NOTE FROM OUR 2019 CHAIR

It is my pleasure to present the Chamber’s 2019 Business Plan, outlining the initiatives, programs, events and promotional opportunities designed to grow your business and foster economic prosperity in the coming year.

Based upon the results of our most recent strategic plan, the Chamber Board of Directors has created the following committees to support the Chamber in its mission to be the leading organization dedicated to creating a climate where business can prosper:

- Advocacy
- Business Resource Center
- Communications
- Engagement
- Investor Development

Please take a moment to review the Business Plan and learn more about the abundant opportunities that the Chamber has to offer for your business.

Michelle Ledford
Chair, Chamber Board of Directors
COLLABORATION IS KEY

The Lakeland Chamber serves as the umbrella organization for several entities working towards one common goal: making our community a destination for businesses and individuals alike by providing a sought after quality of life and positive economic and political climate.

LAKELAND CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

Tourism is Florida’s top economic driver saving every Florida household $1549 per year in taxes. Last year, 126.1 million visitors came to Florida – where for every 78 visitors, one Florida job is created. The Lakeland Chamber of Commerce partners with the City of Lakeland to provide the Lakeland Convention and Visitors Bureau, which works closely with the Central Florida Visitors and Convention Bureau and Visit Florida to maximize Lakeland’s tourism marketing and bring these new dollars to Lakeland’s businesses. The LCVB also works with the Polk County School Board Athletic Association, the Florida High School Athletic Association, the Detroit Tigers, SUN ‘n FUN, Destinations Florida, the Lakeland Hotel & Motel Association, the RP Funding Center and area industry partners to collaborate and grow our tourism and meeting industry.
BUSINESSVOICE OF GREATER LAKELAND, INC.

Created in 2000 as an organization to support pro-business candidates and to promote issues which impact the business community, BusinessVoice works to ensure the election of business-minded candidates to state and local office, and to serve as an endorsement board for those individuals who personify the objectives of the business community.

LAKELAND CHAMBER FOUNDATION

The Lakeland Chamber Foundation is one of the greatest assets this Chamber has in serving the diverse needs of our community. Founded in 1973 as a 501(c) (3) not-for-profit organization, the Foundation serves to support worthwhile community and education betterment initiatives.

LEADERSHIP LAKELAND

Established in 1983 by the Lakeland Chamber of Commerce, Leadership Lakeland is an annual program designed to identify leadership and enhance the leadership currently existing in our community. The program unites leaders from diverse backgrounds and perspectives in order to increase their understanding of community issues and improve their ability to lead effectively.

EMERGE LAKELAND

EMERGE Lakeland is a meaningful networking organization of dedicated, talented young professionals ranging in age from 21-42 in Lakeland. EMERGE seeks to create a venue for our members to build relationships, develop professionally, become politically aware, philanthropically active, and contribute to the economic development and quality of life in Lakeland.
ADVOCACY

Promotes policies conducive to a strong business climate; plans programs and briefings on public policy; updates and interprets the local and Legislative Agendas; and recommends policy positions to the Chamber Board of Directors.

BUSINESS RESOURCE CENTER

Responsible for advancing the strategy to create a new “Business Resource Center,” a shared facility that will foster a collaborative approach through partnerships with other area resource partners to help small businesses grow and succeed. The business community will have access to seminars and education on topics/issues that impact small businesses. This committee will identify the site, recommend the design and then build/renovate the facility. They will also be responsible for completing a capital campaign to raise the resources necessary to cover the costs of this facility.
COMMUNICATIONS

Partner with chamber marketing/communications staff to develop the most effective and strategic communications of timely, relevant information to members and the community at large. Significant focus from this committee should be on ensuring that the chamber is connecting with and getting members engaged with chamber programs, events, and other initiatives. Creating value and relevance in the minds of all investors is critical to the chamber’s success.

ENGAGEMENT

Focus on the work of understanding what chamber investors and the business community want from their chamber and then work with chamber staff to ensure programs, events, and other initiatives are aligned with those needs. This committee will also partner with chamber staff to assess value and ROI of initiatives and events and work with the Chief Development Officer to connect existing and new chamber investors with the new initiatives for 2019 and beyond.
Focus on increasing revenue, working with staff to increase the number of new investors, reduce lost investors, and "step up" investors to increase revenue. This committee should partner with Engagement Committee to develop a strategy to improve the engagement of our existing investors with the programs, events and other initiatives of the Chamber. There is a tremendous opportunity to reduce lost investors due to their perception of not seeing the value of their investment. This committee should also work with Chief Development Officer to develop new sources of revenue from new programs and initiatives that will create value for existing and new investors.
Host professional management training courses to provide leadership development training to emerging leaders and C-Level executives in the business community at a discounted rate for investors.

Continue to partner with the Small Business Development Center at USF (SBDC) by providing office space for counseling sessions.

Host educational seminars in partnership with Central Florida SCORE.

Continue the 36 year tradition of Leadership Lakeland, an annual leadership program designed as a hands-on opportunity to learn more about the Lakeland community and make lasting relationships.

Organize various business growth opportunities in coordination with the Lakeland Chamber Foundation including New Business 101, Quickbooks Training and the Early-Declared Internship Program.

Host the annual Economic Forecast Breakfast and Midyear Economic Update to offer an expert’s view of the state of the nation's economy.

Organize and moderate the annual Legislative Wrap-Up Breakfast to provide an opportunity for investors to learn more about the legislative session directly from our elected officials. Continue the pursuit of the Lakeland Business Resource Center; a shared facility, fostering a collaborative approach to small business growth and development through partnerships with area resource partners.

Partnered with local universities to host the annual Suit-Up event to facilitate the networking of students nearing graduation and local employers seeking quality talent.

Coordinate the Nod to Nonprofits Tour Series, an initiative that is designed to spread awareness about our local nonprofits and highlight at least 12 organizations each year that are impacting our community in positive ways.

Facilitate The Longest Table Lakeland initiative for the purpose of the community sharing a free meal together and engaging in meaningful conversation. This initiative, similar to other events held around the country, is designed to build unity and foster goodwill within a community.
ADVOCACY

Lobby a pro-commerce legislative priority agenda at the City, County and State levels on behalf our investors.

Meet one-on-one with elected officials to share position statements and encourage continued support of the business community.

Host the annual Capitol Connection advocacy trip to Tallahassee in conjunction with other chambers from across Central Florida.

Represent the business community at various government meetings and hearings. Through the Chamber's Political Action Committee, BusinessVoice of Greater Lakeland, Inc., engage directly in the election process by interviewing, endorsing and financially supporting pro-business candidates.

Host the annual Public and Policy Institute of Polk County (PLI) whose mission is to prepare business leaders for pro-business public advocacy and engagement.

Host candidate and issue-based forums to further educate investors and the community at-large.

NETWORKING

Welcome new investors and engage existing members with our volunteer Chamber Champions program.

Organize events such as Business After Hours and Good Morning, Lakeland!, as well as annual events including the Chamber Golf Scramble, Tiger BBQ, Annual Meeting and Hats Off to Chamber Investors.

Support Leads Groups and fostering the development of Area Councils in an effort to further enhance the ROI for all investors.

Provide administrative support for EMERGE Lakeland, an organization for young professionals that promotes networking, professional development and philanthropic engagement.
Recently launched an updated, interactive website at LakelandChamber.com which serves as Lakeland’s leading resource for community and business information.

Act as the Visitor Information Center for the City of Lakeland and refer investor businesses through the Lakeland Convention & Visitors Bureau.

Increase the economic impact of tourism by promoting Lakeland as a tourist destination through partnerships with local and state-wide tourism agencies, attractions, and sports teams.

Publish investor accolades and news in the weekly e-newsletter, Blog.lakelandChamber.com and through our various social media platforms.

Coordinate ribbon cuttings and ground breakings for investor businesses.

Publish the 2019-20 Lakeland Business Guide as a relocation resource and print advertising opportunity.

Provide additional digital advertising opportunities through the e-newsletter and website.

Host the 2nd Annual Suncoast Credit Union SwantoberFest to provide investors with a business expo opportunity in conjunction with a community festival.

Honor a deserving Small Business of the Month each month at our Board of Directors’ meeting with one of our recipients being recognized as the “Scott Linder Small Business of the Year” at our Chamber Annual Meeting.

Launch “Bid Simple” a new B2C lead generator tool