



Economic and Workforce Development Summary

Overview

The community workshop on economic and workforce development was held on Tuesday, May 19, 2026, at the African American Arts and Cultural Center. The workshop brought together residents, community leaders, service providers, and other stakeholders to discuss economic and workforce development priorities in the Fillmore and Western Addition neighborhoods. The event began with a brief presentation, participants were then invited to place a dot on their top three economic development strategies and their top three workforce development strategies. Following this activity, attendees joined table groups for deeper discussion on either economic or workforce development.

Participants received a handout outlining priority areas and strategies, developed from past community engagement, reports, and input from City agencies and community members. During group discussions, participants were asked to affirm these strategies, identify any gaps, and share which strategies would have the greatest impact for the neighborhood. Four groups focused on workforce development strategies, and three groups focused on economic development strategies. Below is a summary of the comments, key themes, and top priorities that emerged from these discussions.

Workforce Development

Across all tables, participants described significant barriers preventing youth and adults in the Fillmore/Western Addition from accessing and benefiting from workforce opportunities. Key themes included disconnection, trauma, limited exposure to opportunities, fragmented service delivery, and lack of coordinated communication.

Major Challenges

- Many community members feel disconnected from existing systems, with limited mentorship, inconsistent support, and a lack of second chance opportunities.
- Trauma—unaddressed and widespread—was described as a major barrier to participation, stability, confidence, and learning.
- Illiteracy and minimal digital literacy (including limited access to laptops, WiFi, and technology training) block entry into meaningful career pathways
- Turf issues and safety perceptions, especially for young people, restrict movement and engagement.
- Workforce services are fragmented across 24+ city departments, creating confusion about where to go for help.
- Nonprofits often operate in silos, leading to duplication, limited reach, and service gaps.
- Parents and caregivers often lack the information or skills needed to support youth workforce readiness.
- Structural inequities persist residents noted that local communities were historically excluded from major construction jobs (e.g., Buchanan Mall), reinforcing distrust.

Critical Needs

- Parent education and early childhood literacy support, including training for parents, preschool teachers, and faith-based educators.
- More job readiness integrated directly into schools, with early exposure to careers and role models.
- A break from generational cycles of poverty and lack of opportunity.
- Dedicated spaces and programs that connect youth to jobs, internships, leadership development, and practical experiences.
- AI and technology training—particularly for jobs at risk of automation—to help residents reskill
- Greater alignment between job opportunities and residents' actual skills and interests.
- Better communication channels: centralized resource lists, events calendars, needs-based databases, and outreach through churches, beauty salons, barber shops, and community hubs.
- Expanding youth opportunities connected to career pathways to keep young people engaged in positive activities and counter the negative effects of social media.

Promising Approaches and Program Ideas

- Wrap-around services similar to Code Tenderloin, United Playaz, Brothers Against Guns, and Us for Us to support both healing and career readiness.
- Bringing mentorship, training, and services directly into housing developments
- Subsidized youth employment programs, with ongoing career counselor support
- “Earn-and-learn” pathways for adults and youth, including stipends so people can afford to participate.
- Strengthened partnerships between small businesses, CBOs, and city departments, including mentorship days led by local business owners.
- Expanding construction, trade, and apprenticeship opportunities with guaranteed pathways for local residents.
- Programs that help people meet SNAP work requirements through meaningful training and paid experience.
- Hyper-local hiring for major projects (e.g., Kaiser, parks, construction) supported by better coordination between workforce and economic development teams.
- SBDC and other TA providers should conduct outreach to high school students in their Junior & Senior year about how to start and run a small business

System-Level Gaps and Opportunities

- The current system may lack capacity to absorb everyone who needs support; participants asked whether the city could provide funds directly to community members or small organizations to run training programs.
- Reliance on government programs alone is insufficient; private sector and corporate partners must take a larger role.

- Demand for a more coordinated, unified nonprofit and workforce ecosystem—perhaps through shared databases, joint outreach, or consolidated programming
- Job training institutions like City College and JobCorps need stronger partnerships, higher staff pay, and more accessible pathways for residents.

Communication & Outreach

- Word of mouth remains one of the most trusted and effective methods
- Materials should be distributed at community events, fairs, and through local agencies. Centralized, accessible listings of workforce programs are needed so residents can more easily navigate the landscape
- Communication must “meet people where they are,” including culturally relevant spaces and trusted community institutions.

Overall, the top three strategies among all participants that attended the meeting include:

1. **Strategy 1a.** Provide paid work experience internships, and other work-based learning opportunities that help youth build skills, understand workplace expectations, and connect short-term employment experiences to long-term education and career goals.
2. **Strategy 2a.** Provide neighborhood-based employment services that connect residents to job preparation, training opportunities, employer engagement, and ongoing support that promotes long-term career stability.
3. Tie for the 3rd priority strategy:
 - **Strategy 1f.** Support youth beyond the initial program experience by helping them identify next steps, connect to education, training, employment, or supportive services, and build long-term networks that support career development.
 - **Strategy 2c.** Identify employment barriers – such as education, housing stability and childcare and strengthen connections to supportive services to improve outcomes across all employment levels, including job retention and stability.



Economic and Workforce Development Summary

Economic Development

Community members emphasized the need for better communication about grants, asking for longer lead times, help with applications, and posting on community bulletin boards. Arts and entertainment were highlighted as especially important for young people.

There was interest in cooperative business models, including community ownership of important buildings such as the Fillmore Heritage Center. Participants noted benefits of a Community Benefits District (CBD) including cleaning services, marketing campaigns, and fostering collaboration among merchants. Japantown's CBD was referenced as a potential model, and the group discussed whether an association-focused model might work if a CBD is not feasible.

Desired new businesses included groceries (not high-end including produce and fruit market, meat market, and a full grocery store) retail pharmacy, affordable clothing, a community bank, a bookstore, health and wellness options, entertainment venues, and public spaces with art, Attracting Black owned/Black customer focused businesses, and legacy businesses with experience was highlighted. Participants want a mix of local- and visitor oriented pricing, with continued recognition of the neighborhood's history. They also emphasized that current businesses do not adequately serve Black residents and that merchant groups should include the full district, not only Fillmore Street. Participants were interested in accessing a commissary kitchen in the Fillmore for caterers and food vendors. Economic development concerns included a high number of storefront vacancies, loss of major stores, and a corridor that lacks visual appeal. Participants asked how vacant spaces could be better utilized to promote existing businesses and discussed that the City should enforce the Storefront Vacancy Tax.

Additional themes included the need for innovative solutions to revive Fillmore's historic vibrancy, leveraging influencers to tell the neighborhood's story, ensuring people feel welcome at all hours, and launching "low-hanging-fruit" strategies quickly. Participants also questioned what an optimal merchant association would look like and whether a new organization should focus solely on merchants.

The top voted strategies from two of the groups included:

1a. Support Fillmore corridor events and activations through financial assistance and partnerships with local artists, merchants, cultural groups, and community leaders to increase business visibility and cultural identity.

- Local vendors/caterers want to sell their food and wares at the planned night markets & future events
- Include themes that revive the Jazz District
- Hosting regular events along the Fillmore—beyond Juneteenth—including heritage-related programming, street markets, and family oriented activities.
- Sunday Streets should not be off Fillmore it should be on the Fillmore Corridor



Economic and Workforce Development Summary

1b. Increase visibility and customer activity along the Fillmore corridor through coordinated outreach and promotion of diverse events and activations with community stakeholders.

- Strengthening marketing and creative “destination programming” to attract visitors and activate the corridor.

2a. Provide broker and leasing services to fill commercial vacancies along the Fillmore Corridor and in the Fillmore Western Addition.

- Broker services should be combined with other types of technical assistance to support business attraction
- Building owners don’t want to rent to new businesses, Vacant to Vibrant is a good model to help with this to try out new businesses for temporary leases with TA support to the businesses

3a. Provide technical assistance and business development support through trainings, one-on-one coaching, and peer mentorship for existing small businesses and commercial tenants, including support with leadership development, real estate, legal services, accounting, finance, marketing, pricing, e-commerce, and business expansion.

- Technical assistance needed in multiple languages
- More TA is needed on how to become a city vendor

3b. Provide access to grants and loans for small businesses in the Fillmore Western Addition, including Black-owned businesses, across all stages of the business cycle—from startup to scale-up to expansion.

- Providing grants to local businesses, with the belief that local owners understand community needs best.
- Need more low barrier grants to assist start up businesses in general and prepare them to move into the storefronts. Requiring fund reserves creates barriers to accessing grants, 3 years of taxes is too much for a start up business
- Technical assistance is needed to support grant applicants to successfully fill out/apply for grant applications
- Grants should be available to support existing social enterprise business models run by nonprofits or for profits such as youth window washing enterprise, community food programs to promote their services through grants for marketing and grants for business operations. For profit businesses should partner with these nonprofit community social enterprise programs.

4b. Increase awareness of City programs and services that support economic development and small businesses among merchants, residents, CBOs, and other neighborhood stakeholders.

- Small Biz technical assistance services should be more accessible, known

4c. Explore and support cooperative economic development models and collaborative fundraising strategies that advance community-led corridor management and decision-making, including merchant associations, entertainment districts, community benefit districts, and similar models.

- Pursuing collaborative models and coordinated fundraising, potentially through a Community Benefits District (CBD) to support businesses, nonprofits, and tourism.

Overall, the top three strategies among all participants that attended the meeting include:

1. **Strategy 3b.** Provide access to grants and loans to support small businesses in the Fillmore Western Addition, including Black-owned businesses, across all stages of the business cycle—from startup to scale-up to expansion.
2. **Strategy 2b.** Provide access to grants and loans to attract commercial tenants to vacant storefronts, including businesses from the Western Addition and Black-owned businesses in San Francisco.
3. **Strategy 1b.** Increase visibility and customer activity along the Fillmore corridor by coordinating outreach that promotes diverse events and activations with community stakeholders.