

Dear Fellow Chamber Members:

Since our Chamber began to grow in 2005, your board has been discussing the need to map a course for the future. For at least 18 months, deliberations have occurred about whether a new name for the Chamber would allow it to better serve the eastern Gaston region. At a planning conference last fall, called specifically to chart long-range direction, members agreed the Chamber should move toward serving all communities in eastern Gaston and developing a new name to convey that mission.

That's how we came to create a new website listing the names of all eastern Gaston towns and to publish a newcomer guide with information not only on Belmont, but also on Mount Holly, Cramerton, Lowell, McAdenville and Stanley.



**Belmont Cramerton Lowell McAdenville Mount Holly Stanley**

At the annual banquet last week, we unveiled a new name and logo. The plan is to transition to the new name in 2008, since it will take some time to revise websites, signs, stationery, etc. Even though emails were sent and newspaper articles were published announcing we were considering a name change, we realize some members were caught off-guard by the news and more explanation is in order.

The Chamber's roots are deep in Belmont, and the Belmont Chamber has served the community well for close to half a century. We're fully committed to maintaining a permanent Chamber office in Belmont. And we anticipate the need for additional offices in other towns. To meet the needs of a region about to be engulfed by massive growth and change, it's essential that the Chamber become a driving force for collaboration among all eastern Gaston communities. We can be a stronger advocate for eastern Gaston as a more inclusive Chamber embracing members from throughout the region. It's already happening. While growing from 84 members in 2005 to more than 300 today, our profile has changed, and close to 40 percent of our membership now comes from Charlotte, Gastonia, Mount Holly and other towns.

Why Montcross Area Chamber? Of the hundreds of possible names considered, our board felt this name over time will become a common way to refer to the heart of eastern Gaston, especially the I-85 and Highway 74 corridor, as the massive 1,100-acre Montcross project develops between the rivers along both sides of the Interstate.

With the addition of residential projects, office buildings, medical complexes, restaurants, financial institutions and many other types of businesses, this area will become a major economic hub in the region. When fully developed, it's predicted that 14,000 jobs will be created in Montcross. Combine the economic component with the geographic (Montcross touches five of the six eastern Gaston towns), and our board decided that's the kind of innovative, progressive enterprise with which a Chamber of Commerce should be identified.

A century ago, our grandfathers and great-grandfathers were charged with the responsibility of spearheading massive change. They built mills and other manufacturing plants and gave residents of this area the opportunity to earn a living in ways other than farming. Those times are gone, and our generation now faces similar challenges and opportunities as this region prepares for a new revolution brought on by massive growth.

The Chamber would be shirking its duty to put on blinders and continue as if nothing has changed. The changes we are making are for one purpose: to position our Chamber to be a more effective asset in helping the communities of eastern Gaston County cope with what lies ahead in this exciting, dynamic and sometimes daunting atmosphere of economic change. We look forward to working with you to make our area a shining example of how to manage growth and maintain a great quality of life for residents.

Sincerely,

Titus Workman  
Chairman of the Board

Ted Hall  
President