



For Immediate Release

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Hamilton County Residents, Businesses Invited to Have their Voices Heard *Chattanooga Chamber Launches “Climbs Higher” Survey*

Chattanooga, Tenn. (Jan. 5, 2023) – To continue prospering and open doors of opportunity to all, what should be Chattanooga’s top areas of focus and investment over the next five years? A brief and important survey asking every resident to share their dreams, concerns and opinions about Chattanooga’s future opens today for public and community input.

In 2019-2020, the Chattanooga Chamber of Commerce and a steering committee comprised of community, county, city and business leaders worked to engage area residents on a future vision for economic prosperity in Chattanooga and Hamilton County. The result, [the Chattanooga Climbs strategic plan](#), guides the Chamber’s work program for high-quality job creation, talent development for an emerging economy, and equitable access to increased regional prosperity.

The Chattanooga Chamber is launching a major update to that strategic plan, asking people who live or work in Hamilton County to invest five minutes in completing a brief online survey about economic and talent development priorities for area communities. Responses will become part of critical research needed for the next iteration of the strategic master plan, *Chattanooga Climbs Higher*, spanning years 2024 through 2028.

“Public feedback is critical as we work to develop a fresh, contemporary vision for our local economy—particularly as so many unique challenges and opportunities have emerged on the

heels of a global pandemic,” said Charles Wood, Interim President and CEO and VP, Economic and Talent Development, **Chattanooga Chamber**.

“We invite leaders from faith-based organizations, educational institutions, businesses, and our diverse neighborhoods to encourage all local residents to complete this survey,” Wood said.

Area business leaders and elected officials joined Wood in championing Hamilton County residents and people who work in the Chattanooga area to become engaged in this process.

“Building One Chattanooga means creating an economy where good-paying jobs are accessible for everyone, regardless of background or zip code, so that all Chattanoogaans have the opportunity to thrive,” said Tim Kelly, Mayor, City of Chattanooga.

“To get there, we need to continue hearing from all parts of our community about the challenges and opportunities unique to their neighborhoods. That’s why I encourage everyone to share their voice by completing the Climbs Higher survey today,” Kelly said.

“Now is the time for us to prepare for an economy that could look very differently from the one we have today,” said Weston Wamp, Mayor, Hamilton County.

“We want all members of our community to have an opportunity to succeed and thrive in the jobs of tomorrow – with your input, Chattanooga Climbs Higher will serve as a guide for developing the talent and skills this region needs to remain competitive,” Wamp said.

“Since 2020 we’ve made considerable progress on implementation of *Chattanooga Climbs*,” said Janelle Reilly, Chair of the Board of Directors, Chattanooga Chamber, and Market CEO, CHI Memorial.

“That said, regional and local economies are dynamic – so plans must be updated every few years to remain relevant, inclusive, and successful,” Reilly said.

Michael Mathis, Chattanooga Climbs Steering Committee Chair and Chattanooga President, Pinnacle Financial Partners, agreed. “By engaging as many Chattanooga residents as possible through *Chattanooga Climbs Higher*, we will gain a clearer understanding of our collective needs, aspirations, challenges, and opportunities.”

“Chattanooga and Hamilton County’s growth has the potential to be the rising tide that lifts all boats — so we invite all our local business, community, and civic leaders to help create and own the outcome,” Mathis said.

Specifically, input is needed from a diversity of local backgrounds and perspectives on topics including: grading the overall health of Chattanooga-Hamilton County’s economy today; identifying both the strongest and weakest components of the area economy; and expanding the education pipeline to improving transit options, the top priorities economic developers, civic and community leaders should focus on through 2028.

Organizers ask people to share the brief *Chattanooga Climbs Higher* survey with friends, neighbors, family members, and co-workers.

Linked at ChattanoogaChamber.com/climbs-higher-survey, the five-question survey opens for responses today and closes toward the end of January.

BACKGROUND: In 2019, results gathered from the Chattanooga Chamber’s *Velocity2040* community-wide visioning survey revealed five top priorities for a 20-year timeframe in Hamilton County and Chattanooga. The *Velocity2040* survey drew nearly 5,000 responses. Resulting community vision and top-five goals included:

- 1) Be the smartest city in the South; focus on educational excellence for all students.

- 2) Every resident thrives economically.
- 3) A transit trip of 20 minutes or less is our standard.
- 4) Diverse leaders represent the full spectrum of who we are.
- 5) With openness and respect, a collaborative process for solving challenges is what will transform neighborhoods and bring our local governments together.

An outgrowth of *Velocity2040*, the *Chattanooga Climbs* strategic plan and associated capital campaign rests on these major pillars for regional identity, economic and talent development:

- Become **Future Ready** by developing skills for the new economy
- Deliver economic **Mobility for All**, so that every resident is thriving
- Leverage the **GIG City** to allow entrepreneurs to lead the way
- Foster an **Inclusive Economy** through **Collaborative Leadership**

Between 2014 and 2019, the *Chattanooga Climbs* job growth and investment strategy generated an additional **\$1.3 billion** in economic activity for the Chattanooga region.

Other *Climbs* successes have included: Business recruitment efforts expanding to a global footprint, campaigns to attract and encourage entrepreneurs, regional site selection and engineering analyses, talent attraction/development/retention initiatives, and public policy advocacy at both the state and national levels.

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