

UPTOWN

a publication of the Municipal Association of South Carolina

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Cover Photo : City of Greenwood crews
work to clear downed trees blocking roads
in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane
Helene on September 28, 2024. Photo: City
of Greenwood.

Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute Recognizes 5 Graduates

The SC Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute gained five new graduates in September, as 62 municipal staff attended MCTI Year 3, Session A.

The graduates this session are Rita Bruce, city clerk/treasurer, City of Landrum; Michelle Chambers, deputy clerk/treasurer, Town of McCormick; Courtnay Heyward, municipal clerk, City of North Charleston; Janice Miller, records manager, City of Rock Hill; and Tina Scott, council clerk, City of Dillon. There has been a total of 342 graduates since MCTI began in 1992.

The Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute is designed to provide municipal clerks and treasurers with the skills critical to their respective professions. The Institute is offered in a series of six half-week sessions. Each year, two half-week sessions are offered, one in the spring and one during the fall.

In the September session, participants learned about human resources records management, different types of performance reviews and what policies should be included in a municipality’s employee handbook. A *Model Employee Handbook for South Carolina Municipalities* that cities and towns can adapt for their use can be found at www.masc.sc (keyword: Model Employee Handbook).

Attendees also learned more about the South Carolina State Ethics Act, customer service skills, the legislative process and how to advocate on behalf of their city or town. They participated in an in-depth communication skills session that gave tips on public speaking, written communication and creating effective slideshow presentations.

MCTI is approved for certification credit by the International Institute for Municipal Clerks and the Association of Public Treasurers of the United States and Canada. Graduate Janice Miller completed a capstone project during her time in MCTI and can now use MCTI to satisfy the education requirements necessary to apply for a national certification through IIMC.

Learn more about the program at www.masc.sc (keyword: MCTI).





HELENE RECOVERY HIGHLIGHTS RESILIENCE OF CITIES AND TOWNS

City of Newberry utility crews repair lines following Hurricane Helene. Photo: City of Newberry.

On September 26, Hurricane Helene, at one point a Category 4 storm, made landfall on the Gulf Coast of Florida. It tore a path deep inland through Georgia, South and North Carolina and beyond, becoming one of the most destructive and deadly hurricanes to hit the United States in decades.

In the aftermath of Helene, we felt it was appropriate in this issue of *Uptown* to highlight the extraordinary efforts and long hours of performing the paramount responsibility of local government — providing for the public’s safety.

The geographic extent of destruction and challenges that your cities have faced in the aftermath of this storm have been unprecedented. However, the resilience, dedication and long hours demonstrated by the elected officials and staff have been truly inspiring. Your leadership has played an essential role in ensuring that recovery efforts are coordinated, safe and as swift as possible.

While the road to full recovery may still be long, it is clear that the steps you’ve taken thus far have improved lives and, in many cases, saved them.

During these times, many are reminded that municipalities are the closest line of defense to the public for the devastation that mankind or nature can leave behind.

The Municipal Association of South Carolina works every day to support all 271 municipalities as you work to fulfill your important mission. Today, our thoughts and prayers are with each of the cities affected by Helene and the residents you serve. We are proud of the work that you have done and will do as you emerge from this disaster even stronger.

As you continue to rebuild, lean on the partnerships available to you through federal, state and local resources to accelerate those efforts. If the Municipal Association can assist in any way, please let us know.

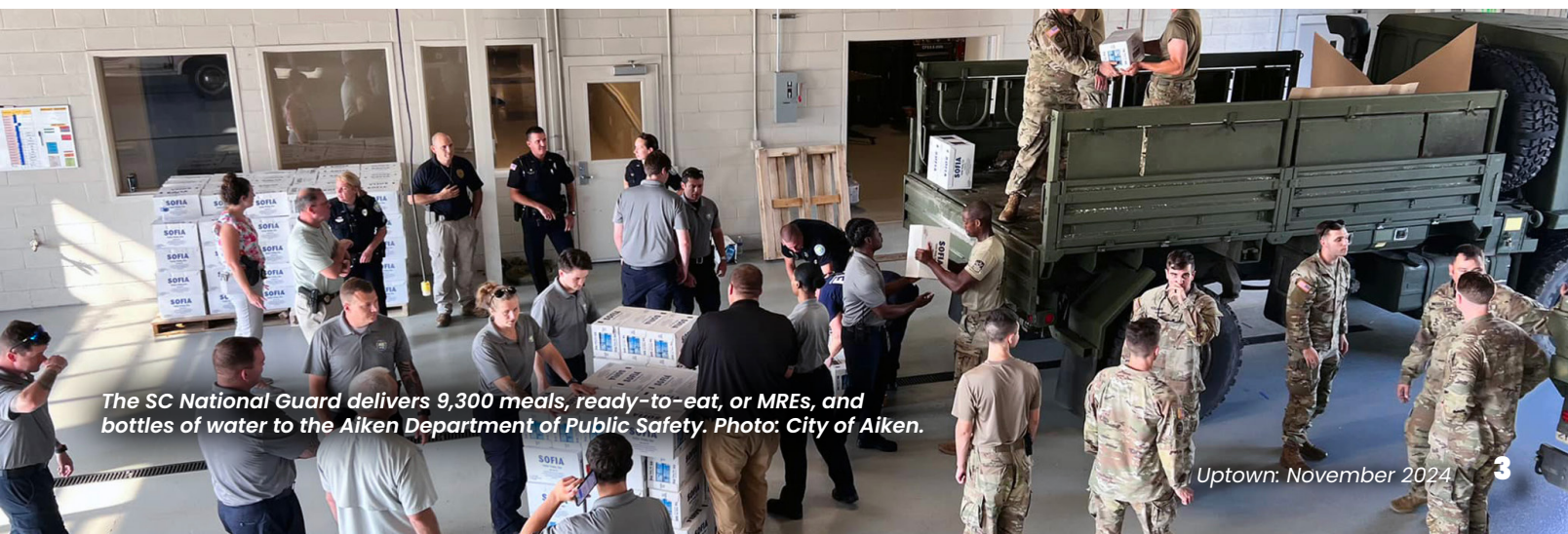
Thank you again for your steadfast leadership during this challenging time.



B. Todd Glover
Executive Director,
Municipal Association of SC



The Greenwood Commissioners of Public Works receives assistance from the City of Troy, Alabama, Utilities Department to restore power. Troy was among many communities to provide assistance to the Helene-affected parts of South Carolina, and worked in the state for 13 days. Greenwood CPW is a member of both the SC Association of Municipal Power Systems and the American Public Power Association. Photo: City of Troy, Alabama.



The SC National Guard delivers 9,300 meals, ready-to-eat, or MREs, and bottles of water to the Aiken Department of Public Safety. Photo: City of Aiken.



Municipal Association
of South Carolina

Hometown Legislative Action Day

Tuesday, January 21, 2025 | Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center

Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government

Wednesday, January 22, 2025

The Municipal Association's 2025 Hometown Legislative Action Day will take place on an earlier date than usual — January 21, 2025 — and at a new location — the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center.

HLAD serves as a time for municipal officials from all over the state to come to Columbia to receive updates on current legislative issues, visit their local legislators at the State House and connect with legislators at the Association's annual legislative reception. The Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government and Advanced Institute take place the next day, January 22, makes attending both sessions convenient for participants.

Here are the dates attendees will need to know to register by the deadline:

Registration brochure available on Municipal Association website

Monday, November 18

Hotel reservations deadline

Saturday, December 21

For the Hilton Columbia Center, make hotel reservations online or by calling 1.803.744.7800 and ask for the Municipal Association of SC HLAD rate of \$199 plus taxes and fees. Use the group code "C-94C."

For the Hampton Inn Downtown Historic District, make hotel reservations online or by calling 1.803.231.2000 and ask for the Municipal Association of SC HLAD rate of \$174 plus taxes fees. Use group code "C-91R."

Registration deadline for HLAD and MEO Institute

Friday, January 10

Hometown Legislative Action Day

Tuesday, January 21 | Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center

Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government, Advanced Institute and Advanced Continuing Education

Wednesday, January 22 | Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center

For more information, visit www.masc.sc (keyword: HLAD).



Organization and Vision Can Drive Small-city Development

The Inman Harvest Day Festival traditionally takes place in September, but was rescheduled in 2024 because of the impacts of Hurricane Helene. Photo: City of Inman.

For Inman City Administrator Joe Lanahan, the overall economic story of the Inman community has been broadly defined by the arrival — and departure — of some major economic drivers. The exciting thing for Inman presently is that work is underway to bring in a new one: the Saluda Grade Trail, to be built on a former railroad pathway. The trail would connect Inman with Zirconia, N.C., near Flat Rock and Hendersonville.

It's an effort, he said, which could bring transformative economic benefits not unlike what the now-famous Swamp Rabbit Trail has done for the City of Travelers Rest.

"I think when you look back on the history of Inman, like a lot of our communities, something sparked it," he said. "For us, obviously, it was the train line. You either lived in Inman 'before the train' or 'after the train.' You either lived in Inman 'before the peaches' or 'after the peaches.' You either lived in Inman 'before the mill,' or 'after the mill' — and we still have an active textile mill, which we are very proud of. Inman Mills is the oldest business in Inman, almost 150 years old. I think the fourth one will be that you either lived in Inman 'before the trail' or 'after the trail.'"

Lanahan was one of several representatives of small municipalities

to present during the Municipal Association of SC Small Cities Summit in August, describing how their economic development efforts have gained traction. All three of the communities presenting, including Bishopville and Kingstree, participate in one of the levels of Main Street South Carolina, which offers technical assistance to guide local revitalization programs.

Like the rest of Spartanburg County, Inman is growing substantially and attracting millions of dollars in private investments. Beyond new housing construction, the impacts are becoming apparent in the business core as well, which has a Harvest Day Festival and now a purpose-built pavilion space with power and restrooms to host the Music on Mill series. Recently vacant downtown storefronts had opened new businesses, Lanahan said, and a brewery moved to town as well. City council's vision, confirmed by a charette process, involved starting with downtown revitalization and working outwards.

"The idea is, how do you start getting folks back into that downtown, take them off the bypass, and bring them off [Interstate] 26? That really starts for us with two things — retail and restaurants," he said.

The City of Bishopville in Lee County has been pursuing projects including its

downtown master plan. Perhaps the most visually impressive is a \$1.4 million effort to refurbish its historic brick railroad depot building and its surroundings, located in the center of the downtown, to create a community and event space.

Bishopville Mayor Wayne Hancock described the decision-making processes that council uses to determine its development priorities each time a councilmember is elected.

"We have each councilmember and the mayor prioritize a list [of action items], bring it in, and we have a workshop," he said. Those lists are prioritized as a group, and then delegated to each committee chair to try to take action on their task. One of the priority lists we made in 2019 was to clean up dilapidated structures, stabilize the downtown historic district, develop partnerships with Lee County, the legislative delegation, Santee-Lynches Regional Council of Governments, apply for all funding sources for grants and make infrastructure improvements."

Hancock said Bishopville "applies for pretty much every grant we could apply for," while finding necessary funding matches.

The railroad depot project, he said, received \$450,000 from the SC Department of Commerce and \$450,000 through the SC Department of Archives and History.

In Williamsburg County, the Town of Kingstree has generated new energy in recent years, in part from the announcement of a new state park along the Black River, a growing tourism destination, and in part because of its investment in its historic downtown.

“We started with the little things,” Mayor Darren Tisdale said.

In some cases, that meant community cleanup efforts along the river and in the downtown. It also involved city branding that invokes Kingstree’s history and its namesakes — the tall pines suitable for ship masts, marked to indicate that they were the property of the British Crown.

It also involved the downtown benches, with funding donated

by community members, and hanging flower baskets, which Tisdale said proved more of an attraction than he expected. The ultimate goal in all of it, he said, is to create an environment where younger generations will want to return and open businesses.

“You ask me what my mission is?” he said. “Let’s rebuild Kingstree for our children’s children. It’s nothing about Mayor Tisdale.”

Main Street South Carolina is a technical assistance program of the Municipal Association of SC. It offers several community membership levels ranging in cost and requirements. Learn more at www.masc.sc (keyword: Main Street).



The City of Bishopville leveraged state funding to refurbish its railroad depot to serve as an event space.

Participate in the 2025 Compensation Survey in January



Each year, the Municipal Association of SC helps cities and towns compile an annual report of the wages and salaries paid to municipal employees and elected officials. Getting the data to truly reflect competitive compensation requires as many municipalities as possible to participate by completing the online survey.

Competitive pay serves as one of the most critical tools municipalities can use to attract and retain valuable employees. Local governments compete for job candidates with state agencies, county governments and the private sector. Studying data on current salary ranges can help cities and towns set their compensation at levels that will attract applicants.

The Municipal Association makes the data from its compensation survey available through its website,

www.masc.sc. Cities and towns can use this online tool to make sure that their compensation scales are on par with other municipalities with comparable populations and budgets. The report is helpful when looking at one-off comparisons or between formal salary studies, but it does not provide all the data of a full class and compensation study.

Responding to the survey is optional, but the Association encourages all municipalities to complete it every year, since widespread participation makes the data more useful.

The 2025 survey will be available for data entry from January 2 to February 21. For more information, visit www.masc.sc (keyword: compensation survey), and for questions, contact Lea Ann Mitchell at lmitchell@masc.sc or 803.933.1254.

Addressing Cyber Losses, Before and After They Happen Steps to Mitigate Your Exposure

By Mark Sadler, JD, CPCU, CIPP/US, Divisional Senior Vice President; and Dominick Zangaro, MS, CPCU, CPLP, Senior Loss Control Specialist, Great American

A cyberattack can be one of the most damaging and disruptive events faced by an organization. Whether the event involves ransomware, hacking, hacktivism, business email compromise or cybercrime, a cyber event can lead to significant monetary loss and negative public attention for the victim. Although the risk is severe, there are steps that can be taken both before and after a loss to limit its impact.

Pre-loss mitigation

Cyber risk management is the continuous process of mitigating risks related to your information technology systems. At its core, this means reducing the frequency and severity of potential loss producing scenarios, and mitigating the likelihood and impact of cyberattacks. The National Institute of Standards and Technology's Cybersecurity framework is considered the gold standard for managing cybersecurity risk.

Under the NIST framework, two key security solutions that should be implemented pre-loss include

- a secure email gateway, which reduces the likelihood that a phishing email will reach an intended target and is often packaged with training materials; and
- multifactor authentication, which assists in controlling access to sensitive assets or databases, reducing the overall impact and minimizing the likelihood of initial access being gained.

In addition, secure back-ups that are both air gapped — meaning they are disconnected from the network — and immutable — unable to be changed — are favored under the

NIST framework. These steps help reduce the impact of a ransomware event and ensure that there is adequate data to restore data and systems providing an alternative to paying a ransom to a criminal threat actor.

Finally, endpoint detection and response, or EDR, is a software tool that can reduce the likelihood and impact of a cyber loss. It can be programmed to automatically detect anomalous activity and stop that activity before it starts and prevent a malicious actor from moving throughout a network after they have compromised a device. Many organizations look to have this tool managed externally, through managed detection and response, or MDR.

Post-event-loss mitigation

The first step that should be taken upon discovery of a cyber event is providing notice to your cyber insurance carrier. Most carriers provide call center access and the ability to report a claim at any time of the day or the week. Upon notice of a claim, your carrier will help you to immediately mobilize a team of experts to address the incident. The team will usually include these parts:

- *Privacy counsel*, which assists in guiding the investigation under the appropriate privilege and work product protections. Privacy counsel will also begin the process of determining any applicable notification duties to individuals, regulators and others that may be required.
- *Digital forensics consultants* work with your IT team to help eradicate the threat, determine the attack vector, map the portions of the environment that may have been

compromised and provide objective data that can be used by privacy counsel in evaluating the legal exposure and inform the need to provide notification to individuals, regulators and others.

- *Restoration firms* provide IT experts to assist in restoring your environment.
- *Notification firms* provide assistance where notification is required, including notice, offering credit monitoring and standing up a call center to make sure trained persons are available to assist the recipients of the notices that may have questions.

In addition to immediately notifying your cyber insurance carrier, you should also consider the following steps to mitigate the loss and assist in its investigation:

- Do not engage with the attacker or pay a ransom without legal consultation.

- Preserve system logs and do not wipe hardware prior to consultation with a forensic expert.
- Do not turn off any systems prior to consultation with a forensic expert.
- Notify law enforcement.

Although the threat posed by cyber-attacks can be daunting, there are steps you can take before and after discovery of an attack to mitigate its impact. Your cyber insurer can be an essential partner in this effort.

The Great American Insurance Company provides optional cyber insurance for SC Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund members. Great American will present during the Municipal Association of SC Risk Management Services Annual Members Meeting on November 6 in Columbia.

Update Your City Information With the Municipal Association

At the end of each year, the Municipal Association of SC asks every city and town to review, verify and update the information that appears in the municipal directory found on the Association's website. The deadline to manage the information is Tuesday, November 19.

The designated official from each municipality may update their information using the Municipal Information Dashboard found at www.masc.sc.

Even at other times of year, cities and towns should update their information with the Association as needed. Maintaining current information helps the Association keep all of the state's municipalities informed of key issues affecting their operations and residents, including legislative activity at the State House that can have a major impact on local government operations; opportunities to attend

meetings, conferences and workshops, such as the Municipal Association's Annual Meeting, Hometown Legislative Action Day or Small Cities Summit; and other training opportunities from the Association's affiliate organizations and Risk Management Services.

The municipal online directory provides details and contact information for all 271 municipalities. It lists items such as the form of government used in each city and town, the regular schedule of council meetings and the names of all elected officials and key staff positions. It allows users to search for municipalities by county, by population or by which state representatives and state senators serve it.

The Association allows only one person from each municipality to handle the annual update — the municipal clerk or the clerk's designee — to help maintain the accuracy of the information.

For assistance, or to designate a new person responsible for the update, contact Joanna Ayers at jayers@masc.sc or 803.933.1259.

November 19

The deadline for clerks or the designee to update their information on the Municipal Association Dashboard is Tuesday, November 19.



Municipal Association of South Carolina

SCMAA Meeting to Examine Business Licensing, FOIA

This year's SC Municipal Attorneys Association Annual Meeting and Continuing Legal Education Seminar, taking place December 13 in Columbia, will take a closer look at standardizing business licensing practices under Act 176, as well as managing requests under the SC Freedom of Information Act. As in prior years, presenters will review the year's federal cases, recent opinions issued by the U.S. Supreme Court, state cases and state legislation affecting local governments.

An affiliate of the Municipal Association of SC, SCMAA provides resources, consultation, training and networking for city and town attorneys. In past years, these meetings have featured sessions on the legal processes of closing nuisance businesses, short-term rental regulation, land use and zoning matters and state law preemption.

Here's some of the more specialized topics to be included at the 2024 meeting:

Business licensing standardization

The conference will offer a presentation on administering business license appeals after Act 176 of 2020, the Business License Standardization Act. Because Act 176

provides a mandatory appeals process for business license assessment disputes, municipalities with business licensing have been working to ensure that their local appeal processes comply with the law. Having a clear — but also legally compliant policy — can help improve business licensing efficiency and to create an adequate record for possible further appeals.

The Municipal Association has recently updated and expanded its webpage gathering together all of its business licensing resources, including sample documents for the appeals process. Find it at www.masc.sc (keyword: business licensing in South Carolina).

The SC Freedom of Information Act

The SCMAA meeting will offer a review of advanced FOIA topics. The law requires municipalities to provide timely and accurately responses to FOIA requests, but at the same time, municipalities often receive FOIA requests that are difficult to fill: for voluminous email records, or for entire personnel files. The session will explore these difficult aspects of FOIA responses in depth.

Parliamentary procedure

The conference will include a one-hour training session on parliamentary procedures for local government attorneys. Although parliamentary procedures are complex and sometimes confusing, city and town councils can function fare more effectively and efficiently when they understand and comply with orderly procedures.

The registration deadline for the SCMAA Annual Meeting and Continuing Legal Education Seminar is Friday, December 6. Find the agenda and learn more at www.masc.sc (keyword: SCMAA).

SC Cultural Districts Highlight Investments, Opportunities

The City of Camden has used artwork and other improvements to create an attractive alley passageway for pedestrians along Broad Street. Photo: City of Camden.

Cultural districts, offering a chance to explore everything from public art to historic buildings and live theater, are often the heart and soul of a city.

These walkable geographic areas, formally designated by the South Carolina Arts Commission, celebrate the vibrance and cultural footprint of each city, driving tourism and allowing residents to take pride in their communities, said Harvee White, public art coordinator for the SC Arts Commission.

In the 10 years since the General Assembly passed legislation authorizing the South Carolina Arts Commission to designate cultural districts, 11 districts have been established around the state. The goal of the program is to attract artists, creative entrepreneurs and cultural enterprises to communities; encourage economic development; foster local cultural development; and provide a focal point to celebrate and strengthen local cultural identity.

“The mission of the South Carolina Arts Commission is to promote equitable access to the arts and support the cultivation of creativity in South Carolina. This program is one of the ways that we strive toward that mission,” White said. “Cities across the state are thinking about how they can contribute to making their communities more vibrant through creative placemaking.”

And it’s not just the large cities that are participating.

“The program shows that you don’t have to travel to South Carolina’s largest cities to have access to the arts — the entire state is filled with creative people and places,” she said.

Those creative people and places help all of South Carolina. A 2023 economic impact study showed the state’s creative sector generates \$14.1 billion for the state, with the number reflecting direct and indirect demand generated by the local spending activity of all arts-related businesses, their suppliers and their employees, White said.

“Cultural districts are a part of that economic engine, and inspire art-related economic growth,” she said.

The 11 districts network with each other, using the program to share information and ideas, while the Arts Commission also has a grant program

available only to designated cultural districts, with plans to provide additional grant opportunities in the future.

Earning a cultural district designation takes time and commitment. Cities typically start by forming a committee of artists and business owners who work together to assess the area and set geographic boundaries. It needs to be a walkable area that is home to a large number of cultural assets.

“We largely value community input, so part of that process is inviting the public to help create a map of the cultural offerings, which can include murals, festivals and markets, museums, theaters, et cetera,” White said. “They are also required to create a strategic plan for the next five years. This helps them plan for the future. They can use it to set both big and small goals for how they can grow their district — not just in size, but in offerings as well.”



Camden’s downtown Town Green is home to a free concert series. Photo: City of Camden.

There are many moving parts to becoming a designated district, so the Arts Commission works closely with potential districts. Once the materials are gathered and the application is completed, the districts present it to the commission's board, which votes whether to approve the district.

Hartsville is home to one of the newest cultural arts districts in the state, announcing its designation earlier this year. With Coker University, the SC Governor's School for Science and Math, multiple performing and visual arts spaces, distinctive historic architecture and a number of nationally recognized artists who had their start in Hartsville, the city has long celebrated and supported the arts. The new "hARTSville" district in the heart of the city includes the Hartsville Museum and Gallery, Sculpture Courtyard, Center Theater, galleries, murals and other attractions.

"Arts and culture have always been a big part of Hartsville's tourism and just what makes Hartsville special," said Matt Winburn, Main Street Hartsville manager.

Two of the cultural district's inaugural events sold out: the Spring Art and Wine Stroll, and the Heart of the Holidays Art and Wine Walk.

Winburn said the city uses arts and culture as part of its toolkit for economic development and tourism as it markets downtown as the hub of cultural life. It also extends its promotion and does a lot of cross-promotion with the south Hartsville community.

He said achieving the cultural arts designation is a thorough process, starting with a resolution by the city council to show evidence of a good-faith effort by the city.

"We have a strategic and marketing plan, and have to show an effort that we are making the arts and culture a prominent part of the city's programming planning moving forward," he said. "The cultural arts district is recertified every five years. So we make sure when we are up in five years we can say, 'this is what we started with, and this is what we've accomplished and this is what we're planning to accomplish in the next five years.'"

His advice for other cities is to lean heavily on the Arts Commission's team, which offers a great resource to walk cities through the process, and involve the arts and business community in every step.

He also suggested that cities spend some time thinking about what sets each community apart.

"Culture is defined by the community and the people in it. Every city has a different culture," he said. "It's not a one-size-fits-all program. For those considering this program, tap into what culture means for your community. Build upon that. Don't compare yourself to other cities, because they will be different from what you are."

When Camden was designated as a cultural district four years ago, South Carolina's oldest inland city already had a strong arts scene. The designation by the Arts Commission helped to spread the word.

"We've known for decades that arts and culture in the downtown area is a significant economic driver. This designation is the recognition for that," said Katharine Spadacenta, Camden's community development coordinator.

She said while people expect larger cities around the state to have a thriving arts community, they may not always recognize that Camden, with its 7,800 people, is also home to a vibrant arts district.

"It's one more callout to folks who are interested in exploring the arts and culture scene in South Carolina to include Camden in their travels," Spadacenta said.

The cultural district committee is creating a public art policy to help define and catalogue the pieces in town. While the city has much public art, there is not a map of the locations or guidelines for new pieces. Working with the Arts Commission and cultural district program staff, the city will have a plan in place at it explores future projects.



Scott Taylor paints Hartsville's Center Theater during the Heart of the Holidays Art and Wine Walk. Photo: 2nd Floor Media.



Shoppers follow a map of event locations around downtown Hartsville during the Heart of the Holidays Art and Wine Walk. Photo: 2nd Floor Media.

"There's been talk from merchants and property owners and artists in the community, and there's definitely interest in including a few more downtown murals," she said. "We already have several — some exterior, some interior. There's a desire to create more in a strategic way in the downtown."



College Avenue in downtown Hartsville is home to murals celebrating Hartsville's community and history. Photo: 2nd Floor Media.

Over the past few years, there's been a large private investment in restoring some of Camden's significant historic buildings downtown, with an interest in incorporating arts and culture in the renovations and the nearby areas.

She echoed the importance of collaboration among business owners and artists as a way to make cultural districts thrive.

"One of the things that's assisted in promoting the cultural district the most is getting some of our businesses, our galleries, our artist spaces to collaborate in a way that allows us to drive traffic," Spadacenta said. "We've done gallery crawls for years. Now we've expanded the number of galleries and artists spaces in the downtown district. You've got to make sure all the cooperative components are working together."

Learn more at www.southcarolinaarts.com.

South Carolina's Cultural Districts

- Aiken Downtown
- Beaufort
- Camden
- Congaree Vista (Columbia)
- Florence
- Georgetown
- Greenwood
- Hartsville
- Lancaster
- Rock Hill
- Spartanburg Downtown

Tourism Economic Impact by the Numbers

\$27.9 billion: the total amount tourists spent throughout South Carolina in 2022.

This amount generated \$2.6 billion in total tax revenues for the state government and local governments. Tourism also supported, directly and indirectly, more than 257,000 South Carolinian jobs, accounting for about 10% of all employment in the state.

The average state and local tax impact of tourism per county was \$40.17 million. These are the top 10 counties for tourism impact on taxes, and the tax amounts realized in them:



- **Horry County: \$579.56 million**
- **Charleston County: \$407.05 million**
- **Beaufort County: \$235.69 million**
- **Greenville County: \$122.06 million**
- **Richland County: \$76.17 million**
- **Georgetown County: \$56.63 million**
- **Lexington County: \$51.68 million**
- **Florence County: \$36.08 million**
- **York County: \$31.72 million**
- **Spartanburg County: \$30.18 million**

Source: South Carolina Tourism 2022 Economic Fiscal Impact Analysis, SC Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism.



Tourism Directors Focus on Events, Promotion, Data

Rock Hill hosted the 2024 Union Cycliste Internationale BMX Racing World Championships. Photo: City of Rock Hill.

Tourism is South Carolina's largest industry, with an estimated annual economic impact of just under \$30 billion. The SC Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism estimates there are about 200,000 jobs tied to the hospitality industry. Those numbers cover everything from the nearly 200-mile-long coast with its sandy beaches to the Blue Ridge Mountains, with amusement parks, hotels, conferences and seasonal festivals in between.

For cities and towns in the state — places like North Charleston, Rock Hill or North Augusta — managing and marketing individual tourism assets can be a full-time job, or even several full-time jobs.

The City of North Charleston takes a multifaceted approach to marketing itself to visitors. First, it is a stone's throw from one of the best-known tourist destinations on the East Coast — Charleston. It is home to an international airport, a U.S. Air Force base and the region's largest arena and convention space, the North Charleston Coliseum & Performing Arts Center. Also, the city has spent the past decade repurposing the former naval shipyard into a major tourist attraction and event venue.

Each one of those points requires a slightly different approach.

North Charleston cooperates with Charleston and other surrounding towns in marketing the region under the "Explore Charleston" umbrella.

"We do some of our own promoting, but we do depend on Explore Charleston to be our destination marketing arm," said Amy Heath, North Charleston's director of tourism.

The city uses a management company to handle marketing and bookings for its coliseum and convention center, as well as a city-owned golf course, Westcott Golf Plantation. That leaves the former naval base and shipyard, now known as Riverfront Park, as Heath's primary responsibility.

"Part of my role as director of tourism is running and overseeing all of the operations at Riverfront Park, and that includes concerts, festivals, events, weddings — you name it," she said. "We have seven different venues out here that we operate.

So my role kind of moved from more of a marketing-promotion focus to very much event-focused ... Still, my role essentially in whatever I'm doing, whether it's the marketing side or running the Riverfront Park and its venues, is to bring tourists to our city."

One big push for the city is to help those coming for events, such as weddings, find other things to do in North Charleston.

"We are working on our first visitor guide, but we're going to call it a cultural guide," Heath said. "It talks about the uniqueness of the city, our assets, our food and beverage scene — things are important to people."

The City of Rock Hill understands what it's like to live next door to a major tourism draw with both Charlotte, N.C., and the Carowinds amusement park just up the road.

Even so, Rock Hill has a few surprises of its own for visitors, including a BMX Supercross Track, which hosted the 2024 UCI BMX Racing World Championships in May. That event alone had an estimated \$30 million economic impact on the city, said Mark Sexton, the city's new director of parks, recreation and tourism.

Although Sexton is new to the director's role, he has worked for the city since the 1990s, when he was still a student at Winthrop University. He has held nearly every position available in the department.

"I don't think it hurts to be able to explain to the staff that there's really not anything that I'm going to ask you to do that I haven't already done myself," he said.

Sexton understands how Rock Hill has developed its niche as a sporting event tourism destination. In addition to the BMX events, the city also hosts several basketball events, where high school players from around the country as well as some international players come to learn and be seen by college recruiters. The venue for that is the Rock Hill Sports and Event Center, which is being expanded from its current 170,000 square feet to accommodate more and larger events.



North Charleston's Riverfront Park is home to the Culinary Village during the Charleston Wine + Food Festival. Photo: City of North Charleston.

The city also has a velodrome, which is a track cycling arena, and a tennis center, both of which boast an international draw.

“We’re building these facilities specifically to drive the economy through sports tourism,” Sexton said. “However, the beauty about this is that while these facilities are used for entertaining our guests — our tourists — our locals get to use these facilities when they’re not used for these events at a very nominal cost.”

That has helped create opportunities for home-grown athletes who hope to showcase their talents on a larger stage. And, in the case of the American Cornhole League, that organization’s leaders enjoyed their time in Rock Hill so much, they relocated the league’s headquarters to the city.

“The tournaments are important, the events are important, but it’s also people who are moving here because of these facilities and deciding to relocate and call Rock Hill their home,” Sexton said.

Like Rock Hill, the City of North Augusta also wants its new focus on tourism to benefit residents.

“For tourism to do what we needed, we needed that to be a standalone department,” North Augusta Mayor Briton Williams said.

Earlier this year, the city named 20-year parks and recreation veteran Karl Waldhauer as the first director of the standalone tourism department. Waldhauer hired a marketing director, Jennifer Goldman, and the two set about helping North Augusta carve out a niche from neighbor of Augusta just across the Georgia state line.

“What Karl has done is nothing less than incredible,” Williams said.

First was a change in mindset. Instead of inviting people to visit North Augusta, the new tourism push encouraged them to “Explore North Augusta.”

“It is the key to everything,” Williams said. “It makes people want to get out and see what they can find.”

The city isn’t expecting to draw visitors from far away. Rather, it is hoping to get local and regional residents to get out and enjoy what it has to offer: namely, a riverfront with a performance venue as well as natural areas and a bustling downtown.

To find out exactly who is coming — and what they are doing when they get to North Augusta — the city has contracted with Placer.ai, which collects data from cell phones when people come for events.

“It tells us where people came from, how long they stayed at the event or location ... and where they went afterward,” Waldhauer said. “We want to see that they went to downtown North Augusta and went to these businesses there.”

While learning where visitors come from can help the city better pinpoint its advertising, Waldhauer wants to stay focused on regional visitors and even the “tourists” who call North Augusta home.

“The city has had pretty amazing growth. We are going to continue to grow, but we want to keep that small-town feel,” Waldhauer said. “We have these assets we own that are used for these big events, but how can we use those on a daily and weekly basis so residents can actually enjoy this town?”



The Jack-O-Lantern Jubilee takes place on Georgia Avenue in North Augusta. Photo: City of North Augusta.

Plan Ahead for Parade Risks

Parades, a cherished staple of the holiday season, come with risks that their organizers need to manage.

They come with moving vehicles and floats with large numbers of passengers, animals, roads that need to be closed and railroad crossings to consider. Throwing candy from floats is a commonplace danger, since it can open the possibility of children being struck by parade vehicles while trying to retrieve the candy.

Here are some topics to consider in the parade planning process:

Determine who is in charge of the parade.

When considering legal liability, organizers need to distinguish in the planning process and in communicating about the parade whether the event is sponsored by the city, or by another entity. If a parade injury or accident occurs, courts will determine who is at fault, and who has to pay, by reviewing facts of how the parade was organized, and whether the accident was preventable.

Develop a safety plan, and include first responders.

Taking reasonable steps to address safety goes a long way toward providing the city a defense against possible parade claims. Completing a parade checklist

before the parade will demonstrate that the city acted reasonably by documenting all steps taken to address parade safety concerns.

In the planning process, be sure to include all relevant municipal officials and staff, including those involved in permitting as well as law enforcement and emergency response personnel, who can help identify dangers, and who can develop and implement an effective safety and traffic control plan.

In cases where a parade will cross railroad tracks, be sure to contact railroad officials during the planning process.

Plan staging areas and the parade route.

Identify staging areas for participants and determine where traffic barriers and street closings are necessary. Refer to the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, available through the Federal Highway Administration's website at www.mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov. Walk the parade route to check for hazards that need to be addressed.

Set rules for participants and floats, and emphasize safety.

Develop a parade policy outlining guidelines and rules, and include it with the application to participate. Appoint

a parade coordinator to be responsible for providing the parade policy to participants and ensuring compliance. Include a waiver of liability in the application.

Develop a guideline for floats to include appropriate body support, seatbelts or handrails to keep participants safe. Include guidelines for railings and float material. Make sure that all vehicles participating in the parade have insurance, as required by the state of South Carolina and be in sound mechanical condition. Require drivers to have a valid driver's license.

In the parade rules, consider prohibiting participants from throwing any items. Instead, require candy and other items to be handed to the crowd at the curb to prevent spectators from running into the roadway. Prohibit participants from smoking and consuming alcoholic beverages as well. Organizers will also need to communicate these rules during the lineup process just ahead of the parade.

For questions on managing parade risks, contact the Municipal Association's Risk Management Services Loss Control department at losscontrol@masc.sc.



Municipal Association of South Carolina

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Calendar

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

NOVEMBER

1 SC Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association Athenian Dialogue.

Virtual. Topics include the principles described in the book *Make Your Bed: Little Things That Can Change Your Life...And Maybe The World*, by Admiral William McRaven (U.S. Navy Retired).

6 Risk Management Services: Annual Members Meeting.

Cooperative Conference Center, Columbia. Topics include a review of the 2024 operations, 2025 program renewal, loss control best practices panel and an awards presentation.

7 SC Association of Stormwater Managers Fourth Quarter Meeting.

Cooperative Conference Center, Columbia. Topics include a legal panel, green stormwater infrastructure and Clemson University's Post-Construction Best Management Practices Certification Program.

13 Communications Workshop.

Municipal Association of SC, Columbia. Topics include releasing police department information, SC Freedom of Information Act basics, communicating economic development, annexation and artificial intelligence.

13 Main Street SC 4th Quarter Manager's Training.

Black Creek Arts Council, Hartsville. Topics include the power of public art, grant basics, community development financial institutions and a City of Hartsville walking tour.

13 - 15 SC Municipal Human Resources Association Annual Meeting.

Embassy Suites at Kingston Plantation, Myrtle Beach. Topics include the five generations currently at work, artificial intelligence, behavior health needs and creating a burnout-free culture.

19 Business License Essentials Training.

Virtual.

DECEMBER

13 SC Municipal Attorneys Association Annual Meeting and Continuing Legal Education Seminar.

Hilton Columbia Center.

2025

JANUARY

21 Hometown Legislative Action Day.

Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center, Columbia.

22 Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government.

Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center, Columbia.

29 - 31 Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute, Year 3, Session B Training.

Cambria Hotel, Columbia.

FEBRUARY

18 - 19 Municipal Court Administration Association 101 Session C.

Municipal Association of SC, Columbia.

22 Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government.

Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center, Columbia.

MARCH

5 SC Business Licensing Officials Association Spring Academy.

Cooperative Conference Center, Columbia.