

SOUTHERN CITY

A PUBLICATION OF THE NORTH CAROLINA LEAGUE OF MUNICIPALITIES



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WILLIAM HARRIS: FUQUAY-VARINA'S LONGTIME LOCAL LEADER



SOUTHERN CITY

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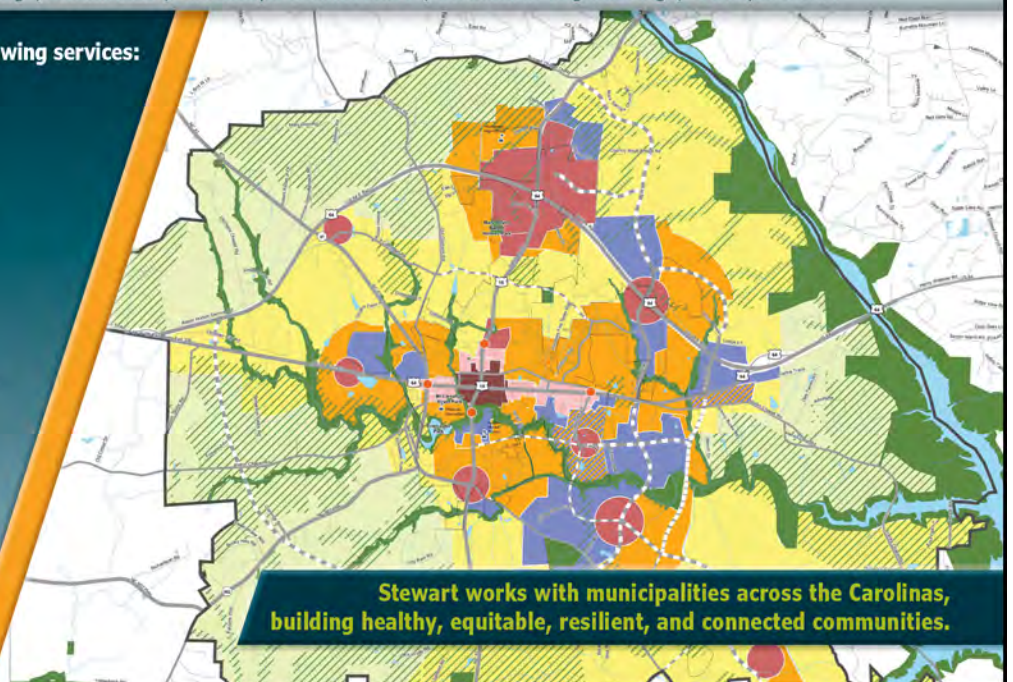
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SPEAKING OUT

Reflecting On the Year



WILLIAM HARRIS
NCLM President

It is difficult to believe that this column and this edition of *Southern City* comes as my tenure as president of the North Carolina League of Municipalities nears its end.

The time has gone by quickly, and my wonderful interactions with all of you, the members of this organization, have made it a great experience. The involvement of the elected and appointed municipal officials of North Carolina is the true strength of the organization, and it is what allows us to shape our state and our communities in ways that better the lives of citizens.

As I look back over the past year, I am proud that NCLM has been able to both improve its own internal positioning for the future and establish services that assist municipalities in improving theirs.

What do I mean by “positioning for the future?”

For NCLM, that has meant being able to move forward with acquiring the full property at the old League campus site in downtown Raleigh, where the buildings were destroyed by fire. The recent approval of a rezoning by the City of Raleigh will allow us to move forward with the property’s redevelopment, which should put the organization in good financial footing for years to come, even as we work to decide the best course for the re-development and the League’s role.

A side benefit of resolving these issues associated with the property is that we have been able to work through issues with the N.C. Association of County Commissioners, and have strengthened our relationship as a result. This relationship is so important because, as sister organizations representing local government, we face many of the same challenges. Doing so with a unified front is often the difference between success and failure before the General Assembly and other state policymakers.

Strengthening our relationship with the UNC School of Government is yet another accomplishment to be proud of over the past year.

As for helping municipalities position themselves for the future, what NCLM has accomplished in the past year through the expansion of service lines is very exciting.

Those offerings help cities and towns comply with the accounting requirements for ARPA grants funds, provide a municipal accounting service program to assist with all bookkeeping, cybersecurity assistance, legal help, and grant writing assistance.

While a lot of these services are aimed at smaller towns with limited resources, here is why it is important to all cities and towns across North Carolina: these services are helping financially struggling towns meet all of their bookkeeping requirements, including conducting their annual audits required by the state. They also are helping to prevent fraud, waste, and cyber theft.

These services come as some towns have seen their finances taken over by the Local Government Commission. Those and others have been the subject of unflattering news accounts related to financial wrongdoing, or critical comments from state officials related to late audits.

When all of our municipalities are doing better, that reflects well on all cities and towns in the state and tamps down negative and often unfair rhetoric.

Obviously, the list of accomplishments by NCLM over the past year goes far beyond those mentioned above. Our staff, and you, continue to meet our advocacy challenges before state legislators, and our relationship-building in that regard has become a strength. Our training offerings for municipal officials strengthens their understanding of issues of governance and assists residents. And our insurance offerings continue to provide a needed service in a changing and challenging environment.

These are not my accomplishments. They are the accomplishments of everyone involved with the League of Municipalities.

I thank all municipal officials, my fellow members of the Board of Directors, NCLM staff, and my own colleagues in Fuquay-Varina for the past year, and I look forward to this continuing commitment to service in the years ahead. ■

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NCLM's 2023 Year in Review

ISABELLA MORMANDO
Communications Associate



The North Carolina League of Municipalities works each year to provide members with the best information, resources, and knowledge to help all municipalities across the state succeed in their individual goals.

Each year, we like to demonstrate a high-level overview of the work being done across each team within the League for our members.

NEW SERVICE LINES

Since 2021, the League has worked to build a team of subject matter experts to help cities and towns in North Carolina utilize their American Rescue Plan funds appropriately and effectively.

The League's Technical Assistance for Cities department houses the ARP field services team that visited 464 different

municipalities in 2023 and conducted 590 site visits in total. These site visits include providing the assistance we offer through various ARP Service Lines:

- The Legal Services saw 14 towns sign on for assistance.
- The Grant Writing Services connected 53 members to Witt O'Brien's, the League's grant services provider, for a consultation or are in grant identification/pursuance.
- 34 towns began Municipal Accounting Services (MAS) software conversion, with seven conversions fully completed by the end of 2023.
- 27 towns utilized Cybersecurity Services (outside of MAS towns, which are provided cybersecurity assessments through the program).
- The League hired a Communications & Multimedia Strategist in 2023 to help towns tell the story of how they have made transformational investments in their communities with their ARP funds across North Carolina. Let the League help you share those stories and encourage growth and prosperity across the state.

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

In February 2023, the League held its annual Town & State Dinner which had 444 members and 80 legislators in attendance. This year, Town & State Dinner: From Jones St. to Main St. is traveling across the state and hosting five different events throughout March and April. Town & State Dinner provides the opportunity for local leaders to connect with their state



CityVision 2023

Congressional Roundtables

legislators to aid in building impactful relationships between local and state governments.

To help orchestrate relations between the local and federal levels, the League hosted Congressional Luncheons, one in May with Representative Valerie Foushee, and one in June with Representative David Rouzer.

To continue to foster the relationships and professional training of local leaders across the state, the NC Mayors Association met five times throughout the state in 2023. The Metro Mayors coalition met twice in 2023.

The League attended two NLC Conferences in 2023. In March, 101 of

our members gathered at the NLC Congressional Cities Conference for our NC Leadership Reception. In November, we hosted another NC Leadership Reception at the NLC City Summit.

The GA team tracked 325 municipal-related bills in the 2023-2024 long session, kept League members up to date on matters within the General Assembly, and lobbied municipal issues on behalf of cities and towns.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS AND MEMBER ENGAGEMENT

More than 400 League members attended CityVision 2023. Adding in guests, speakers, special guests, non-members,

staff, and vendors, the total attendance soared to just at 600. This year, CityVision 2024 will be held in Winston-Salem, April 23-25, register online at cityvision2024.com.

The Inaugural Risk Management Services Trust Matters Conference was held October 5, 2023, in Durham, and hosted 93 members and staff for a daylong training on risk management topics.

Through the League's Advancing Municipal Leaders program, we've educated at least 373 members via On-Demand courses (Ethics and Utility Management Best Practices with DEQ) and Webinars (Ethics and others); held 10+ in-person courses,

continues on page 13



Advancing Municipal Leaders Courses



Town & State Dinner 2023



Mayor's Association 2023



continued from page 11

and launched the Advancing Municipal Leaders (AML) Certification Program for elected and appointed municipal officials.

LEGAL

The League's Legal teamwork included in-house advising of NCLM departments. League attorneys also trained municipal officials through popular offerings within Advancing Municipal Leaders learning platform, including the on-demand Ethics for Municipal Officials course. The team also provided 200+ direct legal consultations for 120 towns.

BUSINESS SERVICES

The League's Business Services team, whose work includes the handling of insurance questions, renewals, as well as serving as main points of contacts for all NCLM programming, logged big numbers, with consultants having made 622 member visits during the 2023 calendar year.

RISK MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Risk Control & Public Safety:

The League's Risk Control Field Services division, whose work includes risk management consulting and training, recorded nearly 1,165 member consultations providing guidance and resources to members one-on-one.

They also included:

- **4 Law Enforcement Risk Reviews** were completed with 27 new agencies now in progress with Risk Review completion expected in 2024.
- **5 Fire Department Risk Reviews** began in 2023 and remain in progress with completion expected in the spring of 2024.
- **5 HR-related training events** took place, including Employment Liability and Recruitment and Retention.
- **37 RMS training events** including Flagger Training, OSHA-10 courses, Driver Training classes, and Sewer Backup training.

Workers' Compensation:

The Workers' Compensation Trust provides members with fair, competitive rates and personalized safety training to help reduce accidents, injuries, and municipally focused risk exposures. The League covered 475 towns and completed 471 premium audits in 2023.

WC Claims Processing in 2023:

New: 970
Closed: 915
Total Open Pending: 741

Property and Causality

The Property & Casualty Trust has decades of proven service showing NCLM is the expert in North Carolina for municipal risk management. The League covered 423 members in 223.

PC Claims Processing in 2023:

New: 2,230
Closed: 2,439
Total Open Pending: 761


Health Benefits Trust

The Health Benefits Trust (HBT) is a self-insured, member-governed health insurance pool that is 100% committed to providing the insurance coverage options that our member cities and towns need.

- 400+ member groups with over 10,000 lives in the Health Benefits Trust program: medical, dental, vision, life, and disability
- HBT Field Consultants attended +230 member visits
- Wellness Grants provided over \$55,000 in funds to 30+ groups

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Just Ahead: The 2024 Legislative Session

SCOTT MOONEYHAM

Director of Political Communication and Coordination

No single legislative session is ever like another, and the 2024 session promises to further confirm that truism.

For North Carolina cities and towns, that may not be a bad thing. That's because this year's session may be heavily shaped by electoral politics, which could translate to less focus on the policy areas that typically worry municipal officials, such as pre-emption of land-use regulation.

As we move into a presidential election year, how that national race shapes up—and the issues that come to the fore—could well dominate discussions in Raleigh, even if some have limited relevance to state policy and the General Assembly's ability to move the needle. The main issues that capture voters' attention in statewide races for governor, attorney general and other executive offices might also become rolled into legislation, as political allies of the candidates seek to play up any political advantage.

But what may set this year's legislative session apart from those during previous presidential election years is that leadership change is coming to the state House. After five terms as Speaker of the House, Cleveland County Rep. Tim Moore will not seek re-election and is running for Congress in the state's 14th Congressional District, covering all or parts of six counties stretching from Charlotte into North Carolina's foothills.

Moore and his key lieutenants in the House, including current House Rules Committee Chair Destin Hall and Majority Leader John Bell, have sought to head off the sort of chaos seen in Washington when power transitions take place. His leading allies, rather than fighting among themselves for the job of House Speaker, instead have agreed to a slate of leadership positions for 2025, assuming Republicans maintain their majority after the election.

That agreement would have Hall become the House Speaker and Bell move into the second most powerful position in the House, chair of the Rules Committee. (That is the case because the Rules Committee chair, typically in conjunction with the Speaker, determines when, how, and if bills are considered.)

Hall told Spectrum News that the agreement came after a lot of discussion among several legislators. "We were confident that we could avoid the kind of problems that they've had in D.C.," Hall said.

Meanwhile, other key positions have also been decided, and the slate appears to have the backing of a strong majority of House Republicans.

"Appears" is the keyword in that sentence. As a famous Scottish poet of the 18th Century once wrote, such plans do go oft awry, leaving the planners, like mice in a plowed field, to scurry about in "nothing but pain and grief."

The chance of the plan falling through may be slim. Regardless, that looming succession and Moore's pending departure will color the legislative session.

How that plays out is anyone's guess. When U.S. Sen. Thom Tillis gave up the House speakership to run for U.S. Senate in 2014, it became more difficult for him to control the flow of legislation and the House caucus generally, as candidates seeking higher office are loath to anger caucus members and block their favorite causes.

That tendency can be counter-balanced by a desire to avoid controversial issues when an election looms and legislators in swing districts want to avoid such votes at all costs.

At the same time, issues that become lightning rods of public attention—particularly those that poll well across different demographic and partisan groups—can find their way into state legislation. Known as "run-on bills," in 2024, they could cover topics ranging from immigration to energy affordability, even if the policy changes proposed bring few changes.

What does all this mean for cities and towns, and their policy priorities?

That is difficult to predict, just as difficult as predicting political outcomes that will be decided months from now.

Backing away from those political dynamics, though, there are a number of factors suggesting that the legislative session may play out without a lot of substantive policy issues becoming law, especially those considered in bills separate from the state budget.

The even-numbered year "short session" limits legislation considered largely to bills with appropriations, bills that passed one legislative chamber or the other in the first year of the biennium, and local bills.

In recent years, legislators have used the state budget bill as a vehicle for state policy changes, and that is a trend that is likely to continue. But **in a short session and major election year, budget writers will probably steer away from the most controversial policy provisions.**

When it comes to bills that “crossed over,” passing either the House or the Senate last year, there simply are not many in that category affecting cities and towns that have any real political heft behind them. One that might move this session, and that involves a policy goal of cities, is HB 588 Heirs Property Study. The legislation seeks to explore ways to better resolve “tangled titles” that leave property owners vulnerable to fraud and some properties vacant and blighted. Pension retirement issues also are always ripe for discussion, and an ABC system reform bill is again in the mix for 2024.

Local bills are not subject to the same limitations as other legislation, and this year marks a change that city officials will want to note: The submission deadline for these bills will precede the reconvening of the General Assembly, so you will want to be in discussions with your legislators regarding any needs for local legislation now. The deadline to submit these bills to legislative bill drafting is April 15 at 4 p.m.

In recent years, legislators have used the state budget bill as a vehicle for state policy changes, and that is a trend that is likely to continue. But in a short session and major election year, budget writers will probably steer away from the most controversial policy provisions.

Worth watching is whether the state Senate again pursues more comprehensive gambling legislation, in the wake of changes allowing sports betting and the establishment of the Catawba casino in Catawba County. Last year’s effort to create a handful of additional state-sanctioned gambling districts, which eventually failed, was largely responsible for delaying the passage of a state budget in 2023.

As always, there will be twists and turns ahead that no one can anticipate. But NCLM’s very capable Government Affairs Team will be there to monitor it all, calling on its best tool—the municipal officials of the League membership—when it is most needed to gain the best outcome for North Carolina’s cities and towns. ■



Rep. Tim Moore



Rep. John Bell with Mayor Karen Alexander



Rep. Tim Moore with Mayor Leonardo Williams

Health Benefits Trust Transition to Aetna

ISABELLA MORMANDO
Communications Associate

In August of 2023, the League's Board of Trustees voted to end the Health Benefits



Trust (HBT) contract with its provider, MedCost, and transition to the League's new provider partners, Aetna and Vimly Benefits Solution, effective July 1, 2024.

The League fully understands the uncertainty and questions that stem from such an important change. The decision to switch providers was not made lightly. This transition will allow League staff to have more involvement in eligibility and provide the ability to help members more directly, bringing a higher level of customer service facilitated by the League, to members.

"Taking billing, eligibility, and customer service in-house doesn't only provide cost savings to our membership in future years; it's an investment in fostering direct relationships, enhancing accountability, and driving positive change from within. We are excited about the future of this program and what we will be able to do for our membership with these changes," says Youssou Fall, NCLM Director of Strategic Operations.

So, what does this mean for HBT members?

To modernize plan options with this transition, some benefits will be altered to have a more positive impact on members' overall experiences. Members will still receive similar great plan options. One important change is the way these plan benefits are administered to members. For example, existing members are familiar with MedCost's provider Teladoc as a virtual, on-demand care service. Aetna offers CVS Virtual Care and CVS Virtual Primary Care as their virtual, on-demand care provider. View the full list of new program names in the chart to the right.

Members can expect the same health care they are accustomed to under their current HBT plan offered by the League, including medical, dental, vision, pharmacy, life, and short-term disability benefits. Aetna's expansive provider network will be able to offer members even more access in the 2024-2025 plan. Their provider network is a 99.6% match to providers previously offered through MedCost. The few primary care physicians not currently in Aetna's provider network will be "grandfathered" in as in-network providers for current pool members. The bottom line is members will not have to change their primary care physician. With this greater network of new providers, members can get access to care that is conveniently located close to them, no matter where they are in North Carolina.

Vimly Benefit Solutions, and its software platform named SIMON, will be the billing and eligibility vendor for all HBT plans. The SIMON software allows the League to bring eligibility in-house.

2023-2024 Programs	2024-2025 Aetna Program Name
Teladoc	CVS Health Virtual Care CVS Health Virtual Primary Care
Teladoc Mental Health	CVS Health Virtual Care—Mental Health
SmartStarts	Aetna Enhanced Maternity
Active and Fit Direct	Aetna Health Your Way—Engage Aetna member website Aetna Concierge
CAM Benefits	CAM Benefits
Wondr Health	Wondr Health
Diabetes Management Program	Diabetes Management Program
Personal Care Management	Aetna One Flex 24-Hour Nurse Line
Claims Portal	Aetna member website Aetna Health app Aetna Concierge
Rx Benefits	Aetna Pharmacy
Optum Rx	Aetna Pharmacy
Atrium Specialty Pharmacy	CVS Specialty Pharmacy
Tobacco Cessation	Aetna Health Your Way—ENGAGE Online digital coaching programs—Quit Tobacco. ACA Required. Smoking cessation counseling 8 visits per year. Covered same as Adult Routine Exam. Also available via MinuteClinic at select CVS Pharmacy locations. ACA Required. Eligible tobacco cessation drugs with prescription.

Taking billing, eligibility, and customer service in-house doesn't only provide cost savings to our membership in future years; it's an investment in fostering direct relationships, enhancing accountability, and driving positive change from within. **We are excited about the future of this program and what we will be able to do for our membership with these changes.**

» Shelly Linker, NCLM Business Manager



This means that the League will use the SIMON platform to make any enrollment changes, such as new hires, terminations, and qualifying event changes on behalf of members.

Over 10 years ago, the League previously handled billing and eligibility in-house very successfully and efficiently.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

The League has a robust and expert staff that provides assistance in whatever capacity is needed from HBT members. League HBT Consultants knows that each member is unique and has a different set of healthcare needs from the next. League staff works to curate and implement the best plan for each of its members by working closely and diligently with municipal employers across North Carolina.

HBT Consultants have expert knowledge on how to make the most of each member's plan. They can provide in-depth, specific knowledge on each program that is available to members and the best practices to utilize each service, all one phone call away.

"The customer service is just top-notch," says Casey Warner, Town of Indian Trails Human Resources Director. "I always get an answer within a day, sometimes within 30 seconds."

The Town of Indian Trails has been a member of the League's Workers' Compensation and Property and Liability Insurance pools for many years before deciding to also join the Health Benefits Trust. Because of the great past experiences Warner had with the League's risk management staff, she trusted the League to provide health coverage to the Town of Indian Trails' 53 employees.

To get to know the needs and expectations of all HBT members, the League not only utilizes HBT Consultants but also League Business Services Consultants who are all licensed insurance producers. Consultants meet face-to-face with HBT members in their municipalities to assist them with any questions and provide risk management programming and knowledge of all the League's programs and services.

"We have [League consultants] come out every year and do open enrollment presentations, they handle all of that and it makes it very easy ... and it's always well-received," says Warner. "If they don't know an answer to a question, they're going to find out, they don't leave you hanging."

Further, the SIMON platform fits varied plan needs and allows the League's consultants to directly assist members with enrollment changes with a quick turnaround. If a member needs to add a new employee to its plan or terminate coverage, they can contact the League directly with this change. Members will also be able to log into the SIMON platform and make the change themselves. Either method allows the League to have access to this eligibility information and the ability to assist members when questions arise.

In February, the League's HBT staff began hosting an ongoing webinar series that will showcase the strategic shift to Aetna and Vimly and demonstrate the transformative advantages this transition will bring. Some webinars include Aetna and Vimly representatives. This is a fantastic opportunity to meet the new HBT partners and understand the compelling reasons behind this exciting transition, ensuring that members are well-informed and confident in the positive changes ahead.

A recording of each webinar is available on the League's website, or visit the link by scanning the QR code below.

Additionally, the annual Risk Management Services (RMS) Spring Tour connects members with League staff throughout the state to discuss renewal offers for each insurance pool. This year, there will be a specific focus on HBT's transition to Aetna. This is a great opportunity to ask League insurance experts any questions or address any concerns this transition brings.



For nearly 40 years, the League's Health Benefits Trust has prioritized member needs and personalized customer service—that will never change. This transition will only strengthen those priorities and allow the League to provide enhanced service to all HBT members. ■



RMS Regional Meetings

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REGISTER NOW!

March 19th - Washington
March 20th - Apex
March 21st - Leland

March 26th - Fletcher
March 27th - Mount Holly
March 28th - Lewisville

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William Harris: Fuquay-Varina's Longtime Local Leader

JACK CASSIDY

NCLM Learning and Development Project Manager

THROUGH EDUCATION AND A DEEP CONNECTION TO THE COMMUNITY, HARRIS HAS SUCCESSFULLY LED FUQUAY-VARINA FOR MORE THAN THREE DECADES.

For more than 30 years, William Harris has been a staple on the Fuquay-Varina town council. It hasn't been time spent idly. Relying upon education and a passion for public service, Harris has been effective in pushing for change and managing one of the fastest-growing towns in North Carolina, and he's done it all never outstepping the wishes of his community, which has responded in turn by electing him over and over again since 1989.

Yet, when he reflects on the experience, he doesn't take the credit. The praise and admiration flow only outward. Harris speaks of his parents, his neighbors, his educators, his church and his colleagues. More accurately, he points to the philosophical—notions of hope, progress, and democracy.

William Harris understands the weight of his position. As a student of public administration and public policy, he knows full well the impact he can have on his community. As a student of history, he knows the weight of his leadership and what it means to his family, his community, and those who came before him.

One story sums it up best—a story told by Harris upon accepting the role of NC League of Municipalities President when he stood in front of hundreds of local officials at CityVision 2023 and recalled his first election.

As Harris remembers, it was the night before his first election, and he was speaking with his neighbor and close friend named Lannie McCullers who was about 90 years old. To most in the community, she went by Miss Lannie. Harris called her Ma Lannie. "She was a member of my church, and I just admired her wisdom," Harris said. "She had so much to teach me." That night, they were making their election day plans for the following morning. McCullers told him, "The polls open at 7 a.m., so you better pick me up tomorrow at 6:45." Harris agreed.

That morning, however, was understandably busy. Harris didn't get to McCullers' house until about 7:15. She was angry, Harris remembers, and he said to her, "Ma Lannie, I'm sorry, but what's the big deal? We have plenty of time. The polls are open all day." And McCullers responded with a line that Harris has never forgotten.

She said, "I wanted to be the very first person to vote for William Harris."

Harris still uses that moment as a touchstone for his leadership. "Here is this 90-year-old woman, born in the 1800s, who as an African American has lived through segregation and through Jim Crow and through so much. I wasn't just a candidate for the



town board—I was a sign of progress. To Ma Lannie, I represented hope.

"It still resonates with me. It's my core motivation for public service."

Harris also points to his parents, both as motivation and mentorship. His father was a World War II veteran, an active community member, and, as Harris remembers, a disciplinarian. "He taught me what it meant to be involved," Harris said. "He believed in democracy." Harris's mother complemented that influence, teaching the value of the social side of service. One of the first female barbers in the area, Harris recalls watching her interact with customers, build relationships, and develop this strong bond between their family and the families of the community. "Those two worldviews, combined—I gleaned a lot from those two people," Harris said.

The aim wasn't always public office, however. Harris, a lifelong Fuquay-Varina native, received an undergraduate degree in business administration and worked as a probation parole officer for some time, but his sights were on becoming a professional musician. Harris is an accomplished trumpet player and traveled up and down the East Coast performing. "I thought I was going to be a studio musician," he said. Inspired by his parents, Harris became active in the community and his church while pursuing

Here is this 90-year-old woman, born in the 1800s, who as an African American has lived through segregation and through Jim Crow and through so much. I wasn't just a candidate for the town board—I **was a sign of progress. To Ma Lannie, I represented hope. It still resonates with me. It's my core motivation for public service.**

» **William Harris**, Fuquay-Varina Commissioner, NCLM President

that vision. He became a more and more visible presence in town. Eventually, he was so well known and admired around Fuquay-Varina that when a vacancy opened on the town board in 1987, Harris was approached about filling it. He agreed and was appointed to the role. He won his first election in 1989, and has won every re-election since.

"I never imagined I would be in public service this long," Harris said. "It started as something I thought I'd do for a little while, but now it is a part of who I am."

In what would become a theme for Harris, he involved himself as fully as possible. Later in this career, when he wanted to become a better public speaker, he didn't just participate in Toastmasters (the nonprofit organization dedicated to public speaking education), he became president of the local Toastmasters club. When he wanted to engage with policy statewide, he didn't just get involved with the NC League of Municipalities, he joined the board of directors, eventually becoming president.

He didn't just join the town board of commissioners, he went back to school and earned his Master's of Public Administration. While this degree leads many into local government work and

elected office, it is exceedingly rare for people to pursue this education *after* holding public office. It reflects a true commitment to education, and for Harris, revealed the inner workings of local government. Now knowing how the machine works, he's been able to navigate challenges and leverage strengths for 30-plus years.

"You have quantitative analysis, public personnel management, public budgeting, finance—all of those things are relative to this particular job," Harris said. "It has allowed me to understand the areas that are important as far as running the city."

His list of accomplishments proves the case. Harris remembers hitting the ground running early bringing the town up to speed with some administrative best practices, such as a strategic plan. Using that framework, Fuquay-Varina was able to set forth a long-term vision, with retreats each year and comprehensive updates every five years. That forward-looking approach has proved invaluable given the town's population increase in recent decades. "It was one of the things I learned in school," Harris said. "It allows us to not just plan services, but investments and

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My father came up in the Jim Crow era, and he still believed in the idea of democracy. Ma Lannie came up in that era, and she still believed in the idea of democracy. **This concept, of government by the people and for the people—it has been passed on to me. I feel fortunate to be in the public arena and to be able to push that forward.**

» **William Harris**, Fuquay-Varina Commissioner, NCLM President

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improvement plans for facilities. It is so important.” Similarly, Harris launched a public safety committee and other community-focused initiatives.

Equally important to his classroom education has been his deep understanding of the community he serves. He recalls one success where he ensured that West Fuquay-Varina, a lower-income community, would receive natural gas services when previously they had been denied. He also notes that he helped lead Fuquay-Varina to become one of the first municipalities in the country to recognize the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday.

“I had to compromise and advocate and work hard, but we got it done,” Harris said. “We have consistently celebrated the King holiday since 1992, and I was elated to be a part of that process.”

Harris deeply believes in the work he does. It shows in his role at the League, where his presidency has included building partnerships in Washington DC, and the continued growth of

the organization back in North Carolina; it has shown through his teaching work, as a professor of public administration at Shaw University; and of course, it shows throughout Fuquay-Varina.

He boils it down to the idea of democracy. It’s a transcendent idea, he says—something beyond normal human thinking—but it’s maintained by people like his parents, by community members like Lannie McCullers, and, though he wouldn’t outright say it, by leaders like himself.

“My father came up in the Jim Crow era, and he still believed in the idea of democracy. Ma Lannie came up in that era, and she still believed in the idea of democracy. This concept, of government by the people and for the people—it has been passed on to me.

“I feel fortunate to be in the public arena and to be able to push that forward.” ■



You're Invited!

TOWN & STATE DINNER 2024

From Jones St. to Main St.

3.6 | Concord
3.20 | Winston-Salem
3.27 | Pinehurst

4.3 | Hickory
4.10 | Goldsboro

The North Carolina League of Municipalities invites you to the Town and State Dinner: From Jones St. to Main St.

This year, we are traveling across the state, bringing Town and State Dinner to you. This event provides an opportunity for you, our municipal elected officials, to meet and build relationships with your regional state legislators over dinner.

CHECK YOUR EMAIL FOR REGISTRATION DETAILS.

Email any questions to TSD@nclm.org







Citizen Engagement with Local Government


BEN BROWN

Communications & Multimedia Strategist

ISABELLA MORMANDO

Communications Associate

A good rhythm of awareness and trust between local governments and their citizenries—it's ever the goal, achievable and rewarding, but the work to build it seems to require more varied and creative thinking all the time. And that may be especially true for cities and towns in a state with so much transformative growth while the rest of the developed world continues to invent new pop communications tools and methods of accessing important info.



Studying what makes for a successful public engagement effort at the local government level these days is steady and evolving work for managers and communications officers, who must track how the world is changing and how audiences seem to prefer to absorb information, ideally with more pomp and circumstance than a standalone, dry press release or barebones posted notice. But even with the ability to set up social media accounts for sharing real-time city hall info, it's hard for governments to keep the public regularly engaged, often requiring some clever extra production, a number of communications officers recently told *Southern City*.

"We're government—that in itself is tough," said Dana Kaminske, the communications and marketing manager for the City of Hickory, when it comes to exciting audiences or establishing conversations. But Hickory is also one of many municipalities around the state seeing successes with tuned communications, having taken the time and effort to keep the two-way flow of information well-exercised, helping the public to develop a level of comfort and sense of norm with government communications. Those successes, in Hickory and many places elsewhere, are proving that a thoughtful comms apparatus can actually make a community better.

"I do believe it builds trust when you go the extra mile," said Kaminske in a recent interview that included focus on the new Hickory Trail, a 10-mile public path that neatly links popular or cool parts of town, a project that came out of a bond referendum the public approved in 2014 and fleshed out with money from other sources, like grants. "The public is very aware of all these projects and are always curious about what is happening with them," Kaminske said, noting that the town's creation of interactive maps and trail markers with QR codes for easy access to information has helped to keep the public accustomed to learning about what the city is working on, and, hopefully, more of a feeling of normalcy and welcome in participating.

While there might still exist that classic public skepticism or suspicion among some residents when it comes to government activity, at any level, city-hall comms professionals including Kaminske are quick to reemphasize how operative a sense of welcome can be. The alternative isn't great.

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"I think what's lost is people probably don't feel engaged, they don't feel like they're part of anything," she said. "They just live there... Then, it's literally just government doing what we think the community wants."

Home to plenty of other examples of considerate modern comms, Hickory is certainly not the only municipality trying out new things.

Kaminske was proud of Hickory's efforts to be available in person to different populations in town, so they would feel heard. "That engages that community at a conversational level, and you have to have that. It doesn't matter how much social media you do and how many fliers you put out there. If you're not talking with them, if you're not sitting with them, and listening, it doesn't matter."

When it comes to engaging with historically unheard and under-represented communities, the City of Durham launched an innovative methodology to engage these communities in conversations. Be Heard Durham is as an online, public-facing portal that collects community conversations that city staff has with underrepresented voices.

"Our specific goals with this portal are to strengthen equitable community engagement, to amplify these underrepresented, under-served voices, and to influence policy and decisions that impact these communities," said Amber Wells, Community Engagement Analyst and primary manager of the Be Heard Durham portal.

The City of Durham's Community Engagement Strategists build relationships with community members. They wanted to implement a way to share these voices of Durham with the rest of its population. Laura Biediger, Senior Manager of the Community Engagement Division of the Department of Neighborhood Improvement Services, along with the department director (Constance Stancil) discovered the value of the Cortico software while at a meeting with Cortico representatives. This is the software upon which Be Heard Durham was built.

Working with Cortico, Durham city staff were able to create and implement the protocol and the online portal for recording and reporting these important conversations that were being had about community needs and wishes.

The online portal provides interactive elements that divide the qualitative data derived from these conversations into recurring themes. City staff can utilize this centralized database that is collected from these conversations to inform how they

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Hickory is one of many municipalities around the state seeing successes with tuned communications, having taken the time and effort to keep the two-way flow of information well-exercised, helping the public to develop a level of comfort and sense of norm with government communications. Those successes, in Hickory and many places elsewhere, are proving that a thoughtful comms apparatus can actually make a community better.





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invest in infrastructure and programs, and to also develop policies and procedures.

“Community members have been really excited to see that their concerns are not isolated,” Wells explained. Sometimes, apprehension to speak up publicly stems from the fear of being rejected. This public portal alleviates that fear when citizens can see their neighbors and peers shed light on similar issues and invite new voices to participate in city government. “There’s a collective action piece where people don’t feel so alone in their concerns, they can actually identify other people who can work together with them to advocate for what they need.”

Biegder identified a way that Be Heard Durham reduces fatigue in Durham citizens who feel as if they have had to repeat their concerns or address the same issues in multiple public forums. With the recording, transcribing, and categorizing of these conversations, participants can be assured that their voices are truly being heard and shared across the City of Durham.

Since Be Heard Durham’s implementation, various city officials across multiple municipal departments have been able to be directly informed on residents’ wants and needs, instead of starting from scratch each time. Like Kaminske described in the City of Hickory, Durham wants to avoid guessing or assuming what its community would like to see. This program provides an invaluable resource in informing those decisions, without the expending research and data collection resources. The public nature of Be Heard Durham’s portal allows and encourages city officials to utilize and reference those voices in their decision-making process.

“Maybe [information] was gathered related to a specific street project, but that data can now help us with the next parks project in that area... or just general budget planning in the next year,” says Biediger.

By collecting and sharing these conversations, community engagement has a lasting and much more profound impact. Citizens of Durham can see their conversations, concerns, hopes, wishes, or whatever that is important to them being considered.

Building community relationships through innovative approaches increases trust between residents and their local governments. This causes the creation of programs and processes that have lasting positive impacts on the community.

If your municipality is working on creative ways to engage citizens in local government, please reach out to Ben Brown at bbrown@nclm.org so the League can learn about what unique practices our cities and towns are utilizing. ■



Building these relationships, **and more importantly, these programs and processes that have lasting impacts and continue to evolve and benefit the community** creates a form of trust between citizens and their local governments.



Be Heard Durham's roll out event.

CityVision 2024:

Join Us in Winston-Salem

JACK CASSIDY

Learning and Development Project Manager

NCLM'S ANNUAL CONFERENCE BEGINS APRIL 23!

It's CityVision season at the NC League of Municipalities, so clear your April calendars!

NCLM's flagship conference is taking place April 23-25 in Winston-Salem, NC, and we are expecting our largest CityVision yet. This event, specifically designed for the municipal officials of North Carolina, features three days of content, training, keynotes, and networking opportunities.

Looking to bolster your CV with a Certificate of Municipal Achievement from NCLM? Hoping to build relationships with your fellow mayors and council members? Want to learn best practices to take back to your hometown? CityVision has you covered.

EDUCATION CREDITS

For the first time, NCLM is offering education credit hours for attending CityVision sessions! These credits apply to the Advancing Municipal Leaders Certificate Program, which recognizes local leaders' dedication to continuing education. Earn up to eight hours!

Additionally, for our professional planners, the pre-conference portion of CityVision will offer two sessions that each offer American Planning Association continuing education credits.

KEY NOTES

We are proud to host nationally recognized speakers Steve Bench and Jeff Havens as our 2024 keynotes!

Bench delivers presentations and training sessions that offer engagement strategies for attracting and retaining Millennial and Gen Z employees, empowering Gen X management, capturing Boomer wisdom, and cultivating future leadership by leveraging the strengths of each generation. This keynote session focuses on talent attraction and workforce retention by building an understanding of who we are, how we were raised, and how each generation views "work" as a part of their identity.

Havens is not your typical business growth expert. His uncanny ability to provide actionable answers to today's business challenges in an undeniably entertaining and impactful way has put him in front of over 1,000 eager audiences. This keynote session will make the process of coming up with new ideas easier and more rewarding than you ever thought possible.

HOST CITY EVENTS

One of the most popular aspects of CityVision is the host city offerings. Winston-Salem will be offering five tours each day. These tours explore a project, a facility, local art, public spaces, and more. Additionally, our host city, Winston-Salem, will also offer a social event on Wednesday, April 24, open to all CityVision attendees, and a golf outing at the conclusion of the conference on Friday, April 26.

SESSIONS AND DAILY SCHEDULE

If there is an emerging issue, a pressing topic facing local governments, or an area in need of discussion and education, our 16 concurrent sessions have it covered.

Presented over two days, CityVision sessions are led by subject matter experts. Topics in 2024 include affordable housing, strategic planning, hiring best practices, economic development, demographic shifts in North Carolina, employee management, a series of case studies featuring our own cities and towns, and more.

Both days, of course, feature plenty of time for networking as well. Enjoy the company of hundreds of fellow local leaders and build relationships that can benefit your town for years to come.

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.

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.

We can't wait to host you. Register now at cityvision2024.com. ■



CityVision

WINSTON-SALEM | APRIL 23-25 2024

REGISTER TODAY APRIL 23 - 25, 2024

Register today for CityVision 2024 in Winston-Salem at the Benton Convention Center! You won't want to miss the opportunity to connect with hundreds of municipal leaders and local government partners during 3 days of educational sessions, networking events, and exploring all that Winston-Salem has to offer!

For registration and more information visit the CityVision website at www.cityvision2024.com.

Youngsville Invests in Safety, Walkability as Town Continues to Grow

STEPHANIE HUGHES

Communications & Multimedia Strategist (ARP)

Youngsville has seen tremendous growth in recent years. The town sits in Franklin County, about 25 miles northeast of Raleigh. Today the town boasts about 2,500 residents, more than doubling its population in just over a decade. The town is excited to celebrate the 150th anniversary of its incorporation in 2025. Town Clerk Emily Hurd has been with the town for over 20 years and has seen many changes during her time there. She recognizes the challenge of holding onto Youngsville's roots as a small North Carolina town while also opening up to the opportunities of growth.

"We are trying to keep that small town feel as we grow, but it is a little hard," Hurd shared. "We want to be a community—not just a city—but a community with all of our residents involved. We are trying to make sure that the area grows in a way that is consistent with that."

As the town has grown and changed, one thing that has remained unchanged is the busy street that runs through the center of town. Youngsville's Main Street is also Hwy 96, meaning each day there can be up to 7,000 vehicles that make their way through town, providing challenges for residents who want to park along Main Street and pedestrians who felt unsafe crossing the street, which, in turn, was having a negative impact on local businesses.

"No one wanted to park downtown to go to the businesses because it was so hard to get back into traffic. We had a huge turnover of businesses at that point," Hurd said.

Improvements for Main Street have been a topic of discussion with town officials for decades and the town was working towards securing funding for a number of major upgrades when they received the unprecedented funds distributed as a part of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARP). The town received just over \$438,000, which they in turn put directly towards police salaries and other set expenses. In doing so, they opened up space in their budget for a larger capital project such as the Main Street Improvements Project.

To make an even bigger impact, the town combined their ARP funds together with state and federal government grants, and both Franklin County Public Utilities and CSX Railroad also contributed to the project, which included a number of large



initiatives totaling around \$4 million. The project officially got underway in mid-2022 with pedestrian walking areas as a top priority. The project included the creation and updating of three crosswalks where there had previously only been one, along with the repairing and pouring of new sidewalks along much of Main Street and creating curb extensions at the intersections and major driveways. These curb extensions help by narrowing the roadway, which slows traffic, allows pedestrians to be more visible at the crosswalks, and provides a shorter distance for foot traffic to cross the street. In a preemptive move, the town partnered with Franklin County Public Utilities to upgrade all water and sewer lines prior to the repaving of Main Street to avoid having to tear up the road in the future. CSX Railroad joined the project by repairing the three railroad crossings in town and making a smoother transition across the tracks.

The result has been a safer and more usable Main Street area for Youngsville residents and visitors. It has already made a difference for town events such as the annual Trick-or-Treat of Main Street that invites families to visit the businesses along Main Street after school on Halloween. In the past, there have been safety concerns with families crossing the busy street and only having one crosswalk to do so properly.

"Previously with the traffic it was a huge nightmare. This project increased some turn lanes, it increased the safety and our ability to cross [pedestrians] over and made them more visible to traffic

We are trying to keep that small town feel as we grow, but it is a little hard. **We want to be a community—not just a city—but a community with all of our residents involved.** We are trying to make sure that the area grows in a way that is consistent with that.

» Emily Hurd, Youngsville, Town Clerk

We are seeing a lot more [foot] traffic downtown, versus before the traffic was so congested and it looks like it has opened up some. **We have had a lot more growth in our business from people stopping versus before when it was kind of gridlocked through here for the past three or four years.**

» Daniel Fuller, Nutrition on Main

that was coming through. The bump outs slowed people down. It turned out this year was really our best year and we were very happy with the turnout for that,” Hurd shared.

Local businesses along Main Street have long noted a need for improvements for the town. Jim and Sue Charron own Charron’s Deli & Cafe, which has been situated on Main Street for 15 years and has seen the challenges the traffic can cause and the need for repairs.

“The sidewalks were horrendous. You would never be able to push a wheelchair or stroller down them,” Jim Charron said.

Leah and Daniel Fuller opened Nutrition on Main, which sells healthy shakes, teas, and other drinks, in October of 2020. They have heard from customers how the upgrades have made driving through town a more pleasant experience.

“It has made a difference. It is super smooth sailing as a resident and as a business owner. Customers come in and they talk about how nice it looks, how smooth it is now,” Leah Fuller said.

While the updates may not have changed the number of vehicles coming through town during peak hours, they have helped to increase the walkability of Main Street and provided some relief in the gridlock of traffic. These businesses have also noticed an uptick in the pedestrian traffic since the sidewalks and crosswalks have been added and repaired.

“We are seeing a lot more [foot] traffic downtown, versus before the traffic was so congested and it looks like it has opened up some,” Daniel Fuller said. “We have had a lot more growth in our business from people stopping versus before when it was kind of gridlocked through here for the past three or four years.”

“It seems like there’s a lot more foot traffic in town now,” Jim Charron said. “It needed an upgrade I think it did exactly what they were thinking it was going to do. It made it look better and made it look more appealing.”

The town stresses the importance of this type of project not just for creating a safe environment, but also for sharing the character of the town with others who pass through or come to visit.

“One of our goals, of course, was the safety, but we want people to come to Youngsville from anywhere and enjoy the downtown events we have ... and enjoy a good hometown feel,” Hurd said. “I think they will like it if they get here.” ▢



WHAT’S NEXT FOR STAYING ARP COMPLIANT?

The Treasury portal for filing the annual Project & Expenditure Report is expected to open on April 1, 2024, and close on April 30, 2024. Before filing, be sure you have access to your SAM.gov account. You must renew this account annually, so you will want to check the expiration date to ensure you will be able to file during the month of April.

The deadline for obligating funds is also fast approaching as all ARP dollars must be obligated by December 31, 2024. Towns should not wait until the last minute to take the necessary steps to do so.

If your town needs help with filing your annual report or making plans for obligating funds, the League has ARP representatives across the state who can work with you on these projects.

DATES TO REMEMBER:

- ARP Report Filing Window: April 1–30, 2024
- Obligation Deadline: December 31, 2024
- Fund Expenditure Deadline: December 31, 2026

NCLM’S SERVICE LINE CONTINUES TO SUPPORT NC TOWNS

The League continues to work with towns across North Carolina with funds earmarked specifically to provide services to cities and towns. In 2023 alone, the ARP team met with 464 towns to support them in upgrading their municipal accounting systems and boosting financial reporting capabilities, providing access to expert legal and grant writing services, helping towns “tell their ARP story” through our communications staff, securing town assets through cybersecurity upgrades, and assisting towns with ARP compliance. ▢



Emily Hurd as panelist for NCLM’s ARP Webinar

Housing Studies Show Less Touted Reforms Effective

SCOTT MOONEYHAM

Director of Political Communications and Coordination

THE PUSH FOR BLANKET MANDATES TO DO AWAY WITH SINGLE FAMILY-ONLY ZONING ARE NOT PRODUCING THE RESULTS THAT SUPPORTERS SOUGHT. INSTEAD, A NEW STUDY SUGGESTS LESSER TOUTED REFORMS MAY IMPROVE HOUSING AFFORDABILITY.

As states across the country have looked at zoning mandates to answer the problem of housing affordability, a new study examining one of the first jurisdictions in the country to do away with single family-only zoning has led to some surprising results.

In December 2018, the Minneapolis City Council adopted a plan with a number of reforms designed to improve housing affordability. The reform that received the most attention was one allowing duplexes and triplexes to be built on any property zoned for single-family residential construction.

Five years later, a Pew Charitable Trust study looking at the effects of the reforms finds that, indeed, Minneapolis is seeing

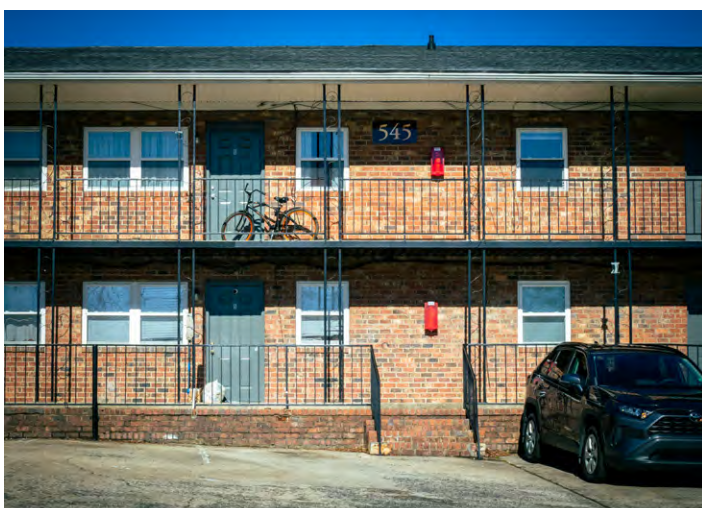
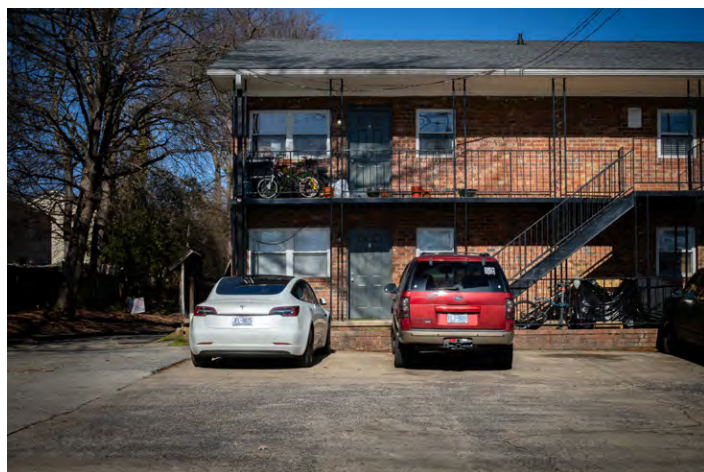
housing production rise and rent increases slow, with rents rising less than inflation. But it is the less touted housing reforms that are producing results, not the elimination of single family-only zoning.

The study shows that eliminating parking minimums, which prior to the adoption of the reform package had required one parking spot per housing unit, is providing the biggest increase in new housing units. Another reform shown to boost housing supply allows for larger, denser apartment buildings in areas where they previously were not permitted, including commercial areas and near public transit spots.

Meanwhile, from January 2020 through March 2022, Minneapolis approved just 62 duplexes and 17 triplexes, with about half being built on lots that were once barred by single family-only zoning rules. Those units represented a fraction of the 9,000 housing units that the city permitted during the same period, with 87% being rental apartments.

While advocates for zoning reform, including those at Pew, have been slow to embrace the findings, the results pretty clearly speak to the fact that a blunt instrument like a wide-ranging zoning mandate is far less effective than more targeted, well-considered reforms that can have real effects in how housing is constructed and financed.





Similar results have been seen in earlier studies.

A 2021 study by the Turner Center for Housing Innovation at the University of California-Berkeley estimated that California's new statewide zoning mandates would result in new homebuilding only on roughly 1% of existing home lots due to cost of land and other factors. Those same researchers held discussions with developers in seven states and found little appetite for taking advantage of simple zoning changes to build more affordable development.

Studies in Australia, where cities face similar housing affordability challenges to those in the United States, also find that reforms and incentives aimed at increasing apartment construction were key to increasing housing stock and affordability in major cities in that country.

One of those studies noted that a key component of affordability is that the construction of apartments and townhomes, even with some at expensive price points, allows for the existing homeowners, particularly retirees looking to downsize, to move from their current homes. That frees up those homes for buyers looking within those home ownership markets and at more affordable price points.

Closer to home, the City of Raleigh has opened up residentially zoned areas to the construction of accessory dwelling units, or ADUs, with the city going so far as to provide a range of pre-approved site plans for potential builders. To date, though, builders have shown only modest interest in taking advantage of the city's changes.

Since 2020, 163 permits have been issued for ADU construction, with 84 constructed to date. Those numbers may be picking up slightly, as 77 ADU permits were issued in 2023.

Nonetheless, what all of these studies and numbers suggest is that addressing the housing affordability challenges in North Carolina and across the country will require a complete and complex response.

The problem itself is complex, created by factors including job concentration in metropolitan areas, rising land costs, rising housing material costs, and labor shortages. The rise of institutional investors buying homes for rental and short-term rental uses, making up 10% or more of purchases in some markets in recent years, also cannot be overlooked.

Policymakers who embrace simple solutions focused only on density allowances are likely to be disappointed.

The studies are increasingly making that case. ▣

What all of these studies and numbers suggest is that **addressing the housing affordability challenges in North Carolina and across the country will require a complete and complex response.**

TAKING THE FIELD

A Time for Education, Networking, and Gathering



ROSE VAUGHN WILLIAMS
NCLM Executive Director

At the NC League of Municipalities, all roads lead to CityVision 2024!

Our annual conference serves as the League's ultimate congregation of education, networking, ideas sharing, and relationship building for our member cities and towns. It is where emerging issues are discussed. It is where valuable connections are formed. And it is where we can all, as a League, gather in one place and learn from one another. It is an exceptional event, and I cannot wait to see you there.

That is not to say, however, that CityVision is the *only* time that we pursue these goals. In fact, the mission of education and relationship building are always front of mind.

Towards education, we announced late last year our revamped AML Certificate Program. This program tracks and recognizes your education credits, earned by taking courses in our AML curriculum. From Council Academy to New Mayors School to HR 101 to Municipal Fiscal Training, all aspects of local leadership are covered through the AML education catalog—and you all have responded with tremendous support! Keep an eye on our event calendar to see the trainings coming near your town.

We are also in the middle of the Essentials of Municipal Government courses—a massive biennial education effort, put on with our close partners at the UNC School of Government. These offerings are invaluable to newly elected officials who are seeking a comprehensive understanding of their new role. This year, the Essentials courses will take place in five locations over ten total days, and will host more than 400 local elected officials!

There's then the relationship building component of our work. Of course, that takes place through the above educational events too, when mayors, councilmembers, managers, and clerks sit alongside their statewide colleagues and discuss issues, problems, and solutions. But we also aim to provide networking opportunities more directly and with leaders at both the local and state level. To that end, we have our upcoming Town and State Dinners: From Jones Street to Main Street.

Typically offered in Raleigh (and with nearly 600 attendees last year!), we're taking the show on the road in 2024. Town and State Dinner gathers local elected officials and state elected officials over a reception and a meal, and proves each year to be one of our most successful engagements. State leaders get a chance to learn about the issues impacting our local governments, local leaders get a chance to meet and converse with North Carolina's lawmakers, and true, lasting relationships are formed that help move our state in the right direction. Town and State Dinners will be offered at five locations across NC in 2024—don't miss it!

All of the above—the education, the partnerships, the networking, and the gathering—culminates at CityVision 2024. It's where we bring it all together. For two-plus days in late April, more than 600 people will gather in Winston-Salem. They will learn, through multiple keynote addresses and 16 educational sessions, all of which offer credit towards our AML Certificate Program. They will network, sharing best practices and discussing pressing issues that affect both the east and west, urban and rural, and mountainous and coastal.

And most importantly, they will simply be together. Each year, I am astonished at the value of this event. I see relationships form in April that result in real, on-the-ground results later in the year. I see elected officials from all over the state put their heads together to address problems and create real solutions for their communities. North Carolina is only as strong as our cities and towns, and our cities and towns are only as strong as our local leaders. As you embrace education and the power of networking, you are continually improving not just your own capacity as a local leader, but also your community itself.

As always, I am proud to lead this organization and to serve you—our selfless and dedicated local leaders. I look forward to our busy spring calendar, to meeting our new elected officials and to gathering again with our experienced leaders. See you at CityVision! ■

ADVERTISING *RATES* STARTING AT \$390!

For more information, please contact
John Constantino at 503-445-2230 or john@llmpubs.com.



ADVERTISE IN *SOUTHERN CITY!*

Southern City is the official publication of the North Carolina League of Municipalities. This professionally designed quarterly magazine is a critical component of the League's communications program and features relevant editorial for people directly involved in North Carolina's city governments. When our readers are ready to contract services and products for their programs and facilities, make sure they think of you first.

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LOCAL ELECTED *Leaders* ACADEMY

The *Local Elected Leaders Academy* (LELA) helps local elected officials develop a mutual understanding of how governing at the local level affects residents and differing constituencies.

Built on the tenets of learning and practice, LELA creates pathways for education, service, and recognition tailored to the needs of local elected officials at any phase of their tenure in public office.

Courses are arranged into four recognition levels:

Practitioner | LELA 101

Master | LELA 201

Mentor | LELA 301

Ambassador | LELA 401

2024 UPCOMING COURSES

Practitioner level LELA 101

**Legal Competency for
Local Elected Officials**
April 30 Raleigh
6 CREDITS

**Working Better
Together as a Board**
May 16 Asheville
6 CREDITS

**Ethics for Local Elected
Officials**
May 23 Online
1 CREDIT

Master level LELA 201

**Effective Community
Engagement: A Toolbox
for Elected Officials**
March 26 Online
3 CREDITS

**Working with Advisory
Boards and Committees**
April 18 Kernersville
6 CREDITS

**TOP 10 PRIMER
Capital Budgeting for
Local Elected Officials**
April 3
2 CREDITS

Mentor level LELA 301

**Do You Hear What
I Hear? The Art of
Listening**
March 13 Greensboro
3 CREDITS

**Affordable Housing
Seminar: Tools,
Strategies, and Case
Studies for Local
Government Leadership**
May 16 Marion
6 CREDITS

Lead Across Boundaries
June 28 Chapel Hill
6 CREDITS

Program information: go.unc.edu/LELA

Course information: go.unc.edu/LELACalendar



SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT
Center for Public Leadership and Governance

ADVANCING MUNICIPAL LEADERS CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

Make the most of your professional development.

AML Certifications showcase your expertise in municipal leadership and commitment to professional development. Local leaders who earn any of the below recognitions will be honored at NCLM's annual conference, CityVision.

- **CERTIFICATE OF MUNICIPAL ACHIEVEMENT**

Requires 12 hours of AML credit

- **CERTIFICATE OF MUNICIPAL EXCELLENCE**

Requires 25 hours of AML credit

- **CERTIFICATE OF MUNICIPAL DEDICATION**

Requires 40 hours of AML credit*

** After obtaining the Certificate of Dedication, officials must complete six hours of continuing education each year to maintain the certificate.*



SPECIALIZED CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

AML also offers specialized certificates for municipal leaders who want to concentrate in certain areas.

Financial Management Certificate

Requires six hours of training in budgeting and finance as it relates to the North Carolina Local Government Budget and Fiscal Control Act. Completion of training for this certificate also meets requirements under G.S. 160A-148 for city managers.

Diversity, Inclusion, and Racial Equity for Cities and Towns (DIRECT) Certificate

Requires six hours of training in the DIRECT curriculum.

Commit to Civility Certificate

A certificate for municipalities. Requires the completion of the [Commit to Civility On-Demand course](#) and a commitment to the civility pledge. Municipalities also adopt and submit a Resolution.

Contact us at learning@nclm.org for more information



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