



URBAN SPARK

A West Charlotte workforce ecosystem
in the 28216 corridor

July 7, 2026



Lead Operator: Urban League of Central Carolinas | **Partners:** Road to Hire, Year Up, My Brother's Keeper, Do Greater Charlotte

Connecting the dots: from ideation to implementation

- | | | | | | |
|-------------------------|---|---|--------------------------|---|---|
| July–August 2025 | ● | Commissioner Ride Alongs | Nov 2025–Jan 2026 | ● | Scope of work developed, and solicitation issued. |
| September 2025 | ● | Presentation 1: LaSalle Building history, community center framework overview, and draft recommendation. | April 2026 | ● | Presentation 3: Application update. |
| September 2025 | ● | Community engagement and community feedback on draft recommendation. | May 2026 | ● | Applicant chosen. |
| October 2025 | ● | Presentation 2: Community engagement feedback & refined recommendation. | July 2026 | ● | Presentation 4: Urban Spark |

Our Workforce Development Framework

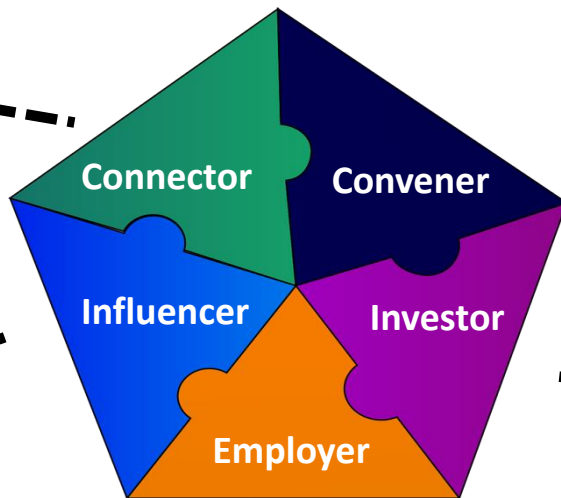
Linking employers,
educators, community
partners and job seekers.

Bringing together key
stakeholders to align
strategies and drive
collaborative solutions.

Advocating for programs and
policies that strengthen
talent development
opportunities and economic
prosperity.

Strategically funding programs
that expand career pathways
and sustainable employment.

Setting vision, driving innovation and
modeling upward mobility practices
within the organization



Serving Students Most Proximate to the LaSalle Site

Urban Spark prioritizes students attending High schools within the 28216 and 28208 zip codes — the communities closest to the LaSalle Building.



ELIGIBLE SCHOOLS



West Charlotte High School (28216)



Northwest School of the Arts (28216)



Philip O. Berry Academy (28208)



Harding University High School (28208)



POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS



75%+ students directly certified for free/reduced meals



Majority first-generation college prospects



High proportion of opportunity youth (ages 16–24)



Student-athletes and working students excluded from traditional programming hours



URBAN SPARK
IGNITING POTENTIAL. BUILDING FUTURES.

The Greatest Mobility Gap is Our Greatest Opportunity

The 28216 zip code represents one of the County's widest mobility and achievement gaps. Urban Spark is a focused answer in the corridor where that gap is widest.



MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

\$34,242

COUNTY: \$83,765



ADULTS WITH A
BACHELOR'S DEGREE

13.5%

COUNTY: 46.9%



HOUSEHOLDS WITH
HIGH-SPEED INTERNET

39.9%

COUNTY: 80.2%



OWNER-OCCUPIED
HOUSING

41.7%

COUNTY: 56.4%



URBAN SPARK

IGNITING POTENTIAL. BUILDING FUTURES.

28216 By the Numbers: The Case for Intervention



81.3%

Black / African American Residents
County: 29.1%



42
YEARS

Median Age
County: 37



49.6%

Receive Food & Nutrition Services
County: 19.1%



72.3%

CMS High-School Graduation Rate
County: 86.6%

Quality of Life Explorer data highlights compounding barriers in the immediate community surrounding the LaSalle site.



2324 LaSalle Street Has Served This Community Since 1956

Urban Spark continues a 70-year legacy of public service by transforming the building into a permanent workforce hub.

- **1956** | North Branch Library opens
- **1998–2012** | City of Charlotte Neighborhood & Business Services
- **2012–2019** | CMS Project L.I.F.T.
- **2019–2024** | CMS Northwest Learning Community
- **2024** | Property donated to Mecklenburg County
- **2026** | **Urban Spark — A new chapter begins**



BUILDING CHARACTERISTICS



3,667 sq. ft. single-floor facility



Located at LaSalle St. & Beatties Ford Rd.



Adjacent to West Charlotte HS,
NW School of the Arts,
University Park Creative Arts



CATS bus stop directly in front



URBAN SPARK: THE INTERVENTION

A collective workforce ecosystem designed to
break barriers for students in the 28216 and 28208 corridors

Five Partners, One Accountable Operator — Coordinated for Impact



Urban Spark is a collective ecosystem of five mission-driven organizations operating in the same corridor.



creating pathways to opportunity through education, mentorship, and career connections.



equips young adults with the skills they need for success through Career Pathways, our tuition-free job training offering.



The Urban League of Central Carolinas serves as the single accountable lead operator.



a collective impact organization founded by men of color to address inequities faced by boys and young men of color.



moves creatives to entrepreneurs and helps them to find their footing, to find their people, and monetize underestimated talent.



Shared focus: High School students in 28216 and 28208 zip codes.

Each Partner Owns a Distinct Role — With Clear Year 1 Targets



Urban League

Lead Operator

ROLE

Micro-credentials, facility, trades path.



YEAR 1 TARGETS

- 30+ industry credentials
- 80% job placement



Road to Hire

Access to college and high wage earning jobs

ROLE

Delivers programming within West Charlotte High.



YEAR 1 TARGETS

- 15 slots
- 15+ employers
- 80% retention



Year Up United

Internships, training for corporate positions and career pathways.

ROLE

Provides professional training, internships, and career pathways to launch young adults into corporate careers.



YEAR 1 TARGETS

- 10 seats/cohort
- Leadership Development Workshops



My Brother's Keeper

Youth Funnel & 3E

ROLE

Supports academic preparation and college access through Youth Funnel and 3E framework.



YEAR 1 TARGETS

- 80% FAFSA
- 80% 3E Letter of Intent



Do Greater Charlotte

Creative Workforce

ROLE

Connects youth to creative careers through opportunities and industry exposure.



YEAR 1 TARGETS

- 30+ participants
- 10+ micro-gigs

Snapshot of Partner Success



YEAR UP UNITED

303

West Side
Residents Served

\$67K

Avg Starting Wage

100%

90-Day Retention

10

Corporate Partners



ROAD TO HIRE

1,000+

Served Annually

\$74K

Avg Starting Wage

94%

1-Year Retention

\$30M+

Scholarships Awarded



**MY BROTHER'S
KEEPER**

741

Residents Served

347

Students Reengaged

148

Families FAFSA Complete

102

Senior 1:1s



URBAN SPARK

From Awareness to Retention — A Coordinated Pathway

The Urban Spark model moves students through six progressive stages. Each stage has a primary owner and a structured warm hand-off to the next partner.





STUDENT JOURNEYS IN ACTION

Three archetypes showing how Urban Spark
meets students where they are



Mateo Cannot Access Conventional Programming Due to Practice and Game Schedules



PROFILE

Senior at West Charlotte HS, basketball standout.



Busy 3:30–6:00 PM daily + weekends.



BARRIER

Traditional after-school workforce programs are inaccessible.



1



URBAN SPARK INTERVENTION

MBK: In-school 3E assessment identifies as unsure of his interest.

2



URBAN LEAGUE:

Saturday/summer IT Fundamentals micro-credentials.

3



YEAR UP:

Accepted into Career Pathways business operations training and internship.

4



LASALLE POP UP:

Leadership development workshops.



OUTCOME

Earns IT credential, completes internship, secures position in high-wage position starting at \$67,000.



Eliza Is Taking Classes with Road to Hire but Struggling with FAFSA as a First-Gen Student



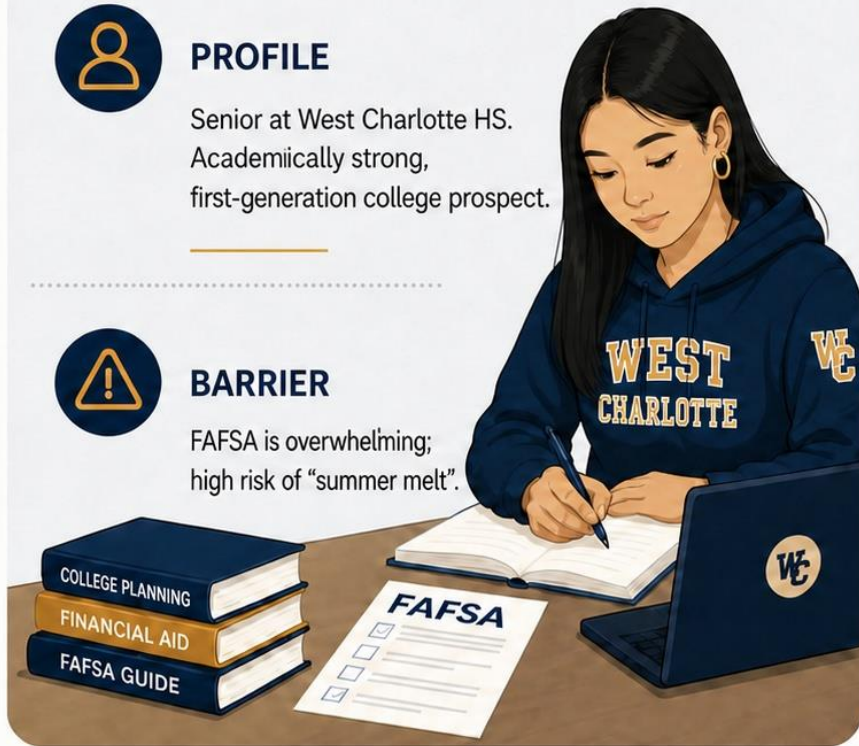
PROFILE

Senior at West Charlotte HS.
Academically strong,
first-generation college prospect.



BARRIER

FAFSA is overwhelming;
high risk of "summer melt".



1



ROAD TO HIRE:

In-school career readiness curriculum.

2



MBK:

1:1 FAFSA navigation and
first-gen mentorship.

3



LASALLE POP UP:

AI accelerator

4



Receives 4 year in-state scholarship
and a success coach

5



OUTCOME

Completes FAFSA, graduates in 4 years
to secure a \$75,000 salary position.



Ricky Wants to Pursue a Career in the Arts but Does Not Know How to Monetize It



PROFILE

Sophomore at Northwest School of the Arts.
Passionate about graphic design and video production.



BARRIER

Creates content for fun but lacks business knowledge to monetize it.



1



DO GREATER (SPARKHOUSE):
Enrolls in Creator Economy studio for digital media. Builds portfolio.

2



SPARKHOUSE BUREAU:
Connects to paid micro-gig opportunities.

3



MBK:
Mentorship from a working creative professional.

4



LASALLE POP UP:
Entrepreneurship workshops on business registration.

5



OUTCOME

Completes portfolio, earns freelance income, and presents at the LaSalle Creator Showcase.

Year 1 collective targets — reported monthly

One shared dashboard. Each partner submits a monthly data snapshot;
ULCC compiles and distributes to all — and to the County.

250+

Participants enrolled

75+

Credentials earned

50+

High-wage placements

80%

90-day job retention

80%

Families completing FAFSA

25+

Employer partners activated

24

Community pop-up events

80+

Job interviews facilitated



ACTIVATING THE SITE: 12-MONTH POP-UP CALENDAR

Experiential learning and community-building
programming that brings the corridor together

Where the corridor sees Urban Spark at work

Public milestones that build trust, draw employers, and create natural moments for initiative visibility.



August

Celebrate LaSalle, Past, Present, Future

Honoring the legacy of LaSalle and our shared vision for what's next.



October

Ribbon-Cutting & Launch

Officially open the hub and launch services with community and partner leaders.



November

28216 Placement Fair

Connect local talent with employers through targeted hiring and opportunity.



February

LaSalle Creator Showcase

Highlight local creators and entrepreneurs driving innovation in the corridor.



April

Expungement & Second Chance Day

Provide legal support and resources that open doors and restore futures.



May

28216 Signing Day Gala

Celebrate commitment, student achievements, and the power of future-ready pathways.

Visualizing the Community Hub at 2324 LaSalle Street

A vibrant, multi-generational gathering space for the 28216 corridor



A fixed meeting rhythm keeps five partners aligned

ULCC convenes; defined decision rights, coordination is structured — not ad hoc.



1. LaSalle Working Committee

Monthly

Who: CEO / ED of each org

Decides: Strategic direction, budgets, partner escalations, County reporting



2. Program Operations Team

Bi-weekly

Who: Program Directors

Decides: Scheduling, referrals, shared KPI tracking, event coordination



3. Community Advisory Council

Monthly

Who: 10-12 residents, youth, faith, employers

Decides: Programming feedback, service gaps, community input, guidance, trust



4. Data & Compliance Work Group

Monthly

Who: Data leads from each org

Decides: Metrics dashboard, grant compliance, outcome verification

Two north stars, one hub

The Vision: Mecklenburg County is a national example of how transformational growth can expand opportunity.



1. FOR COMMUNITY

Move West Charlotte community member from barrier to credentials/internships/3Es, to a high-wage career, to upward mobility.

Barrier



Credentials/
Internships/
3Es



High-wage
career



Upward
Mobility



2. FOR STUDENTS — THE 3E FRAMEWORK

Every CMS student in 28216 leaves with a verified next step. Urban Spark makes it reachable.



Enrolled
(in college/
training)



Enlisted
(in the
military)



Employed
(in a high-wage
career)



IMMEDIATE NEXT STEPS

Lighting the way together

- ✓ Recruit and seat the Advisory Councils
- ✓ Finalize the Year-1 calendar and pop-up schedule
- ✓ Confirm the LaSalle lease, upfits and framework with the County

A high document — reviewed monthly against what the community is telling us.

PARTNERS: URBAN LEAGUE • ROAD TO HIRE • YEAR UP • MY BROTHER'S KEEPER • DO GREATER CHARLOTTE (SPARKHOUSE)