



## Karen Handel Selected to Lead Carroll Tomorrow as President and Chief Executive Officer



(Carrollton, Georgia) Karen Handel has been selected by the leadership of Carroll Tomorrow as the economic development organization's new president and chief executive officer. She will also serve in the same role for the Carroll County Chamber of Commerce. The announcement was made this week by Loy Howard, chair of the Carroll Tomorrow Board of Directors, following an extensive executive search process.

The Chason Group led the executive search for Carroll Tomorrow.

"Early in the process, the search committee identified several key traits we were looking for in a candidate," according to Howard. "The ability to develop and execute Carroll Tomorrow's vision for the community was at the top of that list. Leadership was also a very strong component. The board believes Karen has the ability and experiences to lead our organization forward and put us on an even higher platform than we are today to maintain and create new jobs in Carroll County while at the same time continue our work with local elected leaders to build a pro-business environment."

### **New Contact Information**

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Established in 2001, Carroll Tomorrow is a unique countywide public-private economic development organization that serves as the staff for Carroll County's four industrial development authorities. In concert with city and county leaders, the organization works closely with state economic developers and site selection consultants to support expansion of existing business and recruit new companies to the area. The economic development initiative is a "one-stop-shop" for businesses seeking growth opportunities.

The Carroll Chamber has been the economic engine for the community since 1955. Today, the chamber enjoys the success of an organization with 600+ members, an active board of directors, and talented staff. The chamber executes the annual plan through a committee structure with six standing committees and other ad hoc committees as needed.

"I am excited to join this team to help build on the tremendous successes of both Carroll Tomorrow and the chamber to make Carroll County an even better place for families and businesses," Handel stated.



Handel currently serves as president of Cogent Strategies which provides strategic counsel on business, public policy, and communication matters. She served as president and chief executive officer of the Greater North Fulton Chamber of Commerce in Alpharetta from 2000 until 2003.

On the national level, Handel served as a member of the US House of Representatives from 2017 until 2019. She also served as Georgia's Secretary of State for four years and chairman of the Fulton County Board of Commissioners for three years. Under former Governor Sonny Perdue, she was deputy chief of staff and extremely involved with economic development initiatives around Georgia.

"The opportunity to lead an economic development organization and chamber of commerce as a one-stop-shop for business and community development is a challenge that I am prepared to tackle," Handel said. "I believe my experiences on the local, state and national levels will add value to the investors and community as a whole. I plan on Carroll County being my home for a long time."

The president of Carroll Tomorrow is responsible for providing leadership, long-term visioning, strategic planning and implementation for the economic development organization and chamber of commerce. With a professional team on both sides, the executive works with boards from both groups to execute plans designed to maintain and grow existing businesses, nurture entrepreneurship, and attract new investments for Carroll County.

Daniel Jackson, who had been affiliated with the economic development organization and chamber since 2001, retired at the end of March as president and chief executive officer.

Handel and her husband, Steve, will be moving to Carroll County in the next few months. Her first day at Carroll Tomorrow is set for July 6.

Serving on the search committee for Carroll Tomorrow, in addition to Howard, included: Dr. Mark Albertus, Carrollton City Schools; Ben Butler, Carrollton Ortho; Kirby Butler, United Community Bank; Jill Duncan, State Farm Insurance; Nick Martin, Georgia Power Company; Bill Stone, Systems & Methods, Inc.; and Tim Warren, United Community Bank.

Other members of the Carroll Tomorrow and Carroll County Chamber professional team include J.R. Charles, vice president of economic development; Joan Finch, information specialist and Drugs Don't Work coordinator; Suzy McCorkel, director of member engagement; Suzy Montalto, director of operations; and Rhyne Owenby, director of business development.

Carroll Tomorrow engaged The Chason Group to lead the executive search process. The firm, which is Georgia based, specializes in executive searches for economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, foundations, and other non-profits.