

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

With the transition of the seasons this year, we also see tremendous transformations in our business community. While some of our industries have remained steady or have grown during COVID, the majority of them have suffered considerable losses in revenue. At the Chamber, we are convening groups every day to share resources and best practices to help our region recover and expand economically.

Since the stay-at-home order announced in March, there have been significant shifts in how consumers spend their hard-earned dollars. Albemarle County finally saw a small uptick in shopping starting in June, unlike Charlottesville, which still lags.

People are still shopping, and the real growth in sales is in outlying jurisdictions, where former commuters into Charlottesville and Albemarle are now shopping closer to home. Surrounding counties continue to see significant, double-digit increases in sales activity, particularly at large “big box” stores such as Walmart, Lowe’s, and Home Depot.

These shifts in consumer habits (and the resulting tax implications) will be significant for years to come and necessary to consider as municipalities’ set budgets for the future.

The Chamber recently received exciting news from across the globe. The International Association of Facilitators (IAF) announced they recognize our Chamber with the 2020 Facilitation Impact Award for using facilitation to have a positive impact through Project Rebound. The Chamber will receive this award on Monday, October 26, in a virtual awards ceremony for 17 honorees. The Chamber is one of only three honorees in the United States.

Project Rebound is a considerable team effort envisioned by our partners from Albemarle County, the City of Charlottesville, and the University of Virginia. The idea was simple—convene all interested business stakeholders in the wake



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

of COVID-19 to share best practices, ask for help, and define a path towards our shared economic future.

The execution of that simple idea was far more complicated. We were relieved and grateful that the team at UVA Organizational Excellence volunteered to step in to facilitate the Zoom meetings that hundreds of business people signed up to attend. Before launching the project, we were unsure whether we’d have enough participants to be worthwhile. So when approximately 300 people instantaneously raised their hands to help, we were thrilled and determined to make the experience rewarding for all.

Sarah Collie founded and leads Organizational Excellence for the University. She and her team spent countless hours pre-planning before the Zoom sessions and, many hours afterward, synthesizing the input into well-organized reports. Sarah and her team’s volunteer efforts created the most productive meetings imaginable, especially considering that many of the participants were using Zoom for the first time.

But don’t take my word for it—here’s what Project Rebound meeting attendees had to say:

“Sarah Collie brought such a high degree of professionalism and support to this project; it can only be described by the purest use of the word ‘awesome.’ Her hard and thoughtful work made our communications effective

in large groups. A truly herculean effort was given by her and her team. She has my respect for a lifetime.”—Rebecca Haydock, Director, Central Virginia SBDC (Team co-lead for Reviving Small Businesses)

“Mary Brackett and her team were exactly what we needed. They rose to the occasion and made this heavy-lift not only manageable but inspiring and regenerative. This has been one of the best managed and most rewarding teams I’ve ever been part of.”—Justin Reid, Director, Community Initiatives, Virginia Humanities (Team co-lead for Protecting the Arts and Creative Economy)

“Working with Reid was wonderful! He took our initial concerns about how to logistically run such a large public meeting online and cogently laid out and executed a well-defined plan. You’d never know this was his first time running a series of meetings to collect valuable input from multiple stakeholders of this magnitude! He was a consummate professional, and the Chamber and our community will benefit greatly from his leadership and facilitation capabilities!”—Adrian Felts, Senior Manager at Signature Science, LLC (Team co-lead for Assessing Key Industry Clusters: Subgroup for IT, Financial and Defense)

On behalf of Project Rebound, the Chamber will share the stage with other honorees leading high-impact programs in the UK, France, Italy, Canada, Finland, India, Turkey, Sweden, Finland, and Russia. Congratulations to all of our Project Rebound participants and the fantastic Organizational Excellence team!

For further and updated information, visit cvillechamber.com.



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.