

UPTOWN

a publication of the Municipal Association of South Carolina

SALUTING COMMUNITY VETERANS PARKS, MEMORIALS CONNECT CITIES WITH HOMETOWN SERVICE MEMBERS *page 43*

2026 Annual Meeting Focuses on Community Development and Sustainability *page 4*

New Election Laws Bring Major Changes for Municipalities *page 46*

2026 Annual Report and Municipal Awards Program *page 7*

The Municipal Association of SC
2026 – 2027 Board of Directors..... 3

2026 Annual Meeting Focuses on
Community Development and
Sustainability 4

McClary Elected as Municipal
Association of SC President 5

MEO Institute of Government
Honors New Graduates at
Annual Meeting 6

Saluting Community Veterans:
Parks, Memorials Connect
Cities With Hometown
Servicemembers 43

How Property Taxes Work 45

New Election Laws Bring Major
Changes for Municipalities..... 46

Special Section: Annual Report/Awards

Municipal Association of SC 2026
Annual Report 7

2026 Municipal
Awards Program 27

President :
Mayor Frank McClary, Andrews

Executive Director :
Todd Glover tglover@masc.sc

Managing Editor :
Meredith Houck mhouck@masc.sc

Editor :
Russell Cox rcox@masc.sc

Editorial Assistant :
Onye Kelly okelly@masc.sc

Contributing writers : Webster Hall,
Mary Catherine Lawton, Megan Sexton,
Sara Weathers

Cover Photo: Myrtle Beach hosted
the grand opening of its Vietnam
Veteran's Memorial at Warbird Park
on Memorial Day 2026. Photo: City of
Myrtle Beach.

Introducing SCottie, the Association's AI Assistant

How does a city council correctly
handle a closed executive session
during a public meeting?

How do comprehensive plans for land
use work in South Carolina?

What do city leaders need to know
about updating their business license
class schedules?

These are just a few examples of topics
that website users can ask SCottie,
the generative artificial intelligence
assistant now available on the Municipal
Association of SC website, which
responds to questions about municipal
government and the services of the
Municipal Association of SC. SCottie
can also generate model ordinances and
policies.

The feature is available to the
Association's municipal members by
logging in at www.masc.sc and selecting
"Member Home."

SCottie's avatar is a North American
river otter — chosen because it's an
animal native to all parts of South
Carolina, and it is known for its playful,
curious and intelligent behavior.

How SCottie works

This tool uses several large-language
AI models, enabling it to learn from
knowledge pulled from different
sources to create new, original outputs.
SCottie uses a combination of OpenAI,
Anthropic, Gemini and Microsoft AI
models, depending on the nature of the
question asked. Asking it questions is not
the same, for example, as simply using
ChatGPT.

SCottie's answers draw from the
Association's large amount of website
information — areas that can include
everything from legislative reports to
reference handbooks, as well as past



*Municipal Association of SC Executive
Director Jake Broom introduces SCottie
during the Small Cities Summit.*

Uptown and *RiskLetter* articles on a
wide array of topics. It does not use the
outside internet in answering questions.
Association staff monitors questions
and prompts for opportunities to add
additional resources to fill in gaps in
SCottie's knowledge, meaning that it can
become more accurate and useful over
time.

Reviewing and verifying

While designed to be helpful, AI-
generated responses may occasionally be
inaccurate, incomplete or outdated. The
content provided is for informational
purposes only and should not be
considered professional, legal, financial
or other regulated advice. Users can
check SCottie's sources using the
"recommended for you" tab under each
answer, which allows them to verify that
SCottie is pulling from the most logical
sources. Any document that SCottie
generates should receive review from a
municipal attorney before adoption.

The Municipal Association of SC 2026 – 2027 Board of Directors

The board of directors, composed of both elected and appointed officials, sets policy for the Municipal Association of South Carolina. The Association's membership elects the board during the Annual Meeting.

New officers

The officers, or members of the executive committee, are elected to one-year terms expiring in July 2027.

President: Mayor Frank McClary, Andrews

1st Vice President: Mayor Brandon Smith, Greenwood

Executive Committee Board Members: Councilmember Enterick Lee, Blackville; and City Manager Andy Merriman, Greer

Immediate Past President: Mayor Brandy Amidon, Travelers Rest

Newly elected members

Board members are elected for three-year terms. These newly elected members have terms expiring in July 2029.

Councilmember Will Brennan, Columbia

Councilmember Gail Bush Diggs, Aiken

Mayor Paul Shewmaker, Simpsonville

Other current board members

Councilmember Colin Davis, Sumter

Mayor Mike Fuesser, York

Councilmember Brian Meadows, Hartsville

City Manager Jeff Molinari, Walterboro

Mayor Crawford Moore, Edisto Beach

Mayor Nathan Senn, Laurens

Councilmember Kevin Shealy, Charleston

Mayor Josh Simpson, Reidville

NEWS BRIEFS

The National Civic League named the **City of North Charleston** a 2026 All America City. Some of North Charleston's recent major initiatives have included police accountability and community connection, the development of the world's largest inclusive playground at Park Circle, and the Liberty Hill Afterschool Enrichment Program.

Several officials received their Accreditation in Business Licensing designation from the SC Business Licensing Officials Association. These include **Kathryn Compton**, business license coordinator, City of Rock Hill; **Dana Payne**, revenue collections liaison I, Charleston County; **Eric Sapp**, code enforcement officer, City of Forest Acres; and **Jeffery Williamson**, codes compliance officer, City of North Augusta. **Michael Costa**, business license specialist, Beaufort County, received the Master in Business Licensing designation.

Leadership South Carolina announced its Core Program Class of 2027, including **Sharmane Anderson**, town administrator for the Town of Santee; and **Robert Halfacre**, mayor of the City of Clemson. Leadership SC promotes leadership skills and an understanding of policy issues affecting South Carolina.

Sara Weathers, associate general counsel for the Municipal Association of SC, qualified for the Local Government Fellow designation from the International Municipal Lawyers Association, recognizing proficiency and competency in the local government legal field. Weathers is the second attorney in South Carolina to obtain this designation, joining **Eric Shytle**, general counsel for the Association.

2026 Annual Meeting Focuses on Community Development and Sustainability

Hundreds of representatives of cities and towns across South Carolina gathered in Greenville for the 2026 Annual Meeting of the Municipal Association of SC. Its presenters discussed everything from keeping local communities thriving to data center development and civility in public service.

Keynote speaker Doug Griffiths tackles community-killing problems

A former member of the Alberta, Canada, Legislative Assembly, Doug Griffiths now focuses on helping communities find their individual pathways to economic success.

He authored the bestselling book *13 Ways to Kill Your Community*, covering commonplace issues for cities that can cause destructive declines in morale, commerce and eventually population. It addresses areas like cities refusing to accept newcomers or new economic realities, and prioritizing a sense of independence over the need for responsibility and cooperation.

Another frequently seen issue is a failure to engage young people, with leaders instead simply demanding that the youth stay put. Young people naturally want to explore and move away, he said.

“Our key to success is not to keep them, but to let them go,” he said. “Give them a reason to come home after they’re done exploring, and to bring those new contacts, those new ideas, relationships, concepts, back to your community.”

He has often found local officials talking despairingly about their community’s ability to keep young people rather than articulating a real vision for the community’s future.

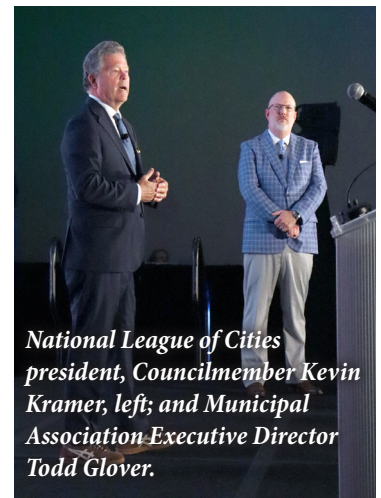
“When those young people come back, you’ve got to engage them, you’ve got to give them some control, some authority, some power to implement stuff,” Griffiths said. “I still hear too many leaders in communities say, ‘those young people, they don’t know anything. They have no



Keynote speaker Doug Griffiths.



Outgoing Municipal Association president, Mayor Brandy Amidon, left; and incoming president, Mayor Frank McClary.



National League of Cities president, Councilmember Kevin Kramer, left; and Municipal Association Executive Director Todd Glover.

experience,’ ... we need them to learn how to be leaders faster, and we need to trust that they know where the world is going, sometimes better than we do.”

Brandy Amidon completes term as president

Travelers Rest Mayor Brandy Amidon marked the conclusion of her term as the Municipal Association’s president at the meeting.

She expressed gratitude for the Association’s staff and for her experiences among fellow elected officials — “celebrating your successes, learning from your challenges and seeing firsthand incredible work happening in your community.”

Among her favorite experiences, Amidon said, was visiting communities to learn about major projects as they came to fruition, whether they were “parks, or a revitalized downtown, a streetscape, a trail, or a long-awaited building that has finally opened its doors.”

“I know those projects don’t happen overnight,” she said. “They represent years of planning, countless meetings, difficult decisions, grant applications, budget discussions and the perseverance to keep moving forward. You should be incredibly proud of what you’ve accomplished in your cities and towns.”

Executive Director Todd Glover discusses financial technical assistance, civility

Association Executive Director Todd Glover discussed South Carolina's 2025 – 2026 legislative session, which he described as the most consequential and challenging he had experienced, with state lawmakers grappling with the impacts of rapid population growth as well as government funding structures. He noted the numerous proposals at the State House to cut the taxes that fund local government services — mirroring similar proposals in many other states — and a growing focus on local governments' submission of their required audits or financial statements.

He announced that the Association will hire additional staff to provide financial technical assistance to cities and towns, just as the Association's Field Services managers provide general technical assistance to municipalities.

He also reiterated the Association's long-running focus on civility in local government.

"We're seeing people — good, decent public servants — leave office at an amazingly high rate because they're tired of being beat up all the time for the work that they're

doing," he said. "We're losing great staff people because they're taking the brunt of some of this incivility."

The Association-developed civility pledge is now used by cities in other parts of the nation and the world. It received additional praise from the current president of the National League of Cities, Louisville, Kentucky, Councilmember Kevin Kramer, who addressed the Annual Meeting to discuss the NLC focus on civility.

"How many of us have unfriended someone in the last two months, because of how negative they are on Facebook?" he said. "We've got to get back to a place where we can recognize — I may not agree with you, but that doesn't make you any less of a person. It doesn't make it such that you deserve any less respect."

Annual Meeting presentations, Achievement Award videos, available online

Some Annual Meeting sessions have presentations available on the Association's website. Find the materials at www.masc.sc (keyword: Annual Meeting). The Municipal Achievement Award videos, which debuted during the meeting, are available by searching the keyword "Achievement Awards."

McClary Elected Municipal Association of SC President



Delegates from cities and towns across the state elected Frank McClary, mayor of the Town of Andrews, as the 2026 – 2027 president of the Municipal Association of SC during the Annual Meeting in Greenville.

McClary, a native of Andrews, is a graduate of Benedict College, and earned a masters degree from the U.S. Army's Senior Service College. A retired U.S. Army colonel, McClary's military career included multiple assignments overseas, as well as time at the Pentagon and battalion command at South Carolina's Fort Jackson. He planned and led combat operations with more than 20 foreign countries.

McClary said he was honored by the opportunity to serve as the Association's president, and congratulated his predecessor, Travelers Rest Mayor Brandy Amidon for her work leading the board of directors.

He also praised the efforts of the Association staff in assisting municipal officials throughout the state in their public service. He encouraged local leaders to take advantage of the Association's educational offerings, such as the Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government, and its affiliate groups that help with the training and networking needs of specific municipal job positions.

The Municipal Association, he said, is "really advocating for the cities and towns of this state. [The Annual Meeting] is next-level stuff, and it just shows you that they're going out, learning new things and looking at ways to improve us and make us better, stronger leaders in our community."

MEO Institute of Government Honors New Graduates at Annual Meeting

The Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government recognized nine summer graduates during the Municipal Association's Annual Meeting in Greenville.

MEO graduates

The new graduates are these:

- Councilmember Jackie Earls, Union
- Councilmember Mike Easler, Clover
- Councilmember Loyd Fox, Van Wyck
- Councilmember Amy Gavin, Cheraw
- Mayor Sloan Griffin, Blythewood
- Councilmember Liz Hager, Hampton
- Councilmember Sharon Kelley, Woodruff
- Mayor Eddie Moore, Heath Springs
- Councilmember Fred Taylor, Gilbert

The newest graduates of the MEO Institute have completed the required 25 hours of instruction available through the Institute and are now eligible to participate in the Advanced MEO Institute of Government.

The next Advanced MEO Institute sessions will take place October 14 in Columbia.

Participants may choose one of two courses: "Advanced Advocacy and Intergovernmental Relations" or "Advanced Municipal Economic Development." For those members who are Advanced MEO Institute graduates, the Advanced Continuing Education course will take place the same day, covering such topics as decision making, grants, special events and citizen academies.

MEO Honor Roll

The MEO Institute also tracks those city and town councils on which all sitting members are MEO graduates. The current MEO Honor Roll cities are these:

- City of Beaufort
- Town of Heath Springs
- Town of Port Royal
- Town of Reidville
- Town of Santee
- City of Walterboro
- City of Woodruff
- City of York





Municipal Association
of South Carolina

2026

ANNUAL REPORT

From the Executive Director

Every South Carolina city and town has a story.

There are stories of growth and opportunity. Others are stories of resilience in the face of challenges. Even some may be of struggle. All are stories of people working every day to improve the communities they call home.

At the Municipal Association of South Carolina, we are privileged to be part of those stories.

For more than eight decades, South Carolina's municipalities have joined together through the Association because they understood a simple truth: we are stronger when we work together. A shared voice carries farther. Shared knowledge creates stronger leaders. Shared solutions help communities overcome challenges that no city or town should have to face alone.

This annual report reflects that commitment in action.

Over the past year, municipal officials and staff across our state demonstrated extraordinary leadership. They advocated for their communities, invested in the next generation of local government leaders, revitalized downtowns, strengthened infrastructure, protected taxpayers, improved public safety and responded to challenges with innovation and determination.

Through our advocacy efforts, municipal voices were heard at both the State House and in Washington, D.C. Through education and training, hundreds of elected officials and municipal employees gained the knowledge needed to serve their communities more effectively. Through our programs and services, cities and towns found practical solutions that protected resources, reduced risk, expanded opportunities, and improved quality of life for residents.

The numbers in this report tell an impressive story, yet the true measure of success is not found in statistics alone. It is found in safer neighborhoods, stronger local economies, revitalized downtowns, improved public services and communities where residents feel connected and proud of where they live.

Thank you for your leadership, your partnership and your dedication to public service. Together, we continue to prove that local government remains the level of government closest to the people, and often the one that makes the greatest difference in their daily lives.

We are honored to serve you and proud of all we have accomplished together.



A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "B. Todd Glover". The signature is fluid and stylized.

B. Todd Glover
Executive Director



Voices

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

Municipal surveys, fiscal impact statements

Cities need state lawmakers to understand when new laws could create new challenges or unintended consequences for local governments. The Association uses surveys from municipal officials and staff throughout the state as data-gathering tools to quantify and articulate the concerns faced by cities of every size. Legislators can request Fiscal Impact Statements through the SC Revenue and Fiscal Affairs Office to see how much of a financial burden a bill will place on governmental entities. In the 2026 session, the Association answered more than 85 requests for fiscal impact on legislation, and responded to individual legislative inquiries, presenting municipal perspectives with clarity and broad-based evidence.

In one survey example, water and sewer utilities responded to the Association's call for information with compelling stories on how septic tanks have damaged sensitive coastal ecosystems, up to the point of forcing the closure of oyster beds for harvesting. Armed with this data, the Association's advocacy team successfully opposed General Assembly proposals that would have undermined utility operations and damaged environmental health.

Explaining legislation and municipal issues

The legislation that affects municipalities is often complex and fast-moving. The Association's advocacy team helps local officials make sense of it all through regular weekly updates, in the *From the Dome to Your Home* report and podcast, and through other online easy-to-read resources. For example, the SC Department of Transportation modernization bills, H5071 and S831, were of great interest to cities in 2026 because of their implications for municipal road ownership and funding. The Association provided an overview on its website of all 28 sections of the proposed law, describing how the roads would receive funding and how voluntary takeover of ownership would work – reprinted with permission from the SC Alliance to Fix Our Roads. The General Assembly ultimately passed S831.

Municipal annexation remains a critical but frequently misunderstood topic of legislative discussion. Many are unaware that the overwhelming majority of annexations in South Carolina use the 100% method, with property owners requesting the annexation. To explain how state law works, the Association launched the "Annexation in South Carolina" information hub at l.masc.sc/AnnexInfoHub. It offers a one-page summary of annexation processes as well as a podcast and video series that explains the technical processes involved.

Federal advocacy, SC/DC podcast

The Association's focus on federal advocacy continued in the last year, including a record five congressional briefings for municipal officials in 2025. These included briefings with Rep. Russell Fry in Conway, Rep. Nancy Mace in Charleston, Rep. Ralph Norman in Rock Hill, Rep. William Timmons in Greer and Rep. Joe Wilson in Cayce. Local officials found the opportunity to connect with their representatives valuable.

The Association's *City Quick Connect* podcast, which provides updates from the State House throughout the legislative session, also expanded with *SC/DC*, a series examining the Association's work with the congressional delegation. Podcast guests included Rep. William Timmons; Shay Hawkins, tax counsel for Sen. Tim Scott, explaining changes to Opportunity Zone law; and Washington-based members of the National League of Cities' advocacy team to discuss congressional funding and government shutdowns.

In a January 2026 episode, Rep. William Timmons of South Carolina's 4th District joined and thanked the Municipal Association for its ongoing communication with him on important issues.

"I need to be in touch with the people that I represent, and know what issues are important to them, know how the federal government needs to respond, and how we can change laws, or how we can be more efficient," he said. "So, I appreciate you taking time to keep me informed and up to date on the issues that are important to you."

371,435 visitors to www.masc.sc, with **993,778 total page views**.

870 social media posts across Facebook, X and Instagram, garnering **255,542 impressions**.

13,036 listens for the Association's podcasts. Some topics covered:

- State and federal legislative action and calls to action for cities and towns
- Award-winning municipal projects
- Annexation
- Business licensing
- Election law
- Risk management topics like cybersecurity and auto loss reduction

555 participants at the Association's 2026 Hometown Legislative Action Day. Topics at the meeting included Congressionally Directed Spending, working with the SC Department of Transportation to strengthen infrastructure, and civility in local government discourse.

484 bills tracked in the Municipal Association's Legislative Tracking System, found at www.masc.sc/legislative-tracking-system.

More than 85 fiscal impact statements submitted in four months for the 2026 legislative session.

The Association's *Uptown* magazine, which offers articles and feature stories on a wide variety of topics important to municipal officials, is distributed to **more than 5,000 recipients** each month. Some of the issues covered during this time include these:

- Building up safety-focused cultures
- Communications outreach
- Creative stormwater management solutions
- Cybersecurity best practices
- Downtown revitalization
- Establishing risk management plans
- Legal analysis
- Managing planning and zoning issues, as well as annexation
- Recreation

Knowledge

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

All About Local Government in South Carolina! activity books

Municipal success requires civic education, which can promote an informed electorate, candidates for elected office and job applicants. Aiming to plant the seeds of civic engagement at an early age, the Association developed an activity book for second grade students and has been distributing 60,000 of them to schools statewide — enough for every second grader. The book covers the role of elected officials, municipal elections, municipal services and civility in government.

Build the Bench, Summer Enrichment Academy

Responding to South Carolina's shortage of well-qualified city management candidates, the Association partnered with the Master of Public Administration programs at the College of Charleston and University of South Carolina to create the Build the Bench program, placing interns with municipalities to familiarize students with real-life municipal work and build a diverse pool of future job candidates. The program has placed recent interns with Goose Creek, West Columbia, Greer and the Municipal Association itself.

USC student Kirsten Miller interned at the Municipal Association and worked with many of its departments. She said the experience made her interested in a career as a city administrator.

"The people within this organization have shown me how I can make a lasting impact during my lifetime by working in this field," Miller said. "Local government is a field I never really knew existed until I became an intern, and I plan to keep exploring it throughout the remainder of my college career."

In 2026, the College of Charleston announced the renaming of the MPA programs' Summer Enrichment Academy in honor of former Municipal Association Deputy Executive Director — and College of Charleston MPA graduate — Eric Budds, recently retired from a 40-year career in local government. The program guides students on graduate education for public service careers, including site visits and networking with local governments and nonprofits.

Main Street South Carolina

Main Street SC, the Association's downtown revitalization and technical assistance program, continued expanding statewide support for small businesses and historic downtowns through training and programming. In 2025, Main Street SC received a StimulateSC grant from the SC Department of Commerce to launch a statewide Small Business Photo Sprint and Story series, helping communities and businesses strengthen their digital presence and ability to share stories through tourism campaigns, websites, social media, and downtown marketing efforts. It ultimately involved photographing 112 small businesses, producing 10,431 professional images and training 176 participants.

"In both casual conversations and interviews, I heard a repeating theme: 'I was looking for something, and I found it in South Carolina.'" said Phil Eich, photographer and project partner. "Whether it was someone returning to their hometown to start a family, exchanging the metropolitan bustle for a small-town quality of life, or someone jumping from state to state, the theme that South Carolina has what people are looking for was a common one."

South Carolina also gained national recognition in 2025 as the host state for Main Street America's Community Transformation Workshop, taking place in Hartsville. It brought 50 downtown revitalization professionals from across the country to study transformation strategies, community engagement, market analysis and preservation-based economic development. Another partnership with Main Street America created the Small-scale Producer Growth Accelerator, providing hands-on support for entrepreneurs, including coaching and peer learning as they improve their operations, reach more customers and contribute to local economies.

683 officials attended the Municipal Association's 2025 Annual Meeting, and **105 officials** attended the 2025 Small Cities Summit.

2,069 total attendees participated in **30 events** hosted by the Municipal Association's affiliate associations. Among attendees were **1,255 municipal employees**, representing **172 cities and towns**, that attended at least one affiliate meeting.

The Municipal Court Administration Association of SC launched a mentorship program connecting veterans of the field with those developing their careers. The first round includes **five mentors** and **six mentees**.

101 elected officials graduated from the Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government, and **47 officials** graduated from the Advanced MEO Institute.

1,990 MEO Institute participants have graduated since 1986, when the program began, and **418 Advanced MEO Institute** participants have graduated since that program began in 2014.

123 elected officials completed their first Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government course in the past year.

200 municipalities of the total 271 now have had at least one MEO graduate. The Town of Jefferson is the newest municipality to gain an MEO graduate.

458 unique users used the Association's on-demand learning portal, which houses training from the MEO Institute, Planning and Zoning Training and Risk Management Services trainings.

32 total Main Street SC communities participating at four levels, including Aiken, Florence, Greenwood, Hartsville and Laurens as the five nationally accredited Main Street SC cities.

85 attendees at the Association's first-ever Risk Management Services Conference in August 2025. Some of sessions that were the most highly reviewed by participants covered reducing the risks of distracted driving, handling sovereign citizens and First Amendment auditors, and changing weather patterns in South Carolina.

770 businesses participating in WeShopSC, the statewide e-commerce marketplace created by the Municipal Association of South Carolina and Main Street SC to advance small business storefront technology, training and marketing support.

Since 1983, designated Main Street communities in SC have collectively recorded **more than \$1.16 billion in investment**, **1,580 new businesses** and **more than 7,300 jobs**.

2,448 technical assistance requests handled by the Association's Field Services managers, assisting municipal clerks, administrators and managers, as well as elected officials, both existing and newly elected. There were **3,742 total municipal contacts** made by the team in **269 cities and towns**.

Top 10 Requests for Technical Assistance

1. **Networking/general discussion**
2. **Finance/budgets/audits/Local Government Fund reports**
3. **Education and training**
4. **Planning and zoning**
5. **American Rescue Plan Act funding and reporting**
6. **Human resources**
7. **Business licensing**
8. **SC Freedom of Information Act**
9. **Council conflict and civility**
10. **Elections**

Solutions

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

Risk Management Services

After Hurricane Helene caused significant destruction in South Carolina in September 2024, members of the SC Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund and the SC Municipal Insurance Trust faced storm-related losses totaling \$5,255,492. RMS staff worked with member municipalities in the processing of more than 500 claims, often involving significant legal and coverage-related complexities, closing 98% of them by May 2026.

In one valuable example of RMS assistance, the staff works with SCMIRF members to help identify special events activities not fully covered by their policies, and can help them secure a special events policy – protecting them while helping them host the festivals and events that bring communities together.

Launch of IMPACT Fund

In 2016, the Municipal Association launched the Hometown Economic Development grants to support local projects. In 2025, that program became the IMPACT Fund, an acronym for “Innovative Municipal Projects for Advancing Change and Transformation,” giving cities more flexibility and funding opportunities. It is supported by the Association’s strategic partner for technology services, VC3. Within it, the Big Idea Grant provides two recipients with \$100,000 each for creative, forward-thinking initiatives. The Problem Solver Grant, meanwhile, gives eight recipients \$25,000 each for routine projects like playground upgrades or facility repairs.

2025 Big Idea Grant recipients included Greenville, which would transform the Nicholtown Community Center into the state’s first Resiliency Hub. North Augusta used Big Idea Grant funds to place 50 automated external defibrillators with CPR-trained volunteers, enabling them to help with cardiac arrest events before first responders arrive.

“As a city, we often talk about providing a great quality of life for our citizens,” North Augusta Mayor Briton Williams said. “By placing AEDs throughout the city and empowering residents to assist those in need, we are truly enhancing quality of life in a way never before seen in North Augusta.”

Palmetto Power Cities

A group with a 52-year history, PPC made major advancements in the past year, beginning with its rebranding from its previous name, the SC Association of Municipal Power Systems to Palmetto Power Cities. A strategic change driven by a commitment to strengthen visibility, communications, representation and member support. PPC provides technical assistance for utility policies, system improvements, customer service and legislative advocacy. Some of their recent activities included Senate subcommittee testimony on data centers, legislative receptions at the U.S. Capitol along with the South Carolina State House, a Lineworker Rodeo and Safety Training day, and tour of the generation plant at the J. Strom Thurmond Dam.

Field Services assistance

The Association’s Field Services managers assist every city and town in the state through regular visits, consultations and trainings – a valuable resource, especially when new councilmembers join council. They offer orientation for newly elected officials, training in the roles and responsibilities of local government and facilitate goal-setting sessions.

In Cordova, part of Field Services Manager’s Desirée Fragoso’s territory, Town Clerk Martha Giacomarro said that Fragoso had helped officials and staff throughout multiple transitions, and with topics like the town’s comprehensive plan.

“Desirée so graciously offered to work around our schedule to deliver a training session so we all know our duties to fulfill. She has truly been a lifesaver to me and the Town of Cordova, helping us achieve our goals of being compliant. She has truly gone above and beyond and we would not have been able to make the strides we have made without her guidance,” she said.

138 SC Municipal Insurance and Risk Financing Fund members.

132 SC Municipal Insurance Trust members.

21,731 employees and volunteers insured through SCMIT.

\$7.16 billion in total value insured through SCMIRF.

73 member-specific training sessions hosted by Risk Management Services Loss Control. Trainings include defensive driving — addressing distracted driving, which is a significant cause of accidents — as well as Occupational Safety and Health Administration Confined Space Competent Person Training and public safety training.

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

\$2 million in surplus returned to eligible SCMIT members.

16,927 courses completed through LocalGovU, the online training portal of the Association's Risk Management Services.

\$402,762 in grant funds disbursed through SCMIT and SCMIRF grants.

More than \$7.7 million collected in subrogation and other recoveries on behalf of SCMIT and SCMIRF members.

\$45.8 million in business license payments processed through the Local Business License Renewal Center in the first four months of 2026, compared to 37.2 million in all of 2025, \$23.8 million in 2024 and \$11.9 million processed in 2023.

30,330 business licenses renewed through the LBLRC in the first four months of 2026, compared to 26,585 processed in all of 2025 and 19,063 processed in 2024.

The Association's Local Revenue Services worked with **270 municipalities** as well as **nine counties** and **40,434 businesses** to audit taxable income.

\$30.23 million in purchases made during calendar year 2026 through the City Connect Market, a cooperative purchasing partnership between the Municipal Association and HGACBuy, with the CarolinaBUY Cooperative added as a new partner in 2026. This brings the total purchases made since the program started in 2021 to **\$98.09 million**.

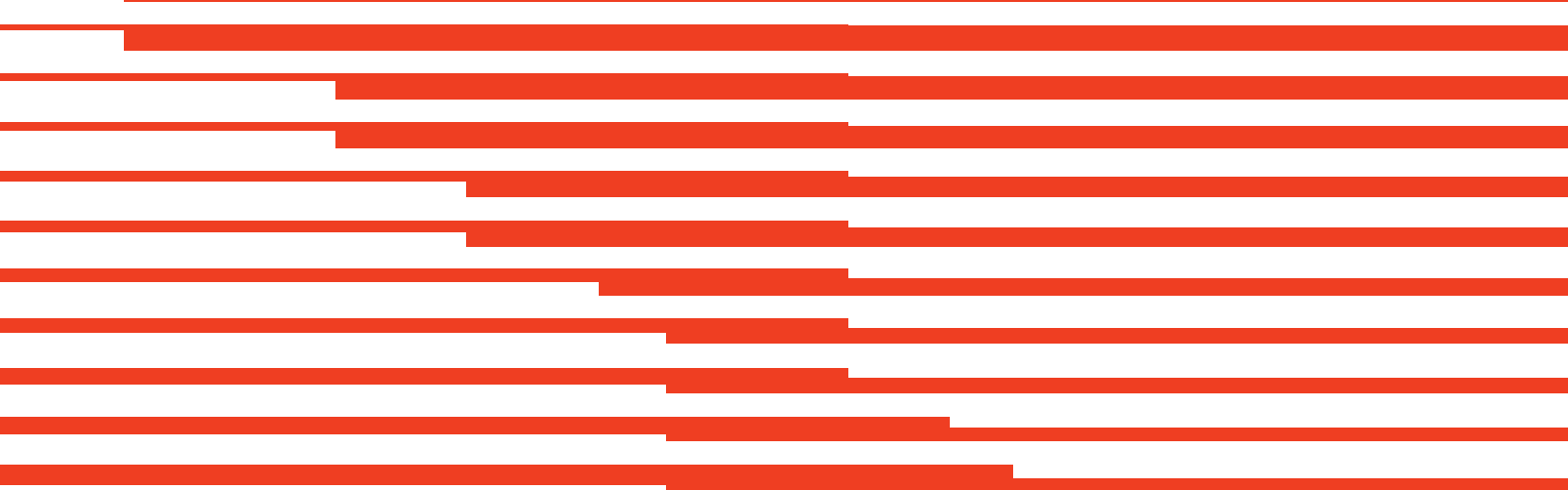
\$400,000 in IMPACT funds awarded to 10 cities and towns.

Big Idea Grant recipients (\$100,000 each):

- City of Greenville
- City of North Augusta

Problem Solver Grant recipients (\$25,000 each):

- Town of Campobello
- City of Chesnee
- Town of Heath Springs
- City of Manning
- Town of Pacolet
- Town of Pageland
- Town of Ruby
- Town of Salley



Internal Services

The internal services of the Municipal Association — technology, finance and human resources — play a critical role in supporting staff so the organization can deliver valuable and efficient services to South Carolina’s cities and towns.

IT upgrades

The Association made numerous IT system upgrades in the past year. From a security and resiliency standpoint, the IT department implemented a new syslog server, which monitors the Association’s networking and infrastructure equipment, completed two business continuity disaster recovery tests, and decommissioned the legacy Trades program hosted on a Windows 2012 server. For the computing equipment used by Association staff, the IT department refreshed many of their laptops and mobile devices, and upgraded the remote access environment which enables staff to work and communicate while outside the office. This helps the staff better serve elected officials and municipal employees around the state, especially for those whose work frequently takes them out of the office — Field Services managers, Loss Control staff, and Education and Training staff who assist with conferences and meetings.

Loss Control and AI insights

Risk Management Services claims staff, as well as the Loss Control division, which helps RMS members build effective safety and loss control programs, has recently begun leveraging Domo, an artificial intelligence data analytics platform, to improve risk management strategies. The total body of information created through losses and insurance claims can be fragmented and complex, but AI analytics helps RMS staff generate reports as well as identify trends and opportunities for improvement — protecting cities and towns, and keeping insurance costs down.

Transition of Mechanical Trades Certification Program

The Municipal Association had operated its Mechanical Trades Certification Program since 1965, issuing journeyman and master certifications in such mechanical trades as electrical, gas, plumbing and heating, ventilation and air conditioning work. At the time the program was created, South Carolina generally did not require state licensing in these areas, and so this helped assure municipalities hired qualified professionals in those fields.

In more recent decades, state licensing requirements in these fields have become more stringent, causing fewer municipalities to rely on the program. In 2025, after studying the issue, the Association helped the program adapt to the current professional environment by transitioning its management to Carolinas AGC, a construction trade association for contractors and related firms in both of the Carolinas. The change took effect in January 2026.





Municipal Association
of South Carolina

Directory of Services

More than 90 years ago, a small group of local elected officials realized they had to work together to meet the challenges of the changing times. With this mission in mind, they organized the Municipal Association of South Carolina. The Municipal Association is still dedicated to the principle of its founding members: to join together to pursue initiatives that cities and towns can carry out more efficiently and effectively when they work together through the Association, than they could by working individually.

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

Voices

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

Lobbying the State Legislature and Congress

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

Legislative Tracking and Reports

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

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

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

Hometown Legislative Action Day

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

Public Engagement

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

Social Media Channels

The Association's X (@MuniAssnSC) and Facebook (MuniAssnSC.StrongSCcities) accounts provide up-to-the-minute information on State House activity and share good news stories about cities and towns. A regular schedule of social media posts highlighting *Uptown* stories amplifies the online version of the monthly newsletter and resources on the Association's website. The Association's Instagram account (StrongSCcities) highlights the strength and services of South Carolina's 271 cities and towns. *Staff Contact: Meredith Houck*

City Connect Blog and City Quick Connect Podcast

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

Municipal Association Mobile App

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

Research and Analysis

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

Knowledge

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

Affiliate Associations

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

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

Association of South Carolina Mayors

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

Municipal Court Administration Association of SC

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

Municipal Technology Association of SC

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

Palmetto Power Cities

For years, municipal electric utility members have worked together as the South Carolina Association of Municipal Power Systems. With a continued focus on providing mutual aid, advocacy efforts, education and shared expertise, the organization is now Palmetto Power Cities. Twenty one of the municipal electric utilities are members of the organization. *Staff Contact: Adam Hedden*

SC Association of Stormwater Managers

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

SC Business Licensing Officials Association

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

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

SC Community Development Association

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

SC Municipal Attorneys Association

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

SC Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association

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

SC Municipal Human Resources Association

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

SC Utility Billing Association

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

Training Institutes

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

SC Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government

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

SC Advanced Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government

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

Business Licensing Training Institute

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

Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute

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

Annual Meeting

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

Technical Assistance

Field Services

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

Main Street South Carolina

Main Street SC helps its members revitalize their downtowns into vibrant centers of commerce and community by using the National Main Street Center's Main Street Approach,TM which focuses on historic preservation and placemaking. Main Street SC provides member programs of varying levels of preparedness and resources with knowledge and tools to develop community-driven and comprehensive revitalization strategies. It provides on-site consultation and technical assistance to local programs that meet specific requirements. Quarterly workshops, networking sessions and on demand trainings also assist local Main Street programs in their efforts.

At the startup level, members build capacity for downtown revitalization. At the Aspiring Main Street level, participants receive three years of technical assistance and then transition into a Classic Main Street program. Members at the highest level meet national accreditation standards. Each year, Main Street SC honors exceptional member accomplishments through its Inspiration Awards. *Staff Contact: Jenny Boulware*

Information Resources

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

Publications

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

- *Public Official's Guide to Compliance with the Freedom of Information Act* (published by the SC Press Association)
 - *South Carolina Business Licensing Handbook*
 - *Tips for Hometown Media Success*
- Staff Contact: Jake Broom*

Website

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

Uptown

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

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

Daily News and The Uplift

Daily News provides links to news stories about the state's smallest rural towns to its largest cities. The articles highlight how local governments deliver services. *The Uplift* delivers a collection of news links every Wednesday showcasing South Carolina cities and towns at their best. *Staff Contact: Russell Cox*

Achievement Awards

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

Solutions

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

Local Revenue Services

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

Brokers Tax Program

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

Insurance Tax Program

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

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

Local Business License Renewal Center

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

Setoff Debt Program

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

Telecommunications Tax Program

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

Risk Management Services

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

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

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

Staff Contact: Naomi Reed

Training

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

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

Loss Control/Technical Assistance

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

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

Grants

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

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

South Carolina Other Retirement Benefits Employer Trust

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

IMPACT Fund

After years of the Municipal Association of SC supporting local economic development initiatives through the Hometown Economic Development Grant program, a new and expanded grant program is taking its place — one updated to reflect the continuously evolving needs and ambitions of communities across the state. The Association introduced the IMPACT Fund, an acronym for "Innovative Municipal Projects for Advancing Change and Transformation." This newly structured program empowers municipalities with greater flexibility, increased funding opportunities and a renewed focus on innovation and problem-solving. *Staff Contact: Sara Whitaker*

Technology Services

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

City Connect Market

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

Staff

Executive

Todd Glover

Executive Director

Jake Broom

Deputy Executive Director

Advocacy

Casey Fields

Director of Advocacy

Webster Hall

Legislative and Public Policy Advocate

Mary Catherine Lawton

Research and Legislative Analyst

Daina Phillips

Legislative and Public Policy Advocate

Erica Wright

Legislative and Public Policy Advocate

Communications

Meredith Houck

Communications Manager

Russell Cox

Uptown Editor and Digital Production Manager

Onye Kelly

Communications and Engagement Coordinator

Kara Pippin

Communications and Systems Assistant

Education and Training

Ken Ivey

Director of Member Services

Jenny Boulware

Main Street South Carolina Manager

Virginia Butler

Business Systems Analyst

Elizabeth Copeland

Staff Associate for Affiliate Services

Dawn Dukes

Administrative Assistant

Urica Floyd

Staff Associate for Training and Learning Solutions

Adam Hedden

Palmetto Power Cities Manager

Jonathan Irick

Staff Associate for Main Street South Carolina

Lea Ann Mitchell

Staff Associate for Affiliate Services

Christine Sumter

Administrative Assistant

Susan Walters

Administrative Assistant

Sara Whitaker

Staff Associate for Affiliate Services

Field Services

Charlie Barrineau

Senior Field Services Manager

Desirée Fragoso

Field Services Manager

Rob Wolfe

Field Services Manager

Finance

Stephanie O'Cain

Chief Financial Officer

Mackenzie Bailey

Accounts Payable Coordinator

Fay Barlow

Accounts Receivable Coordinator

Elizabeth Floyd

Financial Manager

Jodi King

Financial and Technology Specialist

Information Technology

LaTasha Blair

Information Technology Manager

Devon Davis

Information Technology Support Specialist

Legal

Eric Shytte

General Counsel

Sara Weathers

Associate General Counsel

Local Revenue Services

Caitlin Cothran

Manager for Local Revenue Services

Fran Adcock

Revenue Analyst

Anita Lancaster

Revenue Analyst

Rochelle Smith

Revenue Analyst

Kaylee Summerton

Revenue Analyst

Operations

Summer Randall

Director of Operations

Donette Moore

Human Resources Coordinator/Executive Assistant

Vernessa Pendergrass

Receptionist

Risk Management Services

Naomi Reed

Director of Risk Management Services

Krystal Bailey

Senior SCMIRF Claims Adjuster

Kailin Bethel

RMS Financial Specialist

Pam Bergen

Senior SCMIT Claims Adjuster

Robert Collins

Underwriting Manager

Kenneth Davis

Loss Control Consultant

Tchnavia Davis

SCMIRF Claims Adjuster

Tony DesChamps

SCMIT Claims Manager

Amy Gillian

Administrative Assistant

Joy Gloster

Data and Training Analyst

Jennifer Gray

Financial Manager for RMS

Trevor Hall

Public Safety Loss Control Consultant

Sharon Henry

Senior SCMIT Claims Adjuster

Hurisheo Jones

Claims Adjuster

Brenda Kegler

SCMIT Associate Claims Adjuster

Stacy Lee

Senior SCMIRF Claims Adjuster

Amy Lindler

Technology Operations Manager

Tonya Link

Senior SCMIT Claims Adjuster

Will Livoti

Senior SCMIRF Claims Adjuster

Rebecca Mejia-Ward

Loss Control Consultant

Leslie Moser

Assistant Financial Manager for RMS

Leslie Nash

SCMIRF Claims Adjuster

Geneva Oliver

Senior SCMIT Claims Adjuster

Bethany Pendley

Loss Control Manager

Judy Phillips

Senior Claims Adjuster

Harriett Robinson

Senior SCMIT Claims Adjuster

Chassidy Sistrunk

Senior Underwriter

Johnna Smith

Senior SCMIRF Claims Adjuster

Sharon Turner

Underwriter

Mike Waslewski

SCMIRF Claims Manager

Rem Williams

Senior SCMIRF Claims Adjuster

Meiko Woods

SCMIRF Claims Adjuster



Municipal Association
of South Carolina

www.masc.sc

2026

Achievement Awards
Main Street Inspiration Awards



Municipal Association
of South Carolina

2026 Achievement Awards

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

Videos highlighting this year's winners are available on the Association's website at www.masc.sc (keyword: achievement).

Population 1,001 – 5,000: Town of Seabrook Island Disaster Recovery Council

The Town of Seabrook Island's coastal location makes it vulnerable to hurricanes, flooding and power outages. Because of these threats, and the challenges that individual community organizations face when collaborating with one another to respond to an emergency, the town decided to establish the Disaster Recovery Council as a way to strengthen its community preparedness. The council engages in yearly training exercises based on real emergencies facilitated by emergency management professionals. These experiences help the council identify potential issues and recommend improvements to Seabrook Island's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan.

The council takes advantage of town staff expertise and facilities as well as volunteer participation, which helps keep its funding needs to a minimum. It partners with municipal departments, local utilities, homeowners associations, the Seabrook Island Community Emergency Response Team, the Charleston County Sheriff's Office and St. Johns Fire District in its efforts. Future plans include using training scenarios that address emerging risks such as climate-related impacts and infrastructure disruptions, as well as finding more ways to enhance resident preparedness education.

By incorporating the lessons learned from ongoing scenario-based, partnership-driven emergency training, the council places the town in a position to handle future emergencies with clear communication and strong partnerships — all helping to build a more resilient community.

Contact Abigail Grooms at agrooms@townofseabrookisland.org or 843.768.9121.

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

Harvey Place: Hardeeville's "Collaboration Model" for New Attainable Housing

As one of the fastest-growing cities in South Carolina and the nation, Hardeeville faced a severe housing shortage. Housing prices had grown unaffordable for some critical workers like teachers, law enforcement and service industry staff — critical employees for the local community and economy — who become unable to purchase their own home rather than rent their housing. Because traditional market forces could not bridge this gap and develop new housing for low-to-moderate-income families, the city formed an Attainable Housing Task Force that brought together real estate agents, builders and nonprofits.

After analyzing land availability, construction costs and demographics, the group planned and developed the Harvey Place Project, a set of 10 townhouses on Hardeeville's Main Street, a walkable environment with easy grocery access, to serve as a proof-of-concept model for attainable housing in the region. The downtown location's high visibility illustrates that these developments can be a valuable addition to a neighborhood.

The public/private partnership aimed to use funds in the most efficient and effective way possible. Forino Co. built the houses at cost for well below market rate, totaling \$2.25 million for all 10 units. Habitat for Humanity of the Lowcountry offered volunteer labor and its specialized mortgage model, while the Beaufort Jasper Housing Trust granted \$9,000 per home for closing costs. The members of the partnership are now refining this attainable housing template for greater funding efficiency in future projects.

Contact Neil Parsons at nparsons@hardeevillesc.gov or 843.784.2231.

Population 10,001 – 20,000: City of Newberry

Newberry Arts Center Complex

The success and popularity of the Newberry Arts Center's programs meant that participation had grown, and so the NAC needed to expand into a larger physical location. The City of Newberry, aiming to revitalize a former grocery store and later the home of *The Newberry Observer* on its Main Street, decided to spend \$3.3 million to turn the 13,700-square-foot property into a vibrant, architecturally distinct new home for the NAC. The property offered adequate parking and accessibility, sufficient space for multipurpose layouts, and the ability to host the South Carolina Clay Conference and other meetings.

Funding for the complex came from accommodations and hospitality taxes, the city's economic development set-aside funds, the city's general fund and a state appropriation. Private donations made an outdoor plaza possible. The city made use of in-house expertise and minimal redesigns to the building to keep costs low. CREATE Newberry, a nonprofit promoting community arts access, also advocated for the effort and raised funds for its development. CREATE Newberry helped fund the purchase of art furnishings, equipment and audio/visual technology for the facility.

The finished product expands on recent investments in the downtown, including the renovation of the historic Newberry Opera House, the creation of the Edward Kyzer Newberry Firehouse Conference Center, as well as infrastructure improvements and private development. With its new and larger space, the NAC aims to further diversify its programs and build more arts organization partnerships.

Contact Jason Taylor at jtaylor@cityofnewberry.com or 803.321.1000.

Communications: Town of Summerville

Good Morning, Summerville!

Finding that government updates through channels like press releases and social media had grown less effective in reaching residents, the Town of Summerville created “Good Morning, Summerville,” a short-form video series which runs on a consistent weekday schedule. Each episode is less than two minutes long, providing friendly, personable and easy-to-watch updates that cover town initiatives and services, all in a style geared toward mobile devices and social media. The videos highlight the staff working in local government as well as local businesses, groups and community members — aiming to make local government feel open and accountable.

Keeping the process simple and affordable, the production involves only the town’s public information officer — who has become an increasingly recognizable face in the community — and his smartphone. With thousands of views on most videos and frequent positive feedback, engagement grew to a level that more than doubled its past records. Some videos, like emergency updates, business highlights or other Summerville-specific things, achieved viral levels of audience reach. A “birthday celebration” of Mason, the world’s largest sweet tea jar, reached 172,000 views, while a highlight of the downtown Talucci’s Italian Bakery found 159,000 views — numbers far greater than the town’s population of 51,000. Future plans include special miniseries to cover particular town projects.

Contact Christopher Makowski at cmakowski@summervillesc.gov or 843.897.4477.

Economic Development: City of Sumter

Philip L. Edwards Tennis Complex

With its existing 24 hard-surfaced courts at the Palmetto Tennis Center, the City of Sumter had a positive reputation in the tennis-playing world, but it did not offer clay tennis courts. These surfaces, which are vital for professional, collegiate and elite junior play, are rarely found in the United States, and are unheard of in cities of Sumter’s size. Through careful research, including evaluation of European clay facilities as well as maintenance practices and tournament operation, the city developed and opened the Philip L. Edwards Tennis Complex in 2024. It features eight authentic, tournament-grade German clay courts built to the international standards usually found only at elite private clubs or professional venues.

The \$4 million public/private project received funding from the Williams Brice Edwards Trust, while the city obtained state grants for infrastructure. In 2025, Sumter hosted the International Tennis Federation Women’s World Tennis Tour W15 championships, bringing players from around the world to Sumter. It and two other tournaments — the Iris Junior Championships and the U.S. Tennis Association state league championship — generated about \$530,000 in total economic impact over five months, as visitors contributed to Sumter’s hospitality industry. The city plans to further solidify its status as a major destination with more high-profile tennis events.

Contact Shelley Hartley at skile@sumtersc.gov or 803.795.2463.

Public Safety: City of Florence

Technology, Teamwork and Trust: Florence's Innovative Approach to Public Safety

Like many law enforcement agencies in recent years, the Florence Police Department faced significant staffing shortages, all while Florence's population and police call volume have continued to rise. Aiming to enhance public safety while avoiding burnout among overextended officers, the city researched and implemented the Keeping Florence Safe Initiative.

The initiative combines a Real Time Crime Center with a drone first responder program, enabling in-house operators to launch drones and gather critical information on the scene of a call and relay it to responding officers. The cameras help serve as a multiplier for police presence, such as by alerting the department of crowd situations where they may want a patrolling officer to observe in person. The initiative makes use of three dock-mounted drones, more than 45 stationary license plate readers, eight live-view cameras and access to more than 300 community cameras, including those found at local businesses and Florence Housing Authority properties.

In the first six months of camera usage, the technology helped in more than 100 investigations, and assisted in 55 arrests, the recovery of 36 stolen vehicles and 30 stolen license plates, as well as the location of seven missing people. Initial support for the cameras came from state funding, after which the city approved funding for the initiative's expansion, including the drones. Future plans include hiring additional staff for the crime center, encouraging community camera participation and potentially investing in gunshot detection technology.

Contact Amanda Pope at apope@cityofflorencesc.gov or 843.665.3113.

Public Service: City of Goose Creek

Goose Creek Therapeutic Recreation Division

Many adults with disabilities face decreasing opportunities for recreation, socialization and community after they age out of youth services. The City of Goose Creek established its Therapeutic Recreation Division as a dedicated branch of the Recreation Department to address this gap, building on the work of the Social Squad, an existing, volunteer-led club. In two years, the city's allocation of staff and facilities allowed the division to nearly quadruple its programming, allowing participants of all ages and abilities to be welcomed and celebrated.

Because no two participants or programs are the same, staff rely on ongoing input from those with disabilities as well as educators, parents and caregivers to drive the program's direction. City funding allowed for the hiring of a therapeutic recreation coordinator and the delivery of consistent, valuable programming, while the city has kept registration costs low to ensure accessibility. Sponsorships and local business partnerships have supported the program as it has grown, while collaborations with schools and volunteers have helped build meaningful relationships between the disability community and the broader public.

The city encourages and supports neighboring municipalities with similar efforts through mentorship and resources. It promotes inclusive employment through job opportunities within the division, with plans to expand to other departments. Inspired by the city's "Creek Rising" slogan, staff created a "We All Rise" campaign, alongside its development of Central Creek Park — Berkeley County's first fully accessible and inclusive park — to highlight the culture of recognizing and embracing community members of all abilities.

Contact Hannah Miller at hmiller@goosecreeksc.gov or 843.569.4242 x5286.

Public Works: City of Aiken

Shaws Creek Preserve: Using Conservation Partnerships to Protect City Water Supply

As with many cities in a fast-growing state, Aiken has faced development that puts pressure on its infrastructure and its existing community character. Through a partnership with the Aiken Land Conservancy, the city purchased 2,657 acres around Aiken's Mason Branch Reservoir, placing it under a conservation easement and permanently protecting this critical drinking water source from development.

When the property, known as the Brunswick Tract, was listed for sale and was under consideration for private development — including commercial space and 4,300 housing units — the city decided to purchase it for \$5.25 million. It used fund reserves and engaged in some inter-fund borrowing to be paid off over 10 years to do this. Initially, city council expected some limited development to occur on the tract. However, with a \$1.9 million grant to help manage the land from the SC Conservation Bank, the city was able to preserve the property in its entirety.

By protecting a water source, the project contributes to Aiken's focus on water infrastructure resiliency — an effort that also recently included a new \$70 million water treatment plant, and upgrades to aging downtown water infrastructure. By protecting the land from development, the city is able to promote forest health, offer passive recreation access, provide groundwater recharge benefits to four aquifers and protect wildlife habitat. The city is working with the ALC on several grant projects to improve songbird habitat and reforest native longleaf pines.

Contact Mary Tilton at mtilton@cityofaikensc.gov or 803.642.7640.

Other Entries

City of Abbeville

Seeking to elevate the holiday experience for its residents and visitors, the City of Abbeville embellished its existing Christmas programming by adding “The Light of Christmas” to its roster of seasonal citywide events. The inaugural event launched in December 2025 as an addition to the three-year-old “Christmas in Abbeville” experience. Using a collaborative approach orchestrated by city leadership, staff, and small business and community partners such as the Abbeville County Chamber of Commerce, the Catalyst Community Development Corporation and Cold Springs Mennonite Church, the season-long events drew a 42% increase in downtown traffic from the start of the programming in 2023, and a downtown holiday sales increase of 129%.

Funding came from hospitality tax dollars, and an initial investment of \$147,000 by the city in the festival’s first year. Because of its economic impact, the efforts generated an estimated \$5 to \$7 were generated for every \$1 spent.

Contact Mike Clary at mclary@abbevillecitysc.com or 864.366.1800.

City of Bamberg

With limited municipal resources available, the City of Bamberg struggled to consistently deliver communitywide sanitation services. The city council adopted the Sanitation Captains Initiative to provide additional community-driven sanitation services by way of resident volunteers. Three “sanitation captains” in each district routinely provide information to the Sanitation Department during their daily commutes, which allows for greater monitoring of the community’s sanitation needs, while also providing volunteers with a structured framework for their operations, with minimal time commitments and little disruption to their personal schedules.

Support for the initiative came through existing sanitation resources, Keep Bamberg Beautiful

and other community partnerships. By creating a sustainable working model, the city plans to enhance the initiative with more thorough sanitation issue reporting and communications tools, and by adding an incentive-based program for resident reporting of sanitation concerns.

Contact Corey Ramsey at councilmanclramsey@yahoo.com or 803.308.3990.

Town of Batesburg-Leesville

The Town of Batesburg-Leesville recently became a wholesale water customer of the Joint Municipal Water and Sewer Commission through a \$35 million, two-phase infrastructure connection project, after closing its nearly 90-year-old plant. In 2019, the town contracted the engineering firm Hazen and Sawyer in 2019 to study potential solutions for addressing water capacity concerns, and town council ultimately decided to link the existing system with that of the JMWSC.

The town initially funded the engineering study through its enterprise fund. It also leveraged a \$10 million SC Infrastructure Investment Program/American Rescue Plan Act grant through the Rural Infrastructure Authority, as well as a \$4.25 million grant from the Emerging Contaminants fund through the State Revolving Fund. The town also contributed \$228,466 in matching funds. The project opens the possibility to providing water services to unincorporated portions of western Lexington County through the Town of Batesburg-Leesville or through JMWSC.

Contact Jay Hendrix at jhendrix@batesburg-leesville.org or 803.413.7934.

City of Bennettsville

In efforts to combat the retail leakage of residents purchasing goods outside of town, and vacant downtown storefronts, the City of Bennettsville created a retail cooperative, spearheaded by Main Street Bennettsville and the city’s Department of Tourism, Parks and

Recreation. By revitalizing an underutilized former police substation, the city fashioned a storefront, gallery space and event venue for local vendors to showcase their wares and host book signings as well as other gatherings.

Member vendors pay a nominal rent and sell their goods in a low-cost, cashless environment. They also manage the co-op themselves, which saves the city on staffing. With its roster of 18 current vendors, the co-op features many locally produced products and services, from home decor and personal care items to honey and handcrafted goods. Funding for Bennettsville & Co. comes from a combination of city resources and programming funds from Main Street Bennettsville and the Department of Tourism, Parks and Recreation.

Contact William Simon at william.simon@bennettsvillesc.com or 843.439.3879.

Town of Bluffton

Using research data and experience to identify the need for greater civic knowledge at the local level and the need to combat misinformation, the Town of Bluffton published the *Bluffton Resident Resource Guide* to help residents understand how their municipality and its services work. The 24-page guide breaks down barriers by providing valuable civic information, which level of government is responsible for what, and what the town can and cannot do. The printed guide was mailed to every household in 2025, and is also hand-distributed by realtors, property owners associations and chambers of commerce. By getting a printed guide into residents' hands, the town shared accurate, useful information rather than simply telling them to source it themselves online.

Funding for the guide came from the town's general fund. The town used its staff and a contractor to write, design and translate the final work — saving on production costs. Bluffton integrates the guide into its other communications, and will update and mail out the guide every two years.

Contact Debbie Szpanka at dszpanka@townofbluffton.com or 843.540.2274.

Town of Clio

After identifying gaps in the Town of Clio's communication with residents, its mayor, who holds a graphic design degree, met with council and residents to discuss creating a new branding package to boost the town's image. The town developed and adopted a new town logo and seal, and then launched its first official website and social media platforms. To further boost communications, the also established a CodeRED emergency alert system, and a new festival to the events calendar.

Clio's marketing, branding, and communications campaign was able to integrate the needs of the town council while revitalizing the town's image. The in-house approach saved the town from any costs associated with outside vendors. With its new branding and information sources, the town's new "Ribs & Rods Festival," launched in 2023, has brought in growing numbers of visitors, some from more than three hours away, and received almost 900,000 views on social media in 2025.

Contact Adam Pate at mayor@cliosc.com or 843.506.0204.

City of Conway

Aiming to revitalize an underused alleyway off of 2nd Avenue, the City of Conway — increasingly known for its holiday celebrations — reconceptualized the space as "Holiday Alley." This fully accessible destination, adored with seasonal decorations and lights throughout the year, links to the city's Town Green; the Terrace, a public gathering place; and the Riverwalk. A signature arch carries revolving, holiday-specific signage, like "Lover's Lane" for Valentine's Day, "Bunny Trail" for Easter, the "Tunnel of Bones" for Halloween, and "Merry & Bright" for Christmas.

This citywide collaboration included input from various departments, and utilized city staff and labor. Funding came from the city's hospitality funds and from Tree City USA. With its first goal of realizing a safe way to connect the downtown area and keep the merriment going all year-round, the plan's second phase will extend the alley toward the riverfront, adding landscaping, a digital kiosk and a rotating public art display.

Contact Mary Catherine Hyman at mhyman@conwaysc.gov or 843.248.1780.

City of Dillon

What was once a vacant lot in downtown Dillon recently transformed into the city's Festival Marketplace, a multi-use outdoor pavilion that serves as a farmer's market venue and gathering place. Without a permanent home to support Dillon's farmers markets and community events, the city sought to create a marketplace while revitalizing existing vacant land. After securing funding through a combination of grants, legislative funds, and private donations, the \$952,020 project was realized using input from vendors, community leaders, city staff and regional partners. Through the Festival Marketplace, the city realized its goal of increasing its annual market days, vendor participation and foot traffic.

The City of Dillon partnered with the Pee Dee Regional Council of Governments, its state representative, Dillon County Chamber of Commerce, Dillon County Health Initiative, and the Dillon Community Alliance to open the Festival Marketplace opened in fall 2025, fostering greater community engagement and driving economic growth.

Contact Tally McColl at nicholas.t.mccoll@gmail.com or 843.309.4577.

City of Folly Beach

Seeking a solution to chronic roadway flooding, especially for problematic points along East Arctic Avenue, the City of Folly Beach launched a multi-phased Dune Infiltration System Program. Working with partner WK Dickson, an Ardurra Company, the city developed a sustainability-focused solution that recognized its unique needs as a coastal community. The engineering firm conducted a feasibility study was conducted in 2022 in collaboration with the city stormwater and public works staff.

The study found that a dune infiltration system would be a sustainable option for Folly Beach's flood-prone areas, diverting stormwater in an environmentally sensitive away. The city designed such a system for 10th Street, which will serve as a model to replicate in other targeted areas along East Arctic Avenue. The initial feasibility study was funded through the city's established stormwater budget, while engineering designs are funded through the city's capital stormwater program budget.

Contact Eric Lutz at elutz@follybeach.gov or 843.708.9982.

Town of Fort Mill

With local newspapers and other news sources in decline in the Fort Mill area, the town wanted to find a way to keep its residents informed of town projects, meetings and events. In 2021, it established a monthly electronic newsletter, the *Fort Mill Connections* e-newsletter. Produced in-house, primarily by the communications and marketing manager with input from every department, the newsletter allows for direct communication with constituents, covering municipal projects, offerings and department spotlights. The publication strives to deliver a variety of content through multiple voices throughout the town, including business news, event updates and anecdotal stories from residents. This multimedia newsletter also offers videos, surveys and helpful links.

As of December 2025, the newsletter had a subscriber base of 2,661, and consistently receives a 70% open rate. Costs associated with the project are minimal as it is produced using staff resources and minimal subscriptions services.

Contact Christopher Sardelli at csardelli@fortmillsc.gov or 803.992.0021.

City of Greenwood

Waller Avenue in Uptown Greenwood needed an infrastructure overhaul. Decades of utility repairs had left of patchwork of misaligned concrete and asphalt, reducing accessibility and creating tripping hazards. Through a multi-agency collaboration between city leadership, local businesses and engineering consultant Davis & Floyd, the city was able to fulfill part of its Vision Greenwood 2035 Comprehensive Master Plan by revitalizing Waller Avenue. Using a "dig-once" model, the infrastructure along the street was replaced to provide an accessible surface and streetscape, while at the same time, underground utilities were updated.

The total project investment of \$1.2 million was primarily funding through a Community Development Block Grant, paired with its hospitality tax dollars. With the construction phase complete, the current focus is on sustainable economic growth tied in with the objectives of the master plan — create a cohesive, park-like feel for Uptown, encourage private investment and integrate streets with future pedestrian and bike paths.

Contact Becca Bowyer at rebecca.bowyer@gwdcity.com or 864.942.8417.

Town of Hilton Head Island

In an ongoing effort to maintain its shoreline and protect against erosion, Hilton Head Island completes a beach renourishment program approximately every eight to 10 years. For the 2025-2026 project, the town devised a public information program to keep information flowing to constituents through public presentations, media interviews, press releases, in-person meetings, mass mailings, newsletters, e-newsletters, a website and social media. Multiple town departments contributed to the project, as did stakeholder and community input.

The information program sought to create greater public awareness and to share information timely through each phase of renourishment. The minimal funding costs were sourced from the town's communications budget, while staff and partners created the content. For the greater Beach Renourishment Project, replacing 2.2 million cubic yards of beach-compatible sand, the \$47.5 million budget is funded primarily using tourism dollars through the Beach Preservation Fee.

Contact Heather Woolwine at heatherw@hiltonheadislandsc.gov or 843.341.4604.

City of Laurens

In 2026, the City of Laurens' Capitol Theatre celebrates its 100th anniversary, and the city aimed to responsibly maintain this historic structure. It established a revitalization plan to transform the theatre into a mixed-use space that celebrates the performing and visual arts, civic engagement and economic growth. The multi-phased project included restoring several architectural elements to preserve their historic character while also modernizing the facility to meet current safety standards and functionality. Updates included a new audiovisual system, upgraded seating and reinforced stage infrastructure.

Funding for the project was made possible in part by a \$200,000 Growing Rural Communities Grant through the SC Department of Commerce. The City of Laurens and is working on the next phase of the project by expanding its programming and special events, including a film festival, more live music across additional genres, and continued free movie nights.

Contact Lisa Canada at lcanda@cityoflaurens.sc.com or 864.908.9874.

Town of Lexington

When Lexington Town Council identified communications as among their top three priorities for 2024, the town reorganized its public relations team to include an economic developer, public information officer, digital media coordinator, marketing coordinator and special events manager. A communications survey provided feedback from residents that informed a new marketing communications plan.

With social media determined as the primary way that residents received information, the strategic plan outlined which social media channels were the most effective, as well as how to strategically post messages at a frequency that allows for maximum engagement. Planning also pointed to video content as critical. In 2025, the department produced 151 videos, nearly tripling the amount produced in 2022. No outside funding was needed as the project and its deliverables were managed completely in-house. Since communications enhancements began, the town saw a major increase in social media engagement — 7.5 million Facebook views and 2.4 million Instagram views.

Contact Laurin Barnes at lbarnes@lexsc.gov or 803.600.2533.

City of Mauldin

The City of Mauldin transformed a vacant elementary school cafeteria and gymnasium into the Mauldin Cultural Center for theatre, activities, youth programming, and community arts over a 10-year span, with recent renovations in 2019 and 2020. The Mauldin Theatre Company, funded primarily by the city as public service initiative, operates in the cultural center and has historically focused on youth programs. As it grew in popularity, it became evident that the city needed to expand its offerings to allow for great access and participation from a broader range of constituents.

In addition to city support, the theatre company also receives funding from corporate sponsors, private donors, the Greenville County Council and the Mauldin Chamber of Commerce, and is backed by the work of many volunteers. As it has grown, the Mauldin Theatre Company has increased its attendance averages to an estimated 10,000 in 2025. Participation has increased from 75 performers in 2023 to 460 in 2025.

Contact Gregory Saxton at gsaxton@mauldincitysc.com or 864.914.0711.

Town of Mount Pleasant

Through feedback from its biannual Employee Engagement Survey, the Town of Mount Pleasant found that its employees were not immune to stress and burnout, and they needed greater career development and cross-departmental connection. The town therefore created an employee wellness and engagement program, tailored to employee feedback, with the goal of fostering improved organizational culture, wellbeing, engagement opportunities and retention. Partnering with the consultant Gallagher to conduct the biannual surveys, the town fully funds the project through its operation budget.

With insight provided by Human Resources, the employee relations committee and other municipal departments, the town has enacted initiatives including mentoring programs, engagement and wellness activities, and group outings, fostering greater employee satisfaction and retention. The next survey will take place in 2026. Future plans include expanding leadership development, refining wellness programming, as well as adding new cross-departmental outings and engagement opportunities.

Contact Eric LaFontaine at elafontaine@tompsc.com or 843.901.1649.

City of North Myrtle Beach

Since opening in 2014, the City of North Myrtle Beach's Park and Sports Complex has received 8 million visitors, generating \$270 million in direct economic impact. A thriving, multifaceted complex focused on community recreation and sports tourism, it has 25 athletic fields, 6 miles of trails, five playgrounds, two dog parks, 12 picnic areas and an outdoor amphitheater.

In its most recent facility expansion, city leadership and staff met with residents and other stakeholders to assess major priorities. They developed a plan for generating more year-round use, especially in the off-peak months. The complex now receives 1 million visitors a year, generating an estimated \$28 million annually in economic impact.

The complex was financed through an eight-year general obligation bond leveraged through a temporary millage rate increase. Operating costs are mostly sustained through the complex's

revenue, with minimal reliance on the city's general fund. Phase II of the project completed in early 2026.

Contact Lindsey Banter at lrbanter@nmb.us or 843.280.5655.

City of Orangeburg

As the former Orangeburg City Hall, which served the community for more than 100 years, had become outdated, city leadership sought to transform another existing building into a state-of-the-art 18,000-square-foot facility. Large enough to accommodate key municipal departments under one roof, the new city hall is located in downtown Orangeburg, helping to drive the district's economic growth and development.

Through a \$2.5 million state grant, a \$50,000 USDA Community Facilities Program Grant and a \$7 million installment purchase revenue bond, the city realized its project goals of establishing a modern, fully accessible facility, on time and on budget. By collaborating with local stakeholders and contractors, the city cut the ribbon on its new headquarters in August 2025. Future upgrades will include an expansion of the city hall's technology offerings to include digital kiosks, virtual meeting capabilities and updated cybersecurity, and the city also plans to add energy-efficient systems.

Contact Tonya Lott at tonya.lott@orangeburg.sc.us or 803.533.5923.

Town of Pacolet

After a decade-long hiatus, Paddle the Pacolet returned in 2024 to fulfill objectives from the town's comprehensive plan and master plan, including the expansion of outdoor recreation, river access and community events. This community-focused event leverages partnerships among businesses and local nonprofits, as well as volunteer and town resources to create a guided Pacolet River paddling experience. Thirty-five paddlers participated in 2024, and more than 100 paddlers participated in 2025.

Funding for the annual event is primarily sourced through event sponsors, with a small participation fee, as well as through grants including a \$5,000 Elevate Upstate grant and a \$30,000 Park and Recreation Development Fund program grant. Riverbend Aggregates also deeded a portion of land to the town for the creation of a new river access point. Planned enhancements

for the event include education on Cherokee and Catawba history, soapstone use, native wildlife, and the river's role in powering the historic mill and shaping the community.

Contact Patrick Kay at pkay@townofpacolet.com or 864.474.9504.

Town of Pendleton

Proposed by Anderson School District 4, a Sensory Friendly Santa activity complimented the Town of Pendleton's holiday offerings during its annual Christkindlmarkt on the Square. Working in collaboration with the school district's physical therapist and occupational therapist, the town used its staff to create an low-stimulation, all-inclusive, sensory-friendly experience providing photos with Santa. The event uses reduced noise and lighting, minimal crowds and a relaxed atmosphere to help every child feel comfortable and included.

The minimal funding needed to create the experience was provided through the town's general fund. Anderson School District 4 also provided staffing and sensory friendly toys for participants. After the success of its launch, the town plans to partner with the school district again to host the event in 2026. The town will also continue to work with the district's physical therapists and occupational therapist to evaluate and improve upon community events and programs.

Contact Lindsey Watley at lindseyw@townofpendleton.org or 864.502.4491.

Town of Timmonsville

With more than half of Timmonsville's population made up of residents age 55 and older, the town wanted to foster more social connection as well as health and wellness options for its seniors. It hosted a planning seminar with key stakeholders, city leadership and the Pee Dee Council of Governments, before devising a working plan to improve access to senior health and wellness amenities, while also driving economic vitality to historic Main Street. The town then transformed an unused, municipal-owned building into a full-fledged senior center to support engagement, health and wellbeing.

The project made use of American Rescue Plan Act funds and supplemental state funds. Working in partnership with Florence County Senior

Citizens Association, the town's state legislative delegation and Florence County Council, the town successfully created a dedicated place for seniors, all while revitalizing an unused facility and encouraging greater activity on Timmonsville's Main Street.

Contact Thomas McFadden at thomasm@timmonsville.org or 843.319.7115.

City of York

The Liberty Street corridor in York's historic district needed an overhaul of its aging water infrastructure, and so the city pursued a plan to replace approximately 1.6 miles of 80-year-old waterlines with modern, 12-inch high-capacity water mains, capable of meeting projected needs for the next 50 years. After thoroughly evaluating existing utilities as part of York's capital improvement program, city leadership devised a plan to not only upgrade this waterline, but also to pave Liberty Street, working in conjunction with the SC Department of Transportation. The city also engaged with affected residents and business owners through public meetings, and maintained ongoing project updates through its website and social media.

The city secured 62% of total project costs through external sources, including \$5 million in grants from the SC Infrastructure Investment Program and through state appropriations. Additional local funding came from capacity fees and the city's fund balance.

Contact Sarah Ramirez at sramirez@yorksc.gov or 803.818.0089.



Main Street South Carolina Inspiration Awards

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

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

Excellence on Main Street Award

Downtown Florence – Pine Street Townhomes

Florence's restoration of its historic core has seen the recruitment of valuable commercial tenants, but its aim of achieving 18 hours of daily foot traffic required greater focus on housing. The Downtown Florence 2030 Master Plan set a goal of 1,000 new housing units within a decade, including quality affordable, missing middle and market-rate housing at multiple price points and types. The Pine Street Townhomes, which contribute to this goal, help anchor the downtown's eastern boundary providing housing for working professionals, especially targeted to district healthcare employees; and serving as a bridge to neighborhoods in the east targeted for further revitalization.

The developer Urban Development Services led the project, spending \$2 million with support from the SC Community Loan Fund. The City of Florence helped assemble the necessary land parcels over several years and provided a conditional grant of \$200,000, reimbursed upon completion of construction. The Downtown Florence Main Street program provided promotional support, and the City of Florence provided downpayment assistance for first-time homebuyers through its Community Services program.

The units have a scale and appearance appropriate for its location among surrounding historic neighborhoods. The project will be the first phase of a master-planned development of townhomes and duplex properties, including owner-occupied units and rental units. When completed, the overall development will have 35 new housing units and a value of more than \$10 million. Because the project serves as a proof of concept, it has helped attract other small-scale developers to the market.

Contact Hannah Davis at hdavis@cityofflorencesc.gov or 843.678.5912.

Inspiration Awards

Gaines Jontz Rehabilitation

Downtown Lancaster – The Marshall Building

The eight-unit, 7,500-square-foot building at 123 S. White St. in Lancaster — dating to 1950 — housed mostly service businesses throughout its history, and had fallen into disrepair. It was mostly vacant by 2021 when Greg Gregory bought it for revitalization.

Gregory employed architects to establish a unifying theme to the haphazardly modified storefronts of the building, and had the building gutted, with all-new plumbing, electrical, air and interiors. Renovations cost \$765,000 in addition to the \$135,000 property cost. He also commissioned a mural by artist Lance Turner. This artwork specifies that the correct pronunciation of the city's name is "Lank KISS stir" — a point of pride among native residents.

The project to bring new life to White Street generated excitement, with all seven available spaces leased within a few weeks of becoming available. The building now houses preexisting businesses, new startups and a nonprofit.

Contact Steven "Flip" Hutfler at shutfler@lancastercitysc.com or 803.289.1453.

Master Merchant

Downtown Florence – Colton Cauthen, Jack's Books

In October 2024, Colton Cauthen opened Jack's Books — who identified a viable opportunity to fill a market gap and establish Florence's only independent bookstore — with assistance from the tenant upfit grant of the Downtown Florence Main Street program. Within a year, he made the shop to not only be a must-see local destination, but one that has national attention as well, with highlights in *USA Today* and state travel influencer blogs.

In addition to growing his foot traffic by 200% and establishing a robust e-commerce business, he worked to bolster the overall downtown economy as well. He has collaborated with other merchants, created engagement opportunities and events for customers, supported local organizations and developed a unique line of merchandise connecting the customer base to his brand and the downtown as a whole. Cauthen was also selected as the only South Carolina business to participate in Main Street America's virtual business accelerator.

Contact Hannah Davis at hdavis@cityofflorences.gov or 843.678.5912.

Outstanding Partnership

Main Street Manning – Manning Lions Club

On the 11 federal holidays taking place throughout the year, such as Memorial Day, Independence Day or Labor Day, Main Street Manning has placed United States flags on display along sidewalks in its downtown. As it doubled the number of flags, it sought a community partner to help with this, and the timing coincided with a push by the Manning Lions Club to find new ways to enhance its community engagement.

For several years now, the Lions Club has provided the labor to set out about 80 flags each holiday — a critical boost for the Main Street staff to make the patriotic displays possible. Main Street Manning provides the flags, flagpoles and storage space. The value of the Lions Club's volunteer hours in this project amounts to \$1,670 annually, and totaling about \$5,000 since the partnership's beginning.

Contact Carrie Trebil at ctrebil@cityofmanning.org or 803.433.5132.

Outstanding Promotion

Main Street Fountain Inn – Christmas INN Our Town

Christmas INN Our Town has brought horse-drawn carriage rides to the downtown for more than 35 years. The event has grown into a full month of business-supporting activities for residents and visitors. In 2025, the city and Main Street Fountain Inn sought to reimagine the program using a planning committee of longtime event partners, business owners and community members, to use cohesive seasonal promotion to help extend existing holiday visits and sustain foot traffic throughout December.

Working with many community partners and city departments, Main Street Fountain Inn hosted 17 events and marketed 71 activities under the Christmas INN Our Town umbrella, creating a shared brand and consistent messaging. Planning began in March, a teaser campaign began in July and full marketing efforts began in early November. Funding came from the city, sponsorships, in-kind support and event revenue, and the efforts ultimately attracted more than 129,000 visitors to downtown.

Contact Amanda Benfield at Amanda.benfield@fountaininn.org or 864.871.2405.

Outstanding Service

Main Street Manning – Jesse and Anna Surette

Manning natives who have chosen to stay in their hometown, Jesse and Anna Surette are early-career professionals who find many ways to give back to the community and support its development. Jesse is a downtown merchant, as a financial advisor with Edward Jones, and has provided financial workshops to small business owners and city employees; while Anna is the communications director for Laurence Manning Academy.

The couple often volunteers at or attends events in Manning. They offer their services as photographers to Main Street Manning, and Anna often shares her design talents for various logo designs. They served as committee members for the Farm to Table Dinner, where Anna prepared the tomato pies on the menu. In 2025 alone, they contributed 35 volunteer hours just to Main Street Manning, on top of their many hours volunteered with other community groups.

Contact Carrie Trebil at ctrebil@cityofmanningsc.org or 803.433.5132.

Outstanding Special Project

Downtown Florence – Reimagining Walkability

As Francis Marion University launched a new occupational therapy doctorate program, it sought out Florence's Main Street program for downtown engagement opportunities for these students. These groups joined with the SC Department of Public Health's Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Prevention Section to study walkability and accessibility in the downtown district's corridors in an 18-month initiative.

After training, the students studied a 17-block area of the downtown. They created and presented tangible recommendations for pedestrian safety improvements, accessibility, vibrancy and connectivity — especially for vulnerable populations — to city and university leadership. Because the city has been planning its streetscape design projects, the walkability study and recommendations could meaningfully contribute to the community's built environment. The project has become a permanent part of the curriculum for the occupational therapy students, and has come at a time when more cities are focusing on inclusive urban design, quality of life and public health outcomes.

Contact Hannah Davis at hdavis@cityofflorencescc.gov or 843.678.5912.

An aerial photograph of a large crowd gathered at Hardeeville Memorial Park for a ribbon-cutting ceremony. The park features a large wooden pavilion, several American flags, and a paved plaza. People are seen walking around the park, some holding flags.

Saluting Community Veterans

Parks, Memorials Connect Cities With Hometown Service Members

*Hardeeville cut the ribbon on the new Hardeeville Memorial Park on Memorial Day, May 25, 2026.
Photo: City of Hardeeville.*

Military roots run deep in South Carolina, with many cities and towns honoring military members, veterans and first responders with parks, monuments and memorials.

Myrtle Beach is one of those cities.

After the Myrtle Beach Air Force Base closed in 1993, its site was developed as the Market Common, a community of homes, shops, restaurants, parks, trails and offices. It's heralded as a model for military base reuse, but it didn't lose its connection to the base, which originally started as a runway in 1941 to train World War II pilots and was established as a full base in 1956. That connection is on full display at Warbird Park.

Park visitors are welcomed by three Air Force planes exemplifying the types used in the Cold War, Vietnam and the Gulf War. Every day, people walk around the aircraft, posing for pictures as they make their way into the rest of the park.

"The city's really invested over the years in the Market Common. It has become one of the gems of Myrtle Beach," said Meredith Denari, the city's director of communications and creative services. "What has really become the cherry on top is Warbird Park. It's a huge attraction, especially in recent years, because we have added these memorials."

Those include the World War II memorial, which opened in 2023 when 11 local World War II veterans took part in the ceremony. It features

a large plaza, panels depicting battles from the war, and columns representing the military branches. The nearby Vietnam Veterans' Memorial features a long stonework wall, a mural, artwork of a Huey helicopter and seating areas, with statues expected to be installed soon. About 1,000 people turned out for the grand opening in May, with Medal of Honor recipient James E. Livingston as the keynote speaker.

The park also features a 9/11 memorial with a piece of the former World Trade Center, plaques honoring Gold Star families, and a Wall of Service with names of Myrtle Beach base veterans.

Much of the park's look can be attributed to Chris Miller, who recently retired as Myrtle Beach's infrastructure project manager. Miller was the on-site caretaker of the base for seven years after it closed.

At first, Miller said the park was just a place to see the planes provided by the military. He teamed up with the Air Force Base Redevelopment Authority, which had funds available to redevelop the base and was interested in ideas to improve the property, and sought buy-in from the city council and city manager.

"Everybody talked about the military cemetery in Florence. I wanted to put Myrtle Beach on the map," Miller said.

Once the World War II memorial opened, the city began planning the Vietnam memorial, and it turned

to the community – particularly veterans.

"All the plaques you see on the sitting wall, those are all divisions of people that were here in Myrtle Beach that served during the Vietnam War, and that was all because of public input," he said. "If said it once, I said it 1,000 times: 'This isn't my monument. This isn't the city of Myrtle Beach's monument. This is your monument. I'm just building it for you. So, you tell me what you want.'"

The park has been a source of pride for Myrtle Beach's residents and visitors.

"We're so proud of it. It's our busiest park by far, hands down," Denari said. "It's not just the older population that comes there, people bring their kids, and it's just a great learning experience for everyone."



In Hardeeville, a new Memorial Park opened May 25, designed to honor veterans and first responders — “our heroes,” said Matt Davis, deputy city manager.

It’s home to a pavilion with meeting and gathering space, along with a Battlefield Cross, a traditional memorial of combat boots, a helmet and rifle. There is a private area for reflection, and monuments and flags to represent each branch of the armed services.

“We also have a large grass lawn, because that was something that really came out of our listening sessions with veterans and other groups. We didn’t want it to just always be a solemn place,” Davis said. “I mean, we’re never going to have rock concerts there, but it’s a place where people can gather and enjoy themselves as a result of the sacrifices that folks have made. We want it to be used more than a handful of times a year.”

The park is part of a larger revitalization push for Hardeeville’s downtown.

“Some folks came to us and said, ‘We really need to honor our veterans,’ so that’s what kicked it off. People recognize and value what our veterans and first responders have done and continue to do for us every day,” he said. “We said, ‘Well, we’ve got all this

property, why don’t we master plan all of it?’ The first component was the Memorial Park.”

The park’s opening ceremony over Memorial Day brought out both longtime and new residents in the rapidly growing community.

“It was a great blending of the ‘two Hardeevilles’ into one, which is what we work on all the time to try to make it more of a cohesive community. And this is a great way to do it,” Davis said. “So many people can bond over that shared experience.”

Davis stressed the importance of getting public input and understanding what a particular community wants in a memorial, while at the same time being realistic with the public about what is possible. He also pointed out that cities must plan for the costs of park upkeep.

“The absolute last thing you want is for it to look like we don’t care and we don’t take care of it. Don’t forget about the ongoing costs,” he said.

Goose Creek has historically been a military town, so when Mayor Greg Habib took office in 2018, one of his top priorities was to find a way to show the city’s appreciation for veterans.

“The U.S. Navy brought many of our residents here, including the mayor’s own family, as his father was

in the Navy. The mayor realized that honoring their service was important and, frankly, long overdue,” said Frank Johnson, Goose Creek’s public information officer.

That priority became the John McCants Veterans Park, named for U.S. Army veteran and long-time Goose Creek City Council member John McCants. The Veterans Plaza at the park’s entrance features monuments and flags of every U.S. military branch, while the park includes a walking path, a playground, a dog park and a food forest.

Several years ago, the city began offering residents the chance to purchase banners that feature a photo of a veteran along with the veteran’s name, military branch and time of service. The banners are displayed at the park and City Hall throughout November for Veterans Day, and are later given to the families.

Also, Goose Creek residents can purchase bricks engraved with a veteran’s name and military branch or message. These bricks are a permanent addition to the park.

“The banners and bricks in particular give residents a real chance to participate in honoring the heroes in their lives,” Johnson said.



Eleven local World War II veterans took part in the ceremony opening Myrtle Beach’s World War II Memorial in 2023. Photo: City of Myrtle Beach.



How Do Property Taxes Work?

Property taxes or property tax equivalents have existed in South Carolina since the colonial era, and have long been the primary funding source for local government and schools. The first act of the South Carolina General Assembly establishing property taxes passed in 1777.

Property taxes remain one of the most important and stable revenue sources available to South Carolina municipalities. While cities and towns rely on a mixture of revenues — including business licenses, sales and use taxes, franchise fees, permits and state distributions — property taxes continue to provide critical support for core local government services and operations.

For local elected officials, understanding how property taxes are levied and how those revenues are used is essential for budget planning, financial management and communicating with residents.

Levying property taxes

Property taxes are levied on real property and personal property.

- Real property includes land, homes, commercial buildings and other permanently attached structures.
- Personal property includes items such as motor vehicles, boats, aircraft and business personal property.

Regardless of whether the property is a house, a business or an airplane, the method for calculating property taxes is the same. First, county assessors periodically determine the fair market value of the property. Next, the state constitution assigns an assessment ratio based on the type of property being taxed. Finally, the applicable units of local governments apply their own millage rates.

Assessment of property

Property values in South Carolina are assessed based on fair market value. State law defines this as the price a willing buyer would pay a willing seller in an arm's-length transaction. The county assessor conducts a mass appraisal of properties within the county, using sales data, location, condition and market trends to estimate value. The county uses standardized methods rather than individual inspections to do this. Municipalities are not involved in this process.

State law requires properties to be reassessed every five years. The state imposes a 15% cap on increases in assessed value over a five-year cycle, unless the property changes hands or is significantly improved. Reassessment does not raise or lower taxes automatically, it simply updates property values to reflect changes in the market.

In the next step of the process, the fair market value of a property is multiplied by the constitutionally established assessment ratio. The property's usage determines the ratio. Owner-occupied residences are assessed at 4%, while commercial, rental, and second homes are assessed at 6%. Meanwhile, the base ratio is 10.5% for some personal property.

This system of separate assessment ratios reflects a longstanding political choice to protect homeowners — particularly those who use their home as a primary residence — while relying more heavily on business and investment property for tax revenue.

Millage rates

Once a property has an assessed value, local units of government will apply their specific millage rates.

The only discretion local governments have in this process is in setting the millage rate. State law has already determined the assessment ratio, and the overall marketplace determines the fair market value of the property.

Local governments establish millage rates annually during their budget processes. Municipalities are required to publish a notice of their budget and corresponding millage rates to inform the public of the anticipated tax liability.

The “millage rate” is just the tax rate, expressed in a somewhat old-fashioned way. In it, 1 mill equals \$1 of tax for every \$1,000 of taxable value.

A taxpayer will generally receive a single tax bill from the county, combining the property taxes levied by all local governments that provide services to the taxpayer, including the county, the school district, the municipality and other local taxing entities.

Use of property tax revenues

Municipalities' most common use of property tax revenue is to fund the municipal general fund, supporting the day-to-day functions of municipal government. Millage levied for this purpose is commonly referred to as operating millage. Revenue generated from operating millage helps fund such critical local government services such as police and fire protection, sanitation, code enforcement and streets, among others.

Municipalities may also levy property taxes to repay any general obligation debt they have. This millage is separate from general operating millage and is specifically dedicated to repayment of bonds. Cities and towns may use bonds to fund projects such as public safety facilities, municipal buildings, roads, recreation facilities, or items authorized by law.

Special tax districts and municipal participation

In some cases, municipalities may leverage unique taxing structures such as tax increment financing districts, known as TIFs, or municipal improvement districts,

known as MIDs, within a defined geographic area for particular development and redevelopment projects.

These mechanisms vary based on statutory authority and local circumstances, but can provide additional tools to support economic development, infrastructure improvements and revitalization efforts.

Additional resources

To learn more about municipal finance, revenue authority, budgeting and taxation in South Carolina, municipal officials should refer to the Municipal Association of South Carolina's *Handbook for Municipal Officials* at www.masc.sc (keyword: officials handbook). The handbook provides an overview of municipal powers and responsibilities, including sections addressing property taxation, budgeting, debt financing, revenue sources, and financial administration. It serves as a helpful reference for local officials navigating municipal finance and governance issues.

The Association's municipal members can also log in to the website and use the new SCottie artificial intelligence assistant to help understand how millage rates can impact residents. Learn more on page 2.

New Election Laws Bring Major Changes for Municipalities

Two election bills passed by the General Assembly and signed into law in 2026 will bring important changes to municipal election administration, filing procedures and special election scheduling.

H3556, Act 213 — Election dates, partisan elections, election commissions and swearing-in dates

H3556 standardizes municipal election dates across South Carolina.

Beginning January 1, 2027, municipalities must hold general elections on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in either April or November of odd-numbered years. Municipalities already conducting elections on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in either April or November of even-numbered years may continue to do so. Municipalities

conducting elections in November of odd-numbered years as of January 1, 2027, must retain that election date.

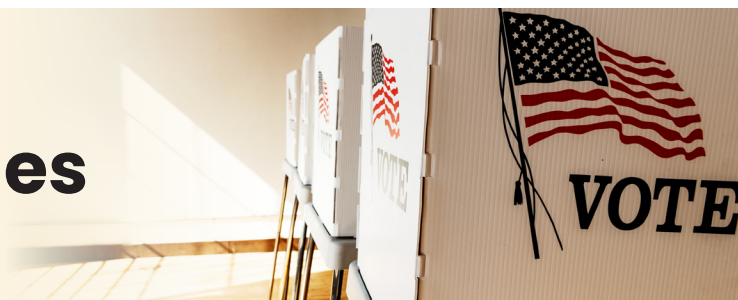
Municipalities that do not adopt a permissible election date before April 1, 2027, will default to holding elections on the November date in odd-numbered years.

The new law also prohibits partisan municipal elections in municipalities with populations of 39,000 or more based on the 2020 Census.

Municipal election commissions will now be limited to municipalities with populations of at least 10,000. Existing commissions in smaller municipalities will be abolished effective January 1, 2027, and county election officials will assume responsibility for conducting and certifying those elections.

Municipalities whose elections are administered by county election boards must reimburse counties for the "reasonable costs" of conducting and certifying elections, following a reimbursement schedule to be established by the South Carolina Election Commission. Affected municipalities may incur new or increased election administration costs in this process. Some municipalities may already reimburse counties for election services, while others could experience additional costs under the new framework.

Previously, state law did not establish a uniform date for municipal terms to begin, aside from a requirement that elected officials must wait at least 48 hours after polls close before qualifying for office. This left



municipalities to address swearing-in procedures through local ordinance.

Under the amended law, terms may begin between 48 hours and 80 days after the election, with a default start date at the beginning of the first council meeting in the month following the election. The law allows certified election winners to serve while election appeals are pending.

H3557, Act 137 – Filing periods, limitations on special election scheduling

H3557 makes several procedural changes to special election

administration. Both partisan and nonpartisan candidate filing periods have been shortened to seven days.

It also eliminates certain special elections when a regularly scheduled election for the same office will take place within 100 days.

Perhaps the most consequential procedural change is found in SC Code Section 7-13-190(D), limiting elections to fill vacancies to only five permissible election dates:

- The fourth Tuesday in January
- The first Tuesday after the first Monday in April
- The second Tuesday in June in

even-numbered years only, and for only primaries for special elections

- The fourth Tuesday in August
- The first Tuesday after the first Monday in November, for only those elections other than primaries for special elections

In cases where the date would be a legal holiday, the permissible date would move to the next Tuesday.

Municipal officials should review these changes carefully and consult legal counsel as needed to ensure compliance before the January 2027 implementation date.

Does a municipality have to change its general election date?

Is the municipal general election held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in either April or November of odd-numbered or even years?

Yes – The municipality does not have to change their election date and will continue using the set date.

No – The municipality must adopt a permissible election date before April 1, 2027.

If a new election date is not adopted by April 1, 2027, the election date will default to the November election date in odd years.

Can the municipality have a municipal election commission?

What is the population of the municipality?

The municipality's population is **below 10,000** based on the 2020 U.S. Census.

No – Existing commissions in smaller municipalities will be abolished effective January 1, 2027. County election officials will assume responsibility for conducting and certifying those elections.

Municipalities must

- reimburse counties for the "reasonable costs" of conducting and certifying elections.
- follow a reimbursement schedule to be established by the SC Election Commission.

The municipality's population is **above 10,000** based on the 2020 U.S. Census.

Yes – The municipality can have a municipal election commission.



**Municipal Association
of South Carolina**



Municipal Association of South Carolina

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

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

Calendar

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

SEPTEMBER

3 SC Association of Stormwater Managers Third Quarter Meeting and Exhibitor Showcase. Seawell's, Columbia. Note that Seawell's has moved to a new location across the street from its former location. It is now located at 1200 Rosewood Drive, inside the SC State Fairgrounds. Topics include local rule and green infrastructure solutions, PFAS in the Pee Dee watershed, and updates from the SC Department of Environmental Services.

9 – 11 Municipal Clerks and Treasurers Institute, Year 2, Session A. Cambria Columbia Downtown the Vista. Topics include human resource management, website accessibility, employee morale, municipal accounting, conducting local elections, special elections and referendums.

15 Municipal Association of SC Regional Advocacy Meeting. Municipal Building, North Augusta.

16 Main Street SC Third Quarter Managers' Training. Farmers Market Pavilion, Fountain Inn. Topics include market studies and historic preservation, a Fountain Inn walking tour, investments and revitalization tools.

17 Regional Advocacy Meeting. Mauldin Cultural Center, Mauldin.

22 Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government — “Municipal Economic Development” and “Forms of Municipal Government.” Located at the five regional Councils of Governments locations. Topics also include the services offered through the councils of governments.

23 – 25 Municipal Technology Association of SC Annual Meeting. Embassy Suites, North Charleston. Topics include compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, Microsoft 365 and other various tech topics.

29 Risk Management Services: Defensive Driving Training. City of West Columbia.

30 Palmetto Power Cities Lineman Rodeo. T. Ed Garrison Arena, Pendleton.

30 Municipal Association of SC Regional Advocacy Meeting. Municipal Association of SC, Columbia.

OCTOBER

6 Municipal Association of SC Regional Advocacy Meeting. 5th and Main, Conway.

7 SC Utility Billing Association Customer Service Training and Networking Luncheon. Hilton Garden Inn Airport, West Columbia.

8 SC Community Development Association Fall Meeting. Hilton Garden Inn Columbia Airport, West Columbia. Topics include partnering with resilience and energy, strengthening communities through the SC Housing Trust Fund, creating vibrant communities and showcasing community successes.

13 Municipal Association of SC Regional Advocacy Meeting. Yorkville Agricultural and Education Society, York.

14 Advanced Municipal Elected Officials Institute Fall Training. Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center.

22 Regional Advocacy Meeting. Rollins Edwards Community Center, Summerville.

27 Communications Workshop. Municipal Association of SC, Columbia.