



**PRESS RELEASE**

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## **Mobile Chamber Expands Leadership Team; Announces Community Development Department**

**MOBILE, Ala.** - The Mobile Chamber announces the expansion of its leadership team and the creation of the Community Development Department.



Laura O'Connor, who has served as senior director of special projects and grant administrator for the Mobile Chamber and the Chamber Foundation since 2015, was named the Chamber's first Vice President of Community Development. In this role, she will lead the newly formed Community Development Department and elevate the Chamber's efforts to address this region's critical issues, including workforce education; workforce transportation; attainable housing; downtown revitalization; entertainment and recreation; and diversity, equity, and inclusion.

"Laura O'Connor brings a wealth of experience to this key leadership role," said Mobile Chamber President and CEO **Bradley Byrne**. "These programs all share a common thread, to strengthen the community and improve the region's economy. In this time of unprecedented economic growth and opportunity, we believe this revitalized program of work will serve as an overall framework and catalyst for Mobile's business ecosystem and drive economic success in our area."

Once an integral part of the Chamber's business model, a community development function will help community stakeholders, citizens and organizations to meet shared community goals for Mobile.



Kim Garrett, the director of Victory Health Partners and a member of the Chamber's board of directors, has been named the vice chair of the Chamber's Community Development Department. In this volunteer role, she will oversee and direct the mission of the department as it seeks to support regional economic development and build a better community for all.

"In keeping pace with the Chamber's momentum, the Community Development Department will focus on convening community partners to capitalize on our region's assets and provide a higher quality of life," said **Garrett**. "In partnership with the Chamber Foundation, community stakeholders and our strong non-profit sector, the Department's current strategic initiatives will address community needs with a collaborative, community-based approach."

O'Connor joined the Chamber team in March 2015 as compliance consultant and project manager for several community initiatives including the Investing in Manufacturing Communities Partnership (IMCP), the Mobile Bay National Estuary Program Three Mile Creek project, and the Alabama Gulf Coast Recovery Council (RESTORE Council). With 22 years of grant administration experience, she also managed the \$6 million Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant supporting construction of the Innovation Portal headquarters on St. Louis Street.

Prior to her time with the Mobile Chamber, O'Connor held several leadership roles in healthcare, grant, and program administration. She spent 26 years with the University of South Alabama in various capacities, including the director of program administration for the Center for Strategic Health Innovation; director of the Alabama Health Education Center Program (AHEC); assistant director of the Telemedicine Project; and business manager for the Department of Anesthesiology. She also served as executive director of the Gulf Coast Patient Care Network, Inc.

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### **About the Mobile Chamber**

The Mobile Chamber is a private business organization with more than 1,700 members and the economic developer for the City of Mobile and Mobile County. The Mobile Chamber's focus is to provide members with networking, marketing and professional development opportunities, expand jobs in the area, develop the local workforce, advocate legislative priorities and offer resources for small businesses. Additional information is on the Chamber's [website](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#).