

# UPTOWN



a publication of the Municipal Association of South Carolina

## **BUILDING A NEW DESTINATION MAULDIN'S BRIDGEWAY STATION SHOWCASES PARTNERSHIPS, IMAGINATION** *Page 44*



**2024 Annual Meeting Explores City Leadership,  
Artificial Intelligence** *page 4*

**Municipal Association of SC 2024 Annual Report** *page 7*

**2024 Awards Program** *page 27*

**Inspiration, Partnerships Help Cities  
Support Homeless Population** *page 46*

Association President Habib's  
Challenge: Strive for Greatness..... 2

The Municipal Association's  
2024 – 2025 Board of Directors..... 3

2024 Annual Meeting Explores City  
Leadership, Artificial Intelligence..... 4

MEO Institute of Government  
Recognizes 3 New Graduates ..... 6

Association Highlight: Online  
Business Licensing Resources..... 6

Preparation Helps Protect  
Employees From Heat,  
Sun Exposure..... 43

Building a New Destination:  
Mauldin's BridgeWay Station  
Showcases Partnerships,  
Imagination..... 44

Inspiration, Partnerships Help  
Cities Support Homeless  
Population..... 46

**Special Section:  
Annual Report/Awards**

Municipal Association of SC  
2024 Annual Report..... 7

2024 Awards Program..... 27

President :  
**Mayor Greg Habib, Goose Creek**

Executive Director :  
**Todd Glover tglover@masc.sc**

Managing Editor :  
**Meredith Houck mhouck@masc.sc**

Editor :  
**Russell Cox rcox@masc.sc**

Editorial Assistant :  
**Onye Kelly okelly@masc.sc**

Contributing writers :  
**Frank Johnson, Megan Sexton**

Cover Photo : Mauldin's BridgeWay  
Station is a mixed-use, pedestrian-  
focused town center development  
located along Interstate 385.

# Association President Habib's Challenge: Strive for Greatness



**A**fter Goose Creek Mayor Greg Habib was elected by delegates from around the state to a one-year term as Association president he offered a challenge for his fellow mayors and other city officials: Strive for greatness.

In his remarks to delegates at the Association's Annual Meeting in Greenville, Mayor Habib praised the Association's "leaders, innovators, administrators, artists -- and even politicians. Our membership is like a quilt that stretches from South Carolina's red clay to its sandy beaches. It's a diverse quilt, sewn together with a common thread of love for our state and each other."

"It is a strong quilt, made stronger by the innovative and creative and intelligent and generous public servants in this room today," he said.

After recalling the game-changing success of the all-accessible Central Creek Park in Goose Creek, Habib called on the cities and towns of South Carolina to strive for more.

"Reach beyond the norm, reach beyond your borders. Strive to impact people. Strive to make the difference in people's lives in the way that only a municipal government can," he said. "Please, do not devalue the work you are doing. The cities and towns of South Carolina are the social, cultural and economic centers of our state. No matter the county or region, every one of our cities and towns makes a significant impact on its surrounding area."

The new Association president described municipal government as the place where real progress is possible in South Carolina.

"I picture municipal governments on the ground floor," he said. "Where things get

done, and people work together, and labels don't matter but hard work does. On the ground floor, where inspirational ideas are dreamt and made into reality; where real action is taken and real lives are changed."

Habib, whose family moved to Goose Creek in 1982 when his father was transferred in the U.S. Navy, encouraged all municipalities to share in the benefits of the Municipal Association's offerings.

"Let's reach out to that nearby city or town that isn't here, or doesn't participate. They need to hear from a friend just how beneficial their participation can be, not just to them, but to all of us. The health of every one of our 271 cities and towns is important," he said. "Every city's success belongs to all of us. And every city's challenge does, too. That is a powerful message that we need to spread. We are not competing with one another. But rather, should work to support each other."

The University of South Carolina graduate who was first elected to Goose Creek city council in 2016 before becoming mayor in 2018 shared the wisdom of a legendary NFL coach.

"'Perfection,' Vince Lombardi once said, 'is not attainable ... but if we chase perfection we can catch excellence.' That's what I want every one of us to do over the next 12 months. Catch excellence," Habib said. "We — every one of us — have the tools to make great things happen. And working together, supporting one another, we are going to do exactly that."

*Recordings from several Annual Meeting sessions, including Habib's speech, are available on the Association's website. Find the materials at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: Annual Meeting).*

# The Municipal Association's 2024 – 2025 Board of Directors

**A** 19-member board of directors, composed of both elected and appointed officials, sets policy for the Municipal Association of South Carolina.

## New officers

The officers, or members of the executive committee, are elected to one-year terms at the Association's Annual Meeting. The officers' terms will expire in July 2025.

President: Mayor Greg Habib, Goose Creek

First Vice President: Mayor Brandy Amidon, Travelers Rest

Second Vice President: Mayor Lancer Shull, Batesburg-Leesville

Third Vice President: Mayor Brenda Bethune, Myrtle Beach

Immediate Past President: Mayor Barbara Jo Blain, Conway

*Board members are elected at the Association's Annual Meeting for three-year terms. The board is composed of representatives from each area of the 10 councils of governments and four at-large seats.*

## Newly elected members

Mayor Mike Fuesser, York  
Representing: Catawba Regional Council of Governments area  
*Term expires: July 2027*

Mayor Frank McClary, Andrews  
Representing: Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments area  
*Term expires: July 2027*

## Other current board members

Councilmember Judy Bridge, Walterboro  
Representing: Lowcountry Council of Governments area  
*Term expires: July 2025*

Mayor Jason Evans, Pageland  
Representing: Pee Dee Council of Governments area  
*Term expires: July 2025*

City Administrator Desiree Fragoso, Isle of Palms  
Representing: At-large  
*Term expires: July 2025*

Mayor Kenneth Gist, Woodruff  
Representing: Appalachian Council of Governments area  
*Term expires: July 2026*

Councilmember Jeffrey Graham, Camden  
Representing: Santee Lynches Council of Governments area  
*Term expires: July 2025*

City Administrator Andy Merriman, Greer  
Representing: At-large  
*Term expires: July 2027*

Mayor Nathan Senn, Laurens  
Representing: Upper Savannah Council of Governments area  
*Term expires: July 2027*

Mayor LaDonna Hall, Salley  
Representing: Lower Savannah Council of Governments area  
*Term expires: July 2026*

Mayor Stellertean Jones, Gray Court  
Representing: At-large  
*Term expires: July 2026*

Councilmember Guang Ming Whitley, Mount Pleasant  
Representing: Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments area  
*Term expires: July 2025*

# NEWS BRIEFS

Several business license officials recently earned their Accreditation in Business Licensing designation. These are **Christy Allen**, Town of Hampton; **Rakenia Collier**, Orangeburg County; **Michael Costa**, Beaufort County; **Debra Edwards**, Horry County; **Lorie Hamrick**, Town of Lyman; **Jolie Householder**, Horry County; **Kyle Hughes**, Richland County; **Kesley Medaglia**, City of Beaufort; **Cinnamon Reid**, Richland County; **Britany Smoak**, City of Cayce; **Angie Wilson**, City of Anderson; **Rochelle Smith**, City of Cayce; and **Heather Towner**, City of Greer.

Two officials have received their Master in Business Licensing designation: **Rochelle Smith**, City of Cayce; and **Heather Towner**, City of Greer.

The SC Society of Association Executives named **Ken Ivey**, manager of member services for the Municipal Association of SC, a 2024 Association Executive of the Year.

For the second year, a list compiled by PODS Moving and Storage named **Myrtle Beach**, along with Wilmington, NC, the most moved-to destination in the nation. The list named **Greenville and Spartanburg** the fourth most moved-to destination.



# 2024 Annual Meeting Explores City Leadership, Artificial Intelligence

**R**epresentatives from cities and towns across South Carolina gathered in Greenville from July 18 through 20 at the Municipal Association's 2024 Annual Meeting to dive into topics as diverse as cultivating new generations of city leadership and managing the growing technological presence of artificial intelligence.

## Greg Habib elected new Association president, President Barbara Jo Blain completes term

City and town officials elected Goose Creek Mayor Greg Habib as the new president of the Municipal Association of SC during the Annual Meeting. In his remarks, Habib called attention to many of the Association's projects, including its new Build the Bench program, which places interns with host municipalities to build a strong and diverse pool of future job candidates. Goose Creek has hosted several of the initiative's first interns, one of whom now works for the city in planning.

"I believe it is our responsibility to prepare our employees for their next opportunity, whether it's in our city or not," Habib said. "In doing so, we will have a better employee. But equally as important, the next opportunity will be filled with the most qualified people."

Conway Mayor Barbara Jo Blain, the Association's outgoing president, reflected on legislative advocacy of the past year. These include ongoing relationship-building with South Carolina's congressional delegation and their staffs; the passage of S1021, extending the South Carolina Abandoned Buildings Revitalization Act to 2035; and the efforts of many cities and towns to pass hate crimes ordinances, demonstrating the need for and support of such laws since the General Assembly has not yet passed a statewide hate crimes law.

Blain also called upon cities and towns to keep up their focus on civility in local government, especially during a year with a contentious national election.

"Many times, people on opposite political sides can't see past political views to see human beings behind those opinions. As leaders of our communities and local governments, we must meet past the bluster and the rhetoric and encourage working together," she said. "I realize that might sound naive, but trash pickup doesn't care if you're one political party or another. Clean water doesn't care if you're one political party or another."

## Executive Director Todd Glover focuses on leadership

Municipal Association Executive Director Todd Glover continued the discussion of municipal leadership. He drew attention to a recent case where the Town of Sullivan's Island, the place where the palmetto tree became the symbol of South Carolina, faced an impending cutting of large numbers of palmetto trees to protect electrical lines. Mayor Patrick O'Neil and the town council worked with the utility and other stakeholders, and helped arrange for tree replacements, reducing the number of trees to be cut by half.



*President-elect Greg Habib, right, recognized outgoing President Barbara Jo Blain.*

Glover also discussed the Association's civility in local government initiative, which he noted has gained traction through other municipal leagues as well. The effort, he said, remains as important as ever.

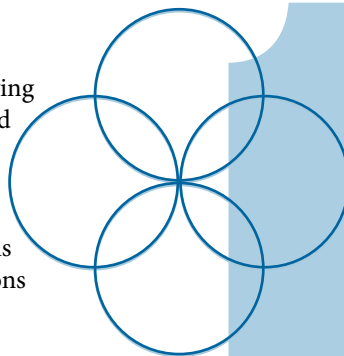
"We have a generation that's learning incivility as a skill, and what I mean by that is they see older folks acting out, and people capitulating, and them getting what they want," Glover said. "If you have not adopted our civility program, I highly recommend that you do. That [Civility] Pledge that we said earlier is a powerful message for any public gathering, but especially that of a city or town. That message is, one, that 'this is what we strive to do.' That's the vision. Two, it makes us hold each other accountable for our actions."

### **Brian Carter discusses challenges and opportunities of AI**

Artificial intelligence, through which computers process material to enable them to perform a variety of problem-solving tasks in a way that simulates human intelligence, has attracted huge amounts of attention in recent years since the launch of programs like ChatGPT or Microsoft Copilot, including in municipal circles. In his keynote address, speaker and author Brian Carter addressed this technology that he said his audience must adapt to, given that many computer applications are already using it.

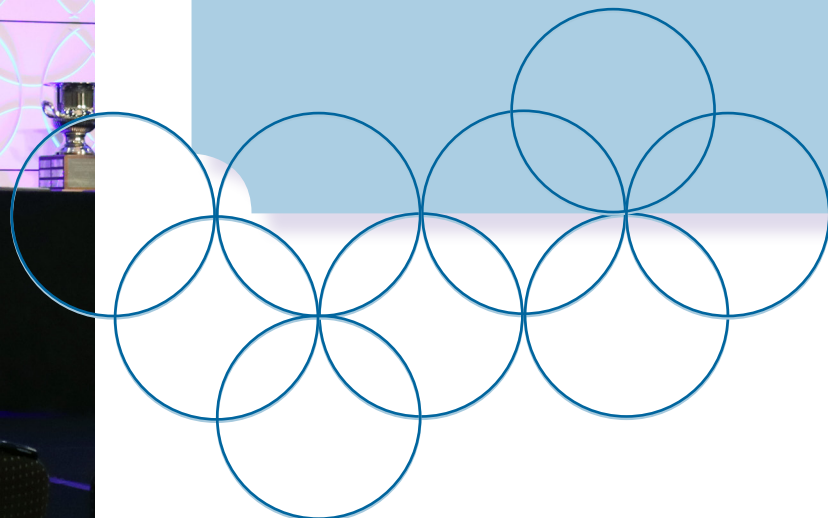
AI can add value and efficiency to operations, allowing for everything from data summaries and trend detections to providing starting points for documents like proclamations and speeches, and can summarize documents and detect trends. While AI can absorb and analyze far more data than a human can in a lifetime, Carter said, it requires human guidance to work well. He added that it needs to be fact-checked because it can produce false information, and it can come with privacy concerns about the data it uses.

"We're always going to need experts, we're always going to need original ideas and creative people," he said. "It's not going to do everything."



## **Annual Meeting Recordings, Presentations Available Online**

Many of this year's Annual Meeting sessions have presentations and recordings now available on the Association's website. Find the materials at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: Annual Meeting). The Municipal Association's Achievement Award videos, which debuted during the meeting, are also available by searching the keyword "Achievement Awards."



*Municipal Association Executive Director Todd Glover addresses the 2024 Annual Meeting.*

# MEO Institute of Government Recognizes 3 New Graduates

The Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government graduated three officials during the Municipal Association's Annual Meeting in Greenville.

The summer 2024 graduates of the Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government are Councilmember Josh Scallate, City of Beaufort; Mayor Russ Touchberry, Town of Summerville; and Councilmember Rhonda Whitaker, City of Liberty.

Since these graduates have completed the required 25 hours of instruction available through the Institute, they are now eligible to participate in the Advanced MEO Institute.

The next Advanced Institute sessions will take place October 16 in Columbia. Participants will be able to choose one of two courses: "Municipal Utility Policy and Administration" or "Public Safety Policy and

Administration." The Advanced Continuing Education course will take place the same day.

The MEO Institute also tracks those city and town councils on which all sitting members are MEO graduates. The current

MEO Honor Roll cities are Atlantic Beach, Beaufort, Estill, Greer, Inman, Jonesville, Newberry, Prosperity, Santee, Walterboro and York.

Learn more about the institute at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: MEO).



## Association Highlight: Online Business Licensing Resources

The General Assembly's passage of the Business License Tax Standardization Act, or Act 176, in 2020 has led to an ongoing effort for cities and towns to standardize their business licensing practices to the state requirements.

With the technical aspects of business licensing now a greater topic of discussion than ever before, the Municipal Association has updated and expanded its webpage gathering together all of its business licensing resources, found at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: business licensing in South Carolina).

Here are some of the page's offerings:

- **An explanation of state law** – This includes the full text of Act 176 and a one-page summary of it.
- **The Association's primary training and guidance resources** – Municipal staff throughout the state take advantage of the meetings and networking of the SC Business Licensing Officials Association as well as the courses of the BLOA Training Institute. The *Business License Handbook* is a reference for every aspect of the process, and serves as the text for the Training Institute.

- **Update schedules for the model business license ordinance, the class schedule and North American Industry Classification codes** – Act 176 requires regular updates of all of these.
- **Sample documents** – This includes an appeals and assessment process, notices of assessment and appeal, and the standard business license application.
- **Training videos for the Local Business License Renewal Center** – Act 176 requires local jurisdictions to use this online renewal portal.
- **Resources for businesses** – This includes frequently asked questions as well as list of those cities and counties that require a business license.

Local Revenue Services offers regular "Business Licensing Essentials" virtual training sessions for local officials to learn licensing practices and ask questions. Learn more and find recordings from previous sessions at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: Business Licensing Essentials).





Municipal Association  
of South Carolina™

# ANNUAL REPORT

2024



I'm pleased to present to you the Municipal Association's 2024 Annual Report. This year, our Association, representing the interests of South Carolina's cities and towns, has again made significant strides in advocacy as well as training and services for local elected officials and staff.

When we discuss the Association's accomplishments, we are always quick to acknowledge that collaboration with you is what makes it possible. The dedication of our elected and local officials, their willingness to partner with stakeholders, and an understanding that we can achieve more together than separately, are instrumental in our success.

Throughout the year, we focused on strengthening our local communities by defending your ability to govern your cities and towns at the local level, promoting sustainable development, enhancing public services and fostering economic growth. We have focused on many initiatives this year – civility in local government, city management succession planning and retail assistance programs – to name just a few.

This report overviews our recent successes, but it sets the stage for our future endeavors as well. We will continue to work together to advocate for policies that benefit our hometowns, invest in innovative solutions, and help build stronger, more resilient communities. Thank you for your commitment and contributions to our shared mission.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "B. Todd Glover".

**B. Todd Glover**  
Municipal Association of SC  
Executive Director







# Voices

**Cities and towns created the Municipal Association of SC in part because officials knew collaboration would greatly amplify and strengthen their messages.**

## Advocacy efforts

The Association's advocacy team helped secure the passage of Act 57, allowing municipalities to use state and local accommodations taxes to develop workforce housing. In another legislative success, the General Assembly passed Act 71, which allows municipalities with less than \$500,000 in recurring revenues to provide a compilation of financial statements rather than a full audit. This new law offers a more cost-effective option for many small towns. For the second year, the advocacy team prevented a state budget proviso that would bar municipalities from regulating short-term rentals in their communities.

The Association also worked to create an online resource for municipalities who sought to pass a hate crimes ordinance due to the lack of a statewide hate crimes law. For example, North Charleston passed their local ordinance because the city "must protect its residents from intimidation based on bias or hate towards a person because of the actual or perceived ethnicity, national origin, color, religion, sexual orientation, gender and gender identity or physical or mental disability."

## Research expansion

The Association's efforts to be a source of critical South Carolina-specific municipal information to officials — as well as the General Assembly and state agencies — received a substantial boost in 2023 with the hire of a research and legislative analyst. Some of the data already collected included fiscal impact statements and other documents related to short-term rentals, annexation and other critical topics used by municipalities, Association staff and the SC Office of Revenue and Fiscal Affairs.

"RFA appreciates the cooperation and assistance from [the Municipal Association] on the many fiscal and legislative issues that our office is required to provide analysis on for the legislature and other offices," RFA staff said in a statement. "Having a dedicated person who understands the many details of the issues and can help us identify or understand the complete picture is especially helpful."

The Association's research involves many other valuable topics: short-term rental regulation around the state, acceptance of surety bonds, 911 communicator training, fire department personnel training and turnover, tax collection methodologies, and political sign regulations, among others.

## Civility in local government

In 2022, the Association launched an initiative to restore civility in local government, providing local leaders with training, civility pledges and other resources. The effort to help officials listen, learn and work through conflicts struck a chord, not only with city councils, but also with other governmental entities in South Carolina and across the nation. The Association joined with the SC School Boards Association for a joint civility initiative partnership in 2023.

The two organizations came together to host a joint training with retired police chief Harry Dolan on deescalating volatile or heated situations. A key to the process, Dolan said, is the ability to listen to someone express why they are upset, give them adequate time to express their feelings, and demonstrate that you understand their concerns.

"The most powerful word in the English language, in my opinion, is empathy — to be able to see the world through someone else's eyes," he said.

The Association's sample civility resolution, as well as a variety of other resources including the civility pledge adopted by numerous councils, can be found at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: civility).

**> 414 General Assembly bills tracked in the Association's Legislative Tracking System.**

Among other municipal topics, these bills address Association Advocacy Initiatives, including protecting local authority to regulate short-term rentals and supporting statewide hate crimes legislation.

**> 484 posts on the Municipal Association's Facebook, X and Instagram feeds, with 82,980 impressions.**

For legislative advocacy material, including posts from the Association's advocacy team, the count is 169 posts and 11,441 impressions.

**> 10,617 hits on the Association's podcasts**

58 episodes covering legislative action, award-winning municipal projects, Municipal Association conferences and civility in government.

**> 281,911 visitors to [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc)**

**> 782,558 total page views**

# Knowledge

Education is a core tenet of the Municipal Association, with multiple training opportunities available throughout many programs and services.

## Education and training improvements

A great challenge for training and professional development among municipal elected officials and staff is the turnover often experienced in these positions. The Association continues to find new ways to connect officials and staff with the knowledge they need to do their jobs well.

A recent example includes the Association's first-ever Small Cities Summit which offered targeted educational sessions for municipalities with populations of fewer than 3,000 residents. The Association's Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government updated several of its on-demand courses in 2023. Also, the downtown revitalization technical assistance program Main Street South Carolina expanded its staff with a new staff associate and launched online training for design review board members.

The SC Business License Officials Association is one of 11 affiliate associations of the Municipal Association that provide job-specific training. In the case of BLOA, it provides regular training for administering local business and professional license taxes, and offers an Accreditation in Business Licensing and a Master in Business Licensing. Hardeeville Business License Coordinator Cynthia Oliver is the current BLOA secretary/treasurer.

"My 12-year tenure as a successful business license official is due to the wealth of knowledge I've received from BLOA," Oliver said. "The *Business License Handbook*, Municipal Association staff, and various website tools have been invaluable resources to my accomplishments."

## Build the Bench interns

As with many local government positions, succession planning is vital in leadership roles. The Municipal Association's board of directors resolved to cultivate a leadership pipeline through the Build the Bench program, placing interns with municipalities to build a strong and diverse pool of future job candidates.

The City of Goose Creek has accepted several of the interns placed through the program. The first intern for the city, Joseph Morris, worked on projects including a city-wide micromobility program for modes of transportation like bicycles, scooters and e-bikes. He has since taken a planning job with the city. Goose Creek Special Projects Manager Alexis Kiser supervises the city's interns.

The Build the Bench program, Kiser said, has offered practical exposure to work that "is invaluable for their professional development, allowing them to understand the complexities and dynamics of local governance. By working on diverse projects, interns gain a comprehensive understanding of how different departments function and interact, preparing them for future leadership roles in public administration."

## Field services managers

The Association's field services managers are available to help every city and town in South Carolina with many of the challenges that local officials face, using regular visits to municipalities, training sessions and a personal connection. For several years now, the field services managers have helped municipal officials submit American Rescue Plan Act fund reports to the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

The three field services managers often help facilitate everything from goal-setting sessions with city and town councils to training sessions on major topics like business licensing and annexation. Naomi Reed is the field services manager for the Upstate region, where she provided newly elected official training and training on the forms of government for the Town of Saluda, alongside many other municipalities. Saluda's town council found the training insightful, Mayor Miliken Matthews said.

"[Reed's] expertise and clear explanations have significantly enhanced our understanding and preparedness. We truly appreciate the time and effort [she] dedicated to our development," he said.

- > **1,160 total attendees**  
at the Municipal Association's 2023 Annual Meeting, and
- > **112 attendees**  
at the first-ever 2023 Small City Summit
- > **512 attendees**  
at the 2024 Hometown Legislative Action Day
- > **131 elected officials**  
have taken their first Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government course in the last year.
- > **1,886 MEO Institute graduates**  
since 1986, when the program began, and
- > **371 Advanced MEO Institute graduates**  
since that program began in 2014.
- > **194 municipalities**  
with at least one MEO graduate since the founding of the MEO Institute, representing 72% of all municipalities.
- > **34 Main Street South Carolina communities**  
participating at four levels, including Aiken, Florence, Greenwood, Hartsville and Laurens as the five accredited Main Street SC cities. Downtown Florence won the national Great American Main Street Award in 2023. Main Street SC partnered with the SC Broadband Office to provide technical assistance in Ridge Spring and Norway.
- > **6 months of on-site training**  
coordinated by Main Street SC with each Aspiring Main Street participating downtown program, equating to over \$45,000 of services to each program.
- > **1,509 municipal employees**  
around the state participate in at least one of the Municipal Association's affiliate associations, and
- > **2,049 attendees**  
at affiliate association meetings within the last year.
- > **18 new graduates**  
of the Municipal Court Administrators Association 101 training, and 46 graduates total since MCAA 101 began.
- > **8 "Business Licensing Essentials" virtual training sessions**  
hosted by the Municipal Association's Local Revenue Services, with an average of
- > **54 business licensing officials attending**  
each session.
- > **3,573 technical assistance requests**  
handled by the Association's field services managers. The 3,573 total municipal contacts made by the team included 269 cities and towns out of the total 271.
- > **122 council training sessions, meetings or strategic planning sessions**  
led by the Association's field services managers for the year.

## Top 10 Requests for Technical Assistance

1. Networking
2. Education and training
3. American Rescue Plan Act funds
4. Finance
5. Planning and zoning
6. Business licensing
7. Human resources
8. Freedom of Information Act
9. Elections
10. Budget, audit, Local Government Fund report

# Solutions

Cities and towns from across South Carolina face common challenges, but municipal officials can find efficient solutions by working together through the Association.

## Retail assistance

The Association and Main Street South Carolina spent several years developing and launching WeShopSC.com, the state's only online marketplace of small businesses. The web platform supports small business owners and showcases their unique products and services for a wider audience. In 2023, Main Street SC staff brought WeShopSC training to a diverse array of businesses and Main Street directors.

Many municipalities participated in a retail recruitment training program offered by the Association and The Retail Coach. This intensive training helped cities and towns attract new businesses through marketing analyses and outreach efforts. City of Forest Acres staff were among the participants.

"We learned a lot about site selection and the importance of being able to identify your current inventory of properties," City Administrator Shaun Greenwood said. "Through a connection made at the training, we were able to secure a new Slim Chickens location to replace a long-struggling empty building. We have also been able to use the information provided by The Retail Coach to create a more interactive economic development experience at the City of Forest Acres."

## Local Business License Renewal Center

Cities, towns and the Association have worked together on standardizing business licensing practices according to the SC Business License Tax Standardization Act of 2020. The law requires jurisdictions to offer their businesses the opportunity to renew their business license through the Local Business License Renewal Center, developed by the Association. In the past year, the renewal center experienced a jump in usage by more than 80% with nearly 16,000 businesses using it.

"The Local Business License Renewal Center has not only met, but exceeded my expectations," Myrtle Beach Director of Financial Services Jeremy Roof said. "The Municipal Association staff that supports the portal has been extremely responsive and has taken a cooperative proactive approach to not only design, but delivering a product that has made all business licensing officials jobs easier. All businesses that have used the portal have expressed a genuine appreciation of a renewal experience that is not rigid and complicated, but rather simple and easy."

## Risk management improvements

The programs of Risk Management Services, the SC Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund and SC Municipal Insurance Trust, need to maintain a healthy fund balance, just as cities do to maintain financial stability. Using a capital adequacy study, RMS helped the SCMIRF board of trustees set a target surplus position and work to stabilize SCMIRF rates. The SCMIT board, recognizing overall increases in insurance costs faced by municipalities, approved an additional \$1 million in return of SCMIT surplus for 2024, increasing the total to \$4 million.

RMS loss control staff help member cities establish effective risk management practices, visiting members to help them determine what changes could reduce claims and keep employees safe. Since identifying auto losses as a trend that heavily impacts insurance costs, the loss control staff delivered three regional driver training classes and created an online auto loss prevention resource. They also updated the SCMIRF law enforcement guidelines to include the minimum standards required by Act 218 of 2023; and developed a hurricane preparedness checklist for SCMIRF members.

The City of Chester is one of those that worked with RMS loss control staff to enhance safety practices.

"Their proactive approach and diligent counsel on action plan development, coupled with their kindness and technical assistance support, have made a profound impact on our community's well-being. Our collaboration with RMS loss control staff exemplifies our commitment to working smart and prioritizing loss control," City Administrator Malik Whitaker said. "Their action plan support and technical assistance support empower us to implement effective strategies that mitigate risks and ensure the well-being of our community."

> **\$22.1 million in business license payments processed**

through the Local Business License Renewal Center in the first four months of 2024, compared to \$11.9 million processed in all of 2023 and \$3.5 million in 2022.

> **18,117 business licenses renewed**

through the LBLRC in the first four months of 2024, compared to 10,756 processed throughout all of 2023.

> **\$50 million+ in total purchases**

made through the City Connect Market, a cooperative purchasing partnership between HGACBuy and the Municipal Association launched in August 2021.

> **137 SC Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund members**

with the Town of Chapin and Town of Smyrna joining as the newest members.

> **131 SC Municipal Insurance Trust members**

with Chapin being the newest member.

> **21,132 courses completed through LocalGovU,**

the online training portal for the Association's Risk Management Services.

> **20,232 employees and volunteers insured**

through SCMIT.

> **\$6.1 billion in total value insured**

through SCMIRF.

> **\$442,101 grant funds disbursed** through SCMIT and SCMIRF grants.

> **More than \$3 million collected** in subrogation and other recoveries on behalf of SCMIT and SCMIRF members.

> **63 member-specific training sessions**

hosted by Risk Management Services Loss Control.

> **416 member visits**

conducted by Risk Management Services for SCMIT and SCMIRF members, addressing police and fire consultations, scheduled annual reviews and assessments.

> **16 consecutive years**

of the SC Other Retirement Benefits Employer Trust receiving the Governmental Accounting Standards Board Award for Excellence for its financial report. SC ORBET is a trust that employers can join to pre-fund their future retirement benefit obligations.

> **482 small businesses registered for WeShopSC**

across 53 cities and 27 active individual community markets with their own market manager since the platform launched in August 2023. The website receives an average of 3,000 to 5,000 monthly visitors.

> **\$300,000 in Hometown Economic Development Grant**

funds awarded to 12 cities and towns.

Recipients:

Allendale	Blackville
Carlisle	Clio
Dillon	Johnsonville
Lane	Lockhart
Marion	Mauldin
Simpsonville	Winnsboro

# Internal Services

The internal services of the Association, such as technology, finance and human resources, play a critical role in providing support to the staff so that the organization can deliver valuable services to South Carolina's cities and towns and continue to seek ways to improve its efficiency.

## Finance systems upgrade

In 2023, the Association's Finance department undertook a major project to research, select and implement a new financial management software system. The Association partnered with development firms to achieve all necessary integration and to reduce the risks of relying on a single provider. The new software and reporting system improves budget processes, helping to validate and disperse funds more efficiently and allowing for a more timely budget report. The improved user-friendliness of the system also allows for more efficient use of staff time.

## Other IT improvements

Multi-factor authentication, or MFA, adds a layer of authentication to computer access, such as a code sent to a phone that the user must enter to verify their identity and access. Because it is a difficult obstacle for cyberattacks, this authentication tool is now a requirement for cybersecurity insurance. The Association now requires MFA for staff and vendors who access its network and systems remotely.

## Cross-pollination of Association efforts

The Association's wide range of services and programs means that strong collaboration between internal departments is a key component to the Association's success. The passage of the SC Business License Tax Standardization Act is a good example of this teamwork in action. The Association's legislative team helped secure a bill that was fair and practical for both cities and businesses. Once the new law was in effect, legislative staff worked closely with the Association's Local Revenue Services and other departments — including Education and Training, Advocacy and Communications and Field Services — for the rollout of the Local Business License Renewal Center and for the highly detailed work of helping cities and towns with business licensing to standardize their processes.



# Directory of Services

More than 90 years ago, a small group of local elected officials realized they had to work together to meet the challenges of the changing times. With this mission in mind, they organized the Municipal Association of South Carolina.

The Municipal Association is still dedicated to the principle of its founding members: to join together to pursue initiatives cities and towns can carry out more efficiently and effectively by working together through the Association than by working individually.

A nonpartisan, nonprofit association representing all of the state's 271 incorporated cities and towns, the Municipal Association fulfills its mission through **shared voices, knowledge and solutions**.

## Voices

From the very start of the Association in the early 1930s, South Carolina municipal officials understood that only by working together could they effectively communicate the needs and views of municipal government to state and federal lawmakers.

### Lobbying the State Legislature and Congress

The Association advocates for changes in state law that enable local elected officials to address municipal challenges. Partnerships play an important part in the Association's advocacy efforts. The Association also monitors federal legislation through the National League of Cities and advocates on behalf of South Carolina cities and towns when federal issues affect the state. *Staff Contacts: Casey Fields, Joannie Nickel, Erica Wright*

#### Fall Advocacy Meeting

Each fall, the Association hosts a fall advocacy day to talk about the challenges facing cities and towns and how changes to state law could help them meet those challenges. Based in part on input gathered during these conversations, the Association's legislative committee and board of directors set the Association's annual Advocacy Initiatives. *Staff Contact: Casey Fields*

#### Legislative Tracking and Reports

During the South Carolina legislative session, the Association actively monitors bills impacting cities and towns and updates the Association's online tracking system to reflect relevant daily bill activity. The online tracking system gives municipal leaders another tool they can use to follow subcommittee, committee and floor action.

Each Friday during the legislative session, municipal officials receive *From the Dome to Your Home*, which recaps the week's major legislative events and previews the upcoming week's activities. The report is posted on the Association's website, emailed and shared with more than 5,000 social media followers. The legislative team expands on the report with additional information through regular episodes of the *From the Dome to Your Home* podcast during the legislative session.

At the end of the legislative session, the Association produces its annual legislative report recapping work on the Advocacy Initiatives and legislative action on major bills of municipal interest.

*Staff Contact: Casey Fields*

#### Hometown Legislative Action Day

In February, Hometown Legislative Action Day draws local officials from all over the state to Columbia to get updates on current legislative issues, visit their local legislators at the State House and connect with legislators at the Association's annual legislative reception. *Staff Contacts: Ken Ivey*

### Public Engagement

Legislators, business leaders, the news media and key influencers learn about successes in cities and towns through online and print resources.

#### Social Media Channels

The Association's Twitter (@MuniAssnSC) and Facebook (MuniAssnSC.StrongSCcities) accounts provide up-to-the-minute information on State House activity and share good news stories about cities and towns. A regular schedule of

social media posts highlighting *Uptown* stories amplifies the online version of the monthly newsletter and resources on the Association's website. The Association's Instagram account (StrongSCcities) highlights the strength and services of South Carolina's 271 cities and towns. *Staff Contact: Meredith Houck*

### **City Connect Blog and City Quick Connect Podcast**

The *City Connect* blog offers short, timely updates on a variety of issues. The blog packages information in a format that is useful not only to local officials but also to the news media, legislators and the public. The *City Quick Connect* podcast gives listeners a chance to hear the latest from Municipal Association staff and others about the issues, the legislation and the support services impacting cities and towns. *Staff Contact: Russell Cox*

### **Municipal Association Mobile App**

The Association app provides a mobile-friendly way to interact with the Association and connect to educational and legislative resources. Through the app, users can access the municipal directory, Association staff listing and municipal job openings, or view the calendar to see sessions and speakers at upcoming events. *Staff Contact: Russell Cox*

### **Research and Analysis**

The Association conducts quantitative and qualitative research and compiles reports on topics related to municipal governance, operations and legislative issues affecting cities and towns. While this research activity primarily supports the work of the Association, it is also available to member cities and towns as they seek to develop new policies and positions on issues. *Staff Contact: Mary Catherine Lawton*

## **Knowledge**

The Association plays an important role in developing municipal elected officials' and employees' knowledge and skills through a wide range of training programs, publications and meetings.

### **Affiliate Associations**

The Municipal Association supports 11 affiliate organizations by providing training and networking for a variety of local government positions with specialized training needs.

In addition to traditional face-to-face training and networking opportunities, the affiliate associations offer online communities for members to share best practices and to pose specific questions related to their local government responsibilities.

*Staff Contact: Ken Ivey*

#### **Association of South Carolina Mayors**

The Association of South Carolina Mayors provides opportunities for its members to more fully engage in advocating for issues that affect cities and towns, network, take part in educational activities, and share ideas and best practices. *Staff Contact: Casey Fields*

#### **Municipal Court Administration Association of SC**

The Municipal Court Administration Association of South Carolina offers training at two workshops for court administrators, clerks of court, municipal judges and other municipal employees involved in court administration. The Supreme Court of South Carolina Commission on CLE and Specialization and the Office of Victims Services recognize these workshops for continuing education credits. Additionally, the Association offers MCAA 101, a three-part training on the basics of Court Administration. *Staff Contact: Lea Ann Mitchell*

#### **Municipal Technology Association of SC**

The Municipal Technology Association of SC promotes municipalities' effective use of technology. MTASC exposes its members to a broad range of technology systems, platforms and solutions. The training serves IT staff and those with GIS responsibilities, in addition to employees who work in other departments but have technology-related duties. *Staff Contact: Lea Ann Mitchell*

#### **SC Association of Municipal Power Systems**

Twenty of the municipal electric utilities are members of the SC Association of Municipal Power Systems. Originally, SCAMPS existed solely for its members to help one another during times of disaster. Although mutual aid is still the backbone of SCAMPS, the affiliate's scope also includes legislative initiatives and training. *Staff Contact: Elizabeth Copeland*

**SC Association of Stormwater Managers**

The SC Association of Stormwater Managers offers its members quarterly training on stormwater management policies and best practices. The SC Board of Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors recognizes the quarterly training sessions for continuing education credits. *Staff Contact: Elizabeth Copeland*

**SC Business Licensing Officials Association**

The South Carolina Business Licensing Officials Association promotes best practices for administering and enforcing the local business license tax. Through rigorous training sessions, members learn skills and practices that make licensing in their cities and towns more efficient and business-friendly.

The professional designation programs of Accreditation in Business Licensing and Masters in Business Licensing reflects members’ dedication to continuing education. *Staff Contact: Elizabeth Copeland*

**SC Community Development Association**

The South Carolina Community Development Association provides educational forums for its members to address economic and community development needs. Members include municipal, county, regional and state community development professionals; employees of private companies with an interest in community development; elected officials; and volunteers. *Staff Contact: Lea Ann Mitchell*

**SC Municipal Attorneys Association**

The South Carolina Municipal Attorneys Association’s annual meeting covers issues important to municipal attorneys, whether working as municipal staff or as a municipality’s outside counsel. The Supreme Court of South Carolina Commission on CLE and Specialization approves this training session for continuing education credits. *Staff Contact: Eric Shytle*

**SC Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association**

The South Carolina Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association offers training programs covering the diverse responsibilities of its members. All of the training sessions qualify for a combination of continuing education credits for certified municipal clerks, certified public accountants and certified public treasurers. MFOCTA sponsors the Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute with the Municipal Association and the College of Charleston’s Joseph P. Riley Jr. Center for Livable Communities. *Staff Contact: Elizabeth Copeland*

**SC Municipal Human Resources Association**

The South Carolina Municipal Human Resources Association promotes sound human resources administration and encourages innovative programs. Through its training programs, MHRA provides information and the opportunity to exchange ideas among its members. The Society for Human Resources Management recognizes this training for continuing education credits. *Staff Contact: Lea Ann Mitchell*

**SC Utility Billing Association**

The South Carolina Utility Billing Association provides training and networking opportunities for its members, including billing clerks, meter readers and department managers. SCUBA’s meetings encompass a variety of topics focused on customer service, safety in the workplace, and new technologies to increase the efficiencies of utility billing and collections. *Staff Contact: Ken Ivey*

**Training Institutes**

Educational opportunities are available to municipal officials and staff through four training institutes.

**SC Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government**

The SC Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government trains elected officials to increase their understanding of local government operations. Elected officials take seven required courses to complete the institute. The required courses consist of two day-long sessions held each February in Columbia the day after Hometown Legislative Action Day and five additional classes, held yearly at designated councils of governments’ locations or online through an on-demand format found on the Association’s website.

*Staff Contact: Urica Floyd*

### **SC Advanced Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government**

Offered exclusively for graduates of the MEO Institute, the Advanced Institute gives elected officials the opportunity to continue their education. To complete the Advanced Institute, participants must take four of the six offered courses that explore in greater depth topics included in the MEO Institute and other topics critical for effective municipal operations. Advanced Institute graduates also have the opportunity to participate in the Advanced Continuing Education program. *Staff Contact: Urica Floyd*

### **Business Licensing Training Institute**

The Business Licensing Training Institute educates municipal and county officials on the basics of administering a business licensing program. To complete the institute, officials must complete three day-long training classes, which are offered across three years. Once they complete the training classes, officials may take an exam to earn the Accreditation in Business Licensing credential. The SC Business Licensing Officials Association sponsors the institute. *Staff Contact: Elizabeth Copeland*

### **Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute**

The Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute offers instruction in several areas, including forms of government, financial management, the role of the municipal clerk and business licensing. The Association sponsors MCTI in partnership with the SC Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association and the College of Charleston's Joseph P. Riley Jr. Center for Livable Communities. *Staff Contact: Elizabeth Copeland*

### **Annual Meeting**

Each summer, the Annual Meeting brings municipal officials together for training, networking and discussion of issues of common interest. Officials hear from state and nationally known speakers, participate in sessions, and learn about new technology and developments in local government. *Staff Contact: Ken Ivey*

### **Technical Assistance**

#### **Field Services**

The Association's three field services managers travel the state to offer hands-on technical assistance, training and consultation to help municipalities address challenges. *Staff Contacts: Charlie Barrineau and Naomi Reed*

#### **Main Street South Carolina**

Main Street SC helps its members revitalize their downtowns into vibrant centers of commerce and community by using the National Main Street Center's Main Street Approach,<sup>TM</sup> which focuses on historic preservation and placemaking. Main Street SC provides member programs of varying levels of preparedness and resources with knowledge and tools to develop community-driven and comprehensive revitalization strategies. It provides on-site consultation and technical assistance to local programs that meet specific requirements. Quarterly workshops, networking sessions and on demand trainings also assist local Main Street programs in their efforts. At the startup level, members build capacity for downtown revitalization. At the Aspiring Main Street level, participants receive three years of technical assistance and then transition into a Classic Main Street program. Members at the highest level meet national accreditation standards. Each year, Main Street SC honors exceptional member accomplishments through its Inspiration Awards. *Staff Contact: Jenny Boulware*

### **Information Resources**

The Association's print and online resources address hundreds of topics related to municipal government.

#### **Publications**

- *Annexation Handbook*
- *Comprehensive Planning Guide for Local Governments*
- *Election Handbook*
- *Forms and Powers of Municipal Government*
- *Handbook for Municipal Officials in South Carolina*
- *The Municipal Association of South Carolina 1930 – 2015: A History of Shared Voices, Shared Knowledge, Shared Solutions*
- *How to Conduct Effective Meeting*
- *Incorporation Handbook*
- *Model Employee Handbook for SC Municipalities*

- *Municipal Officials and Legislative Directory*
  - *Public Official's Guide to Compliance with the Freedom of Information Act* (published by the SC Press Association)
  - *South Carolina Business Licensing Handbook*
  - *Tips for Hometown Media Success*
- Staff Contact: Eric Budds*

**Website**

The Municipal Association's website, [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc), offers more than 2,000 pages and 2,000 documents, presentations and links to external resources. With a responsive design to fit the needs and formats of mobile and desktop devices, the site includes a powerful search engine and information center to help users navigate to specific resources of interest. *Staff Contact: Meredith Houck*

**Uptown**

The monthly newsletter in print and electronic formats features articles on a variety of topics important to municipal officials. Each issue's special section looks in depth at a topic central to local government.

A weekly e-newsletter, *Uptown Update*, informs municipal officials about a variety of timely opportunities, including meeting registrations, training events and grants. A regular feature, "In Case You Missed It," gives *Uptown Update* readers a second look at past articles and posts from the Association's publications. *Staff Contact: Russell Cox*

**Daily News**

*Daily News* provides links to news stories about the state's smallest rural towns to its largest cities. The articles highlight how local governments deliver services. *Staff Contact: Russell Cox*

**The Uplift**

*The Uplift* delivers a collection of news links every Wednesday showcasing South Carolina cities and towns at their best. *Staff Contact: Russell Cox*

**Achievement Awards**

The Achievement Awards recognize successful and innovative projects that improve the quality of life for residents and add value to communities. The program also encourages municipal officials to share ideas. *Staff Contact: Meredith Houck*

## Solutions

Cities and towns face many of the same challenges and can find solutions by pooling resources and ideas through the Association.

**Local Revenue Services**

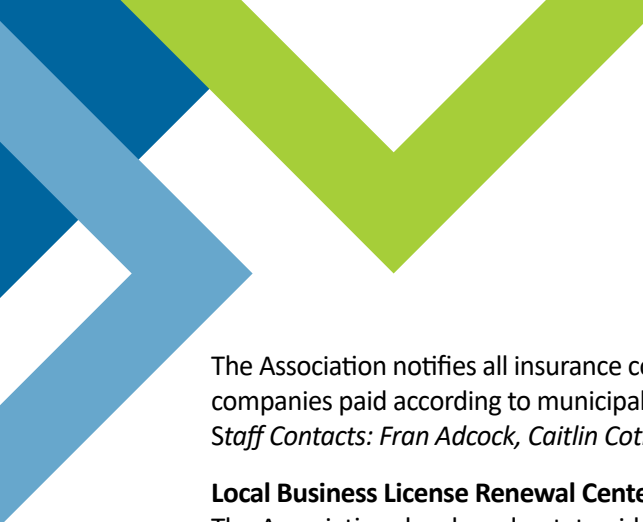
The Municipal Association works with cities and towns to improve efficiencies by offering centralized local revenue services for certain business license taxes and delinquent debts. The Association provides an online portal to participating cities in the insurance, brokers and telecommunications tax programs as well as the Setoff Debt Program, that allows them to securely access current and past program documents.

**Brokers Tax Program**

Insurance companies not licensed to directly sell policies in the state can provide coverage through South Carolina licensed brokers. Businesses pay the municipal brokers premium tax to the SC Department of Insurance., which then remits funds to the Association to distribute to cities and towns. *Staff Contacts: Caitlin Cothran, Kaylee Summerton*

**Insurance Tax Program**

The Association receives municipal business license tax payments from insurance companies and distributes the taxes owed to municipalities. The Insurance Tax Program consolidates the licensing procedures for insurance companies, saving time and money for municipalities and companies alike. Participating municipalities adopt a standard ordinance for these taxes.



The Association notifies all insurance companies of the payment process, uses industry data to confirm all companies paid according to municipal ordinances, and provides a portal for the reporting and payment of the tax. *Staff Contacts: Fran Adcock, Caitlin Cothran, Anita Lancaster, Kaylee Summerton*

#### **Local Business License Renewal Center**

The Association developed a statewide online portal for business license renewals. The online portal is for renewals only. New business licenses will still be issued by the city or town. State law requires this system to be hosted by the SC Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office. To use this free software, municipalities must adopt the standard business license practices. *Staff Contacts: Fran Adcock, Caitlin Cothran*

#### **Setoff Debt Program**

The SC Department of Revenue receives payments for delinquent debts, such as utility bills, taxes and court fines, by reducing state income tax refunds by the amount of the debt. The department forwards the debt payments it receives to the Association, which in turn forwards the amounts to the reporting municipality or claimant agency. The Association provides software to all participating entities to streamline their program administration and ensure compliance with state regulations. *Staff Contacts: Caitlin Cothran, Anita Lancaster*

#### **Telecommunications Tax Program**

The Association centralizes the business license tax due to municipalities from telecommunication companies. Each December, the Association sends a notice to all telecommunications companies for the municipalities participating in the program. By law, municipalities can assess this tax only on the voice portion of a phone bill. The system streamlines the payment process for telecommunications companies. It also saves cities and towns time and money by eliminating the need for each to perform the same processes. *Staff Contacts: Caitlin Cothran, Kaylee Summerton*

#### **Risk Management Services**

The two self-funded insurance programs administered by the Association's Risk Management Services staff are prime examples of strength and efficiency through the combined efforts of member cities. Each program operates under the direction of a board of trustees composed of representatives from its membership.

The SC Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund provides all lines of property and casualty coverage, including general liability, law enforcement liability, public officials' liability, cyber liability and property and automobile coverage. The SC Municipal Insurance Trust, provides workers' compensation coverage for municipal employees.

RMS provides grants, attorney hotlines, employee training and loss control services to members. These services help members improve risk management efforts, prevent claims and reduce the cost of insurance. *Staff Contact: Heather Ricard*

#### **Training**

RMS members have access to online and in-person training at no charge.

- Customized, on-site training: RMS provides training for members in their hometowns, allowing city employees to attend sessions together.
- Online training: The online training opportunities include a variety of risk management, human resources, safety and law enforcement topics, including use of force and pursuit driving.
- Statewide and regional training: RMS offers members regional training sessions on topics such as law enforcement liability, OSHA training, risk management 101 and defensive driving.
- Risk Management Institute: RMI offers participants from SCMIT- and SCMIRF-member organizations specialized training in the role of risk manager and safety coordinator.
- *RiskLetter*: The quarterly e-newsletter provides information on a wide range of risk management topics.

- Law enforcement simulator: RMS offers members access to a law enforcement training simulator that allows officers to practice their decision-making skills and responses to resistance.

**Loss Control/Technical Assistance**

RMS helps its members build effective safety and loss control programs.

- Model policies and procedures manuals for law enforcement and fire services: SCMIT and SCMIRF members receive updated fire and law enforcement policies.
- One-on-one technical assistance visits: The loss control staff meet with member organizations to evaluate their safety and loss control programs.
- Legal hotlines: SCMIRF members can access up to 10 hours of free legal advice on each legal hotline for labor and liability issues.
- Education tools: SCMIRF members have access to cybersecurity services through the online tool, eRisk Hub, in addition to specialized toolkits, such as parks and recreation liability, public officials’ liability, sewer backups, special events liability and workers’ compensation.

**Grants**

The RMS grant program helps RMS members purchase products or equipment to reduce the frequency and severity of claims.

- SCMIRF awards the Law Enforcement Liability Reduction Grant Program grants to member law enforcement agencies to purchase stun guns or Tasers, Taser cameras, body cameras and other equipment.
- SCMIRF awards the Public Works Property and Liability Reduction Grant Program grants to member public works and utilities departments to purchase items to address the frequency and severity of claims, including back-up cameras, collision avoidance systems, concrete scarifiers, sewer cameras, meter locks and other equipment.
- SCMIT awards grants to member law enforcement, fire and public works departments to purchase work-zone safety equipment, soft body armor and other protective gear.

**South Carolina Other Retirement Benefits Employer Trust**

The South Carolina Other Retirement Benefits Employer Trust allows cities to set aside funds for nonpension benefits, such as retiree healthcare, as required by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board. Each member shares in the trust’s administrative- and investment- related expenses, lowering the overall cost of compliance for each local government. *Staff Contact: Heather Ricard*

**Hometown Economic Development Grants**

The Municipal Association’s Hometown Economic Development Grants provide cities and towns with funds to implement economic development projects that will have a positive effect on the quality of life in their communities. The Hometown Economic Development Grants are awarded annually. *Staff Contact: Jake Broom*

**Technology Services**

The Association, in partnership with VC3, provides discounted technology services to cities and towns. VC3, an information technology company headquartered in Columbia, designs and hosts municipal websites; designs and implements computer networks; and provides security, disaster recovery, strategic technology planning and voice communication services. *Staff Contact: Jake Broom*

**City Connect Market**

City Connect Market, a cooperative purchasing partnership between the Municipal Association of SC and HGACBuy, allows South Carolina’s cities and towns to take advantage of volume discounts when purchasing everything from fire trucks to roll carts to professional services. The partnership improves pricing and can help eliminate the need for each municipality to handle all details of each competitive bid process.

*Staff Contact: Jake Broom*

# Staff

## Executive

Todd Glover  
*Executive Director*  
Eric Budds  
*Deputy Executive Director*  
Jake Broom  
*Chief Operating Officer*

## Advocacy and Communications

Joanna Ayers  
*Administrative Assistant*  
Russell Cox  
*Uptown Editor and Digital Production Manager*  
Casey Fields  
*Director of Advocacy*  
Meredith Houck  
*Communications Manager*  
Onye Kelly  
*Communications and Engagement Coordinator*  
Mary Catherine Lawton  
*Research and Legislative Analyst*  
Joannie Nickel  
*Legislative and Public Policy Advocate*  
Erica Wright  
*Legislative and Public Policy Advocate*

## Education and Training

Kailin Bethel  
*Administrative Assistant*  
Jenny Boulware  
*Main Street SC Manager*  
Elizabeth Copeland  
*Staff Associate for Affiliate Services*  
Dawn Dukes  
*Administrative Assistant*  
Urica Floyd  
*Staff Associate for Training and Learning Solutions*  
Jonathan Irick  
*Staff Associate for Main Street SC*  
Ken Ivey  
*Manager of Member Services*  
Lea Ann Mitchell  
*Staff Associate for Affiliate Services*  
Christine Sumter  
*Administrative Assistant*

## Field Services

Charlie Barrineau  
*Field Services Manager*  
Naomi Reed  
*Field Services Manager*

## Finance

Stephanie O'Cain  
*Chief Financial Officer*  
Fay Barlow  
*Accounts Receivable Coordinator*  
Elizabeth Floyd  
*Financial Manager*  
Lynn Miller  
*Accounts Payable Coordinator*  
Jodi Pendris  
*Financial and Technology Specialist*

## Information Technology

Virginia Butler  
*Business Systems Analyst*  
Krystal Dailey  
*Information Technology Manager*  
Devon Davis  
*Information Technology Support Specialist*

## Legal

Eric Shytle  
*General Counsel*

## Local Revenue Services

Caitlin Cothran  
*Manager for Local Revenue Services*  
Fran Adcock  
*Revenue Analyst*  
Anita Lancaster  
*Revenue Analyst*  
Kaylee Summerton  
*Revenue Analyst*

## Operations

Summer Randall  
*Operations Manager*  
Vernessa Pendergrass  
*Receptionist*

## Risk Management Services

Heather Ricard  
*Director of Risk Management Services*  
Krystal Bailey  
*Senior SCMIRF Claims Adjuster*  
John Ciesielski  
*Loss Control Consultant*  
Robert Collins  
*Underwriting Manager*  
Tchnavia Davis  
*SCMIRF Claims Adjuster*  
Tony DesChamps  
*SCMIT Claims Manager*  
Amy Gillian  
*Administrative Assistant*  
Joy Gloster  
*Data and Training Analyst*  
Jennifer Gray  
*Financial Manager for RMS*  
Sharon Henry  
*Senior SCMIT Claims Adjuster*  
Latrice Jenkins  
*SCMIT Claims Adjuster*  
Hurisheo Jones  
*Claims Adjuster*  
Brenda Kegler  
*SCMIT Associate Claims Adjuster*  
Stacy Lee  
*Senior SCMIRF Claims Adjuster*  
Amy Lindler  
*Technology Operations Manager*  
Leslie Nash  
*SCMIRF Claims Adjuster*  
Kayde Niemira  
*Loss Control Coordinator*  
Bethany Pendley  
*Loss Control Manager*  
Judy Phillips  
*Senior Claims Adjuster*  
Harriett Robinson  
*Senior SCMIT Claims Adjuster*  
Chassidy Sistrunk  
*Senior Underwriter*  
Johnna Smith  
*Senior SCMIRF Claims Adjuster*  
Sharon Turner  
*Underwriter*  
Mike Waslewski  
*SCMIRF Claims Manager*  
Rem Williams  
*Senior SCMIRF Claims Adjuster*



# Pillars of Civility

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

Be as eager to listen as to speak.

Your time is valuable. So is everyone else's. Respect it.

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

Concentrate on facts, not theories.

Ask questions to learn. Answer questions with respect.

Make your point about the issue, not the person.

Make your case on merits, not on what people want to hear.

Ask "what will persuade people in this room?" not "what will make a great tweet?"

## Civility. Respect. Solutions.



Municipal Association  
of South Carolina

[www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc)



Municipal Association  
of South Carolina



**2024**

Achievement Awards  
Main Street Inspiration Awards



# 2024 Achievement Awards

Started in 1986, the Achievement Awards program gives cities and towns deserved recognition for superior and innovative efforts in local government. The program also provides a forum for sharing the best public service ideas in South Carolina.

This year, 40 municipalities entered the Achievement Awards program. Videos highlighting this year's winners are available on the Association's website at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: achievement).

## Population 1 – 1,000: Town of Six Mile

### Bryson Children's Nature Walk

In 2003, Six Mile resident Conrad Ardell Bryson bequeathed more than 62 acres to the town for the benefit of economically challenged children. A significant stretch of greenspace, the land has a pond and a wetlands area. Given these features the gift fits into the goal stated in the Town of Six Mile's comprehensive plan of protecting greenspace, especially the scenic views approaching Six Mile Mountain.

To establish a children's nature walk on the property, town officials worked closely with Bryson's estate representatives as well as the local land trust Upstate Forever, a group dedicated to preserving the lands, waters and character of South Carolina's Upstate. Although resolving issues involved in the bequest produced a delay of more than 17 years, the collaborative efforts now have fulfilled the terms of the will and protected the land in perpetuity through a conservation easement, which maintains the land's pristine features.

The project received \$8,000 in closing costs from the Upstate Land Conservation Fund, as well as federal American Rescue Plan Act funds. The town continues to work with Bryson's estate and accepts private donations from residents and businesses to maintain the facility.

The property will also offer an outdoor learning area and garden for students of the adjoining Six Mile Elementary School, where Bryson served as a volunteer.

Contact Mayor James Atkinson at [mayoratkinsonsixmile@gmail.com](mailto:mayoratkinsonsixmile@gmail.com) or 864.868.2653.

## Population 1,001 – 5,000: City of Abbeville

### Abbeville Infrastructure Modernization

Like other rural communities, the City of Abbeville faced many challenges from aging and deteriorating infrastructure. The state of the city's waterlines was leading to water quality complaints, the wastewater treatment plant was moving toward potential regulatory problems, stormwater runoff was entering the sewer system, and the hydroelectric dam needed upgrades. Housing developments and electric school bus adoption were increasing the demand on the city's electrical grid. In 2018, the city began a sustainability-focused effort addressing all of these issues through upgrades and refurbishments, and even the extension of water lines.

With help from the utilities department and public input sessions, the city created a capital improvement plan, prioritizing projects based on their potential impact on residents, health and safety considerations, feasibility and economic needs. City council selects specific projects from the list to pursue each year. Of the approximately \$15 million invested into water and sewer infrastructure over six years, nearly 80% has been funded through grants and one-time federal and state funding. The Upper Savannah Council of Governments helped with grant applications and the 2023 comprehensive plan process, with other support coming from the SC Rural Infrastructure Authority, SC Department of Health and Environmental Control and SC Department of Transportation, which helped by timing its street repaving to align with the waterline work.

Abbeville's investments in itself have now paid dividends with the arrival of new commercial operations, industry and housing developments. The city is planning further projects across all utility types through 2026. After that, it will add further projects to its capital improvement plan, and update its comprehensive plan.

Contact Mike Clary at [mclary@abbevillecitysc.com](mailto:mclary@abbevillecitysc.com) or 864.366.1800.

## Population 5,001 – 10,000: City of Hardeeville

### Building Economic Development in Hardeeville through the new Hardeeville Commerce Park

Located in the fast-growing Southern Lowcountry and along Interstate 95, Hardeeville has historically hosted a tourism-focused and travel-driven economy. City leaders sought higher-paying jobs for its growing population with the Hardeeville Commerce Park, a 170-acre facility on Exit 5.

The project began with the gift of 130 acres to the city in 2012, and the city acquired the remaining 40 acres at low prices. For water and sewer infrastructure development, the city obtained \$850,000 in grants from the SC Rural Infrastructure Authority and \$480,000 from the Beaufort-Jasper Water & Sewer Authority. The park's access road, Prosper Parkway, received \$1.9 million from the SC Economic Development Administration — made possible through federal Opportunity Zone and Promise Zone designations — and \$1.65 million from Jasper County's local option sales tax. SC Dominion provided \$70,000 to expand broadband development, and total grant funds secured amounted to \$4.6 million.

With the commerce park established, 10 landowners purchased all of its available parcels, and are now developing it with hundreds of millions of investment dollars. Once construction is complete, the park will add at least 250 high-paying jobs in logistics, commercial shipping and light industrial professions.

The sale of the park parcels made \$4.6 million for the city, which has established an Economic Development Fund to help it purchase and develop further properties along U.S. Highway 17 between exits 5 and 8. Hardeeville will also use its workforce training program for residents to gain the skills the new industries need, such as welding, forklift and Occupational Safety and Health Administration certification, as well as commercial driver's licenses.

Contact Michael Czymbor at [mczymbor@herdeevillesc.gov](mailto:mczymbor@herdeevillesc.gov) or 843.784.2231.



## Population 10,001 – 20,000: City of Fountain Inn

### Sanctified Hill Park Renovation

Located in Fountain Inn’s historically Black community, Sanctified Hill Park suffered from a legacy of neglect. Once an unofficial town dump, soil tests revealed layers of trash beneath the surface. In the 1970s, the city used dirt to cap the trash and added basic amenities. Even so, the park remained a symbol of inequitable investment for decades, and developed a reputation for gang activity and crime.

Golden View Baptist Church became an early leader for restoring the park, taking on maintenance responsibilities. In 2020, the city prioritized its revitalization, driven by a steering committee with the church and other stakeholders, and kicking off the process with a block party.

The grand reopening of the park came in May 2023. The park is now a vibrant public space that is home to modern playground equipment, including a playground for younger children and another for older children; two basketball courts; a paved walking path; a large lawn; restrooms and two picnic pavilions.

Strategic planning allowed for efficient execution of most of the refurbishment work in the initial phase of the project, using \$2.5 million in state funding, and additional contributions from Laurens County American Rescue Plan Act funds and capital sales tax revenue. The transformation of Sanctified Hill Park addressed longstanding historical inequities, promoted inclusivity and bolstered community pride.

*Contact Martin Lane at [Martin.Lane@fountaininn.org](mailto:Martin.Lane@fountaininn.org) or 864.216.2480.*

## Communications: City of Goose Creek

### Adopt a Goose Program

A relatively new city incorporated in 1961, Goose Creek is working to overcome its perception as a bedroom community without a traditional downtown. The Adopt a Goose Program provided an immediate way for it to build community identity. Local businesses can adopt a 4-foot fiberglass goose statue, uniquely painted by the Goose Creek Artists Guild and frequently themed to the business, for display throughout the city — driving economic development, resident relations and online engagement.

Businesses apply online to sponsor a goose at a \$2,000 price point to cover costs, followed by design work, painting, clear-coating and installation. As the project launched, city staff built community buzz using social media teasers before revealing the first four geese in a surprise overnight installation. With the initial slate of geese installed, they offered an interactive scavenger hunt complete with local-business-focused promotions, which encouraged goose statue hunters to travel into businesses and take selfies with the geese for social media.

The program emphasizes fun in everything from the designs to the avian puns — one installation carries the name of Vincent Van Goose — and the community has responded enthusiastically. Video campaigns across all social platforms received more than 30,000 views, with photo posts reaching about 40,000 Facebook and Instagram accounts.

After its first year, the program has 25 geese completed. Some of the next steps include a GIS map project, trading cards — and, of course, more geese.

*Contact Adam Kelly at [akelly@cityofgoosecreek.com](mailto:akelly@cityofgoosecreek.com) or 843.937.1581.*

# Economic Development – Joseph P. Riley Jr. Award: City of Florence

## Florence Hits a Home Run with Sports Tourism

Cultivating excellent recreational opportunities has long been a goal for the City of Florence’s comprehensive plan, and this focus has come to include sports tourism as well, allowing the community to invest in itself as a vibrant economic hub.

Florence’s expanding slate of sports facilities, drawing people from across the region and even the nation, now includes the 30-court Dr. Eddie Floyd Tennis Center, the 14-field Florence Soccer Complex, and the multipurpose Freedom Florence Recreation Complex. The newest facility, the Florence Sports Complex, is home to Carolina Bank Field, where the Coastal Plain League baseball team, the Florence Flamings, play, as well as five Little League fields, a high-school baseball field and a collegiate-level track.

The city used installment and hospitality revenue bonds to fund the approximately \$35.6 million construction costs of its newest facilities. Land donations came from the Drs. Bruce and Lee Foundation and philanthropist Dr. Edward Floyd. The facilities, spread among the city’s neighborhoods and commercial districts, have easy interstate highway access and trail system connections.

In 2022, Florence saw a \$12.2 million economic impact of sports tourism, compared to \$8.2 million in 2018. More recently, the 2023 Florence Cup alone brought more than 11,000 unique visitors to the Florence Soccer Complex. Hospitality revenues generated by sports tourism exceeded the projected \$5.8 million in the 2023 fiscal year.

Planning for future expansions at every step, the city now aims to solidify its status as a premier sports destination with a four-field multipurpose complex, and an expansion of the three-court Pearl Moore Basketball Center with an arena-style facility.

Contact Amanda Pope at [apope@cityofflorence.com](mailto:apope@cityofflorence.com) or 843.495.2284.

# Public Safety: Town of Mount Pleasant

## Innovative Partnerships to Combat the Opioid Crisis

At a time when opioid overdoses were increasing quickly across the nation in 2016, the crisis claimed the life of 19-year-old Creighton Shipman in Mount Pleasant. His mother, Nanci Shipman, founded WakeUp Carolina, a nonprofit dedicated to providing peer-based recovery support services. Aiming to maximize its impact, the group partnered with the Mount Pleasant Police Department to combat opioid misuse and save lives.

The innovative partnership includes peer support initiatives, community naloxone training and awareness events, comprehensive education for first responders, and now a Critical Information Management System, or CIMS, to provide real-time support for opioid-related incidents and increase follow-ups on overdose cases. The assistance kits left with the families of those who have suffered overdoses, which contain fentanyl testing strips and naloxone, are known to have saved at least one life. After studying community trends and adjusting strategies using the CIMS program, Mount Pleasant police saw a 40% decrease in opioid overdoses within one year. Information shared between the partners allowed WakeUp Carolina to make 241 peer-support contacts. Mount Pleasant Town Council directed its allocations from the SC Opioid Recovery Fund to the effort.

The project also helps fulfill elements from the police department’s strategic plan, which targets community mental health needs — an issue frequently connected to drug misuse — and partnering with the private sector. In 2024, the partnership is extending its focus to tourism locations, since visitors and nonresidents make up the majority of Mount Pleasant’s overdoses cases, and expanding into neighboring counties as well.

Contact Eric LaFontaine at [elafontaine@tompsc.com](mailto:elafontaine@tompsc.com) or 843.901.1649.



## Public Service: City of Greenville

### Confronting Our History and Making Good on a Promise

The Reedy River above Greenville's downtown faced a toxic environmental legacy of pollutants from textile and other manufacturing, as well as a historical river straightening project that created flash flooding. The area was also the site of a long-unfulfilled promise — that Rev. Elias Brown Holloway secured a commitment from the city in the 1930s for a park development to serve the Black residents, which did not happen.

The city ultimately fulfilled that pledge many decades later. Development of the park began by carefully gathering input from surrounding neighborhoods, businesses and stakeholder groups on the park's development. A \$25 million project moved the city's public works campus off the site, and the city built an innovative drainage upgrade for the park's wetlands that percolates stormwater through natural channels before it enters the river, mitigating flash floods. It also replaced invasive plants with native species.

The 60-acre Unity Park ultimately opened in 2022. It offers a connection to the 23-mile Swamp Rabbit Trail, a boardwalk, pedestrian bridges across the river, playgrounds, a splash pad, a 10,000 square-foot welcome center and two expansive green spaces, among other features. Its opening reduced the pressure Greenville's other parks faced from the area's ongoing growth. Entrepreneurs have opened businesses, including a food and beverage hall, in existing warehouses along the park.

Funding sources included hospitality and stormwater bonds, as well as grants and donations from public and private entities. Unity Park's next phase will restore a historic baseball field and build the Honor Tower, celebrating first responders and offering views of Greenville's skyline and the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Contact Tara Eaker at [teaker@greenville.gov](mailto:teaker@greenville.gov) or 864.467.6667.

## Public Works: City of Aiken

### Sewer Oxygenation Project

For years, the City of Aiken managed the undesirable smells and the significant corrosion potential of hydrogen sulfide at several of its sewer system locations with a nitrate feed program. This came with several disadvantages — the process was maintenance-intensive, environmentally unfriendly, and expensive. In 2017, Aiken's Engineering and Utilities Department found a better solution — a system that dissolves pure oxygen gas into sewage, preventing the formation of hydrogen sulfide, lowering environmental impacts and saving \$200,000 annually.

Aiken's Engineering and Utilities Department, working with the Operations and Maintenance Department, undertook the project at two of its primary wastewater pumping stations after researching and analyzing its technical feasibility, and used temporary monitors to demonstrate the improved reduction in hydrogen sulfide. It funded the effort with a capital project sales tax allocation, as well as a grant from the SC Rural Infrastructure Authority. The cost savings of the project mean that it is paying back its costs in just over four years.

In addition to improved odor and corrosion prevention, the project has also reduced the production of methane, a highly potent greenhouse gas. Looking forward, the city plans to further optimize the effort by using a remote monitoring and reporting system. It will also evaluate additional wastewater sites for the potential replacement of the nitrate feed process with oxygenation.

Contact Mike Prybylowicz at [mprzyby@cityofaikensc.gov](mailto:mprzyby@cityofaikensc.gov) or 803.642.7610.



# Other Entries

## Town of Batesburg-Leesville

### Batesburg-Leesville Water Regionalization

After almost two decades of water supply issues, the Town of Batesburg-Leesville partnered with the Joint Municipal Water and Sewer Commission to link its water system to the JMWSC system through the installation of a 12-mile pipe. The partnership also allowed for future expansion into more rural areas of western Lexington County.

With its rapid population, the town needed to find a new water source other than its existing town pond. An engineering firm undertook a study on options for a new water source in 2019, and town council opted to link its system to JMWSC, providing a sustainable water source while saving residents and the town money.

Initial funding came from the town's enterprise fund, as well as \$10 million for SC Infrastructure Investment Program/American Rescue Plan Act funding and \$4.25 million in Emerging Contaminants funds. The town commissioned the contractor in December 2023, with a completion date projected for late 2025.

Contact Jay Hendrix at [jhendrix@batesburg-leesville.org](mailto:jhendrix@batesburg-leesville.org) or 803.413.7934.

## City of Beaufort

### Safe Living Beaufort

In June 2023, the Beaufort Police Department embarked on a meta-data analysis of "shots fired" calls for service. Findings indicated that many of the incidents involved two particular multi-housing complexes. Using this data, the department established the Safe Living Beaufort Initiative, which aims to foster better relations between residents and the police

department, and nurture safe environments for families to thrive.

Through careful data analysis and pertinent communication with residents and property managers, Beaufort police improved its training and enforcement efforts, including training officers in multi-housing crime prevention. Adding a staffed substation along with frequent patrolling, K-9 patrols, and increased community engagement through meetings and events have all benefited in the reduction of crime. From September 2023 to January 2024, calls for service decreased by 99%.

Funding came from the police department's budget the city's general fund and the parks and tourism fund. The City of Beaufort funded training and certification of its officers in multi-housing crime-free policing.

Contact Kathleen Williams at [kwilliams@cityofbeaufort.org](mailto:kwilliams@cityofbeaufort.org) or 843.470.3508.

## Town of Bethune

### Law Enforcement Partnership

Like many small towns, Bethune faced challenges in hiring and retaining police officers. A major hurdle identified by town council was that the town's budget lacked the funding necessary to provide for new officers while meeting the requirements of Act 218 of 2022, which mandates minimum standards for law enforcement agencies.

Mayor Susan Holley researched innovative policing solutions, and met with Kershaw County Sheriff Lee Boan about the possibility of an intergovernmental agreement. After consulting with appropriate legal counsel, the town dissolved its fledgling police department and entered into an intergovernmental agreement with the sheriff for regular policing.

Funding for the sheriff's law enforcement services comes out of the town's general municipal operating budget, which covers hourly rates plus additional contracted services. Training, equipment, liability and insurance coverage is provided by the Kershaw County Sheriff's Office, alleviating the town of that financial burden. Through this partnership, Bethune residents now have a consistent law enforcement presence and a greater sense of safety.

Contact Susan Holley at [bethunetownhall@shtc.net](mailto:bethunetownhall@shtc.net) or 843.334.6238.

## Town of Bluffton

### Reimagining Police Culture – Bluffton Police Department's Comprehensive Community Program

The Bluffton Police Department's comprehensive, long-running Community Program helps mitigate issues before they escalate to criminal activity or other problems. Capitalizing on the success of the initiative, the department now offers 13 different outreach programs tailored for various groups of residents from young people to special-needs individuals. The BPD added two new programs to its roster in 2023: domestic violence outreach and Blessings for Bluffton, which connects financially distressed families with necessities and resources.

The department evaluates program effectiveness each year and takes community feedback, which recently led to it hiring a new mental health community advocate.

The BPD also aims to reduce crime by mitigating the root cause; establish a connection between the department, individuals and community groups; and cultivate an environment of mutual trust. In 2023, the department assisted 134

individuals with 211 follow-up visits. Funding comes from multiple sources for each tier of the program. The town partnered with a nonprofit to provide a tax-deductible means of donation, and donations from residents have so far exceeded \$160,000.

Contact Debbie Szpanka at [dszpanka@townofbluffton.com](mailto:dszpanka@townofbluffton.com) or 843.540.2274.

## City of Cayce

### Cayce Community Tool Shed

Cayce's code enforcement efforts faced code violations ranging from unkept yards to structure violations. Talking to residents, staff found that many violations were from renter-occupied homes, and most were inhabited by elderly or single parents with little to no access to the tools needed to address problems. Researching solutions, the city realized that the problem was larger than first thought, as entire neighborhoods needed proper tools and assistance.

Staff acquired a trailer to house a tool shed, allowing for easy transportation of tools to neighborhoods and community cleanup events. They set rules for loaning tools, and the code enforcement team obtained a \$10,000 sponsorship of the trailer. Other sponsors included Lowe's of West Columbia, Martin Marietta, The Graphics Source, and The Carter Insurance Group, who sponsored tools and the wrapping for the shed.

As a mobile and collaborative effort, the Cayce Tool Shed shows how creative solutions can help solve common community-wide problems.

Contact Amanda Rowan at [arowan@caycesc.gov](mailto:arowan@caycesc.gov) or 803.550.9520.

## Town of Chapin

### Chapin PD Chief Connection – Strengthening Communities through Proactive Social Engagement

Although it is a small, eight-officer department with a limited budget, the Chapin Police Department wanted to proactively engage its community. Led by Police Chief Thomas Griffin, the department sought to forge relationships with residents using inexpensive, readily available tools like social media.

Projects included a recruitment video, new officer-designed badges, and the launch of the Greater Chapin Business Watch, which are ongoing information-sharing sessions, and a Fall Night Out event. Chief Griffin also developed an innovative "Virtual Ride Along" on Facebook, using in-vehicle cameras on under-construction roads to give residents a first-hand look at new routes and traffic patterns.

The cost to stage these events was less than \$300, drawn from the department's annual budget. The Greater Chapin Chamber of Commerce partnered with the department for the Greater Chapin Business Watch, the SC Department of Transportation assisted with the Virtual Ride Along and a private video firm helped produce the recruitment video.

Contact Nicholle Burroughs at [nburroughs@chapinnc.com](mailto:nburroughs@chapinnc.com) or 803.667.0958.

## City of Clinton

### Revitalization of Clinton

Once a thriving mill town, Clinton had historically been home to two successful mill operations, with the Clinton Cotton Mill dating to 1896 and the Lydia Cotton Mill to 1902. When the mills closed in 2001, many of the out-of-work employees and their families moved away from the city. The neighborhoods which had been built to house this population were largely abandoned. Since many of the houses were condemned, the city initiated its revitalization efforts

by demolishing dilapidated homes, wanting to clean and beautify its neighborhoods, and in doing so, entice developers to the area.

The city aims to keep demolition costs low by using its own. Since the start of the initiative in the early 2000s, the city has removed more than 150 dilapidated homes, and is working to acquire vacant lots for potential development.

Contact Ashley Rochester at [arochester@cityofclintonnc.com](mailto:arochester@cityofclintonnc.com) or 864.200.4505.

## City of Columbia

### Rapid Shelter Columbia

The idea of Rapid Shelter Columbia came from the need to address the housing crisis for Columbia's chronically unsheltered population. After researching pallet shelter villages on the West Coast and weighing recommendations from a council-appointed task force, the city created Rapid Shelter Columbia, a pallet shelter village of 50 individualized, non-congregated pallet shelters. It also hired full-time staff and initiated partnerships with providers.

The first of its kind in the Southeast, the facility uses a holistic approach to assisting clients, first by securing shelter through a "housing-first" approach, followed by essential resources like food and water, and finally support and services like basic health care and mental health services. Aftercare support is available for those transitioning into permanent housing.

Funding came through a portion of the city's American Rescue Plan Act funds supplemented by the general fund. Of the 577 referrals received in the first year, the facility admitted 217 individuals. Of those, 40 were permanently housed and received aftercare support services.

Contact Kameisha Heppard at [kameisha.heppard@columbiasc.gov](mailto:kameisha.heppard@columbiasc.gov) or 803.561.6717.

## Town of Estill

### Town of Estill Project Hope

Without a police department building of its own, the Town of Estill received a General Assembly appropriation to build one after new Chief of Police Chauncey Solomon Sr. determined it to be a top priority. After determining costs through competitive bidding and obtaining council approval Chief Solomon and Town Administrator Tiffany Hooks requested funding through Estill's state legislative delegation, and the town received \$1.5 million.

The 4,500-square-foot facility will house a training room, conference room, evidence room, police bullpen, victim advocate's office, physical training area and lobby. The facility will have dedicated space to keep temporarily incarcerated individuals out of public areas and a safe space for crime victims, and will allow for community safety meetings and in-house training of officers.

The project will be the first freestanding police station in Hampton County. As the town aims to promote new business and employment opportunities, it will require the construction company to hire a certain percentage of its workers for the project from Estill and Hampton County.

Contact Tiffany Cooks at [tcooks@townofestill.sc.gov](mailto:tcooks@townofestill.sc.gov) or 803.346.9347.

## City of Forest Acres

### Gills Creek Memorial Park

Forest Acres sought to transform a condemned piece of property along Gills Creek, flooded during the October 2015 floods, into a vibrant memorial park, fulfilling a vision it had pursued for over two decades. The project involved resident lobbying and community involvement, the addition of 45 parking spaces, and the replacement of a damaged bridge in partnership with the SC Department of Transportation.

The park features a memorial garden for fallen Forest Acres police officers, a boardwalk and fishing dock,

a performance area, a splash pad and a walking path. The repurposing of this underutilized land into public greenspace helps enhance quality of life for Forest Acres residents and visitors.

Funding for Gills Creek Memorial Park came from hospitality tax funds and \$3 million in American Rescue Act funds. The state allocated \$1 million toward the bridge replacement, while Richland County contributed \$600,000 towards more sustainable traffic flow on Forest Drive.

Contact Shaun Greenwood at [sgreenwood@forestacres.net](mailto:sgreenwood@forestacres.net) or 803.917.7001.

## City of Gaffney

### Glymph Memorial Garden

Receiving a grant from the SC Humanities Council, the City of Gaffney set out to create a plan for an outdoor memorial garden and museum. It selected a landscape architect firm, and accepted bids once the design was selected.

Built in the Gaffney's historic core commercial district on land once used by Black-owned businesses, Glymph Memorial Garden is named after Clarence L. Glymph Sr., who operated Glymph's Grocery from 1920 to 1961 and who promoted college education and home ownership in his community, the memorial garden celebrates Gaffney's Black residents and the lasting legacy of its Black business owners. A 100-foot mural designed by muralist Jamile Steele showcases the district's businesses and occupants.

Funding for the memorial gardens was provided through a grant from the SC Humanities Council, the City of Gaffney through American Rescue Plan Act funds, and the sale of commemorative bricks.

Contact James Taylor at [jtaylor@cityofgaffney-sc.gov](mailto:jtaylor@cityofgaffney-sc.gov) or 864.487.6247.

## City of Greer

### The Platform at Greer – Building an Entrepreneurship Ecosystem

The City of Greer identified a need for a start-up space to facilitate innovation and connect its entrepreneurs to the local and statewide business ecosystem. It established the Platform at Greer to foster creativity and innovation by hosting three recurring events: The Huddle, IGNITE Greer, and The Bootcamp. Focusing on market validation, a means of determining a product's viability, the Platform at Greer works in partnership with other Upstate Entrepreneurial Ecosystem members like GVL Starts and Village Launch.

In 2023, 1,400 entrepreneurs benefited from the Platform. Four of these received startup funding through the SC Research Authority, and more than 10 entrepreneurs connected with large manufacturers in Greer. The Platform Bootcamp will serve the 16th cohort in 2024. A strong monthly attendance for both The Huddle and IGNITE Greer also boosts engagement, averaging around 50 entrepreneurs per session.

Funding is provided through the private sector, grants and local government. The project is managed using a core group of advisors comprising both the public and private sectors.

Contact Reno Deaton at [jdeaton@cityofgreer.org](mailto:jdeaton@cityofgreer.org) or 864.416.0126.

## City of Hartsville

### Heart of the Holiday Festival

Seeing a need for a three-day holiday event to support local businesses in advance of the busy holiday season, and aiming to address Hartsville's lack of a major annual festival in recent years, the City of Hartsville created the Heart of the Holiday Festival. Taking place the weekend before Thanksgiving, it expanded upon an existing single-day shopping event into three days of downtown.

The festival began on Thursday night with the popular Downtown Open House and Centennial Tree Lighting Celebration, attended by 15,000 participants. On Friday night, the sold-out Heart of the Holidays Wine and Art Walk welcomed 150 ticket holders and additional shoppers to 18 wine stops and offered extended-hour shopping. Saturday morning featured the free Children's Carnival and Craft Show event which brought 3,000 people downtown, and the festival culminated with Saturday night's Holiday Ball. The volunteer-staffed festival drew 20,000 participants.

Contact Michelle Byers Brown at [michelle.brown@hartsvillesc.gov](mailto:michelle.brown@hartsvillesc.gov) or 843.799.7584.

## Town of Hilton Head Island

### Adaptive Traffic Signal Management System Project

Challenged by traffic delays and ongoing congestion, the Town of Hilton Head Island wanted to reduce travel times for commuters onto the island. After researching the issue, the town decided on an adaptive traffic signal management system. It partnered with the SC Department of Transportation and Beaufort County to update 25 outdated traffic signals with this technology.

By linking its traffic signals to communicate with each other, the town succeeded in relieving congestion. The initial study of the adaptive system's effectiveness indicated a 15% reduction in vehicle delays and the emissions that come with them.

Funding for this \$3.1 million project came from an intergovernmental agreement between the town and Beaufort County using traffic impact fees paid by developers on Hilton Head Island collected by the county. In addition to using a competitive bid process, the town implemented many cost-saving measures and even created a position dedicated to managing the adaptive system.

Contact Jim Iwanicki at [jimi@hiltonheadislandsc.gov](mailto:jimi@hiltonheadislandsc.gov) or 843.341.4774.

## Town of Kershaw

### Stepping Up Downtown with First Steps

Looking to solve the problem of insufficient childcare in an area known as a "childcare desert," and to find a tenant for a historic bank building in its downtown, the Town of Kershaw worked to renovate the structure so it could house a First Steps program.

After purchasing the building for \$100,000, the town undertook a fundraising campaign to meet the \$1.45 million construction budget. Funding partnerships with the Arras Foundation, John T. Stevens Foundation, Oceana Gold, the Springs Close Foundation, the SC Department of Education, and First Steps created the means to open the facility by late summer 2023. Additional funding through the Lancaster County's Capital Sales Tax program will provide the \$1 million necessary for future renovations of the second floor.

The project has contributed to the effort to bring renewed life to downtown Kershaw, with building occupancy now approaching 100%.

Contact John Douglas at [john.douglas@townofkershawsc.gov](mailto:john.douglas@townofkershawsc.gov) or 803.475.6065.

## City of Lake City

### Water System Improvements

After the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control compliance evaluation inspections concluded deficiencies in the 50-year-old Lake City Wastewater Treatment Plant, the city set out to replace or repair its older equipment.

The city enlisted an engineering consultant to secure the necessary permits and leverage funding. The overall \$10 million budget came from the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, administered SC DHEC with joint funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the state of South Carolina. Funding also included a forgivable loan from the State Revolving Fund Program, the Florence County penny sales tax, and a construction loan that will be

converted into a U.S. Department of Rural Development loan.

The project includes upgrades to aging equipment and infrastructure and the construction of the new water treatment lab. With more upgrades coming, the city is exploring funding opportunities for projects including stormwater upgrades and a \$13.8 million grant application to address flood mitigation.

Contact Donna Tracy at [dtracy@cityoflakecity.org](mailto:dtracy@cityoflakecity.org) or 843.374.5421.

## City of Landrum

### Landrum Farmers Market Pavilion & Market Square

For over 20 years, the City of Landrum's Farmers Market took place on a closed off-street that lacked parking and shelter. Realizing a need for a facility to house the farmers market, also allow more space for vendors and offer ample parking, the city council appointed a planning committee including vendors, performing artists and downtown businesses, to make project recommendations.

A vacant site was acquired from an owner a decaying shopping center, which had two outparcels that the city purchased at a discount. Using hospitality tax funds and a 30-year \$1.6 million bond, the over 12,000-square-foot Landrum Farmers Market Pavilion & Market Square was constructed.

In addition to housing the Landrum Farmers Market, the city's marketing and tourism director uses the pavilion for other events including a Summer Music Concert series and the annual Quilt Show. Private groups can rent the event space, and rental revenue supports operational costs, with a small percentage reinvested into additional equipment and furnishings.

Contact Richard Caplan at [rich.caplan@cityoflandrumsc.com](mailto:rich.caplan@cityoflandrumsc.com) or 864.457.3000.



## City of Laurens

### Solid Waste Removal Service

When a third-party waste removal service backed out its contract with the City of Laurens, city officials were left to pivot and quickly come up with a new solution for trash collection. Calling on its Streets and Sanitation Department to help out, the city leaders divided Laurens into four quadrants and purchased trash collecting trucks to serve each quadrant. The department bought small trucks, which worked well with the department's staff, most of whom did not have commercial driver's licenses. The city also made renovations to the City of Laurens Recycling Convenience Center.

Funding for the trucks came from a capital lease purchase, and funding for the recycling center remodel came from a revenue bond.

The small Streets and Sanitation Department and city administration worked together to not only fulfill a dire need, but did so with limited service interruptions to residents, and managed to save the city money with city-managed, fuel-efficient vehicles.

Contact Hunter Holmes at [hholmes@cityoflaurenssc.com](mailto:hholmes@cityoflaurenssc.com) or 864.923.6569.

## Town of Lexington

### 10-Year Strategic Plan Makes for a Safer Town of Lexington

In 2014, the Lexington Police Department used a two-day strategic planning session to define its shared goals and objectives. In this process, Police Chief Terrence Green, along with command staff, supervisors and officers collaborated to rewrite the department's mission, vision and values, and to define the department's four strategic goals while assigning objectives and follow-up accountability plans.

Because of the department's efforts since that time, the Town of Lexington has improved its reputation for safety. Property crimes have fallen by 25%, assisted by improved patrols and data

usage, and police respond to calls within 10 minutes 80% of the time.

The department continues to hold half-day follow-up sessions every six months to debrief on goal progress. Annual two-day strategic planning sessions allow department staff to delve deeper into discussions, voice concerns and make suggestions. These ongoing meetings are funded through the town's operating budget.

Contact Terrence Green at [tgreen@lexsc.com](mailto:tgreen@lexsc.com) or 803.359.6260.

## Town of Lyman

### The Lyman Centennial Celebration

A once flourishing mill town, Lyman historically served as a location for the Pacific Mills company. The mill's development brought over 375 homes, jobs, a school and library — all of which supported town activities. For its 100th anniversary, the town created a two-day Centennial Celebration in November 2023 to honor the mill's legacy and the future of the site, and to bring together current and former residents.

The town established a centennial planning committee and budget for the effort, and the committee sought input from community members and town staff on event ideas. A Pacific Mills Reunion lunch honored former mill workers. The town allocated \$65,000 for the event through its hospitality budget. It also sought donations, event venues and items for the reunion from businesses.

The Town of Lyman is currently working towards developing the former Pacific Mills site as a mixed-use structure.

Contact Madison Workman at [zoning@lymansc.gov](mailto:zoning@lymansc.gov) or 864.978.3490.

## City of Manning

### An "IT" Renaissance in Downtown Manning

Wanting to contribute to the revitalization of its historic downtown, the City of Manning

decided to purchase and renovate a key downtown asset — the former Alderman's 20 Stores in One building which later became a Belk Department Store. Built in 1919, this two-story, 30,000-square-foot building served as Manning's first department store and housed the first elevator in the area.

The city purchased the building in 2015 for \$350,000. It was also marketing the area's assets to retailers and developers at this time, which ultimately led Provalus, an IT outsourcing company with approximately 50 employees, to reach out to the city and ultimately occupy the building.

Funding for the \$1.5 million project came from Clarendon County Business Development Corporation, Clarendon County, the state of South Carolina, and the City of Manning. Provalus estimates that it will expand its workforce to about 300 employees by 2025.

Contact Scott Tanner at [stanner@cityofmanning.org](mailto:stanner@cityofmanning.org) or 803.825.9008.

## City of Mauldin

### Bridgeway Station and Pedestrian Bridge

The pedestrian-focused, mixed-used Bridgeway Station development, emerged from a public/private partnership between the City of Mauldin and Hughes Investments. The first of its kind for the Upstate, its plan incorporates apartments, offices, shops and restaurants, and a pedestrian bridge crossing I-385 to allow for greater foot traffic by connecting with an existing trail, which will eventually connect to the Swamp Rabbit Trail network.

To make Bridgeway Station a reality, the city and developer established a multi-county industrial park for public infrastructure funding, supported by both Greenville County and the Greenville County School District.

Funding for the over \$100 million project came through private investments secured by Hughes Investments. The city used a revenue bond for the pedestrian bridge,

costing just over \$5 million. The estimated tax revenue benefit will reach approximately \$2.5 million at project completion, with an estimated 10,000 jobs created.

Contact Seth Duncan at [sduncan@mauldincitysc.com](mailto:sduncan@mauldincitysc.com) or 864.289.8890.

## Town of Moncks Corner

### Moncks Corner Small Business Outreach

After surveying its small business owners, the Town of Moncks Corner sought to make more business resources, information and marketing readily available to local businesses.

The town created an American Rescue Plan Act-funded grant program in 2023 to focus on external improvements for businesses, and the town's social media profiles showcased all recipients. The town also used ARPA funds to create "how-to" videos covering the steps new businesses need to take to get established. Finally, the town created a Business Spotlight Facebook Live series, interviewing business owners about themselves and why they have selected Moncks Corner as their location. These segments garnered anywhere between 5,000 to 32,000 viewers, often exceeding Monck's Corner's population of nearly 14,000.

Future plans for the initiative include two business symposiums slated for this year. These will address small business needs like financial services, marketing, strategic planning, employee management and human resources basics, and will offer networking among businesses and service providers.

Contact Rebecca Vetter at [r.vetter@monckscornersc.gov](mailto:r.vetter@monckscornersc.gov) or 843.719.7962.

## City of Myrtle Beach

### World War II Memorial

Lacking a proper World War II memorial to commemorate its 50-year military history and its veterans, the City of Myrtle Beach decided to locate a new memorial at Warbird Park in The Market Common — a site

that was the Myrtle Beach Air Force Base until 1993.

City council sought bids from architecture firms to determine how to best deliver on its vision for honoring the veterans of World War II and all foreign wars. The city's infrastructure team was instrumental during the design phase and met weekly to review construction and to select construction materials, receiving input from national veterans' groups and other stakeholders. Within three months of breaking ground, the memorial opened in time for Veterans Day in November 2023.

Funding for the \$1.1 million project came from the city and the Myrtle Beach Air Force Base Redevelopment Authority. Another \$7,000 was raised for a marker commemorating the 11 World War II veterans who attended the opening ceremony.

Contact Meredith Denari at [mdenari@cityofmyrtlebeach.com](mailto:mdenari@cityofmyrtlebeach.com) or 502.644.0571.

## City of North Augusta

### City of North Augusta Material Recovery Facility

A massive fire in 2021 destroyed most of the City of North Augusta's Material Recovery Facility, so the city made building a new structure as a high priority. City leadership wanted move towards a "clean MRP" facility allowing for separate stream recyclables as well as the ability to serve surrounding cities, counties and private sanitation companies, all while upgrading from manual to automatic processes. This would require a new kind of building with more equipment.

Using funding from the SC Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund, the effort minimized expenses by using competitive bidding and internal labor, and it sourced equipment from local businesses that had closed.

With the new MRF online, the city reinstated its recycling program, which had stopped in January 2020. The facility now processes local trash and recycling as well as materials from surrounding municipalities and

counties. The city will seek bids for a transfer station in 2024.

Contact James Clifford at [jclifford@northaugustasc.gov](mailto:jclifford@northaugustasc.gov) or 803.441.4202.

## City of Seneca

### The Fifth Quarter – Our Youth, Our Future

In 2021, City of Seneca leadership received feedback from parents of local high school students that those students lacked a good place to socialize after high school football and basketball games. City leaders, along with the Seneca Police Department and input from Seneca High School administrative staff, established a Fifth Quarter task force to develop a fun and safe environment for students after sporting events. An unobtrusive police presence at these events allows for communication and relationship building between the department and the city's young people.

The city uses its existing resources to support the events. Its recreation complex provides a safe and familiar venue, staff from the recreation department manage the events, and police provide monitoring. Area business partners such as Ingles and 313 Café provided food and snacks while local residents donated additional funds and resources to support the initiative. The events have been popular with the students and school administration alike.

Contact Deborah Williams at [dwilliams@seneca.sc.us](mailto:dwilliams@seneca.sc.us) or 864.888.0880.

## Town of St. Matthews

### Community Involvement

In efforts to engage its residents in community events, the Town of St. Matthews organized events throughout the year targeted at participants of every age. The town has sponsored bingo nights, movie nights organized by the police department and a Community Day planned by the fire department. It has launched a Veterans Honor Day as well as a Cancer Walk, has organized a town softball game, and produced a

Western Night that featured dancing and a “rock snake” painting competition, where the line of 1,274 painted rocks won the challenge against the Town of Elloree.

The initiative successfully brought together numerous residents and local organizations. Donations for gifts and prizes came from local area businesses, while additional event funding came from the town’s budget. Building off of the enthusiastic response to the first year of events in 2023, the Town of St. Matthews plans to continue most of the events annually.

Contact Rosyl Warren at [townofstmatthews@windstream.net](mailto:townofstmatthews@windstream.net) or 803.874.2405.

## City of Sumter

### Turning the City Inside Out

The City of Sumter faced issues of high turnover rates and low work fulfillment among its staff. In 2020, Mayor David Merchant challenged proposed staff leaders to find ways to better support employees in their personal lives, boosting morale and performance at work — a focus that could lead to better service for residents.

To meet this challenge, the city introduced the Arbinger’s Developing and Implementing an Outward Mindset training program. Funding for the project came out of the city’s general fund and trainers are current staff members, helping to reduce costs.

Training sessions are recurring with classes taking place most months. Participating city staff members have reported improvement in their personal life goals and their job skills, and now more than half of city employees have gone through the training. Given the positive response, the city will continue providing the training sessions and will introduce an advanced level as well.

Contact Shelley Kile at [skile@sumtersc.gov](mailto:skile@sumtersc.gov) or 803.795.2463.



## Town of Timmonsville

### Town of Timmonsville Revitalization

Aiming to make Timmonsville more appealing, attractive and safer, the town’s mayor, town administrator and chief of police undertook a goal planning session to identify projects to pursue with support through American Rescue Plan Act funds, grants, state funds and the Florence County penny sales tax.

The town completed beautification and structural improvement projects including painting, roof replacements and installation of new awnings of town-owned buildings along Main Street. Some senior residents received roof replacements for their homes, two town parks had their courts resurfaced and several streets received resurfacing. The town formed a new partnership with the Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority for a new transit service in Timmonsville. The police department new, fully equipped vehicles and equipment, and the town purchased 11 acres of land slated for new housing. Additional funding helped promote town events including the Taste of Timmonsville, Cops in the Park, Gospel in the Park and the Christmas Festival.

Contact Thomas McFadden at [thomasm@timmonsville.org](mailto:thomasm@timmonsville.org) or 843.319.7115.

## City of West Columbia

### Closing a Life Saving Service Gap Through Intergovernmental Partnerships

Facing the demands of a growing population, the City of West Columbia and the West Columbia Fire Department sought to improve emergency medical services response times and to provide more advanced life support services to its residents by equipping the fire department with prehospital care skills. Through data analysis and planning, the city council, city leadership and the fire department secured grants through the Federal Emergency

Management Agency for initial paramedic staffing, and a millage increase by city council to fund new firefighter/paramedic positions.

Additional funding came through the South Carolina workforce scholarship for cross-training and cost-sharing through the Apprenticeship Carolina program. With these funding streams, the city bridged service gaps by offering more advanced medical care and life-saving prehospital treatment administered by the fire department. These efforts have aligned with the city’s strategic vision of fostering county-wide partnerships leading to faster EMS response times, greater cardiac arrest survival rates, and more advanced treatment for critical conditions.

Contact Marquis Solomon at [msolomon@westcolumbiasc.gov](mailto:msolomon@westcolumbiasc.gov) or 803.873.1335.

## City of Woodruff

### Woodruff Renaissance

Aiming to strengthen the community for its present and future residents and to avoid becoming merely a bedroom community, the City of Woodruff sought to attract new housing developments, jobs and greater investment in its downtown.

The city installed a five-mile section of sewer along Highway 101, serving the area’s parcels and attracting the attention of developers. Since 2016, the city has added 4,000 single family homes. The \$1 billion of new investments in recent years have also included land purchased to build a new sports complex, a new high school and the arrival of BMW’s Woodruff Electric Vehicle Battery Assembly plant, an impactful economic development project which will provide at least 300 jobs. Partners for these efforts have included the nonprofit OneSpartanburg Inc. and Spartanburg County.

City council also created a new zoning ordinance to help facilitate these efforts and future projects, which will add affordable housing and new roads.

Contact Lee Bailey at [lbailey@cityofwoodruff.com](mailto:lbailey@cityofwoodruff.com) or 864.415.9573.



# Main Street South Carolina Inspiration Awards

Main Street South Carolina empowers residents, business owners and local officials with the knowledge, skills, tools and organizational structure necessary to revitalize downtowns and neighborhood commercial districts into vibrant centers of commerce and community.

Main Street South Carolina is a service of the Municipal Association of SC and is a Coordinating Program of Main Street America™. Main Street SC follows the Four Point Approach to economic development which focuses holistically on design, organization, promotion, and economic vitality. Each year, Main Street South Carolina recognizes members' achievements and successes in downtown revitalization.

## **Excellence on Main Street Award** **Outstanding Service Award** **Main Street Inman – Mayor's Youth Council**

When Inman Mayor Cornelius Huff took office, he found that the city's youth felt little connection to the city and that it lacked selling points. He responded by creating the Mayor's Youth Council, a group open to high school juniors and seniors through a competitive application process, which has cultivated civic pride and dedication and created a wealth of social capital in the city — including its downtown and the Inman Main Street program.

With less than 30 spots available on the council each year, the students from Chapman High School undergo a rigorous selection process for Youth Council participation, including teacher referrals, grade requirements and one-on-one interviews.

Youth Council members participate in monthly cleanup days. They must attend at least five city council meetings a year to learn about their local government, and volunteer at city events like "Boo on Mill" and "Light Up Inman." Enthusiasm for the Youth Council's work is so strong that students will bring friends to volunteer who have no obligation to do so.

In 2023, the Mayor's Youth Council, along with Inman's Main Street volunteer team, contributed a total of 544 hours of service for the community. Having the youth involved in downtown activities has been invaluable to Main Street Inman. The Youth Council has also begun a research project to create a written and pictorial history of Inman's downtown.

Since the creation of the youth council a decade ago, it has created lasting change in the Inman community, fostered better community connections among its young people, and has served as a model for other programs around South Carolina.

Contact Joe Lanahan at [janahan@cityofinman.org](mailto:janahan@cityofinman.org) or 864.472.6200



# Inspiration Awards

## Gaines Jontz Rehabilitation Main Street Inman – 3, 5 and 7 Mill

Inman native Amanda Blackwell, now the owner of the Pink Salon at 5 Mill St., bought the storefronts at 3, 5 and 7 Mill St. at a time when downtown Inman was in decline and occupancy was around 25%.

She and her family extensively renovated the long-vacant buildings using local contractors, managing the costs by handling them one at a time over six years. She supplemented her personal financing with city facade grant funding.

With the three properties each painted its own distinctive bright color, Inman residents have declared them to be a miniature version of Charleston’s famous Rainbow Row. The most challenging component of the rehabilitation project completed in 2023, 3 Mill St., is now a mixed-use property housing the Med Spa and an apartment. 7 Mill St. is home to the Wildflower Soul Collective shop. Blackwell has proven to be a visionary in her redevelopment, as Inman’s downtown now boasts 85% occupancy.

Contact Joe Lanahan at [jlanahan@cityofinman.org](mailto:jlanahan@cityofinman.org) or 864.472.6200 .

## Master Merchant Main Street Inman – Marianne McElveen, Kempson Rexall Drugs

Kempson Rexall Drugs, originally Orr’s Rexall Drugs, has remained a part of downtown Inman since 1905, joining a handful of other businesses in outlasting the district’s period of decline. Marianne McElveen, alongside her husband Sandy, have maintained and renovated this local institution while finding ways to keep it one of Inman’s favorite places.

The drugstore became one of the first in the district to expand its business hours, increasing customer traffic on Main Street. It also brought back and expanded its old-fashioned soda fountain, where customers can buy a malt or a Coca-Cola with cherry syrup added.

Kempson Rexall Drugs has embraced all of the town’s special events, using extended hours for each of the Music on Mill concert dates, and partnering with a new Inman business for an ice cream giveaway. They also had staff in 1950s-style soda jerk uniforms selling ice cream throughout the concerts. Marianne and Sandy McElveen champion the city and help new businesses with advice.

Contact Joe Lanahan at [jlanahan@cityofinman.org](mailto:jlanahan@cityofinman.org) or 864.472.6200 .

## Outstanding Business Development Program Main Street Fountain Inn – Main Street Improvement Grant Program

At a time when Fountain Inn businesses were struggling to survive through the COVID-19 pandemic, city leaders resolved to support local merchants, and build a better downtown district, through the Main Street Improvement Grant Program.

The program provided for reimbursements of up to \$20,000 through an Outdoor Expansion and Beautification Grant, addressing spaces intended for public use; a Facade Improvement Grant of up to \$10,000; and an Outdoor Seating and Accessories for a Tourism & Hospitality Businesses Grant of up to \$4,000.

The city funded the grants through \$250,000 from its one-time American Rescue Plan Act allotment. The program awarded 33 individual grants in 2022 and 2023 for everything from removal of slipcover facades, window replacements and awnings to parking and lighting improvements. With Fountain Inn growing and downtown properties difficult to find for business owners, the city has approved streetscape improvements further south out of the district’s central core.

Contact Martin Lane at [Martin.Lane@fountaininn.org](mailto:Martin.Lane@fountaininn.org) or 864.216.2480.

## Outstanding Special Project Downtown Florence – North Dargan Street Mural Project

With railroad tracks separating the 200 block of North Dargan Street from much of downtown Florence, this part of the city’s historic Black business district had experienced underinvestment for decades. As part of its work to reverse this trend, Florence’s Main Street program aimed to celebrate the area and the contributions of local barbershop culture with a mural on the historic building housing the Thompson Barber College.

The Main Street program acquired the removable mural cloth material — ideal for historic buildings — that allowed nearly 500 community members to participate in the painting. Partners for the \$50,000 project included SC Rural Arts Project and Claflin University students for a design that commemorates Florence’s history, with additional support from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Florence Regional Arts Alliance. A T-Mobile Hometown Grant made possible a pocket park next to the mural. As part of the Thompson family’s investment in the project, they secured a new roof to stabilize the building.

Contact Hannah Davis at [hdavis@cityofflorence.com](mailto:hdavis@cityofflorence.com) or 843.678.5912.





# Preparation Helps Protect Employees From Heat, Sun Exposure

**E**xtrême heat is a serious hazard for outdoor workers, and employers need to take precautions to reduce the dangers it poses. The South Carolina Occupational Safety and Health Administration identifies heat stress as a high hazard in workplaces, and completes heat-related inspections around the state.

## Training and acclimatization

South Carolina can experience extreme weather changes, including temperature swings of 30 degrees Fahrenheit or more in a single day. In some cases, employees may not be used to 90-degree weather and may not be physically acclimated to the heat, placing them at high risk of heat-related illnesses during periods of high heat.

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health has heat-related guidance for how long it takes an employee to become acclimatized to high heat. At least five days of 1 to 2 hours of heat exposure a day are needed for heat acclimatization. Supervisors should remember that all employees will not have the same physical response to the same conditions.

Training for employees should ensure that all staff members can recognize the signs and symptoms of heat-related illnesses for themselves and others, as well as what to do to reduce these hazards.

## Signs of heat-related illness

Employees working in hot outdoor conditions and who experience the onset of a headache, dizziness or fainting should immediately seek shade and an air-conditioned space. They should also remove their outer clothing while fanning and misting with water. If available, those helping employees should place ice bags on the employee along with drinking water, and call a supervisor. If needed, they should call 911.

The most serious heat illness is heatstroke, where the body's temperature has reached 104 degrees Fahrenheit. Anyone

observing a worker appearing to be not alert or confused should call 911 immediately, as these symptoms may be signs of heatstroke.

The most noticeable difference between heat exhaustion and heatstroke is that the body stops sweating during heatstroke. Employees who stop sweating should seek immediate medical attention. Untreated heatstroke can cause permanent brain damage.

Workers can reduce sun exposure and heat stress by wearing long-sleeve, moisture-wicking shirts. However, these shirts are not rated as flame resistant or a fire retardant, so they are unsuitable for welders, firefighters or electricians.

## Protect workers by planning ahead

Whether workers are digging a trench on the side of the roadway or working in a wastewater treatment plant aeration basin, they must be aware of heat-related hazards. OSHA recommends that employees alternate work with rest and shade.

Ideally, supervisors should provide a temporary shade tent covering the work area, and should provide water for hydration and an air-conditioned cab of a work truck, if available.

Supervisors should also stress the importance of drinking fluids before work and during work in hot conditions, with drinking at least one cup of water every 10 to 15 minutes helping workers avoid dehydration.

Weather-focused mobile apps can help workers know when the heat index will be elevated and in the extreme-risk category. Workers should plan to complete the work during cooler times of the day, if job duties allow for this.

*For questions on employee heat exposure, contact the Municipal Association's Risk Management Services Loss Control department at [losscontrol@masc.sc](mailto:losscontrol@masc.sc).*

# Building a New Destination

*Mauldin's BridgeWay Station Showcases Partnerships, Imagination*



*The Mauldin Gateway Bridge, a pedestrian bridge passing above Interstate 385, was part of the BridgeWay Station development.*

The “Golden Strip,” stretching southward along I-385 from Greenville, has become a symbol of the fast-paced economic growth of the Upstate. At Exit 33, one of the most unmistakable pieces of that has risen out of the City of Mauldin: BridgeWay Station, a mixed-use, pedestrian-focused town center development with Italian architectural inspirations.

BridgeWay Station, developed by Hughes Investments, Inc., has seen the development of office space, apartments, a variety of restaurants, greenspaces, a brewery and a gym, among other businesses. Soon after its grand opening in April 2024, BridgeWay Station and the City of Mauldin hosted a tour of the urban village for participants of the Municipal Association of SC 2024 Annual Meeting.

During the tour, a panel discussing the project included Phil Hughes, president of Hughes Investments. He described BridgeWay Station as the result of much work, patience, and passion, but also because of the business environment and the resources of both Mauldin and in South Carolina.

“We’re a good state — climate, people, work ethic, government — we have infrastructure powering things that we need,” he said.

Developers want to bring projects to places where the local government wants to partner with them, Hughes said.

“When you get a town where they like [development,] they understand it, they react, they help — we don’t want to leave! We want to keep on going,” he said.

Development trends that influenced the project included the redevelopment of downtown Greenville, showing that many people were hungry for pedestrian-focused experiences and well-built outdoor spaces. With BridgeWay Station, Hughes aimed to connect those ideas for a city center with businesses and recreation opportunities with easy highway access.

Perhaps the most eye-catching aspect, however, is the unique architecture of the project, with Italian and other European inspirations. Some inspirations were more local, too: a common area known as the “Train Station” recreates the tower found on Greenville’s historic, now-demolished Southern Railway Depot.

Hughes noted that he sought a handmade quality to the construction. He sought for the brickwork not to appear “machine perfect,” but instead include details like the occasional mismatched brick or messy joints.

“Guess what? It’s fun!” he said. “I enjoy it. It’s wonderful to put something together that others haven’t.”

Mauldin Mayor Terry Merritt described the city as having a strong sense of community that its residents love, but as it faced growth, they wanted to find ways to get its residents the amenities they were looking for at home. BridgeWay Station

is one answer to this, and the Mauldin Cultural Center is another.

“Mauldin was a stopover place that you passed through,” he said. “Our citizens wanted more. They wanted places to go out and eat, they wanted entertainment, and we didn’t have it ... We were leaking dollars where people had to go to Greenville and other places to be dined, to be entertained.”

Mauldin Director of Business and Development Services David Dyrhaug described the city’s use of form-based zoning to help overcome obstacles with the visionary project, much of it focused on walkability.

The effort, he said, “designed the development in a way that would be attractive for people to come. It was focused on architectural standards, it was focused on tightening things up so that it was easier and better for the pedestrian experience as opposed to the driver. I think we hit a home run with that.”

During the tour, the entire panel emphasized the importance of partnerships to BridgeWay Station. The development used a multi-county business park, requiring county government and school district support. But it also needed simple accessibility and responsiveness from the government officials, said Ryan Peiffer, Hughes Investments’ vice president of leasing and property management. It’s often the case for developers that when they submit

building permits, they don't know if they will receive approval or not, he said.

"I think what Mauldin did so well, we're all grateful for it, is how to get to 'yes.' We'll have this problem — we have a zoning problem, we have a building permit problem, we have a code issue — they welcome the conversation," Peiffer said. "They have the same objective we do and that is to get open, to get finished, to make the best project we possibly can."

Rivers Hughes, an executive with Hughes Investments, also spoke of the good communication with the municipality.

Mauldin, he said, is "driven and focused on growing their community, and not just for the sake of growth, but growing in a smart way that's beneficial for all the residents that sets them up well for the future."

The group also drew attention to the Mauldin Gateway Bridge, a pedestrian bridge spanning Interstate 385, built as part of the development. The bridge aimed to improve walkability in the Mauldin area and eventually connect to the popular Prisma Health Swamp Rabbit Trail.

Mauldin formed a development agreement with Hughes Investments where the city would fund the bridge and the company would manage the

project. Dyrhaug described an early meeting with the SC Department of Transportation, where the list of regulatory issues identified by SCDOT left them feeling discouraged. However, partnerships helped here as well. The design/build team they assembled included those experienced with working with SCDOT and even some former SCDOT staffers who could effectively communicate with the agency, Dyrhaug said.

"That made all the difference in the world," he said.

Having numerous activities going on around the development provides a benefit to everyone involved, Phil Hughes said, adding that residents and office workers enjoy stepping outside to be surrounded by events.

"What happens outside of the building is more important, probably, than what happens on the inside," he said. "Last night, you would have seen this plaza full of people doing yoga. If you come back at 5 o'clock today, it will be a farmer's market. Thousands of people."



*Italianate architecture is seen throughout the plaza at the BridgeWay Station development.*



*BridgeWay Station combines residential and office development with restaurants, shopping and public spaces.*

# Inspiration, Partnerships Help Cities Support Homeless Population



Rock Hill Municipal Court Judge Jane Modla helped establish the Rock Hill Homeless Court. Photo: City of Rock Hill.

From building individual pallet homes to creating courts that work to expunge misdemeanor records of homeless clients, cities around South Carolina are working to find ways to support homeless residents.

In 2021, 13,399 people received homeless services in South Carolina, according to a report from the SC Interagency Council on Homelessness — an 18% increase from the previous year.

Kameisha Heppard, the director of homeless services for the City of Columbia, said increases in the number of people experiencing homelessness spurred the city to act. After researching pallet shelter communities on the West Coast and using recommendations from a council-appointed task force, Columbia decided to create the Rapid Shelter Columbia program, a collection of 50 pallet homes serving as individual shelters for homeless people.

While it typically takes two years to get a program up and running, Columbia had the pallet shelters ready in less than 70 days. When the facility opened in November 2022, it was the first such program in the Southeast.

Each pallet is 64 square feet. It includes a bed, a heating and air conditioning unit, a desk and an area for the residents' personal belongings. There are 40 pallets for men and 10 for women, and clients can stay in them 90 days.

"Rapid Shelter Columbia is for individuals who are chronically unsheltered," Heppard said.

"They are for individuals who have been homeless 12 consecutive months, or have had four episodes of homelessness in three years. Those are the qualifications to be eligible to get a pallet."

The program is referral-based, meaning clients are recommended for the shelter by social workers from the SC Department of Social Services, the Richland Library and other agencies. They go through a screening process to determine if they meet the qualifications. Once they are accepted, they are assigned to a case manager who helps them access services.

The program, Heppard said, is "doing what it's supposed to do. It eliminates the congregant setting that some individuals cannot thrive in, and allows them to have their own space."

The program is funded through the city's general fund, supplemented with a portion of Columbia's American Rescue Plan Act funds. There were 577 referrals in the first year, with 217 people admitted to the pallet shelters.

As with Columbia's Rapid Shelter program, the Rock Hill Homeless Court found its inspiration in programs proven to work elsewhere. In 2019, an article from SC Lawyer magazine about homeless courts came across Rock Hill Municipal Judge Jane Modla's desk. She was intrigued.

"I knew we had homeless people and we had a place called Pathways that is a one-stop shop for the homeless," she said. "I said, 'I'm the city judge; maybe I should do something,'" Modla said.

Homeless courts, which began on the West Coast and have spread throughout the country, were created to help expunge misdemeanor charges, fines and bench warrants on homeless people's records so they would be more likely to secure housing. There are seven homeless courts now operating in South Carolina.

Modla spoke with an attorney from Columbia's Nelson Mullins law firm, which had taken on establishing homeless courts pro bono, and met with Rock Hill's public defender and solicitor before visiting Columbia's homeless court.

"I told the mayor and city council, 'I have a proposition. It's free and easy,'" she said.

She saw it as just another session of court — two hours a month of her time — and she would take the court to the homeless residents to help with their potential fear of court sessions. Sessions would take place on the fourth Thursday of the month at Pathways.

The charges can't be violent crimes, felonies or drunk-driving charges. Participants must be seeking help through a program and working toward acquiring housing. A service provider makes the application to the court on the person's behalf.

"We follow them through for four months or so to keep up with how they are doing," Modla said. "If they graduate, we take the charges off their record."

The court handles only misdemeanors within the city limits, with some people having charges that go back 30 years and more, a time when simple possession of marijuana could be a felony.

“They have charges that shouldn’t be on their rap sheets. They have non-convictions that didn’t get expunged and should be,” she said.

SC Legal Services, which provides free legal assistance in a variety of non-criminal matters to low-income South Carolinians, can help with areas such as disability claims, Social Security cards and other services.

The court’s first session came in March 2023. In a little over a year, the court had 65 referrals, 35 acceptances into homeless court and 17 graduates. Modla said the court has been successful because of community support, including from social workers, service providers that run the shelters, staff in mental health and substance abuse centers, the circuit solicitors and legal aid.

“We are not building houses. This is not magic,” she said. “But this is one thing the legal community can do. We are trying to help where it hurts. And the legal community is willing to do it.”

In Charleston, there are several programs offering help to homeless populations, including the Hope Center, a day resource center providing services to unsheltered and vulnerable people.

Hope Center services include respite from the hot or cold weather, access to laundry facilities, bathrooms, clean clothing and mobile phones. Counseling comes from a peer support specialist, licensed substance abuse counselor, a social worker and an outreach team, said Geona Shaw Johnson, Charleston’s director of housing.

“The City of Charleston created the Hope Center in response to the need to address an increase of persons in the community that were considered chronically homeless, meaning living on the streets or in places not meant for human habitation for two or more years, and to minimize the increase of the vulnerable to ensure they could maintain housing and other services,” she said.

In the first two years of the program, approximately 2,500 people have been helped through various services at the center.

The mayors of Charleston and surrounding municipalities also have worked to establish the Lowcountry Rapid Housing Program, which provides an immediate, low-barrier shelter to at least 120 people.

The program works “in concert with the clients to secure wrap-around services to assist them in locating permanent housing and to address the challenges that caused homelessness,” Johnson said. “Because homelessness knows no boundaries and an effective approach is a regional approach, Mayor [William] Cogswell has met with the mayors across the community to discuss and implement a strategy that addresses this matter.”

The City of Charleston also supports Neighbors Together, a local nonprofit that is starting a pilot project “Gateway to Housing,” incentivizing landlords to rent to people transitioning out of

homelessness. Landlords will receive rental deposits on behalf of the tenant and a maintenance fee for repairs to the apartment should any damage occur, she said.

Johnson offers this advice for cities working to support homeless populations: “Recognize that homelessness is a multi-tiered challenge, and it requires a multi-tiered approach, with funding and committed, collaborative organizations with the appropriate skills and experience who can provide persons who have and are experiencing homelessness an opportunity for a better life.”



**The 64-square-foot pallet homes at Rapid Shelter Columbia include a bed, desk, storage for belongings and heating and air conditioning. Photos: City of Columbia.**



**From left: Public Deender Jeremy Hayes; Public Defender Deondra Sexton; Curtis Gordon, the first graduate of the Rock Hill Homeless Court program; Rock Hill Municipal Court Judge Jane Modla; and Assistant Solicitor Shannen Deeter. Photo: City of Rock Hill.**



# Municipal Association of South Carolina

1411 Gervais Street | PO Box 12109  
Columbia, South Carolina 29211  
803.799.9574  
www.masc.sc

PRESORTED  
STANDARD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
Columbia, S.C.  
PERMIT NO. 31

## Calendar

For a complete listing of the Association's training opportunities, visit [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) to view the calendar.

### SEPTEMBER

**5 SC Association of Stormwater Managers Third Quarter Meeting and Exhibitor Showcase.** Cooperative Conference Center, Columbia. Topics include stormwater projects funded through the American Rescue Plan Act as well as the effects of stormwater ponds and restored streams in urban watersheds.

**10 Local Business License Renewal Training for New Business License Employees.** Municipal Association of SC, Columbia.

**11 – 13 Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute, Year 3, Session A.** Hilton Garden Inn, Columbia. Topics include employee handbooks, legislative advocacy, employee evaluations, customer service, HR records management, ethics, ordinance preparation and media relations.

**17 Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government: Forms of Municipal Government and Municipal Economic Development.** Regional Councils of Governments locations, with the Central Midlands COG meeting at the Municipal Association of SC in Columbia.

**17 Local Business License Renewal Training for New Cities.** Municipal Association of SC, Columbia.

**18 Main Street South Carolina 3rd Quarter Managers' Training.** The Larne Building, Clover. Topics include design training, Main Street policies and procedures, using market data in marketing materials and a walking tour of Clover.

**18 – 20 Municipal Technology Association of SC Annual Meeting.** SpringHill Suites, Greenville. Topics include artificial intelligence, the SC Critical Infrastructure Cybersecurity Program, migrating to the Microsoft Office 365 government cloud, as well as drone technology and geographic information systems.

**24 Risk Management Services: Generational Diversity/Understanding the Impact of Impairment in the Workplace Training.** Cooperative Conference Center, Columbia.

**25 Advocacy Initiatives Building Day.** Cooperative Conference Center, Columbia.

### OCTOBER

**2 SC Utility Billing Association Customer Service Training and Networking Luncheon.** Cooperative Conference Center, Columbia.

**3 SC Community Development Association Fall Meeting.** Cooperative Conference Center, Columbia.

**8 – 11 SC Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association and SC Business Licensing Officials Joint Academy.** Sonesta Resort, Hilton Head Island.

**16 Advanced Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government: Municipal Utility Policy and Administration.** Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center, Columbia. Topics include public utility risk management, water and sewer regulations, municipal utility authority, utility financing, and water and sewer engineering.

**16 Advanced Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government: Public Safety Policy and Administration.** Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center, Columbia. Topics include police policy and fire policy.