



Elizabeth Cromwell, President and CEO of the Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce

Greetings from the Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce. On behalf of our Board of Directors and staff, we are thrilled to connect with *albemarle* Magazine readers to highlight some of the vital work happening within our business community.

An Update on Project Rebound: Initial Findings

An endeavor of the Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce and many partners, Project Rebound is an initiative to provide information, resources, connection, and guidance to local businesses in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis. Our overarching goal is to engage business leaders to share insights, identify challenges, and build actionable strategies to restore the local economy.

When it arose in Winter 2019, the public health emergency represented by COVID-19 presented communities, families, and businesses around the world with an extraordinary challenge. From personal celebrations to travel to commerce, many of our assumptions and best-laid plans were upset.

In Virginia, a statewide shelter-in-place order was issued in late March in order to slow the virus' spread. A significant impact of the law was that many businesses—including those in the Charlottesville

region—were forced to close their doors suddenly. In early June 2020, the state began issuing guidance for the reopening of Virginia businesses.

As a business community, our challenge is twofold: to return the economy to a vibrant state after so much disruption and public health uncertainty and to use this moment of adversity to nurture a more resilient and inclusive community.

This project began as a conversation among a few people, and now with input from hundreds of business and community leaders, we have a good sense of both immediate and longer-term needs.

When KPMG LLP, a global network of independent member firms offering audit, tax, and advisory services, stepped forward as an advisor, the project became more than a grassroots endeavor. They synthesized and contextualized our vast compilation of notes from our business community. With an experienced team of data miners, they also added an overlay of regional economic data to broaden our understanding of the shifting economic landscape before and during COVID. The GO Virginia grant that enabled us to engage KPMG covered a fraction of the hours they dedicated to this project to support communities that are working together to recover. With rock-solid data in hand, we can move forward both as a Chamber and as a business community. KPMG was honored to work alongside the Project Rebound team, bringing their ideas to life in support of the community through the development of this report.

One of the many positive outcomes of this phase of Project Rebound is that through this process, we have discovered that enterprising people and businesses are already hard at work, operationalizing some of the ideas gleaned from our sessions. Determining who's going to do what will be an essential next step for the Chamber, allowing us to continue in the role of convener and connector.

The 100-page Project Rebound document is available on the Chamber website. I invite you to browse it as a starting point. Our intent is that this report is just one first step and that it will continue to serve as a framework to evolve, expand the conversation and contribute to the improvement of Charlottesville, Albemarle County, and Central Virginia.

After reviewing the report, please let us know if you are engaging in any of

the initiatives envisioned within (for example, a "Buy Local" campaign) to build out our master list of progress.

And if you're not already involved but would like to help the business community build an inclusive resiliency, please get in touch with me. The roadmap for implementation is rooted in community feedback prioritized into categories of "now," "next," and "later" for potential implementation. What we do from here is up to our collective team—and that includes you.

For further and updated information, visit cvillechamber.com.



Project Rebound is led by the Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce in collaboration with economic development partners at the University of Virginia, Albemarle County, and the City of Charlottesville.



Project Rebound, A Blueprint for Economic Resiliency and Reinvention in the Greater Charlottesville Region is available on the Chamber website at www.cvillechamber.com/rebound.



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The Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce advocates, convenes, and engages to strengthen business in the greater Charlottesville Region.