assisting 185:7 associated 43:1 117:10 210:9 214:24 Association 13:18 116:16 204:6 212:24 217:19 assumed 76:16 132:15 assuming 52:3 100:18 195:12 assure 211:22 astronomically 109:20 astute 68:25 At-large 69:11 attack 96:16 178:20 attempt 219:6 attend 225:25 attendance 2:23, 24 attendees 3:15 253:21 attention 97:4 162:10 252:24 attest 234:5
---	--	--	---	--	--

attract 242:15 247:4	153:1, 4, 7, 9 183:3	barcode 170:8	16	2, 13	22 81:6
attracting 234:13 246:7	awarded 15:1, 6 62:7	barely 78:5	behave 167:3	Biden 15:19	165:19 168:21, 22, 25
attribute 146:12	aware 9:13 95:10 105:14	barrier 118:21 244:12	behaving 80:10 87:1	big 52:3, 18, 23 99:25	blocks 48:11, 25 49:15
attributed 110:21	Awesome 119:2	base 97:4 102:2 123:22	behavior 215:2	100:5 155:18	82:15 88:16
audit 12:1 13:20, 21 14:8, 9, 20 27:14	< B >	208:12 218:9	believe 18:12	158:17 227:16	157:19, 22
30:19 31:1	baby 49:6	234:12 242:5	36:20 39:20, 22 45:22, 25	252:8	165:19 168:15
38:12 61:23	back 29:13	245:25	56:12 120:9	biggest 28:25 89:17	blog 76:2
62:6 63:7	33:14 34:5, 21	based 22:8	127:3 132:3	Bill 6:17 7:2, 6, 8, 11, 18 8:3	blown 108:11
116:17 117:3, 14, 16 124:16	35:11 43:7	25:1 30:20	136:20 138:20	23:9 24:1	Board 10:7
audits 119:25	50:6 52:2	32:17 39:14	172:18 179:20	36:7, 14 79:9, 10 200:16	148:22 149:19, 24 164:18
August 127:1	54:13 59:20	46:18 49:25	186:25 196:20	245:16	187:19 189:1, 6, 15, 17, 24
131:18 161:21	60:18 71:14	54:17 63:12	199:25 201:6	billion 44:23, 25 46:7 176:2, 18, 25 177:22, 24, 25 204:20	195:6, 21
Authority 8:20, 25	72:22, 24	79:24 81:16	218:7 234:20	215:25 222:15	226:24 228:15
105:17 170:24	78:20 82:24	83:25 92:5	238:18 240:1	227:13 246:3	body 198:24
authorized 8:22	87:10 88:24	127:20 132:7	246:15 248:12	billions 226:12 232:13, 14	199:20 222:3
automatically 145:20 157:10	89:5 95:5	136:23 165:20	252:9 256:7	bill 1:1 6:21 9:4 23:7	BOMA 213:1 214:8
availability 17:17 149:12	100:3 101:16	168:20 169:4	believed 214:4	36:8 149:7	BOMA's 215:17
available 9:24	106:11 107:13	172:6 183:1	bell 33:13	198:15	books 75:16
12:23 13:9	123:19 152:23	192:11 227:7	140:17 143:17	BILLS 1:1 6:21 9:4 23:7	borrow 205:2
19:23 29:7	156:20, 22	234:3	156:21 217:1, 3	36:8 149:7	bottom 147:24 230:11 249:4
30:15 40:8, 10, 11, 16, 22	157:7, 10	basic 208:7	bellwether 47:16	198:15	bought 165:16
41:15 74:14	158:4 160:6	basically 24:25 89:17	below-average 65:24	BIRT 213:15 223:21 244:16	boundaries 167:13
76:14, 22	161:19 164:23	104:19 146:2	Ben 217:12, 18	246:11 247:3	box 191:9
113:21 123:10	172:14 177:11, 18, 19 180:13	172:4 176:7	benefit 40:1 234:11 254:23	250:10, 14	Bram 255:6, 22
124:8 135:16	184:25 195:17	basing 46:13	benefits 241:23 254:11	254:19 258:5, 9, 22 263:24	brand 66:11
141:7 149:10	197:2, 13	basis 25:15	best 15:2	bit 58:6, 10	break 49:11
153:24 154:25	198:2 200:24	38:24 77:20	51:15 54:5	91:1, 22 92:24	106:24 152:22
155:6 170:13	204:23 212:6	120:14, 16	107:12 124:8	94:17 99:18	198:3 215:4
218:17 228:4	214:18 256:14	152:16	128:13 131:25	110:1	breakdown 114:3
229:7	263:25	BASS 1:1 3:2, 3 57:10 70:4, 5, 9 71:19	146:15 206:7	Black 29:21, 25 32:20	breaking 31:3
avenue 19:14, 21 48:9	backbone 248:25	74:5 75:14	214:8 222:5	77:25 78:1	break-out 54:20 130:11, 13, 18
148:14	Background 179:25 253:16	76:24 87:21	better 24:21 52:7 99:20	221:4, 5, 13, 24	breaks 140:19
avenues 76:5, 9	backgrounds 243:9	150:16, 17, 21	109:8 114:18	222:8, 17, 21	BRIAN 1:1
average 17:13	backlog 124:17 137:12, 14 209:18	153:3, 6, 11	115:12 129:4	223:17 224:1, 5 231:15, 18	brief 87:4 124:13 126:10 189:11
39:5 55:4	backwards 156:12	154:5 155:10, 22 156:5, 18	138:11 141:1, 13 142:1	Black-owned 221:9, 11, 12 236:9	briefing 13:4 19:18
65:20 66:9	backyard 169:1	157:12, 16	148:15 158:10	blame 115:21	briefly 182:23 200:7
80:25 81:19	badly 252:21	158:12 183:9, 10 185:21	165:24 178:3, 4, 5 221:19	Blane 235:23 236:5	bring 26:16 40:9, 12 63:4
83:1, 2, 14	balances 189:20	186:18, 23	233:10 240:18	blank 40:13, 15 170:10	97:3 125:3, 9
85:18 102:1, 5	balloting 23:19	187:1, 24	254:11, 21	blend 141:12	147:23 180:13
111:3, 10	ballpark 45:8	203:4, 6	256:19 261:15	blended 57:3	187:7, 19
121:10 139:7	Bank 206:17	Bass's 57:6	beyond 74:22 77:21 170:18	blending 142:8	254:6
195:10	barber's 261:7	111:25	233:9 234:21	blends 66:17	
AVI 29:16, 17		bath 49:6	BFW 236:8	blighted 7:23	
76:6, 7 97:21		Bawie 260:19, 24 261:3, 6, 7	BIA 205:8	block 48:10, 18, 19 70:16,	
103:15 139:17		188:10 200:3	206:5, 23		
		207:16 217:25	bias 27:21		
		243:6 251:14,	bidding 123:1,		

bringing 46:24 186:8 214:17 232:13 258:25	246:20 248:18 250:7 263:23	244:5, 10, 11, 12, 14 245:2, 4, 5, 9 246:2, 11	calculator 13:8 182:18, 25	captured 90:22 110:10 122:6	27:10, 23 48:15 49:8 51:12 55:16
broad-brush 84:17	budgetary 208:14	248:20, 22 249:7, 8, 10, 14, 19 250:1, 3	Calendar 90:10 195:24	capturing 111:14 142:16 147:9	59:13 63:2, 9 67:15 89:21 90:2, 12 91:7
broaden 208:12	budgeted 38:8 98:16 125:22	251:13, 22 252:1, 7, 15, 18 254:8, 17, 18	call 2:23 18:17 21:1, 8 22:13, 21 65:24 73:17 137:6 186:13 201:14 238:19 247:9 262:22	care 21:9 109:9 242:6	106:1 122:2, 16 132:9 138:17 140:25 201:20
broader 166:17 172:11	build 119:3 146:15 172:3, 9 173:17	256:9 258:4, 23 259:18, 20, 25 261:8, 13	callback 52:6 182:5 188:9	careful 165:24	certainly 24:3 25:11, 13
broadly 172:17	218:20 221:21, 24 237:10, 19	262:6, 7, 9, 10, 14, 15	called 43:25 73:23 158:4 202:4, 6 254:19	carefully 213:11	27:16 28:14 39:12 40:14 46:4 55:12
broken 80:8 109:13, 16	building 12:17 15:9 59:24 60:9 110:22 204:5 205:9 210:10, 15, 23 211:2 212:24 216:6 217:19 237:9 248:4	businesses 175:23 208:10 214:16 218:8 221:10, 11, 13, 18, 24 222:9, 17, 21 223:1, 6, 10, 13, 16, 17, 23 224:5, 8 229:25 230:17 232:12 234:4 236:21, 23 240:24 242:12 244:8, 17, 22 245:14, 18, 20, 24 246:17, 24 247:25 249:2 250:8, 15, 18, 20 251:17, 24 252:13 254:6, 9, 17, 20 256:4 257:20, 23, 24 258:8, 10, 11, 16, 24 263:15, 18	calls 21:9, 20 22:7 156:9 188:12 193:12 CAMA 11:20 15:11, 15 25:2 26:21 33:23 54:14 62:11 124:18 190:16	Carla 189:6 CARROLL 265:11	151:14 154:11, 19 156:14
BROOKS 1:1 3:10	built 51:22, 25 61:3 81:18 82:18 84:15 85:18 88:18 145:5, 15 173:24 208:18 237:13, 15	business-killing 244:16	call 21:9, 20 22:7 156:9 188:12 193:12 CAMA 11:20 15:11, 15 25:2 26:21 33:23 54:14 62:11 124:18 190:16	carrying 258:4 Carter 238:24 239:4, 8, 9, 14 cascade 215:15	Certificate 14:23
brought 135:13	buildings 59:22 60:20, 24 64:20 109:15, 18 214:8 215:12 241:17	business-to- business 242:4	calls 21:9, 20 22:7 156:9 188:12 193:12 CAMA 11:20 15:11, 15 25:2 26:21 33:23 54:14 62:11 124:18 190:16	case 61:1 70:18 80:1 103:22 194:22, 24	certification 93:19 118:13 173:5 174:6 185:13, 15 265:18
Brown 77:25 78:1 221:24 223:17	bulk 83:1, 3, 25	bustling 235:3	calling 134:20 136:23 142:6 157:10, 14 189:1 225:22 226:3, 20 234:15	cases 24:1 51:8 52:24 55:13 64:7 72:9, 10 85:19 90:19 94:11 151:14 166:21 190:6	certified 152:14 171:9, 13
BRT 70:22 101:12 115:15 143:25 144:3 160:15, 19 161:4, 9, 11, 18 163:7, 14, 21 164:12 170:17, 25 171:6 190:17 191:6 192:6 193:15 194:9, 19 195:1, 14, 20 196:2 197:9	bulk 83:1, 3, 25	business 242:4	camera 100:2	catastrophic 93:25	certify 41:13 265:1
BRT/OPA 192:8	bump 117:10	buy 232:21	candidate 16:11, 15	catchment 51:9 67:15 167:7	certifying 174:7 265:22
BRTs 20:19	bundling 23:6, 24	buying 90:1	candidates 16:14	catch-up 54:1	cetera 254:12
brunt 26:13 29:1	burden 205:6 223:15	business-killing 244:16	cap 98:18 99:7 103:17, 22, 23 104:4, 7 105:15, 23 177:16	categories 197:6	chain 19:5 23:13
bucket 86:20	burdens 214:24	business-to- business 242:4	cap 98:18 99:7 103:17, 22, 23 104:4, 7 105:15, 23 177:16	caught 110:13	chains 23:3
buckets 84:23	burdensome 250:14 258:3	bustling 235:3	capabilities 23:2 206:12 211:17	caused 21:15 23:18	CHAIR 1:1 26:2 35:17 39:12 43:13 53:8 61:17 70:3 78:25 89:8 97:11 98:6 107:17 116:8 126:2 135:6 137:24 138:3 139:3 150:15 157:1 160:2 165:1 169:16 175:6 183:8 200:1, 12 212:23 228:15
Budget 7:7, 9 8:4 11:11 26:19 38:1 43:17 98:15 118:16 120:10 124:25 127:15 132:3 175:25 176:25 177:23 178:14, 24 184:3, 24 198:16, 23 199:22 201:5, 23 204:25 205:14, 20 208:3, 6, 8 209:25 213:4 214:12 215:17 227:1, 8 232:6 237:5 239:19	bureaucracy 245:20 bus 168:24 business 14:12 205:7, 8 208:22 216:10 221:4, 5, 21 229:11, 18 230:7 231:15, 23 232:3, 7, 16 233:4 234:6, 18, 24 235:16, 17 236:11, 16, 18, 22 241:9 243:4, 7, 20, 25	buying 90:1	cap 98:18 99:7 103:17, 22, 23 104:4, 7 105:15, 23 177:16	causes 51:12 CDR 210:25 CEAA 14:25 Census 141:11, 14 142:9 center 21:8 22:13 85:17 167:2, 14 186:13 212:22 213:21 236:25 245:22 centers 139:23 CEO 217:18 228:14 231:5, 8 247:20 257:15 certain 7:14, 16 8:2 13:22	Chairman 237:23

challenge 24:9 94:17 95:8 211:18 254:12	Chapter 207:17 234:10	132:6 134:4, 25 136:5	city-wide 31:6 37:1 39:15 44:15 55:15 64:8 99:13 100:20 109:15 120:1, 12, 16 177:3 190:11 230:1 242:12	217:13 220:2, 7, 14, 18, 23 224:12, 17, 24 225:3, 9, 13, 18 227:25 228:5 230:20, 25 233:14, 19 235:18, 22, 24 236:3 237:24 238:4, 9, 14, 21, 25 239:6 242:18, 23 247:10, 15 251:2, 7 253:5, 10, 15 255:1, 7, 12, 15, 18 257:2, 9 259:2, 7, 13 260:4, 9, 16, 20 261:1, 4, 18, 23 262:3, 18 263:11 264:7, 19	238:2, 12, 16, 23 242:21 247:13 251:5 253:8 255:5 257:7 259:5 260:7, 18 261:21
challenged 103:21	characteristics 111:15 173:16, 21	138:21 139:5, 21 140:13 141:21 144:24 151:2 152:19 162:11, 16 164:10 165:6, 12 169:3 170:16 171:9 172:19 176:15, 18, 19, 20 177:5 178:1, 5 179:4 186:1, 24 188:11 191:12 195:4 197:21 199:15 201:6 204:16 205:10 206:2, 14, 21 208:8, 11, 21 209:3, 5 211:19, 22 213:13, 14, 20, 21, 24 214:1 215:6, 7, 11 218:7, 15 219:4, 7, 10, 23 220:24 221:6, 12, 25 223:8 226:10, 23 227:1, 16, 20, 21 228:11, 24 230:5, 14, 17, 19 232:3 233:7, 9, 12 236:14, 17, 19, 22, 25 237:1, 3, 10, 15, 16 239:21 240:5 241:8 242:3, 9 244:7, 11, 15 245:3, 5, 22, 23 246:1, 10, 15, 18, 21, 24 247:9 248:16, 17 249:14, 25 250:5 252:9, 13, 16 253:20, 25 254:6, 14, 16 256:18 258:14, 21, 25 263:19	civic 210:20 227:18 clarification 45:15 142:14 clarify 80:2 169:21 173:7 213:11 clarity 116:21 197:10 244:10 245:4 CLARKE 1:1 2:2 3:7, 16 4:2, 10, 21 5:1, 8, 15 6:1, 4, 5, 10, 14 9:1 10:16, 21, 25 17:5 20:21 21:22 22:2, 24 24:7, 19 25:24 35:15 43:11 45:3, 7, 19, 24 53:6 56:7 61:15 69:23 70:7 78:23 89:6 97:9, 15 107:15 116:5, 12 125:25 135:2 143:19 144:14, 18 146:23 147:21 148:19 150:13, 19 156:24 157:13 159:22, 23 164:24 169:14 174:15 175:4 179:17, 23 180:1, 4, 8 182:7 183:6 188:2, 19 189:7 191:19, 23 192:22 193:2 194:4 195:8 196:9, 13, 19, 23 197:15, 24 198:8 200:19 203:7, 14, 19, 22, 25 207:3, 8, 11 212:3, 12, 17 213:2 215:21 216:11	225:3, 9, 13, 18 227:25 228:5 230:20, 25 233:14, 19 235:18, 22, 24 236:3 237:24 238:4, 9, 14, 21, 25 239:6 242:18, 23 247:10, 15 251:2, 7 253:5, 10, 15 255:1, 7, 12, 15, 18 257:2, 9 259:2, 7, 13 260:4, 9, 16, 20 261:1, 4, 18, 23 262:3, 18 263:11 264:7, 19	clients 234:8 climate 240:19 CLIP 8:7 clock 199:19 close 22:14 48:23 56:5, 16 206:15 closer 32:12 40:11 177:23, 24 215:8 closing 49:15 242:8 256:6 clustered 206:18 Coalition 223:20 243:16 249:24 Coast 241:19 Co-Chair 207:18 COD 32:2 79:21 Code 7:13, 20 41:9 66:23 139:25 174:5, 11 codes 12:14 65:9 67:4, 9 140:3 141:2 245:8 Coefficient 30:6 31:5, 23, 25 79:20 114:5 collaborate 205:25 221:20 collaboration 15:16 collaboratively 130:25 131:7, 9, 24 133:22 colleague 183:16, 23 228:25 colleagues 3:4, 14 4:1, 9 5:7, 14, 24 17:9 26:1 29:12 35:12 42:11 49:21 95:19 96:1 110:4 115:1 138:4
challenges 50:5 103:14 134:24 191:5 208:9 209:16 234:6 243:20 244:5	charter 67:20 199:8 chat 9:24 10:3 check 41:6 checking 259:22 CHERELLE 1:1 Chicago 222:6 Chief 10:14 11:2, 5 209:2 239:23 child 67:18 children 225:25 235:11 choose 246:13 chop 159:19 chronic 226:1 CINDY 1:1 70:20 circulated 229:15 cities 219:16 222:6, 23 224:3 229:13 240:13 244:20 249:5 252:8 Citizen 177:15 citizens 54:3 159:4 192:23 197:20 CITY 1:1 2:9 3:5 7:24 8:6, 13, 15, 25 11:13 12:2, 8 13:1 23:15 26:22 27:4, 19 28:19, 23 34:10, 15 44:9, 23 45:12 47:17, 23 52:19 55:6, 17, 21 57:20 59:13 65:14 66:20 68:17, 19, 20 71:2, 6 72:6 79:8, 11 84:5 85:15, 17 91:23 94:20, 21 104:21 112:1, 10 113:5 120:3, 22 122:1, 2, 15 126:14 127:19	132:6 134:4, 25 136:5 138:21 139:5, 21 140:13 141:21 144:24 151:2 152:19 162:11, 16 164:10 165:6, 12 169:3 170:16 171:9 172:19 176:15, 18, 19, 20 177:5 178:1, 5 179:4 186:1, 24 188:11 191:12 195:4 197:21 199:15 201:6 204:16 205:10 206:2, 14, 21 208:8, 11, 21 209:3, 5 211:19, 22 213:13, 14, 20, 21, 24 214:1 215:6, 7, 11 218:7, 15 219:4, 7, 10, 23 220:24 221:6, 12, 25 223:8 226:10, 23 227:1, 16, 20, 21 228:11, 24 230:5, 14, 17, 19 232:3 233:7, 9, 12 236:14, 17, 19, 22, 25 237:1, 3, 10, 15, 16 239:21 240:5 241:8 242:3, 9 244:7, 11, 15 245:3, 5, 22, 23 246:1, 10, 15, 18, 21, 24 247:9 248:16, 17 249:14, 25 250:5 252:9, 13, 16 253:20, 25 254:6, 14, 16 256:18 258:14, 21, 25 263:19 City's 12:24 13:7 51:6 176:12 201:5, 23 208:17 209:13 215:16 229:22 240:19 244:24 246:9	city-wide 31:6 37:1 39:15 44:15 55:15 64:8 99:13 100:20 109:15 120:1, 12, 16 177:3 190:11 230:1 242:12 civic 210:20 227:18 clarification 45:15 142:14 clarify 80:2 169:21 173:7 213:11 clarity 116:21 197:10 244:10 245:4 CLARKE 1:1 2:2 3:7, 16 4:2, 10, 21 5:1, 8, 15 6:1, 4, 5, 10, 14 9:1 10:16, 21, 25 17:5 20:21 21:22 22:2, 24 24:7, 19 25:24 35:15 43:11 45:3, 7, 19, 24 53:6 56:7 61:15 69:23 70:7 78:23 89:6 97:9, 15 107:15 116:5, 12 125:25 135:2 143:19 144:14, 18 146:23 147:21 148:19 150:13, 19 156:24 157:13 159:22, 23 164:24 169:14 174:15 175:4 179:17, 23 180:1, 4, 8 182:7 183:6 188:2, 19 189:7 191:19, 23 192:22 193:2 194:4 195:8 196:9, 13, 19, 23 197:15, 24 198:8 200:19 203:7, 14, 19, 22, 25 207:3, 8, 11 212:3, 12, 17 213:2 215:21 216:11	217:13 220:2, 7, 14, 18, 23 224:12, 17, 24 225:3, 9, 13, 18 227:25 228:5 230:20, 25 233:14, 19 235:18, 22, 24 236:3 237:24 238:4, 9, 14, 21, 25 239:6 242:18, 23 247:10, 15 251:2, 7 253:5, 10, 15 255:1, 7, 12, 15, 18 257:2, 9 259:2, 7, 13 260:4, 9, 16, 20 261:1, 4, 18, 23 262:3, 18 263:11 264:7, 19 Clarke's 139:20 149:4 Class 187:19, 20 212:1 classes 114:8 118:4, 10, 15 125:14 classifications 12:12 Clause 104:17 105:9, 14 106:4 clean 233:5 cleaner 176:19 183:25 184:2 cleanliness 8:8 244:12 clear 40:24 74:24 159:12 213:9 clearly 26:18 94:19 134:13 clerical 16:7 37:15 38:4 94:2 CLERK 3:2, 9, 12, 18, 22 4:4, 6, 12, 15, 17, 23 5:3, 10, 17, 20 6:3 7:2 9:4 10:13 189:4 203:12 207:6 212:15 217:11 220:5, 16 224:15 225:1, 11 228:3 230:23 233:17	238:2, 12, 16, 23 242:21 247:13 251:5 253:8 255:5 257:7 259:5 260:7, 18 261:21 clients 234:8 climate 240:19 CLIP 8:7 clock 199:19 close 22:14 48:23 56:5, 16 206:15 closer 32:12 40:11 177:23, 24 215:8 closing 49:15 242:8 256:6 clustered 206:18 Coalition 223:20 243:16 249:24 Coast 241:19 Co-Chair 207:18 COD 32:2 79:21 Code 7:13, 20 41:9 66:23 139:25 174:5, 11 codes 12:14 65:9 67:4, 9 140:3 141:2 245:8 Coefficient 30:6 31:5, 23, 25 79:20 114:5 collaborate 205:25 221:20 collaboration 15:16 collaboratively 130:25 131:7, 9, 24 133:22 colleague 183:16, 23 228:25 colleagues 3:4, 14 4:1, 9 5:7, 14, 24 17:9 26:1 29:12 35:12 42:11 49:21 95:19 96:1 110:4 115:1 138:4
challenging 197:20 213:6 232:5 Chamber 221:1 228:16 239:11, 16, 25 243:5 247:22 250:23 251:15 257:16, 19, 21 Chambers 223:19 243:15, 16 249:24 250:13 chance 118:9 142:8 216:15 217:8 254:21 change 12:16 28:9 44:19 49:23 58:5, 16 60:9 61:9 110:10 122:17 143:13 155:8 161:14 163:12, 25 164:4, 6, 7, 16 178:9 211:15 changed 147:3 164:17, 21 190:18 232:23 249:13 254:20 changes 8:1, 17 11:24 12:20 25:23 46:19 60:15 74:24, 25 121:19 122:3 123:4 124:2, 4 136:22 137:22 147:4, 11, 14, 16 148:16 151:20 154:21 172:13, 21 187:22 192:10 199:9 233:13 changing 22:17 59:12 122:9 138:16 230:13	Chapter 207:17 234:10 characteristics 111:15 173:16, 21 charter 67:20 199:8 chat 9:24 10:3 check 41:6 checking 259:22 CHERELLE 1:1 Chicago 222:6 Chief 10:14 11:2, 5 209:2 239:23 child 67:18 children 225:25 235:11 choose 246:13 chop 159:19 chronic 226:1 CINDY 1:1 70:20 circulated 229:15 cities 219:16 222:6, 23 224:3 229:13 240:13 244:20 249:5 252:8 Citizen 177:15 citizens 54:3 159:4 192:23 197:20 CITY 1:1 2:9 3:5 7:24 8:6, 13, 15, 25 11:13 12:2, 8 13:1 23:15 26:22 27:4, 19 28:19, 23 34:10, 15 44:9, 23 45:12 47:17, 23 52:19 55:6, 17, 21 57:20 59:13 65:14 66:20 68:17, 19, 20 71:2, 6 72:6 79:8, 11 84:5 85:15, 17 91:23 94:20, 21 104:21 112:1, 10 113:5 120:3, 22 122:1, 2, 15 126:14 127:19	132:6 134:4, 25 136:5 138:21 139:5, 21 140:13 141:21 144:24 151:2 152:19 162:11, 16 164:10 165:6, 12 169:3 170:16 171:9 172:19 176:15, 18, 19, 20 177:5 178:1, 5 179:4 186:1, 24 188:11 191:12 195:4 197:21 199:15 201:6 204:16 205:10 206:2, 14, 21 208:8, 11, 21 209:3, 5 211:19, 22 213:13, 14, 20, 21, 24 214:1 215:6, 7, 11 218:7, 15 219:4, 7, 10, 23 220:24 221:6, 12, 25 223:8 226:10, 23 227:1, 16, 20, 21 228:11, 24 230:5, 14, 17, 19 232:3 233:7, 9, 12 236:14, 17, 19, 22, 25 237:1, 3, 10, 15, 16 239:21 240:5 241:8 242:3, 9 244:7, 11, 15 245:3, 5, 22, 23 246:1, 10, 15, 18, 21, 24 247:9 248:16, 17 249:14, 25 250:5 252:9, 13, 16 253:20, 25 254:6, 14, 16 256:18 258:14, 21, 25 263:19 City's 12:24 13:7 51:6 176:12 201:5, 23 208:17 209:13 215:16 229:22 240:19 244:24 246:9	city-wide 31:6 37:1 39:15 44:15 55:15 64:8 99:13 100:20 109:15 120:1, 12, 16 177:3 190:11 230:1 242:12 civic 210:20 227:18 clarification 45:15 142:14 clarify 80:2 169:21 173:7 213:11 clarity 116:21 197:10 244:10 245:4 CLARKE 1:1 2:2 3:7, 16 4:2, 10, 21 5:1, 8, 15 6:1, 4, 5, 10, 14 9:1 10:16, 21, 25 17:5 20:21 21:22 22:2, 24 24:7, 19 25:24 35:15 43:11 45:3, 7, 19, 24 53:6 56:7 61:15 69:23 70:7 78:23 89:6 97:9, 15 107:15 116:5, 12 125:25 135:2 143:19 144:14, 18 146:23 147:21 148:19 150:13, 19 156:24 157:13 159:22, 23 164:24 169:14 174:15 175:4 179:17, 23 180:1, 4, 8 182:7 183:6 188:2, 19 189:7 191:19, 23 192:22 193:2 194:4 195:8 196:9, 13, 19, 23 197:15, 24 198:8 200:19 203:7, 14, 19, 22, 25 207:3, 8, 11 212:3, 12, 17 213:2 215:21 216:11	217:13 220:2, 7, 14, 18, 23 224:12, 17, 24 225:3, 9, 13, 18 227:25 228:5 230:20, 25 233:14, 19 235:18, 22, 24 236:3 237:24 238:4, 9, 14, 21, 25 239:6 242:18, 23 247:10, 15 251:2, 7 253:5, 10, 15 255:1, 7, 12, 15, 18 257:2, 9 259:2, 7, 13 260:4, 9, 16, 20 261:1, 4, 18, 23 262:3, 18 263:11 264:7, 19 Clarke's 139:20 149:4 Class 187:19, 20 212:1 classes 114:8 118:4, 10, 15 125:14 classifications 12:12 Clause 104:17 105:9, 14 106:4 clean 233:5 cleaner 176:19 183:25 184:2 cleanliness 8:8 244:12 clear 40:24 74:24 159:12 213:9 clearly 26:18 94:19 134:13 clerical 16:7 37:15 38:4 94:2 CLERK 3:2, 9, 12, 18, 22 4:4, 6, 12, 15, 17, 23 5:3, 10, 17, 20 6:3 7:2 9:4 10:13 189:4 203:12 207:6 212:15 217:11 220:5, 16 224:15 225:1, 11 228:3 230:23 233:17	238:2, 12, 16, 23 242:21 247:13 251:5 253:8 255:5 257:7 259:5 260:7, 18 261:21 clients 234:8 climate 240:19 CLIP 8:7 clock 199:19 close 22:14 48:23 56:5, 16 206:15 closer 32:12 40:11 177:23, 24 215:8 closing 49:15 242:8 256:6 clustered 206:18 Coalition 223:20 243:16 249:24 Coast 241:19 Co-Chair 207:18 COD 32:2 79:21 Code 7:13, 20 41:9 66:23 139:25 174:5, 11 codes 12:14 65:9 67:4, 9 140:3 141:2 245:8 Coefficient 30:6 31:5, 23, 25 79:20 114:5 collaborate 205:25 221:20 collaboration 15:16 collaboratively 130:25 131:7, 9, 24 133:22 colleague 183:16, 23 228:25 colleagues 3:4, 14 4:1, 9 5:7, 14, 24 17:9 26:1 29:12 35:12 42:11 49:21 95:19 96:1 110:4 115:1 138:4

139:18 159:5 168:18 175:17 188:20 191:25 collect 15:8 16:2 collection 12:11 178:20 collectively 243:19 College 178:23 color 16:16 33:18 248:10 combination 54:22 132:21 combined 252:7 Comcast 212:22 come 2:21 33:14 34:21 42:22 43:7 64:5 65:1 66:18 72:22 74:16 75:22 78:20 87:10 88:24 94:23 106:11 107:13 127:9 128:4 131:1 133:23 134:5 138:14 156:20, 21 158:2 159:9 162:18 164:23 165:14 168:4 170:3 177:9 191:8 198:2 213:10 219:18 222:3 231:8 234:1 258:17 262:13 comes 60:11 71:7 88:8 98:14 117:11 167:25 168:10 218:11 246:6 coming 22:11 23:19 34:13 35:11 37:12 38:9 53:22 60:18 70:17 75:6 81:3 87:5 97:22 118:1 121:3 127:21 132:6 141:11 151:17 156:10, 13, 16 162:11 177:18 183:1, 20 197:5 204:19	comment 159:15 175:12 201:10, 17, 25 comments 9:22 150:23 264:9 Commerce 221:1 228:16 239:11, 16, 25 242:5 243:5, 15 247:22 251:15 257:16, 21 commercial 57:2 146:19 207:21 210:19 215:10 217:21 Commission 199:16 205:12 commissioned 12:2 62:5 Commissioner 7:13 Commissioners 47:22 commit 112:10 commitment 14:21 25:11 212:7 226:25 committed 153:16 250:19 COMMITTEE 1:1 6:17 9:3 76:7, 8 196:16 207:19 208:1 213:2 239:13 264:10, 12, 21 Committees 2:9, 15 common 79:18 85:12 169:2 commonly 212:25 commonsense 219:19 Commonwealth 104:18 communicate 176:22 177:8 communication 22:15 108:2 109:5 158:8 228:15 Communities 16:16 33:18 49:25 74:10, 11 208:10, 16	209:11 211:7 223:1, 5 248:10, 15 Community 8:6 19:24 40:12 44:1, 4 74:17, 23 112:2, 3 149:20 151:8 178:23 205:18 207:22 213:10 221:21 224:2 231:19 237:19 243:7, 19, 25 246:16 248:3, 11 252:5 256:19 262:16 commute 214:25 comp 145:11 146:1 compacted 48:20 companies 241:11, 25 company 231:10 232:17, 25 236:9 241:16 comparable 46:11, 20 47:8 229:12 249:5 comparables 86:12 88:14 compared 46:15 81:20 163:5 171:18 comparing 51:3 comparisons 122:22 compelling 208:14 245:3 compensated 211:23 compensation 234:14 competitors 241:4 246:5 compile 42:4 compiling 41:24 complaints 42:16 47:21 244:15 complement 16:4 complementary 250:10	completed 11:12 25:18 92:23 93:2, 12 completely 71:20 80:6 92:16 165:19 168:22 completion 30:20 44:18 209:14 compliance 148:24 complicated 245:12 comply 10:2 component 119:19 compound 215:2 comprehensive 11:17 211:19 comprised 243:8 comprises 250:17 comps 109:21 Computer- Assisted 11:21 concern 33:16 34:3 60:5, 19 71:23 90:8 104:16 133:21 135:18 141:10 156:10 187:18 193:9 concerned 17:20 59:21 60:1 113:4 122:21 195:18 213:9 226:1 concerning 110:9 concerns 18:5 21:4 23:18 30:12 50:22 63:16 89:17 97:20 110:17 134:21 192:11 194:21 215:5 244:8 conclude 202:19 217:2 concluded 202:22 264:22 concludes 135:4 condition 12:14 65:9, 20, 25 66:9 67:4,	9 81:19 82:18 83:14 84:15 conditions 7:17 8:2 66:5 138:17 conducive 219:13 conduct 13:19 42:10 244:3 249:18 conducted 211:22 223:19 250:12 conducting 171:17, 19 confidence 119:4 confirm 86:4 confirmed 89:18 250:13 confluence 229:7 confusing 18:17 91:6, 8 conjunction 13:6 connected 10:18 189:2 203:10, 23 220:12, 15 224:22 225:8 238:10 255:13 260:14 263:1 connecting 77:23 Connors 217:12, 17, 18 consecutively 21:21 consenting 9:19 consequences 158:25 215:10 Conshohocken 241:14, 21 consider 9:4 33:6 52:24 115:25 144:13 146:21 204:24 236:14, 19 237:3, 5, 17 252:14 258:22 considerable 134:2 consideration 64:13 65:1 192:24 212:11 220:1 224:11 247:6	considered 110:20 considering 33:3 134:24 consistent 144:8 consolidation 79:12 consolidations 94:3 constituencies 77:3 constituent 13:2 19:20 180:17 constituents 26:15 29:7 35:5 40:17 107:10 114:20 119:4, 21 134:20 142:3 157:8 162:9 244:5 constitute 9:5 137:5 Constitution 104:17 105:8 106:4 construction 12:13 47:2, 11 65:11, 14 66:12, 16 81:12, 15, 17 82:1, 7, 8, 13, 15, 17 84:24 85:19, 25 86:15 93:21 94:15 106:20 217:23 219:3, 9, 12, 15, 20 236:8 consultant 27:15 251:19 consultation 231:22 consulting 186:9 231:13 234:2, 18 contact 77:12 contained 15:20 265:1 contains 15:22 contingent 20:3 161:25 continual 93:17 continually 222:4
---	--	---	---	--	--

continue 9:2 16:3, 9 25:12 94:5 99:9 106:13 143:22 214:6 218:19 221:20 234:23	51:23 102:14 127:11, 17, 22 136:14, 25 144:17 146:5, 6 151:3, 5 265:1	134:1, 19 135:1, 2, 9 139:20, 25 140:4 142:19 143:18, 19 144:14, 18	258:21 259:2, 7, 13 260:4, 9, 13, 14, 16, 20 261:1, 4, 18, 23 262:3, 18 263:10, 11 264:6, 7, 19	Councilmanic 109:12 114:4	115:18, 23 116:6 135:7, 8 137:11 138:1 140:16 141:9 142:17 143:16, 20 150:15, 17, 21 153:3, 6, 11 154:5 155:10, 22 156:5, 18, 25 169:16, 18 170:15 171:1, 8, 15, 23 173:6 174:1, 12, 16 183:8, 10 185:21 186:18, 23 187:1, 24 188:3 200:1, 14 203:4, 6, 8 263:9, 12, 13 264:8, 17	
continued 6:16 124:2 180:11 190:6 191:10	correcting 54:12	146:23 147:21 148:19 150:13, 19, 23 151:2 152:17 156:2, 24 159:18, 23 160:5 164:24 165:3 169:12, 14, 19 174:14, 15, 22 175:2, 4, 9 179:15, 17, 23 180:1, 4, 8 181:15, 19 182:7, 17 183:6 188:2, 11, 19 189:7, 10 191:18, 19, 23 192:22 193:2, 16 194:4 195:8 196:9, 13, 19, 23 197:15, 24 198:8 199:11 200:19 203:7, 14, 19, 22, 25 204:13, 14, 22 206:1, 19 207:3, 8, 11, 14 212:3, 12, 17 215:21 216:11 217:13 218:2, 3 219:8, 17 220:2, 7, 11, 12, 14, 18, 23, 24 224:12, 17, 21, 23, 24 225:3, 7, 9, 13, 18 226:23 227:21, 25 228:5, 9, 10, 11 230:18, 19, 20, 25 232:6 233:11, 14, 19 235:18, 22, 24 236:3, 14, 19 237:24 238:4, 9, 14, 18, 19, 21, 25 239:6, 12, 21 242:18, 23 244:7 247:10, 15 250:5 251:2, 7 253:5, 10, 15 255:1, 7, 12, 15, 18 257:2, 9, 14	COUNCILMA N 1:1 3:13 4:19, 24 5:22 6:7, 11, 13 43:13, 15 44:24 45:5, 10 46:8, 17 47:12 51:24 52:4 53:7, 8, 10, 14 56:19 59:14 61:11, 16, 17, 18, 22 63:14 67:10 69:24 70:2, 10 71:23 79:22 89:8, 10 91:5, 21 92:25 94:16 97:7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 17 98:2, 7, 23 99:11, 22 100:4, 23 101:2, 5, 20, 25 102:7, 12, 18, 24 103:7, 13 105:16 106:7 107:3, 16 116:8, 10, 14 119:2 121:4, 14, 23 122:20 124:11 125:23 126:1, 2, 4, 16, 19, 24 127:4, 14, 23 128:1, 15, 22 129:10 130:5, 16 132:2, 24 133:20 135:3 157:1, 3 159:24 160:1, 2, 4 161:15 162:2 163:3, 17, 23 164:14, 22, 25 165:1, 2 167:17 169:15 170:22 175:6, 8 177:20 179:1, 3, 18, 20, 21, 24 180:2, 5, 6, 10 181:17 182:8, 16 183:5, 7, 16 239:9	Councilmember 3:2, 9, 12, 18, 22 4:4, 6, 12, 15, 17, 23 5:3, 10, 17, 20 6:9 35:22 41:22 54:24 56:13 57:5, 6, 8, 10, 11 76:21 79:16 87:21 101:17 104:15 106:16 111:24, 25 113:25 114:16 139:18, 19 154:23 163:10 200:12 213:2	Councilmember s 69:8, 9 78:12 87:4 110:17 112:15 151:19 153:9, 22 189:10 199:23 236:7 243:2 253:21 254:1	counseling 87:13 89:1 count 210:1 counterparts 240:12 country 23:17, 22 58:22 59:10 139:23 231:20 249:1 252:8 County 7:21 79:11 couple 2:25 17:8 23:15 26:9 44:7 47:4 54:22 60:15 71:21 74:1 76:18 78:8 92:13 116:15, 20, 22 118:2 123:6 124:5 125:2 129:8 152:10 161:3 183:12 186:14 187:5 191:24 233:8 237:2 coupled 250:3 course 117:22 149:11 157:20 190:11 Court 265:12 cover 211:3 covering 8:15 COVID 25:1 42:9 189:19 191:6 262:8
contract 62:7 221:17	cost 47:10 52:22, 23 100:19 177:14 211:23 244:9, 14 249:6 250:2	15, 22 175:2, 4, 9 179:15, 17, 23 180:1, 4, 8 181:15, 19 182:7, 17 183:6 188:2, 11, 19 189:7, 10 191:18, 19, 23 192:22 193:2, 16 194:4 195:8 196:9, 13, 19, 23 197:15, 24 198:8 199:11 200:19 203:7, 14, 19, 22, 25 204:13, 14, 22 206:1, 19 207:3, 8, 11, 14 212:3, 12, 17 215:21 216:11 217:13 218:2, 3 219:8, 17 220:2, 7, 11, 12, 14, 18, 23, 24 224:12, 17, 21, 23, 24 225:3, 7, 9, 13, 18 226:23 227:21, 25 228:5, 9, 10, 11 230:18, 19, 20, 25 232:6 233:11, 14, 19 235:18, 22, 24 236:3, 14, 19 237:24 238:4, 9, 14, 18, 19, 21, 25 239:6, 12, 21 242:18, 23 244:7 247:10, 15 250:5 251:2, 7 253:5, 10, 15 255:1, 7, 12, 15, 18 257:2, 9, 14	COUNCILMA N 1:1 3:13 4:19, 24 5:22 6:7, 11, 13 43:13, 15 44:24 45:5, 10 46:8, 17 47:12 51:24 52:4 53:7, 8, 10, 14 56:19 59:14 61:11, 16, 17, 18, 22 63:14 67:10 69:24 70:2, 10 71:23 79:22 89:8, 10 91:5, 21 92:25 94:16 97:7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 17 98:2, 7, 23 99:11, 22 100:4, 23 101:2, 5, 20, 25 102:7, 12, 18, 24 103:7, 13 105:16 106:7 107:3, 16 116:8, 10, 14 119:2 121:4, 14, 23 122:20 124:11 125:23 126:1, 2, 4, 16, 19, 24 127:4, 14, 23 128:1, 15, 22 129:10 130:5, 16 132:2, 24 133:20 135:3 157:1, 3 159:24 160:1, 2, 4 161:15 162:2 163:3, 17, 23 164:14, 22, 25 165:1, 2 167:17 169:15 170:22 175:6, 8 177:20 179:1, 3, 18, 20, 21, 24 180:2, 5, 6, 10 181:17 182:8, 16 183:5, 7, 16 239:9	Councilmanic 109:12 114:4	115:18, 23 116:6 135:7, 8 137:11 138:1 140:16 141:9 142:17 143:16, 20 150:15, 17, 21 153:3, 6, 11 154:5 155:10, 22 156:5, 18, 25 169:16, 18 170:15 171:1, 8, 15, 23 173:6 174:1, 12, 16 183:8, 10 185:21 186:18, 23 187:1, 24 188:3 200:1, 14 203:4, 6, 8 263:9, 12, 13 264:8, 17	
contracted 13:17 22:9, 13 186:22	correcting 54:12	146:23 147:21 148:19 150:13, 19, 23 151:2 152:17 156:2, 24 159:18, 23 160:5 164:24 165:3 169:12, 14, 19 174:14, 15, 22 175:2, 4, 9 179:15, 17, 23 180:1, 4, 8 181:15, 19 182:7, 17 183:6 188:2, 11, 19 189:7, 10 191:18, 19, 23 192:22 193:2, 16 194:4 195:8 196:9, 13, 19, 23 197:15, 24 198:8 199:11 200:19 203:7, 14, 19, 22, 25 204:13, 14, 22 206:1, 19 207:3, 8, 11, 14 212:3, 12, 17 215:21 216:11 217:13 218:2, 3 219:8, 17 220:2, 7, 11, 12, 14, 18, 23, 24 224:12, 17, 21, 23, 24 225:3, 7, 9, 13, 18 226:23 227:21, 25 228:5, 9, 10, 11 230:18, 19, 20, 25 232:6 233:11, 14, 19 235:18, 22, 24 236:3, 14, 19 237:24 238:4, 9, 14, 18, 19, 21, 25 239:6, 12, 21 242:18, 23 244:7 247:10, 15 250:5 251:2, 7 253:5, 10, 15 255:1, 7, 12, 15, 18 257:2, 9, 14	COUNCILMA N 1:1 3:13 4:19, 24 5:22 6:7, 11, 13 43:13, 15 44:24 45:5, 10 46:8, 17 47:12 51:24 52:4 53:7, 8, 10, 14 56:19 59:14 61:11, 16, 17, 18, 22 63:14 67:10 69:24 70:2, 10 71:23 79:22 89:8, 10 91:5, 21 92:25 94:16 97:7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 17 98:2, 7, 23 99:11, 22 100:4, 23 101:2, 5, 20, 25 102:7, 12, 18, 24 103:7, 13 105:16 106:7 107:3, 16 116:8, 10, 14 119:2 121:4, 14, 23 122:20 124:11 125:23 126:1, 2, 4, 16, 19, 24 127:4, 14, 23 128:1, 15, 22 129:10 130:5, 16 132:2, 24 133:20 135:3 157:1, 3 159:24 160:1, 2, 4 161:15 162:2 163:3, 17, 23 164:14, 22, 25 165:1, 2 167:17 169:15 170:22 175:6, 8 177:20 179:1, 3, 18, 20, 21, 24 180:2, 5, 6, 10 181:17 182:8, 16 183:5, 7, 16 239:9	Councilmanic 109:12 114:4	115:18, 23 116:6 135:7, 8 137:11 138:1 140:16 141:9 142:17 143:16, 20 150:15, 17, 21 153:3, 6, 11 154:5 155:10, 22 156:5, 18, 25 169:16, 18 170:15 171:1, 8, 15, 23 173:6 174:1, 12, 16 183:8, 10 185:21 186:18, 23 187:1, 24 188:3 200:1, 14 203:4, 6, 8 263:9, 12, 13 264:8, 17	
contracting 12:9 187:7 223:12	cost-efficiency 187:11	15, 22 175:2, 4, 9 179:15, 17, 23 180:1, 4, 8 181:15, 19 182:7, 17 183:6 188:2, 11, 19 189:7, 10 191:18, 19, 23 192:22 193:2, 16 194:4 195:8 196:9, 13, 19, 23 197:15, 24 198:8 199:11 200:19 203:7, 14, 19, 22, 25 204:13, 14, 22 206:1, 19 207:3, 8, 11, 14 212:3, 12, 17 215:21 216:11 217:13 218:2, 3 219:8, 17 220:2, 7, 11, 12, 14, 18, 23, 24 224:12, 17, 21, 23, 24 225:3, 7, 9, 13, 18 226:23 227:21, 25 228:5, 9, 10, 11 230:18, 19, 20, 25 232:6 233:11, 14, 19 235:18, 22, 24 236:3, 14, 19 237:24 238:4, 9, 14, 18, 19, 21, 25 239:6, 12, 21 242:18, 23 244:7 247:10, 15 250:5 251:2, 7 253:5, 10, 15 255:1, 7, 12, 15, 18 257:2, 9, 14	COUNCILMA N 1:1 3:13 4:19, 24 5:22 6:7, 11, 13 43:13, 15 44:24 45:5, 10 46:8, 17 47:12 51:24 52:4 53:7, 8, 10, 14 56:19 59:14 61:11, 16, 17, 18, 22 63:14 67:10 69:24 70:2, 10 71:23 79:22 89:8, 10 91:5, 21 92:25 94:16 97:7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 17 98:2, 7, 23 99:11, 22 100:4, 23 101:2, 5, 20, 25 102:7, 12, 18, 24 103:7, 13 105:16 106:7 107:3, 16 116:8, 10, 14 119:2 121:4, 14, 23 122:20 124:11 125:23 126:1, 2, 4, 16, 19, 24 127:4, 14, 23 128:1, 15, 22 129:10 130:5, 16 132:2, 24 133:20 135:3 157:1, 3 159:24 160:1, 2, 4 161:15 162:2 163:3, 17, 23 164:14, 22, 25 165:1, 2 167:17 169:15 170:22 175:6, 8 177:20 179:1, 3, 18, 20, 21, 24 180:2, 5, 6, 10 181:17 182:8, 16 183:5, 7, 16 239:9	Councilmanic 109:12 114:4	115:18, 23 116:6 135:7, 8 137:11 138:1 140:16 141:9 142:17 143:16, 20 150:15, 17, 21 153:3, 6, 11 154:5 155:10, 22 156:5, 18, 25 169:16, 18 170:15 171:1, 8, 15, 23 173:6 174:1, 12, 16 183:8, 10 185:21 186:18, 23 187:1, 24 188:3 200:1, 14 203:4, 6, 8 263:9, 12, 13 264:8, 17	
Contractors 217:19, 22 219:1	costs 210:22 214:23 219:12 229:18	15, 22 175:2, 4, 9 179:15, 17, 23 180:1, 4, 8 181:15, 19 182:7, 17 183:6 188:2, 11, 19 189:7, 10 191:18, 19, 23 192:22 193:2, 16 194:4 195:8 196:9, 13, 19, 23 197:15, 24 198:8 199:11 200:19 203:7, 14, 19, 22, 25 204:13, 14, 22 206:1, 19 207:3, 8, 11, 14 212:3, 12, 17 215:21 216:11 217:13 218:2, 3 219:8, 17 220:2, 7, 11, 12, 14, 18, 23, 24 224:12, 17, 21, 23, 24 225:3, 7, 9, 13, 18 226:23 227:21, 25 228:5, 9, 10, 11 230:18, 19, 20, 25 232:6 233:11, 14, 19 235:18, 22, 24 236:3, 14, 19 237:24 238:4, 9, 14, 18, 19, 21, 25 239:6, 12, 21 242:18, 23 244:7 247:10, 15 250:5 251:2, 7 253:5, 10, 15 255:1, 7, 12, 15, 18 257:2, 9, 14	COUNCILMA N 1:1 3:13 4:19, 24 5:22 6:7, 11, 13 43:13, 15 44:24 45:5, 10 46:8, 17 47:12 51:24 52:4 53:7, 8, 10, 14 56:19 59:14 61:11, 16, 17, 18, 22 63:14 67:10 69:24 70:2, 10 71:23 79:22 89:8, 10 91:5, 21 92:25 94:16 97:7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 17 98:2, 7, 23 99:11, 22 100:4, 23 101:2, 5, 20, 25 102:7, 12, 18, 24 103:7, 13 105:16 106:7 107:3, 16 116:8, 10, 14 119:2 121:4, 14, 23 122:20 124:11 125:23 126:1, 2, 4, 16, 19, 24 127:4, 14, 23 128:1, 15, 22 129:10 130:5, 16 132:2, 24 133:20 135:3 157:1, 3 159:24 160:1, 2, 4 161:15 162:2 163:3, 17, 23 164:14, 22, 25 165:1, 2 167:17 169:15 170:22 175:6, 8 177:20 179:1, 3, 18, 20, 21, 24 180:2, 5, 6, 10 181:17 182:8, 16 183:5, 7, 16 239:9	Councilmanic 109:12 114:4	115:18, 23 116:6 135:7, 8 137:11 138:1 140:16 141:9 142:17 143:16, 20 150:15, 17, 21 153:3, 6, 11 154:5 155:10, 22 156:5, 18, 25 169:16, 18 170:15 171:1, 8, 15, 23 173:6 174:1, 12, 16 183:8, 10 185:21 186:18, 23 187:1, 24 188:3 200:1, 14 203:4, 6, 8 263:9, 12, 13 264:8, 17	
contracts 185:23 186:3	COUNCIL 1:1 2:2, 9, 15 3:7, 14, 16, 25 4:2, 8, 10, 21 5:1, 8, 15, 23 6:1, 3, 5, 7, 10, 14 8:13, 23 9:1 10:16, 21, 25 11:1 12:2 13:1 17:5 19:17, 19 20:21 21:22 22:2, 24 24:7, 19 25:24 26:5 27:14 29:18 31:1 35:15 38:12 40:15 43:11 44:15, 21 45:3, 7, 19, 24 50:8, 13, 20 53:6, 11, 17, 21 56:7, 22 61:13, 15, 19, 22 62:15 63:7 69:19, 22, 23, 25 70:7 75:13 76:9 78:23 89:4, 6, 11 97:2, 8, 9, 15 107:15 111:24 112:4 116:4, 5, 11, 12 125:25 126:5 127:19 128:8 129:15, 23 130:8 131:12 133:8	15, 22 175:2, 4, 9 179:15, 17, 23 180:1, 4, 8 181:15, 19 182:7, 17 183:6 188:2, 11, 19 189:7, 10 191:18, 19, 23 192:22 193:2, 16 194:4 195:8 196:9, 13, 19, 23 197:15, 24 198:8 199:11 200:19 203:7, 14, 19, 22, 25 204:13, 14, 22 206:1, 19 207:3, 8, 11, 14 212:3, 12, 17 215:21 216:11 217:13 218:2, 3 219:8, 17 220:2, 7, 11, 12, 14, 18, 23, 24 224:12, 17, 21, 23, 24 225:3, 7, 9, 13, 18 226:23 227:21, 25 228:5, 9, 10, 11 230:18, 19, 20, 25 232:6 233:11, 14, 19 235:18, 22, 24 236:3, 14, 19 237:24 238:4, 9, 14, 18, 19, 21, 25 239:6, 12, 21 242:18, 23 244:7 247:10, 15 250:5 251:2, 7 253:5, 10, 15 255:1, 7, 12, 15, 18 257:2, 9, 14	COUNCILMA N 1:1 3:13 4:19, 24 5:22 6:7, 11, 13 43:13, 15 44:24 45:5, 10 46:8, 17 47:12 51:24 52:4 53:7, 8, 10, 14 56:19 59:14 61:11, 16, 17, 18, 22 63:14 67:10 69:24 70:2, 10 71:23 79:22 89:8, 10 91:5, 21 92:25 94:16 97:7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 17 98:2, 7, 23 99:11, 22 100:4, 23 101:2, 5, 20, 25 102:7, 12, 18, 24 103:7, 13 105:16 106:7 107:3, 16 116:8, 10, 14 119:2 121:4, 14, 23 122:20 124:11 125:23 126:1, 2, 4, 16, 19, 24 127:4, 14, 23 128:1, 15, 22 129:10 130:5, 16 132:2, 24 133:20 135:3 157:1, 3 159:24 160:1, 2, 4 161:15 162:2 163:3, 17			

COVID-19 2:8 201:8 248:9	90:11 99:3 < D > D.C 249:11 Daily 2:17 214:25 danger 218:24 dangerous 244:24 dark 168:5 DARRELL 1:1 data 12:9, 11 14:10 15:5, 9, 12, 20, 24, 25 16:1 41:11 46:24, 25 50:8, 10 89:18 90:13, 14 108:9 110:6 111:15 123:9 124:8, 18 137:4 139:25 141:6, 13, 14, 18 142:9, 11 147:15 152:14 162:20 172:7 174:18, 23 181:4, 11 186:11 240:21 Database 15:21 databases 113:7 date 19:3 94:6, 11 115:4 124:7 126:17 127:3 160:18, 25 161:1, 5, 9 170:5 174:6 191:1 195:12 262:25 dates 190:4 DAVID 1:1 day 69:18 101:11 116:19 123:16 128:7 158:3 203:1 days 99:21 101:9 162:4 181:16 183:1 199:17 234:20 deadline 20:3 35:1 36:18 115:4, 9, 14, 16, 17 116:1 160:20 161:4 162:5 164:13 170:6, 18, 24 195:2, 3, 7, 20	deadlines 34:21 deal 19:19 53:18 158:17 180:14 237:7 dealing 34:11, 12 dear 48:7 death 168:24 debated 134:10 debates 204:24 decade 21:24 22:14 56:4 71:15, 16 125:17 decades 240:22 241:1 247:23 249:11 December 190:5 196:5 decent 237:21 decide 19:12 deciding 249:21 decisions 149:1 249:12 deck 88:19 declining 241:3 decreasing 149:25 dedicated 12:4 27:2 58:3 185:25 deducted 82:2 deed 136:18 137:9 deeds 7:15 137:17, 19 defer 28:15 51:19 76:13 104:10 definitely 59:12 115:8 116:6 155:4 Delaware 221:2 delayed 218:23 delays 189:19 delete 199:13 delineation 84:10 delineations 87:6 deliver 40:21 demand 56:1 124:4 demographic 33:4 166:14	demolishing 7:23 Demolition 7:21 demonstrated 210:3 denied 194:16 density 150:1 Department 13:20, 25 14:18 23:11 27:6 33:21 118:11, 25 125:20 162:12, 15 178:19 185:6 186:17 190:3, 18 193:23 195:4 199:5 209:17, 21 210:1, 7 212:8 departmental 113:6 departments 23:16 142:10 210:4 Department's 190:8 depend 132:19 depending 59:1 98:13 depends 38:23 depreciation 85:25 depressed 58:6 Deputy 11:5 DEREK 1:1 describe 72:19 122:4 171:16 description 174:3 deserve 246:19 design 210:21 designation 230:14 desire 206:23 despite 117:9 210:2 destination 235:3 detail 26:11 83:11 108:17 153:21 detailed 83:12 114:3 174:2, 9 details 112:22 142:15 162:22 185:17 187:25	determination 63:2 84:10 determine 66:7 81:9 83:20 102:13 169:10 determined 61:24 determining 195:7 devalues 59:23 devastating 88:5 215:9 develop 14:18 16:10 118:24 125:20 147:6 243:15 developed 95:22 developers 149:3 150:24 209:10 211:6, 24 237:17 developing 58:14 91:22 112:10 134:3 205:18 247:24 development 7:23 14:15, 21 92:1, 8, 12, 14, 21 93:2 95:10 96:17 134:8 144:24 148:3 149:4, 14 151:2, 7, 9 204:11 207:21 208:13 209:5, 7, 18, 22 210:8, 20 211:5, 12, 21 237:18 248:14 dictate 234:22 difference 31:13 120:11 155:18 158:21 165:10 166:11 168:19 differences 63:24 111:18 171:16 different 24:2 45:16 47:5 48:10, 12 49:4 56:13 57:16, 25 63:6 67:4 69:15 71:17 74:1 84:23 85:8 94:21 113:6 147:7,	17 153:17 162:21, 23 165:20 166:25 168:22 173:8, 20 192:7 Differential 30:3 31:7, 24 32:1 48:24 114:6 differentiate 82:17 differently 80:11 155:19 167:10 difficult 123:24 245:6, 11 249:18 252:12 262:9 difficulty 250:2 digit 55:15 122:14 241:3, 5 digital 17:23, 25 18:9, 13, 16 24:12 73:17 75:25 digital- centered 76:1 digitally 19:13 35:9 direct 211:23 265:21 direction 206:5 directly 151:18 163:7 Director 11:7 28:15 53:12 56:20 61:12, 20 79:4 175:11, 19 179:13 189:5 239:22 243:3 disadvantage 24:13 disadvantaged 26:15 disagree 71:9 disappointed 107:25 disastrous 63:20 disclaimer 137:7 discrepancies 69:10 discriminatory 50:1 discuss 171:5
---------------------------------------	--	--	---	--	--

discussed 133:11 134:10 136:16 159:2	discussing 263:4	discussion 129:17 156:3 178:13	discussions 19:24 23:24 128:12 130:12, 18, 19 131:10	disparity 88:19 221:16	Dispersion 30:6 31:5, 23, 25 79:21 114:5	displaced 72:7 96:10	displacing 88:9	displayed 3:1	dispositions 206:11	disproportionat e 248:9	disproportionat ely 223:2	distilled 244:9	distinguishes 169:3	distribute 159:18	distributed 222:11	District 47:18 49:8 69:8 72:15 75:17 77:13 80:22 108:10 109:12, 20 110:8 114:4, 7, 10, 12, 13 140:1 151:19 152:8, 21 154:19 155:3, 18 157:19 159:10 178:23 190:7 226:22 263:18	district-by- district 152:16, 25	districts 50:14, 21 51:9 56:22 57:6 140:4 154:7, 12, 18 167:7 206:19, 20	discussed 133:11 134:10 136:16 159:2	diverse 221:7 223:9, 13, 19 243:16, 20, 24 249:24 250:12, 17	diversity 16:15, 23 223:3 231:12, 21	document 30:24 117:15	documentation 41:12, 20 42:2 73:21 83:10 120:24	documents 7:16, 25	doing 24:25 27:9, 12, 22 30:10 32:5 53:25 62:24 76:17 77:7, 8, 9, 11 86:11 91:19 92:15 96:24 113:20 120:13 127:25 128:2 146:22 153:16 160:9 185:7, 9, 18 205:10 232:18 236:16, 17 244:10, 11, 14 245:4 249:7 250:3 256:12 258:8	dollar 29:1 101:16	dollars 133:6 221:18 222:12 226:12 232:14, 22	DOMB 1:1 3:12, 13 53:9, 10, 14 56:13, 19 59:14 61:11 175:7, 8 177:20 179:1 183:16	Domb's 121:23	door 83:6	double 55:15 122:14 124:23 229:24 241:2, 4, 8 244:19 246:11 254:16	doubled 45:11 167:23	doubling 124:21 168:7	doubt 78:19 215:15	downtown 214:18 259:21	downzone 145:21	dramatic 122:13	dramatically 148:1 219:15	drastic 121:19	draw 166:20, 25 167:11 172:4	drawn 51:7	drew 57:22 104:10, 13	Drexel 67:20	drill 49:5 53:2 88:7 120:17	drive 258:9	drive-by 119:12	driven 77:5 78:12	driving 208:18	drop 40:9 261:12	dropped 39:22 184:5 238:19 262:22	DUBOW 45:14, 22 46:6 51:20, 21, 25 76:13, 15 98:17 99:6 100:3, 18 101:1, 4, 15, 23 102:5, 15, 22 103:5, 9 104:10, 15 112:12, 20 113:2, 10, 23 126:7, 21, 23 127:2, 12, 22, 24 128:10, 17, 25 129:25 130:9 131:14 132:13 133:14 143:1 144:6, 17 154:2, 4, 6 155:24 156:6, 17 171:5 177:7 178:12 188:6, 17	Due 2:7 46:11 190:11 195:16 201:7	211:9 218:21 246:8 250:1	dumping 168:1 178:21	duplicative 97:21	dynamic 235:4	< E >	eager 76:22 219:24	earlier 18:12 27:1 45:9 57:18 75:11 87:3 95:19 106:15 115:12, 13 121:23 125:7 153:15 182:19 192:14, 20 228:25	early 26:17 55:19 73:9	earned 249:17	ears 194:19	ease 190:21 249:7	easier 59:3 117:21 241:25	easily 191:3	easing 236:16	East 86:19	easy 170:8	echo 20:25	eclectic 48:18	economic 7:22 134:7 242:10 243:23 246:22 248:2 249:6	economists 55:14	economy 216:10 224:1 228:22 243:22 248:5, 25	educate 89:2	education 35:24 68:5 118:19 178:22 240:7 242:6 253:1	educator 62:21	effect 78:4	effective 94:6	effectively 108:15	effects 229:21	efficiency 191:11	efficient 40:6 89:14 187:9	efficiently 36:23 176:19	effort 24:15 168:14 250:11	efforts 77:2	either 12:16 25:15 27:21 38:6 40:20 82:5 130:20 149:25 164:1 170:11 177:12 229:2 240:15 245:23	either-or 230:4 245:22	elected 63:17	election 205:1	elections 23:18	electronic 41:1	elements 16:1 148:8 162:20 172:7	eligibility 100:15 113:12	eligible 98:11 99:24 100:10, 25 106:23 107:2 113:8 135:22	eliminate 27:24 253:17	email 193:22 201:14	emailed 190:24	emails 180:17	emerge 250:21	emergency 201:8	emphasize 223:8	employed 229:2	employee 185:12 193:11 225:23 227:20 259:23	employees 14:15 186:1, 7 214:20 232:15 236:10 241:11 242:15 250:16 251:22 254:10, 22	employers 113:14 214:17 246:8, 13 247:5	enabling 105:19, 21 106:1	enact 199:11 227:21	encourage 7:22 219:19	encouraging 193:7 222:2 248:1	ended 123:2	endowment 227:12	endure 254:9	engage 243:21	enhance 8:9 176:11 234:11 242:4	enjoy 241:22	enjoyed 214:21	ensure 13:22 14:17 15:14 16:14, 22 17:21 26:12 27:10 77:11 136:8 192:16 199:19 201:18 205:15 209:10 222:24 227:22 235:14	ensured 26:23	ensuring 226:4 240:6	enterprises 243:21	entire 11:12 49:24 63:17 68:16 94:20 168:15	entitled 7:13, 20	entitlement 211:8	entity 64:18 67:21	entrepreneurial 235:5	Entrepreneurs 248:24 249:20	entrepreneurshi p 248:12 249:3	entry 16:8 170:10	envelope 23:14	envelopes 23:4 115:20 192:12
---	----------------------------	---	--	----------------------------------	--	--------------------------------	------------------------	----------------------	-------------------------------	------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	------------------------	-------------------------------	-----------------------------	------------------------------	--	--	--	---	---	--	---------------------------------	---	------------------------------	---	------------------------------	---	--	----------------------	------------------	---	--------------------------------	---------------------------------	------------------------------	----------------------------------	---------------------------	---------------------------	-------------------------------------	-----------------------	---	-------------------	---------------------------------	---------------------	--	--------------------	---------------------------	-----------------------------	-----------------------	----------------------------	--	--	--	-----------------------------	--------------------------------	-----------------------------	----------------------	-------	------------------------------	--	----------------------------------	----------------------	--------------------	-----------------------------	-------------------------------------	---------------------	----------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------------	-----------------------	--	----------------------------	--	---------------------	---	-----------------------	--------------------	-----------------------	------------------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------------	--------------------------------------	------------------------------------	--------------------------------------	---------------------	--	----------------------------------	----------------------	-----------------------	------------------------	------------------------	---	-------------------------------------	--	----------------------------------	-------------------------------	-----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	---------------------------	---------------------------	--------------------------	---	---	---	--	-------------------------------	---------------------------------	--	--------------------	----------------------------	---------------------	----------------------	--	---------------------	-----------------------	--	----------------------	--------------------------------	------------------------------	---	-----------------------------	-----------------------------	------------------------------	---------------------------------	---------------------------------------	--	-----------------------------	-----------------------	--

environment 62:11 191:6 201:18 208:18 222:8 equal 103:4 226:7 equitable 53:4 96:24 208:13 209:6 222:7 224:8 232:4 equitably 26:13 219:24 equity 14:6 26:10, 19, 23 27:4, 8, 17 29:15 34:5, 7, 19 49:21, 22 96:2 109:10 112:7 138:19 222:24 231:12, 21 232:1 233:2 errors 94:2 especially 25:21 109:20 123:1 138:20 218:16 223:17 245:21 257:22, 23 258:18 essentially 56:12 82:16 89:19 96:8, 19 230:1 established 6:15 79:8 146:1 201:21 establishment 210:24 establishments 229:12 estate 12:7, 21 16:18 34:2 44:9 49:17 57:2 64:3 71:7 95:1 125:10 132:5, 21 134:12, 22 204:8 207:21, 24 208:22 211:16 215:11, 16 218:1 219:18 estimate 55:22 99:21 114:18, 20, 22 139:7 estimated 214:9 estimates	18:24 122:15 et 254:12 ethnic 243:8 evaluate 114:19 187:21 evaluated 119:25 Evaluator 16:12, 20, 24 38:3, 25 125:12 185:2 evaluators 16:6 37:18 event 112:3 216:21 events 40:12 77:16, 17 78:8, 9 ever-changing 245:7 everybody 24:15 27:12 35:8 89:12 150:12 181:21 216:15 217:8 Everything's 195:17 evidence 194:12 265:1 exacerbated 229:16 exacerbates 25:23 exact 19:2, 7 49:14 52:2 54:20 60:7 137:16 156:3 186:20 exactly 55:9 58:18 63:23 99:7 115:10 151:5 examine 213:11 example 29:19 67:12 146:8 151:23 158:14 165:11 167:7 210:17 245:15 exceed 176:10 exceeded 189:18 exceedingly 138:5 Excellence 14:24 exception 105:13	exceptions 105:10 excited 191:7 excuse 20:16 Executive 189:5, 14 243:3 exempt 45:18 Exemption 105:11, 12 106:6 135:23 142:23 227:15 exemptions 105:18 106:21 exhausted 215:25 Exhibit 213:20 exist 199:3 245:1, 8 existed 110:12 existing 15:25 37:18 75:19 145:1, 7, 9, 11 146:8, 20 147:10, 19, 25 148:5 199:1, 3 expect 12:18 18:23 21:19 27:20 37:4 50:10 160:8 174:2 expectation 9:17 22:20 263:22 expectations 176:10 189:18 expected 204:20 expecting 77:19 190:12 expects 13:11 14:9 expenditure 185:22 expense 244:18 expensive 249:9 252:12 experience 16:8, 19 139:14 experienced 214:24 experiences 244:4 expert 11:25 experts 55:14 explain 26:11 81:4 90:7	109:18 111:11 121:11 142:2 expressed 183:17 expressions 243:10 extend 115:3, 14, 15 170:17 extended 211:10 extending 115:25 extensive 211:3 extent 48:13 91:7 external 12:1 27:15 30:19 55:11, 14 56:17 62:6 121:25 187:12 externally 28:21 extract 67:7 extracted 85:8, 22 extremely 80:23 eye 68:25 < F > face 191:4 234:7 243:21 faced 36:16 88:12 facilities 199:3 facility 199:1 fact 24:11 53:23 63:21 78:16 109:21 184:1 244:25 246:9 249:22 252:10 factor 66:6, 13 146:11, 13 147:18 166:14 172:24 173:12, 15 factored 169:6 210:22 factors 25:16 65:9 84:13 166:10 229:13 facts 53:17, 18 229:9 240:21, 25 fair 66:18 80:19 202:11 227:22	fairly 56:16 148:17 fairness 49:25 71:8 faithfully 202:12 fall 26:14 86:20 196:1 familiar 73:5, 7 families 49:24 77:25 248:19, 21, 22, 24 251:23 family 31:3 146:9, 17 158:23 far 18:9 20:1 21:16 28:1, 5, 13 29:2 33:4 50:24 51:17 58:23 95:4 122:18 137:3 146:14 160:22 250:13 Farida 261:22 262:1, 5, 6 Farms 158:15 fault 115:19 116:2, 7 favor 215:8 fear 181:1 feature 9:24 10:3 features 173:20 Fed 29:14 federal 204:21 222:13 fee 7:25 feedback 21:15 feel 28:25 92:3 162:25 178:1, 2, 3, 4, 11 183:24, 25 195:14 259:23 feels 108:5 178:5 235:8 Fees 7:13, 14 210:9, 22, 24 211:1 feet 88:23 236:24 fell 120:3 female-owned 231:15 Fenua 255:6, 11, 17, 21 fewer 229:11	fight 96:8 234:23 figure 17:18 54:4 99:9 100:7 113:7, 20 150:10 152:4 153:20 figures 114:9 227:8 file 18:4 20:8 40:23 75:7 161:1, 9, 10, 11 163:20 164:9, 11 169:22 170:1 175:1 181:14 194:9, 23 196:2, 11 219:1 filed 13:14 36:24 189:24 194:25 filer 195:10 filing 36:13 41:1 190:19, 22, 25 195:2, 7, 11, 20 filings 190:15 fill 16:6 38:9 40:14 125:21 184:22, 25 187:16 194:11 final 14:1 30:18, 22 49:20 99:19 102:11 120:22 finalize 126:13 finalized 128:14, 16, 17 175:1 Finally 50:2 219:7 227:11 237:2, 9 252:20 Finance 13:6 28:15 182:24 199:5 Financial 8:14 financing 206:12 find 16:14 18:16 52:14 63:24 85:13 137:16 165:4 191:10 260:1 finding 257:25 fine-tune 191:15 fingers 148:21
---	---	--	---	--	--

finish 42:1	floor 158:9	forms 40:7, 15	frustration	GAUTHIER	25 180:16
finished 63:13	189:12 191:17	170:11, 12	175:16, 21	1:1 3:19, 20	186:3 197:2
fire 93:25	FLR 37:14	190:19 222:13	176:5 179:10,	6:25 107:18,	240:18
firmly 248:12	38:13 39:20	248:17	11	19, 23 111:20	Gilchrist
firms 61:2	161:10, 17	formula 83:6	full 15:15	112:18, 23	207:7, 10, 13,
217:23	162:25 164:10	116:23, 24, 25	167:5 172:15	113:3, 17, 24	15 212:5
first 10:11, 13	194:9, 10, 24	222:24	210:15 212:7	114:14, 24	GILMORE
11:17, 19	focus 28:17	forth 132:12	252:25	115:18, 23	1:1 3:23, 24
13:12 14:22	185:19 190:8	133:12 134:15	full-time	169:17, 18	26:3, 4 28:3
20:2, 9, 20	201:6 222:10	Fortunately	251:21	170:15 171:1,	29:8 31:9, 12,
26:1, 9 34:22	focused 221:22	204:18	fully 87:13	8, 15, 23 173:6	18 32:6, 16
36:21, 24 37:3,	focusing	forward 25:4	95:21 211:2, 4	174:1, 12	33:12 35:22
6, 19 38:20	139:17	29:10 34:4	265:1	GBCA 217:25	41:22 48:7
39:8, 17 40:6	folding 236:23	35:11 53:1	Fund 7:22	218:20 219:4	79:17 135:7, 8
44:11 45:1	Folks 18:15	91:17 131:4,	15:7 87:25	gender 243:9	137:11 138:1
46:10, 15, 20	19:21 20:5	20 132:23	177:10, 19	general 34:2	140:16 141:9
67:2 70:14	21:3, 16 40:7,	133:24 134:4	222:12	55:11 79:7	142:17 143:16
71:17 72:23	13 42:5 50:13,	156:7 182:4	fundamental	80:7, 18 83:12,	give 16:21
101:7 104:1	20 60:18	197:17 205:19	227:18	20 86:17	30:16 37:23
108:5 114:19	62:17 71:24	230:6 247:7	funded 209:9	124:19 134:1	39:18 44:13
115:4 126:25	72:5, 12 73:16,	Forward-	funding 15:6	137:2 154:22	67:16 73:13
135:4 136:9	23 74:2, 23	looking 9:7	76:11 87:13	177:10, 18	82:4 96:15
140:6 143:25	75:18 76:4	found 2:19	144:7 178:18	178:5 212:21	112:21 114:9
160:6, 9, 12, 16,	77:23 78:1	14:3 29:14, 19	183:14 184:25	217:19, 22	119:15 120:4
22 162:5	79:3 81:22	30:1 119:24	198:25 205:14	generally	125:13 136:5
163:20 164:12	83:18 89:2	194:18	211:4 212:2	146:11	139:2, 7, 24
169:22 170:1,	111:19 117:22	founder 228:14	218:24 222:13,	generate	140:19 147:22
3 185:8 191:1,	125:3, 13	founding	19, 25 223:5	47:10 65:19	152:15 159:10
13 195:2, 11	139:17 140:24	204:7 207:23	funds 60:25	66:10 206:7	201:24 230:15
198:10 199:14	149:9 152:17	four 20:7	76:21 111:23	256:17	235:14
203:3, 11, 12	161:11 163:1,	56:22, 24 57:1	112:13 118:16	generated	given 23:6
216:6 217:1	16 164:3	93:7 95:9	183:19 184:19	47:7 211:1	27:14 116:1
218:5 228:18	170:11 181:21	115:5 227:10	204:21 215:25	generational	122:22 160:18
231:6 232:23	185:18 192:8	240:25 244:9	218:15, 16	138:13	192:23 219:5
243:17 257:17	263:17 264:1	248:23 250:16	further 92:24	generations	giving 117:19
Fiscal 7:4, 7, 9	follow 70:10	fragile 213:19	172:15 176:11	151:14	201:13 230:2
8:15, 17 9:6, 8,	190:7 224:5	frame 211:10	263:4	gentrification	237:17 254:24
9 11:10 62:4	following 2:6	Francisco	Furthermore	139:15 168:13	257:18
185:23 189:16	29:16 41:7	249:11	214:3	gentrify 152:7	glad 35:25
190:9 191:13	113:25 114:25	frankly 167:22	future 14:10,	gentrifying	76:25 111:21
Fishtown	150:22	freak 149:3	18 25:6	72:3 78:2	253:2
57:24 58:20	follows 201:21	free 185:17	118:25 159:3	83:22	gladly 17:3
80:2, 18 86:5,	follow-up 28:2	freeze 100:13,	204:11 216:2	geographic	global 23:5
13, 21	114:15	15, 19 177:15	234:19 244:24	57:19 64:24	Gloudemans
Five 8:14	footage 15:9	frequently	FY22 13:17	69:1 114:3, 7	11:25
55:3 132:15	84:22 88:20	117:25	184:23 222:16	167:1 172:18	GMA 81:9
250:16 252:1	forced 191:9	Friday 116:19	FY23 13:12	geographical	83:25 84:3
fix 46:25	foregoing	174:22	14:9 15:4	51:12 166:19	go 10:19 18:8
178:9 179:7	265:1, 18	friendlier	192:1 195:13,	Germantown	19:23 23:25
fixed 52:17, 22	forge 247:8	190:20	16 213:4	48:17, 19, 21	24:1 28:4
54:2, 17	form 40:13	friends 256:5	222:16 223:18	95:20	29:13 37:9
158:18 179:8	105:23 131:25	front 31:15	< G >	getting 20:24	48:16 50:6, 13
fixing 54:14	162:25 170:4	46:3 156:13	gainfully 229:1	28:18 50:8	60:12 66:25
flag 152:3	177:11 193:15	fronts 213:6	game 196:1	64:21 83:5	71:21 72:24
155:2	194:12 262:24	froze 56:8	gameplan 77:4	95:16 96:17,	73:11 79:4
flat 25:17	formal 20:19	fruition 88:9	Garcia 251:6,	23 99:12	81:13 88:1
122:8 125:2	170:17 194:23	frustrating	11 263:15	136:17 146:2	103:18 104:5
flawed 119:7	format 162:19	233:9		149:6 153:23	108:24 135:5
	formed 204:9			163:2 178:11,	143:14 154:6

156:2 158:13 160:6 161:8, 20 165:18 172:14 179:5 180:9, 23 181:22 200:8, 24 213:12 226:18 236:12 237:4 241:15 255:19 262:4 goal 11:13 13:21 14:22 25:19 127:13, 15 goals 177:3 218:12 219:21 243:23 244:2 251:25 goes 20:4 21:11 47:2 100:19 101:16 161:13 going 2:4 17:18 21:4 25:25 34:5, 24 36:7, 20 37:19 42:22 49:11 52:5, 10 64:8 67:22 68:12, 14 71:13 72:14, 15, 16, 21 74:8, 25 77:15, 22, 25 78:3, 11, 15, 17, 18 80:20 82:24 86:4 87:14, 18, 25 88:5, 6 89:13 96:9 97:20 98:11, 14 99:3, 4, 25 100:5 101:8 111:4 112:19 113:18, 19 116:2 119:13 121:7, 9 123:14 124:15, 20 131:7, 9 134:15, 22 143:23 149:14, 23 151:6, 21 152:6 153:17 154:20 156:9, 10 157:8, 21, 24 158:6, 15 159:4 160:7, 14, 17 161:16, 18, 20 163:4 168:12, 14	170:16 171:2 176:4 177:11, 19 179:6, 11 180:11, 22 181:7, 8, 22, 24 182:8, 14 183:20 184:9 186:2 188:12, 25 192:9, 15 196:1 197:19 198:9, 11 200:2 216:12, 17, 22 217:3 222:25 230:6 256:2, 3, 9, 12, 13 Good 2:2 3:3, 6, 7, 13, 16, 25 4:2, 7, 8, 10, 19, 21, 24 5:1, 5, 6, 8, 13, 15, 22, 23, 24 6:1, 5, 11, 13 10:20, 24 26:5 35:2, 3, 19 52:11 53:11, 12, 13 61:20, 21 68:3 70:5 75:11 79:3 89:12 107:21, 22 116:11, 12 125:19 150:1 157:18, 22 189:7, 9, 11, 16 192:6 196:3 203:10, 14, 15 205:8 207:8 212:17 217:13, 17 218:6 220:7, 18, 22 224:17 225:3, 13 228:5, 8, 9, 10 230:25 233:19 235:25 238:4, 9, 25 239:12 242:23 243:1 247:15, 19 251:7 253:10, 20 255:7, 17, 21 257:9, 13 259:7 260:9, 20, 24 261:1, 9, 13, 23 good-paying 240:24 gotten 21:14 62:18 92:4	118:2 govern 209:4 governed 160:20 government 109:4, 7 141:24 207:19 239:10, 15 248:17 governmental 23:16 government's 209:3 GPHCC 247:23 248:11 250:19 grades 12:14 Graduate 58:3 grant 15:19 grants 257:25 grave 215:5 great 63:23 67:12 70:15 71:22 187:2 195:25 205:23 231:4 234:16 greater 56:23 99:15 204:18 207:17 217:24 228:16 239:11, 17 240:1 243:4 247:21 257:16, 20 greatest 194:18 greatly 212:8 219:16 GREEN 1:1 4:4 6:7, 9, 13 126:3, 4, 16, 19, 24 127:4, 14, 23 128:1, 15, 22 129:10 130:5, 16 132:2, 24 133:20 greener 176:18 Greg 224:16 grinding 244:21 grocery 255:23 258:18 gross 236:15 252:10 ground 198:18 201:2, 20 group 44:5 51:2, 14 58:5 126:22, 25 127:7, 10	129:2, 16, 22 130:2, 7, 15, 21 131:13, 18 153:1, 5, 7, 10 154:10, 16 167:15, 16 183:3 231:6, 9 264:4 group-by- community 44:4 grouped 58:7 66:24 84:20 grouping 86:21 groups 67:6 80:6 130:11, 12, 13 grow 208:12 218:9 228:22 241:11 242:3, 11, 15 246:24 247:4 251:25 252:13, 18 258:13 262:10, 15 growing 218:19 240:23 246:7 grown 184:3 grows 219:23 growth 55:15, 16, 21 87:17 90:21 122:14 132:16, 18, 20 208:17, 23 209:6 215:18 219:14 221:4 223:16 230:7, 9, 13 235:15 241:3 242:13 245:24 246:3 247:2 248:2, 14 249:8 guarantee 19:7 guardrails 158:1 guess 22:25 23:5 25:2 56:9 128:3 151:22 158:5 177:21 180:12 guesstimate 101:3 guidance 254:3 guidelines 62:23 127:9 gun 240:6 250:4	gunfire 166:6 guy 70:21 guys 45:17 77:15 78:11 97:14 181:10 192:15 239:4 254:3 GYM 1:1 4:6, 7 < H > hair 156:12 Hairston 220:17, 22 half 39:22 90:14 102:16 hall 42:12 152:19 205:10 218:7 219:10 hampered 108:21 hand 40:20 handle 37:25 52:8 107:12 175:13 handles 19:3 handling 21:5 27:7 hands 263:25 handy 98:5 hanging 78:6 happen 157:11 158:4, 8 happened 64:23 89:24 95:11 108:14 125:5 229:16 happening 74:12, 22 79:6 91:13, 14 151:20 happens 92:22 103:2 121:20 215:24 happy 41:5 76:8 97:5 106:12 211:17 harassment 168:2 hard 27:10 54:21 86:11 113:11 148:12 184:6 215:4 235:13 240:14 hardships 148:25 hard-working	230:2 241:8 harm 215:19 Harris 233:18, 23, 24 235:21 Harrison 220:25 hate 216:12 hated 43:20 head 39:11 186:21 210:1 health 2:8 8:8 208:7 231:17 242:6 249:6 hear 9:10 10:5 64:11 76:25 111:21 140:17 155:10, 12 180:7, 9 189:20 190:5 195:24 198:20 201:4 203:24 207:10 214:16 216:21 217:1 225:17 239:4 253:14 259:12 261:3 262:4 heard 33:13 95:18 100:13 101:6 143:17 179:2 183:16 192:21 194:5 195:1 201:20 258:1 hearing 2:6, 16 6:16 9:3, 14, 15 108:20 112:6 114:8, 17 116:23 142:4 158:3, 7 175:15, 22 190:4 191:1, 3, 4 195:12, 22 196:6, 12 198:4, 12, 14 200:8, 25 202:1, 2, 22 250:22 258:20 hearings 2:11, 15, 19 196:4 heavily 154:20 heavy 190:10 heels 34:13 141:11 HELEN 1:1 Hello 97:13 180:2 207:13 212:20 233:23
---	--	---	--	---	--

255:11 259:11 260:24 262:2 help 13:3 27:17 29:7 35:7 40:17 53:19 54:4 89:2 96:21 131:20 133:17 138:10, 19 139:11 141:13, 18 143:4 181:9, 18, 20 185:5 206:1 219:25 232:24 240:7 242:14 247:4 253:20 256:24, 25 261:12, 15 262:14 helpful 138:2, 5 140:4 175:5 187:15 253:18 helping 257:22, 25 Hey 116:10 136:24 high 32:12 64:7, 14, 22 102:13 103:17 166:5 168:11 208:20 213:23 250:2 252:24 256:3, 8 259:18 261:11 262:10, 12 higher 22:7 31:21 46:9 56:2 64:19 100:17 152:24 176:4 204:19 248:20 252:18 254:22 highest 140:1 141:3 146:15 206:20 229:23 241:6 246:10 252:7 254:15 highlight 74:9 highly 223:22 243:10 hire 37:22 218:17 241:11 252:1, 19 256:17 hiring 12:8 37:11 38:2 184:14 185:25 186:2 232:19 254:10	Hispanic 243:14 247:21, 25 248:3, 10, 22, 23 251:14 historic 71:6 122:3 158:22 historical 244:22 history 229:6 hit 86:11 101:19 hoc 136:21 hold 10:10 75:8 202:12 holding 250:22 holistically 223:24 Holmes 11:6 home 52:12, 13 54:6 67:17 70:14 119:13 143:11 145:7 146:9, 17 148:5 158:23 168:19, 20 169:4 199:8 213:22, 23 247:9 homeowners 17:15, 22 18:1 19:10 28:13 36:2, 9, 15 42:17 95:25 113:5 145:1, 11 147:25 192:9, 17 homeownership 237:20 homes 15:23 31:23, 25 42:17 48:2, 22 49:1 52:13 58:8 66:14 68:22, 23 69:4 75:9 81:13, 14, 17 82:2, 3, 5 85:13 88:22 121:9 122:25 139:5 140:22, 25 145:9 146:20 147:10 165:16 166:2 168:21 214:7 237:12, 14 Homestead 21:12 73:24 88:2 102:3, 14, 15, 19 103:3, 6,	8, 10, 12 105:11 106:6 135:23 142:22 143:2, 7, 9, 12 177:13 honest 54:21 honestly 95:12 240:11 honing 129:3 hook 78:8, 9 142:5 hope 93:6 151:15 181:15 214:14 218:19 227:21 256:10, 16 261:11, 13 hoped 161:24 hopefully 37:11 44:21 50:11 159:5 174:8 188:14 197:18 256:15 262:23 hopes 234:13 hoping 96:14 219:23 horrible 229:24 Hospital 58:3 hospitality- focused 245:18 host 74:15 208:8 hosting 42:24 77:16 hot 109:23 156:14 hotline 18:15 20:23 21:1, 5, 13 36:1 72:25 73:4, 24 182:13 hotspots 156:20 hottest 59:9 hour 2:20 21:2 hours 210:18 house 52:23 63:22 67:24 90:3, 5 95:21, 22 119:8, 10 123:15 145:5 166:11, 12 167:20 168:5 house-by-house 181:11 households 99:24 113:8	houses 64:21 68:11, 13 145:6, 15 165:13 166:8 168:11 housing 72:13 87:13 88:13, 25 165:8 205:23 206:9 208:6 237:10, 11, 13, 15 HR 234:1, 2, 18 hub 249:15 HUD 55:20 huge 53:25 112:7 124:15 165:10 206:15 hugely 88:4 human 209:23 234:4 hurt 54:1 hurts 242:3 hybrid 191:3 < I > IAAO 13:19 14:1, 8, 16 62:1, 6, 20 91:2 117:4 118:14, 15 IAAO's 14:23 Ida 251:6, 11 263:15 idea 54:15 78:7 95:8 96:16 117:7 120:5 132:8 134:14 138:11 141:1 ideas 127:11 128:24 129:1, 12, 18 130:14, 23 131:2 133:4, 9 134:4 identical 69:16 164:5 184:20 identified 186:7 identifies 170:8 identify 96:22 184:10 244:18 identifying 67:21 illegal 103:20 104:7 168:1 178:21 215:2 image 2:25	imagine 81:1 180:20 immediate 60:23 187:17 252:23 immediately 59:24 impact 17:19 28:11 36:6 59:6 60:23 78:15 80:13 88:20, 21 135:22 143:5 145:6, 10 149:15 150:2 151:9 204:10 208:9 223:22 244:6 248:9 254:6 impacted 78:19 87:18 154:13, 18, 20 223:6 impacts 28:6 109:6 149:24 151:11 223:25 impedes 248:14 imperative 212:1 228:24 implement 222:5 implementation 26:21 33:23 190:16 implementation s 12:3 implemented 11:23 201:9 206:14 222:24 implementing 14:7 implore 219:7, 17 232:6 235:13 import 136:19 importance 74:19 87:12 223:9 important 29:10 34:18 35:25 73:8 75:3 77:4, 14 78:14 131:15 141:20 159:19 167:18 177:8 208:4 218:22 226:3 227:5	228:20 232:2 233:13 imported 137:17, 19 imposed 219:12 imposing 7:24 219:8 Imposition 7:20 improve 8:7 11:14 15:12, 13 27:17 190:21 208:15 218:15 230:6 242:9 246:22 improved 29:16 176:14 178:25 Improvement 8:7 28:23 29:20 improvements 13:25 27:1 86:1 93:20 120:19, 21 148:9 199:1, 3 inappropriately 184:13 inaudible 56:6 91:4 213:8 215:6, 9 219:22 235:12 241:22 242:12 252:25 259:17 262:8 incentivized 219:1 inclu 77:5 include 12:3 78:12 99:2 106:18 120:25 148:23 161:2 included 2:16 57:22 120:9 133:25 includes 223:10 including 38:5 57:7 62:9 76:20 93:19 221:7 226:24 229:19 242:13 247:3 inclusion 231:13, 22 233:3
---	---	--	--	---	--

inclusive 7:5 208:13 221:21 222:8 230:13 235:15 245:24 248:5	25 147:5 151:25 155:16, 17 158:21 184:6, 8, 9, 17, 24 190:14 192:19 212:1 214:21 229:1 234:12 242:5 250:4	individually 50:14 individuals 27:7 33:22 34:14, 25 135:22 136:11 138:18 188:21 216:22 229:18	141:8, 16 148:16 149:22 150:9 153:12, 17, 25 159:17 161:2, 12 166:15 167:18 175:23, 24 181:10 182:11 193:21, 22	intentional 96:5 221:23 222:2 intentionally 222:11 interactive 194:10 interest 122:24 123:2 229:17 interested 87:7 118:8 201:13 interesting 17:10	issue 23:5, 13 51:19 79:5 96:3 115:9 119:6, 23, 24 135:12, 18, 19 138:14 175:25 197:7 211:13 240:3 issued 14:1 62:1 issues 19:6 21:13, 16 22:5 25:2, 17 30:10 33:9 88:15 97:2 112:7 133:23 134:6, 23 177:4 179:7 208:5, 7 244:1 252:21 258:16 issuing 210:5 ITEF 199:2 item 162:16 198:21 items 8:1 56:13 it'll 162:18 its 15:15 17:19 108:19 129:12 145:25 201:7 204:24 206:2, 4, 12, 23 208:12 209:24 221:17 223:4 227:22 230:13 242:10 243:18 246:11, 22
income 46:21, 23 47:9, 10 52:17, 22 54:3 60:22 68:3, 5 78:5 80:25 88:11 98:13 102:1, 4 140:9 205:6 252:7, 11 254:17, 22 258:4	increased 22:21 36:12 98:25 103:3 106:20 109:13, 19 144:23 176:1, 25 177:12 219:11 increases 25:5 49:10, 13, 16 53:20 54:8, 11 56:24 57:7 97:23 104:6, 9 106:18 109:5 110:13 113:1 129:5, 9 143:3, 6 145:8 148:4 154:8 177:14 178:16 181:6 183:20 184:21 241:5	individual's 113:13 industrial 49:2 217:21 industries 19:4 204:10 223:6 industry 11:24 13:23 14:4, 19 16:5 32:4 33:7 61:24 62:3, 21 63:3, 11 110:23 119:1 120:4 204:6 219:18 243:11 industry- recommended 30:8 inequities 33:10 inequity 248:13 infill 82:15 88:13 inflated 83:3 88:13 inflation 34:11 91:13 229:17 influence 51:11 influences 167:6 inform 74:16 181:6 182:1	infrastructure 68:21 inherently 147:5 inhouse 187:8 initial 50:10 82:24 104:1 initially 103:15 Initiative 206:3 initiatives 14:11 15:12 178:17 242:10 246:23 innovation 249:15 innovative 177:4 inperson 117:24 153:19 input 150:9 Inquirer 2:18 inquiries 192:3 inspectors 218:18 instance 51:9 80:24 82:23 84:21 186:10, 12 instances 136:13 institution 226:11 227:14 institutional 217:21 institutions 226:16 Instructions 2:13 insurance 251:12 integrate 15:2 integration 62:10 Intelligencer 2:18 intended 39:8 159:1 intends 14:13 intent 200:5	Internet 35:8 73:11 193:9, 10 interrupt 163:10 interruption 32:8 137:13 179:25 introduced 79:9 introducing 200:9 inundated 180:16, 25 inventory 69:9 invest 67:22 208:19 209:6 230:16 232:21 investing 176:17 206:15 223:9 224:9 230:7 240:14 246:2 investment 52:12 204:11 221:5 246:19 247:2 investments 52:14 208:25 209:8 221:23 invited 9:12 202:1 involved 130:9 ISAIAH 1:1	it'll 162:18 its 15:15 17:19 108:19 129:12 145:25 201:7 204:24 206:2, 4, 12, 23 208:12 209:24 221:17 223:4 227:22 230:13 242:10 243:18 246:11, 22 < J > Jacobson 220:6 228:4, 8, 13, 14 Jamal 212:16, 21 James 10:14 11:1 JAMIE 1:1 January 8:24 61:7 94:7, 10 124:1 138:9 195:22 196:7 Jennifer 247:14, 20 Jersey 221:2 JJS 253:22, 23 job 16:21 53:15, 16 108:19 204:11 218:9 229:11
income-eligible 158:20 income- generating 46:22 incomes 54:3 158:18 incomplete 250:11 inconsistencies 69:14 inconsistent 63:22 incorporate 199:21 incorporated 101:21 incorporating 8:16 incorporation 185:3 incorrect 54:17 increase 7:14, 22 14:13 16:11 17:14 22:8 29:2 34:17 43:6 49:20 52:1 64:9 80:21 94:25 98:16 99:5, 15, 25 100:5, 14, 16 102:14 103:2, 12 104:1 108:12 109:16 111:6 121:7 132:5, 17, 25 133:3 134:12 139:8 140:1 141:3, 17 143:4, 7 144:11 146:3,	incur 214:22 independent 14:3 55:4, 7 61:23 63:5 77:6 243:3 indepth 223:11 indicated 223:20 249:24 indication 120:20 indicators 249:5 individual 41:19 51:5 56:2 60:9 84:8 87:4 111:6, 12 118:20 119:16 120:2 173:2 individualized 84:2	information 13:1, 7 15:22 17:16, 17 19:22 21:12 33:4 41:13, 16, 24 42:14 44:21 46:21 47:14 53:2 73:8, 12 76:1 106:15 107:11 127:20 128:11 132:11 134:8, 17, 18 135:15 136:8, 12, 14, 18 137:1, 2 138:3 139:1, 3 140:8, 19, 23	inherent 147:5 inhouse 187:8 initial 50:10 82:24 104:1 initially 103:15 Initiative 206:3 initiatives 14:11 15:12 178:17 242:10 246:23 innovation 249:15 innovative 177:4 inperson 117:24 153:19 input 150:9 Inquirer 2:18 inquiries 192:3 inspectors 218:18 instance 51:9 80:24 82:23 84:21 186:10, 12 instances 136:13 institution 226:11 227:14 institutional 217:21 institutions 226:16 Instructions 2:13 insurance 251:12 integrate 15:2 integration 62:10 Intelligencer 2:18 intended 39:8 159:1 intends 14:13 intent 200:5	interruption 32:8 137:13 179:25 introduced 79:9 introducing 200:9 inundated 180:16, 25 inventory 69:9 invest 67:22 208:19 209:6 230:16 232:21 investing 176:17 206:15 223:9 224:9 230:7 240:14 246:2 investment 52:12 204:11 221:5 246:19 247:2 investments 52:14 208:25 209:8 221:23 invited 9:12 202:1 involved 130:9 ISAIAH 1:1	item 162:16 198:21 items 8:1 56:13 it'll 162:18 its 15:15 17:19 108:19 129:12 145:25 201:7 204:24 206:2, 4, 12, 23 208:12 209:24 221:17 223:4 227:22 230:13 242:10 243:18 246:11, 22 < J > Jacobson 220:6 228:4, 8, 13, 14 Jamal 212:16, 21 James 10:14 11:1 JAMIE 1:1 January 8:24 61:7 94:7, 10 124:1 138:9 195:22 196:7 Jennifer 247:14, 20 Jersey 221:2 JJS 253:22, 23 job 16:21 53:15, 16 108:19 204:11 218:9 229:11

230:7 235:15 241:3 242:13 246:2 249:8 257:25 job-creating 218:23 jobs 16:17 218:11 237:6 240:24 242:4, 12 245:25 246:7, 24 249:1 252:3 job-training 237:6 Joe 253:9, 22 263:16 JOHNSON 1:1 4:13 116:9, 10, 14 119:2 121:4, 14 122:20 124:11 125:23 157:14 212:16, 20, 21 215:23 Johnson's 139:19 join 202:1 joining 2:3 11:3 JoJo 259:6, 17 JONES 1:1 4:15 43:14, 15 44:24 45:5, 10 46:8, 17 47:12 51:24 52:4 54:24 101:17 157:2, 3 JR 1:1 11:1 judgments 37:14 jump 17:7 37:17 50:23 89:13 121:11 154:3 jumpstart 133:17 jurisdictions 15:1, 17 justice 227:18 < K > Kahl 238:3, 13 KATHERINE 1:1 35:22 keep 109:9 179:6 205:11 218:21 232:22 245:8 254:9	keeping 83:23 KENDRA 1:1 Kensington 57:23 58:20 80:1, 3, 18 86:5, 7, 17, 18, 19, 20 87:16 88:6, 15 KENYATTA 1:1 key 11:23 119:3, 22 171:16 206:4 247:1 249:5 keys 248:13 Khine 257:8, 14 kids 256:23 killing 256:4 kind 25:21, 22 29:6 33:8 38:16 46:22 50:20 56:14 70:25 76:5 80:10 81:21 94:1 106:25 110:13 118:18 124:24 125:4 133:16 140:11 141:6 144:8 147:9 152:15, 22 153:25 156:3 186:7 193:17 243:18 kinds 48:22 50:4, 18 158:25 kitchen 256:13 knew 22:11 71:1 86:24 94:24 184:22 know 22:16 23:14 30:2 33:24 35:12 36:15 37:10 42:10, 22 47:25 48:1, 16 50:16 52:5, 8 55:3 59:18 60:4, 5 62:17 70:20 72:24 73:6 75:5, 15 78:15, 17 80:5, 10 86:7 93:11 95:23 98:15, 17, 24 99:1 100:14 104:12 105:17 106:10 107:4 108:1,	23, 25 115:10 118:2 124:12, 14 126:7 127:5 133:21 135:16 137:10, 15 138:6, 25 139:15 140:12, 17, 21 143:8, 21 144:3, 15, 19 145:1, 4 148:12 149:5, 22 152:13 154:15, 16, 17, 21 156:11, 13, 15, 16 157:11, 12, 13 160:7, 12 163:4 168:9 170:4, 5 174:19 175:18 180:7, 11 181:2, 3 182:18 186:21 187:3, 13 193:8 195:18 196:24 199:25 226:13 229:10 230:8 232:10 246:17 254:3, 14 263:21 264:1 knowing 27:23 92:6 knowledge 125:10 known 13:19 14:25 73:23 172:1 199:2 258:5 knows 237:10 KOP 241:15 < L > L&I 148:13 205:12 218:17, 20 219:5 LA 29:18 labeled 162:17 labor 219:2 labyrinth 245:7 lack 42:21 60:17 192:12 211:9 218:21 244:11 Ladipo 230:24 231:4, 5, 6, 8 lag 91:1 92:21 137:9 laid 161:12	land 12:17 58:23 91:25 93:15 94:13 109:14, 17 110:16, 20 111:2 146:14, 18 164:17 206:10 236:18 237:17 landlords 72:8 large 15:17 24:22 34:16 36:23 69:1 72:5 80:6 85:14 97:23 99:2 104:6, 9 136:19 181:6 215:13 larger 58:5 84:4, 18, 23 85:24 94:4 172:24, 25 largest 29:1 221:6 226:9 230:14 lastly 30:11 late 107:6 116:3 156:6 194:25 196:4 lately 241:15 latest 141:14 246:20 Latino-owned 250:20 Latinos 251:18 laugh 52:9 launch 243:16 Lauren 207:7, 15 law 41:7 61:1 104:12 169:8 lawyer 104:11 lay 198:17 201:2 lead 112:16 210:14 leader 62:21 75:17 leaders 14:18 118:25 249:12 250:23 leadership 29:12 leading 20:15 206:13 221:9 247:23 leads 122:17 lean 149:21	learned 128:7, 9 133:9 learning 117:23 125:15 leases 60:20 leave 169:10 205:4 215:7 256:24 leaving 256:6 led 122:25 Lee 260:8 Legal 2:18 legislation 105:19, 21 106:1 222:2 Legislative 239:22 lend 211:17 lens 34:19 96:24 lest 101:8 letter 41:7 163:13 181:8 letterhead 162:13 letters 108:23 161:20 162:8 letting 160:12 230:18 level 11:15 13:13 14:5 20:2, 9 22:7 28:8 32:14 34:15 36:21, 24 37:4, 7, 20 38:20 39:8, 17 40:6 44:3 59:7 79:18 81:9 101:7 108:9, 17 114:19 115:4 125:1, 4 140:10 143:25 144:24 148:2, 24 152:24 153:16, 21 155:8 160:7, 9, 13, 16, 22 163:21 166:17, 21, 22 169:22 170:1, 3 185:8 197:11, 18 237:8 levels 14:12 16:8 62:10 185:2 199:2 levy 176:22 Levy's 205:3	LGBTQ 243:5, 7 246:16 liability 147:1 Liberties 86:12 liens 206:17 lieu 226:6 Life 8:6, 9 100:21 151:12 167:22 169:5 176:14 178:2 208:15, 20 235:10 249:3 252:22 lifeblood 237:1 lifeline 245:17 lifting 218:10 light 78:14, 16 79:5 109:21 183:15 192:1 248:8 likelihood 20:24, 25 25:9 144:20 likewise 241:12 limit 202:11, 13 216:13, 25 limited 90:13 91:4 126:8 227:4 Linda 189:14 line 35:21 55:7 70:11 147:24 166:21 167:2, 4, 14 187:15, 20 202:21 230:11 lines 33:11 140:10 list 206:10 216:20 listen 37:22 194:20 listening 130:22, 24 175:15 179:2 228:12 literally 45:11 166:20 167:13 little 17:19 18:17 27:10 38:15 57:15 58:6, 10 59:3 66:17 70:15 77:6 83:11 85:25 91:1, 6, 22 92:23 94:17 99:18 108:1 110:1 117:21 123:23
---	---	---	---	---	--

135:25 149:21	87:18 88:10	113:12 139:10	42:6 75:24	manual	10:11 189:2
156:6 162:21	98:9 211:13	177:16 192:6	109:3 170:2	137:22 170:10	203:2 217:10
170:21 172:15	long-time	Los 222:6, 23	193:14 194:3	maps 152:21	McKay
195:18 197:10	138:22 139:12	249:10	mailed 20:8	March 131:19	225:12, 17, 21
210:6	140:20, 23	lose 54:6	40:3, 20	213:20	McKinley
livable 66:3	look 20:11	170:12	mailer 101:10	marginally	225:2
live 34:15	24:3, 8 29:10	loss 52:3	162:10, 11	144:21	meager 237:21
47:22 52:16	35:10 48:4	93:25	mail-in 23:19	MARIA 1:1	mean 21:2, 4
68:3 75:2	51:1, 8 52:11	losses 51:23	mailing 18:22	11:5	22:5, 11 32:11
158:24 167:20,	54:25 55:2	lot 21:3 33:19	19:4, 8 20:4,	MARK 1:1	59:6 102:5
21 232:3	56:25 57:21	47:22 48:1	16, 18 23:2, 8	market 12:21	144:8 148:7
235:12 237:22	60:6 69:4, 12	53:22 57:2	40:11 115:6	13:13 25:15,	150:5 165:21
256:22 258:13	73:12 80:20	60:19, 24 61:8	116:3 137:1	16, 22 30:22	166:6 167:18
lived 88:11	87:23 89:21	63:16 64:17	162:1 170:5,	44:16, 22	169:2 259:20
167:22	106:25 112:19	72:1 73:10	14 192:12	46:19 49:17	Meaning
lives 33:5	120:7, 17	76:3 77:9, 23	194:24	51:7 56:18	65:25 102:4
34:9	121:8 123:9,	78:17 80:11	mailings 23:25	57:19 59:16	meaningful
living 68:6	18 124:21	82:14 84:7	159:12	60:3 61:8	177:2 242:13
78:1 145:2	129:5 136:3	88:16 92:8, 14,	main 23:12	72:11 73:19	247:3 252:3
151:13 179:4	139:21 141:5	18 94:20, 21	111:17 244:8,	79:7 80:15	means 64:15
252:16	145:23 148:15	95:23 97:19	15 251:25	82:25 85:5	71:25 72:4
LLC 253:23	150:10 151:21	106:10 118:13	256:7	86:14, 25 87:6	104:19 112:9
lobbyists 171:6	152:1 156:7	138:14 144:22	maintain 16:4	90:21 91:14	165:6 213:25
local 23:20	162:7, 19, 21,	160:8, 9	71:25 72:13	111:6, 16	237:21 265:20
148:23 149:15	24 165:13	165:25 167:20,	140:7 228:23	121:19, 25	measured
216:10 222:20	166:3 167:11	24 168:9	230:5 246:1	122:8 123:5,	216:4
224:1 226:15	168:21 178:15	182:14 188:13	maintenance	16 124:3	measures 9:6
232:19 239:10,	180:24 181:23	192:5, 8	145:4	138:17 159:20	28:14 29:6, 9
15 240:23	187:25 197:17	196:24 197:3	major 65:23	164:1, 3	133:19 136:4
242:4 243:13,	216:2 222:4	232:10 253:16	204:16 221:12	166:18, 19	media 76:2
18, 22	223:11, 24	255:25	222:6 241:5, 8	167:1, 12	median 102:1,
locally 229:15	240:21 247:7	lots 129:25	246:12 254:16	186:11 235:1	6, 16 248:20
241:13	250:6 258:24	206:17	majority	marketplaces	medium 55:5
locate 218:9	looked 44:2	love 96:21	29:21, 24	53:3	meet 32:4
246:13	62:8 89:15	212:9 235:7	32:19 75:17	markets 59:12	63:3, 11
located 49:1	99:14 120:2	247:9 256:22	178:7 206:18	80:9	110:23 124:3
location 1:1	132:19 167:19	low 70:24	221:7 223:3	Mass 11:21	125:4 176:9
186:20 249:20	looking 18:14,	92:11 122:23,	249:1, 23	62:22	208:14 243:19
locations 215:8	21 19:1 27:18	24 253:1	250:17	massive 158:21	meeting 2:10
long 19:10	28:8 33:9	260:2	making 8:1	material	9:13, 18 13:22
37:6 38:18	49:13 53:1	lower 29:21,	76:4, 10 81:3	161:13	42:23 127:1
39:8 68:7	56:15, 21	22 54:3 59:3	83:2 84:1	math 31:17	157:6 200:9
70:17, 19 71:3,	58:25 64:3	258:9	136:21 208:24	111:9	meetings
4 87:15 92:25	74:3 91:13, 19	lowering	233:11 241:24	matter 176:13	19:24 42:13
95:24 114:18	96:3, 6 138:16	252:14 258:22	262:16	184:1 218:13	50:19 75:16
140:21 156:15	143:2 149:5	lowers 57:4	males 221:19	227:17 228:20	76:6 129:14
179:6 205:2	157:9 182:4,	lowest 221:10	man 53:1	265:1	154:1, 10
210:14 213:13	21 185:8	low-income	168:23 169:1	maximum	156:1
234:10	187:4 234:11	29:22	manage 210:19	100:1 104:2	meets 62:3
longer 98:12	256:21	lump 83:23	Management	Mayor 8:19,	member 43:21
115:13 159:7	looks 54:9	lumped 83:21	16:13, 21 38:3	24 127:18	48:7 157:16
long-range	56:21 129:6	lunch 196:22	125:8 185:4	176:21 199:15	158:12 204:7
117:15	131:25 153:18		236:8	Mayoral 205:1	207:23
longstanding	164:16	< M >	Manager	Mayor's 75:25	Members 2:24
215:17	LOOP 88:2	Ma'am 212:4	212:21	127:15 132:3	9:21, 25 10:25
long-term	98:9, 16, 18	magazines	Managers	198:16 205:7	19:19 77:9
60:19, 20	99:4, 24	58:22	212:24	218:5	117:3, 4 128:8
80:25 83:5	100:10 105:12	mail 18:23, 25	mandates	McDermott	129:14, 16, 23
	106:5, 19, 22	34:25 40:7	236:20	2:22 6:20 7:1	130:6, 8, 13

131:12 133:8 134:1, 19 154:12, 15 188:4, 21 196:16 197:25 204:14 216:19 218:3, 20 220:23 228:11 230:19 239:13 252:2, 4, 20 258:2, 17 263:7 264:10 membership 208:3 217:20 mental 231:17 mention 245:10 252:21 mentioned 18:11 19:16 23:14 28:20 32:3 51:5, 10, 18 53:22 54:23 55:21 56:14 57:18 66:6 73:4, 9 75:11 83:10 84:12 87:3 91:16 106:15 110:2, 3, 16, 18 111:13 117:14 118:6 125:7 152:10 153:15 155:25 159:20 170:21 182:19, 22 183:23 186:14 mentioning 33:11 92:20 101:6 121:22 message 214:15 met 14:4 27:11 50:12 214:19 methodologies 108:8 methodology 30:13, 15 41:12 61:23 62:3 63:1 110:19 121:1 171:17, 19 173:8 174:3, 10 methods 190:24 191:10, 15 metrics 32:2	63:3, 10 120:8 micro 257:24 Microsoft 2:10 9:25 Microsoft® 1:1 Microsoft's 264:14 middle 78:5 mid-June 159:8 midsize 210:19 million 46:16 50:3 59:5 98:18, 20, 21 100:6, 20, 21 101:19 185:24 206:16 222:14, 16 227:3, 9 250:15 millions 15:22 Milwaukee 222:7 223:3 mindful 18:10 161:3 mine 90:8 minimizes 151:12 minimum 149:18 182:9 minorities 33:24 251:17 minority 78:4 243:24 251:23 254:8 minority- owned 222:21 minute 202:13 minutes 202:9 216:22 misclassified 219:2 missed 70:21 169:20 missing 176:6 mission 209:24 mistake 216:3 mistakes 92:9 mitigate 229:21 mix 99:10 128:13 Mo 203:13, 22 204:3 model 65:10, 18 87:2 164:18 173:18	modeling 43:4 65:5 81:13 83:9 172:16 models 84:6, 7 172:3, 9 moderate 49:10 moment 43:20 56:8 58:15 229:4 230:5 244:22 245:23 Monday 1:1 20:20 162:6 164:12 195:3 money 50:2 57:13 64:17 68:11, 12 69:3 76:18, 19, 20 95:4 98:14 99:1 111:21 145:10 177:17 184:14 187:14, 18 229:14 240:8, 17 241:10, 13 242:16 259:24, 25 263:25 Monica 11:4 monies 237:4 Monitoring 76:7 153:1, 4, 7, 10 month 174:5, 9 months 19:25 36:10 37:12 38:7, 10 61:10 76:18 93:7 95:9 109:2 112:5 137:18 138:7, 8 196:11 216:5 morning 2:3, 4 3:4, 6, 8, 13, 17, 25 4:1, 3, 7, 8, 11, 20, 22, 24 5:2, 6, 9, 13, 14, 16, 23, 24 6:2, 6, 12, 13 10:5, 20, 24 18:12 26:5 35:20 53:11, 12, 13 61:20, 21 70:6 79:3 89:12 116:11, 13 189:11 203:10, 15 morning's 198:12	mortgages 7:15 15:23 Mount 70:14 move 25:3 66:1 131:20 133:24 134:4 205:19 209:12 210:14 242:1 260:1 moved 100:17 110:24 148:13 259:19 moving 34:4 58:9, 10 91:17 131:16 158:23 245:2 multi-family 146:10, 16 multiple 131:6 multitude 185:19 municipalities 245:1 mute 159:25 174:21 202:21 muted 202:3 < N > NAIOP 207:17, 19 208:3 211:15 name 10:22 11:1 202:6 203:3, 16 204:3 207:5, 15 212:18, 20 217:14 220:8, 19, 24 224:18 225:4, 14 228:6 231:1 233:20, 23 235:25 236:5 238:5 239:1 242:24 247:16 251:8 253:11, 22 255:8, 22 257:10, 14 259:8, 16 260:10, 21 261:6, 24 262:1, 5 narrative 215:3 nation 221:9 229:23 national 59:7 246:5 nationally	222:18 nation's 241:6 natively 85:15 navigate 211:8 245:7, 15 Navy 236:10 near 48:7 necessarily 28:8 32:25 64:4 90:22 118:15 158:19 175:19 185:11 necessary 75:8 94:10 103:23, 25 105:19 108:17 181:5 201:16 208:19, 25 necessity 186:15 need 35:9 37:25 42:3 87:15, 20, 22, 24, 25 99:9 104:4 105:17 107:4 112:1 114:20 117:22 118:15 124:9 138:11 142:1, 13 149:20, 22 152:3 155:19 159:1 161:10 181:4, 9, 20, 25 182:2, 3, 9 185:13 197:12 204:17 205:13, 22 210:3 214:16 222:21 229:7 252:23 254:19 needed 16:9, 19 143:3 156:18 193:15 209:22 needs 151:8 208:11, 14 negatively 77:24 78:18 88:21 Nehemiah 237:14 neighbor 70:16, 17 neighborhood 8:9 47:25 48:5, 6, 17 50:25 51:14 66:15 68:4, 9 139:8 145:13	149:23 151:10 152:7 165:9, 20 167:1, 25 168:10 169:4 205:16 206:3 208:9 211:7 230:1 neighborhoods 8:5 27:24 28:25 29:23, 25 32:20 33:5 39:2 47:16 49:22 55:16 57:13 58:13, 21 59:9 68:7, 20 72:2 78:2 80:14 84:19 92:7 122:16 139:13, 14 140:2 141:2 144:25 165:6 208:21 209:1 221:25 233:8 neighboring 245:1 neighbors 168:4 179:3 neither 214:3 net 103:4 248:20, 23 252:11 never 43:22 64:11 70:24 104:3 204:18 new 11:20 26:21 37:5 47:2 57:22, 23 62:11 65:13 66:11, 15 81:12, 14, 16 82:1, 7, 8, 12, 16 84:24 85:19 86:15 89:22 93:20 94:3, 14, 15 96:16 106:20 108:3, 10 110:7 125:3 145:5, 15 148:2, 13 172:3, 4 185:12 190:24 191:5, 6, 10 206:4 211:4 218:11 221:2 235:8 246:7 248:17 249:1 252:9 254:10 256:13
---	---	---	---	--	--

newer 65:11, 15 84:16 85:24	noticed 73:4 74:13	101:21 106:25 107:4, 6 110:1 120:23 122:7, 10 152:25	offerings 234:12	15 128:2, 15 141:10 142:18 143:17 150:13	24 16:1, 3, 9, 22 18:15 21:9, 12 25:11 36:4
newly 37:2	notices 2:16 20:7, 16 21:11	156:8 188:9 197:4 241:3	offers 214:13	153:6, 11, 14 170:15 171:1, 8, 15 180:4	41:10 61:24 70:22 77:5 78:13 79:12
News 2:17	22:22 23:7 36:10 42:6	numerical 120:11	Office 10:6, 15 11:3, 9 13:7 40:9 43:25	181:17 185:21 187:24 195:8 196:9, 13	87:22 89:17 108:6, 16 110:24 112:1, 9 114:19
157:18 214:25	73:21 162:18 164:20 170:2	numerous 129:19, 21	59:15, 16, 19, 21, 23 60:2, 12, 18 62:9 74:14	212:5 238:21 255:1, 19 259:16 260:3	116:17, 23 117:3 128:9, 11 135:14, 20 137:4 140:6
nicely 95:22	notification 24:11 74:7	nurtured 219:22	182:15 193:11 213:21, 23 214:11 215:3	ol 192:6	142:11 150:10 160:20, 21 169:23 170:16, 23 180:14
Nicetown 151:24	notified 192:10 notify 181:5 193:18	< O > obstacles 254:7	216:6, 9 Officer 11:2, 5 239:23	old 65:15 68:21 82:4 86:18	181:9 182:20 197:3 OPA's 11:4, 6 13:5 14:4, 22 15:12 16:15, 20 17:21
night 77:18 179:5	notifying 74:10 November 196:5	obviously 18:10 19:23 23:25 28:6, 10, 12, 24 33:2	Officers 13:19 116:17	older 82:9, 10 84:19, 25 85:13, 15, 16, 17 88:22	36:22 40:2 108:1, 8 171:17
nightmare 245:20	NPI 206:2 number 8:5 14:14 17:24	47:7 50:7 60:7 74:2 76:3 86:18 110:2, 9	offices 19:19 40:16 59:20 75:13 97:2	on-average 108:12	17:17
Nodded 171:23	18:17 20:23 21:6, 10, 15, 20 25:1 27:6	128:19 133:11 134:9 143:24 144:23 150:6 153:20 162:22	111:24 136:17 181:1 214:18	once 40:7, 10 120:2 123:2 163:7 170:4	open 50:18 96:20 148:8, 17 153:15
noise 253:16	31:15, 16 34:20 36:1, 21, 23 37:24	180:14 187:6 192:2 236:13	office's 30:13 official 137:5, 7 200:11	188:9 197:6 202:6, 13, 18 239:14 245:16 256:16	189:12 191:17 256:13
noncommercial 226:13	44:11 46:3, 15 47:4, 6 52:2 55:6, 12 56:4, 16 58:19	occasions 129:20, 21 131:6	offset 64:19 143:5	one-by-one 37:9	opened 262:7
nonprofits 226:5	59:18 62:8 66:18 72:5, 25 73:5, 14, 15, 17, 20, 25 75:20	Occupant 98:10	offsite 186:15, 22	O'NEILL 1:1 4:18, 19	opening 91:16 125:7 182:23
nonresidential 12:13	97:1 98:5 99:2, 17 100:1, 16 102:9, 11	occupants 138:23 140:20, 24	offsite-hosted 21:8	one-on-one 44:4	operate 245:21 258:16
Nora 261:22	106:17 109:2 121:24 122:17	occupied 214:9 occur 63:20 244:20	OH 1:1 4:23, 24 61:17, 18, 22 63:14	onerous 244:18 ones 62:23 63:10 65:12 122:13	Operating 7:9 9:5 11:10 239:23
262:1, 6	123:20, 22 130:17 133:25 137:16, 24	occurred 12:21 o'clock 198:1, 4, 5	67:10 70:2, 20 71:13, 23 79:22 141:20 143:21 165:1, 2 167:17 179:3	one-year 172:13	Operation 189:17
normal 20:13 118:11	139:13 143:24 153:8 159:6 173:12, 20 185:5 192:3	October 20:20 35:1 101:11 115:17 160:18 162:6 164:13 170:19 190:4 194:25 195:3, 21 196:4 243:12	181:1 214:18 office's 30:13 official 137:5, 7 200:11	ongoing 30:10 online 13:8 20:17 40:22 73:12 75:24 108:11 180:23 181:23 256:2 259:20	operational 25:17 Operations 15:7
normally 93:1 145:13 173:1, 17 174:4 185:18	185:5 192:3 213:6 216:14 229:1 258:15 262:21	offer 2:14 118:7 125:14 152:23 198:22 200:2, 16 254:11, 21	offsite 186:15, 22	onscreen 190:20	opportunities 14:15 125:15 199:20 258:1
Norris 80:1, 24	numbers 19:11 30:17, 18, 20 37:5 39:19 44:14, 19 51:17 52:7	offered 118:4, 10, 14 199:7 offering 16:23	20:21 22:25 25:24 31:19 39:13, 25 41:2, 4 59:14 63:14 68:11 74:5 76:24 91:5, 21 98:7 111:20 112:23 113:1, 24 115:23 126:20 127:4,	onset 139:16 oop 228:9 OOPA 88:2 OPA 11:11, 19, 22 12:25 13:11, 17, 22 14:7, 9, 13 15:4, 6, 14, 16,	operating 7:9 9:5 11:10 239:23 Operation 189:17 operational 25:17 Operations 15:7 opportunities 14:15 125:15 199:20 258:1 opportunity 16:22 17:2 24:16 25:20 34:22, 23 40:8 87:12 117:19 133:1 150:8 201:17, 19 204:23 206:7, 15 207:1 213:3 218:8
North 251:20	56:21 61:4 62:13 88:7 89:15 94:23 97:22 99:12				
Northeast 85:16					
Northern 86:12					
Nos 6:18 200:16					
nostalgia 235:11					
notable 47:22					
Notary 265:12					
note 2:20 9:23 41:8 42:15 107:24 148:20 198:21 227:11					
noted 250:9 265:1					
notes 236:12 265:1					
notice 18:22 24:3 36:2 160:11, 24 161:14 162:21, 25 163:6, 24 164:4, 6, 8, 11 170:3, 7 182:1 194:2, 24 195:13					

224:7 228:19 233:25 239:19 253:3 254:2, 24 257:18 259:1 261:16 opposed 133:7 172:14 opposite 93:23 optimal 14:11 optimistically 59:20 options 205:23 223:24 229:8 249:21 Oracle 241:18 order 10:2 90:25 110:22 202:4, 11 205:14 209:6, 13 ordinance 7:3, 6, 8, 11, 18 8:3, 23 organization 207:20 organizational 37:16 organizations 14:17 231:20 organization's 62:25 organizing 37:18 orientation 243:9 original 118:6, 23 120:10 144:16 184:18 outcomes 178:25 outdated 245:11 outpaced 229:10 outpacing 246:6 outreach 76:12, 17, 20, 23 77:2 111:22 112:2, 11, 24 113:5 177:17 193:17 outside 12:10 15:8 95:7 118:10 186:3 191:9 242:2 245:21 246:13 overall 28:22 44:16 55:22	56:23 57:9 60:12 76:12 83:8 86:17 110:25 111:6, 8, 14 120:12, 15 122:1, 16 162:19, 24 164:1, 3, 15 176:5 240:18 overappraised 184:11 overasking 123:17 overassessed 68:13 Overbrook 48:25 158:15 overinflate 79:23 overinflated 86:13 overlaid 142:10 overlay 141:18 overvalued 42:18 overwhelmingly 244:17 owe 159:3 226:21 owes 227:7 owned 221:18 251:17 258:12 Owner 98:9 136:24 137:5, 7, 8 138:23 140:20, 24 164:10 226:10 231:23 232:17 233:4 234:1, 19 251:19 253:22 262:6 owners 12:18 13:9 135:20 140:8 176:24 191:12 193:8, 13 194:17 212:24 232:7 235:16 241:9 252:18 254:8 ownership 136:20, 21 137:3, 21 < P > P&D 210:10 p.m 201:15 235:2 264:22	pace 72:17 219:13 252:19 PACENET 100:14, 16 package 158:6 Pagan 189:6, 9 191:22 192:21 193:1, 5 194:8 195:19 196:10, 21 197:14, 23 Page 30:25 paid 118:19 123:21 227:6 240:18 painful 232:1 pandemic 34:12, 14 58:20 59:11 117:19 213:8, 17 222:18 223:3, 7 234:21 245:19 250:21 255:24 257:24 261:9, 10 paper 162:13 parcel 146:8 166:22 167:13, 14 parcels 12:16 parent 225:24 227:19 234:19 parents 235:12 Park 49:1 168:6 PARKER 1:1 5:4, 5 35:18, 19 37:21 38:18, 22 39:3, 13, 24 40:18 41:2 42:7 57:9 114:16 157:13 264:17 Parker's 57:8 75:17 Parks 199:4 part 18:3 48:20 49:20 55:1 56:9, 11 57:14 71:18 74:21 83:9 84:3, 17 91:8 112:14, 15 113:10 120:24 122:5 126:21 127:6 129:15, 17 130:19, 21 135:25 146:19	147:11 148:11 154:14 173:22 175:21 178:13 181:13 192:7 200:23 206:24 215:13 235:8 246:8, 20 263:22 participant 224:22 225:8 260:14 participants 9:16 participate 202:24 participated 130:17 participating 188:8 participation 263:3 particular 10:4 47:18 55:17 79:5 81:23 86:8 87:8 95:14 119:23 121:20 139:9 140:22 151:25 154:10 162:16, 24 184:15 196:17 248:11 particularly 17:22 33:25 63:21 64:2 68:19 69:8 74:10 77:16 78:14, 16 109:8 113:11 119:5 122:1 138:15, 22 139:13 148:9 149:18 183:15 185:2, 6 223:16 228:21 246:3 parties 190:6 partner 42:12 205:10, 11 partners 87:23 partnership 243:18 244:3 parts 47:17, 18 49:8 94:21 158:14 169:3 pass 125:12 232:6 241:14 passage 199:22	passed 30:24 44:14 70:18, 19 79:9 202:19 pathway 16:24 patience 198:11 201:1 Paul 205:2 pay 52:25 67:23 68:25 82:11, 12 99:4 118:17 147:6 157:21 162:9 168:6 178:10 214:21 226:8, 16, 20 227:3 232:20 233:4 236:21 241:21 254:11 259:22, 23 paying 66:8 81:21, 22 85:3, 6 176:9 183:22 227:17 payments 226:5 pays 226:11 227:22 peers 189:11 pending 137:22 Penn 67:11, 14, 19, 20 165:15 226:4, 9, 20, 24 227:2, 6, 12, 22 Pennsylvania 8:19 195:5 221:2 225:24 penny 177:9 people 17:17, 25 24:10, 12 27:9, 18 49:11 54:2 66:7 67:25 68:4, 24 69:13 73:6, 10 75:1, 4 78:4, 18 81:5, 21 82:22 88:2 95:5 96:7 97:24 98:11, 24 99:2, 3 100:10, 24 101:6, 9 102:25 103:1 106:10, 20, 25 119:6, 11 125:9 133:25 141:20 142:6	145:1, 9 146:2 149:1, 6, 12, 16, 22 151:13 152:20 158:16, 18, 19 159:10 160:9, 12, 15 164:15 165:15 166:7 167:20 168:14 176:3 177:22 178:7, 10 179:4 180:23 181:2, 3, 5 182:10, 14 183:21, 24 187:19 192:5 193:25 194:15, 19, 23 196:2 205:24 216:14, 20 217:7 229:2, 25 231:25 235:3, 4, 5 236:23 237:20 240:8, 15, 17 256:1, 2, 17 261:7 262:21 264:1 people's 113:16 242:16 percent 17:14 31:6 46:9 49:13, 16 54:9 55:6, 16, 23 56:23 57:9 59:4, 19 64:9 80:22 87:17 97:24 98:8, 25 99:15 101:13 104:3 108:12 109:13, 14, 16, 17, 18 111:1, 4, 11 121:7, 10 122:19 132:14, 25 134:11 155:1, 15, 16, 17 157:22 164:18 176:2 189:25 190:14 213:22 214:9 221:8, 17 222:17 223:4 226:7, 21 227:6 236:24 percentage 29:2 37:2 54:15 57:4 59:1 92:2 97:24 111:4 151:25
---	---	---	---	---	---

perception 232:11	68:19 71:2, 7 85:15 94:24	193:12 202:3, 7, 21	159:17 161:3 188:22 199:25	poorest 227:16 230:14	poverty 34:15 206:21 218:10
perceptions 215:4	95:6 104:22 126:14 132:7	phrase 205:3	202:2, 6, 9, 20 203:2, 17	Poplar 237:12	228:22 237:8
perform 140:11	138:16, 24 139:6 144:25	physical 42:6	204:1 207:12	popped 154:2	power 245:13
performance 63:9 120:8	162:12 165:5 174:5, 10	pick 92:22 93:1, 4, 6 94:5	215:22 216:23	popular 43:22	practice 222:10 234:3
performed 240:23	186:24 190:8 192:17 197:21	148:12 172:21 185:16	217:4, 15 220:9, 19	population 69:2 221:7	practices 15:3
period 43:21 54:10 107:7, 9	199:8 204:6, 7, 12 205:3, 9, 22	picked 93:9 166:22 178:4	224:19 225:5, 15, 20 231:2	portable 213:16	PRD 30:2, 6 32:3
140:25 172:13 216:4 227:4 228:21	207:17, 22, 23 211:16 212:25 213:13 217:24	picture 142:2 piece 226:3 Pierce 259:6, 11, 16, 17	233:20 236:1, 4 238:6 239:2, 7 242:25	portion 61:5 136:6	pre- appreciation 54:16
periphery 80:12	218:1, 18 219:14, 23	pike 75:6 pilots 226:6 227:17	247:17 251:9 253:12 255:9, 19 256:23, 25 257:11 258:22	positions 16:20, 24 125:22 184:15, 16 185:1	precipitated 209:19
permit 66:21 210:23 211:2	220:24 221:16 222:13 223:20	pipeline 125:19	259:9, 14 260:11, 22 261:5, 24, 25 262:14 263:12	positive 223:22	preCOVID 199:2
permits 119:15 210:6, 10, 13, 16, 23	224:7 225:22, 25 228:17 229:2, 9 230:12, 15	piper 52:25 pitch 87:12 place 47:25 67:3 92:12 95:24 158:2 166:9 182:3 197:7 224:8 237:22 249:16, 17 250:1 256:22 260:1	pleased 11:8 14:2 189:22 194:15 pledge 227:11 plug 192:18 plus 67:13 80:22 88:18 pocket 95:5 118:20 pockets 242:17 point 24:6 31:15 45:14 55:23, 24 67:10 82:3 90:12 91:18 106:14 111:22, 25 114:1 139:22 150:7 161:7 162:4 181:11 213:8 224:4 pointed 38:12 points 50:7 114:25 policies 128:6 129:12, 24 131:1, 8 132:9 205:25 218:12 242:11 246:23 policy 51:19 127:11, 20 128:5 131:11 133:4 134:3, 15 219:21 223:11 pool 16:11, 15 poor 109:3 248:15	possess 245:14 possibility 24:9 148:18 162:3 214:5 possible 2:12 19:25 28:7, 19 38:10 46:5 50:9 75:5 89:15 93:11 114:23 173:11 174:8, 24 182:5 187:8 192:24 possibly 42:14 135:21 post 19:13 73:2 75:24 93:18 post-AVI 30:1 32:21 posted 20:17 22:23 42:2 73:18 74:4 93:16 137:3 201:11 posting 83:9 Post-pandemic 234:9 posts 76:2 posture 130:23, 24 potential 60:2 192:19 199:21 potentially 15:25 91:19 106:18 135:21 149:8 150:3	predetermined 79:19 predicated 172:6 predict 123:5 predicted 123:7 preferable 47:13 preferred 121:17 preliminary 18:18, 24 44:14, 16 73:18 74:3 99:17 117:17 120:20 premier 231:11 prepandemic 152:11 prepare 75:7 124:9 170:13 188:22 prepared 42:25 89:1 107:12 preparing 13:16 91:17 PRESENT 1:1 3:5, 15 4:1, 9, 25 5:14, 25 6:8, 25 74:16 203:6 214:8 presented 129:19 134:9 presenting 130:23 Preservation 206:3
person 10:12 21:1 24:2 34:9 35:7 50:15, 17 146:24 189:3, 4 203:11 232:19 245:13	231:10, 16 232:1, 20, 21 233:7, 11 234:3, 24 235:2, 9, 14 236:9 239:12, 17 240:1, 22 241:2, 10, 12, 20 242:2 243:4, 17 244:10, 21 245:5 246:6, 9, 14, 16 247:21 248:1, 4 249:3, 22 250:25 251:12, 20 252:6 254:7, 15 256:22 257:17, 20 258:10, 12, 14 261:8 262:7 Philadelphians 136:4 206:9 218:10 230:2 252:23 Philadelphia's 11:16 30:2 243:7 249:13 Philly 165:12 256:21, 25 257:5 259:19 Philly's 171:9 PHLCouncil.co m 2:20 phone 20:23 142:4 188:12	placed 173:23 places 47:20 49:19 95:10 96:22 157:18 Plan 8:14 17:21 36:22 87:22 88:4 91:10 96:15 100:22 112:11 118:7 127:24 132:15 133:24 151:18 191:14 204:21 216:1 222:16 230:9 246:4 planned 159:2 205:15 planning 14:10 38:6 117:15 128:2 199:16 205:12 209:5, 7, 17, 21 210:7 211:5, 12, 20 plans 88:3 117:7 234:14 play 146:13, 18 playing 92:5 plea 88:25 please 2:22 6:20 10:22, 23	poor 109:3 248:15		

PRESIDENT	18 227:25	prior 2:18	7 242:25	professional	89:20 92:3
1:1 2:2 3:4, 7,	228:5, 9, 10	9:20 24:25	247:17 251:9	12:5 14:14, 16,	93:22 104:21,
14, 16, 25 4:2,	230:19, 20, 25	58:19 59:11	253:12 255:9,	21 27:2	23, 24 106:19
8, 10, 21 5:1, 6,	233:14, 19	94:10 120:8	19 257:11	professionals	111:2, 16
8, 13, 15, 23	235:18, 22, 24	209:18 210:24	259:9, 14	130:20	138:23 145:3
6:1, 4, 5, 8, 10,	236:2, 3, 6	priorities	260:11, 22	profit 256:18	147:20 157:9
14 9:1 10:16,	237:24 238:4,	201:7 204:24	261:5, 25	Program 7:3	167:4, 11
21, 25 17:5	9, 14, 20, 21, 25	prioritize	proceeding	8:7 9:7, 8	172:17, 25
20:21 21:22	239:6, 10, 13,	245:23	198:17	98:10 198:23	173:16 184:11,
22:2, 24 24:7,	25 242:18, 23	priority 224:4	proceedings	199:10, 12	12 206:22
19 25:24 26:6	247:10, 15, 20	248:6, 7, 16	265:1	206:4	Property 10:6,
35:14, 15, 20	251:2, 7 253:5,	privacy 9:17	process 11:23	programming	15 11:3, 9, 16
43:10, 11, 16	10, 15 255:1, 7,	private 16:17,	22:16 26:10,	204:17	12:24 13:9
44:25 45:2, 3,	12, 15, 18	18 206:11	17 27:25 34:4,	programs	18:2, 19 29:15
7, 19, 24 53:5,	257:2, 9, 14, 15	226:9 247:2	8, 20 35:8, 10	64:25 113:9,	36:5 41:14, 19
6, 11, 21 56:7	259:2, 7, 13	248:6	36:23 37:14	18, 19 139:11	47:1 48:9
61:13, 15, 19	260:4, 9, 15, 16,	pro 228:7	38:14, 21	237:7	50:25 52:10,
69:22, 23 70:7	20 261:1, 4, 18,	proactive	41:23 43:7, 18	prohibit	18 59:5 63:19
78:22, 23 89:4,	23 262:3, 18	74:21	45:1 46:10, 20	163:14	64:1 65:6, 10,
6, 11 97:8, 9,	263:10, 11	proactively	50:22 57:15	project 93:3	20, 22 66:3, 23
15 107:15, 20	264:6, 7, 18, 19	219:6	60:11 63:17	199:13 210:20	72:1 81:17
116:4, 5, 11, 12	President's	probably 19:1	64:12 65:5	211:4 236:8	83:14 84:15
125:25 126:5	150:23	43:17 60:12	68:17 69:12	projecting	85:4, 9, 11, 12,
135:1, 2, 10	press 201:12	66:1 71:11	81:14 83:9	61:7 101:12	21 86:1 90:1
139:20 142:19	pressing 229:7	72:21 128:14	89:3 92:24	124:1	92:1 93:12, 22
143:18, 19	pretending	160:8 181:20	94:13 99:19	projection	94:12 105:2, 5
144:14, 18	104:12	188:8 192:9	102:8 118:5	102:20 132:25	108:8 109:23
146:23 147:21	pretty 23:5	196:21 197:1	119:7 120:13	134:12	110:21 112:6
148:19 150:13,	38:13 39:1	241:16	124:20 136:1	projections	113:9 114:8
18, 19 156:24	52:19 55:6	problem 23:10	138:6, 10	101:24 230:10	119:17 121:6
157:4 159:18,	68:1, 3 75:18	27:8 42:20	142:24 149:17	projects 15:6	123:12 126:13
21, 22, 23	85:20 125:1	67:12 68:16	150:8 161:12	205:15, 19	135:14 136:3
160:5 164:24	prevalent 33:7	71:6 107:6	172:16 174:18	209:12 210:15	137:1, 6
165:3 169:13,	prevents	120:6 169:2	185:20 190:12,	218:23	138:19 140:9
14, 19 174:14,	232:18	183:18	23, 24 192:16,	promoting	141:17, 22
15 175:4, 9	previous	problematic	25 193:18	247:24	145:18, 24
179:16, 17, 23	13:10 27:5	69:13 80:23	194:10, 11, 15	promulgate	147:3, 8, 17
180:1, 4, 8	41:21 152:10	165:5	197:8, 17	79:13	162:17 168:7
181:19 182:7,	172:6, 22, 23	problems	209:7 210:12,	proper 67:1	170:9, 18
17 183:6, 11	173:3, 5, 12, 14,	82:23 168:10	21 211:2, 9, 15	135:19	171:9 173:21
188:1, 2, 19	23	problem-	214:15 237:5	properly	176:24 177:10
189:7, 10	previously	solving 211:14	250:7 263:2,	87:24 205:15	180:18 191:12
191:19, 23	16:2 17:1	problemsome	23	219:22	193:7, 13
192:22 193:2	58:2 110:7	258:7	processes	properties	194:17 195:13,
194:4 195:8	118:18 135:13	procedure	14:12 62:9	7:24 12:13	16 226:8, 10,
196:9, 13, 19,	price 55:5	11:23	118:12 190:18	27:22 31:4, 5	13, 14, 21
23 197:15, 24	64:5, 18 66:11	procedures	209:4, 13	37:3 39:15, 16	227:7 229:19
198:8 200:15,	67:8 123:17	27:11 62:10	processing	44:8 46:22, 23	230:10 232:21
19 203:5, 7, 14,	Price-Related	67:1 201:9	37:19 163:15	47:8, 9, 11	253:23
19, 22, 25	30:3 31:7, 24	proceed 10:23	produce 175:1	48:4, 16 49:3	property-by-
204:14 207:3,	32:1 114:6	105:22 198:18	produced	51:6, 15 58:18	property 38:24
8, 11, 15 212:3,	prices 51:13	203:17 204:1	62:13	65:11 66:5, 8,	property-
12, 17 215:21	58:9 64:13	207:12 212:19	producing	16, 25 67:5	valued 29:22
216:11 217:13,	81:22	216:19 217:15	90:25	69:16 71:24	proposal
18 218:3	primarily 47:6	220:9, 20	production	72:13 73:19	102:22 131:4
220:2, 7, 13, 14,	57:23 187:6	224:19 225:5,	191:10	79:24 81:2, 7,	132:12, 23
18, 23, 25	primary 62:20	15, 19 231:2	productive	20, 23 82:9, 10,	142:22 178:15
224:12, 17, 23,	84:13 226:14	233:21 236:1,	206:22	19 84:16, 20,	205:7 218:6
24 225:3, 9, 13,		4 238:6 239:2,		21, 24 85:6, 23	263:5, 6

proposals 98:19 128:4 129:4 131:15, 19, 20 proposed 9:5 36:3 141:16 144:2 177:13 192:10 198:16 199:24 201:5, 23 208:6 210:2 213:4 214:12 proposing 38:2 143:6 proposition 176:6 propounds 121:21 prospect 245:2 prosper 240:5 prosperity 206:2 prostitution 168:2 protect 104:8 protecting 251:23 protections 95:24 182:3 proud 251:19 253:22 provide 11:8 13:2, 4, 8, 23 16:18 30:5 39:12 40:14 62:18 114:11, 17 117:8 132:10 137:24 138:3 140:15 141:7 142:13 159:17 171:14 197:18 201:17 208:2, 25 211:20 215:14 231:17 provided 108:16 134:19 210:7 211:24 provider 231:11 provides 223:15 providing 8:12 150:1 183:18 210:5 proximity 48:23 public 2:5, 8, 13, 14, 15, 16	5:25 6:16 9:2, 14, 15 10:10 19:15 43:5 67:21 108:3 109:4 129:16 133:8 134:2, 7 176:13 177:3 188:22 198:1, 13, 15, 19 200:8, 25 201:2, 10, 17, 24 206:10 208:7 219:20 225:25 226:6 242:6 248:6 258:20 265:12 publicly 30:15 41:14 133:13 134:18 public-private 240:3 publish 120:24 published 2:17 116:24 publisher 62:20 publishing 41:25 pull 30:17 pulled 137:4 pulling 119:14 purchase 64:16 67:14 purchased 70:14 90:3 purchasing 67:17 purpose 10:4 168:16 200:9 243:17 purposes 74:1 pursuant 8:21 push 168:14 pushed 112:5 137:23 195:17 pushes 68:8 pushing 136:22 put 19:15 50:3, 5 61:1 62:5 64:17 75:25 76:12, 19 86:6 95:2 104:7 105:18 131:15 132:23 144:1, 8, 10 153:24 158:1 160:23 163:4 167:4 172:7 173:11 182:3	192:18 193:22 206:22 242:16 putting 12:25 48:15 80:17 94:8, 14 95:4 112:20 114:1 131:20 132:11 133:12 177:17 181:14 236:19 < Q > qualified 16:7, 14 qualify 16:19 quality 8:9 14:10 15:5, 13 29:24 32:19 151:12 169:5 176:14 178:2 208:15, 20, 25 228:23 235:10 240:7 252:22 253:1 quality-of-life 134:6 177:4 quantities 206:8 quarter 191:13 question 17:16 18:3 20:22 24:24 41:22 45:13, 16 51:22 54:8 56:20 59:15, 25 98:23 101:17 115:2 124:14 126:11 128:3 136:1 144:21 150:22 151:16 159:14 176:16 177:21 179:19 180:12 195:9 questioning 35:21 70:11 questions 9:21 13:3 17:3, 8 18:20 26:9 33:16 35:13 44:7 71:22 72:21, 23 78:21 89:13 97:19 106:11 107:24 108:13 110:3 116:15 117:1 121:23 126:10 134:21 135:5 148:22 149:12 152:11	156:23 159:6 180:15, 25 182:6 183:13 188:5, 13 189:12 191:18, 24 196:15 264:10 quick 39:1 47:19 70:12 72:17 143:22 182:17 191:24 quickly 46:4 50:9 93:10 98:6 114:22 135:12 138:12 142:20 174:8, 23 179:8 263:10 Quinones 113:25 QUINONES- SANCHEZ 1:1 5:11, 12 79:1, 2 80:16 82:21 83:16, 19 86:2, 10 87:9 200:2, 13, 14 263:9, 13 quite 54:21 56:5 245:3 quorum 6:15 < R > races 243:8 racial 109:9 raise 152:2 230:3, 16 235:14 256:23 raised 30:12 192:12 raising 72:10 99:7 134:20 141:21 Ramah 225:12 ran 169:1 ranch-style 48:2 random 49:9 rank 249:4 rapidly 59:12 rare 145:20 rate 58:14 101:13 141:25 221:11 236:25 252:15, 16, 24 rates 122:24 123:2 124:2 206:21 229:17 252:8	ratio 14:3 28:20 30:23 62:12 63:5, 6 79:18, 19 104:20 ratios 30:14 RCOs 75:20 reach 35:6 77:2 97:3 142:14 151:18 181:20 193:25 reaching 156:19 197:13 react 93:10 reacting 57:25 read 6:20 9:4 203:3 reading 55:20 189:13 ready 191:15 250:24 real 11:16 12:7, 21 16:18 34:2 44:8 46:11 49:17 57:2 64:3 71:7 95:1 125:10 132:5, 21 134:12, 21 175:25 182:16 183:18 204:8 207:21, 24 208:21 211:16 215:11, 16 218:1 219:17 240:21 247:1 reality 123:8 realize 100:2 230:12 reallocate 22:19 reallocating 187:14 really 23:22 38:23 54:1 56:2 57:7, 25 65:23 68:22 70:10, 12, 20, 23 71:4, 25 72:18 73:5, 6 74:18, 20 75:3 76:4, 25 77:5, 6 78:10, 13 95:8 107:9 119:14, 15 125:19 129:2, 6, 7 131:8 139:11, 17, 21 141:22 142:20	159:12 162:9 178:24 179:1 183:21 202:24 228:20, 24 234:22, 25 240:5 253:2, 6 realtime 148:16 reapply 160:15 reason 35:24 65:17 94:18 96:12 163:19 164:9 192:3 199:6 226:19 241:5 246:12 reasonable 9:17 230:9 reasoning 98:8 reasons 111:17 121:17 reassessment 11:12, 18, 19, 22 12:15 13:15, 16 14:4 24:23 25:18 30:21 32:15 37:1 39:16 42:1 44:18 57:21 60:14 62:14 75:21 91:18, 20 117:12 120:9 122:5 124:14 152:19 153:23 154:24 155:6 172:2, 23 190:12 192:1 reassessments 11:14 13:10 18:2 25:12, 13 30:11 57:17 121:2, 18 rebuilding 205:9 234:21 recalibrate 172:3, 9 receipt 115:6 252:11 254:18 receipts 236:16 258:4 receive 18:2 101:10 109:2 114:2 116:3 135:23 161:6 163:8 176:8 192:2 252:4 received 36:2 108:7 116:18
--	---	---	--	---	---

180:16 222:15 receives 200:21 receiving 174:18 195:11 recess 198:7 200:7 263:8 264:12 recognize 19:9 28:24 61:6 96:9 151:8 155:20 205:21 240:16 recognized 10:1 recognizes 26:2 35:17 43:13 53:8 61:17 70:3 78:25 89:8 97:11 107:17 116:8 126:2 135:6 150:15 157:1 160:2 165:1 169:16 175:6 183:8 200:12 208:4 recognizing 9:21 recollection 127:17 recommend 14:11 194:22 249:25 recommendatio n 91:3 95:3 199:18 recommendatio ns 12:1 13:24 14:8 16:5 27:13 43:3 110:23 128:18 199:15 recommending 194:6 reconfigured 191:2 reconvene 198:3, 12 264:14 record 6:24 9:23 10:22 32:17 36:20 39:4 40:19 41:8 42:8, 15 103:1 107:25 114:2 136:2 137:8 139:2 142:21 148:11 198:22 200:6,	11, 23 203:8, 16 212:19 217:15 220:9, 20 224:19 225:5, 15 228:7 231:2 233:21 238:6 239:2 242:25 247:17 251:9 253:12 255:9 257:11 259:9 260:11, 22 261:25 recorded 7:25 9:15, 19 recording 7:15 Records 7:14 94:9 136:8, 18 recourse 159:13 recover 189:18 recovery 216:4, 7 228:21 234:9 247:8 250:8 Recreation 199:4 red 152:2 155:2 206:10 redeveloped 147:9 Redfin 49:18 reduce 184:23 228:22 reduced 194:14 reducing 218:6 229:22 240:6 262:15 reduction 61:4 214:13, 14 223:21 236:14, 15 250:10 reductions 128:6 177:13 reference 127:19 128:5 132:5, 11 133:3, 21 referred 212:25 249:15 referring 182:14 reflect 6:24 12:20 60:13 93:14 168:18 202:10 203:9 216:24	reflected 94:12 136:9 146:4 210:8 reflective 56:5 Reform 126:22, 25 127:6, 10 129:1, 15 130:2, 7, 10, 14 131:17 223:12, 14 242:14 247:4 263:24 reforming 148:22 refresher 117:22 regarding 6:17 116:15, 23 119:24 121:2 128:5 129:12 132:9 133:6 135:19 136:6 228:19 245:4 regards 201:7 Regina 220:17, 25 228:25 region 204:12 217:24 regional 241:4 246:5 region's 241:23 regular 11:14 25:12 77:20 121:18 148:11 162:13 regularly 136:17 244:3 regulations 79:13 245:8 regulatory 219:11 reinforce 221:22 reiterate 42:19 related 7:15, 25 8:1 27:21 42:20 144:22 191:5 198:15 relates 94:25 112:8 192:25 197:9 245:6 relating 148:20 relationship 97:1, 6 relationships 75:12, 20	relative 135:14, 18 141:16 250:2 relatives 158:24 release 37:5 201:12 released 141:15 175:24 reliant 213:14, 19 relief 29:6, 9 98:19 99:10 113:9, 21 128:13 131:25 132:18, 21, 22 133:19 136:3 177:12, 19 197:19 223:15 250:9 relocate 241:19 242:2 relocated 241:20 remain 30:8 221:22 remainder 16:25 remained 30:3 remaining 189:25 202:15 remains 177:21 remarks 202:20 217:3, 5 remedy 219:6 remember 44:10 45:6 56:3 70:13, 16 116:22 127:2 130:10 192:5 reminded 202:16 Remote 1:1 2:11 190:17 remotely 2:10 214:7 renovate 256:14 renovated 65:21 66:17, 23 93:21 95:21 renovations 66:19, 22 rent 60:7 72:10 232:20	256:3 259:21, 22 rental 237:19 rents 46:23 rent's 256:8 repeat 56:9 repopulate 216:5 report 14:2 29:13, 23 32:3, 17, 18, 23 53:16 55:20 62:1, 2 91:3 110:18 241:1 reported 59:8 123:19 Reporter 265:12, 22 reporting 61:25 reports 214:3 215:1 represent 119:5, 21 246:21 representatives 19:17 149:19 174:22 represented 245:17 represents 94:19 207:20 257:19 reproduction 265:19 reputation 249:13, 17 request 40:3, 5, 19 52:6 145:14 199:14 200:17 258:21 requested 37:3 39:17 150:10 175:3 184:8, 19 requesting 15:18 188:5 200:4 requests 22:1 38:25 39:20, 23 114:13 118:2 183:14 require 117:5 170:9 211:14 245:13 required 79:12 125:11 174:10 210:5 211:20	requirement 210:25 requirements 98:9 199:9 223:12 requires 41:10 104:18 198:24 requisite 108:16 Rescue 204:21 222:12, 15 230:8 246:4 Research 248:19 researched 136:25 resident 83:6 169:22 225:22 227:20 231:9 233:5 residential 12:12 54:10 57:4 58:18 84:5 98:3 109:11, 15, 19 111:2 113:7 121:25 146:20 147:10, 19 residents 8:10 40:1, 22 53:19 87:16, 19 88:10 104:8 108:10, 24, 25 109:7 115:19, 22 116:2, 7 139:12 140:21 148:23 175:16, 22 176:7, 8, 23 193:18 195:14 206:1 214:16 221:14 235:16 resident's 80:25 Resignation 234:16 resistance 214:19 215:6 RESOLUTION 1:1 6:19, 22 8:11, 12 resolutions 6:22 resources 22:19 96:8, 11 134:5 140:13 144:2 192:19 197:11 204:10 208:19 209:23 219:5 244:23
---	--	---	--	---	---

respect 8:17 35:12 197:8 201:10 263:4 Respecting 156:21 respective 47:17 respond 108:15 193:4 199:17 262:22 responded 62:7 160:14 respondents 249:23 responding 13:12 response 3:11, 21 4:5, 14, 16 5:19 56:10 159:13 160:25 161:7, 8 179:22 180:3 196:18 203:18, 21 238:8, 11 255:14 responses 161:19 responsibility 224:6 227:19 responsible 12:6 214:1 rest 208:1 restaurants 258:18 restores 198:25 restrict 208:23 restrictions 219:9 result 13:14 36:11 210:10 218:22 219:3, 16 226:17 resulting 74:25 210:14 results 176:12 resume 198:13 retainer 61:2 retaining 118:3 retiree 52:17 retirements 125:5 retires 38:6 retrieve 193:13 return 59:17 214:11 215:3 returns 113:13 revaluing 93:20	Revenue 13:6 21:10, 13 23:11 132:6 162:12, 15 180:14 182:24 204:19 213:14, 19 215:13, 14 216:8 219:4 226:15 230:11 232:14 246:4 250:16 256:18 revenues 208:24 Reverend 225:2 reverse 229:20 review 12:10 13:13 20:3, 9 34:22 37:4, 7 38:21 39:9, 17 40:2, 6 47:19 101:8 107:8, 9 114:19 115:4 143:25 160:7, 10, 16, 23 163:21 170:1, 4 210:19, 21 211:3, 19 reviewed 63:10 205:16 reviewing 13:12 169:23 Reviews 36:21, 24 37:20 185:8, 9, 20 210:5, 13 211:21 Revised 8:14, 17 Revision 10:7 189:1, 6, 15 revolve 190:9 reworking 234:14 RFP 62:6 RICHARDSON 1:1 3:23, 24 26:3, 4 28:3 29:8 31:9, 12, 18 32:6, 16 33:12 35:23 41:23 79:17 135:7, 8 137:11 138:1 140:16 141:9 142:17 143:16 right 17:7 18:22 22:25	24:8 25:25 28:10 36:17 37:17 39:25 40:21 41:3, 16, 19 43:5 45:2 46:3 52:4 56:8 61:11 63:22 74:6 80:19 81:10 83:22 86:14 87:15 89:13, 16, 25 92:19 93:14 95:17 96:5, 13, 18, 23 99:11, 22 100:23 101:3, 5, 10, 18, 20, 24, 25 102:15, 18, 19 103:5 105:16 106:10 111:19 119:12 121:8 124:16, 19 130:5 133:18 141:19 145:12 147:22 158:7 161:17 163:3 164:22 168:24 175:5 177:20 195:9 196:25 206:5 216:12 227:13 230:9 239:8 241:24 246:13 262:11, 12, 13 ring 152:2 ringing 142:5 rising 229:17 risk 251:18 River 85:17 86:22 Rob 103:24 154:6 155:11, 23 156:16 177:5 181:11 Robert 11:25 Rob's 111:22 robust 72:11 112:11 Rodriguez 247:14, 19, 20 role 152:12, 13 206:13 roles 33:19, 20 roll 2:23 152:15 171:13 rolled 46:3 47:5 56:14 rolling 99:19 roll-out 108:3	rolls 60:7 215:16 roof 152:6 rooftop 88:19 room 186:16 191:3 rooms 152:20 Roughly 101:15 round 24:24 26:1 33:15 35:12 43:8 72:22 78:21 87:11 88:24 106:11, 12 107:14 121:6 135:4, 6 140:18 156:22 row 31:4 rowhome 70:15 85:1 rowhomes 31:6, 7 51:2, 4 rowhouses 48:20 Rule 199:8 rules 198:18 201:3, 20 245:12 run 19:5 176:19 229:25 running 120:22 199:19 234:17 245:9 254:10 261:9, 13 Rushdy 203:13, 20, 23, 24 204:3, 4 < S > sacrifice 235:10 safe 233:6 safeguards 158:1 safer 176:18 178:2 183:24 184:1 228:24 250:25 262:16 safety 8:8 134:7 176:13 177:3 205:16 258:15 salaries 234:12 252:4 sale 55:4, 5 58:9 66:11 68:15 122:25	sales 12:5 27:3, 5, 19, 22 46:11, 12, 21 47:7 51:1 55:1 64:4 65:17, 18 66:4, 5 67:7 81:16, 19 82:6, 8, 9, 19 84:8 85:10 89:24 90:9, 16, 20 109:21, 23 110:5 111:15 122:22 123:18 124:18 172:8, 14, 20 173:4, 19 sampling 49:9 San 249:11 Sanchez 57:5, 11 263:12 Sanchez's 111:25 114:1 Santiago 253:9, 13, 19, 22 263:16 sat 152:20 satisfied 44:3 save 241:13 saving 256:11 savvy 35:9 181:22 saw 58:19 88:8 129:8 151:23, 24 saying 34:23 56:12 64:7 75:1 83:24 85:10 86:3 91:7 94:18 96:4 103:20 105:20 109:9 115:9 136:23 155:14 156:6 157:14 160:24 161:22 166:17 167:21 177:22 says 65:6 78:11 149:13 155:3 scale 120:2 scales 209:12 schedule 117:21, 25 189:22 scheduled 10:9 190:1 197:25 scheduling 118:5	school 49:2 51:9 67:21 178:23 190:7 226:15, 22 227:4 schools 51:10 67:20 226:1, 2, 7 scope 172:12, 24 scratch 172:5 173:25 screen 3:1 screening 12:6 se 32:25 seamlessly 209:12 search 12:24 135:14 season 191:16 196:1 seat 156:15 second 30:17 33:15 35:11 36:25 43:8 45:12 48:5 78:21 87:11 88:24 90:14 106:11, 12 107:13 135:6 140:18 152:24 163:10 174:21 217:3 218:14 221:6 252:9 seconds 202:15 217:2 Section 7:12, 19 41:9 sections 122:2 sector 16:18 61:8 206:11 247:2 248:7 sectors 59:13 see 19:10 20:14 22:25 29:1 41:4 51:11 60:22 63:15 74:19, 20 78:10 81:21 82:22 86:25 87:17 94:25 97:5, 18, 22, 23 99:13 100:25 103:10, 12 104:5 108:10 110:14 111:5 120:11, 18 122:14 124:4 131:8
--	--	---	--	---	---

137:23 141:3 142:12 154:2 162:7 167:6 171:7 182:19 183:21 184:18 188:4 198:5 200:20 236:23 241:16 256:5 seeing 50:21 56:3 59:16 60:21 80:14 104:9 111:19 154:8 196:20 237:8 seeking 205:24 seemingly 71:3 seen 12:16 25:22 50:23 56:23 59:7 62:19 63:15 92:1, 8, 14 96:19 99:17 121:24 124:5 178:1 222:1 sell 65:6 123:14 145:9 166:8 168:12 seller 85:5 selling 81:15 158:22 167:10 sells 166:24 send 75:24 115:11 134:17 160:11 senior 54:3 100:13, 15, 19 177:15 seniors 138:21, 22 139:5, 9 140:6 sense 27:4 90:11 129:4 139:4 144:19 172:12 sent 36:9, 10 62:15 201:12 213:22 sentence 212:6 separate 51:13 67:8 80:4 142:11 163:15 separated 86:23 separately 82:6 142:12 separates 165:7, 9, 11 separation 84:11	September 18:23 34:25 161:21, 23 181:8 190:2 serious 109:6 264:2 seriously 144:12 serve 207:18 256:19 served 8:6 239:24 serves 21:12 73:25 service 43:23 44:3 150:1 217:23 242:7 245:11 263:19 Services 11:6 13:2 19:20 176:15 178:11 184:4 186:9 204:17 209:1 211:19, 24 218:15 228:23 230:6 231:12, 18 245:23 246:1 253:23 serving 191:11 sessions 19:18 191:4 set 27:18 62:23 76:19 79:14 111:22 112:13 129:3, 6 134:15 156:1 170:22 195:4 210:24 set-aside 60:1 sets 30:22 setting 111:23 seven 61:10 67:3 176:1, 17, 20 177:1, 23 severely 108:20 205:13 sexual 243:9 shapes 209:10 share 179:9 194:20 206:2 226:17 227:22 shared 131:12 sharpen 191:14 sheriff's 68:15 shield 188:11 shift 111:5, 12 190:17 205:5	shock 36:16 158:16 159:11 180:21 shocked 157:17 shockingly 69:15 shootings 165:25 215:1 shopping 256:1 shops 165:16 short 107:7, 8 124:12 shortage 23:14 shortages 189:19 shorten 190:25 shortening 20:10 shorter 20:5 172:21 shortly 94:14 99:13 120:23 shot 165:23 166:8 168:23 show 90:20 193:21 240:21, 25 shown 135:20 shows 248:19 side 28:14 29:4 98:20 119:7 132:22 141:23 165:22, 23 166:24 167:8, 10, 15 sides 240:3 sidewalk 215:2 signatures 193:23 signed 201:24 202:5 significance 29:3 significant 17:24 22:6, 8 25:5 59:6 78:3 90:7 93:25 143:24 144:1 145:5 148:2, 24 154:8, 13 192:2 206:8 209:15, 22 216:14 217:7 significantly 71:17 90:6 115:5, 25 166:25 184:4,	5 219:11 229:14 232:24 signify 10:1 signs 241:17 similar 37:4 63:6 66:16 92:19 96:1 153:16 162:18, 20 163:1 similarly- looking 165:8 similarly- situated 244:20 Simms 225:2 simple 173:11 240:11 simplify 110:22 190:22 simply 244:25 245:14 254:9 simultaneously 13:15 20:18 sincere 206:23 single 31:3, 4, 22 34:9 48:2, 21 51:4 77:13, 18 146:9, 17 177:9 singles 51:1 sir 45:4, 8, 9 97:16 216:12 236:4 255:2, 20 257:5 sit 107:5 site 182:20 sites 219:3 situation 69:20 70:1, 25 133:7 168:23 219:7 situations 89:22 92:15 95:13 96:6 six 7:4 55:3 93:7 95:9 251:21 size 16:11 88:16 sizes 209:11 242:15 247:5 sketches 15:10 skills 176:15 204:9 skip 161:11 skyrocketing 72:18 skyscraper 146:16 slight 214:13	slightly 29:25 32:9, 21 44:19 45:16 122:9 slots 38:9 slow 38:15 261:10 262:13, 14 slowing 55:21, 23 small 146:10 223:1, 6, 15 224:8 231:23, 24 232:16 234:6 245:13 249:2, 14 251:16 254:6, 20 255:23 257:19, 23 258:11 259:24 261:8, 12 262:9 263:15, 17 smaller 106:23 146:17 smart 68:1 smooth 192:17 smoothed 83:5 smoothing 83:13 85:7 social 76:2 sold 146:1 147:8 148:5 solid 234:13 solidify 52:7 solution 206:13, 24 212:9 226:4 solutions 188:14 206:25 219:19 247:8 solving 211:18 248:13 somebody 41:6 65:25 66:25 94:19 123:13, 14, 21 136:23 147:6 149:13 155:15 196:24 somebody's 82:11 163:11 something's 149:23 somewhat 24:13 131:3 195:17 soon 24:20 102:10 117:17 159:16 169:21	sooner 24:11 161:24 196:6 sophisticated 211:6 sorry 6:23 20:2 22:22 28:1 91:4 100:1 102:3 107:16 126:16 155:11 159:24 169:20 173:7 174:20 200:11 203:16 sort 19:10 33:20 36:16 37:17 47:2 54:23 58:10 67:6 71:5 78:7 80:15 84:9 93:23 94:9 114:22 121:21 138:19 149:17 153:20 185:19 263:23 sounds 45:8 source 226:14 sources 213:19 South 86:7 87:16 88:6 255:24 262:7 Southwest 165:12 Souvier 238:3, 12 space 57:24 59:23 95:14 186:16 spaces 91:23 speak 63:8 80:19 109:25 111:18 197:5 221:3 230:18 233:25 240:12 243:25 253:3 speaker 203:3 225:10, 11 230:23 238:22 Speakers 201:13 speaking 28:16 41:21 121:1, 13 151:4 232:16 243:6 251:14 254:24 speaks 27:3 28:21 41:21 176:7
--	--	--	--	--	--

spearhead 112:1	37:12, 13, 23 38:4 42:23	198:10 202:14 264:3	sticker 36:16 158:16 159:11	structures 64:10 232:4	successfully 15:2 120:5
special 190:6 201:9	117:2, 4, 5 118:9 124:16,	Starting 20:22 59:2 117:18	Stifling 208:22	struggle 211:7	211:9 245:15
specialty 47:9	19 156:2	starts 172:5	stimulate 216:9	struggles 234:7	successive 121:21
specific 23:23 65:5 72:20	186:2 187:22 189:17 210:4,	196:6	Stoddart 235:23 236:2,	struggling 255:25	sudden 145:8
81:25 85:6, 11	6, 18 211:3, 12	stat 30:23	5, 6	stuck 116:20	Sue 220:6
87:6 93:8	218:22 226:18	state 10:22	stop 90:24	students 226:17	228:4, 13
120:6 126:11	250:23 258:17	105:17, 19, 20	123:8 149:4	studied 55:3	suffers 219:16
140:7 152:12	staffed 22:9	106:1 118:12	168:24 219:8	studies 33:2	sufficient 210:11
161:5 162:23	186:15, 19	125:14 170:22,	222:3	55:4 63:6	suggest 49:19
specifically 24:5 51:10	staffers 13:2	23 171:2, 6, 10,	stopped 60:21	study 14:3	161:16
63:8 79:10	184:10	11 185:14	90:24	28:20 62:12,	suggested 11:24 112:17
96:16 110:15	staffing 12:4	195:5 203:16	stopping 208:23	24 63:5	suggestions 127:9 130:1, 3
146:21 151:22	14:12 16:4	207:9 212:18	255:23	221:16 241:1,	133:4, 10
223:14	62:10 125:1	217:14 220:8,	256:2, 6, 14	2	suggests 74:14
speculate 149:16	185:1 186:8	19 224:18	259:21	stuff 80:11	suit 224:5
spells 199:8	189:19 210:21	225:4, 14	stores 258:19	97:4 168:3	summarize 217:4
spend 13:11 94:20 241:13	stage 128:21	228:6 231:1	stories 88:17,	subcontractors 217:22	summer 19:2
spending 9:6	stages 117:17	233:20 235:25	18, 22	subdivisions 94:2	77:17 168:25
spent 134:2 239:20 252:5	stance 144:9	238:5 239:1	story 70:12	subject 68:14	193:17 196:3
split 156:11	stand 264:12	242:24 247:16	141:14, 19	123:13	sunsetting 209:20
spoke 27:1 54:24 103:14	standard 61:25 62:3	251:8 253:11	straight 39:4	submission 120:10 171:12	Sunshine 10:2
153:2 174:21	standards 13:23 14:5	255:8 256:6	240:4	submit 139:3	super 109:23
spoken 19:16	27:11 31:22	257:10 259:8	Strategic 228:14	194:12	supervision 265:21
square 15:9 80:1, 24 84:22	32:4 62:21	260:10, 21	strategies 16:10	submitted 8:18 17:1	supply 19:5
88:20, 23	63:1, 3, 12	261:24	strategy 25:3	50:9 128:7	23:3, 13 55:25
squarely 209:3	79:13, 14	stated 29:23	234:5	subneighborhood 167:12	122:25 124:3
Squill 97:12	120:4	127:7, 18	stream 216:9	subsequent 146:25	support 149:2,
SQUILLA 1:1 5:18 97:12, 13,	standby 193:12	131:6	streamlined 209:9	subsequently 148:5 150:3	14 193:16
17 98:2, 7, 23	standing 11:20 97:1	statements 263:7	streams 213:14 215:13	subsets 138:18	194:12 209:8
99:11, 22	242:10 246:23	States 15:18	street 51:13	subsidized 227:14	210:12 211:11
100:4, 23	standpoint 103:20 119:20	32:18 227:16	82:13 119:8, 9	subsidizing 237:18	215:18 220:11
101:2, 5, 20, 25	stands 232:9	statistical 166:15	165:7, 8, 11, 14,	substantial 52:1 148:6	224:4, 21
102:7, 12, 18,	start 18:13	statistics 30:23 229:21	18, 22, 24	substantially 8:4 143:4	225:7 233:11
24 103:7, 13	21:18 26:8	status 12:18	166:21, 23, 24	229:22 242:9	238:18 249:4
104:15 105:16	49:12 52:6, 11	93:14	167:2, 5, 8, 14	246:22	250:7 260:13
106:7, 16	90:25 97:5	statute 195:6	235:1 255:24	subtract 81:8	supporting 41:11 184:10
107:3 157:12	110:25 111:8	202:21 205:4	Streeter 245:16	147:15	222:20 223:5
160:3, 4	128:20, 23	234:23 235:7	streets 44:2	subtracted 143:10	250:20
161:15 162:2	133:2 156:9,	242:1 246:18	88:1 178:19	suburbs 213:24 214:7	supports 206:5 234:4
163:3, 17, 23	10 169:23	252:12 256:25	183:25 233:5,	success 125:18	supposed 91:11 136:24
164:14, 22	172:10 173:18	257:4	6 252:24	successful 43:19 246:19	145:6
170:22 179:20,	180:23 189:12	stayed 70:24	strengthen 224:1	253:24	sure 2:25
21, 24 180:6,	195:21 196:4,	105:3	stresses 191:5		10:24 17:11
10 181:17	7 199:18	stenographer 200:21	strong 56:1		18:7 24:15
182:16 183:5	201:1 205:8	stenographic 265:1	57:7 117:23		26:25 30:16
Squilla's 139:18	218:7 263:2	step 204:23	stronger 250:25		37:8 40:23
staff 16:7 19:18 22:18	started 2:4 44:11 45:1	steps 14:22	structure 64:2,		49:5 53:3
	46:10, 20	192:15 201:16	16 231:25		54:5 62:4
	129:2 131:18	206:4			
	157:5 183:4				

69:16 70:23	25 173:12, 15	63:19 64:15	11, 23 183:22	229:10 237:9	44:5 53:5, 6,
71:13 73:15	193:12 198:3	67:13 74:25	189:1, 6, 15	240:23 242:14	10 59:14
75:10 76:15	201:16 204:23	100:9 108:1, 4	195:16 201:7,	terrific 228:13	61:12, 13, 14,
77:22 79:18	206:12 235:8	113:9, 13	23 205:7	test 125:12	15, 18 69:20,
80:20 81:4	240:20 254:1,	126:22, 24	208:22 213:20	testify 9:13	21, 22, 23 70:1,
83:2 84:1	2	127:6, 10, 11,	226:6, 8, 11, 14,	10:12, 14 17:2	6 74:6 78:22,
87:20 88:1	taken 44:17	20 128:5, 6	22 227:7	189:3, 5 202:9	23 87:10 89:4,
90:9 95:16	64:12 92:12	129:1, 15	229:19 233:3	204:15 207:1	6, 10 97:7, 8, 9,
96:17, 23	111:7 131:3	130:1, 7, 10, 14	241:8 244:19	213:3 216:16,	17 104:14
105:25 106:8	166:9 200:18	131:11, 17	246:11, 12	23 217:9	106:13 107:14,
109:25 117:13	265:1	132:6 136:3	254:17	218:4 228:19	16, 19 111:21
120:7 136:15	takes 21:9	141:17, 25	tax-exempt	231:7 239:19	114:14, 24
138:2 140:5	160:13 210:17	147:1 149:7	226:11	testifying	116:3, 4, 5, 10
152:9 155:13	talent 125:19	164:16 170:18	taxpayers	97:18 188:21	125:23, 24, 25
156:12 162:8	234:13	171:10, 18, 20,	113:14 234:20	204:4	126:4, 6, 20
173:10 178:19	talented 235:6	21, 25 173:8	teachers	testimony	135:1, 2, 3, 9,
182:10 188:12	talk 23:2	177:14, 15	226:18	2:14 9:11	11 142:18
191:22 192:23	26:20 34:21	189:20, 21, 22,	team 27:3	10:6, 10, 23	143:17, 19, 20
193:5 194:5	42:25 84:21	24 196:7	75:25 94:22	11:9 16:25	150:14, 17
202:2 216:15	91:22 95:19	198:15 204:18	192:8 231:24	17:7 26:8	155:22 156:23,
217:8 253:19	119:11, 22	205:3, 6	252:2, 4, 20	33:17 91:16	24 157:3
254:14	130:3, 15	208:12, 19, 23	Teams 1:1	118:7, 24	159:21, 23, 25
surface 215:19	135:12, 24	209:20 213:15	2:11 9:25	156:1 175:11	160:4 164:23,
surprise 158:5	138:12 151:19	214:1, 13	220:12 224:22	179:14 182:23	24 165:2
surrounded	152:3 155:4, 7,	215:16 216:8	264:15	188:7, 15	169:12, 14, 18
68:4	13 156:2	218:6, 12	TECH 220:11	189:13 191:21	170:16 174:12,
surrounding	179:3 183:13	219:4 223:11,	224:21 225:7	197:1, 17	14, 15 175:5, 8,
80:8 86:24	193:3 254:5	14 227:15	238:18 260:13	198:1, 14, 19,	10 179:12, 13,
survey 223:18	talked 26:18	229:23, 24	technical 8:1	20 201:2, 14,	15, 17 180:10
249:23	33:17 49:21	230:10 231:25	201:16 211:11,	22 202:10, 14	182:4, 8 183:5,
surveys	79:15 91:2	232:4 236:15,	17	203:17 204:2	6, 7, 10 188:1,
177:25 244:4	96:2 100:12	16 241:7	technological	207:4 208:2	2, 7, 14, 15, 17,
250:12	103:15, 16	242:5, 14	191:7	212:13, 19	18 191:19, 20
survive 245:18	117:4 122:18	244:16 245:25	Technology	216:24 217:16	194:4 196:14,
254:21	152:24 157:17	246:10, 12	13:7 210:12	220:3, 10, 21	25 197:14, 16,
Swarthmore	192:13	247:3 250:9,	212:22 245:12	221:3 224:13,	22, 23 198:5, 6,
259:19	talking 21:3	14 252:7, 15	tech-savvy	20 225:6, 16,	8, 10 200:15,
System 11:21	49:12 79:16,	254:15, 18, 19	108:24	19 228:1	19, 25 202:23
15:11, 15	20 81:11	258:3, 5, 6, 9	tee-up 33:20	230:21 231:3	203:7 204:13
26:22 33:24	84:13 93:24	259:18, 23	telephoned	233:15, 22	206:25 207:2,
54:15 148:13	124:17 129:1,	260:2 261:10,	201:25	235:19 236:1	3, 14, 25
157:9 209:16	11 139:16	12 262:10, 15	Tell 36:21	237:25 238:7	212:10, 12
systemic 71:6	146:7 156:4, 8	263:5	70:12 92:4	239:3 242:19	213:1 218:2
112:3	232:11, 12	taxable 12:18	116:7 119:14	247:11, 18	219:25 220:2
	233:2	44:8 45:17, 18,	124:15 141:13,	251:3, 10	224:10, 12
< T >	tandem 136:7	23 46:1	19 142:3, 23	253:6 255:3,	225:9, 21
table 154:17	TANEHA	taxation	157:7 166:16	10, 20 257:3,	227:23, 25
take 2:23	265:11	104:19	167:9	12 259:3, 10,	228:18 230:17,
37:7 38:19	tape 206:10	taxed 105:1, 4	telling 52:21	15 260:5, 12,	20 231:4, 6
39:9 48:23	target 184:24	232:7, 17	136:10 169:7	23 261:19	233:13, 14
64:25 66:13,	targeted 113:4	252:10	176:3	262:19, 24	235:17, 18, 21,
20 72:10	221:23	Taxes 10:8	tend 23:8	testing 47:16	24 237:22, 24
79:21 81:5	taught 213:17	43:22 44:9	84:18 146:13	190:23	239:18 242:17,
82:4 89:23	Tax 7:20	64:19 70:24	term 34:6	Thank 2:3	18, 19 247:5,
93:1 95:9	11:11, 18	71:1, 8 95:1, 4	86:18 87:16	3:1 6:10, 11	10 250:21
98:20 102:23	12:23 13:8	99:5 112:6	terms 7:16	9:1 10:16, 19	251:1, 2 253:4,
109:22 112:16	28:14 29:4	134:13, 22	8:2 23:1	17:1, 5, 6 26:5,	5 254:2, 23
114:18 118:9	36:7, 8, 14, 16	141:21 149:15	72:17 129:3, 6	7 35:14, 15, 20	255:2 257:1, 2,
125:11 159:6,	51:19 53:1	150:4 176:3, 9,	145:24 152:1	43:9, 11, 15, 23	17 258:25

259:2 260:3, 4, 16 261:15, 17, 18, 19 262:16, 18, 19 263:14, 20 264:4, 6, 7, 11, 15, 17 Thanks 100:4 theirs 24:14 theoretically 214:20 theory 163:11 therapy 231:11, 17 thing 52:8, 11, 15 68:8 95:17 100:11, 12 124:12 136:10 148:20 153:19 155:24 194:18 195:25 256:8 things 27:23 33:6 38:11 46:12 47:3, 5 49:22 52:5 54:22 61:9 62:8 63:20, 21 68:15, 18 73:3 76:16 94:1 116:20 117:14, 20 125:6 157:21 158:20 165:4 166:1 178:10, 16, 21 185:11, 19 186:6 187:5 192:13 209:2 213:7 237:2 think 21:25 26:25 27:14, 16 28:19, 21 29:4 31:16 34:18 37:15 43:18 45:15, 18 51:18, 21 53:14, 15, 21 54:1 55:12 56:5 57:3, 9 58:20 60:17 65:2 67:11 69:7, 17 71:9, 10, 15 73:7 74:2 75:11, 12 77:3, 13 78:13 79:16 88:8 89:16, 25 91:8, 15 92:10 93:3 95:18, 25 96:2 99:16 100:11 107:4 110:18	115:7, 24 119:3, 6, 18, 22 123:8, 20, 25 125:6, 18 128:8, 13 131:19, 23 133:18 134:16 136:16 137:19 140:5 141:19, 20 146:4 148:9 150:7 151:2, 6, 7 152:9 154:19 156:19 157:24 167:17 168:8, 15 170:20 174:4 175:14, 18, 21 178:6, 10 179:2, 9 180:5 181:24 186:6 187:17, 20 188:20 191:9 233:2 237:13 thinking 37:24 38:16 160:10 169:9 thinks 76:10 thinner 244:23 third 156:22 THOMAS 1:1 5:21, 22 89:9, 10 91:5, 21 92:25 94:16 97:7 thought 23:6 38:13 128:12 131:14 133:22 142:24 143:3 147:23 150:6, 24 thoughts 132:7 thousands 206:16 232:15 threat 2:8 three 43:2 53:24 57:1, 12 88:17, 18, 22 110:4 111:17 137:18 138:7, 8 202:12 239:24 247:22 250:12 252:21 three-story 84:19, 25 three-year 25:21 threshold 30:4	thresholds 30:9 throw 185:12 throwing 49:6 155:2 thrust 244:15 tied 170:1 215:13 Tila 260:19 261:6 time 9:23 10:8 18:4 19:1, 7 20:5, 7, 13, 15 23:9 25:8 35:4, 6 39:5, 14 40:12 43:20, 22 54:10 58:24 60:25 68:7 75:21 90:17 91:24 94:20, 23 95:2, 24 101:9 103:25 107:7, 8 112:8 124:9, 12 126:8 132:10, 14 134:3, 25 139:15 140:25 141:4, 10 152:18 154:23 155:5 157:5, 6 159:8 160:13 161:19 162:9 163:16 172:13, 17 178:4, 20 182:2 185:17 188:25 190:25 195:10, 12 199:7 200:18 202:3, 10, 16, 18, 20, 25 205:5, 19 206:21 210:6, 18 211:3, 10 212:11 214:24 216:13, 17 220:1 223:23 224:9, 10 227:24 228:12 229:5 230:3 231:7 232:7 234:25 247:6 253:2 254:2 257:1 263:21 264:5, 14 timeline 39:6 93:8 timely 12:6	36:13 timer 202:14 times 34:10 60:24 84:7 127:5 186:14 210:14 227:10 248:23 timetable 214:10 timing 193:6 197:10 title 16:12, 13, 21 79:11 titles 6:21 Today 9:2, 12 11:4 17:11 44:12 74:1 93:3 108:9, 19 109:1 136:10 139:2 175:11 183:17 188:7, 16, 22 189:13 190:1 198:24 201:4 202:8 204:4, 15 207:1, 16 212:23 217:6 221:3 233:25 239:20 243:6 247:7 252:14 253:24 254:5, 25 today's 209:25 250:22 told 70:13 104:2 123:13 161:25 228:3 262:12 ton 97:18 Tonya 230:24 231:5 tools 204:9 top 39:11 58:21 67:17 108:22 173:23 186:21 248:5 tops 93:7 torn 93:22 Total 44:22 47:3 98:15 100:7 185:22 touch 74:22, 23 77:13 97:4 107:10 touching 75:4 tough 34:11 53:15 town 42:12	tractor 168:1 trade-off 19:12 traditional 145:4 Traditionally 21:7, 14 50:12, 19 73:20 125:11 147:18 152:11 153:22 trailers 168:2 train 218:17 Trainee 16:13, 21 125:8 Trainees 38:3 training 14:14 117:2, 5, 6, 8, 18 118:11, 18, 23 119:18 185:4, 14, 25 trainings 117:25 trajectory 49:24 transcript 265:1, 19 transfers 12:8 Transformation 15:7 transition 216:1 transparency 30:13 43:6 109:4 119:19 transportation 214:23 trash 178:3, 19 252:25 travel 240:11 treated 85:21 155:19 treating 166:2 trending 39:21 172:1 173:22 trickle 153:12 tried 178:14 triggers 98:8 troubling 63:25 true 105:2 119:16 138:20 230:12 trust 70:1 Trustees 226:24 truth 219:14 253:23	try 18:7 37:8 38:8 51:2, 14 67:18 77:2 93:10 114:21 132:17 137:16 151:10 153:24 trying 28:6 53:16 85:2 133:23 134:3 149:4 159:25 173:10 187:16 190:23 193:24 Tucci 189:14 Tuesday 264:13 turn 17:8 25:25 191:25 206:4 turnaround 187:10 turned 245:19 turning 213:7 twice 214:25 232:8, 18 twin 31:4, 25 two 24:25 30:22 34:20 39:18 47:15 52:5 55:13, 24 80:6 108:7 137:18 138:7, 8 149:18 165:19 202:8 213:5 214:1 216:22 225:24 227:2 234:19 255:24 two-minute 202:10 216:25 two-plus 33:8 two's 58:24 two-story 84:20, 25 type 23:8 49:19 50:25 62:1 68:8 85:4, 8, 11 92:2 124:19 134:14 140:23 147:17 168:3 214:15 types 184:15 typical 85:20 195:19 Typically 20:6 21:18 22:4 75:23 160:23 186:11 196:6
--	---	--	--	--	---

< U >	unfortunately 23:21	update 94:9 136:5, 20 193:20	95:15, 23 146:14, 18 206:16, 18	150:3 152:5 164:17 168:7 174:25 193:14 246:20	voice 194:17 244:1 247:23
U&O 213:15	unfunded 236:20	updated 65:21 108:8, 18 137:20 190:19	validation 12:5, 7 27:3	valuing 27:22 110:20	voicemail 193:24
U.S 15:22 206:17 221:12	unhappy 161:8	updates 46:25	valuation 36:3, 18 49:4	variable 65:5 146:21 147:13	volume 21:5, 20 22:7, 21 190:10 202:8
uh-oh 152:2	unified 244:1	updating 111:15	valuations 33:3 44:2 123:22	variance 48:3 50:24 145:19 148:10	vote 198:24 200:4, 18
ultimately 239:22	Uniform 15:20 104:20	upgrade 66:2 146:24	value 12:17 13:14 18:18 25:14, 23 29:2 30:23 36:4, 6 44:10, 16, 22 45:11, 17 46:14 47:3 48:24 52:10 59:2 60:13 64:4, 6, 9, 18 65:2, 19 72:17 73:19 74:3 79:23 81:8 83:1, 3, 4, 21, 25 85:7, 22 88:13, 21 90:2, 5, 15 94:15 95:13 100:9 102:6, 7, 16 110:25 111:1, 7 119:14, 16 121:9 143:9, 10 145:8, 18, 22 146:3, 12, 18, 24 147:5, 15 151:25 164:2, 3 169:4 172:5, 6 173:2, 24 176:6, 8 180:18 183:21 215:12	various 113:8 129:14	< W >
unable 16:2 72:12	uniformity 11:15 14:5 29:20 42:21, 25 48:14 104:16, 18 105:9, 14 106:4	upgraded 145:24	variances 148:17 166:23	vary 93:5	wage 113:13 128:5 177:14 208:22 213:15, 20, 23 214:1, 13 218:6 236:15 241:7 246:10 247:3 250:9 252:15 254:15 258:6 263:24
unanimously 244:2	unintended 159:1	uplift 243:24	vendor 12:10 15:8 19:3 115:11 162:1	vehicle 40:22	wait 19:10 109:1 195:10
unavailable 186:11	unintentionally 96:10	uploads 124:18	vendors 187:12	verification 55:11	waiting 94:22 194:1
uncertainty 197:3	unique 240:2 243:20	upper 47:21 158:13	verify 15:9, 25	version 235:9	waive 160:21 170:24
unchecked 215:1	unit 12:5	uptick 21:19	versus 51:1 54:16 84:25 155:16 233:8	view 2:14 53:15 128:19 131:22 133:15	walk 48:18 50:20, 21 95:20 157:18 233:6
unconscious 27:20	United 15:18 227:16	urgency 36:13 229:4	Vice 239:9, 24	viewers 9:16	walked 44:1 48:11
underappreciated 68:24	units 51:3 237:12, 15, 20	urgent 205:22	VICE-CHAIR 1:1	viewing 111:16	want 28:9 39:4, 25 40:23 41:7 42:15, 19, 24 43:24 44:5 52:18 66:1 70:10 74:7 76:16 79:4 80:12 81:4 95:8, 16 97:3 107:24 109:8 112:14, 15 117:2, 6 118:21, 24 131:24 137:5 138:5 143:22 149:3 152:22 154:24 155:4, 6, 13, 25 156:1 160:6 175:12 177:5 187:7 188:6 192:2, 23 194:5, 19 196:25 197:16 198:10, 17, 22 199:18 202:22
underassessment 110:11	universe 106:23	urging 226:23	Vice-president 204:5 239:15	viewpoint 155:12	
underfunding 226:2	universities 45:25	use 30:22 60:5 76:4, 10 83:7 86:16 87:11 90:17 106:17 110:6 123:21 127:8 132:17 133:3 146:15 147:10, 13 168:5 186:10 190:3, 21 206:22 219:2 250:7	Victorian 48:21	violence 240:6 250:4	
underlotting 89:18	University 67:11, 14 165:12, 15 225:23 227:20	usual 192:11	Victorians 51:4	violent 165:25 166:7, 10	
underlying 41:11 146:10 147:4	University's 227:8	Usually 20:16 36:9 39:1 50:3 68:2 92:22 160:25 195:23	view 2:14 53:15 128:19 131:22 133:15	virtual 117:20, 23 145:18 153:19 201:18	
underrepresented 33:19 34:1 248:15	unknown 109:2	utilize 34:19 204:9	viewed 81:24 82:6, 7, 9 92:11 95:15 119:8, 10	virtually 90:13 184:20	
underserved 74:11	unlock 206:16	utilized 11:20 34:6	values 18:11 19:15 20:17 22:22 41:20 47:24 48:9 49:7 56:1 58:6 59:1 66:7, 10 69:15 70:23 72:14 80:21 81:2, 15 84:11 90:23 99:20 102:17 112:9 121:6 144:22 146:22 147:19, 25	vision 231:10	
understaffed 205:13	unmute 202:7	Utilizing 16:20		visit 258:23	
understand 22:3 23:3 24:22 36:3, 6, 12 42:9 48:3, 11, 14 49:17 81:5 108:18, 22 155:12 174:17 197:4 258:6	unpermanent 66:19	< V >		vitality 29:10	
understanding 76:3 98:10 127:16 134:14	unprecedented 55:18 122:23, 24 144:23	vacancies 16:6 59:23 125:21 184:22 185:3 187:16			
understated 229:5	unrealized 83:4	vacancy 236:25			
Understood 113:2 142:7 155:21	unreasonable 157:23	vacant 91:25 93:15 94:13			
unexpectedly 38:6	unrepresented 16:17				
unfortunate 134:17	unsafe 219:3				
	unscrupulous 218:25				
	unveil 158:6				
	upcoming 191:16				

204:13 213:12 216:14 217:7 227:1, 11 235:1, 10 239:18 246:18 254:1, 5, 23 256:23 257:4 258:13 259:20 263:1 264:1, 4 wanted 26:8 29:13 41:3, 4 50:13 72:23 79:17 116:21 135:12 136:1 138:12 142:21 144:4 179:9 183:13 263:14, 20 wants 40:16 118:22 war 123:13 Wards 85:18 86:22 wars 123:1, 2 Washington 249:11 watch 233:3 water 23:7, 9, 10, 11 24:1 49:6 way 19:20 39:7 49:7 51:3 53:24 55:10 58:11 65:8 72:18 73:2 80:13 82:5 96:13 139:6 143:8 150:11 151:11 154:13 158:8 159:3 161:18 167:5 169:9 186:3 188:20 192:18 210:17 231:25 ways 55:18 234:11 242:13 250:6 wealth 138:13 wealthy 226:5, 16 227:14 weather 234:15 web 20:12 22:23 183:1 website 12:24 40:2 92:6 135:15, 20 136:6, 12, 22	190:21 193:20 201:12 week 13:5 14:1 17:12 19:17 44:15, 22 47:15 50:10, 11 62:16, 17 128:14, 16 136:19 137:20 148:21 153:1 156:2 174:25 183:3 weeks 20:7 42:3 47:15 87:5 115:6 118:1 121:3 129:8 183:1 weigh 104:13 welcome 70:8 150:20 264:20 well 11:25 15:10 38:13 47:25 58:16 69:12 71:12 80:10 91:3, 9 95:9, 25 99:23 110:10 112:24 114:5 115:14, 15, 17, 24 120:3 121:16 128:25 148:13 149:13 152:23 155:3, 10 163:22 166:8 183:25 187:24 193:9 196:25 219:21 222:12 225:8 231:9 240:23 252:15 well-educated 68:2 well-paying 252:3 Wendell 224:16 went 18:11 56:2 70:24 79:11 105:5 123:3 154:9 163:18 174:20 180:18 196:21 We're 2:4 10:9 19:1 28:6 31:21 33:3 34:11, 12 38:2, 8 46:8 50:8 51:3 54:14 58:2	59:16, 18 61:6 76:8 77:7, 14 78:11 80:20 81:10 85:2, 7 87:14, 25 91:10 94:7 95:16 96:3, 5, 6, 12, 17, 23, 24 99:7, 18 100:6, 18 102:8 104:9 112:20 116:25 118:5 120:12 121:6 124:7 131:9 132:14 136:17, 21 141:11 143:23 145:17 147:9 148:7 149:13 151:1 153:15, 23 156:11, 13 157:24 158:6 160:7 161:18, 22, 25 170:2 174:7 175:22 176:2, 3 177:16 180:15, 22 181:8, 14, 24 182:8, 13, 24 186:2 187:15, 22 188:12, 25 189:21 193:19 194:19 195:18 196:3 198:9 200:3 201:4 202:11 216:17, 21 217:3 232:11, 12 233:2 234:11 237:8, 16 241:24 250:19 256:12, 13 264:2 West 241:19 We've 6:15 18:10 21:7, 21 22:13, 15 25:22 28:22 38:15 44:14 50:12 86:13 92:1, 8, 13 94:22 108:7 118:2 119:11 120:18, 20 121:24 124:5, 25 125:3, 16, 21 128:25 135:16 136:15	150:6 152:13 178:1 191:2 193:21 205:24 236:10 256:12 White 221:18 Whitney 233:18, 24 wholeheartedly 206:6 wide 246:25 wife 234:18 Wilcha 242:22 243:1, 2 William 239:9, 14 Williams 11:4 willing 64:16 77:1 82:11, 12 85:5 202:12 willingness 202:24 wise 29:3 wish 10:1 Wissahickon 47:21 158:13 withstand 211:10 witness 196:17 203:12 207:6 212:15 217:10, 11 220:5, 15, 16 224:15, 25 225:1 233:17 235:23 238:2, 15, 16, 23 242:21 247:13 251:5 253:8 255:5 257:6, 7 259:5 260:7, 17, 18 261:21 witnesses 9:11, 22 188:5 216:20 Wolford 234:1, 17 Wonderful 207:14 wondering 89:22 151:22 word 35:4 60:5 193:25 240:20 words 2:25 64:14 work 15:8 16:3, 9 28:22 67:13 74:19 76:20, 23 77:1 87:24 93:11,	17 96:21 111:23 130:25 131:7, 9, 24 134:3 150:8, 11 170:17 171:2 185:16 186:1, 4 187:10 190:17 191:6 206:25 212:10 214:6, 18 219:17, 24 221:20 226:23 231:19 232:2 235:13 236:7 240:9, 10, 15 243:18 250:24 258:17 264:2, 3 worked 38:13 70:21, 22 workers 59:17, 19 213:21, 23, 25 214:6, 10 216:9 229:24 230:16 241:7, 12 252:16 workflows 124:17 working 13:5 15:4 29:5, 11 33:22 75:12 108:6 126:22, 25 127:7, 10, 19 128:23 129:2, 16, 22 130:2, 7, 11 131:13, 17 133:22 136:7 174:7, 24 182:24 183:4 193:19 229:3 239:21 240:15 242:16 247:7 workload 117:10 workplace 15:3 works 39:6, 7 143:9 workshop 249:16 world 231:21 249:16 world-class 246:17 249:14 worse 30:1 32:21 215:19 worth 58:24 68:22 69:5	104:24 105:6 137:19 226:12 248:21, 23 wrap 212:4 215:22 216:17 217:4 wraps 120:25 write 158:17 writing 114:9 194:14 written 226:25 262:24 wrong 92:4 127:17 wrote 58:23 236:11 Wyndale 48:8 Wynnefield 48:6 52:16 158:14 < Y > Yard 236:10 Yeah 23:12 25:10 45:19 51:21, 24 54:19 65:4 86:16 98:17 99:6 106:7 107:3 114:11 128:10 131:14 133:14 141:5 142:7 144:14 148:7 150:5 154:4 159:24 178:12 182:8 184:17 186:5 203:25 253:15 255:21 261:11, 15 262:5 Year 7:10 8:14, 18 11:10, 11, 18 12:23 21:11 22:17 25:7, 14, 19 36:25 39:21 49:10 55:17 58:24 60:8 62:5 75:18 82:18 84:14 85:18 89:25 90:4, 10, 14 91:12 95:11, 12 98:18, 22 100:20 103:18 104:3, 6 108:2, 4 110:24 118:17 121:20 122:9, 10, 15,
---	---	---	---	--	---

23 127:1	Zach 242:22				
132:15 135:14	243:2				
144:6 157:20,	Zaw 257:8, 13,				
25 161:5	14				
162:23 171:18,	zero 117:2				
20, 21, 25	zip 139:25				
172:2, 22, 23	140:3 141:2				
173:9 178:15	zone 57:23				
180:19 182:18,	58:3 84:4				
21 184:20	114:12				
185:23 189:16,	zoned 145:21				
20, 21, 23, 24	zones 57:22				
190:5, 9	58:1 80:9				
191:14 195:20,	84:4 85:13, 14				
24 196:8	86:3 114:4, 7				
197:20 227:3,	172:4, 18				
10, 23 252:2	zoning 145:14,				
256:10, 16	19, 25 146:3,				
261:14	10, 12, 20				
year-by-year	147:4, 11				
25:15	148:16, 22				
Years 7:4	149:19 236:17				
8:16 12:22					
24:25 33:8					
38:17 43:3					
47:1 53:24					
55:1, 13, 25					
56:2, 18 57:12					
58:19 60:15					
63:18 64:20					
65:14, 22, 23					
71:14 82:4, 5					
88:12 92:13					
98:12 108:7					
110:5, 10, 19					
116:22 121:16,					
21 122:4, 11					
123:6 124:6					
125:2 138:15					
145:2 161:3					
173:19 176:1,					
17, 20 177:1,					
23 213:5					
214:2 216:5					
219:10 227:2,					
4 236:11					
239:21, 24					
251:24 255:25					
256:11, 21					
year's 30:7					
101:13 163:5					
204:25 227:1					
yesterday					
201:15					
York 252:9					
young 168:23					
169:1					
< Z >					