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The Recap

Dear League Members,

As we close out 2024, it's important to reflect on both the challenges and the remarkable successes that municipalities across North Carolina experienced this year. While we faced significant hurdles—such as the devastation of Hurricane Helene in western North Carolina, which tested our communities' resilience and response efforts—municipalities demonstrated extraordinary strength and dedication. Local officials worked tirelessly to restore services, support recovery, and ensure the safety of residents in the wake of the storm. Their quick response and commitment to recovery are a testament to the power of local leadership.

The election season brought its own set of hurdles, as our nation faced a complex political landscape. Despite these tensions, municipal leaders continued to focus on what truly matters: serving their communities. By maintaining a commitment to effective, nonpartisan governance, they were able to push forward important initiatives and provide essential services that kept communities strong and united.

Municipalities made strides in addressing critical issues like affordable housing, infrastructure improvements and economic development. Many cities and towns launched new projects, enhanced local services, and found innovative solutions to long-standing problems. These successes reflect the dedication of municipal officials to improving the quality of life for all North Carolinians.

As we look ahead to 2025, we are optimistic about the opportunities that lie ahead. With the lessons learned from the challenges of 2024, municipalities are more resilient, focused, and better positioned to address pressing issues next year.

On behalf of the Government Affairs team, we wish you a joyful holiday season and a prosperous New Year. Here's to a bright 2025!

Derrick Applewhite

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Derrick Applewhite', is written in a cursive style.

Senior Government Affairs Associate

Senate Vote to Override Veto of Omnibus Bill

The state Senate has voted to override Gov. Roy Cooper's veto of an omnibus end-of-year bill that sets aside more money for disaster needs but also stripped the governor of additional powers and includes a provision harmful to cities' ability to plan for growth. [SB 382 Disaster Relief-3/Budget/Various Law Changes](#) is not yet law, as the House has yet to take up the governor's veto. That chamber will convene on Monday, when it is expected to consider the veto.

The land-use planning provision, the last one in [a 131-page omnibus bill](#), prohibits local governments from enacting "down-zoning" changes without first obtaining the written consent of all property owners in the new zone. Along with the new prohibition, legislators expanded a pre-existing definition of "down-zoning" to include commercial and industrial non-conformities that result from any new zoning. Due to the breadth of the provision, numerous rezoning efforts currently in progress will likely halt, as well as future rezoning efforts.

It is important to understand that, because this provision was first introduced as part of a conference report and legislative rules do not allow for changes to conference reports, there was no opportunity to modify the provision. In his veto of the bill, Governor Cooper called it a "sham" and criticized the lack of direct assistance to businesses harmed by Hurricane Helene.

We encourage you to continue sharing stories of the real-life impact the down-zoning provision will have in your communities. Feel free to share those stories with NCLM staff and your local legislators. It is imperative that legislators understand how this provision will hinder the ability of municipalities to address growth and development in their communities.

ETJ Virtual Meeting

Over 100 municipal officials joined a call Wednesday afternoon to discuss strategies around the preservation of extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ) in cities and towns across the state. Throughout the past several legislative sessions, there have been statewide and local attempts to reel back ETJ authority, which could compromise the ability of growing municipalities to plan for compatible, sustainable development in and around their communities. During this week's call, municipal officials and NCLM Government Affairs staff discussed strategies for how we can all advocate for this valuable planning tool.

Armed with [talking points](#) and [case study examples](#), municipal officials are encouraged to reach out to their legislators to make their case for why ETJ authority should remain in place. For more background and information, please review the slideshow from the meeting [here](#).

NCLM staff encourage impacted communities to tell us your ETJ story by completing the form [here](#). For any questions about ETJ or legislative strategy, contact Derrick Applewhite, NCLM Sr. Government Affairs Associate at dapplewhite@nclm.org.

Helene Meeting

In early November, more than 200 local, state and federal government officials came together in Morganton to discuss Helene recovery efforts and identify the top priorities to assist western North Carolina communities. The event was organized by NCLM, the N.C. Association of County Commissioners and area Councils of Government. As a part of the meeting, groups of attendees captured [top priorities to assist state and federal policymakers moving forward](#). Meanwhile, NCLM and NCACC are continuing to prepared a video and handout that will assist state and federal officials in making the case for more assistance for the region.

Some photos of the event can be seen [here](#). You can also find some news coverage at these sites: WCNC → [View here](#); WLOS News 13 → [View here](#); and The News Herald (Morganton) → [View here](#).

Municipal Elections

With only a limited number of municipal elections during even-numbered years, this year's general election in November saw few surprises in the cities and towns where elections were held. By and large, most local bond issues were approved. A key exception was in the Town of Cary, where [voters rejected](#) a parks and sports facility bond totaling \$560 million and an affordable housing bond of \$30 million. In the highest profile contested race in the state, former State Treasury Janet Cowell easily defeated four other candidates to win the Raleigh mayoral contest.



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