

**G**reetings 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.

Let's not sugarcoat it—2020 has been rough so far. But I will skip the oft-repeated expressions of unprecedented challenges in favor of more inspiring highlights from the past several weeks as we work together to restore our economy in the wake of COVID-19.

Along with our partners at the City of Charlottesville, Albemarle County and the University of Virginia, the Chamber launched Project Rebound in April. The project's goal is to develop a blueprint for restoring local business operations and build economic resiliency.

The name "Project Rebound" was inspired by the words of UVA Basketball Coach Tony Bennett at the NCAA Championship post-final press conference. "If you use it right—the adversity—it will buy you a ticket to a place you couldn't have gone any other way." So here we are, trying to use our adversity the right way to create the best outcome possible.

Project Rebound Steering Committee members Pace Lochte, Denise Herndon, Roger Johnson, and Chris Engel teamed up with Team Chamber to create a united effort spanning business, government, and academia.

Within two weeks of announcing the project, more than 300 business and community leaders volunteered their time to share ideas, insights, and concerns through a structured, team-based exploration of industries and sectors facilitated by UVA's Office of Organizational Excellence.

Project Rebound's industry-specific, the team-based approach has generated actionable ideas for both urgent, immediate needs to reopen and rebuild capacity and for longer-range economic resiliency. These business leaders continue to help identify specific opportunities, challenges, partnership opportunities, and potential solutions.

Among a variety of emerging themes from Project Rebound are: developing

a consistent model for businesses to engage among employees and customers safely; building a common language for near-term, immediate regional recovery, with shared goals and benchmarks; relentlessly fostering innovation to pivot companies and leverage new opportunities; identifying partnerships among and across industry sectors; and identifying supply chain problems and solutions.

Almost immediately, Project Rebound has received attention for its deeply collaborative spirit between the business community, municipalities, and the university. We have been fielding inquiries and sharing materials with university communities such as Chapel Hill, Williamsburg, Hampton Roads, and Iowa City. With an emphasis on shared outcomes and a common vision for economic recovery, this community's approach seems to be an unusual model and one that others would like to emulate.

I had the good fortune to sit in on nearly all of the committee meetings, and am gratified to see efforts for mutual support, even among competitors. The majority of our businesses are interconnected and reliant on each other to succeed. Admirable are the businesses that have been able to pivot their products and services to satisfy a new need or those who have been willing to share resources such as legal and HR expertise with more vulnerable companies.

Mostly, what I observed is that regardless of industry, our businesses are made up of real people who share many common values and concerns. People are concerned about feeling confident that the places they go to and the people who surround them are making safe choices. They are worried about standardizing safety protocols so that there isn't a checkerboard approach—which will confuse consumers and create opportunities for interpersonal conflict.

And they care tremendously about stabilizing childcare, without which many businesses won't be able to reopen.

There is also a lot of hope. As the nation recovers from the economic fallout of the COVID crisis, we still have assets



Elizabeth Cromwell

that are the envy of many communities, and we will make the best use of them to safely crank up the economy again.

The collaborative support of our municipal partners and the university cannot be understated. The Chamber is a lean nonprofit, albeit with a powerhouse board of directors spanning many industry sectors. More than ever, the Chamber is doing what we do best—convening, engaging, and advocating on behalf of the business community. Aligned through Project Rebound, we hope our shared efforts bring a more resilient economy for today and tomorrow.

For further information, visit [cvillechamber.com](http://cvillechamber.com).

**Elizabeth Cromwell** is the President and CEO of the Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce



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.

**Charlottesville Regional Chamber of Commerce** 434-295-3141 [www.cvillechamber.com](http://www.cvillechamber.com)

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