



# TCC Minutes

**Committee:** Regional Growth, Development, & Small Business Enterprise

**Date + Time:** December 16, 2025 | 2PM

**Location:** Council Chambers

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**Attendees:** Melden, Hobbs, Driscoll, Komives, Morris, Sarantou, Cherry

**Absentees:** Martinez

**Also Present:** Williams, Jones, McPherson, Gadus

**Presenters:** Director Brandon Sehlhorst, Director Jim Molnar

**Legislative Aide Facilitating:** Makenzie Kujawa

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## Topics...

- Department of Economic Development 2026 Budget Proposal
- Division of Building Inspection 2026 Budget Proposal

## Discussion...

### *Department of Economic Development*

- 8 employees in department
  - o Real estate division and division of economic development
  - o Addition of Megan from DEI
  - o Kyle Jones full time addition (0.75 in 2025 due to late hiring)
- Majority of expenses attributed to personnel
- Decreased services line item
  - o Vibrancy initiative reduced
- TIF districts (separate from General Fund)
  - o Pass through for tax proceeds (Ironville)
  - o Uses money for improvements/paying city back for investments (Southwyck)
- Toledo Expansion Incentive Program
  - o Based on income tax from creating new jobs in City
  - o 17 companies enrolled
  - o 1600 new jobs committed, 2395 actually employed
  - o \$129,000,000 payroll-- \$3.3 million in new income tax
- Vibrancy Initiative
  - o Enhancing city's vitality
  - o Created from conversations with local business owners
  - o Façade Improvement Grant Program
    - 50% matching up to \$40,000
    - 68 awarded
    - 47 existing businesses, 560 jobs retained, 15 new businesses, 105 new jobs
    - \$78 million in private investment



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- 47 applications, 10 projects, \$4.6 million in private investment, 25 new letters of interest in 2026
- Whitebox Grant
  - Grant for Building Code upgrades
  - Aims to make opening easier for new businesses
  - 29 grants to date, 11 new businesses, 60 new jobs, \$45 million in private investment
  - 200,000 sq feet of new leasable space
  - 9 projects out of 19 submitted, \$10 million in private investment, 10.6 years vacant prior to program
  - 31 new interests in 2026
  - Concerned with why applications were not coming from certain areas
    - 2 new planning grants came from this thought
- Planning Grants
  - Launched in 2024
  - Provides owner with report, scope of work, estimates, and conceptual rendering (needed to get the façade grants)
  - Creating pipeline to improvements
  - First planning grant awarded to Daily's Dis n Dat store
- NEW! Property readiness evaluation program
  - Problem: chronic vacancy, presumed risk by investors
  - Helping owners figure out if the risk does exist
  - \$500,000 EPA grant to do proactive environmental assessments has helped utilize Federal funds
    - Not awarded this grant again
  - Goal: prime the pump for new investment to create clearer pathway to redevelopment
  - Allowed expenses: Environmental expenses, geotechnical expenses, wetlands, market feasibility study, building condition study
  - Ordinance to come to council at a later date (\$80,000)
- \$568,000 requested to vibrancy grants

## *Department of Code Enforcement, Division of Building Inspection*

- 6 inspectors, 1 vacancy
- Continued to develop new permit portal
- Reduced average plan review time—less than 2 weeks turnaround time
- Promoting customer experience
- 0 applications to board of building appeals—making team more accessible to help find solutions to code issues
- Worked with Fire Department to help streamline process
- Update to chapter 13 to align with Ohio Building Code
- 100% of inspectors have multiple certifications allowing for more flexibility within department
- Hired Bob Kurtz as Chief Building Official helping to boost division's work
  - Can now do in house plan review now



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- Significantly reduced overtime costs and Safe Build costs
- 31,000 calls to building inspection main phone line
- 700 final certificates of occupancy issued
- Reducing services line item—savings from having full staff and not needing third party assistance

## Questions/Referrals Requested...

### Economic Development Questions:

- Gadus: Vibrancy, are you using Tolomy to track and see if development is surrounding investments?
  - o They have not yet, but Directors will be collaborating
  - o They have begun to map where the projects are
- Gadus: Uptown construction project, are they eligible to get legacy corridor small business grants?
  - o They would be eligible; construction coming in 2027 to be included in budget
- Morris: Whitebox grant, how much of new leasable space is still vacant?
  - o Does not have stat to share at this moment, but they do track and require owner to actively market the space.
  - o Will share by way of referral
- Morris: wants City to balance how we do these projects in neighborhoods
  - o Worried about decrease in program dollars
- Morris: is the new PRE program going to be balance throughout the city?
  - o Open across the city
  - o Typically like to focus on NRSA neighborhoods
  - o Pilot program will allow department to learn a lot
  - o Emphasizing previous business corridors and small businesses within neighborhoods
- Melden: PRE program, is there a consideration of return on investment when awarding grants?
  - o Department has seen that we as the city will have to begin to pay for large plots of land that go undeveloped
    - Cost savings by investing a little money now and saving money in the long run
  - o Thinking about how they bring in more people and more income tax/jobs
- Sarantou: Toledo Expansion Incentive program, what do you think is the reason for larger job numbers than agreed to?
  - o A lot of companies are growing and we are supporting their growth
  - o Balance of being cautiously optimistic and growing
- Sarantou: vibrancy initiative, are the jobs created here the same jobs as counted other places?
  - o No, these are different new jobs
- Gadus: Do we done any assessment of our businesses? What percentage is vacant? Blighted? Ready to be open?
  - o No study has been done that comprehensively
  - o Neighborhood master plans study this by neighborhood
  - o Concern over neighborhoods that do not have a plan
- Morris: North Towne Mall Site update
  - o Mobis occupying building 1, but still more space



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- Other buildings are of interest to Jeep expansion
- Optimistic on new tenant
- Jones: with the addition of jobs, do we have data on what kind of jobs are created? Pay? Full or part time? Etc.
  - When applicants apply, they have to list jobs—all data collected is full time
  - Grant requires fair pay for employees are requirement
  - Department is strategic about who they aware grants and incentives to
  - Referral to get report
- Jones: vibrancy incentive programs, is criteria going to be more competitive now that there is less money allocated?
  - They have had to adjust their applications each year as they learn more (NRSA inclusion)
  - All criteria are online
  - Department wants to see transformational projects which will elevate their scores
  - Independent incentive advisory committee scores projects
  - Would be happy to share with council
- Jones: does department help out with CIFT? Do they have partnership?
  - Yes, they do work with CIFT—business empowerment group
  - CIFT's funding has been suspended—what type of gap would we be expecting?
    - Gap is food specific and small manufacturing—working to see how they can support businesses
- Melden: façade and Whitebox, on average \$15.7 million in private investment per year → \$4.6 million this year—can we explain why?
  - Concern that department was putting too much emphasis on transformational projects and are leaving out the small businesses
  - Started working more with existing businesses that require less private investment
- Melden: how did we decide cuts to grant programs?
  - Department knew cuts were needed to satisfy the budget requirements
  - Still able to do impactful work with limited funds
  - Making room for the PRE program
- Melden: how do we think through projects to get funding knowing that we have limited funding?
  - Money in façade improvements can go further
  - Building code costs are expensive and money does not go as far
  - Looking at most in need structures and their historic importance
  - Melden to be looking for additional funding for these programs
- Melden: how does your proposal for 2026 align with CIC?
  - Whole purpose of CIC is to develop city with thoughtfulness
  - Will proactively acquire sites and redevelop to make it attractive
  - Grant programs and CIC work together
- Melden: concerned that by limiting our grants so much we may be stifling entrepreneurship
- Sarantou: have they discussed with JobsOhio or RGP to do this grant work?
  - They are partners and have resources to bring in but are project specific
  - JobsOhio focuses on export businesses (businesses that could go anywhere but choose Toledo)



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- Request: have a meeting with state reps to help show successes and show need for increase in funding
- McPherson: emphasis on need for state dollars to help promote and expand the work economic development is doing
  - Concerned about the fact that the most beneficial programs are the ones being cut in the budget

### Division of Building Inspection Questions:

- Driscoll: why is there no estimate for fines and forfeitures?
  - Had not gotten any revenue in 2025 so they did not project to collect any in 2026
  - Director Campbell can send extra data
- Sarantou: have they looked at surrounding communities and what they charge for inspection fees?
  - Yes, but the research is not complete at this point
  - Plan to bring something to council early next year
- Melden: strategically, how are we better as a City now that building inspection is under Brandon as Chief of Growth?
  - Wanting to make process seamless
  - Getting businesses open ASAP
  - All departments under growth have the same end goal in mind
- Jones: will Molnar be working in code compliance or building inspection?
  - He will be the commissioner of code compliance
  - Will continue to work collaboratively
- Jones: emphasizing community benefit agreements as tool to use
- McPherson: questioning where problems go to after the change in organizational structure