

Bring Them Home

How to Attract and Retain Gen Z Talent in
Chesapeake's Future Workforce

Presented By

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The Bridge Between Two Worlds



“Nearly 80% of Americans who say they feel deeply connected to their community also say they plan to stay there long-term.”

— Source: Pew Research Center, ‘What Americans Value About Their Communities’ (2021)

Connection builds roots... and roots keep talent home.

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Mentimeter

What ONE word describes why people stay in Chesapeake?



Menti

Chesapeake Alliance

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When this presentation is shared to your group, it will look like this:



Read these in order of what you think matters most to you:



The Great Gen Z Migration



25%

Higher Retention in cities that
invest in *LIVABILITY*

38%

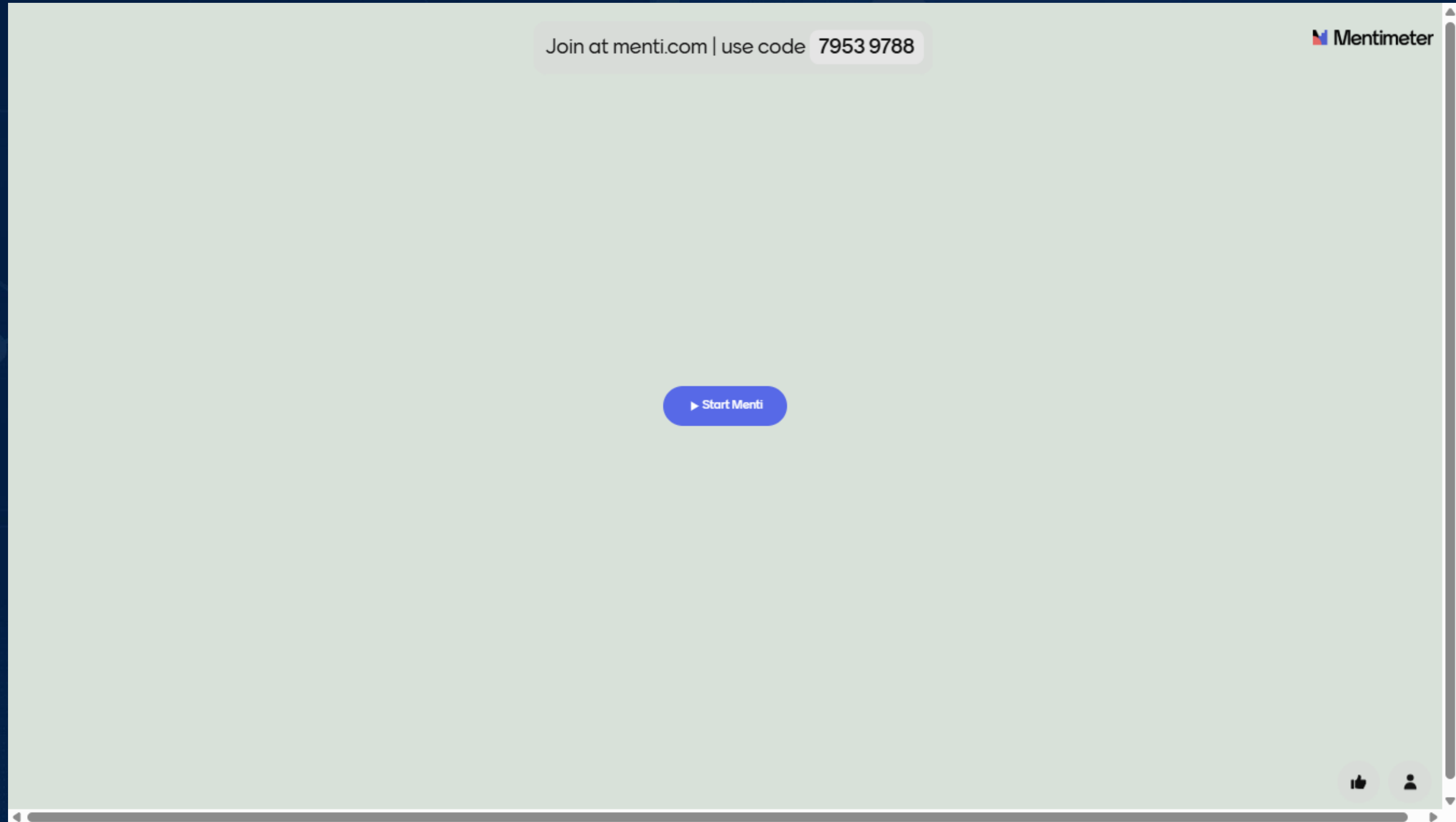
Rural & Mid-Sized Find Local
Internships (vs. 55% Metros)

70%

Don't Come Back Home!

**77% of Gen Z nationwide say they *want*
to move if given the chance.**

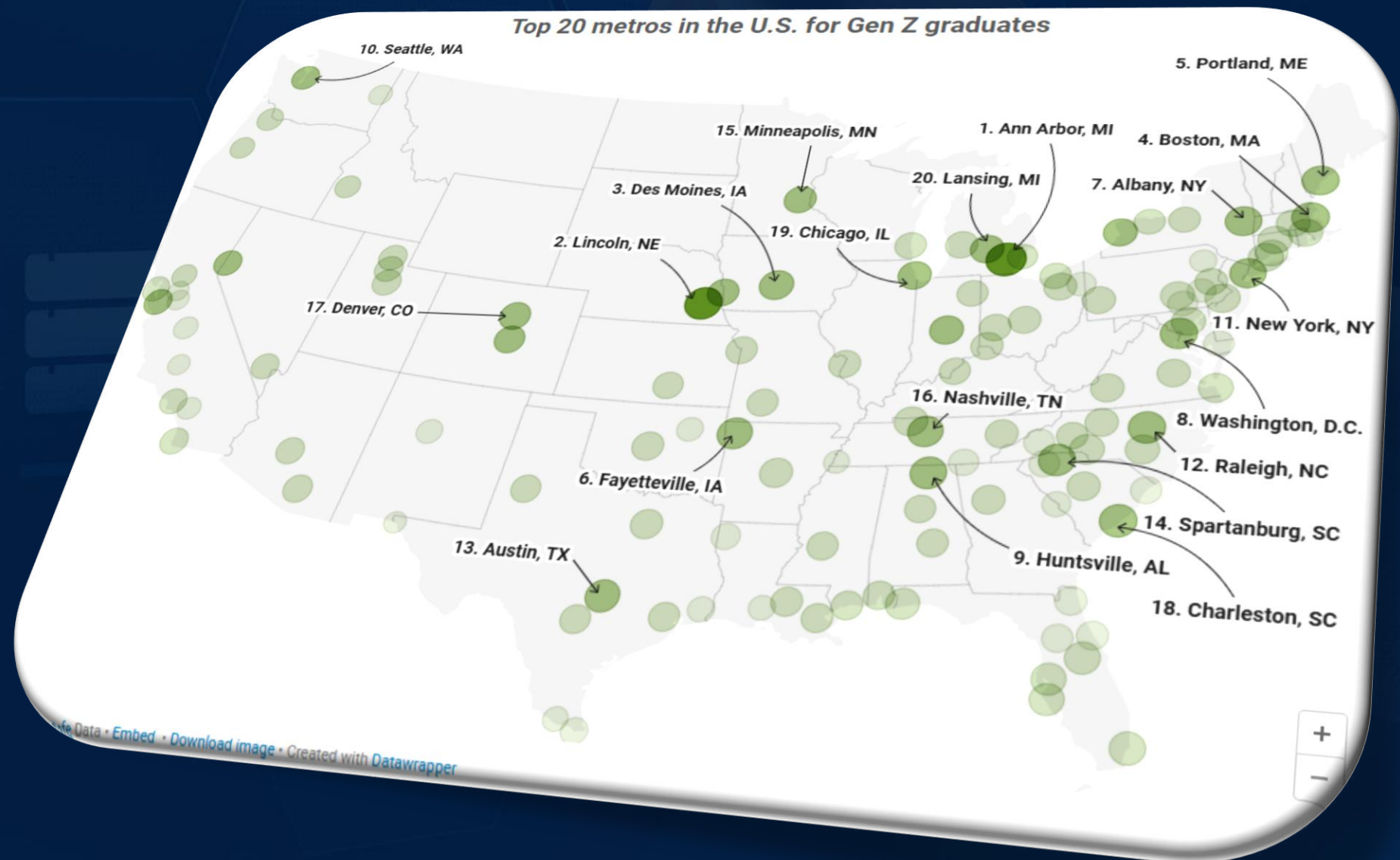
Interactive Activity



Top 20 Metros in U.S. For Gen Z Graduates

Top 20 metros for Gen Z graduates

Ranking	Metro name	Total score	Share of Gen Z adults from total metro population	Share of highly educated Gen Z adults	Change in unemployment	Income growth	Job growth	Livability composite index
1	Ann Arbor, MI	100	9.98%	21.42%	-3.59%	7.46%	2.01%	95
2	Lincoln, NE	96	10.40%	13.51%	-11.39%	34.62%	2.23%	100
3	Des Moines, IA	79	7.31%	13.82%	0.94%	36.33%	2.95%	96
4	Boston, MA	78	7.06%	18.99%	1.23%	17.88%	1.17%	89
5	Portland, ME	77	6.24%	16.51%	5.30%	27.31%	2.31%	100
6	Fayetteville, AR	77	8.52%	12.38%	-2.45%	75.10%	2.50%	74
7	Albany, NY	75	7.01%	16.40%	0.78%	6.23%	2.07%	90
8	Washington, D.C.	75	6.58%	15.45%	-1.28%	15.29%	1.87%	94
9	Huntsville, AL	74	7.11%	15.20%	-2.00%	-2.40%	4.64%	77
10	Seattle, WA	72	7.11%	16.71%	0.32%	9.32%	0.76%	89
11	New York, NY	72	6.44%	16.18%	-1.26%	20.12%	2.55%	82
12	Raleigh, NC	72	6.84%	14.30%	-0.66%	16.98%	3.61%	81
13	Austin, TX	72	7.44%	15.24%	0.60%	12.16%	4.13%	71
14	Spartanburg, SC	71	7.07%	8.70%	-14.80%	99.93%	1.65%	76
15	Minneapolis, MN	71	6.50%	14.55%	1.66%	17.80%	1.57%	95
16	Nashville, TN	71	7.10%	15.89%	0.32%	11.60%	3.36%	73
17	Denver, CO	70	6.90%	15.39%	1.91%	14.14%	2.14%	85
18	Charleston, SC	70	6.58%	12.47%	-5.24%	22.18%	3.89%	79
19	Chicago, IL	69	6.82%	13.81%	-2.34%	18.54%	1.78%	85
20	Lansing, MI	69	8.36%	11.01%	0.48%	4.29%	2.76%	83



Interactive Activity

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 Mentimeter

► Start Menti

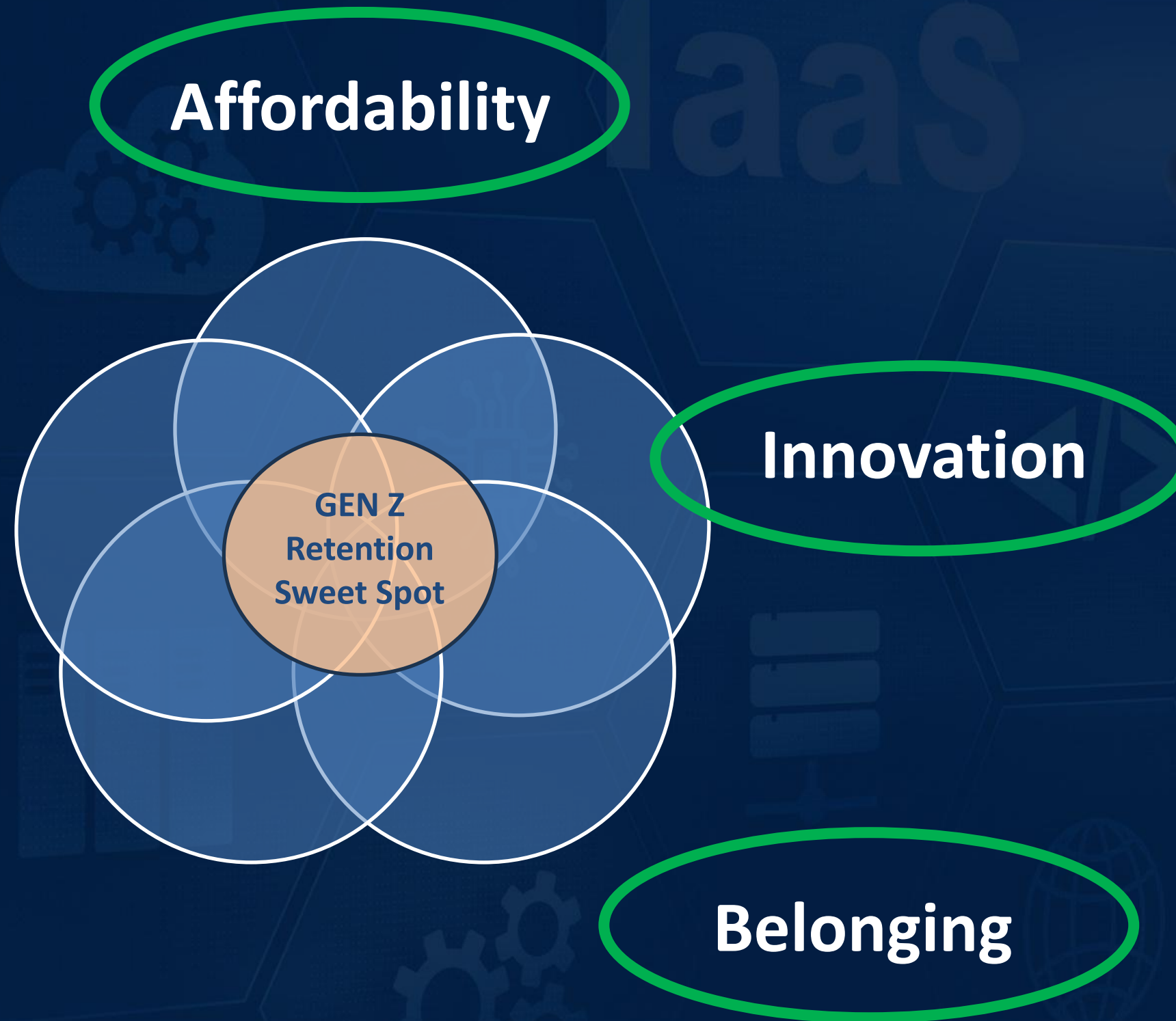


The Pull, Not the Push



Other
Quality of
Life

Career
Pathways



Winning Formula = AFFORDABILITY + INNOVATION + BELONGING



Case Study: Huntsville, Alabama. The Blueprint.



Comparable Scale: Nearly identical population size to Chesapeake 250K

Innovation Engine: Anchored by NASA, defense, and growing tech start-ups

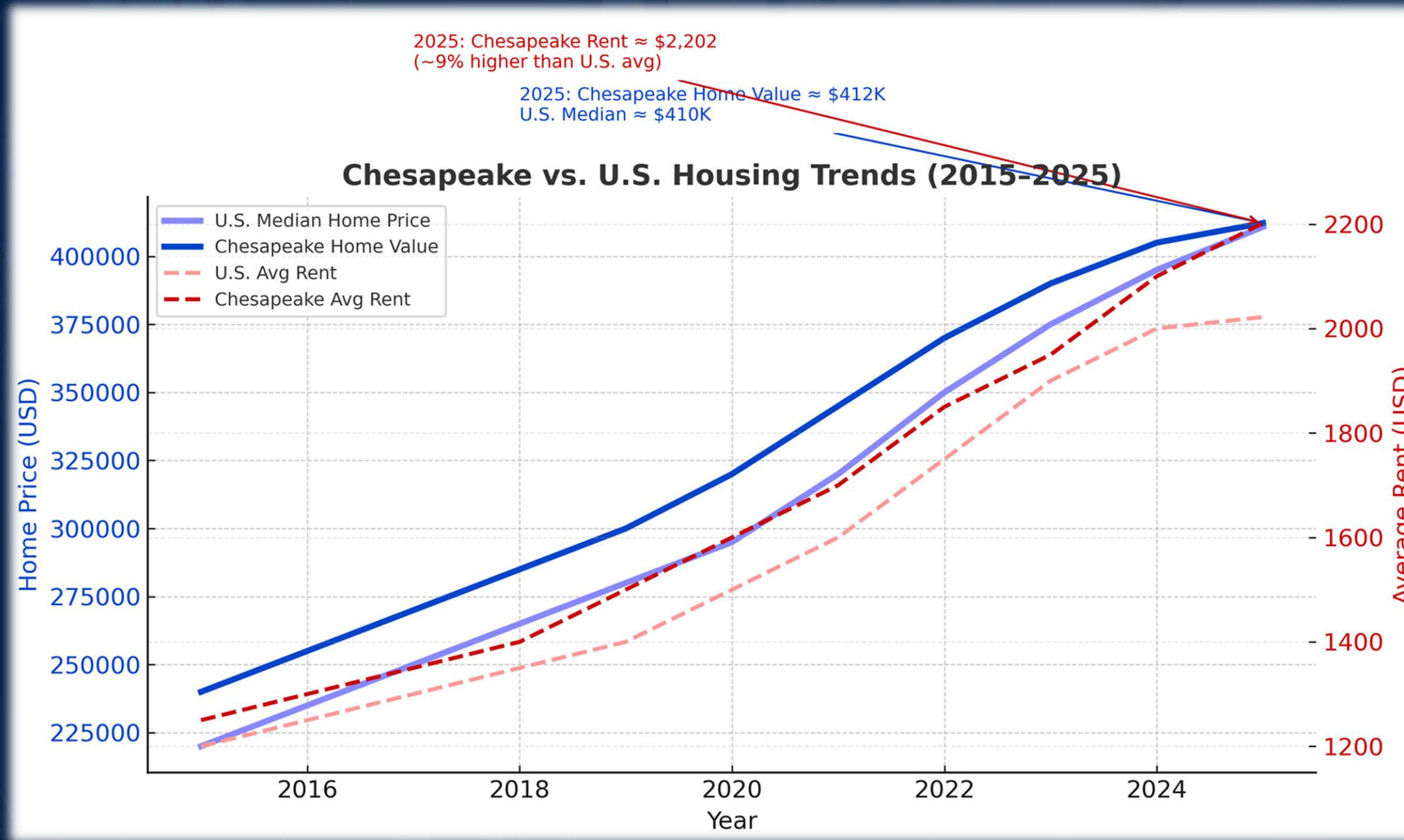
Affordable + Livable: Median rent and home prices below the national average

Triple-Helix Model: Public-private-education partnerships power growth

"Small-city feel, big-city opportunity" narrative built on belonging and civic pride

*They didn't wait for Gen Z to return.
Instead, they built a place Gen Z wanted to come to.*

Case Study: Huntsville, Alabama. The Connection.



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3C's Pathway For Chesapeake



✓ COLLABORATION

- Build Bridges, Not Silos
- Connect city Leadership, schools, and employers
- Co-create Career Pathways that start BEFORE graduation



✓ COMMUNICATION

- Shape the Story
- Let Gen Z voices lead our community narrative
- Share authentic success stories on the platforms they live on



✓ CULTURE

- Belonging drives retention
- Foster workplaces where people feel seen and valued
- Embed purpose, flexibility, and inclusion into how we lead

Behavior drives culture. Culture drives retention.

Two-Layer Behavior Intelligence Framework

Blue (Purpose-driven): Stay where they feel part of something bigger.

Gold (Structured): Stay where they see stability.

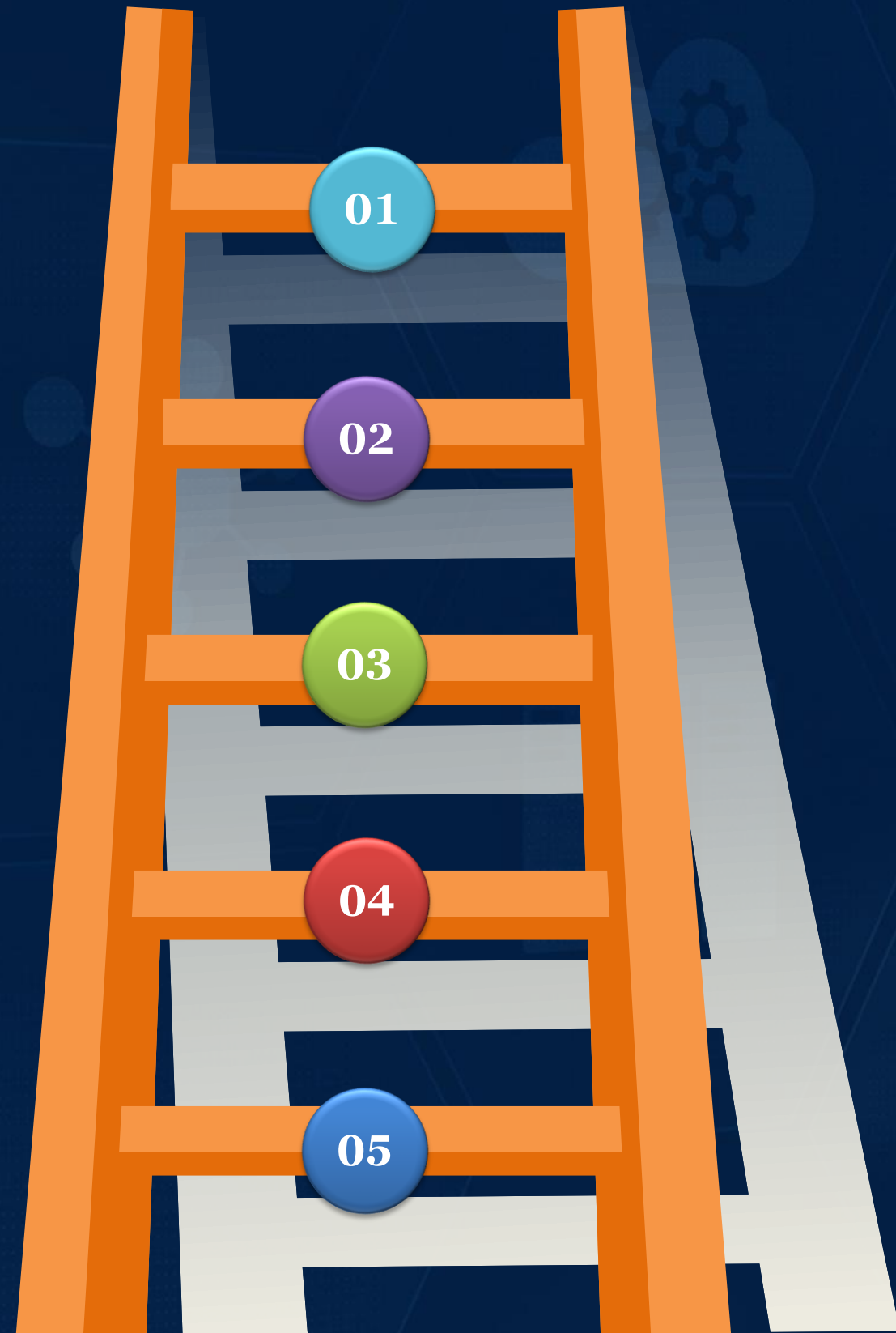
Green (Analytical): Stay where ideas are valued.

Orange (Adventurous): Stay where life feels vibrant and flexible.



If we want to keep people here, we first have to understand what drives them.

The Climb to Belonging: What Keeps Gen Z Rooted



01

Belonging

“Do I feel like I’m part of something bigger?”



02

Innovation

“Is this city moving forward or standing still?”



03

Affordability

“Can I afford to stay here?”



04

Quality of Life

“When I’m not working, do I love how I live?”



05

Career Pathways

“Can I build a future here?”

Our Future If We Can Get This Right Chesapeake 2035



- ✓ A city known for affordability, community, and innovation.
- ✓ Young professionals returning after college.
- ✓ Tech and green-energy startups anchored locally and walkable mixed-use hubs (ex. Summit Pointe).
- ✓ Small-city feel, big-city opportunity!

How We Begin the Climb

The Chesapeake Blueprint



Partnerships

Create a city-education-employer coalition to expand career pathways.



Innovation Hubs

Incentivize co-working and start-up zones.



Livability Projects

Promote affordable housing, walkability, and digital infrastructure.



Narrative Campaign

Launch an “#IAmChesapeake” campaign featuring Gen Z locals.

Let's Build the City That Brings Them Home



Thank You for your attention

I'd love to continue to support:

- Workshops
- Leadership training/ Coaching
- Good conversation over coffee

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