



From the Mayor's Desk

August 2020

In it for the long haul

As more Americans return to the office and the economy reopens, keeping employees safe will extend far beyond issuing key cards or creating numeric door codes. It will involve a concerted effort by everyone to keep countless surfaces sanitized, limit occupant capacity, wear masks, and keep their distance from one another.

A study by the U.S. Census Bureau found that 44 percent of small business owners felt in late June that their businesses would need more than six months to return to normal. Six months seems almost minimal at this juncture. More than 40 million people have lost their jobs since this began. Companies are grappling with massive disruptions to their businesses and making tough choices at a challenging time.

Direct subsidies to businesses have kept a lot of people employed. According to researchers at M.I.T, the Paycheck Protection Program, (P.P.P.) saved between 1.5 million and 3.5 million jobs. I've spoken with a lot of our local business owners, and to some who received this assistance. Even small grants and moderate loans have helped to keep people employed.

The pandemic has forced the adoption of new ways of working. Organizations are reimagining work and the role of offices in creating safe, productive, and enjoyable jobs and lives for employees. Employees are zooming into meetings, responding to messages around the clock, and willingly blurring the boundary between their work and private lives to help their organizations succeed. Technology has been our savior, both personally and professionally, at these unprecedented times.

As the weeks churn on, we learn more and more about reducing community spread of Covid-19. It may be tough for some businesses to voluntarily limit the number of patrons or clients inside their stores, especially after experiencing lost revenues, but we are recognizing its necessity, as the numbers continue to climb in Gwinnett County.

Many of our local businesses have risen to the occasion, acting quickly to safeguard employees and patrons. In the last newsletter, and also in a direct email, we made a request of our businesses. We asked them to let us know if they had taken the extra measures outlined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. We have placed the list on our city website on the Covid-19 information page. We have also placed some Business Reopening Best Practices on our website. Quite simply, it is about putting this virus out of business, so we can get back to running our own. This virus will retreat eventually, but it won't be without commitment and dedication over the long haul.