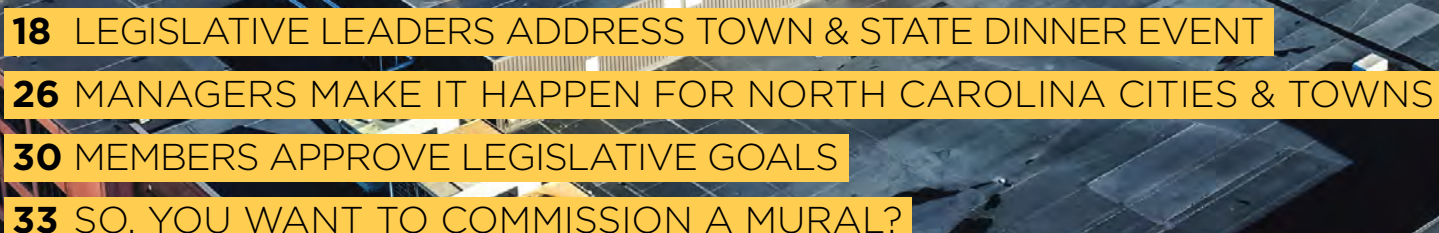


A PUBLICATION OF THE NORTH CAROLINA LEAGUE OF MUNICIPALITIES

An aerial photograph of a city street with a blue banner overlaid. The banner contains the text 'MANAGERS MAKE IT HAPPEN FOR NORTH CAROLINA CITIES AND TOWNS' in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. The background shows a street with buildings, trees, and a clear sky.

MANAGERS MAKE IT HAPPEN FOR NORTH CAROLINA CITIES AND TOWNS

- 
- An aerial photograph of a city street, likely in North Carolina, showing a grid of streets and buildings. Overlaid on the image are four yellow rectangular boxes containing black text, each representing a time slot and an event. The text is as follows:
-
- 18 LEGISLATIVE LEADERS ADDRESS TOWN & STATE DINNER EVENT
-
- 26 MANAGERS MAKE IT HAPPEN FOR NORTH CAROLINA CITIES & TOWNS
-
- 30 MEMBERS APPROVE LEGISLATIVE GOALS
-
- 33 SO, YOU WANT TO COMMISSION A MURAL?
-
- The background image shows a street with a crosswalk, a fire hydrant, and some trees, providing a local context for the event.

VOLUME 73 / NUMBER 1 / 1ST QUARTER 2023



YOUR FINANCIAL FUTURE IS NOW. BUILD IT WHERE YOU MATTER MOST.

MEET CIVIC

A Credit Union designed to give you - a local government employee - and your family more flexibility with better financial options. As a member-led organization, we literally work for you.

We've reimagined banking and branches to make the entire experience more convenient for you.

At Civic Federal Credit Union we work for you! Here, it's people before profits. Start building your financial future today.

Visit civicro.org for more information.

★ **DEPOSIT CHECKS** from
ANYWHERE*

★ **ACCESS** any ATM ANYWHERE
with **NO FEES†**

★ **CHECKING** accounts with
built-in rewards

* Data fees may apply. Check with your service provider.

† Fees applicable to any ATM network in the United States and its territories will be charged to member account and then refunded to the same account by Civic within 2 business days.



MetroView™



A better-connected, more safe community.

MetroView™ surveillance cameras have a cloud-based video monitoring service so you can get live and recorded high-definition video from any device, any time. Businesses, government and law enforcement can access live and recorded video and help create a safer environment for everyone. Keep a better eye on your community with MetroView.

Learn more today at duke-energy.com/Video or call 888.246.0877.

BENEFITS:



Leverage state-of-the-art technology from the private sector



Analytics help you share public and private resources more effectively



Monitor businesses in HD, from anywhere



Help increase overall public safety

Duke Energy One ("DEOne") is not the same company as Duke Energy Corporation's regulated utilities, including Duke Energy Carolinas, Duke Energy Florida, Duke Energy Kentucky, Duke Energy Indiana, Duke Energy Ohio and Duke Energy Progress ("Regulated Utilities"); DEOne is not in any way sanctioned by the state utility commissions regulating the Regulated Utilities; Purchasers of products or services from DEOne will receive no preference or special treatment from the Regulated Utilities; and a customer does not have to buy products or services from DEOne in order to continue to receive the same safe and reliable electric or gas service from the Regulated Utilities. Nonpayment for these products or services may result in removal from the program, but will not result in disconnection of electric or gas service by the Regulated Utilities. THIS MESSAGE IS PAID FOR BY THE SHAREHOLDERS OF DUKE ENERGY CORPORATION.

22

MAYOR SCOTT NEISLER WRAPS UP A REMARKABLE YEAR



SOUTHERN CITY

Southern City is a publication for and about North Carolina municipalities, published quarterly by the North Carolina League of Municipalities.

Volume 73
Number 1
1st Quarter 2023

Executive Director &
Publisher: Rose Vaughn Williams
Editor: Jack Cassidy
Writer: Ben Brown
Writer: Scott Mooneyham

www.nclm.org

Southern City (USPS 827-280) is published quarterly for \$25 per year (\$2 per year to member municipalities, \$1 for single copies) by the North Carolina League of Municipalities.

Phone: 919-715-4000

Postmaster:
Send address changes to:
Southern City
434 Fayetteville Street, Suite 1900
Raleigh, NC 27601

Advertising & Design:



Advertising Sales: Ronnie Jacko
Design & Layout: Jon Cannon

For advertising opportunities and deadlines, contact LLM Publications at 503-445-2234 or ronnie@llmpubs.com.

©2023 NC League of Municipalities
All rights reserved. The contents of this publication may not be reproduced by any means, in whole or in part, without the prior written consent of the publisher.

PUBLISHED SPRING 2023

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Case Studies in Local Government Housing Efforts 10

Cities and towns are on the forefront of the affordable housing issue.

CityVision Heads to Concord for 2023 Conference 12

Three full days of valuable content, networking, and fun.

Apex Works Through Community to Make Transformational Investment 16

A citizen-driven process of preparation and prioritization, Apex's ARP projects are designed for long-term impact.

Legislative Leaders Address Crowded Town & State Dinner Event: United Hundreds of Municipal Officials & Lawmakers 18

The strong relationship between local and state leaders on full display at Town & State Dinner.

Mayor Scott Neisler Wraps Up a Remarkable Year 22

Succeeding in initiative after initiative, Neisler closes his presidential term having made a significant impact on the NC League.

Advancing Advocacy: How We Adapt to Change 24

NCLM's regular legislative update webinars keep members informed on the most pressing happening at the General Assembly.

Always on Call: Managers Make It Happen for North Carolina Cities & Towns 26

The backbone of our state is our cities. And the backbone of our cities is our managers. It's a task taken up by a select group of dedicated, community-minded public servants.

Members Approve Legislative Goals 30

After months of listening sessions, legislative policy committee meetings and finally electronic voting by member cities and towns, the NC League of municipalities approved its legislative goals for the 2023-24 legislative biennium.

So, You Want to Commission a Mural? 33

Vibrant and eye-catching, local leaders across North Carolina are looking to murals to enhance their town.

Board of Directors 6

Speaking Out 8

Big Achievements by Working Together

Taking the Field 40

Town & State and CityVision:
A Microcosm of the League in Action

Board of Trustees 42



30



33

WRITERS THIS ISSUE



BEN BROWN
NCLM Communications &
Multimedia Strategist



JACK CASSIDY
NCLM Communications
Associate



SCOTT MOONEYHAM
NCLM Director of Political
Communication & Coordination

Board of Directors 2022–2023



PRESIDENT
Scott Neisler
Mayor, Kings Mountain



FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT
William Harris
Commissioner, Fuquay-Varina



SECOND VICE-PRESIDENT
Mark-Anthony Middleton
Mayor Pro Tem, Durham



IMMEDIATE PAST-PRESIDENT
Karen Alexander
Mayor, Salisbury



DISTRICT 1
Mayor Elizabeth Morey
Southern Shores



DISTRICT 11
Council Member Phyllis Harris
Mount Holly



UNDESIGNATED AFFILIATE REP.
Chief Chris Beddingfield,
NC Association of Police Chiefs
Biltmore Forest



DISTRICT 2
Council Member Brian Jackson
Jacksonville



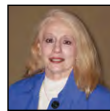
AT LARGE
Mayor Don Hardy
Kinston



CHARLOTTE
Council Member Malcolm Graham



DISTRICT 3
Mayor Terry Mann
Whiteville



AT LARGE
Mayor Pro Tem Martha Sue Hall
Albemarle



DURHAM
Council Member
Leonardo Williams



DISTRICT 4
Mayor Jody McLeod
Clayton



AT LARGE
Council Member Owen Thomas
Lumberton



FAYETTEVILLE
Council Member Kathy Jensen



DISTRICT 5
Council Member TJ Walker
Rocky Mount



MANAGER
Tasha Logan-Ford, City Manager
High Point



GREENSBORO
Mayor Pro Tem Yvonne Johnson



DISTRICT 6
Council Member Satish Garimella
Morrisville



MANAGER
Andrew Havens, Town Manager
Duck



WINSTON-SALEM
Council Member Jeff MacIntosh



DISTRICT 7
Alderman Sona Cooper
Spring Lake



MANAGER
Bob Boyette, City Manager
Marion



PRESIDENT'S APPOINTMENT
Mayor Walter Eccard
Shallotte



DISTRICT 8
Mayor Melinda Bales
Huntersville



CLERK
Brenda Blanco, Municipal Clerk
New Bern



PRESIDENT'S APPOINTMENT
Mayor Neville Hall
Eden



DISTRICT 9
Mayor Michael Horn
Lewisville



ATTORNEY
Karen McDonald, City Attorney
Fayetteville



PRESIDENT'S APPOINTMENT
Mayor Dwight Lake
Mayodan



DISTRICT 10
Mayor Teross Young, Troutman



UNDESIGNATED AFFILIATE REP.
Commissioner John Ellen,
Resort Towns & Convention Cities
Kure Beach

WORKING AS ONE. ADVANCING ALL.



NATIONALTM
CARCHARGING

ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING EXPERTS

EV CHARGING MADE EASY.

Fast track adding EV charging stations with National Car Charging's North Carolina state procurement contract or any of our pre-negotiated, government-approved cooperative buying contracts.

Our state contracts and cooperative buying partners save you time and money by doing all the research, vetting and negotiating for you - all to ensure your experience is smooth from planning through installation.

Whether you are just beginning the planning process or ready to purchase, call us today at (866) 996-6EVS.



SCAN ME

UNMATCHED EXPERTISE.

We have solutions for every situation. This experience, matched with our unparalleled customer service, allows us to offer a seamless process from planning through installation.

PERSONALIZED SERVICE.

Each customer has different needs. Offering the most extensive selection of products allows us to always deliver the best hardware and software solution for your specific project.

COMPETITIVE PRICING.

We offer competitive prices on hardware, software and installation.

Plus, with our state and local procurement contracts, and co-operative buying options, we save the hassle of an RFP.

IT PAYS TO BE CHOOSY.

ChargePoint electric vehicle (EV) charging stations are designed with cutting-edge technology to be safe and reliable, while offering drivers a premium charging experience.

ChargePoint rigorously tests all their products to ensure they are rugged and built to withstand the elements. And all of their products are UL/Intertek listed.



CHARGEPOINT
VALUE-ADDED
RESELLER 

**PLANNING, HARDWARE, SOFTWARE,
INSTALLATION & SERVICE - ALL AVAILABLE.**

NATIONALCARCHARGING.COM/NORTH-CAROLINA
CALL AMY MULLETT AT 858-255-9041

SPEAKING OUT

Big Achievements by Working Together



SCOTT NEISLER
NCLM President

Wow how time flies! It seems like yesterday that for the first time in two years we had our first in-person CityVision annual conference in Wilmington. It was such an honor taking the oath of office as president of your North Carolina League of Municipalities.

Looking back, I see a year of tremendous progress, primarily because we haven't dealt with some sort of crisis. Focusing instead on our mission of assisting and representing cities and towns across North Carolina.

I can sincerely say that the accomplishments of the League and its member cities and towns has never been more closely linked. That is because of how closely we have all worked together with the unprecedented infusion of federal dollars into our communities through direct federal American Rescue Plan Act funding and the additional investments made by our state legislators into our communities. Truly a partnership with the state that I hope and pray will continue.

As I look across the state, and speak with my fellow NCLM board members and fellow North Carolina mayors, I know that Kings Mountain is not alone in making these types of transformational investments that will enhance the lives of residents and improve our local economies. From the mountains to the coast, similar investments are being made in waste, sewer, and stormwater projects, in parks and other amenities, and in other ways that are generating more economic activity.

In my city of Kings Mountain, that funding is going toward infrastructure that will allow us to expand sewer service, stabilize our water supply reservoir and even leverage additional federal grants for wastewater infrastructure.

And I am proud that, over this past year, the League of Municipalities has been with cities and towns that need assistance in how to navigate the complexities of the ARPA grants so that they can get the most from these investments. That work is seen in staff members who meet with local officials directly to answer questions and assist in meeting program requirements, in joint regional meetings with partner organizations that have helped

to explain the funding and requirements, and in the resources that the League has created and housed on a microsite website, www.arp.nclm.org.

We can also be proud of how the League is publicizing these exciting investments, both through its own publications and through media outreach emphasizing the improvements to our cities and thus our state. It's a clear strength of our organization, especially as it relates to our initiatives around ARPA and the promotion of lasting, effective investments. The League's accomplishments over the past year hardly stop there.

We have settled property issues regarding our property and are moving forward in establishing a permanent home with a replacement to our League headquarters building. What we will pursue is a facility that will serve the needs of our members for generations to come!

We also need to continue to recognize how successful the 2021-22 legislative biennium was and how this is a direct result of our efforts to emphasize our common ground with state legislators. At our 2022 Town & State Dinner, I don't know that I have ever seen our legislative leaders so relaxed and enjoying themselves, and that is because they see our common purpose and our willingness to work with them. I see that relationship improving even more through our support of a Legislative Municipal Caucus, so that we can even avoid the darts coming from nowhere affecting land-use and other local authority.

As my term as president comes to an end, our League of Municipalities is in great hands. It has been a privilege to get to work with and get to know my fellow members of the Board of Directors, League staff, and local officials from across the state committed to improving their communities. I have learned so much from them, as I use that valuable knowledge to serve my citizens in Kings Mountain. So, my time as president has been a fruitful experience. The league lives out its motto, Working as One, Advancing All. I know that that good work will continue into the future! ■

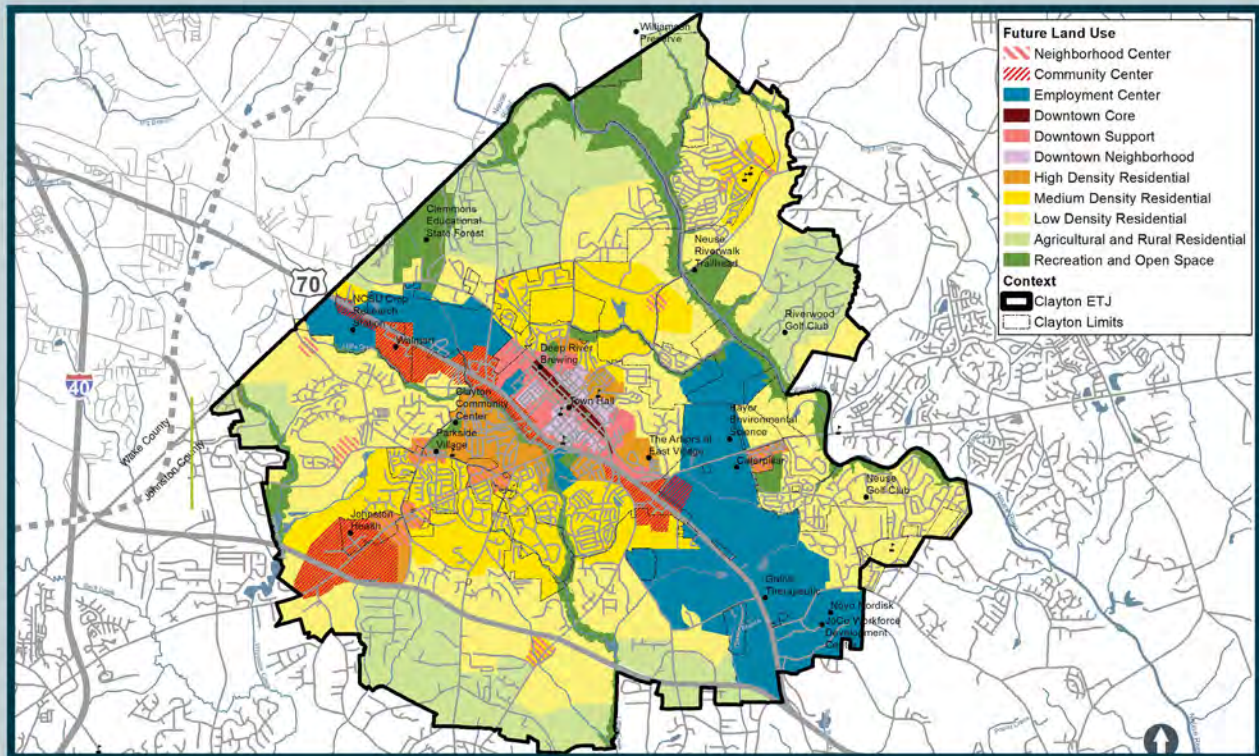


IN NORTH CAROLINA WE ARE STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES



PREFERRED PARTNER

communityviz[®] GOLD CONSULTANT



With a unique collaborative approach that results in stronger and more creative design solutions, Stewart offers a full range of services.

Civil Engineering | Geomatics | Geotechnical & Construction Services
Landscape Architecture | Structural Engineering | Transportation & Planning

Stewart works with municipalities across North Carolina, building healthy, equitable, resilient, and connected communities.

WE PROVIDE LOCAL GOVERNMENTS THE FOLLOWING SERVICES:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| ADA Transition Plans | Park Planning & Design |
| Athletic Fields & Structure Design | Streetscape Improvement Plans |
| Comprehensive Plans | Public Engagement |
| Downtown Master Plans | Citizen Board Training |
| Greenways | Municipal Complex & Emergency Services |
| Infrastructure Planning & Design | Design & Engineering Services |
| Parks & Recreation | |



WWW.STEWARTINC.COM

Case Studies in Local Government Housing Efforts

SCOTT MOONEYHAM

NCLM Director of Political Communication & Coordination

Over the last few years, the housing affordability crisis has brought increased scrutiny to local land-use regulation. In the eyes of some critics, zoning is a primary culprit explaining the increase in housing prices. It's a narrative that ignores the simple economics of supply and demand: that more people want to be closer to the amenities found in cities and urban areas and the jobs that they attract. Really, cities have become victims of their own success. The critics also have ignored how homebuilders see the opportunity for making the most profit by meeting the needs of more affluent home buyers, typically in high-demand areas where land prices are high.

What has also been clear for years, is that local city and town councils have been on the forefront of trying to address the need for affordable housing, even as they do so at considerable political risk. In the back-and-forth between the NIMBYs (Not in My Back Yard) and YIMBYs (Yes in My Back Yard), it has often been local elected officials caught in the crossfire. That hasn't kept them from looking for innovative ways to try to bring more affordable housing to their cities and towns. Here is a look at a handful of those efforts through a group of case studies that NCLM has compiled. These case studies will be included in a larger, upcoming report from NCLM and the NC Association of County Commissioners examining housing affordability, local regulation, and some possible solutions to help address the problem.

RALEIGH: ADUs THAT WORK FOR YOU

The City of Raleigh is one of several cities and towns that have recently agreed to allow denser development in traditional single-family only zoned neighborhoods, a move that includes allowing so called accessory dwelling units (ADU), or "granny flats." In fact, in a survey conducted as part of the larger study referenced above, more than half of municipal and county jurisdictions that responded now allow these free-standing structures built alongside existing homes in their residential zoning areas. Raleigh has gone a step further in attempting to help residents utilize ADUs as a potential solution to housing affordability. Its planners have created 11 pre-approved ADU plans, with the plans costing between \$400 and \$1,200. While residents will still have to go through a site assessment to ensure setbacks and other regulations are met, building code issues will have already been resolved through the pre-approved plans. This should assist in helping the city meet its goal of doubling the number of ADUs, which polling has indicated are a favored solution among seniors for their housing needs, over the next few years. "ADUs are a small but significant part of the solution to housing affordability. It creates opportunities for folks at all parts of the income spectrum and all parts of the age spectrum," Pat Young, Raleigh's Director of Planning and Development, told WUNC Radio.

ASHEVILLE: INCENTIVES AND "MICROHOUSING"

For over a decade, the City of Asheville has been utilizing its Land Use Incentive Grant program to address housing affordability and encourage the development of new housing. The program works by providing incentives to private developers in which at least 20% of the development's units are offered to those making 80% or less of the area median income, and with at least 50% of units allowing rental assistance of some type. The grants amounts are then determined based on a points system rewarding affordability. They are paid out as property tax rebates. To date, 11 projects have been awarded the subsidies. The latest is perhaps the quintessential dense development—an 80 unit "microhousing" development in which each unit is only 250 square feet but will have communal kitchen and living areas. The developer describes the project as "reasonably priced workforce housing" with proximity to downtown amenities.

APEX/WAKE COUNTY: AFFORDABLE, ACCESSIBLE APARTMENTS

In many respects, the Broadstone Walk apartment complex planned near downtown Apex is not very different from many of the developments designed to address housing affordability in communities across the state. These projects typically work only through the careful cooperation of local governments and non-profit or private developers, with those developers often utilizing tax credits provided by the NC Housing Finance Agency. In the case of Broadstone Walk, Wake County and the Town of Apex provided \$7 million in financing to non-profit developer DHIC Inc., that in turn helped it secure other loan financing. The 164-unit complex will offer 60 of those units to families making less than 50% of the area median income (AMI). A crucial part of the develop is also its location. The one-, two-, and three-bedroom apartments are near grocery stores and other retail stores, as well as bus transit lines, ensuring that residents have ready access to their workplaces and shopping.

WILMINGTON/NEW HANOVER: NEW HOUSING FOR AREAS HIT HARD BY HURRICANES

When Hurricanes Florence and Matthew hit eastern North Carolina, the loss of rental housing was substantial, particularly as it affected workers crucial to the local tourism economies. In response, local governments have been working with the state and developers to rebound that rental housing stock. One example is the Starway Village planned for Wilmington. The 278-unit multi-family development is being funded with a \$9 million award from the NC Office of Recovery and Resiliency, as well as \$3.5 million from the City of Wilmington and \$1.89 million from New Hanover County, with both utilizing their ARPA awards. The

developer, Bradley Housing Developers, is constructing the project on the site of an old drive-in movie theater, which is accessible to nearby shopping and transit routes. Families who make 60% of the area median income (AMI) will be eligible. The project is similar to those taking place in Morehead City and Greenville, which also suffered middle-housing losses due to the storms.

HOUSING BONDS: CITIES INVEST IN HOUSING

The housing affordability crisis may have become more widespread over the last few years, with smaller communities and those with tourism-based economies now seeing the need for more workforce housing and middle-income housing. Still, it isn't new, especially in our larger cities. That is why North Carolina's largest cities and their residents have approved housing bonds—typically by overwhelming majorities—for several years now. Some of the more recent approved bond issues to address housing affordability include, in 2022, \$50 million in Charlotte, \$30 million in Greensboro, \$12 million in Fayetteville, and \$40 million in Buncombe County and Asheville; in 2020, \$80 million in Charlotte; and in 2018, \$95 million in Durham. It is important to understand that these bonds are typically approved in the context of larger housing plans adopted by the cities that are intended improve housing opportunities across lower and middle incomes. Besides direct construction of low-income housing, typically aimed to help those making 30% or less of the local average median income, assistance also can target middle-income residents with funding for down payments and other assistance. Land banking and other measures are often a part of the housing plans, seeking to leverage private investment than can help a range of residents and the larger economy. In total, these local taxpayer investments have created thousands of additional residential housing units that would not otherwise exist. ■

GENERAL CODE

Innovative Code Solutions



Expert codification services



Interactive zoning map



Flexible online code portal



Custom Local Building Codes

LoriAnn Shura | Account Manager
585.314.2444 | ishura@generalcode.com
[generalcode.com](https://www.generalcode.com)

THINK CREATIVELY ACT COLLABORATIVELY LEAD STRATEGICALLY

LOCAL ELECTED

Leaders

ACADEMY

The LELA curriculum provides interchangeable pathways to help elected officials maintain constant awareness of the ever-evolving legal requirements of governing and creates opportunities for leaders to develop the personal leadership skills and behavior that promote effective governance at the local level.

Courses are arranged into four levels:


LELA 101	From Campaigning to Governing
LELA 201	Pathways to Excellence in Governing
LELA 301	Pathways to Collaborative Leadership
LELA 401	Pathways to Advanced Leading and Governing

UPCOMING COURSES 2023

Build an Equitable Organization: From Awareness to Action	March 10 Online
LELA 201: When Differences of Opinion Escalate: Conflict Resolution Skills for Local Elected	March 23 Online
Top 10 Primer: Transportation Planning in North Carolina	April 11 Online
LELA 201: Essentials of Economic Development	May 5 WCU Asheville
Race Matters: Courageous Conversations for Leaders	May 12 Online
Top 10 Primer: Use of Social Media for Local Elected Officials	May 12 Online
LELA 101: Ethics for Local Elected Officials	May 25 Online

REGISTER AT [GO.UNC.EDU/LELA](https://go.unc.edu/LELA)

©2023 UNC



SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT
Center for Public Leadership and Governance

CityVision Heads to Concord for 2023 Conference

THREE FULL DAYS OF VALUABLE CONTENT, NETWORKING, AND FUN

NCLM STAFF

It's the central most exciting and engaging annual event specifically designed for North Carolina's municipal elected and staff officials. The NC League of Municipalities' CityVision conference is back for 2023, with three full days of valuable content, more than 20 engaging speaker sessions, four tracks geared toward local government issues, and we're thrilled that the City of Concord is our host.

CityVision 2023 is a not-to-miss opportunity to connect with hundreds of municipal leaders and local government partners during the educational sessions, social events, and exploring all that Concord has to offer.

The conference is scheduled for April 25-27 at the Embassy Suites By Hilton Charlotte Concord Golf Resort and Spa.

APRIL 25 AND 'PRE-CONFERENCE'

The main schedule of CityVision activity picks up early-morning April 26 with opening ceremonies and runs through April 27, but this year offers a new "pre-conference" feature one day ahead, on April 25. This pre-conference includes hours of additional educational sessions and a welcome reception. It's a great way to get a sampling of what the League and CityVision have to offer, including also the invaluable opportunities to network with fellow municipal officials. Members who register for the entire conference get access to the pre-conference sessions for no additional charge.

APRIL 26

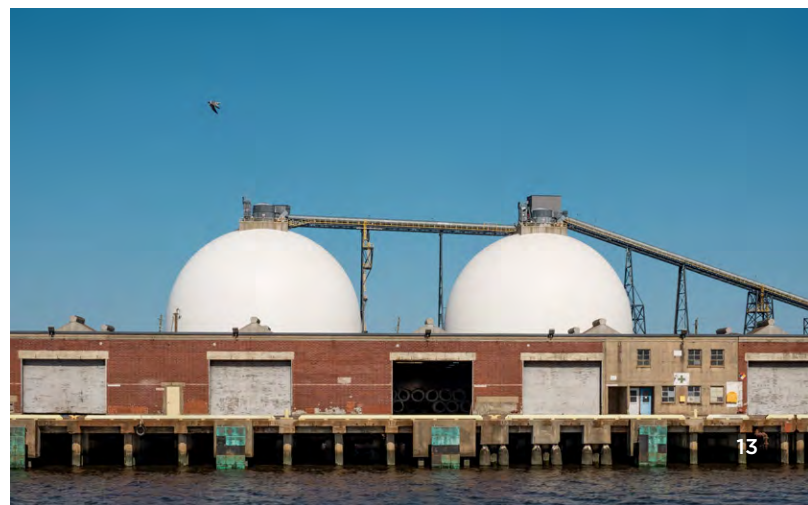
Following official opening ceremonies and a subsequent networking session the morning of April 26, CityVision's agenda kicks

continues on page 14





League Update



continued from page 12

up with concurrent sessions on popular or verging topics, like the impact of heirs' property in local government; the power of regional partnerships; incorporating diversity, equity, and inclusion into your municipal planning decisions; and attracting and retaining employees.

Following a luncheon, valuable concurrent sessions continue in the afternoon with topics including leveraging state and federal resources to address infrastructure in your community; how the corporate buyout of housing is affecting municipalities and how they can respond; small town strategic planning and infrastructure; and what to know about municipal employment laws.

The ever-popular ice cream networking social follows, and then it's time for organized tours (registration required) and a bit of exploring of Concord before the always-fun Host City Event, put on by the City of Concord and set for the Cabarrus Brewery Kettle Room at the Gibson Mill—Concord's community-driven gathering spot.

APRIL 27

Attendees can start their morning with exhibit-hall networking and a continental breakfast before more concurrent sessions on timely topics for municipalities. They include federal grants, strategies for focusing on underutilized properties, social districts, and best practices in law enforcement.

Other stops along the day include "hot topic" roundtable discussions, exhibit hall networking and door prizes, the League's luncheon and business meeting and networking dessert social before more enjoyment and exploring in Concord.

Various tours (again, registration required) in the mid to late afternoon will include the Concord Motor Speedway, downtown Concord and Kannapolis, and other interesting locations.

CityVision culminates with the League President's Dinner and Awards Ceremony, always a memorable occasion of fellowship, recognition of accomplishments, and the swearing-in of a new League Board of Directors and president.

On another note, CityVision is also bringing back its traditional exhibit hall for the first time since before COVID.

CityVision is North Carolina's best opportunity for municipal officials, both elected and staff, to network, learn, and explore side-by-side with fellow officials and partners from around the state. ■






*Exceptional Reliability.
Local Ownership.*

*That's the
VALUE OF
PUBLIC
POWER.*

◆ **ELECTRICITIES** of NC

Learn more at ElectriCities.com



INSURANCE

Member-Driven and Municipal-Minded

Insurance coverage solutions for the smallest towns to the largest cities, including:

- Property and liability coverage
- Workers' compensation
- Medical, dental, vision and voluntary benefits
- Unmatched customer service and value-added programming, including grants and training opportunities

**Contact us for your personalized
quote or renewal information!**

www.nclm.org 919-715-4000

 **NCLM**
PROPERTY & CASUALTY
INSURANCE

Apex Works Through Community to Make Transformational Investment

A CITIZEN-DRIVEN PROCESS OF PREPARATION AND PRIORITIZATION, APEX'S ARP PROJECTS ARE DESIGNED FOR LONG-TERM IMPACT

The American Rescue Plan offers a generational opportunity for our municipalities, not just to recover from the pandemic, but to thrive well into the future. It is this forward-looking aspect of the ARP that is most consequential. How best can we utilize this money to create a lasting impact?

All across North Carolina, cities and towns are developing plans and programs specifically geared towards this question, and history shows us that these projects will be successful. When our municipalities receive financial support, they achieve substantial successes. Cities get the job done.

This ongoing series will showcase those projects, plans, and transformational investments, both to highlight the end-to-end impressive work of our municipalities and to share best practices with other cities and towns.

FAST FACTS

Town of Apex

Funds Received: \$16.75 million

Population: 62,900

Key Investments: Water infrastructure, affordable housing, parks, and nonprofit support

The message of the American Rescue Plan from local governments has been resoundingly clear: when cities get support, they get the job done. Few places exemplify that more than the Town of Apex, whose structure and strategy has allowed local leaders to quickly and effectively employ more than \$16 million towards the community.

Apex's approach is not a new one to the Town. Rather, it's an extension of its larger philosophy, already very much in place: understand community needs and work to address them.

"Our process has put us in a good position towards the situation-changing, large-scale projects," said Stacie Galloway, Communications Director for the Town of Apex. "It definitely changes the situation for some of these communities."

Some issues are easy to see, such as the significant growth that Apex is experiencing. Just since the 2020 Census, the community has grown by an estimated 7%, creating capacity issues as it relates to infrastructure, primarily water and sewer. Other concerns can be harder to identify and may vary among the local population. Apex finds them through a series of community engagement endeavors. Bringing it all together is the long-term strategy overseen by forward-looking local leaders.

Towards ARP, the Town took all of the above into account. The result is a list of projects that meet both short-term needs and long-term goals, all aligned under a strategy informed by the community members themselves.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, PROCESS, AND INVESTMENT

The Town of Apex held multiple listening sessions for community members, both virtual and in-person. They also partnered with Wake County on a county-wide survey. From these efforts, leadership received more than 600 total responses.

"From those public engagement sessions, we were able to see what the public was interested in supporting," said Galloway.

With community input received, Apex's ARP team worked with city department directors to turn those requests into tangible projects, specifically looking at potential investments that had previously been evaluated and identified as important, but had not yet received funding. Apex then prioritized the list to ensure it met the Town's overall goal for ARP funds, which, as Galloway said, "was to address the impacts of COVID on the Apex community."

The result is a list of projects that comprehensively cover the town. Towards large, macro issues such as infrastructure capacity, Apex made significant investments into its water and sewer capacity, public spaces, and downtown. The Town also addresses affordable housing—another offshoot issue of population growth—with additional funding directed towards local nonprofit organizations.

The full list of projects can be seen in Figure 1.

Apex's ability to quickly identify and pursue transformational projects is a testament to its preparation, capacity, and approach. The projects above were not selected on a whim. Rather, they are the culmination of thoughtful, long-term strategic thinking.

"A lot of these projects, we've been looking at for a while," said Galloway. "Without these funds, they wouldn't have been feasible. Now we're in a position to pursue them." ■

PROJECT NAME	ARPA FUNDING	OTHER FUNDING	ESTIMATED TOTAL
Downtown Improvements	\$3,000,000	\$3,700,000	\$6,700,000
Site Acquisition for Affordable Housing	\$3,000,000	None	\$3,000,000
Housing Transition for Displaced Communities	\$1,000,000	None	\$1,000,000
COVID-19/ARPA Support Staff	\$400,000	General Fund	\$400,000
Non-Profit Funding	\$800,000	None	\$800,000
West Street Park and Baucom Sewer	\$1,750,000	None	\$1,750,000
1.5 MG Elevated Water Storage Tank	\$3,600,000	\$4,060,000	\$7,660,000
Sunset Hills Pump Station	\$3,510,000	\$100,000	\$3,610,000

Figure 1.



Legislative Leaders Address Crowded Town & State Dinner Event: United Hundreds of Municipal Officials & Lawmakers

NCLM STAFF

IT WAS ALL ABOUT CONNECTING, COMMUNICATING, AND CELEBRATING THE MANY GREAT OUTCOMES NORTH CAROLINA HAS EXPERIENCED WITH LOCAL-STATE TEAMWORK.

More than 500 elected and staff government officials filled the Raleigh Convention Center on Wednesday, Feb. 22, for the fifth installment of the League's popular Town & State Dinner, uniting municipal and legislative leaders for relationship-building, the talking-through of various timely issues, and to hear updates and perspective from House and Senate majority and minority leaders on the shape of North Carolina.

Over a meal, and following a networking social, attendees from areas across the state utilized the occasion to strengthen inter-governmental connections as the General Assembly carries out

its annual lawmaking session, which speakers noted can include a wide variety of issues, making ongoing communication between local and state officials essential.

"We may not always agree on the exact path, but we all do this to try to make our state better," said event emcee William Harris, the commissioner from Fuquay-Varina and NCLM Board of Directors first vice-president. Commissioner Harris introduced question-and-answer panels featured over the evening, starting with House Speaker Tim Moore and House Democratic Leader Rep. Robert Reives, moderated by NCLM President and Kings Mountain Mayor Scott Neisler.

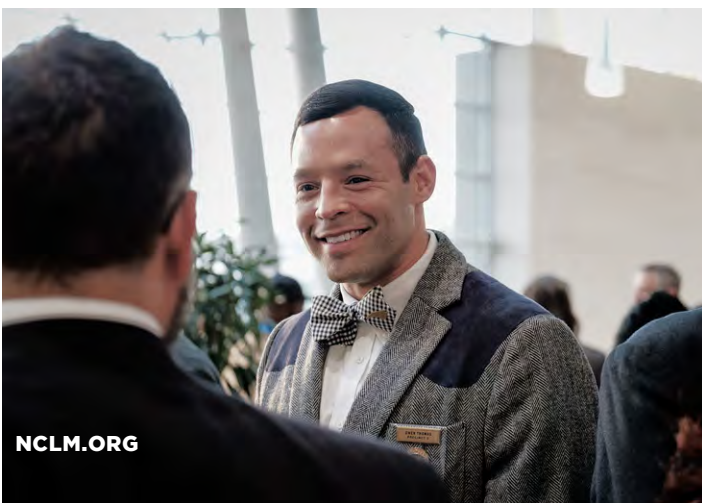
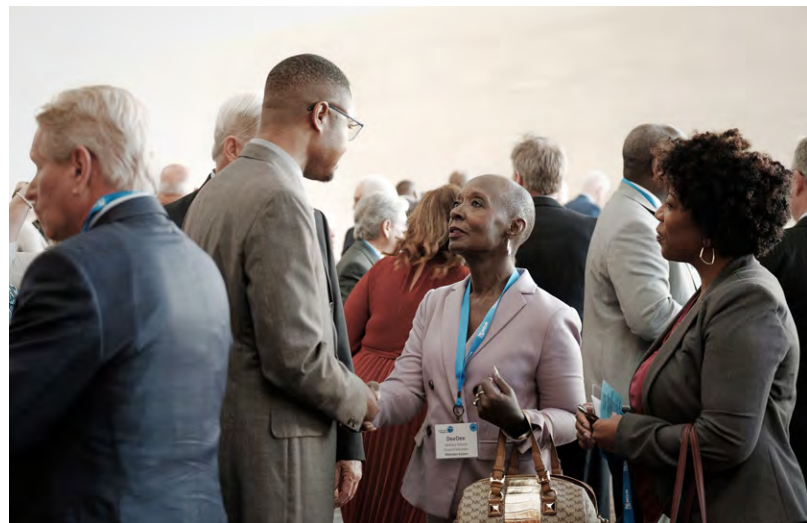
Mayor Neisler, with Speaker Moore and Rep. Reives seated to his sides, noted the sizable responsibility of public service. "We want to thank you so much for your sacrifice ... leaving your families, leaving your businesses, to come up here and serve," Mayor Neisler said. But during his conversation with the legislative leaders, the importance of sustained ties and fruitful communication between local officials and their lawmakers received as much emphasis.

continues on page 20





Town & State Dinner



continued from page 18

“Keep up with what’s going on with us,” Rep. Reives said. He urged local officials to maintain communication channels with their lawmakers for clear understandings of issues or needs, a two-way street. “We don’t know everything, and because we don’t know everything, we’ve got to have folks on the ground that tell us here’s what’s going on with it, here’s what we need, here’s how you can best serve us,” Reives said, noting those might be hard conversations sometimes. “But you’re the folks on the ground touching the communities every day, and there’s nothing more important for us than to get information.”

Speaker Moore too urged healthy local-state communication, and has noted his frequent conversations with Mayor Neisler, who lives in Speaker Moore’s district.

The speaker also affirmed that all officials have common ground in that they’re working for the best that North Carolina can be. “It is the highest honor that I’ve had, to serve in this role,” Speaker Moore said after Mayor Neisler asked about the challenging nature of General Assembly work. Speaker Moore said there are always endurance-testing days for legislators, “but at the same time, we all know we’re in it—and I know that the folks on the other side of the aisle and the other side of the building—are there for the right reasons, and that is caring about this great state. So, while there’s always those days that are tough, in the end, the good always outweighs those tough times.”

Senate leader Phil Berger and the chamber’s minority leader, Sen. Dan Blue, also took the stage for discussion, as moderated by Durham Mayor Pro Tem Mark-Anthony Middleton, NCLM’s second vice-president.

We may not always agree on the exact path, but **we all do this to try to make our state better.**

Sen. Blue pointed out the diversity of North Carolina’s more-than-540 cities and towns. “Each is unique,” Sen. Blue said, adding he has appreciated the help of the League and its member municipal leaders for serving as resources clarifying the nuance and effects of proposals that come forward in context with municipalities.

Sen. Berger, a former municipal attorney, gave remarks about topics including infrastructure and the state’s economy. Sen. Berger said that North Carolina’s economic position in relation to other U.S. states is strong, with a bounce-back measured from the hard days of the pandemic. Sen. Berger pointed out that North Carolina today has two million more registered voters than it did 10 years ago, and called that a showing of people planting their roots here to take advantage of all the state has to offer. “We’re probably doing most things better than most other states, and we just need to make sure we continue that as we go forward,” Sen. Berger said.

The evening was a rousing success, thanks to the participation of North Carolina’s local and legislative officials and their interest in working toward positive outcomes. “We’ve got north of 500 people attending tonight,” said Mayor Pro Tem Middleton to applause. The League thanks all who attended and engaged with the opportunity to work as one. ▣

**WITH A DEPTH
OF EXPERIENCE
IN MUNICIPAL
FACILITIES
THROUGHOUT
NORTH CAROLINA,
BOBBITT IS THE
RIGHT PARTNER
TO BRING YOUR
COMMUNITY
BUILDING TO
LIFE.**

bobbitt.com

Pictured: The 3,320 sqft gated access Chatham Park Community Building provides space for meetings, parties and pool activities. It also houses pool equipment and includes a concession stand.

BOBBITT

BUTLER

Bringing Wireless Carriers & Municipalities Together

APC is a national tower & telecom services development company. APC is based in Raleigh, North Carolina with offices in Cincinnati, OH, Houston, TX, and Chicago. APC provides expert tower development services with over 500 owned and managed towers, in addition to Rooftop locations in 37 states. APC offers a unique blend of highly personalized services and extensive best-in-class resources, ensuring that carriers can deploy service where and when needed.

A Local Municipality Partner

APC works closely with each of the major carriers at a local, regional, and national level. APC has developed key relationships in niche markets across the US and partnered with many local municipalities to expand network development across the US. Their partnerships with all national wireless companies further simplifies the relationship with the municipalities who work with APC.

In 2017, APC was awarded the Wake County Schools management agreement granting APC the access rights to all 200 properties. The Wake County School District is the 16th largest in the United States with over 159K students.

The APC Team prides themselves on working with municipalities around the country daily. APC consulted with the City of Asheville in North Carolina resulting in a substantial increase in long term revenue options available to the city. Also, APC worked with the mayor of Mine Hill, New Jersey to monetize ground rights and are engaged with a large university in California managing and operating tower sites.

The typical APC Towers Partnership w/ Local Municipalities:

1. APC Towers signs partnership agreement with rights to market city properties and/or acquire the ground rights to properties.
2. APC Towers leverages wireless relationships to fill coverage gaps on city properties.
3. APC Towers manages and drives all diligence required to build or manage an existing tower.
4. APC will negotiate fair market pricing with wireless carriers and will coordinate all leasing efforts including lease supplements with carriers and prime leases with municipalities.
5. APC will manage the tower and any needed modifications necessary to accommodate additional carriers.
6. Our goal is to drive revenue at a local level and help bring coverage to areas by using a speed to market strategy.

APC Towers
www.apctowers.com

Bring **traffic safety** to your city

Trusted by more State Police agencies than all other radar brands combined.



Slower Streets = Safer Streets

STALKER
STREET DYNAMICS

1-800-782-5537
StreetDynamics.com

continues on page 34

Mayor Scott Neisler Wraps Up a Remarkable Year

JACK CASSIDY

NCLM Communications Strategist

SUCCEEDING IN INITIATIVE AFTER INITIATIVE, NEISLER CLOSES HIS PRESIDENTIAL TERM HAVING MADE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE NC LEAGUE.

Per usual, Kings Mountain Mayor Scott Neisler takes the humble road. “I just hope that maybe I did something this year that affected the League in a positive way,” he says, reflecting on an NCLM Presidency that achieved almost nothing but positives.

There were the successes with state lawmakers. With the League positioned as a leader on the issues of local government pandemic recovery, Neisler oversaw the creation and early implementation of NCLM’s American Rescue Plan service line, which has guided all 550-plus municipalities through the federal funding process and towards long-term, transformational successes. The North Carolina General Assembly has supported those efforts through generous state funding, and Gov. Roy Cooper shared his gratitude of the League’s leadership in an introductory letter at NCLM’s four-stop, statewide American Rescue Plan Expert Tour this fall, writing, “When we engage collaboratively, we can make the most of the opportunities presented by the ARP. I am grateful to the League for their leadership, in hosting and organizing this tour, and for their ongoing partnership.”

There were the successes in determining NCLM’s advocacy priorities and establishing the 2023–24 Legislative Goals. That process, in total, included 10 goal idea listening sessions, 32 small group discussions, and the submissions of 400 ideas and 50 distinct goals. After the thoughtful consideration of the Legislative Policy Committee and the NCLM Board of Directors, the membership overwhelmingly approved the legislative agenda and reaffirmed NCLM’s Core Municipal Principles.

And most importantly, there were the successes in bolstering the League as a whole. The activity and accomplishments of the past few years are made all the more impressive considering the circumstances of uncertainty. Neisler and other League leaders played a critical role in ensuring that the organization not only continued its service to cities and towns, but became stronger and more capable along the way. That includes the work done to resolve issues with the NC Association of County Commissioners regarding the League’s downtown Raleigh property—a success that will be felt by League members for decades to come.

“The thing I am most proud of is how the League morphed into what it needed to be,” said Mayor Neisler. “Even through the crisis, we were there, and we were whatever our 550 towns needed us to be.”



As both League President and mayor, Neisler sees both sides of the organization—both the inner workings and the external applications. On the League side, that unique perspective has helped inform his leadership and his guidance of League offerings. And on the city side, it’s helped him appreciate the services. “The League is successful cause it’s appropriate for today. It’s a service organization that really does provide service,” said Neisler. “The cities that are a part of the League get so much out of it—so many benefits. And, and that’s what we have to continue to do in the future. We have got to be appropriate for the needs of the cities of North Carolina. And we’ve done that very, very successfully.”

All of Neisler’s successes—the strength of the League, the strength of its state-level relationships and the strategic vision of the legislative advocacy efforts—were on full display during both the 2022 and 2023 Town and State Dinners. Due to some scheduling peculiarities in the wake of the pandemic, Mayor Neisler had the opportunity to take part each year, as he presided over the dinner in 2022 and interviewed the NC House of Representatives’ leadership in 2023. Between the two events, nearly 1,000 local leaders and state lawmakers attended. “It showcased the standing of NCLM on the state level,” said Neisler.

At NCLM’s annual conference CityVision in April, Neisler will handoff the role of NCLM President and move into the position of immediate past president. While the tenure itself may be ending, the impacts of his work will reverberate for a long time across North Carolina.

“I’m sort of melancholy in a way. But I’m also so proud,” said Neisler. “It’s been an honor to serve the NC League of Municipalities, and it’s been an honor to serve our cities and towns.” ■

The thing I am most proud of is how the League morphed into what it needed to be. Even through the crisis, we were there, and we were wherever our 550 towns needed us to be.



Advancing Advocacy: How We Adapted to Change

SCOTT MOONEYHAM

NCLM Director of Political Communication & Coordination

NCLM'S REGULAR LEGISLATIVE UPDATE WEBINARS KEEP MEMBERS INFORMED ON THE MOST PRESSING HAPPENINGS AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

If the COVID-19 pandemic reinforced one idea throughout society, it is that necessity is indeed the mother of invention. That adage was seen in how people adjusted to the loss of the ability to meet and converse in-person, especially in large gatherings, with examples springing up everywhere—whether in remote work environments, new types of shopping experiences, or even outdoor worship services.

For an organization like NCLM, where meeting with local elected and appointed officials to understand and then attempt to address the challenges of cities and towns, the change of circumstances was especially tough. But we adapted. And one of the

early ways that we did so was through the creation of our virtual advocacy meeting series, Advancing Advocacy.

It has now been nearly three years since NCLM's Government Affairs staff held the first of these virtual meetings in the early April of 2020.

At the time, then-NCLM Grassroots Associate Christine Heubusch told those attending: "As you may know, we plan on continuing this virtual briefing, which we call Advancing Advocacy, each week at the same time for the foreseeable future. With less face-to-face contact, we hope to utilize this time to provide you with the information needed to continue to be key advocates on behalf of cities. These are unpredictable times, but we know that a lot of decisions that are going to be coming from Raleigh and Washington over the next several weeks are going to be important to our recovery and to the future of your town, and we are committed to being there to get the best results possible."

It was a crucial time for municipalities, facing the uncertainty of what might happen to revenue streams from sales taxes, utility



fees and occupancy taxes, and how state and federal policy makers would respond.

With such uncertainty in the air, the virtual meetings began as weekly events. And the participation of representatives of member cities and towns clearly demonstrated the need. Early on, virtual attendees numbered between 200 and 300. The information discussed was seen as vital.

There were presentations on the impact of the pandemic on economic activity and local budgets, the federal CARES Act and how it was being administered, state legislative efforts addressing budget challenges, and NCLM letter-writing and other advocacy actions to communicate municipal needs.

Outside presenters were also a part of the plan, with topics ranging from how the U.S. Census count would work in a pandemic landscape, how the restaurant and lodging industry saw the economic challenges, and the possible paths of economic recovery.

Of course, eventually the effects of the pandemic eased, and society began to return to some sense of normalcy.

Advancing Advocacy, though, has continued. The necessities of 2020 have created what is now seen as an effective and ongoing addition to our advocacy-related communication. While the need and circumstances no longer necessitate every-week sessions, or garner those 200-plus attendees, the more spread-out sessions still see 60 to 100 League members attending.

And our staff still sees these sessions as an effective way to communicate with you about the important happenings at the General Assembly and elsewhere affecting municipal-related public policy. So, keep on looking out for notifications of the meetings, and keep attending so that we can keep working together to advance the collective needs of North Carolina's cities and towns. ■

N•FOCUS

Local Government Services

Small Towns . . .

Great Opportunities!!!

Unlock your potential with a zoning audit to
"Stress Test" your development ordinances.
 You'll be glad you did . . .

- UDO/Zoning/Subdivision Ordinances
- Zoning Audits/Testing
- Comprehensive / Land Use / Master Planning
- Sign & Nuisance Ordinances
- Codification Services
- Code Administration/Enforcement
- Interim Public Administration

Contact: Patti Rader, Manager / COO
 704.933.0772
Prader@NFocusPlanning.org











SEASONAL ICE RINKS: A CAROLINA TRADITION SINCE 2016

Seasonal Ice Rinks is your local community partner specializing in custom design, manufacture, installation, and removal of temporary ice rinks. Superior customer service and 24/7 support is a hallmark of all our municipal relationships, and we will work tirelessly from concept to completion to ensure your project is successful. Seasonal Ice's temporary ice rinks,

- Can be customized to fit your city or town's unique landscape, character, or purpose.
- Are a unique way to inject energy, togetherness, and family fun into your community while generating revenue.
- Make an ideal space for special events, tree lightings, performances, fundraisers, and holiday parties - there's nothing more magical than ice skating outside in the South!

Contact us today at **704-594-2264** or visit www.seasonalicerinks.com.

Managers Make It Happen for North Carolina Cities and Towns

JACK CASSIDY
NCLM Communications Strategist



Some days, its strategic steps, planned and plotted and pursued with a long-term vision of what a city can become. Other days, it's just the immediate—just the crises.

“Depends on the day,” says High Point Manager Tasha Logan Ford, laughing. “I’m intentional in planning goals for each day, organizing the broader objectives of our Council into steps our staff team needs to execute, but I also have to be flexible to respond to what may be waiting as the day breaks. Many times, the plan has changed before making it to the office.”

To be a manager is to tackle both and to not know which is coming. The job seems to be one of both optimism and perseverance—of both racing between fires and muscling through problems. In both cases, it’s about finding solutions, consistency, relationship building, and carrying a message of hope. As difficult as it rightfully appears, a class of professionals all across North Carolina take up the mantle as a career. They’re not the face of their town, but they might be the backbone.

Managers are the CEOs of local government. They come from a variety of public service backgrounds. Some rise through the ranks of a single city. More commonly, others serve a number of towns. Logan Ford began her career in Goldsboro, rising to the ranks of assistant city manager before taking the same position in the larger jurisdiction of Winston-Salem. Her background is purely administrative, working primarily in managers’ offices. Others work their way through budget departments or planning departments or, as a more recent trend, community development departments. Each come with their own unique experiences and skill sets, but only the role itself can provide the full load of responsibilities.

The job title is familiar to most. The inner, day-to-day workings are somewhat harder to see, though they’re by no means a secret. Like most public service jobs, it just gets done, with little fame or fanfare. It starts for Tasha Logan Ford with a read through the local newspapers and a glance through Google Alerts. “Before I come into the office, I like to have an idea of what’s going on in the community and to get a pulse of what people might be talking about globally.” From there, it transitions to the operational needs of every single day: housing, police, fire, garbage collection, water, and sewer, just to name a few.

Perhaps, most notable in the responsibilities of a city manager is the relationship with the governing board. As the key connection between an elected body and city staff, the manager oversees far more than just administrative duties. They also serve in a communications role, a support role, and many times, a strategic role.

“The job is whatever it needs you to be on a given day,” says Logan Ford. “To be successful in the job, it requires presence of mind in each situation, a significant investment of time, trust, and grace.”

Step foot in any collegiate public administration course, and the first lesson you’ll hear is this: for a public organization to succeed, they must understand and respond to their stakeholders. Managers are the embodiment of that guidance. Logan Ford, recapping just a single week, notes that she had meetings with her staff, the local chamber of commerce, several foundations and nonprofits, and, of course, the High Point City Council. Other weeks bring different audiences. At the same time, citizens voice their concerns and needs, and Logan Ford must position the staff team to be responsive to them as well.

In High Point, city leadership is able to address both long-term and short-term needs through a team structure. Logan Ford often relies on her executive team to take on the day-to-day operations, which allows her to fully engage the litany of stakeholders—all of whom have a part to play in the strategic direction of the city. “It requires a team committed to the core values of this organization and the broader community,” Logan Ford says. “We seek to strike the right balance, by engaging with our elected body to build consensus around a set of common goals and then executing through the talent of our employees.” Even with ample support,

managers are involved with all city business and it can lead to one of the pitfalls of the job: burnout. The daily emails number in the hundreds, as do the weekly phone calls, and few if any workdays end at 5pm.

NCLM’s Heather James sees the weight of the role firsthand. As the League’s Manager for Operational Outreach, James runs the League’s interim manager program, which places retired municipal managers temporarily in manager-less towns. The program ensures continuity of service and provides the town with additional time to recruit for the position. And in recent years, demand for the program has increased. “It’s a really, really difficult job. It is 24/7,” James said of town managers. “Those with families, aging parents, anything outside of work—it can be hard to balance that.”

As with many public sector roles across the state and country, recruiting and retaining employees has been a challenge since the COVID-19 pandemic. That’s especially true for managers, who tout an executive-level skillset, supervise large staffs, and direct large and complex budgets. That’s a background with obvious appeal in any industry. It is not uncommon to see managers get recruited to the private sector.

continues on page 29

Before I come into the office, I like to have an idea of what’s going on in the community and to get a pulse of what people might be talking about globally.

» Tasha Logan Ford, High Point Manager



These managers are so committed to the profession because they've seen what success looks like in our towns. Once you get one success you want to continue getting more and more. Even minor changes can be huge for a town. None of them are there for the money. They're community driven.

» Heather James, Manager for Operational Outreach, NCLM



Tasha Logan Ford sits with the High Point City Council.



NCLM's Heather James works throughout the state to help manager-less towns find interim support.



continued from page 27

And still, despite that competition, North Carolina hosts a dedicated core of municipal managers. James sees it through the interim program and the retired managers that continue coming back to help communities. "These managers are so committed to the profession because they've seen what success looks like in our towns," said James. "Once you get one success you want to continue getting more and more. Even minor changes can be huge for a town. None of them are there for the money. They're community driven."

Logan Ford notes the same motivation. Through the state's many managers and their different personalities and different towns in which they work, the element that binds the group is consistent to a person: the desire to watch a community prosper and to have a hand in that success.

"I'm in public service because I care about the community. I fundamentally believe we can create spaces where people can use their talents to define their version of success, be successful in a way that is meaningful to them and support the broader economic vitality of the region. I want to see a community that's thriving. I want to see a community that's creating their own sense of identity with growing businesses and community ties that bind. In High Point, we will attract generational investments and residents who feel they can be successful," says Logan Ford. "There's nothing personal in it for me. It is about being able to leave this environment—whether it's my community environment or the environment of my organization—in a better position than it was when I found it. That is what motivates me every day and gets me excited about the work we do."

"Those who stay in this work do so because they want their community to be successful. It's adaptive work and Managers are committed to that ideal and the process to make it happen." ■



World Class Customer Service!

Our ATM team members cultivate business relationships based on integrity, honesty, and mutual respect. With a management team that has over 200 years of combined experience and vast knowledge of the water tank maintenance industry, ATM will provide customers with optimal solutions for their water tank needs.

Our Capabilities:

- Professional Water Tank Services • Tank Maintenance Programs
- Mixing Systems • Exterior/Interior Paint Renovations
- Fully Contained Lead Abatements • Major & Minor Repairs
- Washout Inspections & Cleanings • ROV Inspections
- Logo Design & Application • Chemical Cleaning • Emergency Services
- Visual Inspections • Paint Touch-Ups • Exterior Pressure Wash

See how our unique program is changing the industry!

CALL 800.418.6099
info@americantankmaintenance.com

American Tank Maintenance
www.americantankmaintenance.com



MOSCA Design

Commercial Holiday Decorations & Seasonal Banners

(800) 332-6798
info@moscadesign.com
www.MoscaDesign.com

Members Approve Legislative Goals

SCOTT MOONEYHAM

NCLM Director of Political Communication & Coordination

AFTER MONTHS OF LISTENING SESSIONS, LEGISLATIVE POLICY COMMITTEE MEETINGS, AND FINALLY ELECTRONIC VOTING BY MEMBER CITIES AND TOWNS, THE NC LEAGUE OF MUNICIPALITIES APPROVED ITS LEGISLATIVE GOALS FOR THE 2023-24 LEGISLATIVE BIENNIUM.

From 408 municipal goal proposals submitted through this process, falling into 50 distinct subject matter areas, 155 cities and towns approved a top 10 list of goals that now make up NCLM's final legislative agenda. Not surprisingly, infrastructure-related goals were again a top priority, closely followed by proposals involving keeping cities and towns financially healthy. Housing and law enforcement training were also top concerns of North Carolina's municipal leaders.

Of course, to turn these priorities into successful achievements, and get them passed into law, will not be easy. It never is. But it is important to note that the broad involvement of a diverse array of cities and towns, and their elected and appointed leaders, helps to make the case at the General Assembly that these goals represent the priorities of the municipalities in legislators' districts, no matter where they live.

"Hundreds of cities and towns and their officials from across North Carolina gave their input and prioritized these legislative goals. These goals truly reflect the top priorities of all our cities and towns, whether small or large, and achieving them will move our economy even further ahead," said Erin Wynia, NCLM's Director of Government Affairs.

In addition to the voting, 111 officials from cities and towns participated in various in-person and virtual discussions, while the 65-member Policy Committee and NCLM Board of Directors played key roles in considering and narrowing priorities and developing goal language.

As the legislative session heats up, expect to see legislation that encompasses some of the aims of these goals. Some, especially those in the area of infrastructure, could show up in provisions in a state budget bill. Others may come in the form of stand-alone bills. Whatever the case, the advocacy of NCLM members will continue to be needed to try to gain legislative support. As always, that will involve individual conversations with legislators, as well as making the case through other forms of communication and even in formal committee hearings.



With that in mind, here are the member-approved 10 Legislative Goals for 2023-24, along with the subject areas approved by the League Board of Directors, and some brief talking points that can be used to demonstrate their importance to the challenges faced by North Carolina's cities and towns.

RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE

Create an adequate and permanent funding stream for local infrastructure.

- Infrastructure—including roads, water, sewer, stormwater, parks, and beaches—is critical to economic development and job creation.
- Many cities in the state are growing, creating a constant need for investment to keep pace with population growth; many cities and towns also have aging infrastructure that must be replaced.
- Creating more permanent funding streams for local infrastructure, such as a dedicated tax source, would allow for better planning to meet needs.

Expand state transportation funding streams for construction and maintenance for municipal and state-owned secondary roads.

- Current Powell Bill and other state funding is not adequate to address transportation needs, particularly as they affect municipal and state-owned secondary roads.

- In many cities and towns, major commuting corridors are not receiving the level of investment needed to keep pace with traffic.
- More investment is needed for these roads if existing residents are to embrace business and residential growth.

Allow municipalities to use local resources and capabilities to expand broadband access in their communities through innovative partnerships.

- Slow and unreliable internet service threatens educational and professional opportunities, and the economic future of entire communities.
- Municipalities own existing infrastructure—including dark fiber, towers, and electric poles—that could be utilized in innovative partnerships and assist in making broadband service more affordable.
- Failure to utilize local government assistance and assets will continue to create digital gaps that have real-world consequences for North Carolinians.

Expand incentives that encourage regionalization of water and sewer, as well as other municipal services, when appropriate.

- A number of municipal water and sewer systems continue to financially struggle with deferred maintenance needs.
- These challenges came about largely due to population and job losses in rural areas, leading to an erosion of taxpayer and ratepayer bases.
- While legislators and municipalities have begun to address these issues with the creation of the Viable Utility Reserve and the use of ARPA funding, state estimates show needs still exceed expenditures by several billion dollars.

Provide local revenue options beyond property tax.

- Roughly 40% of municipal general fund revenue is generated by local property taxes.
- Cities have little to no authority to raise significant revenue in other ways.
- A lack of diverse, local tax options can affect economic growth, as well as cause large swings in revenue based on economic changes.

Expand incentives and funding for local economic development.

- Funding is simply inadequate in many cities and towns to encourage job growth.
- State grants and incentives are often targeted in ways that fail to assist the areas in greatest need of job creation.
- Maintaining or expanding funding for film tax credits, major industrial site development, downtown development, and renewable energy tax credits helps cities and towns across the state.

VIBRANT COMMUNITIES AND NEIGHBORHOODS

Expand federal and state resources for affordable housing.

- Housing affordability is a growing problem across North Carolina, affecting cities and towns of all sizes and people across different income levels.
- Increasingly, the lack of affordable housing acts as a major impediment to business and workforce recruitment.
- Ongoing state and federal revenue streams to address housing affordability are extremely limited, with much of the burden for solutions left with cities and towns.



Revitalize vacant and abandoned properties with enhanced legal tools and funding.

- Abandoned and vacant properties, often the subject of so-called tangled titles, can affect the ability of communities to revitalize areas and improve economic conditions.
- The abandoned properties, with enhanced legal tools to help heirs clear up title issues and sell properties at market rates, could help address local housing needs.
- Many towns do not have the funding to adequately address abandoned properties.

ADAPTIVE MUNICIPAL OPERATIONS

Enhance state systems and resources for local law enforcement officer recruitment, training, and retention.

- Municipalities across the state are facing law enforcement staffing shortages, in many cases severe shortages.
- State training resources are limited, and the cost of local law enforcement agencies to send recruits and existing officers to NC Justice Academy locations can be prohibitive.
- Grant writing assistance is one of several options that might provide better access to the large volume of federal law enforcement grant funding that is available.

Revise state contracting laws to better protect public entities from the effects of inflation.

- Labor and materials costs have been rising at a rapid rate, leaving municipalities with few options when project bids and costs exceed expectations.
- Additional flexibility regarding the contracting process could assist municipalities in protecting taxpayers from inflation and escalating costs.
- Without contracting law flexibility, projects can be delayed, and costs can further increase.

You can find a printable pdf handout of the goals on NCLM website at www.nclm.org/pages/advocacy/advocacy-goals.aspx. Also please use this page to look for updates on important legislation affecting both these priorities and legislation filed that could damage municipal authority. ■



SO, YOU WANT TO COMMISSION A MURAL?

"I found I could say things with color and shapes that I couldn't say any other way—things I had no words for." This quote, from artist Georgia O'Keefe, neighbors so many like it on the seemingly priceless value of art and its powers of communication, representation, unification, introspection, and everyday pleasantries, so much that nothing, not even government, can resist the conversation.

In summer 2017, *Municipal Equation*, the League's podcast about cities and towns adapting to change, ran an episode exploring "public art"—that is, generally, art placed in a public space following some kind of public process—and why municipal governments across North Carolina have been inspired to add public art to the local scene. Just prior, that spring, the podcast examined a downtown mural trail the City of Sanford commissioned to celebrate local, historical heroes and events.

The bottom line, municipal officials and public art experts told the podcast, is that communities can feel a sense of refreshment, pride, fellowship and, to reference O'Keefe, communicative new color with the placement of art in public spaces and on big downtown walls, which may require some kind of local government involvement or approval. Those episodes are online at <https://municipalequation.libsyn.com>.

But the question of exactly *how* a local government can facilitate public art received new attention recently, when the NC Local Government Budget Association's Winter Conference in Winston-Salem featured a live recording of *Municipal Equation* on the very subject. This writer moderated a panel of two municipal government professionals who help to responsibly add public art to their cities.

"I generally give the definition of art in the public realm," said Kelly Bennett, certified planner and Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Public Art Commission staff liaison, when asked to define public art. "You could consider art that's privately funded in a public space public art, but what we generally go with is art that is publicly funded in a public space."

When the City of Sanford, for instance, pursued its public mural project, private funds ended up covering tabs, inclusive of the hired muralist's rate. But many public art projects, like those Bennett deals with, might involve public funds, which motivates oversight, method, and inclusion of community voice.

"For us, there is still that community component, because it is publicly funded," said Chris Lange, art and transit program administrator at Charlotte-Area Transit System (CATS). Lange joined Bennett on the panel.

continues on page 35



continued from page 33

Winston-Salem, itself branded the City of Arts & Innovation, and Forsyth County together provide resources for Bennett's office, which has been active for roughly seven years. Occupancy tax money, directed toward tourism uses, has been a substantial source of the funding. Funds have also come via a bond referendum and a project that brought in private dollars, which "turned into a really cool project on a water tank," Bennett said. The once-plain tank was completely transformed with an appealing otter mural and won television media attention when it took first-place in a national contest focused on municipal water facilities.

"We have also funded (public art) in partnership with a developer who was building a residential building downtown and wanted to see public art nearby," Bennett said. The private developer contributed half the funds toward a sculpture placement on the city block.

A "percent for art" is another way many local governments fund public art. In Raleigh, 1% of municipal construction funds are set aside for public art. The city created a Public Art and Design Board to oversee implementation.

For CATS, Lange noted a similar approach; capital improvement projects include a percent allocated for art. Temporary operating budget allocations have also contributed.

Lange's office is centered around public art in a transit context—light rail stations, park-and-rides, bus stops, and so on. Another office with the City of Charlotte also gets a percent for art, its work dealing with bond packages and vertical constructions among other things.

Expressions of public art—remember, it's art—can vary widely. To barely scratch the surface: sculptures in parks or downtown plazas; graphic wraps to improve the looks of utility boxes or other unsightly infrastructure; sidewalks and crosswalks dazzled with painted designs; dynamic, mechanical whirligigs or installations with interactive components; and the classic, popular mural.

Municipal Equation asked the panelists how something as seemingly simple and straightforward as a mural—on, say, the side of a facilities building—is brought to fruition with government gears. For Lange's office, it begins with a call to artists and a request-for-qualifications. "From there we will work with our advisory committee to form a selection panel," Lange continued, explaining that people from around the community who are knowledgeable about art—art teachers, museum experts and so on—would make up the selection panel. Once an artist is selected for the mural, the city will work with that artist to develop a design and ultimately enter into a contract so work can begin.

Bennett said his office follows similar steps for smaller projects, which in the process may involve candidate artists submitting examples of past work to give the city an idea of caliber and style. For larger projects, the government's purchasing policy requires formal proposals.

An obvious question followed for the panelists: Is there any weight given to local artists? Perfectly qualified, proven artists from around the country might be submitting interest, but there might also be significance in working with the city's own talent.

continues on page 39









expressions of public art—remember, it's art—can vary widely. To barely scratch the surface: sculptures in parks or downtown plazas; graphic wraps to improve the looks of utility boxes or other unsightly infrastructure; sidewalks and crosswalks dazzled with painted designs; dynamic, mechanical whirligigs or installations with interactive components; and the classic, popular mural.

continued from page 35

"Trying to make those local connections is really important," Lange said, noting his office takes a "concentric circle" approach in reaching artists for projects, starting locally and working outward. "We do give favoritism to local artists," he said, adding that about half of the artists his office has worked with have been North Carolina-based or local.

There are numerous ways to reach local artists, Bennett indicated, including special listservs. He named the North Carolina Arts Council's listserv among them. Also, local artists provide their email addresses, which can be stored and used for future calls, when applying for projects. The local arts councils, too, are great

resources for connections to area artists and may be particularly great relationships for municipalities with limited staffing and resources. "Now we have a pretty large list of artists, who are on the lookout for our projects," Bennett said.

He and Lange discussed numerous additional facets of public art development, maintenance, and budgeting during the session, which also included a cautionary tale for cities and towns in selecting artists to work with.

The full episode of the podcast, "So You Want to Commission a Mural," is online <https://municipalequation.libsyn.com>. ■



More than 1,000 municipal officials and staff have participated in the Advancing Municipal Leaders web-based education program this fall.

This member-led program responds to your needs by identifying timely topics and providing practical information you can use right away.

Visit www.aml.nclm.org for more information and to sign up for our AML mailing list.

TAKING THE FIELD

Town & State and CityVision: A Microcosm of the League in Action



ROSE VAUGHN WILLIAMS
NCLM Executive Director

If there are two events that best sum up the NC League of Municipalities, they are CityVision and the Town & State Dinner. Combined, these occasions encapsulate NCLM's mission of supporting, convening and advancing our member cities and towns.

Both featured in this issue, these gatherings are flagship League events. We are fresh off of our fifth Town & State Dinner, which hosted more than 400 local leaders and 100 state legislators. Meeting over a meal in downtown Raleigh, the Town & State Dinner provides an opportunity for our municipal elected and appointed officials to meet and have conversations with their state lawmakers, and it is hard to overstate the importance of these relationships. When local and state leaders discuss issues, develop ideas, and meet problems together, the entire state benefits.

Later this spring, we will host CityVision in beautiful Concord, North Carolina. And if it's anything like last year's edition in Wilmington, we'll be in for another week of education, engagement and excitement. CityVision also welcomes hundreds of local officials, and through a packed agenda of programming, keynotes, local excursions, and networking time, we are able to connect our vast and diverse membership where it is most important: in person.

It is that element that gets at the core value of these events. Our membership is comprised of the large and small, the mountainous and the coastal, and the urban and the rural, and the needs across our municipalities are just as varied. There are themes, though, that connect us. These include a public-service mindset, a willingness to serve one's community, and an outlook towards the future that blends both the optimistic and the pragmatic. It is vital to get together to remember these strengths that unite us.

Throughout my time at the League, I have witnessed countless successes. I have seen our cities and towns earn critical legislative achievements at the General Assembly. I have watched town after town masterfully execute long-term strategies and make long-lasting investments into their communities. And I have watched our state, upon the foundation of our cities, become the toast of the nation. None of these successes happened in a silo. Rather, they were the product of partnerships and collaboration and strong relationships. Town & State Dinner and CityVision get right at the heart of those wins.

Michael Lazzara, a past NCLM President and current member of the NC Senate, summed it up best at last year's conference. "There is absolutely nothing more important as a municipal leader than to be engaged in your League and to attend these events, to get to know your legislators, to make time, to communicate, to build relationships," Lazzara told attendees. "It's extremely important. We have common goals and common challenges."

That's not to say that these events are the only place you'll find the NC League throughout the year. In fact, you can find us just about anywhere across the state, hosting events, sharing information, and consulting local governments on any number of matters, from police to HR to legal. NCLM is a one-stop shop for cities and towns in North Carolina, and we are proud to work with so many of our municipalities each and every day.

If you haven't taken advantage of League services in a while, please reach out to us and see how we can help. And if you want to see the microcosm of NCLM in action, join us at CityVision. We hope to see you there. ■

The Town & State Dinner provides an opportunity for our municipal elected and appointed officials to meet and have conversations with their state lawmakers, and it is hard to overstate the importance of these relationships. **When local and state leaders discuss issues, develop ideas, and meet problems together, the entire state benefits.**



Introducing DIRECT, a new racial equity program for League members.

DIRECT works alongside municipal leaders to acknowledge existing racial inequalities, identify local history and data, and examine municipal policies and procedures that contribute to structural and systemic racism in local communities. Through this shared understanding and knowledge, DIRECT empowers local officials to develop strategies that work toward stronger, more equitable communities.

Learn more at www.nclm.org/DIRECT

Risk Management Board of Trustees 2023



CHAIR
Joe Gibbons
Mayor,
Lenoir



VICE CHAIR
Liz Johnson
Mayor Pro Tem,
Morrisville



Doug Matheson
Mayor Pro Tem,
Blowing Rock



Andrew Smith
Risk Management
Coordinator,
Morganton



Kyle Hayman
Mayor,
Conover



Angela Kirkwood
Director of
Human Resources,
High Point



Matt Zapp
Manager,
Emerald Isle



Adrian Miller
City Manager,
Belmont



Jimmy Stallings
Mayor,
Edenton



Rose Vaughn Williams
Ex-Officio,
Executive Director,
NC League of
Municipalities



Ben Naprstek
Safety & Risk Manager,
Wake Forest



YOUR
PARTNER
FOR
RESULTS.

HARTZOG LAW GROUP

Hartzog Law Group is founded on the principle that our clients deserve aggressive advocacy, a high degree of professionalism, and exceptional client service. Our goal is to be your go-to law firm for municipal law, and clients know that we will work tirelessly on their behalf, both in and out of the courtroom. We strive to be not just a lawyer, but a partner to you.

Hartzog LAW GROUP

You can find us at hartzoglawgroup.com

- GOVERNMENTAL AND MUNICIPAL LAW •
- CONSTITUTIONAL LAW • EMPLOYMENT LAW •
- LAW ENFORCEMENT LIABILITY • ZONING AND LAND USE •
- PUBLIC RECORDS LAW • TOWN ATTORNEY SERVICES •



INSIGHT

PLANNING + DEVELOPMENT



A Service
Disabled Veteran
Owned Small
Business



ROSE
ASSOCIATES

roseassociates.com
704.896.0094

- Economic Development Planning
- Market Analysis • Land Use Strategy
- Experiential Place-Making

*Serving the Carolinas and Southeast
for over 30 years*

Economic Development & Real Estate Advisory Services

CARY, NORTH CAROLINA
NAMED ONE OF THE 2022

BEST PLACES TO WORK

IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

BY ENGAGING LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEADERS (ELGL)

The local government in Cary, North Carolina stands out for its core values, people-first mentality, and inclusive community. The organization seizes opportunities to experiment and adapt, work smart, and foster an “anyone can lead” philosophy to find ways to improve the community. Examples include monthly “rap sessions” discussing challenging topics in a safe space and Cary’s second-to-none “Benefits My Way” program offering quality-of-life perks such as additional time off and lifestyle reimbursements.

**We hope you will join us as we celebrate
this great place to live—and work—inspired!**

VISIT carync.gov | FOLLOW [@caryncgov](https://twitter.com/caryncgov)





434 Fayetteville Street, Suite 1900
Raleigh, NC 27601

nclm.org



We start at the **curb** and continue through the **community**.

SERVICE | COMMUNITY | SAFETY

— SINCE 2001 —

