

## Charlotte: An International City with Small-Town Appeal

Not long ago, Charlotte could fly under the radar of most international city watchers. Not anymore. This city with deep business roots and a rich economic base strengthened by diverse industry is now a magnet that attracts foreign-owned companies and valuable employees.

Charlotte is a multicultural metropolitan area that embraces diverse ideas, opinions, business operations and residents. Foreign-owned firms enrich our business community, cultural amenities and daily lives. In turn, Charlotte offers an environment that helps foreign-owned firms grow and makes foreign-born workers feel at home.

Over 487 foreign-owned firms, representing 41 countries, provide jobs to nearly 26,000 workers in Charlotte-Mecklenburg County. Another 253 foreign-owned firms operate in the 15-county metro region surrounding Mecklenburg County.

### Pro-Business Climate

Charlotte is one of the most business-focused cities in the United States. For three years running, North Carolina claimed the top spot in Site Selection magazine's listing of the best business climates in North America. The magazine ranked Charlotte No. 1 on its list of top 10 U.S. cities for foreign investment. The Queen City has such a pro-business environment that nearly 300 of Fortune's top 500 companies have placed one or more facilities within Mecklenburg County.

### Why International Companies Choose Charlotte

- Excellent U.S. market access from a central Atlantic coast location
- Large airport hub with direct international flights
- Pro-business local government
- Highly productive workforce for manufacturing and services
- State-funded worker training programs
- Extraordinary quality of life
- Below-average cost of living
- Rich international business and cultural communities
- Foreign language schools
- Excellent universities and research programs

For foreign-owned firms in particular, Charlotte offers exceptional air service, foreign trade zones, transparent government and business practices and numerous non-profit organizations that focus on international business, foreign policy and global culture. Charlotte-Mecklenburg is home for the honorary consuls of Austria, Canada, France, Germany, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.



Foreign Direct Investment Magazine recently ranked Charlotte 5th among the North American Cities of the Future. In addition to being 5th overall, Charlotte also ranked 3rd in Best Economic Potential and Best Development & Investment Promotion and 2nd in Quality of Life.

More than half of the 1,274 manufacturing firms in Mecklenburg County are involved with importing or exporting goods. The Charlotte Foreign Trade Zone, which allows goods to be brought in from overseas duty-free and stored or manufactured into a product, is one of the largest in the state.

The Charlotte chapter of the North Carolina World Trade Association, which promotes international trade, is one of the largest in the nation.

Charlotte is also known for its banking powerhouses, namely Bank of America and Wachovia. These Charlotte-headquartered banks operate in 45 countries, including the financial capitals of Frankfurt, Hong Kong, London, Mexico City, Milan, Paris, Sao Paulo, Seoul, Singapore, Taipei and Tokyo. More banking resources are headquartered in Charlotte than in any other U.S. city except New York.

Charlotte's infrastructure and central Eastern U.S. location continue to attract non-U.S. companies.

Charlotte's foreign firms grew 129% since 1990.

## Foreign Firms Growth

Since 1990, the number of foreign-owned firms operating in metro Charlotte has grown by over 129 percent.

Year	Total
2006	740
2005	628
2000	546
1990	323

## High Quality of Life

Charlotte's high quality of life, below-average cost of living, world-class arts and major league sports, as well as abundant opportunities attract talented individuals from around the globe. Approximately 13 percent of Mecklenburg's population was born outside of the United States.

People like living here, and companies based in Charlotte successfully recruit highly talented individuals from around the world and all regions of the U.S.

## Market Access

Charlotte-Douglas International Airport offers extensive commuter and airfreight services. Home to USAirway's largest hub, the airport offers non-stop service to 159 different cities, including Frankfurt, Munich, London, Toronto and Mexico City as well as to Central America and Caribbean cities. Roughly 623 flights leave Charlotte daily.

Charlotte ranks 28th nationwide in air cargo. More than 169,649 tons of cargo was forwarded to destinations worldwide from Charlotte in 2006. More than 400,000 square feet of warehouse space in the Charlotte Air Cargo Center offers quick proximity to runways, railways and interstate highways.

Charlotte is at the heart of a highway and railroad system that stretches across the Eastern and Southern United States. More than 40 percent of the nation's top 100 trucking companies are located in Charlotte, ranking the city No. 11 in the country with 284 companies. The Charlotte region links to 23 states with two major rail systems, Norfolk Southern and CSX. Some 300 trains pass through Charlotte weekly.

## Emphasis on Education

Charlotte's future strength is in development today in schools across Mecklenburg County. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg School (CMS) system supports and encourages cultural and foreign-language education and operates five language immersion schools for students who study German, French, Japanese, Mandarin Chinese, or Spanish. More than 10,000 CMS students speak a foreign language,

## Foreign Firms Operating in Charlotte Region

The number of foreign-owned firms operating in the Charlotte Region grows every year. Today, 740 foreign-owned firms operate here. The 10 countries with the largest presence are:

Country	Business total 2006
Germany	162
United Kingdom	108
Japan	81
Canada	69
France	44
Italy	42
Switzerland	41
Sweden	28
Netherlands	27
Australia	12

representing a total of 97 different languages and 152 countries of origin.

Eight international schools also help students maintain language skills and cultural identity while they are in Charlotte: a Japanese school, a German school, two Chinese schools, a Korean school, a Greek School, a Swedish school, and a Russian school. Charlotte is also home to one of five British American Schools. The Carolina International School is located just outside of Charlotte in Cabarrus County.

Many of the colleges and universities in the Carolinas are recognized for their excellence both nationally and internationally.

Charlotte is a city of educated individuals. We were recently ranked as America's sixth most literate city based on the percentage of residents having a high school diploma or greater and the percentage of residents with a bachelor's degree.

## A Great Destination

Whether you are considering expanded business operations or a new home for your company's headquarters, Charlotte deserves your consideration. We live for business and make business easy to do.



330 South Tryon Street P.O. Box 32785  
Charlotte, North Carolina 28232 U.S.A.  
704.378.1300 phone 704.374.1903 fax  
www.charlottechamber.com

