



## Lake Norman Chamber of Commerce

### 2026 Plan of Action

**Technology connects us. Purpose unites us.**  
**Evolving together — with intelligence and intention**  
*Adopted January 26, 2026*

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## Vision Statement

While digital technologies—including artificial intelligence—and the new transportation era emerging in our region will profoundly shape our future, the Lake Norman Chamber of Commerce recognizes that genuine, people-to-people connections remain the foundation of strong businesses and vibrant communities.

By embracing the synergy between technology and human connection, and by leveraging the opportunities created through increased transportation independence, we can build a future where innovation enhances quality of life without compromising authenticity.

**Together, we are stronger, more connected, and more resilient.**

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## Board Chair Goals – Leah B. Trowbridge

### 1. Reimagining Connection: Purpose, People, Progress

- Facilitate the evolution of committees and Chamber initiatives into a more cohesive, collaborative, and engaged membership experience.
- Increase the visibility, relevance, and value of the Lake Norman Chamber of Commerce among small businesses, corporate partners, and community stakeholders.

### 2. Technology Connects Us. Purpose Unites Us.

- Expand awareness of how artificial intelligence can support marketing, operations, and efficiency for small businesses, corporations, and municipalities through initiatives such as the **2026 Lake Norman Chamber AI Summit** and targeted workshops.
- Increase the use of technology to strengthen member connectivity, including enhancements such as video testimonials, digital storytelling, and improved member engagement tools on the Chamber website.

### 3. Evolving Together — With Intelligence and Intention

- Advocate for infrastructure improvements at both state and local levels, including the implementation of **hardened shoulders along I-77** to alleviate congestion and improve regional mobility.
- Support judicial capacity and access through advocacy efforts, including the appointment of a North Mecklenburg magistrate to enhance efficiency within the local judicial system.

These goals collectively strengthen the Chamber’s advocacy, support effective governance, promote technological advancement, and elevate member engagement.

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## Business Growth & Economic Development

**Chair: Herman Bruno**

The Business Growth and Economic Development Division supports regional prosperity by advocating for a strong commercial infrastructure and assisting in business recruitment and retention. The division collaborates closely with economic, educational, and legislative partners to cultivate a business-friendly environment.

Key Priorities:

- Expand and strengthen the **Leaders & Legends Program**, offering peer-to-peer business education and quarterly learning experiences featuring local leaders and guest speakers.
- Explore workforce development initiatives formerly supported by the Lake Norman Economic Development Corporation.
- Enhance small business recruitment and retention through increased event awareness and structured roundtables.
- Host the annual **Small Business Week** in partnership with the U.S. Small Business Administration.
- Continue collaboration with Mecklenburg County Economic Development, Central Piedmont Community College, SBA, and SCORE.

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## Lake Norman Education Collaborative

**Sub-Chair: Melinda Bales**

- Host an education-focused luncheon featuring representatives from Public Instruction, Educators of the Year (public, charter, and private schools), and a corporate partner supporting vocational education and apprenticeships.
- Collect and respond to school system needs through both broad initiatives and targeted support.

- Host Focus Friday-style forums with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools leadership to promote transparency and dialogue.
- Support Career Days and workforce exploration programs.
- Coordinate initiatives such as **Journey 360** and trade awareness programs for students and educators.
- Strengthen partnerships with schools through Junior Leadership and mentorship programs.
- Engage regional colleges to provide internships and training workshops for Chamber members.
- Promote advanced workforce development opportunities for underemployed populations.

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## Communications & Marketing Division

**Chair: Stacie Bright**

**Mission:** To increase membership growth through relationships and opportunity while providing positive, energetic leadership that supports business success throughout the Lake Norman region.

Strategic Priorities:

- Strengthen member engagement and retention strategies.
- Expand Chamber awareness throughout the broader Lake Norman community.
- Attract new members through targeted social media strategy and enhanced website utilization.
- Develop and implement text marketing strategies.
- Advocate for the importance of member businesses to elected officials at all levels.
- Promote website capabilities including online payments, job boards, B2B discounts, and AI-based tools.
- Publish the **Monthly Splash Newsletter** with a structured, consistent communication strategy.
- Continue promoting members through the weekly podcast **Around the Lake** and WSIC's **Town Talk**.

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## Community Engagement & Diversity Council

**Chair: April Patterson**

**Diversity Council Sub-Chair: Karen Tovar**

The Community Engagement Division serves as a catalyst for:

- Building strong partnerships between business and community.
- Expanding access and opportunity for historically underrepresented businesses.
- Collaborating with government, nonprofits, education, and corporate partners.
- Driving inclusive, community-centered economic development.

### Diversity Council Strategic Focus:

- **Enhance Community Connectivity:** Broaden participation through outreach, events, and engagement initiatives.
- **Advance Minority-Owned Business Success:** Provide high-value programming focused on growth, capacity building, capital access, and procurement readiness.

- **Evolve the Council’s Role:** Transition toward a strategic advisory body focused on unity, opportunity, and inclusion.
- **Strengthen Membership Growth:** Increase membership among minority-owned firms through meaningful, mission-driven engagement.

## Key Programming Initiatives:

- **Minority Business Accelerator (MBA):** Cohort-based mentorship, training, and executive access.
- **Pathways to Capital:** Lunch & Learn programs with lenders, SBA, CDFIs, and financial professionals.
- **Inclusive Leadership & Workforce Pipeline:** Partnerships to expand workforce opportunity and talent pipelines.
- **Community + Chamber Collaboratives:** Quarterly events spotlighting minority-owned businesses.

Funding sources may include corporate sponsorships, grants, registration fees, partnerships, and Chamber operational support, including proceeds from the King Canary partnership.

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## Finance & Operations

**Chair: Alec Natt**

This division oversees the Chamber’s internal operations, fiscal health, contracts, and sustainability.

Priorities:

- Conduct regular Finance & Operations meetings with staff (open to the Board).
  - Collaborate with Member Services to enhance benefits and develop updated membership packages for 2026–27.
  - Evaluate programs for revenue potential, mission alignment, member value, and community impact.
  - Review all ongoing contracts and outsourced services.
  - Develop a long-term capital plan including reserve strategy and investment considerations.
  - Identify new revenue streams and fundraising opportunities.
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## Member Services

**Chair: Brent Thompson**

The Member Services Division ensures exceptional networking, engagement, and value for Chamber members. The **Ambassador Program** remains the foundation of this work.

Strategic Priorities:

- Position Chamber events as premier networking opportunities.
- Clearly communicate the value of membership through updated packages.
- Support membership growth strategies with Chamber staff.
- Promote Chamber benefits through coordinated messaging.

- Strengthen Ambassador engagement to enhance member experience.
- Expand outreach efforts including on-site visits and follow-up communications.
- Foster Young Professionals engagement to develop future Chamber leadership.
- Highlight Chamber history and success stories.
- Deliver consistent, high-quality programming including:
  - Annual Awards Gala
  - Business Expo
  - Captain's Choice Golf Tournament
  - Leadership Lake Norman
  - New affinity and partnership programs

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## Ambassador Program Enhancements

- Establish Ambassador leadership roles for scheduling and coordination.
- Expand Ambassador mentoring and training programs.
- Conduct New Member Orientation sessions.
- Increase direct outreach from Ambassadors to Chamber members.

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## Public Policy Division

### Chair: Pat Jackson

The Public Policy Division monitors legislative issues impacting business and advocates for policies that support economic growth and community vitality.

#### Key Priorities:

- Monitor public meetings and report relevant developments to members.
- Host **Focus Friday** forums with business and government leaders.
- Establish regional legislative priorities.
- Advocate on major policy and infrastructure initiatives.
- Educate members on legislative issues.
- Facilitate legislative meetings and candidate forums.
- Strengthen relationships between members and elected officials.
- Advocate for transportation improvements, including road and highway projects.
- Collaborate with NCDOT and regional partners to accelerate infrastructure development.
- Identify alternative funding strategies for critical projects.
- Serve as a strong voice for Chamber members at all levels of government.