



UPTOWN

a publication of the municipal association of south carolina



2018 Advocacy Initiatives call for action

South Carolina cities and towns are hubs for economic activity all over the state, and local officials are always seeking new and innovative ways to increase the quality of life for residents, ensure a strong business climate for local companies and attract visitors. Each year, the Municipal Association holds 10 Regional Advocacy Meetings to hear from local officials about challenges they face in meeting these goals.

“Through these regional meetings involving hundreds of municipal officials in August and September, we hear themes developing around specific issues that concern local officials,” said Reba Campbell, the Association’s deputy executive director. “In many cases, solutions to these challenges can come from changes in state law.”

Advocacy, page 2 >

In This Issue

Farming feeds rural towns

Page 4

Cities target eyesores

Page 6

Special Section: Economic Development
10 cities win Hometown Economic Development Grants

Page 9

S.C. cities look across state lines

Page 10

In this ISSUE



| | |
|---|---|
| Thank you for the opportunity.... | 3 |
| Farming feeds rural towns | 4 |
| Five graduate from MCTI..... | 5 |
| Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government monthly quiz..... | 5 |
| Cities target eyesores..... | 6 |
| Call for Achievement Award entries | 8 |

Special Section: Economic Development

| | |
|--|----|
| 10 cities win Hometown Economic Development Grants | 9 |
| S.C. cities look across state lines | 10 |
| In their words: Small town leaders | 12 |
| Fun trips rev up downtowns..... | 14 |

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Advocacy, from page 1 >

To offer solutions, the Association's board of directors approved the 2018 Advocacy Initiatives. Each action item represents a recommended change to state law that would give local governments more tools to meet these challenges. These initiatives are intended to encourage business growth and development, provide quality municipal services, increase funding for law enforcement, expand funding sources for infrastructure and reduce blight.

The Advocacy Initiatives will be highlighted at the 2018 Hometown Legislative Action Day on February 6. The deadline for preregistration is January 23.

Encourage business growth and development

For businesses, time is money. Implementing standardized business licensing practices saves businesses time and supports local economic growth.

Action Item

- Standardize business license tax collection processes across the state.

Provide quality services

Residents and businesses expect a positive quality of life and economic prosperity in their hometowns. To achieve this, dependable and consistent revenue sources are necessary to support the efficient and effective delivery of municipal services.

Action Items

- Update the formula for the Local Government Fund to ensure a reliable revenue source for cities and towns.
- Increase flexibility for municipalities to raise revenue to support specific capital projects.
- Allow cities to annex certain enclaves by ordinance.
- Increase flexibility for municipalities to more effectively use local hospital/accommodations tax and victims assistance funds.

Increase funding for law enforcement

Law enforcement agencies face the challenge of recruiting, hiring and training highly qualified officers. Increased funding for training and resources will result in safer streets and communities.

Action Items

- Increase reliable funding to offer more training opportunities for law enforcement officers.
- Increase funding for body worn cameras.
- Equip cities and towns with the tools to meet law enforcement challenges created by the opioid epidemic.

Expand funding sources for infrastructure

Long-term management of infrastructure extends beyond building roads, fixing potholes and cleaning drainage ditches. Cities and towns need resources and flexibility to prioritize and address local infrastructure challenges.

Action Items

- Increase municipal representation on county transportation committees.
- Increase funding for drainage projects to mitigate damage to flood-prone areas.
- Identify funding sources for relocating municipally owned utilities forced to move due to road and bridge construction.

Reduce blight

Dilapidated structures pose a public safety threat in municipalities of all sizes. Additional tools to clear blight will ensure the safety of residents and visitors and spur economic development opportunities for business owners.

Action Item

- Establish options to recover public funds spent to demolish or clean blighted property.

Thank you for the opportunity

A farewell from Executive Director Miriam Hair

Municipal officials and friends have often asked me, “How long have you worked for the Municipal Association?” When I share that it has been 30-plus years, the next question is always, “Why?”

And my answer is always the same — I can’t imagine working for a company where the mission is only to sell more, produce more and increase profits. While we always strive to increase the number of municipal officials engaged in the programs of the Association and find more ways to share why the success of cities and towns is important to the success of our state, it’s much more than just a numbers game.

The Association’s sole purpose is to provide a means through which city officials can work together to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of municipal services and enhance the experience of living, working, and doing business in our state’s cities and towns. That’s a mission that I have enjoyed being a part of now for 32 years.

Before the early 80s, the Association’s small staff of eight or so lobbied the State House, held an annual meeting, collected certain business licensing taxes and published a few publications including the monthly newsletter, *Uptown*.

Then things began to change. In addition to these existing services, the Association created its first pooled insurance program to provide more stable premiums and coverage for cities and towns, and the SC Association of Municipal Power Systems contracted with the Municipal Association for an employee to serve as its executive director. While the decision to staff SCAMPS launched the Association’s vision of using 11 affiliate associations to provide training to municipal employees, it also launched my career, as I was the lucky one hired for the position.

As the complexities of running a city grew, the Municipal Association also



Sen. Floyd Nicholson (D-Greenwood) surprised Miriam Hair with the Order of the Palmetto, the state’s highest civilian honor, at the Association’s Annual Meeting on Hilton Head Island in July. Nicholson is the former board president of the Association and former mayor of Greenwood, Hair’s hometown.

created the Municipal Elected Officials Institute. Next year, the Association will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the institute’s first graduating class. And, last year, the Association celebrated the first graduating class of the Advanced Municipal Elected Officials Institute.

Over the years, the Association invested in technology to provide online training for municipal officials and to provide portals for insurance companies and telecommunication companies to pay municipal taxes online.

These are just a few of the programs developed to respond to the needs of cities and towns. What an exciting time I have experienced in my 32-year career with the Association.

I will always be grateful to Don Wray and Howard Duvall, both former executive directors, for believing in me and giving me the opportunity to build a rewarding career with the Association. And I will always be grateful to Jim Robey, the former deputy director who recruited me to the Association, and guided me in

my duties early on. I also offer a special thank you to the board of directors who nine years ago appointed me executive director after serving 10 as deputy executive director.

When I talk about the Association, I always brag that we are the best in the country. That is only possible because of all the dedicated, knowledgeable and creative employees with whom I have had the pleasure of working over the years. To all of our staff, past and present, your friendship means the world to me and your dedication is appreciated by all our cities and towns.

From elected officials and city employees to the Association’s presidents and board members, what a blessing for me to have worked alongside so many dedicated public servants and witness every day what your service means to South Carolina. I will miss the work as I retire on December 31, but I will miss even more the wonderful people who make this Association and our cities and towns so great.

Farming feeds rural towns

It's usually a city's downtown — not the acres of crops and pastures a few miles out — that captures the attention of municipal officials. Although matters involving agricultural land aren't regularly on the city council agenda, South Carolina farms have a lot to contribute to the economic health of cities and towns.

"When farms across our rural areas of the state thrive and are prosperous, obviously it has an impact on local economies because of the turnover of dollars generated in a farming economy," said Hugh Weathers, South Carolina's commissioner of agriculture and a partner in his family's 80-year-old dairy business and row crop farm. Weathers will be the luncheon speaker at the Municipal Association's Hometown Legislative Action Day, Tuesday, February 6, 2018.

Weathers emphasized that local farms support local businesses by relying on them for petroleum, parts, supplies and other resources. And farms and food processors are a natural business fit for rural communities, which aren't as likely to land automobile, tire and airplane manufacturers.

Local farms can also help cities and towns identify and market their

uniqueness. In short, residents and visitors, alike, love dining in restaurants that draw their produce, meats and eggs from nearby farms.

"I think that resonates with shoppers from nearby, and people might drive to that restaurant just to be a part of that," said Weathers, pointing to a restaurant in the Town of Monetta as an example of one that serves food sourced from local farms.

"When a small town or rural area has sort of a local food emphasis, I think it benefits that town. It gives it a sense of having a little more of a cultural scene."

That's part of a town's branding appeal, he said.

"We've all got great restaurants, but if they go a step further and say, 'We work with our local farmers so that what we sell you is as fresh as can be,' this helps a rural area," he said. "People love farmers, always have, and I think always will, so these companies, restaurants and what not, who tie themselves to local farms



Hugh Weathers,
South Carolina
Commissioner of Agriculture

as much as they can, I think everybody benefits, including the image of the town."

Other topics at the 2018 HLAD will include potential changes to the state retirement system, the opioid crisis, the status of the Local Government Fund, and a panel discussion about next steps for the gas

tax and infrastructure improvements. Attendees will also take a trip to the S.C. State House to meet with their local legislative delegation.

On December 6, the Association will mail registration information about the meeting and the Municipal Elected Officials Institute and Advanced Institute. The information will also be available at www.masc.sc (keyword: HLAD). The preregistration deadline is January 23.

January 10 is the deadline for making hotel reservations at the Columbia Marriott. Make hotel reservations by calling 1.800.593.6465 or 803.771.7000 and asking for the Municipal Association of SC HLAD rate of \$153 plus taxes.



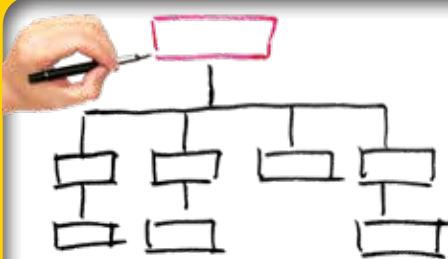
Five graduate from MCTI

In September, five officials graduated from the Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute, a three-year program that provides municipal clerks and treasurers with the skills critical to their profession. They are Teresa Chadwick, Town of Cowpens; Brittany Chapman, City of Pickens; Michelle McClellan, Town of McClellanville; Kelli Ricard, City of West Columbia; and Sylvia Szymanski, Town of Tega Cay.



Test yourself monthly quiz

True or False: In the council-manager form of government, the council may direct municipal employees who are under the city manager's supervision.



Answer: False

In the council-manager form of government, the manager by state law serves as the chief executive officer and head of the administrative branch of the municipal government and is responsible to the municipal council for the proper

administration of all affairs of the municipality.

The mayor and councilmembers are forbidden by law from dealing with employees or interfering with the operation of the departments, offices and agencies that are under the direction of the manager. The prohibition includes no direct involvement in the hiring or firing of the employees under the manager or directly dealing with or giving orders to employees.

The mayor and council set policy and employ the city manager.

Want to learn more? The Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government

offers in-person and online courses. Elected officials who complete all of the required coursework graduate from the institute and are eligible to participate in the Advanced Institute.

The next in-person sessions, held February 7, will be Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government Sessions A and B and Advanced Institute. The Advanced MEO Institute courses offered will be "Municipal Utility Policy and Administration" and "Advanced Advocacy and Intergovernmental Relations."

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



Cities target eyesores

It was a phone call no city official would want to receive, and it came on a Friday afternoon.

City of Manning Administrator Scott Tanner told the story during the October meeting of the South Carolina Community Development Association during a session about blight.

“I think the call was from one of our police officers,” recalled Tanner. “He said, ‘You better come over here. This guy is saying you’re tearing down the wrong house.’”

But Tanner’s story ended well.

“Ultimately, we got over there, and we figured out it was just an address issue, and we were thankfully tearing the right house down,” said Tanner.

Bottom line: Cleaning up blighted property can bring unexpected challenges.

Hurdles and unexpected finds

In the process of razing a structure or clearing land, residents may complain or

officials may learn that a seemingly vacant structure was actually occupied.

Officials from Manning, Sumter and Hartsville urged Community Development Association members to keep several things in mind: the amount of money a city must provide as matching funds to a grant award; the grant’s paperwork and compliance demands; budget overages on a project; and the importance of keeping blight-abatement ordinances up to date.

In the City of Hartsville, a demolition project caught the community’s interest because there was an abandoned, historically significant African-American cemetery on the land.

“In light of a recent grassroots effort to save the cemetery by concerned community residents and volunteers, we decided to use the sensitive clearing of the cemetery to satisfy part of our match requirement for our open Community Development Block Grant,” said Mary Catherine Farrell, assistant to the city manager.

“This grant funded the demolition of the adjacent apartment complex, so this marks a concentrated effort to stabilize this area of the neighborhood while celebrating the neighborhood’s history and cultural identity.”

Due to the overwhelming challenge of addressing blighted properties, Hartsville officials sought help from the American Planning Association’s Community Planning Assistance Team.

“If you’re selected, they send in a team of experts in planning and community development and neighborhood revitalizations,” said Farrell. “They fully immerse themselves in the neighborhood and they interview residents, a long list of stakeholders, and they really spend time getting to know the neighborhood.”

City Council adopted the team’s comprehensive revitalization strategy, which covers the built environment as well as community engagement and intangible, quality-of-life concerns.

Leaders see the problem

Cities have limited ways to curb blighted property. Options include a Community Development Block Grant, and programs such as the Neighborhood Initiative Program, supported in part by state and federal agencies. The latter awarded its last funding, but Farrell urged officials to seek similar opportunities that may arise.

Hartsville allocated some of its funds to a nonprofit foundation through the city's Residential Demolition Assistance program, which allowed blighted houses to be torn down at lower cost with the property owner's contribution of \$500 – \$1,000. The owner would retain ownership of the land. Since 2013, more than 50 houses and a small apartment complex have been demolished under the program.

Sumter officials have wielded an array of tools, said John Macloskie, codes enforcement director. Among them: Penny for Progress, a city/county program that devotes some capital sales tax revenue to blight reduction. Sumter has also used a portion of hospitality tax revenues for removing blighted structures in the course of completing a hospitality-focused project.

Macloskie also pointed to strong code enforcement. A survey of vacant properties in 2014 revealed a stark reality — “That if we aren't taking off more than we're adding to the list, we're losing ground.”

It's also helpful when a city's elected officials and leadership prioritize anti-blight efforts.

In Manning, a project the city implemented through the competitive Community Development Block Grant program called for certain crime-watch measures, including installing security cameras, funded by the city's matching dollars. The grant was intended for low-to-moderate income areas and high-crime areas. The tricky part was finding a useable utility pole as a place to attach it. The quest revealed the importance of partnerships.

“Farmers Telephone was nice enough to give us permission to put the camera on their pole,” said Tanner. “It took one email and one phone call.”

Community Development Association and other affiliates

The SC Community Development Association is one of the Municipal Association's affiliates. These organizations held more than three dozen training programs last year.

SC Community Development Association

CDA provides educational forums on economic and community development needs, best practices and successful case studies.

Municipal Court Administration Association of SC

MCAA offers training to court administrators, clerks of court, municipal judges and other employees involved in court administration.

Municipal Technology Association of SC

MTASC promotes the effective use of technology. Recent training sessions covered open data, cybersecurity when using third-party vendors, PCI requirements and drones in disaster recovery.

SC Association of Municipal Power Systems

SCAMPS focuses on legislative initiatives, mutual aid and provides training for elected officials, management staff and operational personnel for the state's 21 municipal power systems.

SC Association of Stormwater Managers

SCASM offers quarterly training on stormwater management policies and best practices. Training regularly covers proposed changes to stormwater regulations and case studies of innovative practices.

SC Business Licensing Officials Association

BLOA promotes best practices for administering the local business and professional license tax through training sessions, networking, and the Accreditation in Business Licensing and Masters in Business Licensing.

SC Municipal Attorneys Association

MAA's annual training addresses the needs of municipal attorneys and complies with the Supreme Court of South Carolina Commission on CLE and specialization requirements for continuing education credits.

Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association

Training programs cover unique member responsibilities, which include customer service, public records requests, parliamentary procedures and codification. MFOCTA sponsors the Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute with the Municipal Association and the Joseph P. Riley Jr. Center for Livable Communities.

Municipal Human Resources Association

MHRA training programs give members information and the opportunity to exchange ideas and stay current on state and federal labor law and court rulings.

SC Utility Billing Association

SCUBA trains members on utility billing, collections and customer service. Programs frequently focus on customer service skills, workplace safety and best practices in utility billing and collections.

Building Officials Association of South Carolina

BOASC focuses on the challenges of administering and enforcing building and related codes and offers education and networking through its annual meetings and listserv.

Affiliate memberships run on a calendar year schedule. Current members will receive a renewal notice the first week of January but may also renew or join online. All municipal officials and staff are eligible to join online or by completing the renewal notice and mailing it in with payment.

For a list of staff contacts for the affiliates and to join online, visit masc.sc (keyword: affiliate).



NEWS BRIEFS

Call for Achievement Award entries

The Municipal Achievement Awards give cities and towns the chance to make headlines for the good work they are doing. Residents rarely learn of the remarkable work local governments and city staff must do every day to keep a city running smoothly. The Association's Municipal Achievement Awards bring attention to these accomplishments.

The Municipal Association of South Carolina's Achievement Awards program recognizes excellence in local government programs, shares ideas among peers, and reminds residents and businesses of the value they derive from their city or town.

Every city has an award-worthy project to enter in the Achievement Awards competition. It may just take a bit of collaboration to discover it.

Discover your winning achievement award entry

- Request that departments list municipal projects they are most proud of completing.
- Hold an internal competition for departments to compete to be the city's Achievement Award entry.
- Ask "What city project has made the biggest impact on residents?"
- Review previous Achievement Award winners at www.masc.sc (keyword: achievement awards).

The awards entry form is available at www.masc.sc (keyword: achievement awards). The submission deadline for the 2018 awards program is February 14. The designated city contact person for each entry will receive a receipt-confirmation email by February 21.

Municipalities with a population of 20,000 or less can choose to compete in either a population or subject category.

Municipalities with a population greater than 20,000 must compete in one of the five subject categories.

As part of the competition, cities participating in the subject categories must make an oral presentation to the judges on March 5 or 6 in Columbia at the Municipal Association's office. Association staff will assign presentation times after the entry deadline.

The Association will recognize award winners at the Annual Meeting Awards Breakfast held in Hilton Head Island on July 21, 2018.

For more information about the 2018 Achievement Awards, contact Meredith Houck at 803.933.1215 or mhouck@masc.sc.

2017 Achievement Award winners

Population 1 – 1,000:

Town of Ridgeway

Population 1,001 – 5,000:

Town of Saluda

Population 5,001 – 10,000:

City of Hartsville

Population 10,001 – 20,000:

Town of Lexington

Communications:

Town of Hilton Head Island

Economic Development:

City of Florence

Public Safety:

City of Camden

Public Service:

Town of Mount Pleasant

Public Works:

Town of Cheraw

Members of the **SC Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association** elected their 2017 – 18 board of directors during their annual meeting in October. President Carrie Johnson, finance director, City of Orangeburg; Vice President Gregory Saxton, town clerk, Town of Awendaw; Secretary/Treasurer David Seifert, chief financial officer, City of Greer; Directors Amanda Childers, clerk/treasurer, Town of Harleyville; Cammie T. Hayes, director of finance and general services, City of North Augusta; Christine A. Keefer, director of finance and human resources, Town of Blythewood; Annette Moore, clerk/treasurer, Town of St. George; and Past President Camilla Pitman, municipal clerk, City of Greenville.

Members of the **Business Licensing Officials Association of SC** elected their 2017 – 18 board of directors during their Annual Meeting in October. President Karen Proctor, business license specialist, City of Lancaster; Vice President Constance McMichael, business license director, Orangeburg County; Secretary/Treasurer Shaun Greenwood, city administrator, City of Forest Acres; Members at Large Pam Davis, director of the Business Service Center, Richland County; Lakesha Shannon, city clerk and business license official, City of Marion; Barbara Wooster, revenue collector, Town of Hilton Head Island; and Past President Connie Standridge, business license clerk, City of Clemson.



10 cities win Hometown Economic Development Grants

The Municipal Association of South Carolina has awarded Hometown Economic Development Grants to 10 cities and towns. The \$20,000 – 25,000 grants are intended to support economic development projects that will make a positive impact on a municipality's quality of life. The grant program also promotes and recognizes innovation in economic development practices.

The Municipal Association board of directors created this grant program to fund projects that will produce measurable results, can be maintained over time and illustrate best practices that can be replicated in other cities.

CITY OF ANDERSON *"Shock This Block"*

"Shock This Block" is an initiative to use creative placemaking strategies to create a unified, site-specific development plan for downtown Anderson.

CITY OF BELTON *"Belton and Beyond"*

"Belton and Beyond" is a partnership between the city and the Belton Alliance that will develop an exercise area and trailhead near the downtown. This will

provide a free, family-friendly environment for residents of all ages to gather together and get healthy. The trailhead will be the entry point to a walking trail connecting the downtown to the Belton Recreation Hub and Leda Poore Sports Complex.

TOWN OF ESTILL *Demolition of Blighted Buildings*

The Town of Estill will leverage its grant funds with a Community Development Block Grant to demolish 26 vacant, dilapidated housing structures and the 21,000-square-foot former Best Manufacturing building. (See page 6 for more about anti-blight efforts.)

TOWN OF JOHNSTON *"Revitalizing the Peach Capital"*

The Town of Johnston will use its grant to fund the redevelopment of the former police station as a focal point for visitors and residents and revitalize landscaping downtown.

CITY OF LANCASTER *Downtown Farmers Market and Open Air Pavilion*

The City of Lancaster will pay for professional services related to developing and producing design plans for a

multipurpose downtown farmers market and open-air pavilion.

CITY OF LANDRUM *Historical and Railroad Museum Additions*

The City of Landrum intends to acquire and develop an unused passenger rail car into a railroad and historical museum that will sit next to the restored historic Landrum Depot.

TOWN OF MCCLELLANVILLE *Securing the Future of McClellanville's Working Waterfront*

Through partnerships that include the Town of McClellanville, the South Carolina Sea Grant Consortium, the East Cooper Land Trust and Carolina Common Enterprise, the town will develop a master plan to secure the future of the town's working waterfront and seafood industry.

CITY OF PICKENS *#TakeMeToPickens*

Building on the success of its Doodle Trail, the City of Pickens will create the Doodle Park Mural and also expand the Turtles on the Town campaign, which promotes Pickens and its small businesses.

CITY OF SPARTANBURG *African-American Business Development Initiative*

In collaboration with several partners, the City of Spartanburg will implement a business development initiative that will specifically promote the development and support of African-American-owned businesses and businesses seeking to locate within African-American neighborhoods.

CITY OF WEST COLUMBIA *Interactive City Park*

In partnership with EngenuitySC, the City of West Columbia will use grant funds to develop infrastructure within its Americans with Disabilities Act-accessible interactive park to allow it to host music performances, art displays, life-size checkers and chess boards, and other attractions to support local artists.



A rendering of the future Riverside Village and Augusta GreenJackets stadium in North Augusta shows the City of Augusta, Georgia, in the background across the Savannah River. Provided by: North Augusta.

S.C. cities look across state lines

For South Carolina cities and towns situated close to the Georgia or North Carolina border, competing, cooperating and managing growth is a way of life.

Making the most of high-growth cities over the state line has been a constant for the City of Landrum, which is part of two chambers of commerce — one representing Spartanburg County and another for the Carolina Foothills, which includes the North Carolina cities of Saluda, Tryon and Columbus.

Landrum participates in some joint marketing efforts with its North Carolina neighbor towns, which all rely on tourism to some extent, said City Administrator Rich Caplan. In the same spirit, Landrum officials are in the planning stage of a rails-to-trail path that links Landrum, Saluda and Tryon.

Landrum enjoys another unique benefit from its location — Polk County, North Carolina, lies across the border from Landrum. A wealthy

North Carolina benefactor to the area lived on a hill looking down over Landrum and Tryon. When she died, she bequeathed her money to the North Carolina foundation “plus Landrum,” said Caplan, which means each year, Landrum receives some funds for its farmers market.

“Because of her view,” he said, “she included us.”

Caplan said the gas tax, which the Legislature raised by 2 cents in July — the first of six annual 2-cent hikes under the new law — remains lower than North Carolina’s gas tax. This lower tax also provides an incentive for motorists to fill up on South Carolina’s side of the border.

“If they stop to get gas, we have two large grocery stores and another business that are right next to the gas stations off Interstate 26,” Caplan said.

Spillover growth

In the Town of Clover, Town Administrator Allison Harvey said the town is

“absolutely” feeling the effects of growth from North Carolina municipalities.

“Especially because of our favorable residential taxes with Act 388, there are lots of people who move here for the more favorable property tax situation. But then they continue to work in North Carolina. We are definitely seeing that,” she said.

“You are trying to provide for a way of life, but the very provision of it hurts that quality of life. So it’s a challenge to find that balance of, ‘We want to serve our residents, but we keep adding more to the mix.’ So it’s tough.”

Although the City of York is 35 miles away from Charlotte, York City Manager Lisa Wallace said city officials are already preparing for the effects of the rapidly growing North Carolina city.

“We are seeing a lot of interest, which has started us focusing in on our infrastructure and things we can hopefully put in place now before the growth starts heading our way,” she said. “We’re currently working on a strategic plan

PRIORITY PROJECT- Rail with Trail



A rendering of the future Landrum Rails to Trails (left). Plans include a connection between Landrum and Saluda, N.C. Landrum is the South Carolina town among the three North Carolina towns that are part of the Carolina Foothills Chamber of Commerce (logo below). Provided by: City of Landrum.

and our comprehensive plan, but mainly it's water and sewer and infrastructure, because we are lacking in that in a lot of ways."

The City of North Augusta relies heavily on a strong Augusta, Georgia, to thrive, said North Augusta City Administrator Todd Glover.

"The Augusta Greenjackets minor league baseball team moving to North Augusta was not seen as competition," said Glover. "The addition of a stadium on our riverfront benefits downtown Augusta as well. Our two cities had to get away from the mindset of the river as a wall and think of it as Main Street."

The Georgia Cyber Innovation and Training Center is planned for construction near the U.S. Army's Cyber Command headquarters in Augusta, and the U.S. Army announced it would relocate the Army Cyber Command unit from Fort Belvoir, Virginia, to Fort Gordon in Augusta.

That promises big ripples into North Augusta.

"The growth generated by Cyber Command moving to Fort Gordon will provide an excellent opportunity for us to share in the 'wealth,' as we are close enough in proximity for some of the cyber companies to locate," said Glover. "While both sides have unique amenities and different strengths and weaknesses, we are much stronger when businesses and visitors look at us regionally rather than singularly."

That philosophy is evident in Landrum, where the popularity of the

Tryon International Equestrian Center — about 12 miles away — and the World Equestrian Games coming in September of 2018 are already being felt in Landrum.

"There are three ways to get to the center, and one way is if you're coming from Greenville, Spartanburg or Columbia, you'll get off the interstate at Landrum, so we are definitely affected by that," said Caplan. "Because of the center's activities, we have a lot of businesses that are benefiting from selling equestrian gear and equestrian clothing, and restaurants, too."

He said the equestrian influence of the region is drawing people from all over the northeast and southeast. That includes new residents.

"I met a woman recently on the North Carolina side who moved here from New York because they like horses," said Caplan.

Compete in your niche

While outdoor recreation and sports, such as equestrian events, can define a city's niche, so, too, can small-town charm.

Although Clover is considered a bedroom community of Charlotte, which is about 30 miles away, Harvey doesn't see Charlotte as competition.

"We compete with other communities in North Carolina for companies that are looking for a more rural location, because not all companies need or want to be on the interstate," said Harvey. "The small-town quality of life is what these businesses are looking for."



A strong school district, low crime, parks and recreation programming, cultural activities and rural appeal help Clover attract residents.

Clover has found success with small, family-owned companies of about 20 employees or less.

"That is really our niche market," she said. "We're competing with Shelby, North Carolina, and Kings Mountain, North Carolina."

Because of a shortage of employment opportunities in Clover, Harvey said the local workforce journeys north. But recent examples suggest local workers don't usually want to.

In the last two years, Harvey has interviewed a handful of job candidates for town administrative positions. Most of the candidates said they lived in Clover but commuted to Charlotte for work. They wanted to work for the Town of Clover in part, so they could work where they live.

"We have some really solid businesses here," she said. "But we need more."



In their words: Small town leaders

Small towns in South Carolina can't always play by the same economic development rules of larger cities. For one thing, tax incentives to lure giant industrial companies are not typically on the table.

"It's not always easy getting things done in small towns in America," said Ed McMahon, a senior resident fellow for the Urban Land Institute in Washington, D.C., and the board chairman of the National Main Street Center. McMahon

was the keynote speaker at the Municipal Association's Annual Meeting this year.

"I guarantee you that no matter what you have proposed to do in your community, you have people who have told you, 'can't do it, won't work, costs too much, tried it already.' And 'no' is a terrible word in American small towns. But I want to tell you a more powerful word — 'Yes.' 'Yes, we can make our communities a better place to live in, to look at, to work in, to visit.'"

All cities and towns, but especially smaller municipalities, can make the most of their assets by finding what makes them different from other places. McMahon pointed to success stories about the creative reuse of flood walls, a closed bridge, historic grain elevators, a World War II torpedo factory and a riverfront that was in decline. Municipal officials reinvented them all and leveraged them to promote economic prosperity.

But small towns need the basics, too, including infrastructure, a trained workforce and cooperation with neighbors.

Four municipal leaders answered the question: What is your biggest challenge in attracting business?

**Allison Harvey, administrator,
Town of Clover**

Convenient access to transportation alternatives are understandably top priorities for business and industry. Like many other rural communities in South Carolina that are not in close proximity to interstates, airports and rail, Clover can't offer that type of access, which puts us at a competitive disadvantage for attracting larger industry. We are also experiencing high demand for residential development on property that is located on prime commercial transportation corridors, which leaves our community in the challenging situation of finding the right balance for growth.

**Mayor Terrence Culbreath,
City of Johnston**

I believe our challenges when attracting a big employer could be our size and location. We're a rural town located in one of the smaller counties. So most businesses look over us! But we have a lot to offer potential employers. Because in smaller communities comes hometown love and pride, and that makes for a strong local workforce. I see the potential challenges as opportunities for a forward-thinking company to partner and grow alongside Johnston.

See page 9 to read about Johnston's 2017 Hometown Economic Development Grant.

**Mayor Corrin Fitts Bowers,
Town of Estill**

Infrastructure — We are undertaking a \$3.5 million project to upgrade our wastewater treatment plant. This will allow us to drastically improve our services so that we are prepared for any size industry that is willing to locate in Estill. As far as small businesses, the town needs adequate building space that is suitable for small businesses. This will



attract residents and travelers to stop and patronize our area more.

A trained workforce — We need trained residents who can pass WorkKeys (a job skills assessment system). This will allow us to become more attractive to any business that our local economic developer may be trying to recruit to our area. Also, establishing strategic partnerships with our local school and the Technical College of the Lowcountry.

Education — Low test scores are a determining factor in turning off business because the owners want to have a stable workforce. To be effective, partnerships with the school district and other surrounding areas are essential.

See page 9 to read about Estill's 2017 Hometown Economic Development Grant.

**Mayor Blake Sanders,
Town of West Pelzer**

It's difficult as the mayor of a small municipality to put a finger on one single item as our biggest challenge; however, as a small town positioned between Anderson and Greenville, we

assume the position as an underdog for new business opportunities and employment centers. West Pelzer should recognize that Anderson Mayor Terrence Roberts and Greenville Mayor Knox White are very helpful with neighboring towns, and a further partnership could be developed to ensure that we are working cohesively.

Just as I can almost hear the sound of the water at Falls Park or the roar of Memorial Stadium, I'm sure that adjacent neighbors to us can hear the excitement and sounds of the Mill Town Players.

We were awarded a Hometown Economic Development Grant in 2016, which gave us (in partnership with the Town of Pelzer) the opportunity to get a head start on economic development and business opportunities. I utilized the master plan and market study (made possible by the grant) to attract one new retail store (Westy's Antiques and Vintage Heirlooms), two restaurants (Scoops Ice Cream and 26 Main Pizzeria), with many more promising opportunities!

Fun trips rev up downtowns



Economic Development

When it comes to downtown transportation, sometimes the journey is the fun part. As several South Carolina cities have shown, fun ways of getting around can also boost downtown business.

Rickshaws pulled by bikes, horse-drawn carriages, electric scooters and pedal-powered trolleys all offer visitors a chance to get from place to place while experiencing downtown from a different perspective.

“When we can get people out of their cars, it’s helpful for everyone,” said J. Perrin Lawson, vice president for business development at the Charleston Area Convention and Visitors Bureau.

“The more options, the better.”

In the City of Charleston, visitors can hop into a pedicab — a rickshaw pulled by a three-wheeled bike — or climb into a horse-drawn carriage, offering the quintessential way to tour the historic district.

“An association or corporate group may be in town, and they want a ride to a hotel or restaurant or some other venue. The carriages are a unique and atmospheric way to get from Point A to Point B, and people absolutely love it,” Lawson said. The pedicabs hold only a couple people but appeal to visitors who get tired of walking and want to cruise around the city instead.

Lawson said the five carriage companies run year-round and employ 138 people with an annual economic impact of \$19 million. The carriage industry has long been regulated. However, the city got involved with regulating pedicabs more recently, as more companies moved into the market.

“Many alternative modes of transportation are beneficial for any community. But transportation infrastructure is going to be different, depending on the community,” he said. “What works in Charleston may not make sense in Columbia or Bennettsville or someplace else in the state.”

‘They’re always smiling’

Columbia is home to the SC Pedal Parlor, a “bike” that looks more like a bar powered by up to 16 people who pedal it.

Columbia’s pub-crawl-on-wheels tours the Main Street and Vista districts, stopping at two to four restaurants and bars, making it popular for birthday parties, corporate events or just a night on the town.

“It’s a fun, unique and eco-friendly way to ride around downtown,” said Matthew Koleske, co-owner of the SC Pedal Parlor. “It’s a different way to do a pub crawl — a different way rather than a party bus.”

While the party-on-wheels moves by the power of its riders — there is no drinking allowed on board — a driver is provided who steers and leads the tour.

“It’s something new, cool and different to do. It’s something fun to see, and it puts a smile on people’s faces when we go by. There are dozens of people taking pictures

of us, and they're always smiling. It's also stimulating the economy and spreading money around to local businesses," Koleske said.

Koleske said the restaurant managers love when people stop in for a drink and a snack before they hop back on the Pedal Parlor, with some bars offering specials for customers. He estimates the Pedal Parlor has generated \$100,000 in local revenue in the last 18 months or so.

In a city with distinct downtown entertainment districts, finding fun ways to get to all of them is easier with bright, colorful buses like the Soda Cap Connector and bright green, three-wheeled scooters, known as Zapps. The electric cycles are rented through an app on smart phones and can be picked up and dropped off at dozens of locations around Columbia.

"The scooters are an innovative way (to move people around), and Columbia was one of the first cities in the country to embrace that, and city staff worked hard to establish areas to park the scooters," said Matt Kennell, president and CEO of the City Center Partnership in Columbia.

"It makes getting there half the fun," said Kennell.

The "fun factor" is a big part of the strategy.

"The (Soda Cap Connector) is a brightly decaled vehicle. There's free WiFi. Inside, it's like going back to an old Beatles album; that goes to the fun factor," Kennell said. "It's a way to enjoy getting around downtown and the different districts around Columbia."

Local vibrancy

While pedaling a trolley to a bar in downtown Columbia may draw surprised glances from the automobile-driving public, the Town of Moncks Corner has also found a way to give residents and visitors a taste of the unexpected. It, too, involves pedaling and generating local vibrancy.

Moncks Corner partnered with Santee Cooper to open a highly technical, 5-mile mountain biking trail. The town put up signage and trail markers and works with



SC Pedal Parlor in Columbia lets participants power their vehicle to bars and restaurants downtown. Photo: SC Pedal Parlor.

volunteers to maintain the course. Mountain biking is not something you find a lot of in the Lowcountry, so it attracts a lot of people from the area.

"Tourism-related economic development is all about finding what makes you unique," said Jeff Lord, town administrator of Moncks Corner. "What do you have that others do not? For a community in the Lowcountry, having a large greenspace with a 50-foot elevation change is just one of many things that makes Moncks Corner unique. It is something we can offer closer to home for the many outdoor adventure enthusiasts who live in the Charleston metro area that enjoy mountain biking."

He said the town sees visitors from further away who come for a bike ride as part of their trip to the Charleston area.

"And when they come to Moncks Corner for a day of trail riding, they are certainly going to stop at our local restaurants to refuel or refresh with a cold drink," said Lord.

Sometimes the fun starts when the vehicle rumbles to a stop.

On James Island, the nonprofit Smalls Music Lab, a bus filled with musical instruments, spreads the love of music throughout the area. Much like a bookmobile but stocked with keyboards, guitars and percussion instruments, the mobile musical classroom is a regular at town and community events, said Ashley Kellahan, the town administrator.

"It's a very engaging mobile unit that really makes the atmosphere at events more lively. Any time you add music to an event, you draw a larger crowd. When it's music that kids can help create, it adds another level of community and spirit," Kellahan said. "It's definitely a draw. Our Town Hall is in a shopping center with two restaurants. When we have events in the evening, it draws people, and they can go to the restaurants. And we're increasing our hospitality tax (revenue)."

Calendar

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

FEBRUARY

6 Hometown Legislative Action Day.

Marriott Columbia. Sessions include three legislative panels, a lunch address by Agriculture Commissioner Hugh Weathers (see p. 4), and a breakout sessions on opioids and law enforcement.

7 Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government Session A and B and Advanced Institute.

Marriott Columbia. Advanced Institute courses are "Municipal Utility Policy and Administration" and "Advanced Advocacy and

Intergovernmental Relations." Topics for Session A include an overview of local government planning and zoning; conducting public meetings; and strategic planning. Topics for Session B include municipal annexation; intergovernmental relations; and ethics and public accountability.

15 SC Association of Municipal Power Systems Associate Member Lunch.

Seawell's in Columbia.

21 – 23 International Institute of Municipal Clerks Region III Meeting/ SC Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Spring Academy.

Hyatt Regency Greenville. Topics include regional economic development; impact on cities from universities and colleges; and preparing for future capital improvements.

MARCH

1 SC Association of Stormwater Managers First Quarter Meeting.

Columbia Conference Center.

7 – 9 Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute Spring Session – Year 3, Session A.

Hyatt Place Columbia. Topics include the basics of public speaking and media relations; ordinance preparation; employee evaluations and their importance; and human resources records management.

11 – 13 SC Utility Billing Association Annual Meeting.

Hilton Myrtle Beach.

20 Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government: Basic Budgeting and Municipal Finance.

Regional council of governments' locations.

22 Municipal Technology Association of SC Spring Meeting.

Columbia Conference Center.

28 SC Business Licensing Officials Association Spring Training Institute and Advanced Academy.

Columbia Conference Center.