



News Release

Gilroy Chamber of Commerce

October 20, 2025

Dear Chamber Community,

It is with mixed emotions that I announce my decision to step down from my role as President & CEO of the Chamber and prepare to return to Southern California, where I will be closer to my cherished family and friends to focus on new personal priorities. While I am saddened to be leaving this incredible community and organization, I am profoundly grateful for the relationships I've gained during my time here.

Over the past six months, I have been honored to connect with Chamber members, businesses, individuals, community leaders, and partners in Gilroy, forging strong relationships across our wider region. My deep experience within the Chamber of Commerce sector has enabled me to help guide this organization into a period of progression, building a future-ready framework that encourages innovation.

As Board Chair Andrea Nicolette expressed, "We are deeply grateful for Michelle's insight and strategic leadership, which has empowered and inspired others to embrace challenges and welcome change."

Preparing for the future means nurturing emerging leaders, and during my tenure, Cristina Cortes has consistently demonstrated outstanding stewardship, commitment, and initiative — strengthening our membership and expanding our engagement.

The Board has unanimously appointed Cristina as Executive Director, effective immediately. This offers ample time where I will work closely with Cristina to provide comprehensive cross-training before my departure on November 14 to ensure a seamless transition. The Board and I are proud to be executing a thoughtful succession plan that ensures continuity of leadership and stability for the organization.

Andrea Nicolette adds, "The Board of Directors has invested in developing Cristina's leadership skills over the past two years. Her strong relationships within the membership, and broader community, are tremendous assets to the organization. She has continually risen to meet the demands of prior leadership transitions and exemplifies excellence in her role. She is an active member of the



Leadership Gilroy 2025 cohort and has committed to a three year Chamber Academy through the [Western Association of Chamber Executives \(WACE\)](#)."

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude for the unwavering support, collaboration, and trust you have shown me. As I take this next step, I am excited by the prospect of continuing my involvement with the Chamber in a new capacity — remaining engaged through consulting and coaching. I am confident that, under Cristina's exceptional leadership, the organization will continue to thrive.

With that being said, Cristina's role of [Membership Manager is now open](#) and we are accepting resumes and applications until Friday, November 7, 2025.

I encourage you to join us in our [Chamber Networking Lunch](#), this Wednesday, from 12:00 - 1:15 PM at Old City Hall to hear from both Cristina and I.

Sincerely,
Michelle Carlen

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Thank you to our [Gilroy Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors](#) for your unwavering support.

Andrea Nicolette - Chair of the Board, Mt. Madonna YMCA

Tom Cline - Chair Elect and Vice Chair, Budget & Finance, Cline Glass Contractors

Manny Bhandal - Past Chair of the Board and Past Interim President/CEO, Bhandal Brothers

Marcel Eichenberger - Secretary, CordeValle

Gloria Dela Merced - Saint Louise Regional Hospital

Jay Menchaca – Menchaca Law

Dave Leal - Gilroy Bowl

Gina Lopez - Gina Lopez, State Farm Agency

Dr. Anisha Munshi - Gilroy Unified School District



Jeet Sangha - Compass Realty

Mary King - Rebekah Children's Services