



FROM THE DESK OF  
*Natalie S. Masri*

*Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce  
President and Chief Executive Officer*

**If You've Seen One Chamber...**

What do you picture when you hear the words “Chamber of Commerce?” If you said, “a group of men in suits, sitting around the boardroom talking business,” your mental image is due for an update.

Chambers of Commerce in the United States have existed for more than two centuries, and the face of business has changed considerably during that time. The Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce has been around since 1913, but our Chamber of today differs from the Chamber of 110 years ago.

There is an adage in the Chamber world: “If you’ve seen one Chamber, you’ve seen one.” No two Chambers are precisely alike, but every Chamber is dedicated to furthering the collective interests of local organizations while moving their community forward. We know that we can accomplish more through our united voice than individually. The whole of a Chamber of Commerce is greater than the sum of its parts, including its members, staff, board, events, and programs. The Chamber is the voice of the business community.

I want to share who we are at the

Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce. Our organization is a thriving reflection of the community we serve. We are a welcoming organization for diverse enterprises of all sizes, from local one-of-a-kind shops to large anchor institutions. Our vision is for a thriving regional economy.

Our Chamber is a convener. We bring the business community together with traditional and unexpected partners to foster collaboration and to talk about issues that matter to them. At one of this year’s events, we hosted a public dialogue among small business owners and higher education leaders on improving workforce pipelines. On another occasion, we brought together the Chamber’s Minority Business Alliance and our Business Women’s Round Table for a fun day of team building challenges.

Our Chamber is a champion. An essential part of Chamber membership is awareness and advocacy on matters of public policy that directly impact Charlottesville and Albemarle County. Our Chamber strives to raise critical issues as an honest broker and provide a crucial business perspective to challenges and opportunities in our community. Did you know that our Defense Affairs Committee recently commissioned a study showing that the defense industry is our area’s second-largest economic generator? Research conducted by the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service indicated that the sector’s annual impact is more than 1.2 billion dollars.

Our Chamber is a catalyst for growth and change. Our Chamber has been integrally involved in establishing major community initiatives such as the United Way of Greater Charlottesville, the Downtown Mall, Charlottesville Albemarle Convention & Visitors Bureau, the Central Virginia Partnership for Economic Development, Network2Work, Leaders Lab, and Venture Central. This is an exhilarating time to be in business in the Charlottesville region, and we are energized to be part of our region’s next chapter.

If you are excited about the future of our business community, I hope to meet you soon at a Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce event.

*Natalie S. Masri is the new president and CEO of the Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce. She has over twenty years of experience with the US Chamber of Commerce and its Foundation.*

**2023 CHARLOTTESVILLE REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

The general governance, direction, finances, procedures, and policy-making responsibilities of the Chamber of Commerce are vested in the Board of Directors.

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Vice Chairwoman of the Board

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Todd Rowley, Old Dominion National Bank  
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Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce  
434-295-3141 [cvillechamber.com](http://cvillechamber.com)

The Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce advocates, convenes, and engages to strengthen business in the greater Charlottesville Region.