

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.

Generally, I don't make New Year's resolutions. They often seem like an effort to atone for last year's sins (COVID "diet" and a few others) or are pipe dreams that inevitably fall apart by the end of January. But after this year's slog, I can't remember ever being this excited for a new year to start.

So I am taking this opportunity to make some bold resolutions and predictions for our organization and the business community at large. Somehow, resolutions seem more manageable when I am committing all of us to them!

Here are five Chamber resolutions that I can guarantee we'll be keeping all year long in no particular order:

#1. Buying Local—As organizations and individuals, it's crucial that we support our local businesses, which are stepping up their customer service, offering same-day delivery, curbside pickup, and more. Even if your purchase is slightly more expensive or creates some inconvenience, your solidarity will help keep them afloat during COVID. This year, resolve to seek out local options for your personal and business needs, and support our business community.

#2. Empowering Tomorrow's Business Leaders—Two new initiatives will target our emerging professionals in ways that help them grow professional and personal networks, build leadership skills, and connect them to leadership opportunities.

First, the Chamber's new group, Rising Professionals, is creating programs and events geared towards the 40-and-under crowd. The immediate, enormously positive response to this group's recent formation points to a very successful 2021.



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

Second, the acclaimed Leadership Charlottesville will be transforming into a collaborative partnership between the Chamber, the Center for Nonprofit Excellence, and the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, launching in the fall of 2021. By combining the best of the leadership development programs from all three organizations, the new hybrid program will be rigorous and rewarding.

#3. Launching Venture Central—There is strong alignment between the University of Virginia, Albemarle County, and the City of Charlottesville offices of economic development. The Venture Central concept has been in development for many years. The Chamber has become a partner in this initiative, and we expect to launch this new entity in 2021. Ideally, it will become a centralized "front door" for entrepreneurship and support business creation and success. In the near-term, and in a post-COVID environment, it will be more important than ever to foster and cultivate entrepreneurship in order to grow employment and our tax base.

#4. Launching the Chamber's Equity Advisory Council—The Chamber Board of Directors recently voted unanimously to create a new board-level committee to help guide the Chamber's strategies. The

new council will serve as a think tank to ensure that equitable opportunity is a consistent priority throughout the Chamber's initiatives and committee work in 2021 and beyond. The council will include both board members and experts from outside our organization and representatives from the Chamber's Minority Business Alliance.

#5. Building Upon Project Rebound—Perhaps the essential aspect of the Chamber's COVID initiative, Project Rebound, has been in creating and strengthening relationships across the public, private, and academic sectors to work together toward common goals. The report published last summer remains a vital framework of needs and opportunities. As we move into 2021, this document will continue to be a guide for the Chamber and many of our partners.

We'd love to welcome your business to join us as we work together towards a stronger, more cohesive business community. The Chamber's unique skill is the ability to convene the right people, at the right time, to generate positive action.

And when the time is right, we will convene once again *in person* and throw a whopper of a celebration to recognize all of our amazing friends and business partners who are helping build a better tomorrow. Until then, stay safe!

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.

Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce 434-295-3141 www.cvillechamber.com

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