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## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Henry Chairwoman Carlotta Harrell Delivers State of the County to Business Community** *Over 300 Attend Sold-Out Address at Merle Manders Conference Center*

HENRY COUNTY, GA – On Wednesday, May 24, 2023, the [Council for Quality Growth](#) hosted the 2023 State of Henry County Address in partnership with [Henry County](#) and the [Henry Chamber of Commerce](#) at the Merle Manders Conference Center in Stockbridge. A sold-out crowd of more than 300 Council and Chamber members, elected officials, businesses, residents, county staff, and partners of Henry County attended the annual lunch to hear from Henry County Chairwoman Carlotta Harrell. This year’s lunch was presented by [Squire Patton Boggs](#) and [Truist](#).

Chairwoman Harrell focused her 3<sup>rd</sup> State of the County address on mission, purpose, and a new theme for Henry County, “Henry Cares. Henry Committed.” This was unveiled alongside the county’s new logos and colors. In keeping with her past addresses, the Chairwoman used her time to highlight members of her community and present the annual Henry Hero Awards.

She first commended the county’s commitment to public safety, reporting declining crime rates in all categories due to an expanded police force, opening of the Real Time Crime Center, training and re-training programs for law enforcement, and a focus on mental health. The county has also recently opened a new fire station and more than doubled the number of 911 operators to answer emergency calls. She presented the first Henry Hero Awards to Officer Cory McDonald, Corporal Charles Polk, and Firefighter Aaron Porter for their contributions to ensuring the safety of Henry County’s residents.

Chairwoman Harrell spoke about healthcare, announcing \$3.5 million of American Rescue Plan funds approved for an extension of Piedmont Henry to create more capacity. She presented the next Henry Hero Award to Amanda Reeves, Executive Director of Hands of Hope Clinic, a charitable healthcare provider offering medical, dental, and mental health services to those at or below the poverty line. The clinic is approaching its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and Reeves has provided over 50,000 free clinic visits to residents.

She stated the importance of providing enough jobs for the county’s growing population of 250,000. In the last year, Henry County has attracted nearly \$1 billion in new investment, creating over 2,000 new jobs. The county has partnered with Southern Crescent Technical College to expand academic offerings that meet the needs of the industries investing in the county to ensure a suitable workforce. The next Henry Hero Award was presented to Ariel Shaw, founder of the non-profit Southern Crescent Women in Business that offers foundational support and provides access to capital for female entrepreneurs in Henry County.

The Chairwoman acknowledged the difficulties the county faces with traffic, but she reported great progress towards big transportation projects with funding from the TSPLOST referendum renewed in April 2022. The county is also working on the launch of a new fixed-route local bus service and on-demand transit options to further mediate traffic problems. Roque Romero-Muniz accepted the next Henry Hero Award on behalf of the county’s Department of Transportation for meeting the heightened demands on the county’s roads and infrastructure.

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She mentioned other efforts to improve the quality of life for residents in Henry County, including attention to housing. “Our emphasis on housing is there for all to see,” she said. “It’s an emphasis I take personally.” Henry County has received four rounds of federal grants, plus additional funding from ARPA and a federal community development block grant program, that collectively add up to nearly \$100 million towards rent and utility assistance, housing rehabilitation, and homeless services to residents that need it most. “We will continue the push for affordable workforce housing for essential frontline workers. If you work in Henry County, you should be able to afford to live here and share in all the wonderful things that are happening,” said the Chairwoman, calling for partnerships and collaboration to help realize this goal.

She presented the final Henry Hero Awards to Cliff Shearhouse, Executive Director of Transportation Services at Henry County Schools, Pastor Carl Nichols of Relevant Church, and Michele Weaver, Executive Assistant to the Board of Commissioners. Hutch Purvis, Cluster Lead for Asset Management in Henry County, was named the 2023 recipient of the Commissioner Gary Barham Leadership Award. Cheri Matthews, County Manager, received the inaugural award in 2022 after Commissioner Barham lost his life battling the COVID-19 pandemic. “To celebrate this county and all that we’ve accomplished this past year, we must celebrate the people who made it happen,” Chair Harrell concluded.

The Council for Quality Growth works with Henry County and its local municipalities year-round to advocate for our members doing business in those areas. The Council’s State of Henry County annually convenes the county’s business community with its local government bodies, as well as with other local leaders from across the region. “It’s great to hear about so much investment coming to Henry County,” said Michael Paris, President & CEO of the Council. “The Council is proud to partner with Chair Harrell and all the elected officials working to ensure that policies support the growth in a way that lasts.”

The State of Henry also featured remarks from Cheri Matthews, County Manager, Charlene Craig, Senior Vice President at Truist, and Katherine Zitsch, Director of the ARC’s Metro North Georgia Water Planning District.



*[From left: Murphy Talmadge, Charlene Craig, Cheri Matthews, Chairwoman Carlotta Harrell, Michael Paris]*



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A photo gallery and the recording of the full event will be made available in the coming days at <https://www.councilforqualitygrowth.org/news-press/>.

### **About the State of the County/Agency Series**

The Council for Quality Growth hosts 10 'State of' events across the region, including 8 counties and 2 agencies. We work in close collaboration with the office of the County Chairs in Cherokee, Clayton, DeKalb, Douglas, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, and Rockdale, as well as with leadership at MARTA and the Atlanta BeltLine, to provide a platform for our counties and agency partners deliver an annual update on achievements, projects, and the future that is specifically geared toward the business community and the Council's membership. A full calendar of the Council's 2023 Signature Events, including the State of the County/Agency series, can be viewed and downloaded here: [2023 Programs Calendar](#)

### **About the Council for Quality Growth**

The Council for Quality Growth is a trade organization that works to ensure continued growth and economic success for generations to come by providing advocacy, information, and education to its members. In its 38<sup>th</sup> year, the Council is committed to the mission of promoting balanced and responsible growth and is proactively involved in the formulation of policy and legislation critical to the growth and development industry. The Council addresses, head-on, strategic economic planning, infrastructure needs, and tough quality-of-life issues throughout the metro Atlanta region and state. For more information, please visit <http://www.councilforqualitygrowth.org>.

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