



# 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 and implement a grassroots advocacy program segmented by issues
- Enhance opportunities for Investors to engage with elected officials
- Develop and drive 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 and advocate for infrastructure (water, sewer, roads) supporting growth
- Identify opportunities for cross-jurisdictional land use planning alignment and corresponding zoning

### 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
- Lead the creation and implementation of a downtown Gastonia redevelopment strategy



## 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:

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

#### Strategic Initiatives:

- Streamline program offerings
- Determine value for Investors to enhance programs & services
- Expand and enhance networking programming and events
- Partner with Gaston College Small Business Center and SBTDC
- Support small businesses
- Develop a robust peer to peer Investor onboarding process
- Expand relationships with minority-owned businesses
- Evaluate and increase market penetration rates

## 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
- Develop, implement, and analyze comprehensive marketing and business development strategies
- Formalize relationships with Community Partners and Educators
- Develop and engage new sector Collaboratives



## 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
- Increase contingency funding
- Increase programming, grant, and other revenue streams
- Establish and implement a performance review tool
- Increase annual aggregate number of Investors, revenue, and retention rate
- Develop a comprehensive communications strategy

