



THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

June 21, 2022

2021- 2022 Board Members

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Programs Elly Clary



Mike Lamach, Chair, Charlotte Executive Leadership Council

by Elly Clary

The chair of a relatively new business and civic leadership organization made a convincing case for its commitment to improving the city's quality of life.

Mike Lamach leads the Charlotte Executive Leadership Council. It includes 33 business and institution chiefs.

"Our vision is around a vibrant and healthy city," Lamach told Rotarians. "It's around the economic opportunity for all. It's building on what's been done by past generations of city leaders."

The members are focusing their companies' and institutions' efforts, he added, "into the few priorities that really matter."

Charlotte leaders initially formed the group to explore ways to attract, retain and develop the talent needed to grow their organizations. Many traveled on a 2015 Chamber trip to Minneapolis to learn more about that city's CEO Council and discuss best practices. Shortly, they created the CELC.

Early on, CELC members began grappling with what led to conclusions in Harvard University economist Raj Chetty's study of economic mobility in America's 50 largest cities. Charlotte ranked 50th.

"If you were born in poverty in Charlotte, you had a 95 percent probability of being in poverty if you died in Charlotte," said Lamach, the retired

executive chair and CEO of Trane Technologies.

“I was shocked,” he said of the study’s conclusions. So were other CELC members. They set about improving the city in four areas.

Education: They focused on supporting the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. The CELC is trying to bring 2,000 or more trained, volunteer tutors into the system. It’s concentrating on 42 underperforming schools to help with any needs, including safety.

The group helps CMS with managing antiquated processes that sometimes hamper teachers’ efforts. And it is advising on how to retain teachers and principals. Lately, there is help to deal with Covid challenges.

Workforce Development: There is a strong focus on non-traditional pathways to careers, including training for displaced or disconnected youth. So far, such young people have filled perhaps as many as 2,000 jobs.

Healthy Communities: The CELC concentrates on what’s required for people to get to work. This includes the city’s mobility network, child care availability, and affordable housing.

Community Engagement: This is about “the stuff that happens in life and we need to react to,” Lamach said.

After the George Floyd murder, the CELC worked with the Mayor’s Racial Equity Initiative to create six “corridors of opportunity” where community investment is most needed. It helped raise millions of dollars for Johnson C. Smith University and put five CELC members on the school’s board. With aid from Queens University of Charlotte, the CELC plans to help close the digital divide for about 50,000 households.

Additionally, Lamach is co-chairing with Malcolm Coley, EY central region private leader, an initiative to develop African-Americans and all people of color for C-Suite opportunities in the CELC member institutions.

“We’re looking forward to things happening in the next year or so,” Lamach said.

*A recording of the program is available here: <https://vimeo.com/725009866>
The speaker’s presentation begins at 22:10 minutes.