

## N.C. ZEITGEIST FOUNDATION PROMOTES APPRECIATION AND EXCHANGE BETWEEN GERMANY AND NORTH CAROLINA

"In barely less than one year, Klaus Becker has made an extraordinary impact on the greater Charlotte region engaging American and German businesses," attests Mike Hawley of global law firm K&L Gates' Charlotte office. "He has been especially successful with his Speaker Series and cultural events injecting German culture into this community."

"Charlotte is so fortunate to have such a strong and articulate advocate for German businesses to locate their facilities in the Charlotte region," asserts Gunda Knese, a member of the German community herself and director of business development at GreerWalker LLP, a Charlotte-based accounting and business advisory firm.

"A little over a year ago, Klaus Becker became Honorary Consul of the Federal Republic of Germany to North Carolina in the Charlotte region," Knese continues, "and he is spearheading The N.C. Zeitgeist Foundation. Klaus is also working to bridge the communications gap between Washington, D.C., and Berlin."

"I want to be a credible, serious, thoughtful, and trustworthy representative of Germany to American people," affirms Becker.

Becker has a clear understanding of German influence in the Carolinas and he wants to extend American influence into all corners of Germany. In light of the proposed TTIP trade agreement as it moves forward, Becker sees huge new opportunities to recruit many more business to the Charlotte region.

Becker is chairman and president of The N.C. Zeitgeist Foundation, Inc., tasked to inform, educate and foster dialogue about the influence of German business, culture, arts, society and spirit in recognition of the significant and long-standing German-American bilateral relationship in our region.

Zeitgeist means "the spirit of the age," and in carrying out its mission, the Foundation seeks to build even stronger relationships between Germany and North Carolina.

Along with Becker, Margaret Rosenfeld, also Honorary Consul of the Federal Republic of Germany to North Carolina, is heading up the Foundation's efforts in the Raleigh region. Directors of the Foundation include Hawley, Knese, Rosenfeld of Smith Anderson in Raleigh, Mary Dowd of The Cardea Group, and Michael Almond of Antaeus Consulting. Major sponsors include BMW, GreerWalker, Parker Poe, The Cardea Group, Lufthansa, and NiroSteel.

### German Influence and Culture

The Foundation sponsors a formidable Grand Speaker Series. Among those they have hosted are: Dr. Josef Joffe, publisher-editor of German weekly DIE ZEIT on the topic of "Obama & Merkel: Last Man (and Woman) Standing in the West"; Kurt Hans Biedenkopf in celebrating

the 25th Anniversary of Fall of the Wall at Davidson College; Ruprecht Polenz, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the German Bundestag, speaking on "The Putin Doctrine—A Danger to Global Security;" Peter Schneider, German novelist, with the book *Berlin Now*; and Ralf Fücks, president of the Green Political Foundation.

This spring, the Foundation even hosted its first annual Deutsche Operball (German Opera Gala) honoring Dr. Peter Wittig, the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to the U.S., and hosted Wittig and his wife, journalist and writer Huberta von Voss-Wittig, on a tour around Charlotte.

### Doing Business in the Carolinas

Today, there are 3,500 German companies in the U.S. There are 500 in North and South Carolina, with nearly 240 in the 16-county Charlotte region. "North Carolina is home to one of the largest contingents of German subsidiaries and related companies in the nation," Becker points out, "and Germany is the largest-represented foreign country in this region."

"Germany has been a long-time investor in this state," informs Becker, "currently creating more than 30,000 jobs. German companies and subsidiaries own roughly \$436 million in North Carolina real estate."

"Why do German companies like Charlotte?" prompts Becker. "First, Lufthansa and the airport provide easy access to Germany. Second, so many customers and suppliers are here. Third, the German culture is active here. Fourth, there is a good, hard-working base of employees here. And fifth, the Germans can fit into this community without overtly 'standing out.'"

Given the training facilities, skilled workforce, leading-edge research and development, sound infrastructure and overall quality of life, Ronnie Bryant of the Charlotte Regional Partnership agrees, "The area continues to be a destination for German businesses looking to establish or expand their global operations and markets."

"In North Carolina, you have created an environment where talent can grow and hard work is rewarded," acknowledged Ambassador Wittig during his visit to Charlotte. "German ingenuity sometimes needs American creativity to realize its full potential. Mixing the hard-working ethic of both countries is a recipe for great success."

Hawley sums it up, "There is no doubt that Klaus Becker and The N.C. Zeitgeist Foundation will be successful expanding the relationship between the greater Charlotte region and Germany. His gregarious and ebullient nature makes him a natural as Honorary Counsel for Germany."

Content contributed by the The N.C. Zeitgeist Foundation, Inc. For more information, please visit [www.nczeitgeistfoundation.org](http://www.nczeitgeistfoundation.org) or contact them at 704-412-5022 or [contact@nczeitgeistfoundation.org](mailto:contact@nczeitgeistfoundation.org). Their offices are at: The N.C. Zeitgeist Foundation, Inc.; 2700 Coltsgate Rd., Ste. 102; Charlotte, NC 28211.

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Becker