

In 2020 the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce pivoted to a focus on business recovery and resilience. That focus continues today as it supports small businesses trying to recover from the effects of the pandemic. Paige Sharpe, Director of Development and Talent Initiatives and Dani Thompsen Economic Development Specialist, updated City Club members at the February 4 program. The recovery effort included developing partnerships with local businesses and agencies and development of a program to make personal protective equipment available to local businesses in Springfield. That program still has some equipment available, they reported, in case businesses still have needs.



Paige Sharpe

The Chamber offered a September business boot camp to its over 700 members focused on developing or improving an online presence so that business could remain active in the face of restrictions on in person activity. That program included \$500 grants from the City of Springfield used to improve a business's online presence.

The speakers noted that this may be the major change in business practices that will persist beyond the recovery – and online presence will become essential and will enhance a business's ability to pivot as future major

events tend to disrupt the business cycle.

No one knows, they said, how many businesses have closed as a result of the pandemic. While business openings tend to be splashy, closures tend to be quiet and not publicized. There has, however, been serious damage done to the hospitality industries in the metropolitan area.



Dani Thompsen

The speakers reported that the Chamber is supporting efforts to offer some sort of liability protection to local businesses, but efforts have not focused on a specific form that might take.