



March 17, 2021

Dear Chief Elected Officials of SCRCOG,

During the last month, our efforts have shifted significantly from response to recovery. While the pandemic is ongoing and there are many immediate issues to address, the roll out of the vaccine and the American Rescue Act are providing something that has been in short supply over the last year...hope. Restaurants, one of our hardest hit industries, are making plans to reopen outdoor dining and small-scale events are being scheduled. While optimistic, local businesses are also being pragmatic given the unknown impact of the emerging variants and duration of efficacy of the current vaccines.

At our monthly REDFO meeting, we hosted Bob Motley and Evan O'Brien of Cushman and Wakefield to update the economic development stakeholders on the current commercial market and anticipated trends. Greater New Haven has seen the renovation/repurposing of existing office buildings to residential properties, hotels, life science labs and distribution centers. In the short term, they anticipate a hybrid office environment with employees working remotely 2-3 days per week and onsite the remainder. Offices that provide ample space for employees, have modern HVAC and are located in low-rise buildings to reduce interaction with the general public will be in higher demand. It is unclear if the residential market will continue to boom.

We also held a town hall session with DECD Commissioner David Lehman and the lodging industry. Commissioner Lehman outlined the DECD priorities for 2021: equity, efficiency and investment. Some of the actions will include Small Business Express 2.0, 2x incentive benefits for jobs created in opportunity zones or distressed municipalities, a centralized business portal for new businesses, elimination of the Transfer Act, promote our growth industries and rebuild the hospitality sector.

Collaboration with key partners is moving projects forward including NextGen, CI, Bioscience Collaborative, Downtown Crossing, New Haven Innovation Collaborative and the Evergreen Laundry Cooperative. Tourism advertising is focused on the drive market and we are purchasing print and digital media ads from AAA. In addition, we participated in Yale University's Graduate Student Fair for prospective students. Travel restrictions have students selecting colleges in towns and cities they have never visited and this virtual fair provided a great opportunity to showcase our region's assets.

Workforce development is another priority for REX. In conjunction with Workforce Alliance we are identifying trends and are prepared to support new initiatives to align workforce skillsets with available jobs.

Graphs of regional unemployment claims are attached. If you would like the spreadsheet by town, please let us know.

Sincerely,

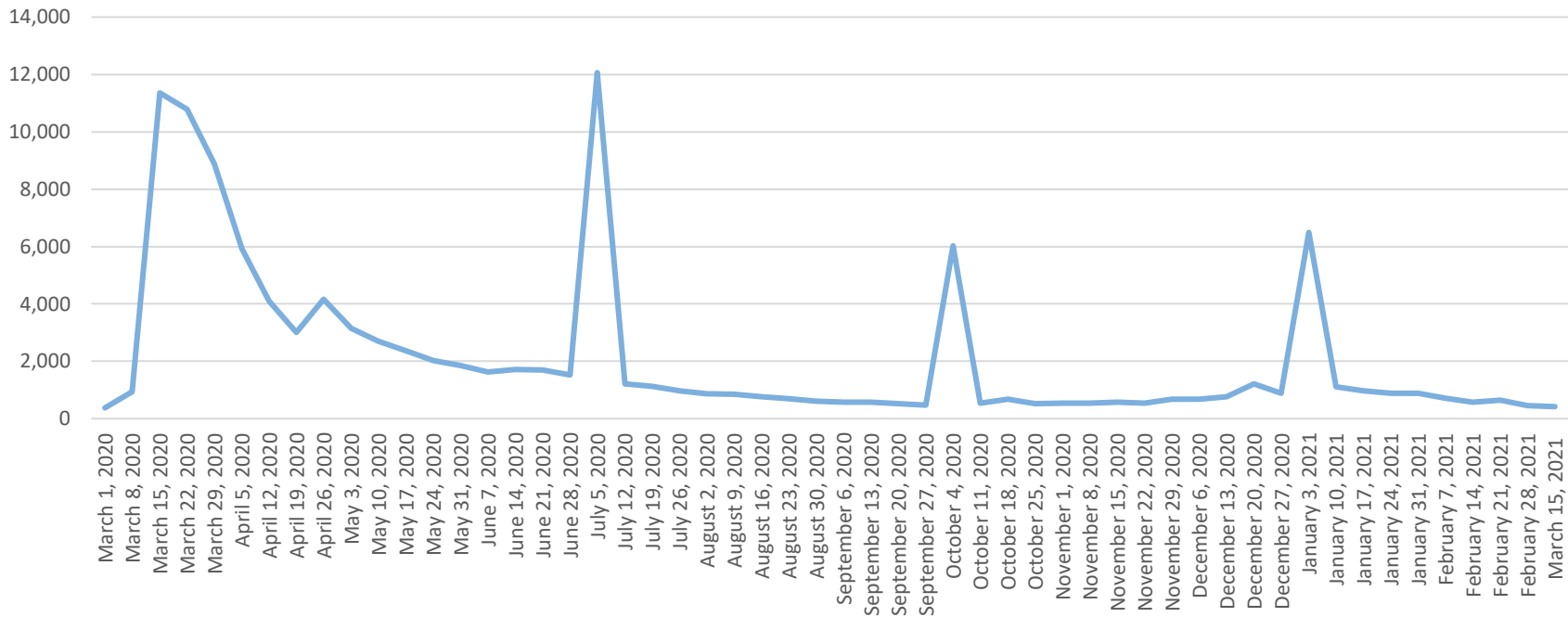
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