



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY BOARD

September 10, 2025, at 3:00 PM

www.fortlauderdale.gov/government/edab

Meeting Minutes

Board Members	Attendance	Present	Absent
Enrique Bargioni, Chair	P	9	0
Russ Klenet, Vice Chair	P	8	1
Jay Adams	P	8	1
William Feinberg	A	7	2
Nicholas Kollias	P	9	0
Marianna S. DeJager	A	8	1
Allyson Meyers	P	8	1
Jason Hughes	P	4	3
Haley Dowling	P	5	0
Kymrae Mizell-Hill	P	3	1

Staff

Von Howard, Administrative Supervisor (Present)
 Daphnee Sainvil, Public Affairs Division Manager (Not Present)
 Ashley Dixon, Management Analyst (Not Present)
 Melissa Mata, Management Fellow (Not Present)

I. Call to Order & Determination of Quorum

Chair, Enrique Bargioni, called the meeting to order at 3:09 PM. Roll call was issued, and it was noted that quorum was established.

II. Approval of Minutes

Chair, Enrique Bargioni, carried out a motion to approve the EDAB Minutes from the meeting that took place on Wednesday, August 13, 2025. Motion moved by Member Kollias and seconded by Member Meyers. Motion passed; EDAB Minutes were approved at 3:12 PM.

III. Member Discussion

Chair Bargioni proposed the board members to identify ten companies that the city could contact in order to grow and expand business ecosystem. Member Meyers asked if anyone had any relationships with businesses that were currently listed on the suggested list that Chair Bargioni recommended. Member Dowling stated that she has contact with someone at BEAM Therapeutics and she would reach out to them to see if they would be willing to discuss bringing their business to Fort Lauderdale.

Member Klenet stated that many high-end businesses are reluctant to bring their businesses due to no private schools with enough student stations nor available real estate in Fort Lauderdale for them to consider bringing their businesses here. He mentioned that he was a part of a discussion to develop a special Economic Development Committee to attempt to persuade the high-end businesses to come to Fort Lauderdale.

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Member Klenet recommended that there should be consideration of developing a charter school to help attract businesses to Fort Lauderdale as the Broward County Public Schools have a high under enrollment due to the political climate therein as well as stressed that the voucher program has been a factor in the current school decline.

Member Adams expressed that public schools have the largest real estate taxes in Broward County in Fort Lauderdale. Whereas Member Mizell-Hill stated that it is both good and bad because some of the non-affluent private schools rarely have to abide by the regulations that are required by public schools.

Chair Bargioni suggested that organizations within the marine, residential construction, and real estate industries who already have children in both public and private schools in Fort Lauderdale can help shift the narrative to help attract new businesses to come in.

City Staff Liaison, Mr. Howard asked the Board how they can help support and make recommendations for current businesses who are established in Fort Lauderdale to stay and/or expand.

Member Adams stressed that a better lifestyle is the driver for businesses and families to remain in Fort Lauderdale. He stated that walkability, the availability of quality restaurants, quality transportation and mobility, friendlier street accessibility, and better parks are the biggest part. He stated that he feels as though the city is failing on the simple things for true economic sustainability and growth to occur.

Member Klenet mentioned that the surtax collection of about 10% is made available for their special projects to qualify for the City match programs.

Member Adams responded by stating that just completing the simple projects like on-the street painting, filling potholes to make it a better lifestyle, specifically in Downtown Fort Lauderdale would make a better difference.

Staff Liaison Howard suggested that the Board review the plans and recommendations on the Spotlight FTL page to remain consistently educated on the projects that are in place and the progress of each that will help provide further clarity on the concerns of mobility.

IV. Division Reports

Mr. Howard provided an overview and update on the StartUp FTL program, which is designed to help entrepreneurs and small business owners to launch, plan, and grow their business within the City of Fort Lauderdale. He informed the Board that they are currently in the 3rd week of their 6-week cohort. Mr. Howard further elaborated on how they are developing their



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business models, getting information on the City's permitting process, as well as what steps are needed to establish possible business loans in the future. Informed that there will be a pitch competition where there will be a winner that will receive funding for the winners.

Mr. Howard also explained the micro-grant program was initiated on Wednesday September 10, 2025, that will help small businesses continue to thrive and be successful. The StartUp FTL Accelerated Program is funded by the National League of Cities through their \$20,000 grant award. The grant is to assist individuals in communities where economic advancement opportunities are available to those within the AMI of 200%. Half the grant funds will be used to award StartUp FTL participants in a pitch competition. A more advanced Grow Cohort is currently open for businesses operating for one to five years and focuses on strengthening branding, marketing, and business operations. He also provided details of the requirements and informed the Board that it is scheduled to end on September 29, 2025. With the winner being announced in mid-October.

Member Dowling inquired as to who would be reviewing the applications once submitted. Mr. Howard informed the Board that to his knowledge, staff would be reviewing the applications, however he would need to get clarity from Ms. Mata.

Staff also highlighted the other half of the grant will also cover microgrants ranging from \$100 to \$850 to help entrepreneurs cover small, but critical, business expenses. These grants will be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis and can help solidify operational elements such as supplies or business operations and equipment.

Member Adams, Mizell-Hill, and Dowling expressed concerns that the microgrants were not enough to truly help a small business owner thrive so that staff should consider reducing the number of people who would receive funds and increasing the amount of money distributed.

Chair Bargioni requested that StartUp cohort members to possibly come to an EDAB meeting to tell the Board about their business and the process of what they are doing in the cohort.

Finally, Member Klenet stated that there be an invitation sent to a Marine Industry representative to come speak with the Board. He also suggested that the Board consider doing a site visit at a local maritime business so that they could get a better understanding of what they do.

V. Areas of Concentration

Member Hughes stated that he would like to have the concentration of non-profit Arts & Culture.

VI. Member Reports

There were no reports provided by the members.



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VII. Meeting adjourned at 4:15 PM.

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

The next EDAB meeting will be on October 08, 2025, at DSD Building.

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