

UPTOWN

a publication of the Municipal Association of South Carolina



Building the Next Block Downtown Florence Looks Forward From National Award

Photo: City of Florence.

It's hard to not be impressed with Florence's downtown revitalization efforts.

Gone are the boarded-up buildings and deserted streets of its historic district. Now, it's home to busy restaurants, a boutique hotel, renovated storefronts, a thriving arts center and popular events. Florence has accomplished 90% of the goals set out in its downtown master plan, and the city is the 2023 recipient of a national Great American Main Street Award, just the second city in South Carolina to ever win, following Greenville.

It's a success story showing what a revitalization effort can accomplish. But here is what city and business leaders say: We're not finished.

They're not content with the building vacancy rates that have dropped from 42% to 6% in recent years in the eight-block downtown district, or the university health science graduate programs housed in renovated buildings.

"When you realize a fair amount of success, and the community responds and says, 'This is wonderful,' it reinforces what you are doing. And you want to do another and another and another," said Fred Carter, president of Francis Marion University and current board chair of the Florence Downtown Development Corporation.

That enthusiasm is evident in the area's new master plan, setting the city's intentions for the next decade. By 2030, the city expects a larger, more diverse and more walkable downtown,

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with a goal of 1,000 more residential units covering a range of price points and styles.

“If we can accomplish all our goals in this master plan, the downtown Florence of 2030 will be a much more connected, walkable and thriving place than it even is today,” said Hannah Davis, Florence’s development manager.

Florence’s definition of “downtown” will change, too. The plan calls for expanding beyond the historic district’s borders into a larger redevelopment area, where enhanced corridors and gateways will announce that people are in a special place, Davis said.

“Our goal is to also create walkable, connected corridors that people feel comfortable utilizing for commutes and for recreation,” she said. “And in 2030, we hope that our intentional and thoughtful work along the lines of diversity and inclusion will pay off so that we can continue to cultivate a vibrant downtown reflective of the demographics of our community.”

It’s an ambitious goal, but it’s something Florence city and business leaders believe is attainable. They point to what the city has done so far — redeveloping 79 buildings in a downtown that was on the brink of collapse in 2002.

Davis said there are several reasons the revitalization has succeeded, including a vision set out in an earlier downtown master plan that received support from the community, elected officials and staff through several administrations, along with the maintenance of a dedicated staff to make it happen.

A Main Street South Carolina member, the city also followed the Main Street approach, including appearance and maintenance codes, designating a historic district to

define the program’s scope, identifying and managing the downtown’s assets, and promotion. But none of it would have happened without strong public-private partnerships, which will remain a priority.

Tim Norwood was an early partner and believer in downtown Florence, working with the mayor, city council and city leaders more than a decade ago to help progress a vision for downtown. Using a combination of local, state and federal incentives, Norwood and partners renovated and opened Hotel Florence and Victors, a fine-dining restaurant.

“Florence hadn’t had a credible downtown in 50 years. We wanted our children and the young people in Florence to have a reason to stay. We wanted to have a downtown people would be proud of,” Norwood said.

It wasn’t an immediate sell, he said, adding with a laugh that some of his friends and business partners questioned his sanity back in 2011. But he remembers what happened when the restaurant opened.

“It was a magical time. The place was flooded. Everyone was dressed up. People said, ‘I can’t believe I’m in Florence.’ It was like Dorothy in ‘The Wizard of Oz.’”

He now is a Florence Downtown Development Corporation board member and continues to work with his partners on development projects. He said getting more people to live downtown is key to continued success.

“Having people living downtown gives the community a fabric. You have people walking around, supporting retail stores. You want that busy feeling,” Norwood said.

Some of that residential development will be helped along by students at Francis Marion University. The university now has



After removing a weathered slipcover facade from its historic building, Hotel Florence became an early example of the city’s downtown revitalization. Photo: City of Florence.

NEWS BRIEFS

The Leadership South Carolina Class of 2023 included **Jamie Caggiano**, fire chief and assistant city administrator, City of Gaffney; **Caitlin Cothran**, manager for Local Revenue Services, Municipal Association of SC; **Alli Gante**, assistant city administrator, City of Clemson; and **John Krajc**, councilmember, City of Myrtle Beach. Leadership SC promotes leadership skills and an understanding of policy issues affecting South Carolina.

Members of the SC Community Development Association elected their 2023 – 2024 board of directors. They include President **Emory Langston**, Lower Savannah Council of Governments; Vice President **Doug Polen**, Town of Irmo; and Secretary **Angela Kirkpatrick**, Catawba Regional Council of Governments. Returning members at large are **Jessi Shuler**, Town of Summerville; **Joe Smith**, Greenville County Redevelopment Authority; **Kimberly Mullinax**, Lowcountry Council of Governments; and **Arlene Young**, Appalachian Council of Governments. New members at large include **Stefanie Smith Dewort**, SC Department of Commerce; **Mayor Frank McClary**, Town of Andrews; and **Kim Etheridge**, Pee Dee Regional Council of Governments. The past president is **Shawn Bell**, City of Fountain Inn.

a significant presence in Florence's downtown, opening its sixth building in the area.

Carter, too, remembers some of the early doubters.

"There were folks, old-time alumni, who cautioned me not to build downtown. They saw the decline and were fearful about graffiti and vandalism. But the group of people with whom we were working were determined we could put up a major arts venue that would spur development in the hospital sector downtown and maybe even residential development," Carter said. "The bottom line: 13 years later, we've never had a single incident at the performing arts center, nothing has been vandalized. The community has had nothing but respect for the facility."

FMU also decided to grow its health sciences programs in the downtown. The university built and renovated two health sciences facilities downtown, where nurse practitioner, speech pathology, clinical psychology and health science administration graduate programs are located — 7 miles from the FMU main campus, but placing clinical rotations of students closer to Florence's health care facilities.

"We keep coming together and keep dreaming. What's wonderful is figuring out what to do with the next block," Carter said. "We'd love more retail, more commercial, more parking. I'd love to see more apartments and more residential building downtown. As we put more grad students downtown, these are students that need to live downtown."

Clint Moore, Florence's assistant city manager, said that increasing residential units is the next step in the central business district's transformation.

"We have an aggressive goal within the master plan for 1,000 units in 20 years," he said.

"Having that 18-hour city life, with downtown busy all the time, is important. Like any neighborhood, you want people living there who take ownership of an area."

New housing is in the works and more is on the drawing board, with new apartments, condominiums and some short-term rental units.

Moore said Florence will look beyond the small footprint of the historic district and expand its focus to the entire central business district. But projects in the historic area give existing property owners a clear vision of ways to improve or better utilize their buildings, allowing them to mimic the historic district's accomplishments, he said.

"It would be very easy for the city to say, 'Look at downtown, it's full, there are only one or two vacant storefronts.' You could look at it and say we were absolutely successful and we're done. But that's not something you should do," Moore said. "You should continue that growth, that effort."

Florence is also a model for others around the state, showing the importance of developing and using strategic planning "to establish a roadmap for intentional direction," said Jenny Boulware, Main Street South Carolina manager.

"This roadmap provides purposeful and realistic goals with incremental steps to achieve those goals. Their roadmap does not sit on a shelf; the local team tracks and celebrates progress as it is made," Boulware said. "I would also note that the Florence team is continually learning. They seek out downtown revitalization best practices from peer Main Street municipalities across the country. This is what makes the Main Street network so impactful — the ability to reach out to like-minded communities pursuing the same goal of a revitalized, vibrant commercial district."



Florence's James Allen Plaza features an iron gate designed by English Cooper. Photo: True Light Photography.

Tech Talks to Explain IT Trends, Needs at Annual Meeting



Annual Meeting
July 27 - 30, 2023 | Greenville, SC

Up-to-date knowledge of information technology is more important than ever for cities and towns. For this reason, the Municipal Association of SC and its technology partner, VC3, are offering Tech Talks throughout the 2023 Annual Meeting on July 27, 28 and 29 — quick, 15-minute sessions about critical information for elected officials and municipal staff.

A Cybersecurity Checklist for Municipalities – Many local governments don't have a cybersecurity plan in place. This session will offer tips, best practices, and recommendations into a checklist that cities and towns can use to create a cybersecurity plan.

Why Multi-Factor Authentication Is Essential – Multi-factor authentication, or MFA, adds a layer of authentication, such as a code sent to a phone, that is a difficult obstacle for cyberattackers. Learn where it should be applied, and why it's such a powerful protection.

Take Your City from Cyber Uninsurable to Insurable – Ransomware attacks affect municipalities more than any other industry, and yet many do not have the security basics in place, causing insurers to increasingly see municipalities

as uninsurable. Learn tips on navigating the cyber insurance environment.

Unpacking Security Awareness Training for City Employees – Cyberattackers are most likely to get into a city's systems with a phishing email and convincing an employee to click a malicious link or file. Learn about automated phishing tests, safe computing practices and identifying malicious emails.

A Guide to Municipal IT Budget Planning – Detailed IT budgets help uncover inefficiencies, save money, and better execute operational goals. This session will cover the components of an IT budget and presenting IT budgets to council.

A Managed IT Services Foundation for Cities and Towns – With constrained budgets limiting the ability to hire IT professionals, small municipalities can struggle to maintain computers, internet and email. Learn about partnering with an IT vendor experienced with municipalities.

Disaster Recovery Checklist and Best Practices for Municipalities – A disaster recovery plan goes far beyond just data backup. This session will

explain what could happen and a disaster recovery checklist for evaluating readiness.

5 Things You Need in a Records Management System – Knowledge of information records and technology are required to effectively manage records, follow retention schedules, and respond to open records requests. This session will cover things to consider for a records management system that helps municipal clerks do their jobs better.

Make Your Website ADA-Compliant: Best Practices for Cities – Many city websites do not comply with best practices that help people with disabilities access content. This session will cover steps that are easy to tackle with the help of a website designer and those who upload content.

Find more information about the Annual Meeting at www.masc.sc (keyword: Annual Meeting). The Tech Talk schedule will be available on the Municipal Association of SC app, which can be downloaded through the App Store or Google Play.

Download the Municipal Association's App Before the Annual Meeting and Small City Summit

The Municipal Association's app gives users access to many of the Association's resources, not just events. Even so, it offers plenty of event information for the Association's Annual Meeting, taking place in Greenville on July 27 – 30, as well as the Small City Summit, also taking place in Greenville on July 27.

Through the app, users can use the meeting agenda to plan which sessions they want to attend. The app also gives users information on speakers and attendees.

Beyond conferences, the app offers access to such resources as the Association's training calendar, municipal directory, staff listing, job openings and the Association's podcasts.

Users should note that the app only refreshes when they navigate through it, selecting links. If they have not navigated through the app since a previous meeting, then old meeting information may populate when they open the app. They can correct this by selecting links to make the app update itself.

Download the app from either the App Store or Google Play by searching for "Municipal Association of SC." To learn more about the app, contact Russell Cox at 803.933.1206 or rcox@masc.sc. Also, Association staff will be available at the Annual Meeting to assist with the app.



Managing Insurance Before and After the Storm

From Hurricane Matthew in 2016 to Florence in 2018 and Ian in 2022, South Carolina has experienced plenty of significant and damaging hurricanes, and the official return of the Atlantic hurricane season in June brought with it the potential for more storms this year. City and town officials looking to prepare for the next big one need to ask whether their insurance coverage is adequate — and the best way to do this is to maintain a list of assets needing insurance coverage, known as a property schedule.

Checking property schedules for accuracy each year can help prevent cities from discovering after a loss that the property had no coverage or had an incorrect value listed. Some common occurrences that can make a schedule outdated are the construction of new facilities or the purchase of assets that the city does not add to the schedule.

Reviewing coverage

- **Understand how much money the coverage would pay if a storm destroyed a given building.** Would the insurance cover it at its replacement cost or based on its actual cash value? Cash-value-basis coverage, which typically includes automobiles, factors in depreciation, which lowers

the payout even when the cost of replacement does not decline.

- **Know whether the coverage has a coinsurance provision, requiring the city to cover a certain percentage of the value of the building and its contents.** If the city does not cover the property for the required minimum, it would have to pay a coinsurance penalty after a loss before the coverage would apply deductibles.
- **Know whether buildings are located inside high-hazard flood zones.** These are zones that the Federal Emergency Management Agency's flood maps marks beginning with the letters "A" or "V." The National Flood Insurance Program offers a maximum coverage of \$500,000 for a building and \$500,000 for contents. If a building is in a high-hazard area and is not insured to these amounts, then any claims payments may be a payout on top of the NFIP coverage. FEMA has a Flood Map Service Center at <https://msc.fema.gov>.

Preparing property

When a tropical cyclone is on the way, there are some steps that staff can take to reduce losses that go beyond the basics of securing anything likely to blow away.

For example, for structures known to be in low-lying areas vulnerable to flooding, staff can move their contents to higher ground. They can also move all vehicles and equipment out of low-lying areas, and spread the equipment among multiple locations in case a catastrophic loss occurs at any one location.

For offices in locations known to be vulnerable, workers may want to move all important paperwork, computers and any other equipment to another location, or potentially cover equipment under plastic sheets and move it away from windows and off the floor.

Managing property after a loss

When a loss happens, the city's first steps should be to secure damaged property to prevent any further losses — for example securing leaking roofs with plastic or tarps. Employees should also immediately document the losses through photographs and written descriptions for the insurance claims.

The SC Emergency Management Division maintains a detailed South Carolina Hurricane Guide explaining hurricane basics, preparations and evacuation processes. Find the guide at <https://hurricane.sc>.



TAKING THE LEAD

How City Officials Can Promote Civility

By Matt Lehrman, Co-founder and Managing Director, Social Prosperity Partners

Civility in local government is similar to the guardrails on a highway — providing structure by which municipal leaders and the public can navigate around each other. When civility breaks down, however, people and perspectives collide — resulting in misunderstandings and disagreements that can harm relationships and fracture a community's sense of togetherness.

Guardrails can't provide complete protection from conflicts, but they are the fundamental structures of cooperation and coexistence.

Taking the lead

Every city official owns the responsibility for the infrastructure of civility in their municipality. Whatever your personal agenda or philosophy, you are — by nature of your position — undeniably responsible for ensuring access, information, and respect for all, including for those with whom you disagree.

Creating an environment that is open, fair, and considerate to everyone is crucial. This means basing your decisions on factual information, being transparent in your actions and decision-making processes, and being accountable for promoting a sense of pride and togetherness throughout your community.

By prioritizing civility, you set a positive example and build trust and confidence — not just in local government, but in your community's essential quality of togetherness. A civil local government is not just nice to have but a must-have. It is the foundation upon which a healthy and functioning democracy is built.

Welcoming disagreements

Disagreement is not a sign of dysfunction, but rather a prerequisite for effective decision-making in a free society. The ideal of democracy is that it enables people with assorted knowledge, values, and lived experiences to come together to recognize and solve community problems. Civic leadership cannot be achieved without the presence of diverse and even passionate perspectives and viewpoints.

Disagreement also helps to expose underlying assumptions and biases. When individuals with different perspectives come together, they are often forced to articulate and defend their assumptions and values — a process that reveals hidden biases and assumptions. By engaging with dissenting viewpoints, municipal leaders can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the problem they are trying to solve.

When citizens are encouraged to express their views and engage in constructive dialogue, they are more likely to hold their leaders accountable for their decisions. Can you make yourself comfortable with feedback and criticism? By engaging with — rather than avoiding or repelling — diverse perspectives, even dissent, you have the potential to create a culture of accountability that ensures decision-making is truly transparent and responsive.

As a civic leader, when you say “community,” it's especially important for people to remember that you are responsible to serve not a specific constituency but the entire population of your city. While it may be tempting to focus on the interests of your most vocal

supporters or a community's loudest voices, doing so can lead to short-term thinking and neglect of the long-term interests of the broader community.

Disagreement builds trust and strengthens relationships. When individuals feel that their opinions are valued and respected, they are more likely to be invested in that decision-making process. By creating forums for meaningful dialogue, municipal leaders demonstrate their commitment to the community and build relationships of trust and mutual respect.

While disagreement can be challenging and uncomfortable, leaders must foster an environment that encourages open and honest communication. This may require the development of formal mechanisms for soliciting feedback and dissent, such as public forums or advisory committees. Leaders must also be prepared to model constructive dialogue and demonstrate a commitment to the values of transparency, accountability, and inclusivity.

Standing strong against incivility

The American ideal of government is rooted in the belief that reasonable people can work together to find solutions to shared problems. Compromise is not a weakness, and ample time and space exist to make community decisions. While not everyone will always agree on the final outcome, the process must be fair and thorough — ensuring that everyone feels heard.

Unfortunately, this ideal is being threatened by the prevalence of anger and outrage in American media, where clicks, shares, and time spent engaging translate into profit. This business model has created a market for incivility and negativity that pervades our society, leading to issues such as polarization and divisiveness.

To counteract this, local governments must actively practice respectful communication and behavior that promotes collaboration, compromise, and constructive dialogue. Incivility, which demonstrates a lack of respect and consideration for others, creates a self-centered attitude that can leave others feeling hurt, disrespected, and excluded.

If you want to stand against incivility, you need to recognize and call it out when you see it, in particular:

- **Obstinace** — stubborn adherence to one's own opinion despite reason or persuasion.
- **Demagoguery** — emotional and prejudicial appeals to sway public opinion, rather than engaging in rational argument.
- **Dogmatism** — the inflexible adherence to a particular set of principles, beliefs, or ideology, without considering alternative viewpoints or evidence.

Changing these behaviors is not something that can be achieved overnight. If you're looking for a quick fix, I'm sorry to disappoint, but there is no magic phrase or verbal jiu-jitsu tactic that can instantly reverse an instance of incivility during a council meeting.

The following is the civility that all local leaders need to get good at:

Energize obstinance. Find shared goals and values that underlie the debate. By identifying common ground, you can frame the conversation in a way that encourages compromise and collaboration. Bring in outside experts, facilitators, or neutral third parties to provide fresh perspectives and objective feedback.

Counter demagoguery. Focus on presenting the facts and evidence that support the proposed course of action. This can help to move the conversation away from emotional appeals and toward rational and fact-based decision-making.

Engaging in active listening and making space for the consideration of alternative solutions is vital.

Overcome dogmatism. Frame the debate in terms of outcomes rather than ideology. By focusing on the practical implications of different policy choices, you shift the conversation away from entrenched beliefs and toward pragmatic solutions. Building alliances and coalitions across ideological lines can also be an effective way to seek out common ground and work together toward shared goals.

You have a crucial responsibility to govern your community in a fair, equitable, and just manner. This requires standing strong against incivility and disrespect, even when it's being thrown at you.

Connecting, respecting and listening

Facing incivility and negativity during council meetings and community events can be disheartening, but giving up is not an option when it comes to civic leadership.

By prioritizing respect and collaboration, you set an example for others to follow, creating a ripple effect that can spread throughout the community. Keep your focus on how people in your community deserve to feel about civic engagement — connected, respected, and heard — and find the motivation to push through challenging situations and work toward constructive solutions.

Local leaders hold the power to shape decisions that impact people's daily lives. Making those decisions with integrity, fairness, and a commitment to the greater good is crucial. By bringing people together, bridging divides, and creating a better future for your community, you have a responsibility worth fighting for.

A version of this article originally appeared in Minnesota Cities magazine.

Learn more about the Municipal Association's civility initiative and its resources at www.masc.sc (keyword: civility).

Pillars of Civility

Be as eager to listen as to speak.

Concentrate on what you have in common, not what separates you.

Act as you would expect someone to act in your home.

Ask questions to learn. Answer questions with respect.



LAW ENFORCEMENT POLICIES

BODY-WORN CAMERAS

Act 218 took effect in 2023, requiring all law enforcement agencies to adopt and implement a set of minimum standards. The law allows departments to establish additional standards that are more restrictive.

The Municipal Association's Risk Management Services drafted model policies for each of the standards, available for use by all cities and towns at www.masc.sc (keyword: law enforcement model policies). Departments that are not SC Municipal Insurance Trust or SC Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund members should reach out to the SC Criminal Justice Academy for policy questions.

The sixth model policy is "Body-Worn Cameras," explaining how officers must handle these devices and the recordings they create.

It states the department's purpose for using the cameras: "to collect evidence to be used in the prosecution of those who violate the law, for officer evaluation and training, and to provide accurate documentation of law enforcement and citizen interaction."

The policy requires that officers receive training on how to maintain the cameras, including by confirming that they are functioning and have fully charged batteries at the beginning of each shift.

Officers who primarily answer calls and interact with residents must wear them at all times under the policy, although they are not required to keep the cameras activated at all times during the shift. They must create audio and video recordings for the entirety of several kinds of situations, including

- when on the scene of any violent crime;
- any situation with the use of force;
- during a motor vehicle accident investigation when the people involved in the accident are present;
- any incident involving a suspicious person, public drunkenness, field sobriety tests, public disorderly conduct, or emotionally-disturbed persons;
- any call for service where citizen contact is made, field contacts, as well as adversarial contact or potentially adversarial contact occurs. This includes citizen transports, but not ride-alongs; and
- all arrests, searches and seizures of evidence, as well as all traffic stops, investigatory stops and foot pursuits.

The policy requires that officers "make every reasonable effort to ensure" that the camera accurately captures the law enforcement events in question, including activating the recording as soon as the contact or event begins, positioning the camera to capture the event, and never erasing, modifying or tampering with the recordings.

Some circumstances noted in the policy would not involve recording, for example, a location with a reasonable expectation of privacy like a restroom or locker room, or encounters with confidential informants. The policy gives officers the choice of discontinuing a recording for a nonconfrontational encounter, such as the interview of a witness or victim.

In situations where the officer decides to stop recording, the policy requires the officer to verbally state the reason for stopping the recording. In instances where the officer responds to a call for assistance without turning on the camera, the officer must document the reason in the incident report or case file.

The policy also spells out how officers are to handle the camera data after its creation. They must move the data onto the law enforcement agency's designated server or storage device at the end of each shift, after which the department will maintain the data for at least 90 days with no alterations or deletions. In cases that are prosecuted, the data is to be further maintained until after the case is adjudicated and the time for appeals is exhausted.

Supervisors, under the policy, are required to review at least one recording from every officer every 90 days to determine that they are complying with the policy.

Find more information about all law enforcement policies at www.masc.sc (keyword: Act 218).



Annual Meeting Concurrent Sessions Offer Host of Choices



Annual Meeting
July 27 - 30, 2023 | Greenville, SC

The Concurrent sessions, where attendees break out into one of a couple of sessions several times during the Municipal Association's Annual Meeting, give city and town leaders options for learning more about many topics relevant to their communities.

The full agenda for the Annual Meeting, taking place July 27 through 29 in Greenville, is available at www.masc.sc (keyword: Annual Meeting) and on the Association's app. Here are the concurrent session options:

Thursday, July 27

2 p.m. sessions

- **The Challenge of Affordable Housing** – Attendees will learn about tools available through the Federal Home Loan Bank from Joel Brockmann an assistant vice president of FHLBank Atlanta who manages the bank's affordable housing rental and homeownership products under the Affordable Housing Program General Fund.
- **Law Enforcement Hiring Best Practices** – Learn best practices for hiring qualified police officers and the requirements for reporting misconduct to the SC Criminal Justice Academy. Employment attorney Kevin Sturm of Sturm & Cont, P.A., will lead the session.

3:15 p.m. sessions

- **Engaging the Next Generation of Local Leaders** – Hear about the projects that are engaging young people in local government work from Inman Mayor Cornelius Huff, Greenwood Mayor Brandon Smith and Hardeeville Mayor Harry Williams.
- **40 Years! Main Street SC Success Stories** – This session will highlight downtown development success stories on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of Main Street South Carolina, the Municipal Association's grassroots economic development program for downtowns. It will feature representatives of the Main Street programs in Cheraw, Georgetown, Fountain Inn, and also Florence, which this year became the second community in South Carolina to win the Great American Main Street Award.

Friday, July 28

11:15 a.m. sessions

- **Retail Development Checklist: What You Should Be Doing To Attract New Businesses** – Participants in this session learn how to understand their city's retail market better and make the city an attractive option for restaurants and retailers looking for a new place to set up shop. They will hear from Charles Parker, project director for The Retail Coach, the firm which has partnered with the Municipal Association for its retail recruitment training.

- **Riley Mayors' Design Fellowship** – Modeled after the National Mayors' Institute on City Design, the Riley Mayors' Design Fellowship was relaunched in 2018. This session will highlight award-winning design projects to emerge from the program, with Laurens Mayor Nathan Senn and West Pelzer Mayor Blake Sanders on the panel.

Saturday, July 29

10:15 a.m. sessions

- **From the Dome to Your Home Live Podcast** – Podcasting has emerged as an attention-grabbing and low-cost way for organizations to connect and communicate with their audiences. The Municipal Association has joined in as well, where its podcasts, available at www.masc.sc (keyword: podcast) include *From the Dome to Your Home*, a weekly State House report running throughout the legislative session. This session will feature the Municipal Association's Manager for Municipal Advocacy — and podcast host — Casey Fields, and her regular guest, Director of Advocacy and Communications Scott Slatton as they demonstrate and describe the podcast process by recording an episode.
- **Implementing Act 218** – This panel will provide insight on the implementation of Act 218, also known as the Law Enforcement Betterment Bill, which codified many law enforcement standards statewide. The session will highlight challenges experienced by chiefs of police, and discuss how those challenges were addressed.

11:15 a.m. sessions

- **Short Takes on Hot Topics** – This session will rapidly cover a number of key issues for cities and towns, including business licensing topics with the Municipal Association's Manager for Local Revenue Services Caitlin Cothran, and other common questions with the Association's field services managers.
- **How Hiring Residents with Disabilities Can Help Solve Your Workforce Shortage** – Like all employers, cities and towns struggle to fill vacant positions. An often-overlooked pool of employees can be found in the disabilities community throughout the state. Dr. Angie Slatton, director of special services for District 5 of Lexington and Richland Counties, will describe how partnering with state agencies and school districts can close employment gaps and lead to employment for residents with disabilities in your city or town.

Find more Annual Meeting details and agenda information, including preconference sessions, general sessions, exhibits, the Achievement Awards Luncheon and other items at www.masc.sc (keyword: Annual Meeting). All Annual Meeting registrations must be complete by July 13.

How the Shooting Range Protection Act Affects Noise, Zoning Regulation

The Shooting Range Protection Act of 2000, found at SC Code Sections 31-18-10 to 31-18-60, provides significant protections for existing, established shooting ranges from local regulations.

The law defines a shooting range under its protection as an area operated for the firing of firearms. There are two requirements for a facility to meet the law's definition:

1. The firing of firearms is the usual, regular, and primary activity occurring in the area.
2. The area is improved or situated such that a person would not reasonably expect a projectile to escape the area's boundaries. This could be a berm, a backstop, or a lot large enough that bullets would likely not leave the property.

Protections

Once a shooting range is established and in use, it is protected in two ways.

First, private landowners cannot bring a nuisance action for noise against the shooting range if it was established before the landowners bringing the action acquired their nearby property, unless there has been a substantial change in the use of the range.

This provision is essentially a codification of the common law rule on "coming to the nuisance," which holds

that landowners cannot sue for a nuisance that existed before they purchased property. For example, residents cannot move in next to an airport and then sue over the noise created by it.

Second, and more importantly for local governments — governments cannot enforce a newly enacted noise ordinance against a shooting range that was already established when the ordinance was enacted.

Similarly, if a local government amends an existing noise ordinance after the establishment of a shooting range, the government cannot enforce the amended noise ordinance against the shooting range if it complied with the noise ordinance as it existed before the amendment.

The Shooting Range Protection Act also establishes that in no event may a local government enforce a noise ordinance against a shooting range established before January 1, 2000.

Implications for cities

Many, if not most, municipalities already prohibit the discharge of firearms within their municipal limits, subject to certain exceptions, and so the law on shooting range regulation may not be an issue.

Such rules prohibiting the discharge of firearms appear not to be preempted by

Section 23-31-510(1), which provides that a local government may not adopt any law regulating "the transfer, ownership, possession, carrying, or transportation of firearms."

This preemption language does not mention ordinances that regulate the discharging of firearms.

Municipalities that do not prohibit the discharge of firearms, however, should consider whether their existing noise ordinance would be sufficient to control unreasonable noise disturbances from shooting ranges. The Shooting Range Protection Act requires no minimum lot size or separation requirements for a shooting range to be established. Instead, it requires only improvements and circumstances that make it reasonably unforeseeable that a projectile would escape the parcel.

Finally, the Shooting Range Protection Act provides that it "does not prohibit a local government from regulating the location and construction of a new shooting range after the effective date of this chapter."

In addition to considering its existing noise ordinance, a municipality that allows the discharge of firearms within its boundaries should review its zoning ordinance to see if it addresses the location and construction of shooting ranges.



Don't Let Trash Trucks Become Burn Barrels



Between its hydraulic system and the ever-present potential for a load full of combustible trash, a garbage truck faces plenty of potential fire hazards in its normal operations. Beyond the threats that garbage truck fires pose to physical safety, these fires can be costly as well, given that the cost of many trucks cost hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Here are steps that workers can take to reduce the dangers of these fires:

Maintaining the truck

Many of the most expensive garbage truck fire incidents come from either a failure of the hydraulic lines, or an electrical fire, which can result from rodents chewing on wiring, highlighting the need for ongoing maintenance.

- **Establish a preventive maintenance program.** Manufacturers provide guidance on what intervals the truck should be serviced — for example, at 150, 300 or 450 hours.
- **Develop a preventive maintenance service checklist.** This should address required inspections and other safety tasks. Many items to check are the same as on other vehicles — the engine, transmission, exhaust, electrical systems, brakes and tires, or steering and suspension.
- **Pay attention to hydraulic system maintenance.** In addition to inspecting all parts routinely and replacing the fluid filter regularly, this includes looking out for reduced power from leaks in the system. If a hydraulic pump fails, the oil should always be cleaned and replaced.
- **Keep the garbage packer running smoothly with routine maintenance.** Lubrication of all moving parts is important, and poor maintenance shortens the life of the system.
- **Develop driver inspection and reporting systems.** Drivers should report on any potential concerns noted before, during or after running the route.
- **Maintain fire extinguishers on the truck and inspect them regularly.**

- **Ensure that all garbage trucks have battery disconnect switches installed.** This can reduce the risk of fires caused by electrical issues, especially for overnight fires. Also, establish a written policy requiring the use of the switches anytime the trucks are parked. Periodically spot-check trucks to verify that drivers are using the switches.

Cleaning the truck

The garbage itself is frequently the culprit of a truck fire, with lithium batteries presenting a major potential for fire. Keeping the truck cleaned out therefore reduces the likelihood of a garbage fire.

- **Avoid leaving waste trucks and transfer trailers loaded overnight.**
- **Clean all debris behind the packer blade after every shift.** This allows the blade to work more effectively and extends the life of the system. Check for signs of damage while cleaning.

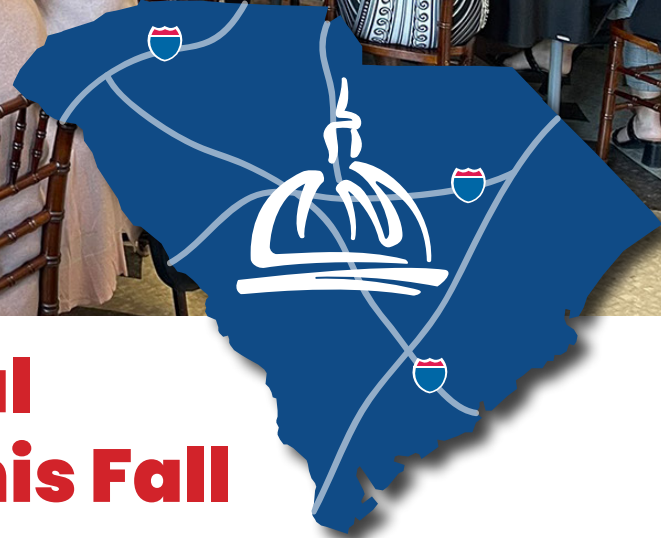
Managing fires

- **When garbage in the truck catches on fire, have workers look for a safe place to unload the burning trash.** It should be an open area away from people, cars or other objects to limit the potential spread of fire — ideally, open parking lots or vacant lots. After dumping the load, the workers should pull away from the fire and call 911. Consider establishing a written policy regarding driver procedures for handling burning loads and other vehicle fires.
- **Train employees on what to do when a fire erupts.** Conducting regular safety meetings with current drivers and establishing training for all new drivers can help ensure that everyone is familiar with expectations and requirements. Use methods like safety briefings and breakroom signage to remind employees of the importance of preventing vehicle fires.

For more information, contact Bethany Pendley, loss control manager, at bpendley@masc.sc or 803.933.1210.



Hartsville Mayor Casey Hancock speaks during one of the Municipal Association's 2022 Regional Advocacy Meetings in Hartsville.



Don't Miss the Regional Advocacy Meetings This Fall

Since 2006, Municipal Association of SC staff have hosted local meetings to discuss legislative issues with municipal elected officials and staff. Even 17 years later, it's important to join these meetings so that everyone can gather information.

The South Carolina General Assembly adjourned at the end of May to end the first half of the two-year session. Legislators will return in January 2024 to complete this session of the 125th General Assembly. 2024 will bring elections for both the House of Representative and the Senate.

The Municipal Association board of directors adopted 11 Advocacy Initiatives last year for cities and towns, as well as Association staff, to work through during this session. While legislation tied to several

of those initiatives has passed, been signed by the governor and enacted into law, there are other initiatives that still need work.

Municipal Association legislative staff will hit the road in September and October to meet with municipal officials around the state to discuss the remaining issues and develop strategies to pass bills or stop legislation that is harmful to cities and towns. Association staff will outline bills that have passed and the effect those bills have on cities and towns. There will also be discussion about pending bills for the 2024 session and strategy development for local officials.

Locations this year will be a little different. The meetings will not be organized by council of government areas as in the past, but in cities around the state that are centrally

located to the region. The Association will offer seven in-person meetings plus one virtual meeting.

The meetings will begin at 11 a.m. and last until 1 p.m. with lunch included at the in-person meetings. The meetings are free but registration for the in-person meetings is necessary for lunch and handouts. Look for registration information beginning in August.

Contact Casey Fields at cfields@masc.sc or 803.933.1203 for more information, and subscribe to the Association's From the Dome to Your Home reports at www.masc.sc (keyword: Dome) for the latest details on legislative action.

Apply for a Hometown Economic Development Grant

The Hometown Economic Development Grant of the Municipal Association of SC funds projects that will produce measurable results, that can be maintained over time and illustrate best practices that can be replicated in other cities. Beginning in July, cities and towns will have another opportunity to pursue funding through the HEDG program, as applications for the 2023 grant cycle will open on July 27, during the Association's Annual Meeting.

Cities and towns are eligible to obtain a grant once every two years, and since the program's inception in 2016, some municipalities have made successful HEDG applications more than once.

The City of Landrum is one example. In 2017, Landrum obtained HEDG funds to help with its project to relocate a historic rail car to Landrum and develop it into a museum.

Its most recent HEDG funding in 2022 allowed it to expand its new Farmers Market Pavilion — a facility that houses both a regular farmers market and also serves as an event space. The city wanted to pursue an adjacent property to help accommodate larger events with improved access, landscaping

and lighting. Landrum applied for and received a second HEDG grant in 2022 for the expansion.

Application guidelines

The 2023 HEDG cycle will award as many as 12 grants of up to \$25,000 each.

HEDG project proposals must make a positive, measurable and sustainable economic impact on a community. Some project types are excluded, as explained in the full eligibility rules on the application.

Those interested should apply online by Friday, September 29 at 5 p.m. The application and grant awards have several key requirements:

- **The municipal council must pass a resolution in support of the grant application.**
- **Cities and towns that receive a grant must provide matching funds.**
- **Grant recipients must also submit progress reports and provide financial details about how they spent grant funds.**

On July 27, officials can find the HEDG application and sample resolution at www.masc.sc (keyword: HEDG). For questions, contact Scott Slatton at sslatton@masc.sc.

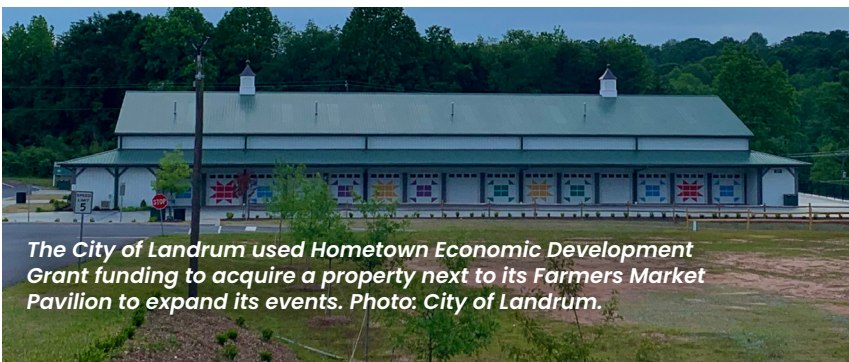
SC Local Government Investment Pool Provides Investment Option for Cities

Investing provides cities and towns a method of generating additional revenue for their operations without increases in taxes or fees, but state law places limitations on how they may invest funds.

SC Code Section 6-5-10 authorizes several investment methods. The allowable methods do not include purchasing stock, and allow purchasing products like certificates of deposit and savings accounts only in some circumstances, depending on how they are collateralized. Because of the limitations imposed by law, city and town councils that invest their funds needs to verify how an investment product is structured, and whether it complies with state law. The state also provides its own investment vehicle available to local subdivisions of government: the Local Government Investment Pool, managed under the SC State Treasurer's Office. The LGIP invests in fixed-income securities, including U.S. Treasury, U.S. agency and corporate securities, and pays interest monthly.

Numerous public entities have accounts with LGIP, including county governments, school districts and others, with 103 municipalities investing in it. The LGIP reports more than \$12.1 billion invested in it, with public entities investing everything from operating cash to bond proceeds, general funds, trust funds and other monies.

Learn more about the Local Government Investment Pool at www.treasurer.sc.gov. The Municipal Association's Handbook for Municipal Officials in South Carolina has a chapter on financial administration, addressing investments and other forms of cash and fund balance management. Find the handbook at www.masc.sc (keyword: public official handbook.)



The City of Landrum used Hometown Economic Development Grant funding to acquire a property next to its Farmers Market Pavilion to expand its events. Photo: City of Landrum.

Retail Recruitment

Municipalities Seek Businesses Through Planning, Relationship Building

New residents in a growing city come with many needs that city leaders must find ways to meet. Residents also need places to purchase necessities and they often look for both variety and the ability to stay in town when doing it.

Several South Carolina municipalities are pursuing a variety of initiatives — and employing creativity — to help create the right mix of retail and livability for their residents.

The key steps to success are knowing what space is available and making connections with real estate agents and retail brokers to find the right fit. Some recent examples of success have come out of Greenwood, Fountain Inn and Cayce.

Greenwood

Relationship building has given the biggest boost to the City of Greenwood's ongoing retail recruitment success, said

Lara Hudson, Greenwood's community development director. Greenwood participated in the Municipal Association of SC Retail Recruitment Training Program, which includes a visit to major retail trade shows.

"When I went to Las Vegas for a trade show, I made all these great connections with developers that are now calling me when they're looking for a location," Hudson said. "Those relationships that we've been able to build with the developers and the brokers that are making these deals happen, that's been one of the most beneficial pieces of it."

Greenwood has landed several restaurant chains, including Starbucks, Eggs Up Grill and Chipotle, as well as service businesses and other retailers since city officials began their recruitment push.

Greenwood's current initiative began about two years ago when city leaders saw that their growing population was traveling elsewhere to dine out, shop and buy services. The city had already been recruiting businesses to its central business district.

"We decided to start more actively recruiting for retail, not just in our downtown, but citywide," Hudson said.

One area the city wanted to promote specifically was the corridor between the business district and Lander University.

"It needed some love," Hudson said. "So, we started focusing more on that and we've already seen a lot of traction."

For this broader outreach, the city needed a better idea of available properties in the area.

"One of the things that we noticed was in our downtown, we do a really good job of keeping inventory of what buildings are available and the information on those buildings," Hudson said. "But when someone would call and need something outside the downtown and they said, 'I need 4,000 square feet' or 'I need 12-foot ceilings' and 'I need 27 parking spaces,' I had no clue. I would literally get in my car and drive around to see what I could find, or I would start seeking out commercial realtors to see if they had anything. We decided we needed to do a better job of inventorying our properties and kind of being the collective keeper of all the properties for retail."

Fountain Inn

Creating a database of available properties has driven Fountain Inn's successful retail recruitment efforts, said City Administrator Shawn Bell.

The city was already working on its retail recruitment when Bell arrived in 2017.

"I spent probably the first year or so here in Fountain Inn making sure that folks knew that Fountain Inn was open for business and that we were growing



Greenwood's push to draw in new businesses netted the city a new Eggs Up Grill. Photo: City of Greenwood.



Fountain Inn brought in Voodoo Brewing in 2022, and used Main Street grants to improve the site's appearance. Photo: City of Fountain Inn.

residentially — that the rooftops were coming and that we were excited to have retail,” Bell said. “When you’re doing economic development for a municipality, it’s important to know your vacant properties, whether they’re buildings or just green fields knowing those owners, knowing their real estate agents. I can look at a vacant building and not just know it as ‘100 Main St.,’ but also that’s the building that Bob Smith owns. And I’ve got his number and we’ve met.”

Like Greenwood, Fountain Inn sought to extend its recruitment efforts beyond downtown, and focused on the SC Highway 418 corridor from Interstate 385 to Main Street.

“My predecessors had the foresight to put an overlay district on that commercial corridor,” Bell said. “I worked with a developer that was able to bring in a Starbucks and a Dollar Tree, and that has now opened the floodgates for that commercial corridor.”

A Wendy’s and Dunkin’ are now planned for that same corridor. Next up, Bell said, is to find a grocery store.

“We’ve also done a lot of market analysis about our retail leakage, and we have a tremendous amount of grocery dollars in Fountain Inn that are being spent in Simpsonville,” he said. “So, I’ve really been working for a long time on trying to get an additional grocery store on the southern part of town, probably on that SC 418 corridor. That’s what our

citizens want. And I think the grocery store developers recognize that we are probably about ready for it.”

Cayce

The City of Cayce went about its retail recruitment a little differently — officials there threw a party.

They invited artists, property owners and potential business owners to Cayce’s historic business district at Frink and State streets. They wanted to show a community that was vibrant, even if it needed some investment.

Cayce Mayor Elise Partin developed the idea after attending the Mayors’ Institute on City Design, said City Manager Tracy Hegler.

“We were doing a lot of redevelopment efforts, but we just weren’t getting anywhere,” Hegler said. “The buildings were boarded up and shuttered and the owners had them just full of stuff. And we’d go to the owners and say, ‘Wouldn’t it be great if you could get a business in here? Wouldn’t you like that?’ And they’d say ‘Yes, of course we want that.’ But nothing was happening. It was a stagnant process.”

So Partin took the problem to the Mayors’ Institute in 2015.

“It’s a fantastic opportunity for mayors from across the country to get together and they bring with them a problem or a challenge,” Hegler said. “There’s a group

of experts there that help solve that. She took revitalizing our original downtown as her challenge.”

The expert advice, she said, was that Cayce was not quite ready for revitalization, and instead it needed to “pre-vitalize.”

“You need to show people what this could be to inspire that next step,” she said.

The city hosted its first “Soiree on State” in 2017 after convincing building owners to open up their spaces, coordinate with local artists and show off what was there in the hopes of inspiring potential business owners to see things a little differently.

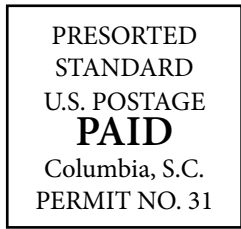
“It was kind of a street party/artist fair,” Hegler said. “And it was just wildly successful. Almost instantly one of those buildings was rehabbed and leased out for Swatch Graphics.”

The Soiree on State has happened every year since — except for 2020 because of the pandemic — and new businesses have followed, including Dialed Bicycles, Piecewise Coffee Co. and in May 2023, Trini Lime Caribbean Café — all located in what is now called the River Arts District.

The event, Hegler said, has served as “a sneaky redevelopment tool.”



Cayce used its Soiree on State event to show businesses and residents what was possible in the city’s downtown. Photo: City of Cayce.



Calendar

For a complete listing of the Association's training opportunities, visit www.masc.sc to view the calendar.

JULY

- 18 Business Licensing Essentials – Class Schedule Changes.** Virtual.
- 27 Small City Summit.** SpringHill Suites, Greenville. Topics include law enforcement policy changes, code enforcement, outsource outsourcing of municipal services, city planning for small cities, business licensing and municipal legal requirements such as budgets, audits and monthly council meetings.
- 27 – 30 Municipal Association of SC Annual Meeting.** Hyatt Regency, Greenville. Topics include youth engagement, Main Street SC success stories, racial reconciliation, retail development, business licensing, workforce shortages and managing visitor influxes. See pages 4 and 9 for more information.

AUGUST

- 1 Setoff Debt Program 2023 Annual Training Session: New Employees of Current Participants.** Municipal Association of SC, Columbia.
- 3 Setoff Debt Program 2023 Annual Training Session: New Participants.** Municipal Association of SC, Columbia.
- 15 Business Licensing Essentials – Local Revenue Services Programs, Where to Find Reporting, Local Collections.** Virtual.
- 23 – 25 Municipal Court Administration Association of SC Annual Meeting.** Marina Inn at Grande Dunes, Myrtle Beach.

SEPTEMBER

- 7 SC Association of Stormwater Managers Third Quarter Meeting.** Cooperative Conference Center, Columbia.
- 13 – 15 Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute, Year 2, Session A.** Hilton Columbia Center.
- 19 Business Licensing Essentials – Peddlers and Special Events, Farmers Markets.** Virtual.
- 20 – 22 Municipal Technology Association of SC Annual Meeting.** Hilton Myrtle Beach.

- 21 Risk Management Services Fire Training.** Cooperative Conference Center, Columbia.

OCTOBER

- 4 SC Utility Billing Association Customer Service Training and Networking Luncheon.** Cooperative Conference Center, Columbia.
- 5 SC Community Development Association Fall Meeting.** Cooperative Conference Center, Columbia.
- 10 – 11 Municipal Court Administration Association 101 Session B.**
- 11 Advanced Municipal Elected Officials Institute and Advanced Continuing Education.** Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center. Advanced MEO courses will be "Advanced Advocacy and Intergovernmental Relations" and "Advanced Municipal Economic Development."
- 24 – 25 SC Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association and SC Business Licensing Officials Association Joint Academy.** Marina Inn at Grande Dunes, Myrtle Beach.