

*businessfirst*

CHARLOTTE | a City-Chamber Program

# 2012 ANNUAL REPORT



CHARLOTTE

*charlotte*  
**CHAMBER**

# About *BusinessFirst* Charlotte

*BusinessFirst* Charlotte is a business expansion and retention program of the Charlotte Chamber and the City of Charlotte focused on helping Charlotte-Mecklenburg businesses grow. Through problem solving and advocacy, *BusinessFirst* Charlotte serves local businesses by developing relationships to better understand the opportunities and challenges of growing businesses in Charlotte.

We enlist chamber and city staff and a team of 60 volunteer ambassadors to visit business owners to hear first-hand about their everyday problems and help identify solutions. **The goal** of our personalized meetings is threefold: **to solve business problems, identify challenges** and **to thank you for doing business in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.**

## **BusinessFirst Charlotte in Action:**

In 2011, *BusinessFirst* Charlotte ambassadors interviewed 254 companies. This report incorporates those responses.

Since September 1, iQor has added 40 bilingual agents and five bilingual supervisors. This expansion was recognized and referred by BusinessFirst Charlotte.

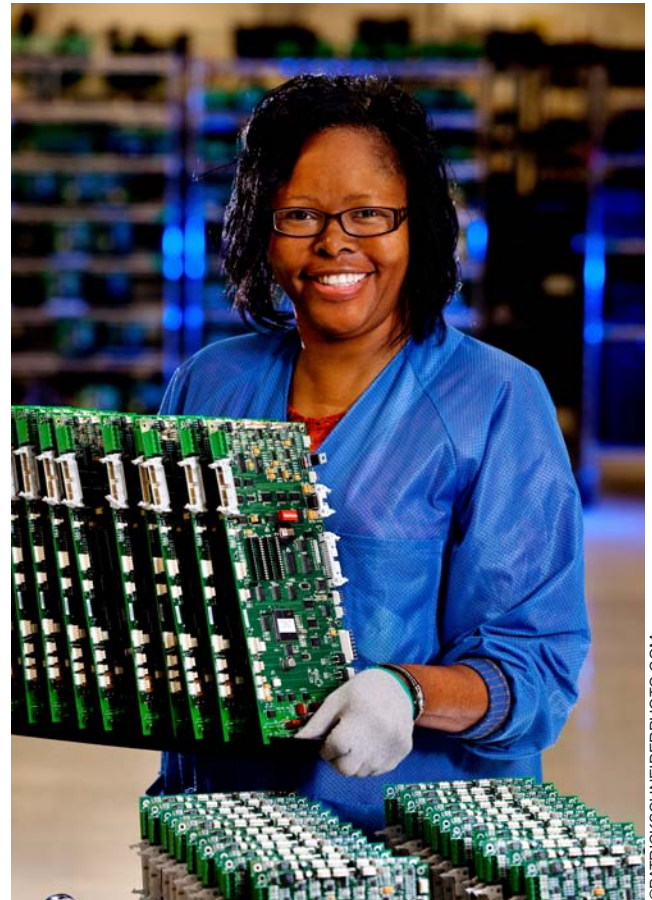
Bank of Ozarks was on hold with a full-service banking expansion project due to a permitting issue. *BusinessFirst* Charlotte got involved, and within one day the issue was resolved. The bank is now moving forward with its expansion.

For more information about *BusinessFirst* Charlotte visit [www.businessfirstcharlotte.com](http://www.businessfirstcharlotte.com).

*"No Response" has been removed from all graphs for easier viewing.*

This program is sponsored by

## Bank of America



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### **Executive Committee**

Stacey Randall, Randall Research – Chair  
Noelle DeAtley, Creative Thinking – Vice Chair  
Will Thompson, LB&A Certified Public Accountants, PLLC – Immediate Past Chair

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[www.PatrickSchneiderPhoto.com](http://www.PatrickSchneiderPhoto.com)

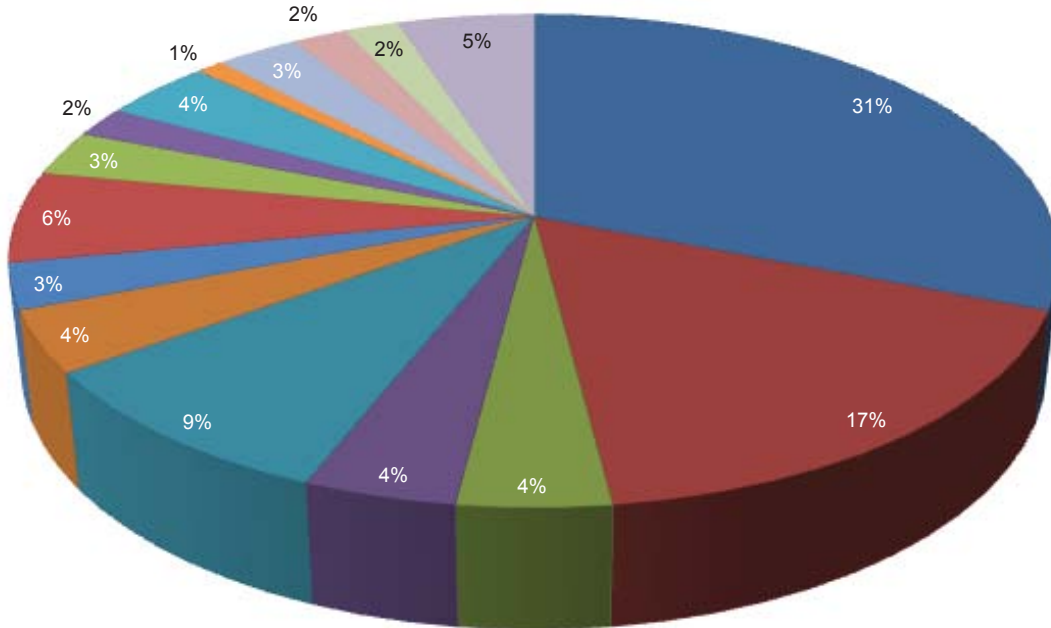
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# Industry Type

Almost half of the company participants were in the professional services or financial and insurance categories. However, we still managed to capture 16 different

categories making our data diverse. Collectively, **these businesses represent** approximately **72,500 jobs** (17.6 percent of all jobs in Mecklenburg County).

**Companies interviewed: 254**



- Professional Services
- Finance and Insurance
- Retail Trade
- Whole Sale Trade
- Manufacturing
- Accommodations & Food Service
- Construction
- Real Estate, Rental & Leasing
- Transportation
- Arts Entertainment & Recreation
- Non-profit Organizations
- Educational Services
- Health Care & Social Assistance
- Information
- Management of Companies
- Other

# Employment Growth

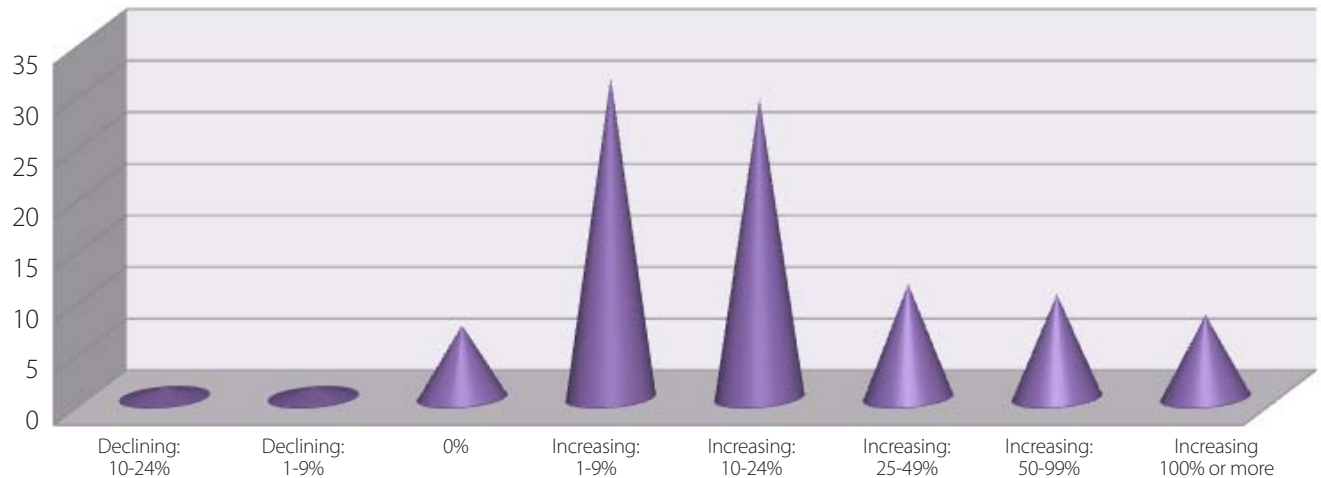
Projected growth = **1,043** **JOBS** **NEW**



# Projected Sales

A little more than **90 percent** of companies interviewed are projected to see an **increase in sales** in 2012.

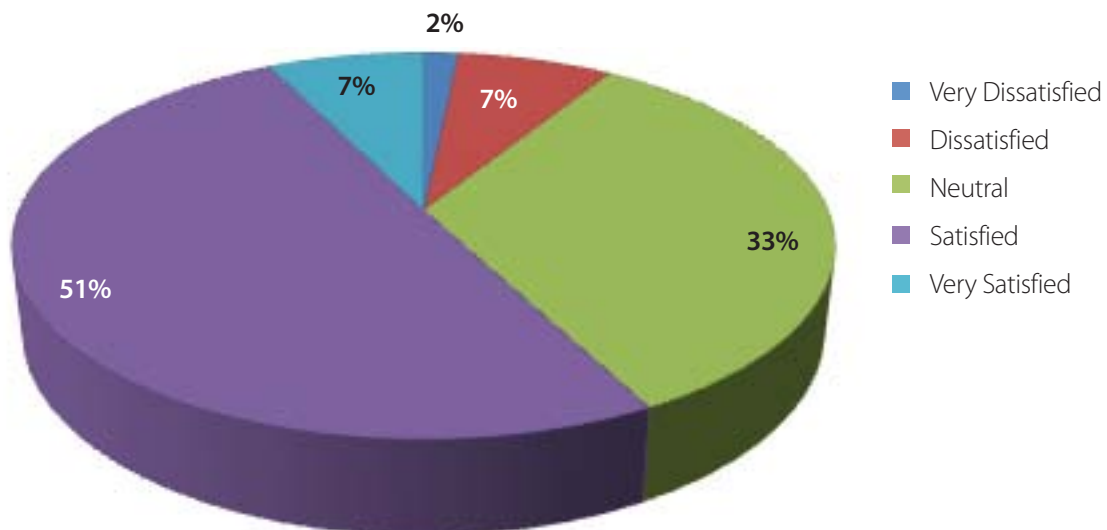
## Projected percentage change in sales over the next year



## Cost of Doing Business

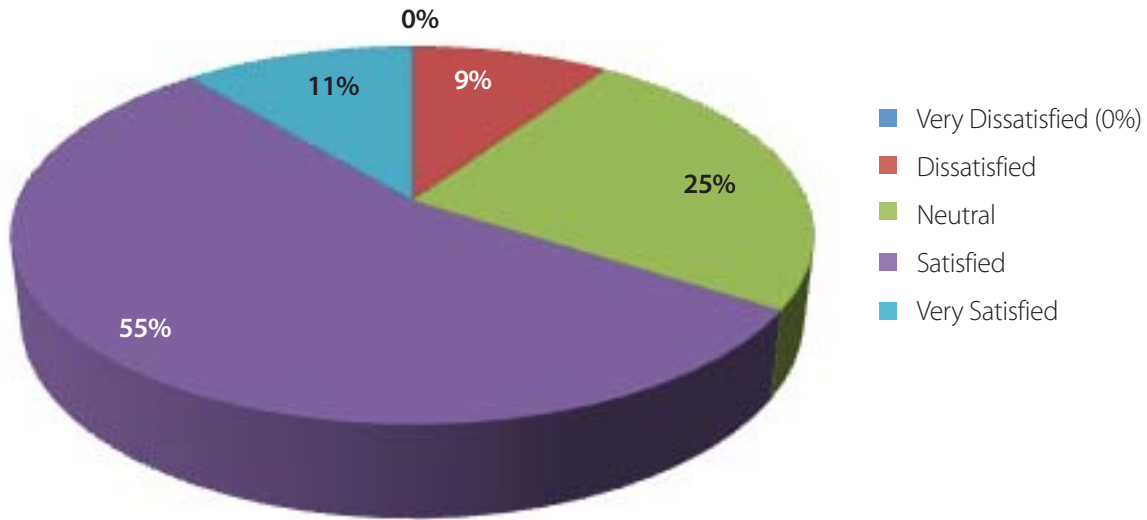
In 2011, **58 percent** of the respondents indicated they are **satisfied** or **very satisfied** with the cost of doing business in Charlotte, compared to **40 percent** in 2010

and **42 percent** in 2009. The cost of doing business includes labor cost, utility rates, taxes, fees and the cost of living.



# Local Business Climate

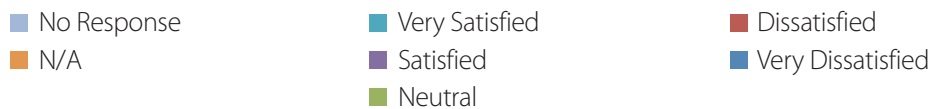
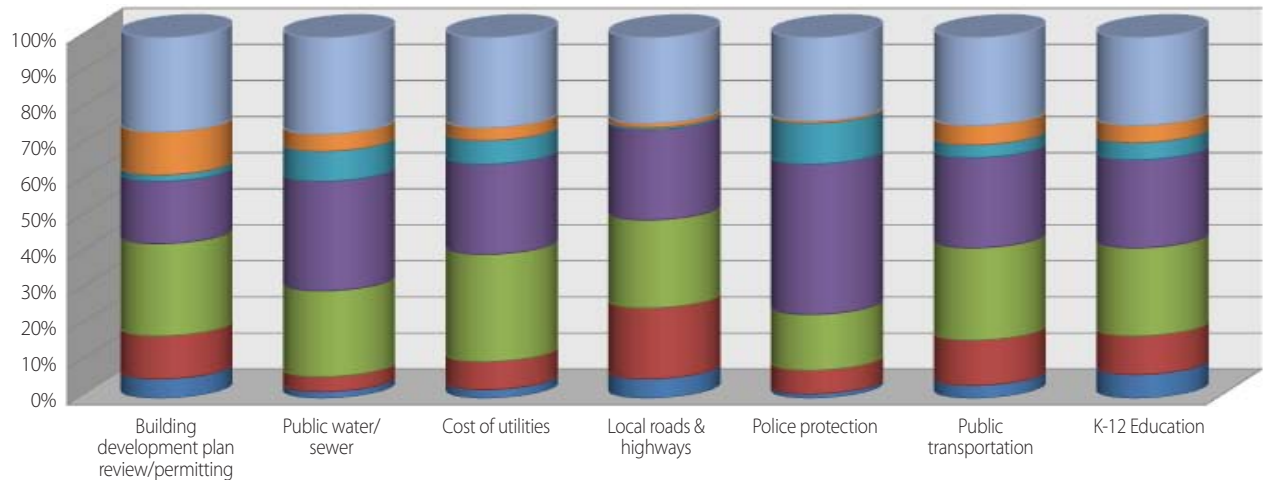
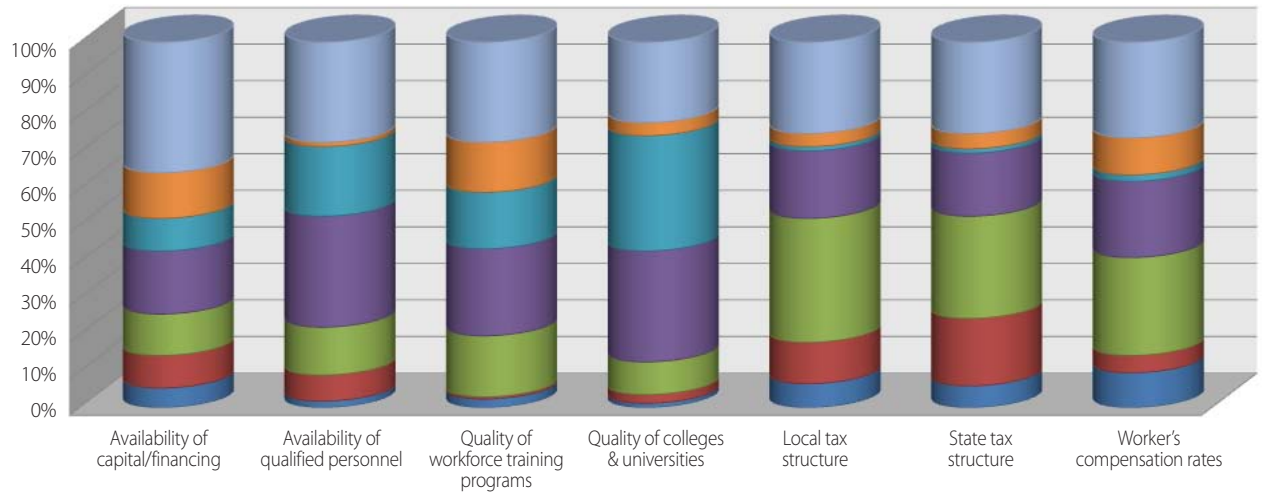
Over the past year, **66 percent** of the respondents indicated they believe Charlotte has a **positive business climate**.



# Business Climate

We asked companies to rank **14 business climate indicators** from very satisfied to very dissatisfied. For the past three years local businesses have rated area **colleges and universities**, the availability of **qualified personnel**

and **police protection** as the **top business climate assets**. Local roads and highways along with building development, plan review and permitting have continued to be major concerns for local companies.



## Business Climate Assets

Quality of colleges & universities  
 Police protection  
 Availability of qualified personnel

## Business Climate Challenges

Local roads & highways  
 Building development plan review/ permitting  
 K-12 education

# Business Climate Feedback

During the interview, *BusinessFirst* Charlotte participants were asked questions about doing business in Charlotte. Some of those responses are listed below.

- » Growing companies in the region, companies relocating to Charlotte and quality of life in Charlotte. Charlotte is an increasingly more attractive place to draw talent — we attract talent from N.Y. and L.A. due to quality of life in Charlotte.
- » Availability of skilled workforce, cost of living and wage rates.
- » Charlotte Douglas International Airport makes access to and from our clients around the country very easy and cost effective.
- » Ease of travel (airport), low cost of doing business.

Charlotte has done all the right things — it's an attractive place. The culture of public-private partnership is a very powerful attraction. We are an energy hub, a banking hub and a transportation hub. The commercial real estate industry has rebounded nicely.

- » Charlotte is a growing city. The quality of workforce and healthy business climate help make my company successful. Charlotte Chamber is top rated in the U.S. and actively works to bring new business to the area.
- » Making great strides in education but still have a lot of work to do. Highways, schools and taxes could be better. The business attitude in the community is very positive.
- » Easy access to transportation routes, availability of raw materials, and qualified workforce.
- » Entrepreneurship and a positive supportive attitude. The local community embraces small business owners, which is good for everyone.
- » Charlotte is an excellent central U.S. and East Coast location, with an outstanding airport and good trucking capabilities to move products in and out.
- » We need to work to make the regulatory environment more 'user friendly' as it relates to relocation/construction of new facilities.
- » Would like to see clearer permitting regulations and dissemination of information would be helpful.

The cost of doing business is favorable and having access to educated workforce is important.

- » We have an experienced workforce, optimistic can-do attitude and a belief that Charlotte businesses can be successful and that other businesses support you.
- » Having an airport hub allows easy travel nationally and internationally. We are in a great location close to the mountains and the coastal areas. Charlotte has great cultural arts and entertainment opportunities which grow tourism.
- » Charlotte supports the entrepreneurial spirit.
- » Geographic location; US Airways hub/airport; quality employees; University/CPCC; right to work state; business friendly climate; can-do spirit; educated workforce; population growth and household income growth; weather; multifaceted city can do business on most anything; quality of life; Incentives for public/private efforts.
- » Charlotte has a pleasant environment, good weather and a business-friendly community.
- » The quality of life enables high quality employee attraction & retention. Also, an international airport is a major driver of a successful community.

Charlotte is in a good location for recruiting and has good synergy as a financial center with a low cost of living. We are able to recruit young people to Charlotte because they can live downtown and have a good lifestyle.

- » Charlotte is a vibrant and well-connected business community, with an excellent civic and corporate citizenship model present. The Charlotte Chamber is actively focused on diversity and inclusion.
- » There is concern that the lengthy zoning, rezoning, and permitting process will discourage businesses from relocating or locating in this area.

# 2011 Volunteer Ambassadors

Hank Alston, Windstream Communications  
Luke Askins, BB&T  
Rich Barker, Web Full Circle Inc.  
Brion Blais, SpeedPro Imaging  
Clint Bundy, Bundy Group  
Manuel Campbell, Anderson, Campbell & Associates  
JP Carlin, Reach Local  
Charles Carnes, CLG  
Wade Chestnut, DoubleRadius, Inc.  
Luke Daube, Piedmont Properties of the Carolinas  
Noelle DeAtley, Creative Thinking  
Mark Decherd, CBRE  
Gail Dougherty, Charlotte Business Journal  
Leigh Finn, KW Commercial  
Beth Ganoe, ECS Carolinas, LLP  
Russ Gill, Professional Communications Video Production  
Steve Giolitti, Xpedx  
Craig Goodson, Messer Construction Co.  
John Graham, SunTrust Bank  
Doug Grant, Ethos Business Advisors, Inc.  
William Grasty, Kingfisher Capital LLC  
Dana Hicks, Huber Technology, Inc.  
Daryl Hollnagel, Shumaker, Loop & Kendrick LLP  
Steven Israel, Aflac  
Steve Kaplan, Kaplan Coaching & Consulting, LLC  
Stacy Keefer, Mom Corps  
Wade Leaphart, Charlotte Hounds

Roy Lindland, Commerical Works  
Brendan Maginnis, Ameriprise Financial  
Casey Mauldin, Carolina Premier bank  
Joseph Mercier, FocalPoint Advisors LLC  
Shawn Messimer, Walbridge  
Tom O'Regan, Colonial Life & Accident Insurance Company  
Geoff Owen, Morgan Keegan & Company, Inc.  
Heath Prior, WealthPlan Financial Partners  
Gerry Quinn, Konica Minolta Business Solutions USA, Inc.  
Stacey Randall, Randall Research  
Frank Risalvato, IRES, Inc.  
Andrea Robinson, Andrea Robinson Interior Design & Consulting  
Damon Roschke, Charlotte Hounds  
Gretchen Rost, Mom Corps  
Robert Russo, Blackbridge Financial  
Trish Shelton, Business Development Services, International  
Jason Sito, Mayer Brown LLP  
Caren Small, Advanced Disposal Services Carolina LLC  
Jenise Tate, Wells Fargo  
Will Thompson, LB&A Certified Public Accountants, PLLC  
Vivek Vemunoori, Xtramile Soft LLC  
Campbell Walker, Lincoln Harris  
James Warder, Solutions  
Eric Welch, GCG Wealth Management  
Joseph Wells, Thompson Financial Group  
Elizabeth Whetstone, Konica Minolta Business Solutions USA, Inc.

## A Note From our Chair

*BusinessFirst* Charlotte had another successful year in 2011. In keeping with tradition we met our goals and were able to assist many companies with their issues through support and resources.

As the 2012 Chair of *BusinessFirst* Charlotte it is my pleasure to work with the volunteer ambassadors and Charlotte Chamber staff on this program. Our volunteer ambassadors are on the front lines of the



chamber's economic development efforts and they gain first-hand insight into the issues facing local businesses.

This year is already off to a great start with many interviews conducted. We look forward to another successful year. If your company is facing any issues or has concerns please do not hesitate to contact us. We would appreciate the opportunity to help you. On behalf of our volunteer ambassadors, we look forward to speaking with you soon.

Stacey Randall, Randall Research