



2023 ANNUAL PLAN

CHARTING A COURSE FOR PROSPERITY





A thriving Gaston County is representative of the positive energy and growth in the greater Charlotte region. Each day, people and businesses throughout the county take advantage of opportunities to chart their course for prosperity.

As the **VOICE OF BUSINESS** in Gaston County, the **GASTON BUSINESS ASSOCIATION** is at the center of this activity, working diligently to drive business success and economic growth.

The **GBA** is uniquely positioned within the business community to address forward-looking, multi-year strategic priorities focused on:

INFLUENCING THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT to enrich Gaston's economic diversification, overall reputation, and regional position

DRIVING BUSINESS SUCCESS by addressing critical business needs with innovative, impactful, and inclusive strategies

ENHANCING WORKFORCE CAPACITY through the attraction, development, and retention of critical talent

FOSTERING OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE with enhanced organizational effectiveness, Investor value, and financial strength

Dear GBA Investors and Partners,

We are encouraged by the progress the GBA has made since its inception in January 2021. Our organization continues its diligent work to drive business success and economic growth throughout Gaston County. We acknowledge our efforts are only made possible through strong partnerships and business relationships and we appreciate your support in positioning Gaston County to lead the region in economic prosperity and opportunity for all.

Despite the impacts of the lingering pandemic, Gaston County experienced dramatic growth in 2022 and further cemented itself as the location of choice for business relocations, expansions, and general investment. The GBA was active in supporting this activity by connecting businesses to critical resources, committing time and energy to advocate with elected officials on behalf of businesses, and collaborating with businesses to find effective solutions.

We look forward to building on the GBA's success from last year as we work throughout 2023 to generate bold advocacy, economic development, business, and talent outcomes. Our strategic emphasis in these areas allows us to guide thoughtful implementation efforts in a way that balances current realities with future aspirations while addressing identified business needs in a relevant, meaningful, and accountable manner.

Thank you again for your continued investment and support of the Gaston Business Association.



Eric Clay
Chairman of the Board



Patrick Mumford
President and CEO



2022 Accomplishments

In 2022, we leveraged our unique position as the voice of business for Gaston County to launch activity addressing our multi-year strategic priorities. Our strategic emphasis in these areas allows us to guide thoughtful implementation efforts in a way that balances current realities with future aspirations while addressing identified business needs in a relevant, meaningful, and accountable manner.

INFLUENCE THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

- Led successful Gastonia Transportation Bonds campaign
- Created new Advocacy Council
- Provided opportunities for interaction with elected officials
- Promoted unique downtown environments

ENHANCE WORKFORCE CAPACITY

- Launched the Talent Partnership of Gaston County
- Raised \$400k among the public and private sectors
- Formalized partnership with GC Schools & Gaston College
- Received national and state recognition for talent efforts

DRIVE BUSINESS SUCCESS

- Established GBA East and West Chapters
- Streamlined communications, events, and programs
- Enhanced Leadership Gaston program
- Initiated minority and women-owned business programming

FOSTER OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

- Earned US Chamber 4-star Accreditation
- Developed and executed a multi-channel marketing strategy
- Welcomed 88 new Investors
- Completed GBA office renovation

2023 Objectives/Initiatives

INFLUENCE THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

Unifying the collective voice of business to advocate for a healthy business climate, essential infrastructure investments, and strategic economic diversification.

Business Climate

Ensuring Gaston County and North Carolina maintain a business climate conducive to business attraction, expansion, and sustainability is critical.

Strategic Objectives:

- Support business-friendly public policies
- Strengthen local, state, and federal government relations activity
- Enhance advocacy of quality pro-growth economic development opportunities

Strategic Initiatives:

- Develop a grassroots advocacy program segmented by issues
- Enhance opportunities for Investors to engage with elected officials
- Develop a 2023 legislative agenda

Transportation/Mobility

Infrastructure needed to support a growing population is key to maintaining an enviable quality of life and driving economic prosperity.

Strategic Objectives:

- Develop a comprehensive transportation/mobility strategy
- Advance local, state, and federal infrastructure investments
- Address land use planning and implementation challenges

Strategic Initiatives:

- Position the GBA as a leading voice for a regional transportation structure
- Determine infrastructure (water, sewer, broadband) requirements for growth
- Identify opportunities for cross-jurisdictional land use planning alignment

Economic Diversification

Diversified business growth broadens the tax base, provides sustainable employment for residents, and strengthens the overall economy.

Strategic Objectives:

- Attract talent to Gaston County
- Lead strategic economic development activity for downtown Gastonia

Strategic Initiatives:

- Highlight Gaston's unique quality-of-life and economic benefits
- Commission and lead a downtown Gastonia visioning study



DRIVE BUSINESS SUCCESS

Connecting existing businesses with resources and services designed to meet their unique, growth needs fuels a vibrant, sustainable, economy

Small Business Resources

Programs, events, and connections to various service providers create a healthy small business ecosystem and support business growth goals.

Strategic Objectives:

- Deliver exceptional and relevant programs and events
- Connect small businesses with partner service organizations
- Rapidly assess & respond to real-time business needs
- Support underrepresented businesses
- Champion and celebrate Gaston business successes

Strategic Initiatives:

- Streamline program offerings and serve 10% more attendees
- Expand and enhance networking programming and events for new investors
- Partner with Gaston College Small Business Center and SBTDC
- Support small businesses through GBA Chapters in the East and West geographies
- Execute a robust peer to peer Investor onboarding process
- Expand relationships with minority owned businesses
- Evaluate and track market penetration rates, increasing diversity in industry profiles

ENHANCE WORKFORCE CAPACITY

Coordinating public schools, higher education, and business stakeholders for the creation of sustainable talent pipelines in targeted industry sectors

Local Talent

In collaboration with our education and business partners, the GBA focuses on attracting, developing, and retaining Gaston County residents to strengthen the local economy and provide economic mobility opportunities.

Strategic Objectives:

- Address critical workforce needs for identified sectors
- Generate data-driven, future-focused policy outcomes
- Ensure policy agenda and process is directly responsive to business demands

Strategic Initiatives:

- Complete the Talent Partnership prototype model (manufacturing) buildout
- Determine the need for technology jobs
 - Begin the development of a healthcare collaborative
 - Facilitate solutions for workforce transportation, childcare, and housing needs



FOSTER OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

The GBA is focused on producing exceptional results, delivering distinct Investor value, and enhancing economic prosperity for all. This level of performance is most effectively achieved when our organization culture aligns directly with our strategy, initiatives, goals, and actions.

Culture

The unique culture of the GBA is shaped by the shared perception of how we function in pursuit of accomplishing our goals. It is further characterized by our collective learning experiences, which lead to a set of shared beliefs, values, and assumptions influencing our behaviors, rules, and norms.

Strategic Objectives:

- Foster innovative thinking and collaboration
- Encourage continuous learning and change readiness
- Promote transparency and accountability
- Establish and commit to a constancy of purpose
- Enhance and sustain financial strength

Strategic Initiatives:

- Align team members with strategic priorities and objectives
- Quantify service and program value for Investors
- Increase contingency fund to six months operating expenses
- Increase programming and revenue streams to exceed 60% in non-dues revenue
- Develop and utilize a performance review tool
- Increase annual aggregate number of Investors, revenue and retention rate
- Develop a comprehensive communications strategy, including at least six issues-related op-ed articles and 24 articles highlighting GBA services, programs, and events



2023 Annual Plan Performance

INFLUENCE THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT		
Business Climate	2023 Target	Status
Develop a grassroots advocacy program segmented by issues		
Strengthen local, state, and federal government relations activity		
Enhance advocacy of quality pro-growth economic development opportunities		
Transportation/Mobility		
Position the GBA as a leading voice for a regional transportation structure		
Determine infrastructure (water, sewer, broadband) requirements for growth		
Identify opportunities for cross-jurisdictional land use planning alignment		
Economic Diversification		
Highlight Gaston's unique quality-of-life and economic benefits		
Commission and lead a downtown Gastonia visioning study		
DRIVE BUSINESS SUCCESS		
Small Business Resources	2023 Target	Status
Streamline program offerings and serve more attendees	10% increase over 2022	
Expand and enhance networking programming and events for new investors		
Partner with Gaston College Small Business Center and SBTDC		
Support small businesses through GBA East & West Chapter geographies		
Execute a robust peer to peer Investor onboarding process		
Expand relationships with minority owned businesses		
Evaluate and track market penetration rates, increasing diversity in industry profiles		
ENHANCE WORKFORCE CAPACITY		
Local Talent	2023 Target	Status
Complete Talent Partnership prototype model (manufacturing) buildout		
Determine needs for technology jobs		
Begin the development of a healthcare collaborative		
Facilitate solutions for workforce transportation/childcare/housing needs		
FOSTER OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE		
Culture	2023 Target	Status
Align team members with strategic priorities and objectives		
Quantify service and program value for Investors		
Increase contingency fund	6 months operating expenses	
Increase programming and revenue streams	>60% in non-dues revenue	
Develop and utilize a performance review tool		
Increase annual aggregate number of Investors, revenue and retention rate		
Develop a comprehensive communications strategy	6 op-ed issues articles 24 GBA services, programs, and events articles	