

WHAT DO YOU WANT IN 2022?

Sounding off on the New Year

Where do you want to see Chatham County a year from today?
If one change could occur this coming year, what would it be?

My wish for Chatham in 2022 is that we successfully navigate through the pandemic to a safer environment where COVID-19 is under control and its worst impacts have been mitigated by thoughtful, kind residents who acknowledge that the health and well-being of the entire community is their responsibility. The change I most hope to see is more compassion for everyone involved in educating our children, from the board of education and superintendent to teachers, staff and beyond.

Karen Howard, Chatham County commissioner

In 2022 I am hopeful that COVID impacts will have been diminished in our schools, workplaces, and daily lives. Moving into 2022, we expect to provide more recreation opportunities, create more affordable housing, and preserve farmland and open space.

One change a year from now: We expect the broadband funding from federal and state resources will have attracted internet vendors to provide critical infrastructure to unserved areas in Chatham.

Diana Hales, Chatham County commissioner

One year from today we would like to be celebrating new large industry announcements at both the CAM site in Siler City and the TIP site in Moncure. Many Chatham leaders and regional allies have worked a long time to put our community in position to be ready at both sites. In 2021 we had record visits and activity at both sites, which led to the new announcements in 2022. Next December we will be working closely with CCCC to be putting together customized training programs to help provide a workforce from Chatham County for these new projects.

A change we would like to see is for our community to better understand and utilize the resources we have at CCCC. That is an excellent and affordable way for our citizens to get the training they need to join one of the many outstanding industries in this region.

C. Michael Smith, president, Chatham Economic Development Corporation

The one change that I hope for in the coming year is for all residents of Chatham County to be fully vaccinated. And, a year from today, I would like to see Chatham County as a place where no one is left behind nor disregarded as more and more economic growth and development comes our way.

Friar Julio A Martinez, pastor of St. Julia Catholic Church, Siler City

I would love to see Chatham County flourish in terms of bettering the lives of the average citizen. Such flourishing strives for more and better-paying jobs, affordable housing, and improved educational systems and improved support/pay for teachers, school staff, and administration.

I would love to see unity. Unity comes through seeing the world through the eyes of others and standing alongside them in service. It means following Christ's example of putting others ahead of ourselves and living purposeful lives for the

betterment of the whole world and not merely ourselves (Philippians 2:3-5).

Gregory E. Lamb, Ph.D., pastor, Mays Chapel Baptist Church

Mountaire Farms has been a strong community partner from the start, and we're invested in Chatham County. We have seen first-hand the positive impact that our Mountaire Cares program can have in the community, and we will continue to stay focused on helping address important issues like food insecurity. As a major employer, we will continue to hire and promote residents of Chatham County to help grow their careers in the poultry industry.

We continue to pray for an end to this pandemic, to allow families to be together and for life to return to some semblance of normalcy. We know we can't let our guard down even then, and we will continue to do everything possible to protect our workforce every day.

Sasha Duncan, community relations manager, Mountaire Farms of North Carolina

I'd like to see people coming together instead of being so divided; collaborating, sharing great ideas with the intent of helping one another; For Pittsboro: a bustling small town that has retained its charm, while embracing the growth that has been coming. And a county that has become a destination for small businesses and families to live, work and play.

Mike Walters, executive director, Cambridge Hills Assisted Living, Pittsboro

I endorse the idea of a "Healthy Chatham" — and have a broad view of this. I imagine a Chatham free of the effects of COVID-19; a sustainable and clean natural environment; and a caring and united community valuing diversity and promoting equity and social justice.

Dennis Streets, director, Chatham Council on Aging

Black History in Chatham is an essential part of the story of the county. More representation of the contributions of former and current residents of the black community should be a priority. It is our hoped to see a remembrance ceremony for the remaining five Black lynched in our county. We need to remember what our country has forgotten.

In 2022, it is important for more Chatham County residents to be aware of and accept the true history of the county.

Racism affects everyone, not just the Black and brown population. We must be willing to acknowledge the issues that dividing us and move forward. What's done is done but now everyone has the opportunity to do better and contribute to a future favoring equality and justice for all.

Mary Nettles, president, Community Remembrance Coalition-Chatham & Chatham Community NAACP Branch #5377

Speaking for myself and on behalf of all local farmers who sell directly to the public, we'd love a permanent, covered farmers market building!

Meredith Leight, via Facebook

I would like to see the county go ahead and put into place regulations to protect the natural look of our countryside, so when the building begins, we can see more green and less parking lot and stone. I am not against new business coming in, but I don't need to look at the brick and mortar ... also, to prevent light pollution.

Shay Blakemore, via Facebook

True district voting and non-partisan local races so that the moderate and conservative portion of the county would have a voice at the table as well.

Michael Buckner, via Facebook

I'd like to see forward thinking and vision from our commissioners, with regard to managing water/wastewater. Our current flush and spray project propagation is killing the county. We need an OWASA (Orange Water And Sewer Authority) equivalent for Chatham County.

Larry M. Hicks, via Facebook

More places to eat other than fast food.

Judy Moore, via Facebook

Clean water.

Marj Dirk, via Facebook

I want to see Chatham County being seen by the larger population as a model for peace, local commerce, sustainability, and true community. Less polarization.

I would like to see folks changing patterns due to what we have learned during the pandemic. To truly put what's important over what the culture thinks is important.

Tami Schwerin, The Plant, Pittsboro

Change can be slow, but it would be great for Chatham County if a solution was at hand for the vexing issues of water quality, potable water and sanitary sewer. One change that could pay dividends for Chatham and Lee would be a merged utility system with Chatham and Pittsboro led by Sanford.

Randolph Voller, former Pittsboro mayor

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We hope for Brighter Futures for Chatham County children and schools. "Brighter Futures" is the title of a task force that documented the correlation between school discipline, on the one hand, and the race, ethnicity, and disability of disciplined students, on the other. We envision change to clarify who we are, who we want to be, and multiple actions to pursue equity and social justice in our

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schools, courts, and community. Rud and Ann Turnbull, Fearington Village

If one change could occur this coming year, it's that we're better able to gather as a community. Because of the pandemic and a reticence to meet and mingle (understandably!) over these last two years, I've deeply missed the opportunity to meet new people and reconnect with old friends. We've certainly made adjustments to make it work, but my hope is that we're able to do so much more in the coming year (and safely!) to find joy in the company of another and rekindle what it means to be beloved community.

The Rev. D. Brent Levy, pastor, The Local Church

I want to see Chatham continue on a positive trajectory as we grow and prosper together as a community. I look forward to attending more events and festivals, and seeing more residents return to activities they love, like spending time in nature, playing sports and visiting parks with friends and family — fully and safely enjoying life. I want to see local businesses revived and thriving again, more community in-

volvement and inclusion ... and I look forward to continuing to serve as your Sheriff. I would like to see community members showing more respect for the good in others and more tolerance of differing opinions. We need greater acceptance of one another, less judgment, and more unity in 2022.

Mike Roberson, Chatham County Sheriff

I want to see Chatham flourishing — creating and filling new jobs, supporting local charities, and welcoming new additions and ideas to this amazing place we love so deeply. I look forward to seeing more immersion in community-focused activities and programs, especially those that serve our senior residents, students, and the environment. Chatham has always been rich in the spirit of giving, and I want to see that amplified as more people get back on their feet (and turn again to lift up their neighbors).

If 2021 taught us to build walls, I hope 2022 teaches us to break them ... May we embrace change, consider alternative viewpoints, celebrate our shared experiences, and move forward with a renewed love of life and one another!

Sara Pack, Chatham Sheriff's Office

One hope I have for Chatham County in the new year is reliable internet access for many of our neighbors. Over the course of the pandemic many have been struggling to stay connected to available resources and community support due to this lack of consistent connectivity. I'm looking forward to the day when every person in Chatham has access to the resources to help them reach their full potential.

Tych Cowdin, executive director, Communities In Schools Chatham County

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