

RAÍCES

NEGOCIOS

Photo: Marcos Suárez-Mproductions

Mayor Michael Caldwell

*Woodstock and the Challenge
of Growing Without Losing
Its Hometown Feel*

Woodstock and the Challenge of Growing Without Losing Its Hometown Feel

In a time of rapid change, Woodstock, Georgia has gone from being a quiet old railroad stop to becoming one of Cherokee County's biggest economic drivers. With business growth, urban expansion, and shifting demographics, the city is facing a real challenge: how do you grow without losing who you are?

At the center of all of this is its mayor, Michael Caldwell, who says two personal pillars shape everything he does: being a father of four and his background as a businessman.

That combination, he explains, is what drives how he makes decisions for the city. For Caldwell, running a city isn't just about managing things, it's about telling the story of a community and making sure that growth never loses sight of the next generation.

Leadership and City Vision

What do you think the community validates about your leadership beyond just the political results?

My job is to be the city's "storyteller." We have an incredible team: six council members, over 200 city employees, and 41,000 residents all moving in the same direction. What I try to do is give a clear picture of where Woodstock is headed and connect the community to that story.

Economic Growth and Transformation

Woodstock has been called the county's economic engine. What has the real growth looked like? We are Cherokee County's economic engine. We make up only 3% of the land but 16% of the population and 40% of the county's entire GDP.

Over the last few years, our economy has grown from about \$2.7 billion to \$5.1 billion, we've basically doubled.

We've gone from being an old railroad town to a city with strong business, retail, and service growth. The next challenge is balancing that growth with affordable housing and creating local jobs, especially office jobs, so people can actually live and work in the same city without a long commute.



Public Decisions and a Business Mindset

It's not common to run a city while also running a tech company. How do you make decisions when business logic and public responsibility cross paths?

Everything crosses: politics, residents, visitors, technology, finances. It's a complex environment.

The key is keeping a clear vision of what we want to build as a city. You don't always get it right, but as long as we're moving forward more than we're stepping back, we're heading in the right direction.

Economic Growth and Opportunities

What kinds of businesses would you like to see come to Woodstock in the next few years?

The economy has already grown from \$2.7 to \$5.1 billion, we've almost doubled. We want to keep expanding that with more diversity: more restaurants, more retail, and more office jobs.

The big challenge right now is balancing that growth with affordable housing and local job creation, so people can live and work here without long commutes.

Innovation and a Growth Mindset

From your experience as a businessman, what's the most common mistake you see and what sets successful people apart?

The most common mistake is letting the need for perfection stop you from moving forward.

You have to be willing to experiment, take risks, and keep going. Not everything works, but progress comes from trying.

The City as "Home"

How close is Woodstock to becoming a city that truly feels like home for everyone?

We've come a long way: economic growth, better infrastructure, and a city that's more diverse every day.

Today, Woodstock isn't just a place to live — it's a place to work, build something, invest, and enjoy life.

Hispanic Inclusion and Community

For a Hispanic entrepreneur in this city, is the playing field really level, or are there still invisible barriers?

There are still invisible barriers, though I hope they keep getting smaller.

The city is moving toward more equity. People here generally get along without labels, what matters is being part of the community.



The Role of Media

What role do media outlets like your magazine play in the community?

They're essential. They help tell stories that otherwise wouldn't get told and reflect the real diversity of the local community.

They also connect people with opportunities and strengthen that sense of belonging. Thank you for sharing these stories.

Message to the Hispanic Community

What would you say to a Hispanic family thinking about moving or investing here?

It's a safe, vibrant, growing city. A place to live well, raise kids, and enjoy life. Welcome to Woodstock.

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