

UPTOWN

Celebrating Success ~ Envisioning Possibilities

Celebrate your past success and look to the future by envisioning possibilities while attending the 65th MASC Annual Meeting. Well-known for his visionary leadership, former Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer will offer the keynote address at Friday's Opening Session. Archer is a former president of the National League of Cities and the American Bar Association. His leadership skills were evident in his spearheading a broad economic and social resurgence in Detroit. Following the Opening Session, attendees will take a trip down memory lane during the Delegate's Luncheon as they look back at the birth of Home Rule and how the concept of Home Rule is still relevant today. This year marks the

The National League of Cities' Leadership Training Institute promotes excellence in municipal leadership through high-quality education and training seminars for local elected officials. Through the Institute, local leaders learn practical leadership skills, abilities and strategies to lead change and innovation in their cities and towns. To learn more about enrolling in the Institute, visit the NLC Web site at www.nlc.org or call the NLC Leadership Training Institute at 202.626.3170.

30th anniversary of The Home Rule Act (See related story on page 7). MASC has invited US Senator Lindsey Graham to discuss federal legislative issues with attendees Saturday, July 30.

Pre-conference workshops

This year, MASC is co-sponsoring two pre-conference workshops with the National League of Cities' Leadership Training Institute (LTI). Elected officials who attend either of these sessions will receive credit toward their LTI certification. The pre-conference workshops are open to all municipal elected officials and anyone working in municipal government (not just those participating in NLC's Leadership Training Institute). The workshops are offered as an additional learning opportunity and are not part of the Annual Meeting, so a **separate fee of \$50 is required** (see box).

Lyle Sumek of Sumek Associates Inc. will lead the workshop,

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MASC offers new options for making Annual Meeting housing reservations

MASC is offering attendees two new ways to make housing reservations for the Annual Meeting. Reservations can be made by telephone or via the Internet, in addition to mailing or hand-delivering the forms. Making reservations over the phone or through the Web alleviates several challenges that have historically faced Annual Meeting attendees.

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May 2005

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Classifieds

- The Town of Kiawah Island is accepting applications for treasurer. Send resumé with salary requirements to Personnel Office, 21 Beachwalker Drive, Kiawah Island, SC 29455.
- The City of Greenwood is accepting applications for uptown manager. Applications are available in Suite 230 of the City of Greenwood Municipal Building, 520 Monument Street, or by e-mail at uptown@cityofgreenwoodsc.com.
- The Town of North is accepting applications for town clerk. Mail cover letter and resumé to Town of North, Attn: Russell Ott, PO Box 399, North, SC 29112. Call Russell Ott at 803.247.2101 for more information.
- The City of Goose Creek Fire Department is accepting applications for building inspector. Apply in person or submit a resumé to City of Goose Creek, Joellyn Robbins, HR Director, PO Drawer 1768, 519 N. Goose Creek Boulevard, Goose Creek, SC 29445-1768 or by e-mail at jrobbins@cityofgoosecreek.com.
- The City of North Myrtle Beach is accepting applications for public works engineer. Applications are available at the Personnel Department, City Hall, 1018 2nd Avenue South, North Myrtle Beach, SC 29582 or online at www.nmb.us.
- The City of Spartanburg is accepting applications for a special events and festival manager. Submit resumé and cover letter with salary expectations to City of Spartanburg, Attn: HR-SE&FM, PO Drawer 1749, Spartanburg, SC 29304 or by e-mail at hr1@cityofspartanburg.org.

Celebrating continued from cover

“Communicating the Value and Vision of Cities.” Sumek will show participants how to become effective leaders and how to communicate the value of their cities. Sumek has served as an adviser and counselor to numerous mayors, councilmembers and administrators across the nation.

Discover with Len Wood, president of the Training Shoppe, how to take steps to minimize the impact of the tough financial years during the pre-conference workshop, **“Beware of the Good Times.”** Financial deficits that lead to cutbacks do not develop overnight and most often have roots in decisions made during previous good times.

Reservations continued from cover

“The biggest concern attendees faced was not knowing what property was able to accommodate their housing request,” explained Michelle James, MASC director of education and training. “If a person makes reservations by phone or via the Internet, they will immediately know if the property has availability and receive a confirmation number.”

MASC will mail conference registration information to all municipal officials and patrons May 11. The registration brochure will be available on the MASC Web site (www.masc.sc) at noon on May 11, along with the Web site links and appropriate MASC group codes to make reservations online. For reservations made by phone, you must reference MASC’s Annual Meeting to get the correct rate and be included in the block of rooms reserved. Reservations sent through the mail or hand-delivered must be made on MASC’s housing reservation form printed in the registration brochure. Reservations are available on a first-come, first-served basis. The Annual

Delegates have their choice of a wide variety of breakout sessions Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Sessions range from legal and legislative issues to risk management, personnel and technology topics.

The Annual Meeting will be held July 28-31 at the Marriott Beach and Golf Resort in Hilton Head Island. MASC will mail meeting registration and housing information May 11. The information will also be available on MASC’s Web site (www.masc.sc) at noon on May 11.

Housing reservations must be made by June 20 to guarantee MASC’s group rate. The deadline for conference pre-registration is July 5.

Meeting registration brochure includes detailed instructions on how to make housing reservations by mail, phone and Internet.

Reservations must be made before Monday, June 20 to guarantee the MASC Annual Meeting rate.

When making reservations by phone or Web, be prepared with the following information: arrival and departure dates, number of rooms needed, room type preferred, name on the reservation, credit card/debit card number and the card’s expiration date.

“To use the new methods, you must guarantee the reservation with a credit card; however, you do not have to pay for the room(s) with that credit card,” said James. “You may mail a check to the property or bring a check with you when you arrive. If you cancel the reservation, your credit card will be charged the cancellation fees. If you do not provide a check before departing the property, any charges associated with the room(s) guaranteed to that card will be charged to that credit card.”

State Revolving Fund loans

by Eric Shytle and Margaret Pope, Haynsworth Sinkler Boyd P.A.

Municipalities may apply for long-term, low-interest water and wastewater loans through the State Revolving Fund administered by the Budget and Control Board's Office of Local Government.

Making additions or improvements to a water or wastewater system usually comes with a large price tag, but municipalities must undertake these projects to remain in compliance with federal mandates under the Clean Water Act and the Safe Drinking Water Act. Many municipalities finance these costly projects through traditional revenue bonds, which may be either sold to a single financial institution or underwritten in a public offering. These bonds are secured by a pledge of the revenues from the utility system. The state, however, in some instances offers a less-costly option.

Municipalities can borrow money from the state through two programs: the Safe Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund Program and the Water Pollution Control State Revolving Loan Fund Program. Together, they are referred to as the State Revolving Fund (SRF).

The Safe Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund Program assists public water utilities in financing infrastructure improvements. The Office of Local Government makes the loans based on a priority list developed by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control. Emphasis is placed on small and disadvantaged communities, in addition to programs encouraging pollution prevention. Interest rates are competitive (between 1 percent and 3 percent for FY 2005), and the loans mature over a 20-year to 30-year period.

The Water Pollution Control State Revolving Loan Fund Program assists

public wastewater utilities in financing the costs of wastewater-related infrastructure including, in some cases, stormwater projects. Again, interest rates are competitive (between 1 percent and 3.25 percent for FY 2005), and the loans mature over a period not exceeding 20 years.

Although the funds are financially administered by the Office of Local Government, projects must receive approval from the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC). The DHEC bases its approval on whether the project meets environmental and technical federal requirements. A loan cannot be finalized without the DHEC's approval.

Using SRF loans offers several advantages for municipalities:

- In recent times, the interest rates have been generally lower than those available through conventional financing and, in some cases, as much as 0.5 percent to 1 percent lower than the market rate.
- SRF loans may mature over a longer term. A traditional bank may cap the maturity of the loan at 10 years to 12 years; an SRF loan is capped at 20 (or in some cases 30) years.
- Municipalities can sometimes receive larger loans than those available through an ordinary bank placement. A traditional bank might not loan more than \$10 million; however, SRF loans have been as high as \$25 million.
- Relatively few restrictions are placed on how the money is used because SRF loans do not need to qualify for federal tax exemption.

- The costs for issuing the bonds (i.e., closing costs and lawyer fees) are generally low.

There are some disadvantages to SRF loans. Most importantly, the SRF borrowing process involves a greater degree of project oversight than a conventional loan. For example, SRF loans involve levels of financial and regulatory review (by the DHEC and the Budget and Control Board's Office of Local Government) not required by a traditional bank placement. The SRF loan programs also require establishing a "reserve fund" equal to one year's debt service on the loan. Generally, the reserve fund is in the form of cash and is held in trust for the life of the loan. Although the reserve fund remains the property of the borrowing municipality (absent default), the municipality cannot access it until the loan is fully repaid. The amount of the reserve fund may be significant. For example, the reserve requirement would be approximately \$200,000 for a 20-year loan of \$3 million at a 3 percent interest rate. Although municipalities may sometimes satisfy the reserve fund requirement by purchasing a surety bond from a bond insurer, the ability to do so has become limited in recent years. Finally, some SRF loan programs impose an additional loan closing fee, which adds to the cost of the borrowing.

The State Budget and Control Board accepts applications for both SRF loan programs annually from October 1 through July 31. Call Trish Comp at the Office of Local Government at 803.737.3808 for more information or an application.

Community Development Block Grants

Portions of the article are reprinted from Nation's Cities Weekly and the SC CDBG's Strengthening Communities.

Summerton resident Mary Mitchell has no idea Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) pumped \$140,670,016 into South Carolina communities over the last four years. What she does know is that she feels like sitting on her porch and walking down the street again.

"It truly benefited the neighborhood," said the 50-year-old of the First Street-Parsons Street housing rehabilitation project. "I thank God that this grant was made available."

The CDBG program is a federally funded program administered through the SC Department of Commerce. It provides funds for rural cities and counties so they may improve their economic opportunities and meet community revitalization needs, particularly for individuals of low and moderate income. "CDBG aids communities with a wide variety of projects, from making certain citizens have clean drinking water to providing safe, affordable homes and essential community services," explained SC Secretary of Commerce Robert Faith in the SC Department of Commerce's *Strengthening Communities* publication.

In 2004 alone, CDBG funded 55 projects totaling almost \$20 million in South Carolina. Fifty-four percent of these projects were located in distressed and least-developed counties. The projects created 80 jobs and assisted almost 20,000 people. With these types of positive results, it is understandable why municipal mayors are shocked the program was on the federal chopping block this year. "The CDBG program is one of the few funding sources for communities to address their critical housing, public facilities and economic development needs," said Bonnie Ammons, CDBG

2000-2004 CDBG impact for South Carolina

2000-2004 CDBG stats

Funding was \$140,670,018 to 145 different localities for 350 projects:

- 45 economic development projects \$38,314,747
- 76 planning projects \$2,729,000
- 229 community development projects:
 - 106 public facilities projects \$47,925,816
 - 114 housing projects \$46,942,549
 - Nine commercial revitalization and other projects \$4,757,904
 - Total \$99,626,269
- 258,677 people were proposed to be assisted
- 190,597 (74%) were low- to moderate-income individuals

program director, who works with cities and towns across the state to improve the lives of low-income families. "South Carolina's rural communities desperately need this money every year."

The fight to save the Community Development Block Grant program moved consolidated appropriations committees of the House of Representatives and the Senate in March.

Both the House and the Senate have consolidated several of their appropriations subcommittees, placing agencies such as the Department of Transportation and the Department of Housing and Urban Development in the jurisdiction of one subcommittee. This places the two departments in competition with each other for funding from an ever-tightening pot of money. "The end result is that despite supportive language in the budget resolutions, the CDBG program could still see significant funding cuts," said Howard Duvall, MASC executive

director. "This fight is far from over to keep CDBG in South Carolina."

Like Mary Mitchell, Bluffton resident W.T. Latham has no awareness of the struggle to keep CDBG funds in his community. But the 20-year resident can tell you how happy he is that his septic tank doesn't overflow anymore when it rains. The Town of Bluffton received an \$858,393 CDBG grant to provide a gravity sewer system to 128 low- to moderate-income homes in Bluffton, including Latham's home.

"It has improved the quality of the neighborhood tremendously," said Latham. "And the smell is gone."

For more information about the status of federal funding for the CDBG program, attend the South Carolina and North Carolina Community Development Associations' Annual Meeting, May 22-23 at Kingston Plantation in Myrtle Beach. For a registration brochure, log on to the MASC Web site at www.masc.sc.

US Representative Spratt speaks out in favor of maintaining CDBG funding for the good of all cities and towns



US Representative John Spratt of York addressed attendees at the National League of Cities' Congressional City Conference in Washington, DC, in March. Spratt, a ranking member of the House and Budget Committee, discussed the importance of maintaining Community Development Block Grant funding for the good of all cities and towns. "There are many members of my committee on both sides of the aisle who are committed to CDBG and have seen what good it does. It is possible that other similar programs could be shaved or killed to save CDBG. We have a serious problem with our federal budget, and we need your help to not eviscerate those programs that help our communities." Prior to the conference, Spratt met with members of the SC delegation who attended the conference. Pictured are, from left, Jane Alleva, public affairs coordinator for Rock Hill; Howard Duvall, executive director of the Municipal Association of South Carolina; Miriam Hair, deputy executive director of the Municipal Association of South Carolina; Councilmember Kathy Pender of Rock Hill, Councilmember Elouise James of Clemson, Representative John Spratt of York, Mayor Mary Clark of Camden and Mayor Doug Echols of Rock Hill. (Photo by Steve Schneider and courtesy of *Nation's Cities Weekly*.)

ABL exam offered June 9

Business licensing officials who have completed the three-year training institute sponsored by the Business Licensing Association of South Carolina (an MASC affiliate) can take the Accreditation in Business Licensing (ABL) exam Thursday, June 9 at the Municipal Association office in Columbia. To receive the ABL designation, business licensing officials must complete the training institute, pledge to follow the ABL Code of Ethics and pass the exam.

For an exam application, visit the MASC Web site, www.masc.sc/affiliates/bla/ABLapp.pdf, or contact Wendy Watt at 803.933.1257 or wwatt@masc.sc. Return the completed application with the non-refundable fee to ABL Exam, PO Box 12109, Columbia, SC 29211. The application fee is \$125 for Business Licensing Officials Association members and \$175 for non-members. For more information, contact Margaret Lumpkin at 803.933.1238 or mlumpkin@masc.sc.

News Briefs



■ In March, Angie Ramsey, accounts payable clerk for the City of Walterboro, graduated from the Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute (MCTI). The Institute is a three-year program designed to provide municipal clerks and treasurers with the skills critical to their profession. Ramsey completed more than 100 class hours and has satisfied the educational requirements for certification from the International Institute of Municipal Clerks and the Association of Public Treasurers of the United States and Canada.

■ Beth Elgin, clerk/treasurer for the Town of West Pelzer, received a three-year scholarship to attend the Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute. The Town of West Pelzer will receive \$200 per session for Elgin to complete the Institute. The scholarship is sponsored by the SC Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association (MFOCTA) and underwritten by SCANA/SCE&G.

■ In March, SC Utility Billing Association members elected their 2005-2006 board: President — Vickie Nichols of Mullins, Vice President — Carl Beckmann Jr. of Charleston CPW, Secretary/Treasurer — Darwin Reed of North Myrtle Beach, Members At-Large — Jenny Wilson of Greenwood CPW, Jimmy Harrison of Greenville Water System and Cheryl Hanna of Lake City.

Building a better South Carolina through partnerships

by Mayor Tom Peebles of Hilton Head Island and president of MASC; this opinion piece was printed in newspapers throughout the state

As a homebuilder, I rely on teamwork and partnerships every day. Working with carpenters, plumbers, architects and landscapers, I know each one of these experts plays an essential role in constructing our town's homes and neighborhoods.

As a mayor, I know the same holds true in our quest to build a better South Carolina. It takes all of us — city government, county government, schools, the state government, the federal government, the private sector, the non-profits, the religious community and a host of others — working together to build a successful South Carolina.

Today, 70 percent of the state's population lives in the state's eight metropolitan regions, and 75 percent of the jobs are located in these same regions. Compare this to the fact that 50 years ago, only 50 percent of jobs were located in these metropolitan regions, and it becomes clear the state's metropolitan areas are essential to the continued success of this state.

Even in our more rural areas, our cities and towns drive the economy of their region. Cities are the places where people from around the region travel to work, receive medical attention, enjoy the latest local theater production, attend parades to show their admiration for our troops returning home and transact business with bankers, accountants and attorneys. Our cities and towns are the places where people of all backgrounds come together and experience a sense of community and belonging.

In addition to being valued places to those currently living in our state, we know cities are magnets for economic development. Industry executives choose places to locate their industries that offer a high quality of life. They look for arts, culture, recreation, shopping — amenities that mainly exist in our cities and towns. Assets provided by municipalities, including safe and reliable water and sewer services and exceptional police and fire services, are basic and essential components of places with a good quality of life.

Growing South Carolina's economy, especially raising the income of our residents, is a goal fully embraced by myself and other municipal officials. Municipalities and all South Carolinians prosper when municipalities locally decide on a vision and are empowered to achieve this vision. In a democratic society, the citizen should make the ultimate decision in the voting booth. If the community's vision is not met, the citizens will replace their elected officials at the next election. For this reason, it is time for the General Assembly to give municipal elected officials the authority to develop and use tools that will allow cities to achieve their visions.

Because our cities and towns are so different, it simply does not work for the General Assembly to mandate a "one-size-fits-all" method for managing our cities and towns. Each has different challenges, different dreams and different assets on which to build. A central city like Columbia may not face the

same challenges as a rural town like Elloree. The physical assets of beachfront property in a town like Hilton Head Island are different than the physical assets of a suburban city like Fountain Inn. Even the vision for two cities of similar size, located in adjacent counties and on the same interstate, like the cities of Newberry and Clinton, may be different. However, the success of each of these cities and towns is essential for the success of South Carolina's economy.

I am confident as more state officials come to understand the value of cities in our state's economy and embrace the philosophy that "decisions that can be made locally should be made locally," cities will be empowered with the necessary array of tools to achieve success for the good of all South Carolina.

The future looks promising. At a recent meeting of municipal officials in Columbia, Governor Sanford said, "Wherever possible, I think you need to send power and authority to the most local level because that allows the maximum degree of self-determination." Governor Sanford's embrace of local self-determination, or Home Rule, is heartening and bodes well for possible changes that will enable cities and towns and the state to reach their full potential.

South Carolina is a great place to live, but it can be even better. I ask for your support in encouraging our state leaders to recognize the essential value of cities and towns as full partners in making South Carolina the best state in this country to work, live and play.

Home Rule celebrates 30 years

June 25, 2005 marks the 30th anniversary of Home Rule in South Carolina

Accepting the idea of Home Rule was not easy for state legislators. Although the constitution and state law fairly well-defined municipal governments' duties and responsibilities, county government remained under the direct control of its local legislative delegation. At that time, each county had one senator who controlled the legislative delegation. It took recommendations from several statewide study committees and the election of reform-minded senators and representatives to create the momentum for change. Finally, in 1971, the General Assembly proposed an amendment to the 1895 constitution.

In 1972, voters approved an amendment to Article 8, Section 17 of the state constitution to read, "All laws concerning local government shall be liberally construed in their favor. Powers, duties, and responsibilities granted local government subdivisions by this constitution and by law shall include those fairly implied and not prohibited by this constitution."

After the vote, it was up to the legislators to pass laws implementing the changes called for by the constitutional amendment. Three years later, on June 25, 1975, Governor James Edwards

signed into law what was popularly known as "The Home Rule Act of 1975." Although the amendments never use the term "Home Rule," court decisions have consistently supported the proposition that local governments in South Carolina are authorized to do any action not prevented by the state legislature.

The 1975 legislation affected municipal governments in many ways. It provided the framework for three forms of municipal government: the mayor-council form, the council form and the council-manager form. Each municipality had to choose which form most closely resembled its structure as of March 1, 1974. The Act also required an annual balanced budget and an annual audit and gave the council the authority to "levy and collect taxes necessary to meet all budget expenses ..."

County government greatly benefited from the Home Rule Act, which authorized five forms of county government. County government was also given the authority to provide municipal-type services and form special tax districts. The Act also prevented any new special purpose districts from forming.

The legislative delegation no longer had authority over county business. Prior to the Home Rule Act, it was common practice for legislators to pass local legislation to take care of local situations. This practice was prohibited by Home Rule legislation, although the legislature still routinely ignores the prohibition.

Thirty years after the Home Rule Act, many of the promises of Home Rule still elude local government. The legislature has never authorized an additional two forms of municipal government or two charter forms of government as called for by the 1973 amendments. Thirty years later, hopes for better annexation laws and more fiscal autonomy have never been fulfilled. There is still no practical way of consolidating county and municipal governments.

In the 1970s, the right combination of progressive minds in the legislature and sound public policy research brought Home Rule to South Carolina. In 2005, true Home Rule has not been realized. True Home Rule will occur only when citizens, particularly members of the General Assembly, recognize the valuable role cities and towns play.

Railroad safety coalition formed

The tragic train derailment in Graniteville in January spurred representatives from 24 municipalities to form the Coalition for Railroad Safety.

The Coalition held its first meeting, which was facilitated by MASC, in March. George Parker and Joe Financhino of the SC Office of Regulatory Staff (ORS) addressed the group.

Parker explained the ORS has a contract with the Federal Railroad Administration to employ inspectors to check tracks, motor power

equipment, signals, hazardous materials, operation and practices.

Facilitated by MASC Executive Director Howard Duvall, the Coalition developed a list of its top concerns: toxic chemical transit and rail storage, hazmat response and placard identification of toxic content, communication with railroad authorities on topics such as emergencies, rail crossings and maintenance of railroad right of way, and equipment, train speed and noise abatement.

Throughout the upcoming year, the Coalition will work with railroad industry officials and state/federal regulators to establish policies that will facilitate safer rail operations and enhance communication among municipalities and the industry.

"Each city has an obligation to make railroad transit through their city as safe as possible," said John Yow, administrator for the City of Orangeburg.

Achievement Awards program recognizes local government excellence

Each year, MASC honors outstanding local government projects in South Carolina. In 2004, 30 municipalities entered the Municipal Achievement Awards program. The seven winners (Wagener, Travelers Rest, Mullins, Greer, Meggett, Aiken and Sumter) were featured in previous issues of *Uptown*. Following are descriptions of other 2004 entries. Descriptions will continue in future issues of *Uptown*.

Georgetown

Disasters come in many sizes and from many sources — wind, water, fire and ice. Those citizens with insurance coverage or who have the financial means to borrow money can recover fairly quickly. However, those with no insurance or those who don't qualify for loans are left empty-handed. A tornado in October 2002 touched down in the poorest area of Georgetown, destroying 28 buildings, doing major damage to 36 more and causing minor damage on another 89. FEMA, the usual safety net, did not regard the damage as a disaster because of its low financial impact. Under the City's leadership, local churches, government agencies, businesses and nonprofits formed G-CARE — Georgetown Communities Active in Relief Efforts. G-CARE's objective was to restore to wholeness those whose housing needs were not being met by traditional relief agencies. Of the 153 properties damaged by the 2002 tornados, only 10 needed to use the G-CARE safety net.

Georgetown took advantage of this "limited" disaster to develop the capability to meet the future needs of community members unable to receive help from traditional disaster relief agencies.

Contact: Cindi Howard,
843.545.4003.

Greenville

Since 1970, Greenville's population has steadily declined from 61,000 to

See the 2005 Achievement Award winners up close at the Annual Meeting

Be sure to attend the Awards Breakfast during the MASC Annual Meeting, Saturday, July 30 at 8:30 a.m. as the winners of the 2005 Municipal Achievement Awards put their municipalities on the map through a multimedia presentation. The presentation is your opportunity to learn about the best ideas from municipalities across the state. MASC will also announce the winners of the Annual Meeting photography contest, along with the winners of the Occupational Safety and Safety Idea contests sponsored by the SC Municipal Insurance Trust. There is a separate fee of \$25 to attend the Awards Breakfast. The winners will have displays set up Saturday morning so all Annual Meeting attendees will get a closer look at their projects. All entries will be placed on MASC's Web site and printed in this newsletter. All municipalities will also receive a brochure after the Annual Meeting highlighting all the projects from the 2005 Achievement Awards program.

56,000. At the same time, however, the county's population grew from 280,000 to 341,000. Greenville developed a plan to reverse this trend and attract new residents to the city. The initiative used data gathered by the City's GIS Department and public opinion collected during a series of neighborhood meetings. GIS data helped establish a baseline for the number of housing units and households within the city, while citizen opinion provided officials with a clearer understanding of what factors influence residents' choice of neighborhoods. The City undertook a host of initiatives to meet its goals, ranging from developing neighborhood associations and green spaces to creating a master plan for neighborhoods and working with developers to create housing options such as zero-lot lines, mid-rise condominiums and resident units in mixed-use development.

Greenville is already seeing positive results from its efforts. The housing market has grown — almost 800 new housing units have been added to the market over the last three years. The quality of life for residents remains a strong selling point to potential buyers. Citizen surveys indicate increased satisfaction with City services, while the use of City parks and recreational facilities are at an all-time high.

Contact: Candace Sommer,
864.467.4470

Hilton Head Island

While creating a disaster recovery plan is standard for local governments, the way Hilton Head Island accomplished its plan was unique. In October 2001, Hilton Head Island completed a Comprehensive Hazard Vulnerability Assessment of all possible hazards that could affect the island. The mayor appointed 10 citizens to serve on a task force. They used the assessment to develop a new comprehensive disaster recovery plan for the Town. These citizens represented a wide variety of expertise. Lawyers, accountants, architects, planners, construction contractors, retirees, business owners, landscape contractors, restaurant owners, Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce staff, planned unit development staff, county and state emergency staff, town staff, town council and the mayor were all involved. The task force identified 22 recovery functions necessary to expedite a speedy recovery by the Town, its citizens and businesses. Each function is a key element in the reconstruction/recovery process and is assigned to members of the Disaster Recovery Center.

Economic restoration and development was a key element of the plan. Small businesses are the mainstay of the town's economic base. Statistics show 70 percent of small businesses do not return to operation after a major disaster. The comprehensive plan outlines policies and procedures to expedite the rebuilding process for home owners and businesses. Hilton Head Island's plan has served as a guideline for other communities. After Hurricane Isabel, Town officials met with seven municipalities on the Outer Banks of North Carolina. As many did not have a formal disaster recovery plan, Hilton Head Island's plan assisted in expediting the towns' recovery process.

Contact: John Harter, 843.682.5156

Irmo

Faced with continued growth that contributed to conflicts between commercial and residential interests, Irmo committed to preserving the town's heritage and beauty through various tree planting and beautification programs. Councilmembers made a firm commitment in 2000 to revitalize the community's "gateways" and the downtown area. With help from volunteer and civic organizations and a mix of federal, state and local funds, Irmo raised more than \$1.3 million for its projects. Council continues to add "teeth" to zoning and land development ordinances to ensure designated significant trees are protected. Police officers and code enforcement and Town officials are vigilant in their efforts to protect the town's green spaces. These projects have greatly enhanced Irmo's image and enriched the lives of its citizens by defining the community as a healthy place to live and work.

Contact: Bob Brown, 803.781.7050

Isle of Palms

For years, the City of Isle of Palms wrestled with what to do with the area known as "Front Beach." The enormously popular destination was wide, unsightly, difficult to maintain and impossible for pedestrians to safely navigate. Over the years, private re-development in the area exacerbated the problem by decreasing the number of on-street parking spaces. The local business community became concerned because of decreased access to the beach and stores.

In 2002, the City tasked an engineering company with creating a more visually pleasing, pedestrian-friendly area while not compromising the SC Department of Transportation's line-of-sight requirements. The City wanted to slow vehicular traffic and

improve pedestrian access to the beach and stores without the loss of on-street parking spaces. Additional project requirements included installing a solar-powered, multi-space parking system and a lighting system that would provide adequate safety lighting but not create ambient light adversely affecting turtle nesting. The solution involved removing a portion of the area from the state system. While this gave the City the responsibility for future maintenance, the positive result allowed the City to move forward with a more creative layout, and the proposed road reconfiguration captured approximately one-third of an acre of undeveloped property for the City's future use. The City met with and shared the plan with representatives from each area business and all community groups that might be affected. At each of these meetings, new ideas and recommendations were made that resulted in a positive "give and take" and tweaking of the project. The final addition to the project is a piece of public art being created by a local artist.

The Front Beach Enhancement Ocean Boulevard Beautification Project is a \$1.3 million project funded predominately with local accommodations tax revenues. The City also raised nearly \$100,000 by selling bricks, benches and palm trees for the project area.

Contact: Linda Tucker, 843.886.6428

Lake City

Lake City, like many other places, is plagued with problems identified and misidentified as racial problems. Determined to use a systematic approach, the City formed the Lake City Community Human Relations Council, composed of representatives of all races, genders and educational,

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economic and social levels. The council's objectives were to develop and stimulate programs, events and seminars recognizing the cultural diversity of Lake City while simultaneously promoting the quality of life and unity among all the citizens of Lake City and the surrounding communities.

A noteworthy project was the "It's All About People: Can We Talk" seminars to stimulate "talking" among the various groups — age, gender, race, economic and social groups. The seminars did not try to solve specific issues; instead, they taught participants strategies and tactics that could be used to address any issue. Several steering committee members have been trained to facilitate group discussions. These group discussions focused on ways to solve and understand racial and diversity problems by using role-playing and removing the "attack the person — not the problem" approach.

The committee sponsored the Lake City Community Unity Worship Service, attended by almost 100 people; the Minister's Diversity Breakfast, allowing local ministers to bring about unity among all the churches; and a student program at Lake City High School addressing the issues of prejudices.

Contact: *Kenneth Feagins*,
843.374.5421

Lancaster

City of Lancaster employees are dedicated public servants, but they go above and far beyond what their job descriptions dictate. Community service is a way of life for these employees. Each year, the fire department builds a Habitat for Humanity house. Not only is this a needed community service, but it also provides valuable training for fire personnel in building construction. This year, the firefighters teamed with YouthBuild to help mentor the students in construc-

tion techniques. YouthBuild is a program designed to give high school dropouts a second chance. Police officers take on several projects under the umbrella of their community policing initiative. Activities range from neighborhood cleanups to organizing a summer camp for neighborhood children to serving as mentors in local elementary schools. Instead of exchanging gifts during the holiday season, employees collect food for a local organization that serves as a clearinghouse for donated goods and services. Extra money collected for the annual employee holiday lunch is used to send food to a local homeless shelter.

City employees are also extremely active in the Adopt-A-Highway program. Last year, employees were chosen as Lancaster County's Adopt-A-Highway Group of the Year, the SC Department of Transportation District 4 Group of the Year and as a finalist for the State Group of the Year award.

Contact: *Steve Willis*, 803.286.8414

Lexington

The Keeping Every Youth Safe (KEYS) initiative is an innovative approach to providing afterschool programming to at-risk youth in Lexington. For approximately 150 latchkey children, KEYS provides academic tutoring, life-skills classes, recreational activities, role modeling, nutritional counseling and other programming.

By having positive activities for at-risk youth during the critical time period between 2:30 p.m. and 7:00 p.m., when most juvenile crime occurs, the program reduces opportunities for them to be involved in activities such as vandalism, substance abuse and loitering. Partners in the KEYS program include human service agencies, educators, the faith community, business and industry, grant-funding resources, community

service providers and law enforcement.

Contact: *L.C. Greene*, 803.951.4633

Loris

Enhancing economic development, yet preserving a small-town atmosphere was the City of Loris' main objective when it undertook a five-phase revitalization program to improve the core of its central business district and the peripheral commercial areas. There are three phases to this project. The final two phases are ongoing, with completion dates planned in the upcoming years.

The City has worked with a combination of business leaders, citizens and public officials to improve traffic control and parking facilities in commercial areas, rubberize the railroad tracks in the central business district and beautify the urban core with engraved bricks, light poles, benches and planters. Several other initiatives have dealt with economic development. This committee hopes to preserve Main Street character by initiating a Main Street USA program, instituting architectural review standards and adopting an aggressive program to put utilities underground. Loris is already seeing positive results with better access and increased traffic to the downtown area, annexation of more than 25 land parcels, several new commercial ventures and new home construction within city limits.

This multifaceted program has renewed interest in the downtown area, and Loris is well on its way to being transformed into one of the finest towns in coastal South Carolina.

Contact: *David Stoudenmire Jr.*,
843.756.4004

McCormick

Concerned with the quality and capacity of the Town's electric, water and sewer systems, the Town Council and the McCormick Commission of

Public Works began setting goals for future upgrades. To upgrade the sewer system alone was estimated to cost \$8 million. The cost to upgrade the electric system was projected at \$1.8 million, and upgrading the water system would cost \$2.9 million. With good planning, creative funding and strong local government relationships, the Town managed to make \$11 million of infrastructure improvements with \$8.5 million in grants, \$841,500 in loan proceeds and \$1.8 million from capital reserves. The town now has ample electric, water and sewer capacities, operational efficiency and cost-saving operations. The town has enhanced its future and ensured its economic security.

Contact: Bernie Welborn, 864.993.4335

Mount Pleasant

Faced with a phenomenal residential growth rate of 9 percent, the once sleepy coastal village of Mount Pleasant implemented smart growth measures with the Building Permit Allocation Program (BPAP) — the first of its kind in South Carolina. The BPAP limits the number of new residential building permits issued each year. This pro-rated program enables the Town to maintain growth rates averaging 3 percent through June 2007. Poised to become the fourth largest SC municipality by the next census, Mount Pleasant's BPAP is an effort to control growth, keep taxes low, protect the town's quality of life and provide for the health and safety of residents and motorists during hurricane evacuations and other times of tremendous demand on the area streets and transportation systems. Commercial development does not directly add residents to the town; therefore, they are not limited by this system. The BPAP is consistent with the Town's Comprehensive Plan, Transportation Plan, Capital

Improvement Plan and Strategic Funding Plan.

Contact: Martine Wolfe, 843.884.8577

Orangeburg

Historically, Orangeburg provided public safety services through two separate departments — fire and police. In 1987, Council decided to combine the two departments into one public safety department. There were many detractors of the plan who predicted fire service would diminish and police professionalism would suffer. After six years of operating a semi-combined department, the Orangeburg Department of Public Safety became fully integrated in 1994, with all its sworn members trained in and performing both law enforcement and suppression duties.

Since the integration, Orangeburg has lowered its ISO rating from a Class 6 to a Class 4. The City has broken ground on a new \$4 million state-of-the-art headquarters to consolidate the police and fire stations. In 2003, the department was recognized as one of only 22 law enforcement agencies in the country and the third public safety agency in South Carolina to be fully accredited through the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies Inc. (CALEA).

The department has initiated several innovative partnerships to increase citizen safety. It organizes and sponsors an annual SAFE Kid Day and provides continuous fire prevention education in partnership with the regional medical center. The City started an anti-gang initiative and obtained grant funding to employ a forensic chemist in the Lexington County crime lab to expedite narcotics evidence analysis for all law enforcement agencies in Orangeburg County. The department's commitment to cooperative crime prevention efforts is reflected in its leadership role in a number of ongoing programs. Programs include a countywide billboard campaign

focused on reducing violent crime, development of a local crime prevention and awareness television program, and the creation of a "Business Watch" program for local merchants.

Contact: John Yow, 803.533.6000

Patrick

Communication in small towns that do not have a newspaper is not easy. The Town of Patrick wanted a practical and attractive way to advertise various Town meetings and events, in addition to a way to boost community pride. The solution to this need was the Town of Patrick Calendar. The wall calendar, now given as the traditional Christmas gift from the Town to its residents, has photos of local sites and individuals and includes important meeting dates. This popular calendar is an inexpensive way both to advertise the town's beauty and to encourage community participation in important meetings and events.

Contact: Mayor Rosa L. Millsaps Privette, 843.498.6994

Pickens

In early 2003, the City of Pickens began a yearlong volunteer effort to build a 2.5-mile nature/walking trail through its 100-acre recreation area. The Town Creek Trail Project was the result of collaboration between the City and Pickens County United Way. With seed money provided by the South Carolina Department of Education's Learn and Service Grant, a rough plan of action was mapped out for the trail. After 16 workdays and more than 1,500 volunteer hours, community volunteers completed 2.5 miles of trail with seven bridges and numerous steps and benches. Additionally, \$2,500 in native trees, flowers and shrubs were planted along the trail through funding from a Kodak Grant.

Contact: Chris Eldridge, 864.878.6421



Educational Opportunities

SC Business Licensing Officials Association

■ **May 4**, will hold its Spring Meeting at Seawell's in Columbia. Topics include "Business Licensing Procedures," "Real Estate Licensing," "The Freedom of Information Act" and "Conflict Management in the Field."

Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government

■ **May 5**, will present "You've Been Elected — Now What?" and "The Freedom of Information Act in South Carolina." The session will be broadcast via satellite to the 10 regional councils of government.

SC Association of Stormwater Managers

■ **May 13**, will hold its second quarterly meeting at Seawell's in Columbia. Topics include "Effective Written Communication," "Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR)," "Ecological Paver

Systems" and "Photographic Imagery and Stormwater Management."

SC Community Development Association

■ **May 22-24**, will hold its Annual Meeting at the Kingston Plantation in Myrtle Beach. Topics include "Spotlighting Specific Communities with Community Development Block Grants," "The Uniform Relocation Act," "The Spin on Revenue Sources" and "The Art of Finding Money."

Hometown Connection

■ **May 31**, municipal officials from cities in Beaufort, Berkeley, Charleston, Colleton, Dorchester, Dillon, Florence, Georgetown, Hampton, Horry, Jasper, Marion and Williamsburg counties will meet at the MASC office at 1411 Gervais Street, Columbia, at 10:30 a.m.

For more information about these meetings or other MASC meetings not listed, please call 803.799.9574, or visit our Web site at www.masc.sc.

SC Municipal Personnel Association

■ **June 16**, will hold its Summer Meeting at Embassy Suites in Columbia.

Municipal Technology Association of SC

■ **June 23**, will hold its Summer Meeting at the Lexington Municipal Complex.

SC Association of Municipal Power Systems

■ **June 26-29**, will hold its Annual Meeting at the Marriott Beach and Golf Resort on Hilton Head Island.

Municipal Association of SC

■ **July 28-31**, will hold its Annual Meeting at the Marriott Beach and Golf Resort on Hilton Head Island. See related articles on page 1.



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