

GEORGIA
500 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SUE PARR
PRESIDENT & CEO, AUGUSTA METRO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, AUGUSTA

With a focus on maintaining a low cost of business, especially in the manufacturing sector, Augusta Chamber President & CEO Sue Parr says its policy work has included advocating for local excise tax-free industrial energy costs and plentiful transportation infrastructure, supporting the state's first back-to-back 10-year, 13-county Transportation Investment Act (TIA) program. Parr oversees the operations and program implementation of the Chamber serving a member constituency of 1,200 businesses and organizations throughout the greater Augusta region, which more than half a million people call home.

The chamber's programs include Meet.Mingle.Mesh., the Small Business Marketing Academy, Women in Business and quarterly member economic luncheons.

The native Michigander spent 16 years with the Lansing Regional Chamber. She is an accredited Georgia Certified Chamber Executive. Parr has presented on various topics at national and state chamber conferences.



MARIA "MAYTE" PECK
PRESIDENT, SHELENDS CONSULTING, ATLANTA

Maria Peck is a driven entrepreneur who aims to support women and minorities in the Georgia business community.

Her company, SheLends, works to educate underserved and under-represented entrepreneurs about how to start and grow a business through community outreach initiatives, coaching, financial education programs, one-on-one business consulting and access to capital preparedness.

Born in New York City and raised in Peru, she returned to the United States to pursue her passion for educating others about Latino culture.

The daughter of a serial entrepreneur, Peck's first venture honored the Peruvian food of her childhood: Sweet Devil Moon tapas bar. She successfully developed the concept for the restaurant and was personally responsible for coordinating and managing the finances, marketing and staff for more than six years.

During that time, a need for additional funding led her to become a national microlender. She eventually joined Access to Capital for Entrepreneurs, a non-profit lender, as a Small Business Loan Officer. During her tenure at ACE, she was the founding director for the SBA ACE Women's Business Center and the director of Hispanic strategies and lending.

GILDA "GIGI" PEDRAZA

CHIEF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR & FOUNDER, LATINO COMMUNITY FUND GEORGIA, ATLANTA



"Over the past 30 years, Georgia's Latino population has grown to represent 11% of the state's population. We have fundamentally changed the face of Metro Atlanta and altered the landscape throughout the state," says Gigi Pedraza. "LCF Georgia is the only organization dedicated to advance people's democracy, protect and build community and facilitate economic opportunity for the Latinx/Hispanic community."

Pedraza founded LCF Georgia in 2017 as a philanthropic vehicle for investment in a community "that's the fabric of Georgia," she says. Since then, her organization has reinvested over \$5 million in the community.

Before COVID, LCF Georgia largely focused on education and leadership. The pandemic exposed an enormous need for food, mental health services and healthcare. In 2021, her organization took over operations of Ventanilla de Salud, a public/private partnership created by the Mexican Consulate that provides support and reliable information on health services. "We were able to feed 152,000 people, and we put over 16,000 vaccinations in people's arms," says Pedraza.

Pedraza serves as an advisory board member of KIND (Kids in Need of Defense). She's a member of the steering committee of the Latinx Alliance and is former chair of the Feminist Women's Health Center.

GIL R. PRADO

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FULTON INDUSTRIAL BOULEVARD IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT, ATLANTA

Since 2012, Gil Prado has led the ongoing redevelopment of the 12-mile-long Fulton Industrial District, known as the largest industrial corridor in the eastern U.S. The CID is committed to leading initiatives to help the area's long-term economic growth, Prado says. "In addition to helping make the district safer, cleaner and more vibrant, the CID is committed to helping prepare and guide the district for innovative concepts that will help the district stay competitive in the future," he says.

Prado says his work now is primarily management, but his background is urban planning. "I have a unique ability to spot trends and innovation, and picture and plan for the near and distant future to ensure well-thought-out and harmonious outcomes that are a win-win for people, business and the environment," he says.

In 2022, he was named the Economic Developer of the Year at the South Metro Development Outlook Conference. Prado serves on the Harvard University Graduate School of Design Alumni Council.



CHRIS PUMPHREY

PRESIDENT, ELEVATE DOUGLAS ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP, DOUGLASVILLE

Chris Pumphrey says Douglas County's economic development group has been busy in 2023, including completing its first capital campaign. "With that we established our first workforce strategy," he says. "We're completely focused on all aspects of business growth, whether that's small business development, a large business recruitment or existing business retention." "In order to do that, we lean into workforce development and policy. But so long as we're growing a well-balanced, sustainable local economy, small business, large business and business retention is our main areas of focus."

Two new company announcements include Zoetis, an animal vaccine manufacturer, and Lions Gate, a film production company.

Pumphrey recently joined the board for CareerRise, an organization that's focused on aligning workforce groups in metro Atlanta. He is also completing his duties as nominating committee chair for the Georgia Economic Developers Association.

