



# UPTOWN

a publication of the municipal association of south carolina

## Population Growth Slows in 2020 Census

In the coming decade, the nation’s population will have an older median age, the size of individual households will decrease, the population will continue to slow its rate of growth, and there will be an increase in racial and ethnic diversity. Dr. Jerome McKibben of McKibben Demographic Research presented these conclusions during a presentation on South Carolina’s demographic trends at Hometown Legislative Action Day.

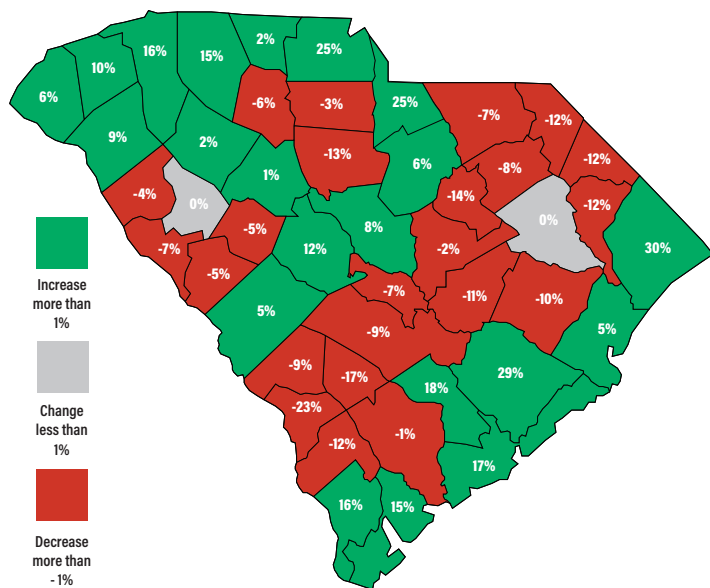
McKibben said many demographers concluded that the 2020 U.S. Census missed between 2 to 4 million people nationwide, and placed somewhere between 6 to 8 million people at incorrect locations. He said that the shift to an online census process likely led to an undercount for rural areas or people with limited internet access, and the disruptions of the COVID-19 pandemic meant that many college students had temporarily relocated home just before the count. These issues have led some municipal officials to question whether they can appeal the official count with the Census Bureau. While McKibben said this was not possible, residents missed in the 2020 census could appear in the annual population estimates.

The national population grew by 7.4% from 2010 to 2020.

“It was the slowest growth rate since the 1930s. And the second slowest rate in this country’s history,” he said.

South Carolina counted an increase of 10.7% during that time, a decline from the 15.3% increase from 2000 – 2010. McKibben attributed this to slowing in-migration as well as the shrinking level of natural increase — the situation where total births exceed total deaths. In South Carolina, 28 of the 46 counties are experiencing natural decrease, where deaths exceed

County Population Change 2010 – 2020



births. The counties that did grow are generally along the coast, in the Upstate, and across the Midlands from Lancaster to Aiken counties.

“The backbone of population growth in this country in the last 250 years is not immigration, it’s natural increase,” McKibben said. “If you have more deaths than births, it’s awful hard for your population to grow.”

While the under-18 population in South Carolina grew slightly by 23,491, it was outpaced by total population growth

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and therefore shrank by 1.8% as a percentage of the total population.

McKibben said this change “has huge implications for both K-12 education and higher ed. The pool is shrinking.”

In discussing migration trends in South Carolina, he said that most migration is short-distance, with people moving just far enough to get what they need, like a job or a house in a location that suits the wage earners of the household. The largest migrations flow from urban counties to nearby suburban counties.

While migration rates are the lowest for the age 50 to 64 bracket, he said that retirement-age residents have now chosen to remain in their existing homes. The

pandemic has contributed to this, he said, with people staying close to family, friends and existing health care providers. The phenomenon has contributed to housing shortages, because even in an era of a dramatic housing construction boom in some parts of South Carolina, the vast majority of the housing market is made up of the sales of existing homes. However, McKibben said, the situation may reverse in time.

“Migration flows like water,” he said. “COVID put a giant dam in front of elderly migration, which has backed up behind it, just a little trickle going through now. And eventually, that giant wave of Baby Boomers is going to break through that dam, and you’re going to see a bunch of existing homes go on the market.”

## Get Ready for the Annual Meeting Registration Appointment

**T**he time has come to get ready for the Municipal Association of South Carolina’s 2022 Annual Meeting.

This year’s meeting will take place July 13 – 17 at the Charleston Place Hotel. As in previous years, the registration process will ensure that municipal officials have priority for reservations and ticketed events.

On Tuesday, May 24, the Association will draw city names to determine the order of registration appointments for cities and towns, providing a fair process for all those interested in attending. The deadline to enter for the drawing will be Thursday, May 19.

### Important dates

- **May 9** – Agenda and registration information posted online. Registration brochures mailed.
- **May 19** – Deadline to enter registration appointment drawing.
- **May 24** – Drawing for registration appointment times.
- **June 7, 8 and 9** – Cities with a phone appointment register on one of these days. During the appointments, the order of which will be determined by a drawing on May 24, an Association



staff member will call the city representative to start the online registration/reservation process.

- A city’s representative must have completed registration forms in hand, including housing and meal ticket requests, for each person to be registered during the city’s call. During the online process, the city representative will use a Visa or MasterCard to make hotel reservations and register municipal attendees for the meeting. Make sure the credit card has a sufficient credit limit and per-transaction limit.
- **June 10** – Online meeting registration opens for cities without appointments and nonmunicipal officials.
- **June 13** – Deadline to make hotel reservations.
- **July 1** – Deadline to register for Annual Meeting.
- **July 13 – 17** – Annual Meeting.

# Municipal Association's Field Services Team Expands

Many city and town officials across the state are familiar with the Municipal Association's field services managers, who travel among all of the state's municipalities to help address issues of local concern and facilitate communication with members. Now, in addition to Jeff Shacker and Charlie Barrineau, the Association has added a third staff member to this team: Ashley Kellahan, who joined in February.

"I've always loved how the Municipal Association is a facilitator of great ideas between local governments, and I'm honored to be a more direct part of that process," Kellahan said. "I'm excited to share what I've learned with others, but more importantly learn from what other cities and towns are doing and help shine a light on their successes."

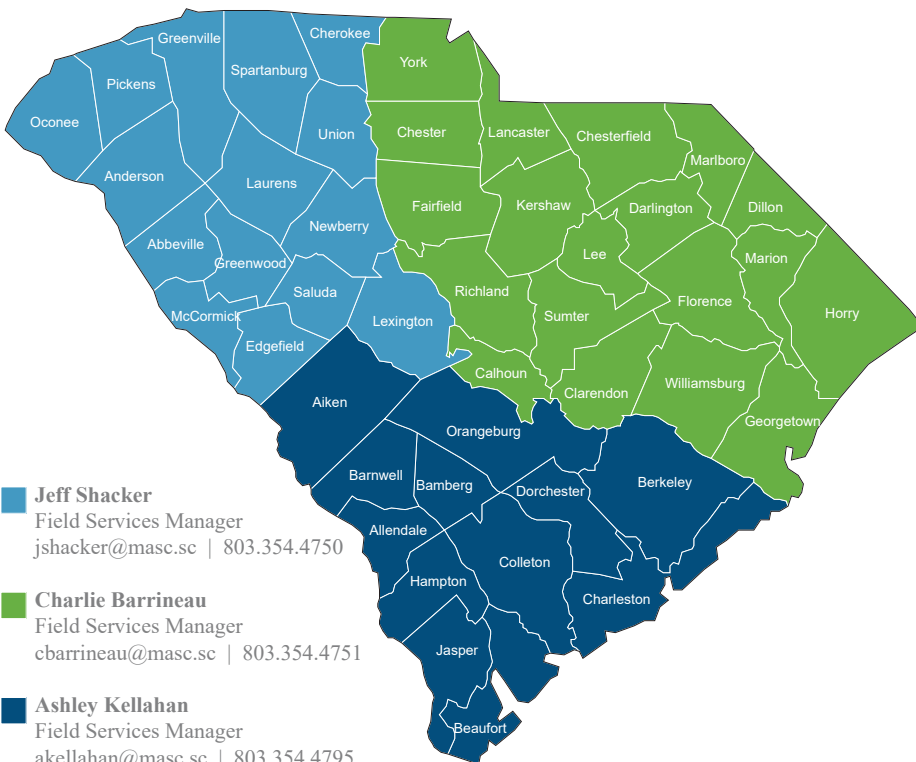
The team of field services managers is available to South Carolina's cities and

towns for the times when local officials identify significant questions or challenges. They also provide hands-on technical assistance before issues can grow into major problems. Beyond keeping in touch and answering questions, the field services managers regularly attend city and town council meetings and conduct informational sessions and goal-setting workshops.

In the past, the field services managers have divided their working territory very roughly between the Upstate and the Lowcountry. The Association will now divide the coverage areas into three parts, with the full transition occurring over the coming months.

The coverage territories and contact information for the three field service managers is below.

## MASC Municipal Association of South Carolina<sup>SM</sup> Field Services Managers



## NEWS BRIEFS

**Catrina Woodruff**, deputy town administrator for the **Town of Surfside Beach**, received her Master in Business Licensing designation from the Business Licensing Officials Training Institute.

In February, several municipal court administration officials became the first to complete the MCAA 101 training of the Municipal Court Administration Association of SC. These were **Candy Brock**, Town of Lyman; **Amanda Childers**, Town of Harleyville; **JoJo Crumley**, Town of Jackson; **Melody Millwood**, Town of Duncan; **Katie Melton**, City of Hartsville; and **Erika Stinson**, City of Tega Cay.

The cities of **Barnwell, Florence, Fountain Inn, Mauldin, Rock Hill, York**; and towns of **Bowman, Cheraw, Kershaw** and **Patrick** were recently awarded Litter Crew Grants from PalmettoPride. The grant program awards amounts of up to \$25,000 to help pay for litter removal crews.

# Downtown Development as a Team Sport

As downtown development directors met at the Sumter Opera House for a Main Street South Carolina training session in February, they found themselves across the street from one of Sumter's great downtown success stories: the Hyatt Place hotel, and the city parking garage behind it.

Assistant City Manager Howie Owens explained the years of work with partners that led to these achievements. The story began in 1999, a time when many in Sumter were concerned about the future of a downtown showing signs of decline and disinvestment.

The original turning point, Owens said, was the Greater Sumter Chamber of Commerce's focus on the downtown. The initiative spread from there to the city council, and ultimately led to a deal between the city, Sumter County and Sumter School District to establish a tax increment financing district, or TIF district. All three entities agreed to freeze their property tax revenues from the district at the 1999 level, and any revenue growth generated above that would be available for improvements in the district for things like streetscaping, sidewalks and parking.

Next, the city pursued the development of housing downtown. As Owens noted, "you're not really going to have a good vibrant downtown until you're a 24/7-type downtown. And at that time, we were really a 9-to-5 downtown mostly."

Sumter also wanted to pull in a hotel downtown, and found that Hyatt Place would come, but only if the city built a parking deck.

"We started scratching our heads on how in the world we were going to come up with \$4.5 million to build a parking garage," Owens said.

The TIF district was about to expire, which would lead to more tax revenue for the city, county and school district. Owens said the city used its good working relationship with the county as it raised



*Sumter pursued tax increment financing for a downtown parking deck that made possible a new hotel development.*

the idea of extending the TIF financing for another 15 years, and then pursued the school district's approval. The effort involved laying groundwork well in advance, and being transparent about what the county and school district would be giving up in the agreement. The city's counterparts both approved the move.

The parking garage opened in 2017, built by the same construction company that built the hotel. The downtown district has seen plenty of success since then, with the Downtown Sumter program counting about \$6.5 million in investment into the area from 2020 to 2021.

"Many approaches exist for cities to be creative in drawing as much value as possible out of a single project," said Main Street SC Manager Jenny Boulware.

Main Street SC now has 32 programs working to build the skills and organization needed to guide commercial vibrance in their downtowns.

Boulware also pointed to the value of collaboration in a downtown program. The first point of the Main Street

Four-Point Approach, which guides all of its revitalization efforts, is "Organization," a focus on bringing together all stakeholders, including businesses and nonprofit groups.

In Sumter's case, Boulware said, the decision to "address downtown parking and lodging issues at the same time put the city and its partners in a great position to provide more and more opportunities for visitors and locals to linger longer in the heart of their downtown."

Owens said that much of Sumter's success comes from a willingness to share the credit — focusing not on the efforts of the city, county and other groups, but rather a team of all groups working together. He said the city strives for constant communication with other groups, and makes sure that everyone involved is coming downtown and seeing that "the downtown is the heart and soul of your community. If you don't take care of the heart, the rest of your community is going to die."

## ASSOCIATION HIGHLIGHT

# SC Municipal Human Resources Association

**M**any municipal job positions have specific training and networking needs, and the Municipal Association of South Carolina's affiliate associations offer opportunities to meet those needs.

The SC Municipal Human Resources Association promotes sound human resources administration and encourages innovative programs. MHRA provides training programs as well as an opportunity to exchange ideas among its members, both through meetings and through its very active listserv. The national Human

Resources Certification Institute and the Society for Human Resources Management recognize MHRA's training for continuing education credits.

The next meeting of MHRA will be its Spring Meeting taking place April 28 in Columbia. Topics will include the legal issues involved in harassment, building partnerships between HR and department heads, training employees for internal promotion and the Family Medical Leave Act.

*Learn more at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: MHRA).*



## True or False?

**Receiving a copy of the minutes of city or town council meetings requires a written Freedom of Information Act request.**

**Answer: False**

**M**unicipalities and other political subdivisions of the state are public bodies subject to the SC Freedom of Information Act. Meeting minutes of public bodies are public records, and state law requires that the minutes for the preceding six months must be made available for immediate inspection and copying. Meeting minutes that have not yet been approved by the council must be released, but they should be marked as “draft” minutes.

Any individual may make an in-person request for this material during normal business hours without being required

to submit the request in writing. This requirement applies to meeting minutes of a municipal council, commission or board of public works, or any committee, subcommittee or advisory committee of the municipality.

*The Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government offers in-person and online courses. The next in-person sessions, “Freedom of Information Act in SC” and “Municipal Governance and Policy,” will take place May 17 at five regional Councils of Governments locations in Columbia, Florence, Georgetown, Greenville and North Charleston. Learn more at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: MEO).*

# Stay Current With Law Enforcement Procedures

**A**t one time, many police departments would keep their policies and procedures unchanged for years, but an era of greater public scrutiny has law enforcement departments wanting to keep up with the professional expectations of policing. Departments should review their policies periodically, and pay close attention to their policies for selection and hiring, use of force and vehicle pursuits.

## Selection and hiring

Hiring the best candidate possible is a key factor in making a department safe and effective. Adopting a hiring policy helps departments make the best hire, promote equity and diversity in the department and it should also provide direction for how the department selects its reserve officers and constables.

Departments don't always conduct a proper background check of the candidates they hire. Doing so can affirm the decision to hire, or it could reveal issues the department needs to explore further.

Police chiefs are sometimes hired purely on the strength of their experience, which can become an issue when proper background checks do not take place. Municipalities should hold the candidates under consideration for the position of chief to all of the standards outlined in the selection and hiring policy, just as it would with candidates for any other position in the department.

## Use of force

While some departments have officers carry only a firearm, others add a Taser,

pepper spray, baton or a BolaWrap to the list. There is no standard for what equipment an officer has to carry, but in every case, their use of equipment affects the public perception of the department. The public will always make assessments about how officers use force, and whether an officer could have handled a situation differently.

A use of force policy should address all equipment issued to the officer to include initial and annual training. Proper equipment use and defensive tactics are skills that will decline without appropriate training.

## Pursuits

All departments should have a policy outlining when an officer can initiate a vehicle pursuit. Whenever a chase occurs, people who are not involved are at risk whenever one occurs, so limiting pursuits to when there is a reasonable suspicion that someone in the vehicle has committed a violent felony — or when there is evidence of reckless driving or driving under the influence — will reduce the potential for incidents. Having a policy that restricts all vehicle pursuits is not recommended.

The policy should outline that a vehicle chase should not commence until approval is received from the officer's supervisor and the supervisor should assert control over the pursuit, based on the officer's communication. The policy also should allow any officer to terminate a pursuit, regardless of the officer's rank. In addition to hands-on emergency

driver training, officers should receive pursuit driving training at least annually, incorporating pursuit-related radio communication.

## Policy reviews and training

Because of changing case law and other variables, departments should review and update their policy and procedure manual at least every three years. The cover portion of the manual should note the date of the review. Some policies may need more frequent updates and should have specific revision dates listed. Tracking revision dates helps clarify what policy was in effect at the time of a reported incident.

Newly-hired officers should receive the standard operating procedures manual and training on the procedures of each policy. Administer knowledge tests to verify the officer's understanding of expectations related to the procedure manual. Experienced officers should receive, at a minimum, the department's high-risk policies on an annual basis, with documented acknowledgment and testing of their understanding on expected procedures.

*The Municipal Association's Risk Management Services will host a training session on law enforcement policies and procedures on May 17 for members of the SC Municipal Insurance Trust and SC Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund. Register at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: training calendar).*



# Closing Municipal Enclaves Would Improve City Services

By Scott Slatton, Director of Advocacy and Communications, Municipal Association of SC

As a city official, have you ever been quizzed by a resident about a property-related issue that they think is your city's responsibility? And when the resident told you where the property was located, did you have to tell them that property is located outside the city, perhaps even in an enclave? The resident was likely surprised to learn this, since areas that look like a city or town in South Carolina often aren't actually in a municipality, because of the state's restrictive annexation laws. In fact, the state's annexation laws are among the most restrictive in the country.

There are three primary methods of municipal annexation in South Carolina law: 100% petition, 75% petition and 25% petition/election. Before an area outside of a city is annexed, all three methods require two things. First, the property must touch the existing city limits. Second, a minimum 51% of the property owners or eligible electors must agree to be annexed. Because of misperceptions about annexation among property owners, they often don't seek to be annexed into a municipality. As a result, cities and towns don't grow naturally as development occurs at their borders. This

in turn leads to confusion among residents about who's responsible for delivering municipal services. Reform of South Carolina's annexation laws to allow cities and towns to grow with the development adjacent to their borders would alleviate confusion and allow for more efficient and cost-effective services.

The 2020 U.S. Census showed that South Carolina's total population grew by more than 10% since 2010. Some cities and towns in the state grew by even larger numbers, depending on where they're located and whether or not the developers in the area needed municipal services like water and sewer. While that growth in certain parts of the state is helpful to some, not all cities and towns have grown their borders as one would expect. Special purpose districts that provide services dissuade new growth areas from annexing into a city. Some counties that provide many governmental services dissuade annexation. This disjointed method for providing services stunts municipal growth and leads to confusion among residents and property owners.

One small solution to South Carolina's annexation confusion would be to allow cities and towns to close enclaves within

their borders. Commonly known as "doughnut holes," these unincorporated areas are completely surrounded by a city or town. Enclaves present many challenges to local governments and their residents alike. County officials have to travel through a municipality in order to deliver their services. Police and fire services can be delayed while officials determine whether the city or the county should respond. Residents of enclaves often don't understand why they aren't allowed to vote for mayor or council.

The Municipal Association of SC has long advocated for a change in state law that would allow municipal councils to annex enclaves by ordinance — improving efficiency and ensuring all residents share responsibility for funding municipal services.

Annexation in South Carolina is complicated, arcane and difficult. That's why reforming the state's annexation laws is needed in order to allow all cities and towns to grow as their communities grow.

*Allowing enclave annexation is one of the Municipal Association's 2021 – 2022 Advocacy Initiatives. Find the full list at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: Advocacy Initiatives).*

# Second Quarter Risk Management Tips

There are numerous actions for municipal risk management staff to take every year as part of a consistent and proactive effort to reduce liability for the local government.

Here are some key things for risk managers to address in the second quarter of the year:

## April

### Conduct safety inspections.

- Conduct safety inspections to identify any existing hazards that should be corrected. Inspections can be conducted by internal staff or an outside agency.
- Be sure to inspect buildings, grounds, equipment, machinery, work practices and conditions.
- Document inspections at least semiannually.
- Document the results and maintain records.
- Implement a follow-up system for inspection recommendations to ensure that action is taken to remedy any deficiencies.

## May

### Identify risks associated with the city or town's summer special events.

- Develop management policies for all special events.

- Request a certificate of insurance from all special event vendors.
- Use experienced third-party vendors to handle all alcohol sales.
- Become familiar with what special event activities are covered or excluded from the city's liability policy.
- Inspect event facilities and sites for hazards, and make sure all facilities are handicapped-accessible.
- Establish an emergency evacuation plan and train all staff and volunteers.
- Obtain waivers or pre-event releases from people participating in any sporting event or other kind of participatory event, such as marathons, bike races and parades.
- Refer to SC Code Section 23-31-520(a) for legal information on restricting the open carry of a firearm during organized events.

### Provide defensive driver training for employees.

- Drivers should protect themselves and others when operating a vehicle.
- To minimize collisions, drivers should be aware of the dangers of speeding, failing to yield the right of way, driving left of the center line and following too closely.

## June

### Review disaster recovery plan and procedures.

- Make sure that city and town leaders have designated only one person to be in charge of the municipality's entire emergency management.
- Make sure that there is both an emergency action plan focusing on preparedness, and a business continuity plan aimed at restarting the city's operations after an emergency.

### Review emergency preparedness plans and drills.

- Refer to Occupational Safety and Health Administration Standard 29 CFR 1910.38, which details the requirements for an emergency action plan.
- Make sure the plans address inclement weather, fire, flood, bomb threats or violence in the workplace.
- Store the plan documents at the workplace and make them available for employees to review.
- Train all employees on how to report emergencies. Make sure that the appropriate people are trained to supervise and coordinate evacuation drills.
- Review the plan regularly and update it as needed.

## Business Licensing Essentials: Gross Receipts, Deductions, Verification, Documentation

Every month in 2022, the Municipal Association's Local Revenue Services is hosting a series of virtual training sessions on the specifics of the business licensing process called "Business Licensing Essentials." The session on calculating and verifying business license amounts based on gross income will take place Wednesday, April 13, 10 to 11:30 a.m. Learn more at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: training calendar).



The April 13 session will help business licensing officials better understand several of Act 176's requirements related

to calculating business license taxes, including the definition of a business's gross income, either for the calendar year or fiscal year; allowable deductions when reporting their income; and the documentation the law allows local governments to request of businesses in order to verify that the income they report is accurate.

Find the recordings of past meetings online at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: business licensing essentials).



# Keep Recreation Civil With a Code of Conduct

The sight of a parent yelling angrily at a referee at a youth league baseball game has become a classic symbol of bad behavior in the world of parks and recreation. Passions can run high during athletic programs, and conflicts can emerge over how residents use their parks facilities.

Because the community's need for civility extends into parks, many parks and recreation departments have established codes of conduct for their facilities and programming. This can be as simple as posted signage stating expectations — for example, the parks and their programs are available for everyone to use, and attendees and participants should communicate appropriately, treat everyone with dignity and respect, and focus on fair play and enjoyment. For youth sports, departments will sometimes ask parents to sign a code of conduct acknowledging that the game is for the benefit of the participating children and that the parents should serve as role models of courtesy and friendly competition.

Some parks and recreation departments will include disciplinary regulations to make their codes of conduct more enforceable. City governments that choose this route should use ordinances to enter the rules into the city code.

Here are some of the elements that a properly devised parks code of conduct should have:

## Prohibitions

**Codes of conduct will often prohibit these behaviors:**

- Any form of physical, verbal or sexual abuse, including shoving, pushing, harassment, taunting or other forms of intimidation of participants or staff.



- Aggressive responses to official decisions — excessive throwing or kicking of items, yelling, or any other disruptive behavior.
- Obscene, profane or vulgar language.
- Abusing or vandalizing equipment.
- Obstructing the ability or others to use facilities, which can be anything from storing personal items on-site inappropriately, using amplified music without approval, taking up picnic facilities for a specified length of time, or failing to follow the rules posted for specific facilities.
- Possessing or drinking alcohol or illegal drugs, or attending events while intoxicated
- Carrying weapons. Note that the law governing the prohibition on the open carry of firearms in certain outdoor spaces, found in SC Code Section 23-31-235(c), was impacted most recently by the Open Carry with Training Act. State law specifies exactly the required dimensions of “no concealed weapons” signs. Find sample signs at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) (keyword: open carry signage).

## Procedures for ejections and trespass policy

**The code of conduct can also detail how parks and recreation staff handle those who violate the rules. It can address these points:**

- Verbal warnings issued by staff before they take any other action.
- Suspension from games, or ejection from facilities, including how soon violators must leave after being told to do so.
- When and how staff should proceed to investigate and issue trespass notices or suspensions of a person's ability to participate in activities.
- For those suspended, the length of the suspension or process for reinstatement.

Parks departments should also make sure that staff is properly trained to handle difficult situations where an established code of conduct has been violated. They should also be trained on how to handle situations where an altercation leads to an injury.



Sally Krebs, who handled natural resources and sustainability for Hilton Head Island for decades and who retired in 2022, is seen among black gum trees in a protected swamp. Photo: Town of Hilton Head Island.

## 'Green Spaces Are Happy Spaces:' Tree Protections, Horticulture Programs Bring Many Benefits

It's not hard to see the value of trees. They provide cooling shade in the summer, they absorb carbon dioxide, filter urban pollutants and help play a role in reducing soil erosion.

Many cities and towns realize that tree-lined streets and well-maintained tree canopies can improve everything from tourism to property values, environmental health and the mental health of residents.

"Trees are a key aspect of the environment on Hilton Head Island and the environment is the key driver in the [town's] strategic plan. Trees contribute directly to the tourist experience and quality of life for those that live on Hilton Head, not to mention the flora and fauna that thrive here," said Brian Eber, senior planner-environmental for the Town of Hilton Head Island.

Hilton Head Island's coastal community has a long-standing commitment to protecting and capitalizing on its natural beauty. It also has one of the most comprehensive tree ordinances in the state, originally passed in the 1980s, not long after the town was incorporated.

Along with setting requirements for trees that must remain on a site, it required developers who were removing trees to replace them with similar types of trees, preserving a species mix. At the time, that requirement set it apart from most tree ordinances in the country.

A Tree City USA since 2000, the town has a robust natural resources and development plan. Before a tree is removed, the property owner must get a permit from the town, describing the tree and giving a reason for the removal, along with any proposed mitigation. Beyond the town's approval, a property owners association or a private architectural review board approval may be necessary for land inside various communities on the island.

"The existing trees help to lessen air pollution and soil erosion and they improve surface water drainage by minimizing flooding and reduce drainage system cost. Trees also help reduce noise, heat, dust, glare and provide a visual buffer between adjacent development. Buffer standards help to reduce long term visual and real [stormwater]

impacts from newly adjacent developed land," Eber said. "The ordinance promotes alternatives to tree removal and does not allow for removals unless the viability of the existing tree is compromised. The trees that are removed are typically mitigated for by planting new native and biodiverse [trees]."

For ongoing maintenance of public land, Eber said the town works with arborists to proactively remove invasive plants, and provide extra nutrients to trees before and after construction of capital improvement projects.

When large storms blow through, Eber and an on-call arborist examine trees within the parks and on town property. The facility division maintains parks and pathways — and reaches out to the on-call arborists when necessary — while it does its daily inspection of parks.

In Walterboro, the city has maintained protections of trees through both staff and a citizen's tree committee for about 20 years. The seven residents on the city's tree protection committee represent the fields of landscape design, utilities, forestry and

the city historic district, along with three at-large members. The committee advises the city on any changes or revisions to its environmental protection and open space ordinance that address tree protection.

“We have one member that has been on the board since its inception, which is unique and very beneficial for the committee and community alike. The City of Walterboro has made a concerted effort to preserve and maintain the urban tree canopy,” Parks Director Ryan McLeod said. “Having a tree protection committee and achieving Tree City USA status can help communicate to residents and tourist alike the investment the City of Walterboro has committed to urban forestry both for today and the future.”

While municipalities do their best to preserve trees, sometimes old or damaged trees must be removed for public safety.

“Anytime staff identifies a potentially dangerous tree we inspect it immediately and make a decision of the best course of action. The City of Walterboro is particularly vulnerable to tree failure within the Walterboro Wildlife Sanctuary that utilizes boardwalks, bridges and walking trails that allow visitors to traverse the headwaters of the [Ashepoo, Combahee and Edisto] Basin,” McLeod said. “When conditions are favorable, even a moderate weather event can wreak havoc on the boardwalks, surrounding vegetation and walking trails.”

In Greenwood, the “official” commitment to horticulture dates to the 1960s, when the SC Festival of Flowers started as a way to show off the gardens at the George W. Park Seed Co. The Greenwood-based company is one of the nation’s top mail-order gardening companies.

The festival draws tens of thousands of visitors to the city each year and showcases its gardens, topiaries and thriving horticulture community. Trees and flowers are also chosen with bees in mind, as the city’s pollinator partners committee has helped Greenwood become a Bee City USA.

“Green spaces are happy places. Trees and flower gardens raise the value of property and add beauty to our business district ... By incorporating these things into our city, we are creating a place that



*Above: The Walterboro Wildlife Sanctuary allows visitors to explore the wildlife of the ACE Basin.*

*Right: Volunteers assist with the horticulture program of the City of Greenwood. Photo: City of Greenwood.*



people want to live in or come visit,” said Diana Fetters, Greenwood’s superintendent of horticulture. “Having an attractive location is a plus when it comes to a business deciding whether to move into the area or not. This is something the horticulture staff takes great pride in — keeping the city colorful.”

While much of the horticulture work is completed by city staff, Greenwood has a volunteer program that allows people from the community to assist city employees with their jobs. That program also is helping educate the community on proper maintenance of plantings.

Greenwood’s horticulture department grows many of its own plants, a practice that saves money and allows staff to monitor the growing process. Having department volunteers work with staffers is a great way for the city to interact with the community, Fetters said.

Dozens of cities in South Carolina are recognized with Tree City USA

honors, a national program that provides the framework to maintain and grow tree cover. To receive the designation, communities must show they meet standards for sound urban forestry management each year.

Hilton Head Island’s Eber has some advice for other municipalities looking to enhance tree maintenance program or attain Tree City USA status: “Go for it. This national standard provides great examples of proven ordinances and allows for the promotion of a rich overstory and understory that not only is pleasing to view, but helps promote a healthy environment for all living creatures.”

Walterboro, another Tree City USA, suggests cities also take advantage of the expertise of the SC Forestry Commission.

“Our regional forester has attended our tree protection committee meetings,” McLeod said. “They have informed us of various grant opportunities and shared their insight to celebrating Arbor Day.”



Conway's Lady Bug Park has an inclusive playground that includes a wheelchair-accessible merry-go-round. Photo: City of Conway.

# Come Out and Play:

## Innovative Playground Trends Keep Inclusivity in Mind

Innovations in accessible and inclusive playground development are raising the bar for play areas across the Palmetto State. As municipalities plan new and unprecedented facilities, they face challenges such as funding, equipment longevity and meeting community safety needs, but the work in places like Conway, Summerville and Moncks Corner can often transform their communities for the better.

### Conway

Coastal and low-lying areas are no strangers to the damaging effects of natural disasters. Following the aftermath of Hurricane Florence and the flooding that ensued, the City of Conway was left with irreparably-damaged playgrounds. It made plans to rebuild the play structures at Sherwood Park and Riverfront Park using long-lasting and removable materials, while reimagining the designs to be inclusive and fully accessible at the

same time. This decision came on the heels of planning for the long-awaited opening of the inclusive Lady Bug Park at the Recreation Center. To recognize these efforts, the City of Conway received an Achievement Award for Public Service by the Municipal Association of SC in 2021.

Public Information Officer and Conway native June Wood explained how the revitalization of the two existing playgrounds came to be. With plans already in place for Lady Bug Park, Conway's city council realized its dream after receiving money from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and donations from other outside sources. This closed the gap on the total budget for the redevelopment of Sherwood Park and Riverfront Park, as well as the buildout for the new Lady Bug Park.

"We wanted the playgrounds to meet the needs of our community, and we wanted all of our parks to be inclusive," said Wood.

Ensuring that the two existing playgrounds were also meeting those needs was an important factor, she emphasized. The city embarked on a request for proposal, or RFP, bidding process. Equipment was a big factor, and the council engaged the community by forming a committee to oversee the selection process. Working with community members and other stakeholders, the planning committee captured all of the necessary requests, like the need for metal or non-porous building materials in a flood-prone area. Wood said that one of the biggest committee discussions was about the wheelchair-accessible merry-go-round.

When approaching a playground design project, Wood recommended focusing on community engagement, saying that the success of the project depends on it.

"Stakeholders hold invaluable information for the communities' needs and aspirations," she said.



Left: Summerville's redeveloped Saul Alexander Park Playground has Dorchester County's first all-inclusive playground. Photo: Town of Summerville.

Above: Miracle League, which connects children with special needs with activities including baseball, is part of Moncks Corner's parks development efforts. Photo: Town of Moncks Corner.

## Summerville

The Town of Summerville recently opened the reimagined Saul Alexander Park Playground, Dorchester County's first all-inclusive playground, adjacent to Summerville's Miracle League Field. Originally built in the 1950s, Saul Alexander Park Playground closed for seven months during renovation and reopened in February 2022.

Coordinating the festivities was Amy Evans, parks and recreation director, who shed some light on the project. The Summerville Miracle League contacted Evans about the addition of an inclusive park just one month after she started in her position. In working with the Miracle League, she found community support and interest in the project.

To fund the redevelopment, the town received grant money from the state as well as funding from Summerville and Dorchester County.

"Many of the funds that came from outside the Town of Summerville were earmarked so we could set those aside," Evans said.

After the RFP selection process, the town partnered with playground designer GameTime. Using built-to-last equipment, the winning design includes several "rooms," or pods along a central pathway that create different sensory play experiences. The town also installed mounds to add a fun visual landscape and serve a functional purpose by linking to the main play structure.

"There are a lot of features of the park that are spread out, so if one pod or

one space is overwhelming, there's other places that kids can go out and play," said Evans.

As a "pocket park" located within a neighborhood, engagement with the community was critical. One of the top requests from community members was the addition of more green space.

"[Residents] did not want a traditional, large one-piece structured playground," said Evans. "The cool thing about [the project] was that the neighborhood actually got more greenspace."

## Moncks Corner

Nearby in the Town of Moncks Corner, the Home Telecom Miracle League Field and playground are in the works as part of a two-phase development project at the Regional Recreation Complex on Main Street. With an anticipated opening date of fall 2022, the field will be named after the project's largest sponsor.

Becky Ellison, recreation director for the Town of Moncks Corner, said that plans for an inclusive ballpark and playground had been in the works for several years.

"We wanted to make sure that was something we could provide," she said. "We now have over 900 participants in four years — that's a lot of growth. But we were still leaving out one group. Not just children, adults as well."

As the project is driven by funding, Ellison said she hopes that Moncks Corner can go straight into Phase II

once Phase I is completed. To raise the necessary funds, the town applied for and received grants including the Community Development Block Grant and the Municipal Association's Hometown Economic Development Grant. A capital campaign with sponsorship outreach within the community was also part of the process.

"We went out and talked to businesses about the Miracle League; that it provides an opportunity for children and adults to play baseball but also [a chance] for the community to be involved as well," Ellison said.

The new Miracle League field will feature rubberized turf which is easily accessible for wheelchairs and walkers. The open-air pavilion, dugouts and all other features of the field are designed with accessibility in mind to limit any hinderance to play. Ellison said the equipment of the all-inclusive playground will have the same rubberized turf as the field. Sensory machines that play music and allow for children to touch, feel and listen will also be part of the design.

"We should provide an opportunity for everyone to play, because recreation is all about fun, community, family," she said. "It brings everyone together."

The playgrounds of the future will most likely continue to keep inclusivity and accessibility in mind. Bringing together community engagement, stakeholder buy-in and diverse funding sources during the initial phases of the planning process are some keys to success.

# Bradford Pear Bounty Conquers Invasive Trees Across South Carolina

By Dena Whitesides, Regional Urban Forester, Piedmont Region, SC Forestry Commission

You probably remember the famous “wanted” posters used in the Old West during the 19<sup>th</sup> century to hunt down and capture notorious criminals. The posters use bold typography and audacious headlines as a way to distribute information to the public.

In South Carolina, a bounty has been put out on one of the most serious invasive plant species: the elusive Bradford pear tree. In 2019, Clemson University teamed up with the South Carolina Forestry Commission to declare war on this notorious invader, asking landowners to cut down their Bradford Pears and exchange them for native replacement trees: the “Bradford Pear Bounty.”

The urban landscape is threaded with many nonnative ornamental plants. Though most of these are harmless, a small cohort of exotics escape the planted environment, leak into our forests and become major invasive problems. They threaten native plant communities by aggressively outcompeting them and replacing them in their natural habitat. This contributes to biodiversity loss and a less resilient landscape.

For decades, Bradford pears have been spreading like wildfire across the South Carolina landscape, evidenced by dense clusters of thorny sprouts established along roadsides and forest edges. The insurgence of invasive pear sprouts in idle agricultural fields result in Bradford pear “meadows.” Like other serious invasives, they spread by producing huge amounts of seed that are widely disseminated by birds and rapidly sprouting new plants from the roots.

The Bradford pear tree was cloned in large numbers and quickly became the most popular street and yard tree in America. Prized for its springtime profusion of gorgeous white blossoms,

Bradford pears also display attractive fall color. Their rapid growth rate delivered near-instant gratification for residential yards. The problem was that it was supposed to be a sterile selection, but instead it shockingly began to cross-pollinate with other *Callery* pear trees. The birds that consumed its fruits began to broadcast its invasive seed across the land, further accelerating its spread.

Many people have grown to despise the nuisance of this tree. Springtime blooms are pretty, but they come with a very foul odor, reminiscent of rotten fish. Their sharply angled branches create crevasses of “included” bark and weak branch attachments prone to failure, usually during storms. Debris cleanup and tree replacements increase the tree’s costs for landowners and municipalities alike. The sharp thorns of new sprouts can injure people, livestock and wildlife, and can also puncture tires.

Clemson and the SC Forestry Commission work collaboratively on the Bradford Pear Bounty project to educate landowners and communities on the negative effects of serious invasive plants, eradicate Bradford Pears from the urban landscape, and foster the selection of the right urban tree for a

location. To date, the program has eliminated approximately 900 Bradford pears from the state’s urban landscape.

The trees are easily recognized by their early spring flowering, so spring is the targeted season for the Bradford Pear Bounty. Three bounties are scheduled for this spring in Sumter, Conway, and Clemson. Any interested landowner can participate, must preregister online and can exchange up to five pears for five native replacements. Each event offers a variety of urban-hardy species, like Swamp white oak, Bald cypress, Blackgum, Sweetbay magnolia and Eastern redbud.

Sponsoring a Bradford Pear Bounty in your community can connect residents and leadership together in support of healthy forests and environmental stewardship. If your municipality is interested in hosting a Bradford Pear Bounty, please contact the program coordinators: David Coyle, Assistant Professor of Forest Health at Clemson University, at [dcoyle@clemson.edu](mailto:dcoyle@clemson.edu) or 864.656.9766; or Dena Whitesides, Urban Forester with the SC Forestry Commission, at [dwhitesides@scfc.gov](mailto:dwhitesides@scfc.gov) or 803.391.0330.

For more information visit <https://www.clemson.edu/extension/bradford-pear/>.



At Bradford pear bounty events like this one in Clemson, landowners can bring photos of their cut-down Bradford pears in exchange for free replacement native trees. Photo: SC Forestry Commission.



# Beware the Hazards of Parks and Recreation

**F**rom the possibility of snakebites to the dangers of weather, the employees of a parks and recreation department face numerous hazards in their jobs. There are many hazards that employers should look out for, and remember when they are training employees on what to avoid.

## Animals

The primary threat posed by animals comes from bites, and the best way for employees to avoid bites is to simply remove themselves from a wild animal encounter. Employees can communicate to animal control or a pest control company to remove the hazard, but they should also understand that they might not see the snake or spider before exposure. Supervisors should train employees on proper first aid techniques and how to request emergency services at a specific location.

## Inclement weather

Weather dangers change throughout the year, with rapidly developing thunderstorms being one of the more common issues for parks staff. Employees need to have communication devices and know their specific location if they need to call for help. Supervisors need to make sure they have a way to communicate that inclement weather is fast approaching and that employees should seek shelter.

## Heat stress

Employees should also know the signs and symptoms of heatstroke — confusion, unconsciousness, convulsions, a very high body temperature and either a lack of

sweating or profuse sweating in the case of an exertional heatstroke. Employees also need to know what to do to reverse these conditions immediately since heatstroke is a medical emergency requiring immediate medical attention. First aid includes cooling the worker as quickly as possible. This could be an ice bath, circulating air around the worker, and placing cold packs on the head, neck, armpits and groin. For exertional heatstroke, oral hydration is vital.

## Equipment maintenance

Maintenance on all aspects of parks — sports fields, nature trails, playground equipment and facilities — should be performed and documented. Beyond completing all work orders for repairs, proper maintenance includes regular inspections for many hazards:

- Ungrounded electrical receptacles or missing receptacle covers
- Chemicals that are not labeled properly
- Missing or inoperable ground fault circuit interrupters within 6 feet of a water source
- Discharged fire extinguishers, or fire extinguishers that have not been regularly inspected
- Damaged personal protective equipment that needs to be removed from service immediately

## Chemicals and machinery

Chemicals such as chlorine for pools, weed killers or even cleaning agents can be dangerous. Employees need to receive training on chemical hazards as explained

by the appropriate material safety data sheet. When using such chemicals, employees must wear appropriate personal protective equipment. If the chemicals require eyewash and shower stations, employees should be trained on the use and location of these devices.

Any employees who operate dangerous machinery, such as lawnmowers, chainsaws and weed eaters should receive proper training and personal protective equipment according to the operator's instructions.

## Volunteers

Some parks and recreation operations rely heavily on volunteers. Municipalities should take care to perform background checks on all volunteers.

The training for volunteers and employees needs to be identical. Volunteers should receive a specific job description from which they are not to deviate from this during their time volunteering.

To limit its liability, a municipality can purchase an accident medical insurance policy that covers those volunteers who are not covered by workers' compensation. Another way to limit liability is to have volunteers sign a waiver of liability acknowledging the risks and agreeing to not hold the city liable for any injuries. Municipal officials should consult with their attorney before using this method.

*For more information on reducing parks and recreation injuries and losses, including facility inspection, contact John Ciesielski, loss control consultant, at [jciesielski@masc.sc](mailto:jciesielski@masc.sc).*



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# Calendar

*Scheduled in-person meetings are subject to change based on the Municipal Association's COVID-19 restrictions in place at the time of the meeting. Information about events and how members can access the virtual events will be updated on the Association's website.*

## APRIL

**6 New Mayors Orientation.** Cooperative Conference Center, Columbia.

**8 Municipal Court Administration Association of SC Spring Meeting.** Cooperative Conference Center, Columbia. Topics include homeless courts, courtroom decorum, sovereign citizens and SC Department of Motor Vehicles procedures.

**13 Business License Essentials – Gross Receipts, Deductions, Verification, Documentation.** Virtual. See page 8.

**26 Public Works/Utilities Risk Management training.** West Columbia City Hall. Topics include fall protection, personal protective equipment, chainsaw safety, the MyCivic identification app and auto claims.

**28 SC Municipal Human Resources Association Spring Meeting.** Cooperative Conference Center, Columbia. Topics will include the legal issues involved in harassment, building partnerships between HR and department heads, training employees for internal promotion and the Family Medical Leave Act.

## MAY

**11 Business License Essentials – How to Handle Appeals and Delinquents.** Virtual.

**17 SCMIT/SCMIRF Law Enforcement Training. Fire Training Grounds Building, Sumter.** Topics include a police chief panel discussion, legal briefings and law enforcement policy development.

**17 Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government: Freedom of Information Act in SC and Municipal Governance and Policy.** Appalachian COG: Greenville, Central Midlands COG: Columbia, Pee Dee Regional COG: Florence, Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester COG: North Charleston, Waccamaw COG: Georgetown.

**18 – 22 SC Community Development Association Annual Meeting. The Beaufort Inn.** Topics include food trucks, historic preservation and community branding.

## JUNE

**2 SC Association of Stormwater Managers Second Quarter Meeting.** Cooperative Conference Center, Columbia.

**7 Accreditation in Business Licensing Exam.** Municipal Association of SC, Columbia.

**8 Business License Essentials – Records Retention.** Virtual.