Kings Mountain Mayor
Scott Neisler
A Community on Track

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One of my favorite sayings is, “If you stop learning, you stop living.” As I begin my term as president of your North Carolina League of Municipalities, and as we come out of our recently-held annual conference, CityVision, which took place in Hickory in mid-May, it is an especially apt phrase to reflect on.

As I noted in my acceptance speech as president at CityVision, to be an effective leader, you must evolve. And to evolve, you have to continue learning, whether that means learning about the policy issues that are so important to future of our municipalities and their residents, or learning about the skills needed to inspire people to follow paths that lead to that future and future success.

One of the great things about CityVision is how it provides for a forum of learning on multiple levels. We have the opportunity to learn from informative programming. We have the opportunity to network and learn from each other. We have the opportunity to see up close how the host city is addressing its needs and challenges. We even have the opportunity to learn about the solutions that the vendors attending can potentially offer to our towns or cities.

“And it is in that growth and learning that we help each other work collectively, through an organization like the League, to come up with solutions that can help all of us.”

And it is in that growth and learning that we help each other work collectively, through an organization like the League, to come up with solutions that can help all of us. One aspect of CityVision this year was the unveiling of our new logo, tagline, mission statement and values statement. That tagline – “Working as One. Advancing All.” – could not more clearly or concisely express this sentiment.

We – municipal officials and League staff together – are committed to addressing problems like a lack of quality broadband access and opioid addiction. We are providing for the insurance needs of cities and towns – in efficient and effective ways that limit liability and prevent costs before they occur. We are assisting cities and towns in the face of tremendous population and cultural change. And we have been and continue to be a great resource for providing innovative ideas and best practices.

While the League staff is crucial in providing this knowledge and expertise, it is no more valuable than your involvement.

After all, it is our collective voice that makes our needs resonant with state policymakers. And it is the ideas of the individual that can be and are shared with the many.

The journey of an elected official is long, but it is a good long. I have been fortunate to travel a path that is mine. It has been a path with many side roads. Those roads have led me to many experiences. And those experiences are a part of that learning, that education.

As I begin down a new part of that path, as president of this organization, I look forward to working with each of you as we continue to grow and learn together. As we do so, I know that we will, in turn, be able to accomplish goals for the benefit of others and be a voice for a cause that better our state as we better each of our towns and cities.  

SC
Hudson Project
‘Connecting Arts and Business’

At the expansive HUB Station off Cedar Valley Road in Hudson, the Caldwell County town and its 4,000 residents have a lot more than just a spot for local commerce. The focus is regionwide economic development and empowerment for the creative, with the slogan: “Connecting Arts and Business.”

Having just celebrated an open house that showed visitors a wealth of available space in the campus’ two buildings — one focused on arts; the other on business-boosting — the HUB Station is “an initiative to promote economic growth and community life by connecting the arts and business on one site,” explained Kathy Carroll, chair of the HUB Station Steering Committee.

HUB stands for Hudson Uptown Building, the former moniker of what originally housed a school in the 1940s and later came under the Town of Hudson’s ownership. In 2003, the Hudson Board of Commissioners opened the revitalized HUB as an arts and events center.

“It has been a great success,” Hudson Town Manager Rebecca M. Bentley said, “but the Board is committed to creating an even better, unique business and arts environment” and have shown as much by rebranding the facility as the HUB Station and adding the business angle with accessible space for entrepreneurs.

Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute’s (CCC&TI) Small Business Center has settled into the HUB Station’s second building, as have other business tenants who enjoy the space.

Ben Willis, Small Business Center director (and mayor pro tem of neighboring Lenoir), said the new location gives the CCC&TI Small Business Center “easier access to the public and better exposure not only for the businesses in the incubation center but throughout the community.”

He added that the location’s affordability for business startups “gives entrepreneurs in the region an option that they may not have considered before. Having a safe, secure, and centrally located space with all the amenities you would expect in a modern day workspace should be attractive to anyone looking to get their business off the ground.”

Meanwhile, the arts building is burgeoning. The Western North Carolina Society of Artisans has leased space there, set up an art gallery and begun offering classes.

The town additionally is working with the Caldwell County Arts Council to

continued on page 43
Kings Mountain Mayor Scott Neisler, a native, lives and breathes his hometown with deep, personal connections. Photo credit: Ben Brown
A Community on Track

Kings Mountain and Mayor Scott Neisler Share Origins, Enthusiasm

By Ben Brown, NCLM Communication and Multimedia Strategist

Asked for an anecdote on the spirit of his native Kings Mountain, the western Piedmont town of about 10,500 people, Mayor Scott Neisler recalled hearing a woman sing the National Anthem at a community gathering downtown.

It was just off on the main strip, broadly shared by pedestrians, motorists, and an active rail line. Sure enough, as the crowd enjoyed the vocalist, a train’s howl crept in.

“And then the train goes by,” the mayor said. “And it drowns her out.”

But the singer kept on.

As it happened, Neisler thought about how similar occasions in larger cities are dampened by, say, jet engines overhead. And about how the loud-charging downtown train had root meaning for this city founded in 1874. While he would’ve loved to have heard the song, “You embrace it for what it is,” he said of the situation. “Had we not had the train, we wouldn’t have this community.”

Southern City spent time recently with Neisler to learn his personal backstory and mission in public service. Appropriately, both have ties to the very Kings Mountain origins he was just describing.

Developed around and supported by rail access, Kings Mountain’s very first mayor, W.A. Mauney, was Neisler’s great-great grandfather. Mauney opened what’s believed to be the city’s earliest business, sensibly close to the popular train depot.

“And then I had another grandfather, H.P. Allison, who was (mayor) also,” Neisler added. “He was probably fifth or sixth down the line.”
But a mayor in his town’s form of government has plenty of duties. And if the office’s best external strength is community morale, communicating context and championing productive causes, Neisler has it covered.

One of the first things he presented Southern City upon visiting was a just-inked press release about the City of Kings Mountain council. Two years later, he was mayor in his first of two stints (1991-99 and 2015-present).

“I don’t know why I decided I wanted to be mayor,” he said with a laugh, “because obviously you don’t have a vote.” On city council, his votes generally only come in to break (rare) tie votes among board members.

But it wasn’t bloodlines or train tracks that specifically connected Neisler to civic duty, which he formally entered in 1989 as a city council member. The Kings Mountain native explained that he, prior, had been away in Florida for school, and came to miss and better appreciate his home turf.

“I would come home when I’d be on break and take landscape pictures,” he said. “In fact, I remember coming back wanting to be on city council. And I asked a city council member and he said, ‘Scott, you’re just a little too young, yet.’ I think I was probably 23.”

But it stayed on his mind and by the time he was 34, he was on council. Two years later, he was mayor in his first of two stints (1991-99 and 2015-present).

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“I don’t know why I decided I wanted to be mayor,” he said with a laugh, “because obviously you don’t have a vote.” On city council, his votes generally only come in to break (rare) tie votes among board members.
The city has integrated smart-meters as well to better follow the health and usage of the system and pounce on problems, like outages. The mayor made sure to exhibit cutting electric rates by an average of nearly 11 percent for residents and 12 percent for industrial users.

It follows the Jan. 1 welcoming of the Florida-based NTE Energy as the city’s new power provider in a switch from another company. King’s Mountain subsequently became home to a 475-megawatt natural gas-fired power plant with cost-friendly efficiencies that have in turn become part of the area’s economic development dialogue. “The mission of Kings Mountain has always been to be one of the greatest places to live, work and play,” Neisler says in the press release. “That includes making energy affordable for all our citizens.”

Neisler grew emotional discussing other people-focused initiatives in town, like Send-A-Kid to College. This Neisler-original program is meant to reduce financial burdens of higher education with scholarships funded by local utility customers who opt in to paying a few extra bucks on their bills.

Another program, courtesy of area industrial resident Cormetech, funded the provision of food to needy kids in town. “We had a day up here in

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Patti Rader, Manager & COO
expert, is also the man behind the city’s July 4 fireworks display, and has been for decades.

If that wasn’t enough for this mayor about town, Neisler is also a longtime local radio personality covering sports and owns an AM talk station, WGNR, where he works full time (following nearly four decades with his family’s textile business in neighboring Shelby).

Per regulations, Neisler can’t blend his mayoral work with the airwaves. But the way he described it, the vocation dependably surfaces in the kind of community spirit driving Kings Mountain anyway.

“That’s one of the things I love about it,” he said before describing an away-game for the high school team that he covered on-air. It was in a distant town, and he said the Kings Mountain contingent in the stands and on the sidelines far outnumbered the home team. “They just had a smattering of people on the other end, because it was an iffy night, rain-wise. But that’s the sort of support that everybody has for this community... This is a great place to be a representative of. It makes me proud every time.”

He said he felt it just as strongly about it between his stints as mayor, and he credited the mayor and council seated in that stretch for working together and advancing the town.

Additionally, he expressed thanks for great interplay between the city and one of its more prominent sons – state House Speaker Tim Moore, who hails from Kings Mountain.

Projects in progress or in discussion today there include new streetscaping for downtown and the completion of an adjacent amphitheater park perfect for seasonal festivals, prom photos or just open space for personal peace. He said locals’ excitement for it is a beautiful driver.

“It’s the people that make things go,” the mayor said.

As Neisler drove Southern City around various other conversation-worthy parts of the city, clouds that had been darkening overhead all morning eventually broke into a dump of hard rain. Staring through his water-pummeled windshield, he noticed a gentleman walking at the roadside in the opposite direction, no umbrella and miserably soaked through.

The mayor was true to character. “I know this guy,” said Neisler, who began turning the car around. “I’m going to give him a ride home.”

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Sometimes the charge of “working together” comes off a bit passive – more of a guiding idea than immediate action. But when the League introduced its Town & State Dinner event – bringing municipal officials and their legislators together for close conversation and a dinner program – it wouldn’t just be an eat-and-go-home affair.

That proved true in February at the second edition of the Town & State Dinner, attended by a capacity crowd at the Raleigh Convention Center as the legislative long session got underway. It was the perfect time for municipal officials and legislators (many of them new in their roles) to discuss the common purposes that they could maintain in the ensuing months of General Assembly lawmaking.

“We all have a common goal of creating a better North Carolina -- one that makes each of our towns and cities better places to live for our citizens,” said the League’s then-president, Mayor Pro Tem Michael Lazzara of Jacksonville.

After tightly attended daytime learning sessions on hot topics like affordable housing and adequate broadband access, city and state officials kicked off a networking reception before the main event, emceed by Mayor Pro Tem Lazzara with special guest speakers including Senate leader Phil Berger of Eden, Sen. Valerie Foushee of Chapel Hill, House Speaker Pro Tem Sarah Stevens of Mt. Airy, and Rep. Gale Adcock of Cary. The underlying theme was unity for a growing and changing state, while President Lazzara highlighted the fact that cities’ and towns’ legislative goals -- on infrastructure needs, economic growth, fiscal health and more -- reflect diversity in the state’s 540-plus municipalities and 170 legislative districts.

“I would like to thank the N.C. League of Municipalities for inviting me to speak last night at their annual Town & State Dinner,” Senator Berger posted to his Facebook page following the gathering. “Cities and towns play a vital role in providing core services to millions of North Carolinians and I appreciate the great work that our local elected officials do every day.”

Both Berger and Stevens touted legislative efforts that have improved the state’s economy, while also acknowledging areas of the state that have lagged in the aftermath of manufacturing-job losses and other challenges, and that state and local officials must continue addressing those needs. Foushee discussed the
The close work of municipal and state officials that benefits all residents, while Adcock noted her experience on the Cary Town Council and how that informed her understanding of municipal government needs.

It was a great continuance of the spirit created at the dinner’s successful first edition, in May 2018 and with special guest speakers including House Speaker Tim Moore. The event stood in as an effective alternative to the Town Hall Days of previous years, in which municipal officials gathered in Raleigh to lobby for local and statewide goals at the General Assembly.

The 2019 Town & State Dinner was once again warmly embraced by League members. Mayor Don Hardy of Kinston stated on Twitter: “It was a great turnout. A strong show of support from our local government officials and NC delegation!! #NCSTRONG!!!”

The League would like to thank all legislators and municipal officials who made the 2019 Town & State Dinner such a meaningful occasion and for actively working together to make North Carolina the best it can be. SC
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After signing a memorandum of understanding late last year, the N.C. Metropolitan Mayors Coalition in late February entered into a formal affiliate agreement with the League.

The agreement was signed by Metro Mayors Coalition Chair and Greensboro Mayor Nancy Vaughan and League Executive Director Paul Meyer during a meeting of the NCLM Board of Directors held just prior to the 2019 Town & State Dinner and the programming that accompanied that event.

The agreement contemplates fully integrating the Metro Mayors Coalition into the League in year two.

Vaughan said during the meeting that the agreement showed “that our municipal family in our state is strengthening our bonds.” Both she and then-NCLM President Michael Lazzara noted that the agreement furthers the ability of municipal government in North Carolina to speak with one voice.

The League and the Coalition previously had an affiliate relationship, from 2001 until 2013, in which the League provided in-house services. While existing as separate entities, the Coalition’s membership fully overlaps with that of the League. The Metro Mayors Coalition represents the viewpoints of mayors from the state’s most populous cities.

The agreement follows years of discussions between the two organizations, with both recognizing the value of working together.

“The League staff is dedicated to helping the mayors of North Carolina act in concert as thought leaders on the important challenges facing our state. Through this agreement with the Metro Mayors Coalition and through the formation of the affiliate group the N.C. Mayors Association, we believe we are better positioned now to do that and work to make all of our cities and towns better places to live for our residents,” Meyer said.

Already, League staff is working with the mayors groups on efforts around key League policy goals to address affordable housing and the extension of the historic preservation tax credit, which has been key to downtown revitalization projects in municipalities of all sizes.

The two mayors groups have approved a joint resolution advocating for the extension of the tax credit, and mayors from key legislative districts have been taking part in a campaign emphasizing the importance of individual projects in those districts.

By Scott Mooneyham, NCLM Director of Political Communication and Coordination

League Executive Director Paul Meyer and Greensboro Mayor Nancy Vaughan sign documents making official the Metro Mayors’ affiliate agreement with the League.

Photo credit: Ben Brown
Community leaders and residents turned out in large numbers at the end of January for three regional meetings to hear local, state and national experts discuss broadband access, how public-private partnerships can address the state’s digital divide and the policy impediments to those partnerships.

The Let’s Connect NC tour – with stops in Albemarle, Fuquay-Varina and Jacksonville – was billed as a conversation to engage local residents, and that is exactly what it did.

More than 80 people attended the meetings – sponsored by the League, the Minneapolis-based Institute for Local Self-Reliance (ILSR), and NC Broadband Matters – in Albemarle and Jacksonville. While a cold rain and the threat of ice held down attendance in Fuquay-Varina, the 40-plus people at that event also sparked insightful dialogue about broadband access and where needs exist for better internet connections and speeds.

Christopher Mitchell, Director of Community Broadband Networks for ILSR, pointed out that North and South Dakota, two of the most rural states in the country, enjoy some of the best access to high-speed fiber broadband networks because those states have embraced public-private partnerships and utilized telephone and electric cooperatives to bring service to residents.

In North Carolina, meanwhile, Mitchell said the state enjoys relatively good access in urban areas but some of the worse access in the nation in rural parts of the state. In Jacksonville, League Chief Legislative Counsel Erin Wynia noted that there are urban areas that also have gaps, but picked up on that theme when saying the state’s broadband landscape is a story of haves and have-nots, a situation that has to be addressed.

Then-League President and Jacksonville Mayor Pro Tem Michael Lazzara provided opening and closing remarks in Jacksonville, touting the League’s efforts and a policy goal of removing state policy barriers to the public-private partnership model in which local governments invest in fiber and other infrastructure and lease that infrastructure to retail providers.
Albemarle City Council member Martha Sue Hall, a member of the League’s Risk Management Services Board of Trustees, opened the meeting in Albemarle. Fuquay Mayor John Byrne and City Manager Adam Mitchell opened the event there. And in Jacksonville, state Rep. Phil Shepard also provided remarks, while Rep. Wayne Sasser spoke in Albemarle.

The events included panel discussions that involved local community leaders and innovative internet service providers. A question-and-answer session led to, at times, provocative questions, including from one resident who wondered how a neighbor could have broadband access when his only option was satellite service.

Among the panelists were Greg Coltrain, executive vice president at RiverStreet Networks; Alan Fitzpatrick, CEO at Open Broadband; John Coggin of the N.C. Rural Center, Capt. Daniel Callender, communications officer for Marine Corps Air Station New River; Beth Bucksot, Pamlico County Economic Development Director; and Ken Russell, Chief Information Officer at Pfeiffer University.

Mitchell, in his keynote remarks, pointed out how reliability for other infrastructure that Americans rely on – electricity, water, natural gas -- were now a given and expected.

“Broadband has not worked that way for most Americans,” Mitchell said. “We can solve that.”

He noted that large telecommunications providers such as CenturyLink and AT&T have no financial incentives in rural areas to keep facilities up-to-date, as they see higher profit margins in more densely populated urban areas.

Meanwhile, both of those companies have received hundred of millions of dollars from federal taxpayers in recent years to provide service in rural areas.

As Mitchell made the point, that led to further discussions of the public-private partnership model that the League has advocated.
The tour generated not just local public interest, but also interest from the media and from the larger incumbent internet service providers in the area. Newspapers and television stations provided both day-of coverage and broadcasts or published pieces afterward. Incumbent provider Windstream used the Albemarle event to announce that it planned more investment in fiber. Meanwhile, a CenturyLink representative met one Onslow County representative outside of the Jacksonville event, which was livestreamed by the city, after he complained about being surrounded by homes with service while he had to rely on spotty satellite service.

The tour served to help generate momentum for policy changes as the 2019 legislative session began, and it became clear in the weeks afterward that better broadband access is a key priority of legislators as well, with a number of broadband-related bills being filed.

The bills include HB 431 FIBER NC Act, which would broaden local government authority to enter into broadband public-private partnerships and clear the way for them to accept grants to make broadband-related investments.

That legislation – sponsored by Reps. Josh Dobson, Jeff Corbin, David Lewis and John Szoka – would, as filed, accomplish a top legislative goal of cities and towns and lead to a much more active public-private partnership landscape in which smaller internet service providers would more fully engage with local governments, bringing better broadband access to more residents and generate more business activity in rural areas of North Carolina. SC
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NC LEAGUE OF MUNICIPALITIES
This spring, League staff traveled across the state to share insurance and risk management information with our members. At each of the eight stops in the “spring tour,” we had the opportunity to visit with members – both members of the League’s three insurance pools and those interested in learning more about them – and covered renewal information for the health, workers’ compensation and property casualty programs.

A benefit of the League membership, our insurance pools are self-funded and member-governed by a 12-member Board of Trustees. Members of the Board of Trustees represent a cross-section of North Carolina cities and towns and are elected officials and appointed staff tasked with overseeing the direction of the three insurance programs. They serve as representatives of each of the pools’ memberships, and are charged with establishing policies, setting rates and approving special services. Consultants assist the Board with investment management, actuarial study and financial audit.

Just like the League’s founding member municipalities realized in 1908, cities and towns are stronger when working together; the same held true more than 30 years ago when municipalities were having difficulties getting insurance coverage that met the unique needs of local government. The League’s membership established three insurance pools to address these challenges, and since then League staff have provided claims management, risk control and underwriting practices for the pools.

The Board of Trustees met in February to approve rates for the 2019-2020 fiscal year. Despite the devastating impacts many members experienced from Hurricanes Florence and Michael and significant reports of employee injuries and liability exposures, we were able to share some encouraging news with our members about renewal rates for the upcoming year.

The Property and Casualty Trust will receive a flat renewal for 2019-2020, while most of the class code rates for workers’ compensation were reduced. Our goal is to provide members with a level of service that is unmatched and to provide stable rates. Given the significant rate increase we are seeing from many reinsurers as a result of natural disasters across the country, a flat renewal for property this year is another example of how the Board of Trustees is working to provide stability to members during a volatile time.

The Health Benefits Trust experienced significant growth this fiscal year. The League offers a program that is designed to respond to the diversity of North Carolina municipal and county operations. From the smallest towns that have medical claims pooled, to large cities and counties that are individually underwritten based on their claims experience, the League has a plan design that can respond to your health insurance needs. Unlike many commercial carriers who only offer a few base plan designs, the League has 20-plus standard plans or can customize a plan to meet your needs without any additional administrative fees.

Keep in mind that while the renewal rates for property and casualty are remaining flat and most workers’ compensation class code rates are decreasing, a member’s individual rates are determined by several variables, including payroll and appraised values for buildings. A major determining factor for a member’s insurance premiums is the claims they experience. That’s why the League strives to help members prevent losses and contain their risk exposures as part of the standard

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cyber security. It’s a term we are all familiar with, but do we really understand the steps to take, or more importantly, the risks involved if we don’t take those steps? Are the protections your city or town have in place enough?

The N.C. League of Municipalities has partnered with Willis Towers and Watson and Beazley Breach Solutions to provide cyber liability coverage that helps members deal with – and pay for – the aftermath of a breach. This coverage is a standard offering under the League’s Property and Casualty coverage line, offering coverage of up to $100,000 toward the aftermath of a cyber security breach (Members can purchase higher limits). But like most property and casualty insurance products, you don’t really want to have to test your coverage because that means there’s been a loss.

If your municipality needs to make a cyber liability claim, we will be there for you, but like with all our other coverages, the League and our partners believe that prevention is key. In addition to the coverage, members also gain access to cyber liability training and resources that help identify risks and prevent catastrophic losses. And that’s what cyber losses tend to be – catastrophic.

Consider this: last year, one of the League’s members suffered a cyber-attack that stole and encrypted the member’s databases and locked out employees; the ransomware demanded that they member pay a fee to have its information released back to them. Instead of paying the ransom to criminals who could not be trusted, the member chose to rebuild its information technology systems from the ground up. Even though this is a costly solution that can be time consuming, rebuilding provides the benefit of incorporating even stronger cyber security protections for the future.

While many cyber crimes seemingly hit fast, the planning and preparations leading up to the attack are often a slow build, with e-criminals waiting for just the right time to strike. In our member’s case, the e-criminals were preying on vulnerabilities and chaos in the aftermath of Hurricane Florence.
Extenuating circumstances like chaos of a natural disaster aren’t the only opportunities for cyber crime, however. Attackers also prey on the vulnerabilities associated with human error.

“Cyber Security Awareness Training for employees is one of the most critical steps an entity can take to avoid breaches,” explained Mike Honeycutt, CIC, Senior Vice President at Willis Towers and Watson.

Honeycutt adds, “the majority of digital attacks attempt to exploit the human factor through phishing and other related efforts. Historical stats show that a high percentage of attackers gain entry to entities system from successful phishing scams.” That’s why employee training is a critical component of any cyber security plan. Employees need to recognize cyber security threats and understand exactly what is at stake in the event of a breach. Understanding the risks, and their role in that risk, can increase employees’ awareness and accountability when it comes to preventing breaches.

As part of our partnership, the cyber security coverage includes training for League members who participate in our property and casualty insurance program. Members can access this free training through Beazley’s online training site, www.beazleybreachsolutions.com. The training includes the following interactive training modules:
- Phishing prevention
- Malware protection
- Mobile device security
- Wi-Fi practices
- Identity theft prevention
- Smarter, better passwords
- Smarter, better email
- Spam prevention.

Members can upload a list of employees, create training assignments for their employees, and track individual completion of training. If you are a member of the League’s property and casualty insurance program and your staff hasn’t take advantage of the free, online training included with your coverage, contact us to get set up.

SC

Preparation and insurance coverage are key components to combat cyber attacks.
Photo credit: Shutterstock
Ready for the Mission

Rep. Holly Grange Reflects on Military Background, Full-Time Task as Legislator

By Ben Brown, NCLM Communication and Multimedia Strategist

State Rep. Holly Grange doesn’t give the impression of someone easily intimidated or overwhelmed. If anything, it’s her warm personality, easiness in conversation and preference that we call her by her first name that illustrate the comfort she has in her command and mission -- more anchored to people and community than formalities and politics. In a case for that, this Wilmington-based lawmaker said there weren’t any particular issues that sparked her run for House in 2016; instead, her noticeable dedication to public service led District 20 voters to ask her directly. Maybe her background as a one of the first women to graduate from West Point, or as a platoon leader, or as a steady community volunteer gave them ideas. Maybe they noticed the hard-fighting quality that prepared her for it all to begin with. She’s now in her second term in the North Carolina House and set aside time in her busy schedule to tell Southern City more about what drives her.

So, when you first ran for this office, it wasn’t for any individual political issue, but more a broad desire to serve?

I’ve been that way my whole life. I was in the military, I was active duty for almost nine years. I’m from a military family, so I’ve always served, even when I left active duty. I was a military wife in Europe and in the United States. I’ve always been a volunteer here in the community. So, public service seemed to be a natural fit.

Tell us more about the military family dynamic.

My father was in the Army. I graduated high school in Fayetteville, because he was at Ft. Bragg in the 82nd Airborne. I was born in Germany, so we’ve lived all over. When I graduated high school in Fayetteville, I went on to West Point, which was my father’s alma matter as well. When I graduated from West Point, I was commissioned a second lieutenant in the Army Corps of Engineers, and went back to Fort Bragg for five years.

Wait, so West Point. What year did you graduate?

I graduated in 1982. I was in the third class with women. The first women went in in 1976... I had always wanted...
to go there. And my father, being a West Point graduate -- it was all male -- would very kindly tell me when I was a little girl, “Well, Holly, they don’t let girls go there.” And then when they admitted the first women in ’76, I kind of thought about it -- I almost waited too long to apply my senior year. But somebody talked me into it. I applied. I was under 18 when I was accepted and that requires a parental signature in order to accept your appointment at West Point. And my father wouldn’t sign. Because he didn’t think women should go there. He had memories of a corps of cadets that’s half the size of what it is now, and it was very difficult. There was physical hazing, it was physically demanding. And he didn’t want to let his little girl to go through that. But by the time I graduated, he was as happy as a pig in mud. He was very proud. And he was the one who encouraged me to go into the Corps of Engineers. He told me that I wanted to go into a branch where I would be compared to men, not compared to other women – meaning, he didn’t think I needed to go into quartermaster or transportation, those branches that have a lot of women. And so I chose the Army Corps of Engineers.

What did you do at the Corps?
My first job at Fort Bragg I was a bridge platoon leader, of a medium girder bridge platoon. It was an all-male platoon because women at the time were not allowed to be bridge builders, because you had to carry around pieces of bridge that could weigh several hundred pounds. But I

Rep. Grange first ran for House in 2016 after district residents approached her with support. Photo credit: Ben Brown
had 15 to five-ton dump trucks and a platoon full of men.

Themes are coming up of adaptability...
I think I am pretty adaptable. I think that West Point did prepare me to be a platoon leader, and you evolve as a soldier. I was very athletically inclined back then. I ran track and cross-country at West Point. And at Fort Bragg at that time, it was the early '80s. And it was very important that you be able to stay in formation and you could complete a physical training run. And that was back when we ran in boots, by the way. I could run my platoon into the ground (laughter). I also think I’ve always tried not to take things too personally. There were women at West Point when I was there who -- everything was a personal attack. And I think I learned to maybe let things roll off my back a little better, and that made me more adaptable to the situation.

How did this influence you in terms of career and getting to where you are right now?
I’m very goal-oriented. I’m very mission-oriented. I like to see things through and get things accomplished. So when there are barriers thrown in my way, I will work very hard to get around those barriers, or even barrel right through them. In some situations, I have to do that.

And as a legislator?
The first thing I learned as a legislator is that nothing starts on time. Legislative time is what they call it. So, even something as simple as a caucus meeting or a committee meeting -- most of them do not start on time, and that is very frustrating if you’re that type of person who has that military mentality. It helped prepare me, and I think I work well with others. I’m not narrowly focused. I have developed a way to look at the big picture, and that helps as a legislator because sometimes you can see unintended consequences of what you’re doing in legislation.

To that end, context and communication are vital. What’s your philosophy on that? Having a legislative district to represent with different areas and communities...
First of all, a lot of that stuff to me, I don’t look at it as a partisan. I think that’s important, because I have to work with both parties, I have to work with every race. So I like to think I’m approachable. I try to smile a lot. I try to be friendly, approachable. There are some people you’re afraid to go up and talk to them. I don’t want to be that person. I want people to feel like they can call me. I usually insist that they call me Holly. If they call me representative, that’s fine, but I usually insist on them calling me Holly, because that’s who I am. And I was very involved in the community before I entered public office. So I developed a lot of relationships in the community, with government and with the movers and shakers, the people who run all the nonprofits.... The mayor, their government relations person, the county commissioners, they all have my number and they just text me if there’s something they need or don’t like. I don’t always go
along with what they say, but I am able to explain why I’m supporting what I’m supporting.... But what I will not respond to are those mass-produced emails, where I get 40 emails that say the exact same thing.... Those, I do not respond to.

You still serve in other roles in your district, too, right?

I’m on an advisory board at UNCW for the Swain Center for Executive Development. I also am on the board of trustees at Coastal Horizons Center, which does mental health and substance abuse (treatment), and I’ve been on that board probably the longest of any board I’ve been on. And I’m still on the Cape Fear Community College Foundation board. Those are just purely volunteer. I’m also on the travel and tourism board; the speaker appointed me to that. But I’ve been a board member for USO of North Carolina. Veterans and military issues are very important to me. I was appointed by Gov. McCrory to be on the Ports Authority. That kind of got me started in government more than some of the other boards I was on.

What interested you in the House, specifically?

There was an open seat. My predecessor was a gentleman named Rick Catlin, who resigned. I was approached by some people in town to consider running for it. And I decided to run. I did not have a general election opponent, but I did have a primary. That was my first election, 2016.

Do you recall your first impressions here? Any surprises?

I don’t think I was surprised at things. The freshman class kind of stuck
together. We were all friends and would seek each other out. They did have orientations for us and we had one on the House floor, and we had another at the UNC School of Government. It kind of gives you the basics, but it takes a while to get used to how things work. I hate to say it, but it is an old boys club in the legislature. But the Army was, too. I was an engineer officer when I was in the Army. And there were only, I think, 2 percent of women in the engineer corps, 98 percent men. And at West Point as well. Back then there were very few women at West Point. So you get used to maneuvering and being able to handle that type of situation. You have to be very outgoing if you want to be successful and you have to be able to sometimes barrel your way into a situation and prove to people you can handle it.

Anyone who’s seen a legislative day transpire knows it’s a busy gig, even if we do call it “part time.” How do you balance time? Well, my husband’s the primary breadwinner. But I come to Raleigh every Monday, and when we’re in session, I have to schedule things in Wilmington for Fridays or Monday mornings, and then head to Raleigh midday on Monday. You get used to it. But even when we’re not in session, I’m up here quite a bit. But, as you just said, this past short session was not short. We were here three days before New Years. And things happen, like hurricanes and such.

What do you do in the little time you’re not legislating? We have a farm in Bladen County... I like going out there. We have a shooting range out there. I’m a concealed-carry instructor, and we’ll go out to the farm. I find that most of my weekends are spent catching up, but I do like to travel. We’ve traveled all over the world. And I have my little workout routines that I go do to get some exercise, because it’s hard to get exercise. I have to get up at 5 a.m. if I want to get in some exercise before my 8:30 a.m. Education Approps Committee meeting. SC
The word “home” gets thrown around a lot these days at the North Carolina League of Municipalities. That’s because it’s more of an elusive concept for the organization that’s lived in temporary headquarters since 2017, when a historic, five-alarm fire in downtown Raleigh devastated the League’s longtime campus.

Having run out its time at its current temp home -- the Wells Fargo Capitol Center on Fayetteville Street in the Oak City -- the League is moving again, this time right down the street to the BB&T skyscraper formally known as Two Hannover Square.

“The BB&T building is a great move for our organization,” said League Executive Director Paul Meyer. Meyer pointed out how fundamentally difficult it is to pick up and move an organization of the League’s size within downtown Raleigh.

“Demand is high for office space, and opportunities disappear quickly,” he said. “But thanks to our very hardworking staff here at the League, we’ve moved into a space that enables us to best serve our member cities and towns.”

Standing at 29 stories, the BB&T building now houses the League on floor 19. Insurance services, public and government affairs, and other internal operations will fill out the space.

The move began in mid-April -- coinciding with planning and execution of the League’s annual conference, CityVision, held this year in Hickory on a new, springtime schedule.

But it wouldn’t be the first time the League was deep in the throes of major event-planning during a big move. It’s exactly what happened in March 2017, when the fire displaced the organization. The fire came just a few days before Town Hall Day, at the time the League’s biggest advocacy event. (Thankfully, it was a major success.)

The League Board of Directors, as of this writing, continue to work with original campus co-owners, the N.C. Association of County Commissioners, on redevelopment.
If you haven’t kept count, Pepsi has gone through at least 11 logo iterations since the brand got off the ground in New Bern in 1898. It’s an evolution that marketing scholars continue to pin as a case study in generational change, expectations, and vision of a long-lived company known for a steady, core product.

From the original cursive logo, to the catchy bottlecap design of the 1940s, to the minimal and clean circular look of the ’70s, through to the overly scientific 2009 overhaul – actually based on concepts like the earth’s gravitational pull (“attraction theory”) and the exponential expansion-rate of the universe (a force for the future) – the company has always taken seriously the details of its logo and how it harmonizes with the times.

So has the League, which is now unveiling a fresh, new logo and tagline that sharpen the organization’s vision, clarify its dedication to a better North Carolina, modernize its aesthetics and carry forward a rich history of service to cities and towns dating back to its 1908 founding (just 10 years after that first Pepsi-Cola).

League Unveils New Logo, Tagline As Organization Looks to Future

By Ben Brown, NCLM Communication and Multimedia Strategist

‘Working as One. Advancing All.’

“Working as one. Advancing all.” is the new encapsulation of the League’s purpose. For the more than 540 cities and towns that make up the League, the tagline highlights how much stronger we are when we work together on shared goals. For League staff, it’s all about the support it gives its members through advocacy, expertise and tailored offerings like insurance, so each municipality can be best positioned for success.

With the new tagline is a new text logo and icon -- clear and clean, yet energetic and bold lettering of the organization’s name next to a graphic of overlapping squares. The stylized squares vary in size, representing the dynamics and diversity of our cities and towns, both separately and together working to better the lives of their residents and all North Carolinians.

This rebranding wasn’t overnight work. It involved depths of research, analysis of the old branding (still in effect at the time), interviews with municipal representatives, creative conversations, a focus group and much more.
Most importantly, the League sought the right group of experts to shepherd the lengthy process.

In a process all its own, the League carefully vetted branding companies to locate a partner best suited for the task and found that in award-winning Raleigh-based agency Clean.

Clean’s vast client list includes big corporations like Lenovo and Red Hat, large public entities like N.C. State University and GO Triangle, chambers of commerce and visitorship groups, and other, local efforts in communities around the state -- a spread of diversity nicely attuned to organizations like the League.

“We get local government,” Clean told the League.

Mission and Values

As the deliverables were being developed, the League also updated its mission and values statements.

“The North Carolina League of Municipalities is a member-driven organization representing the interests of cities and towns in the state,” begins the new mission statement. “Through their collective efforts, League member cities and towns better serve their residents and improve quality of life.

“For more than 100 years,” it continues, “the League has been one voice for cities and towns working for a better North Carolina.”

Its refreshed values statement emphasizes that the League will be guided by its commitment to service, self-determination, inclusiveness, collaboration and responsiveness.

With its new branding in place, the League carries forward its consummate experience in municipal governance and member services, with enthusiasm for 21st century challenges, teamwork, and the nuances that define each of our communities.

Ultimately, it’s still the League you know and trust, but with a fresh approach for today. With this new energy, we’re doing what we’ve always done relying on the strength of our members -- we’re working as one to make North Carolina better for all.

The League debuted its rebranding at the CityVision 2019 conference in Hickory. SC
There is a scary statistic regarding disaster recovery that gets floated around a lot: more than 40 percent of businesses never reopen after a disaster. For those that do manage to survive, only 29 percent were still operating after two years.

This is why disaster recovery and business continuity are so critical in helping improve the chances of a business recovering back to normal after a disaster. Business continuity is the process of restoring business operations after a disaster; disaster recovery is the process of restoring information technology operations after a disaster.

Starting at NCLM, one of the first things I did was perform an assessment of the IT system and processes. While we had some strengths, the limitations were concerning – especially when it came to disaster recovery. Leadership had to be made aware of the results. After struggling to align calendars for weeks, a meeting was scheduled for March 16, 2017.

In that meeting, I covered the strengths and weaknesses of the League’s current Information Technology. Our main concern: the organization’s footing in the event of a disaster. I also outlined some intermediate steps and long-term solutions in the event of disaster striking.

Ironically, that very night, a fire broke out next door and destroyed our office buildings. Unfortunately, all my outlined concerns from the assessment came true. We were able to quickly pivot and resume operations as normal; however, the assessment and educating leadership beforehand about our IT weakness and the potential solutions played a crucial role in our success. Everyone knew where we stood and what we could do.

There are different approaches an organization can take when preparing for a disaster, but the most important thing is just to start and sooner rather than later. The following are ways to get started:

• Do an honest, full assessment of your information technology. Understand how your applications are connected, where your data is stored, how your phones work and how people use those systems. Document them. Conduct a business analysis to identify critical functions and the resources that support them.

• Determine gaps between your organization’s recovery requirements and current capabilities. Identify what strengths and weaknesses exist if there is a disaster. For example, is your data in the cloud? Is it backed up? Do people know how to work from home or a remote location? Identify what your key systems are and how often they are backed up.

• Organize a business continuity team and conduct training, testing, and exercises to evaluate your recovery strategies. Identify key personnel that will be involved in the recovery and their roles. For example, who will handle the communications in the event of a disaster? What vendors and partners need to be involved to help you resume operations? Document all your vendors and what their role is. Know how often your data is backed up and what is the realistic time to get services back in operations.

• Identify what potential disasters your organization could be impacted and the risk level. Also, identify manual workarounds that need to be in place for critical business functions. There will be different levels of responses required for different situations (natural disasters, nation and international events, technology and critical hardware failures, etc.).

continued on page 43
Often the term “affordable housing” is associated with urban areas and the need to assist the poor in having a safe and adequate place to call home. No doubt, larger cities in North Carolina and across the country continue to lead the way when it comes to policies intended to address affordable housing.

But the challenges that those larger cities face are increasingly complex, involving residents across income levels. And now, more and more cities and towns – of all sizes – are seeing a diverse array of challenges in ensuring that their residents have the housing needed for their communities. From a lack of adequate housing stock for people of many income levels to workforces being disconnected from employers to rising homelessness, the challenges are growing.

Against that backdrop, it should have come as no surprise that members of the North Carolina League of Municipalities, at NCLM’s Advocacy Goals Conference in late November, made affordable housing a key advocacy priority. The legislative goal adopted reads, “Seek legislation that provides additional tools and financial resources for addressing the affordable housing crisis.”

North Carolina is hardly alone when it comes to the search for solutions to find more affordable housing options, as the issue has been characterized by many as a crisis at the national level.

In response, the National League of Cities over the last year has issued a series of reports, created a task force and launched an initiative to seek federal solutions to address 

The affordable housing crisis has played out in communities of all sizes. Photo credit: Shutterstock
affordable housing. A key report looking across all states, “Local Tools to Address Housing Affordability,” concludes that North Carolina cities and towns have tools available that include authority for limited (voluntary) inclusionary housing – allowing for the development of affordable housing alongside market-rate units -- and housing trust funds that encourage development of affordable housing. But what is also true, and not included in the report, is that a state tax credit that had incentivized the development of affordable housing was eliminated earlier this decade. Also, the state Housing Trust Fund, a key state tool providing matching funds for private developments designed to create more affordable housing, has seen funding drop in recent years, from $22 million in 2007 to $7.7 million in 2017 (representing a slight increase over 2015).

Several of the state’s larger cities have been responding by putting more local dollars toward affordable housing. In Durham, Mayor Steve Schewel is pushing for a $95 million bond issue to address the crisis, saying gentrification and the lack of affordable housing is the number one policy issue facing the city. Winston-Salem and Charlotte have worked with banks and other private-sector partners to boost funding efforts for affordable housing.

But as noted earlier, and in the NLC report, the affordable housing challenge is not confined to larger cities. Tourism communities that struggle to provide the kinds of housing that services workers can afford amid rising home prices represents one aspect of that challenge; another is rural towns where the quality of rental and owned homes may have declined

City and State Housing Trust Funds

![Map of US showing distribution of housing trust funds](image)

Source: National League of Cities
“Research has shown that there’s not a single city, county or state where a worker earning minimum wage can afford a two-bedroom rental by working a standard 40-hour week.”

Mark Stodola, National League of Cities Immediate Past President and Mayor of Little Rock, Arkansas

over time as population remains flat or drops.

“America’s housing crisis is worsening as housing prices continue to rise while wages stay flat,” National League of Cities Immediate Past President President Mark Stodola, mayor of Little Rock, Arkansas, pointed out last year. “Research has shown that there’s not a single city, county or state where a worker earning minimum wage can afford a two-bedroom rental by working a standard 40-hour week. We must act now so America’s cities can continue to be the strength of our nation, with affordable housing that contributes to the economic vitality of our communities.”

The NLC report, issued in March, also noted that:

There is a simple truth that connects every person in every city, town and village across America: They want a safe, affordable place to call home. A place to raise their families, enjoy meals with friends and rest their heads at night. But for too many people across the country, that vision of home is not accessible, affordable, or in many cases, available.

The report looks at five tools that need to be in cities’ and towns’ toolboxes to bring more affordable housing to more residents: inclusionary housing, rent control, housing voucher holder protections, housing trust funds, and state tax incentive programs. The report concludes:

The significant housing problem facing our country is compelling cities and states to rethink how they address the issue, and to adapt the relationship they have with each other to meet the scale of the challenge. Cities can take a number of steps to achieve the careful balance of local flexibility and mutual housing affordability goals, including:

• Review, strengthen and update low-hanging fruit tools. Nearly all cities have control over local planning, zoning and development regulations and can carefully examine these tools to improve housing options across income levels. For example, cities can relax density requirements in areas designated as single family, modify parking requirements and streamline development processes for projects with an affordability component.

• Fill a policy vacuum. Cities in 23 states do not have state or local sources of income protections for
housing voucher holders. These states also do not have explicit restrictions on local fair housing, meaning that many cities have the opportunity to create policies to limit discrimination and help extend housing options to those using housing vouchers.

- Proactively engage state partners. For example, cities in the state of Utah have been working with the state legislature and state Commission on Housing Affordability to craft a bill that not only accelerates affordability in regional housing markets across the state, but also offers cities flexibility to do so in ways that meet their unique needs.

- Leverage State Programs for Local Investment. Leverage state programs for local investment, such as state tax credits and state housing trust funds.

No matter the solution, the plan or the type of city, a productive local-state relationship is at the heart of providing housing opportunities for people across the income spectrum. After all, ensuring everyone has a place to call home is a priority for all cities and states. With that thought involving effective local-state relationships in mind, it is clear this legislative session state lawmakers have recognized affordable housing as a significant policy challenge, forming work groups and filing several local bills focused on the issue. Efforts by the League and others seeking more funding for the state Housing Trust Fund and other pools of money designed to leverage private development dollars will also be part of the mix this legislative.

At the same time, the affordable housing crisis was many years in the making. It will not be addressed in a single year. And it will require government at all levels working together, and with private-sector partners. Look for the League and its affiliates to help facilitate those discussions as so much of the state and its towns and cities – big, small and in-between – understand that there will need to be comprehensive approaches to assure that citizens have a safe and adequate place to call home. SC

What do 1.2 million North Carolinians have in common? Their homes and workplaces are illuminated by public power. At ElectriCities, we are proud to be the energy behind public power. And although we recognize that all communities are different, public power communities across our state do share some important key values.

**Community Owned with Local, Hometown Service:** Public power utilities are owned by the communities they serve. They provide local jobs and support the local economy. And it’s not uncommon to see your friendly utility staff at a local ball game or grocery store.

**Locally Operated:** Public power utilities are run by the city. If you live in a public power community, you have a voice in decision-making for your utility.

**Exceptional Reliability:** Industry data shows that North Carolina public power communities provide more reliable power than other power providers. Economists estimate the value of this increased reliability to our customers is between $25-$30 million per year.*

These are just a few of the benefits of public power. To learn more, visit [www.electricities.com](http://www.electricities.com).

*Source: Berkeley Lab, Energy Analysis and Environmental Impacts Division
Dynamic changes are occurring throughout the North Carolina fire service creating increased complexity for local governments. Today, many leaders of fire protection service delivery systems are faced with managing greater risks and hazards while simultaneously navigating against demanding staffing challenges and increasing costs to provide essential fire and rescue services.

Never has strategic planning and critical analysis been more important to continuous improvement for the fire service. EnviroSafe brings tremendous experience and strong technical expertise for Fire Chiefs, County and Municipal Managers and local elected officials. An independent review by a credible team of highly experienced and trusted fire chiefs can provide leaders with valuable perspectives on needed organizational and system improvements.

Illustrative professional fire management services from EnviroSafe include:

- Strategic Planning
- Service Delivery Needs Analysis
- Standards of Coverage Analysis
- Contract Development and Facilitation
- Fire District Transition
- Fire Station Placement
- Fire Chief Selection and Promotional Processes
- Human Resource Assistance
- Professional Development, Mentoring and Coaching
- HR Based Causation Analysis
- Interim Chief Fire Officer Leadership
- Fire Apparatus Evaluation and Fire Station Facility Analysis
- Capital Improvement Plan Review and Analysis
- Emergency Operation Post Incident Analysis

Utilizing fire service industry and North Carolina best practices, EnviroSafe constructs customizable solutions for local governments to meet each community’s individual needs to address specific challenges. We provide both specific project assistance and long-term fire management retainer programs. EnviroSafe serves as the fire service consultant for the North Carolina League of Municipalities (NCLM) enabling all NCLM members to receive reduced professional services rates. EnviroSafe staff are strategically located in the Western, Piedmont and Eastern regions of North Carolina. To any local government considering our services, we encourage you to talk with any of our previous or current clients about our service, quality and value.

Contact Chief Greg Grayson with EnviroSafe at 336-266-7998 or GGrayson@EnviroSafe.com to discuss creating an effective, comprehensive solution for your jurisdiction’s fire protection challenges.
Here’s something you might’ve heard before: “Why aren’t more young people interested in local government careers?”

The answer: they are. But not every community feels it.

“There’s simultaneously a huge workforce challenge on the local government end and a huge interest from young leaders, but very few efforts that are effectively bridging those two sides,” said Joe Nail, founder of Lead for America, which aims to help promising young leaders directly into public service careers in their hometowns or in small communities that need them.

Nail’s national initiative, launched last year, is now in partnership with the League to extend game-changing possibilities to smaller towns across North Carolina. Lead along with the League, UNC School of Government, N.C. Association of County Commissioners and the N.C. City and County Management Association will, this summer, power-train bright, recent college grads to fulfill two-year paid fellowships in small or rural local governments around the state.

The League is financially supporting Lead, with the Board of Directors dedicating $25,000 to the effort. It’s called Lead for North Carolina, and it won’t pitch local government as a resume-builder. This program hopes to change the landscape with permanence.

“We are not seeing local government as just a means to an end, and are making sure that we’re not selecting folks who view it that way,” said Nail. “We want to make sure that this is something that’s really a long-term investment in communities, a long-term investment in the profession, and a long-term investment in the state.”

That is, fellows placed by the program will ideally stay and effect change in those communities as a career.

While it sounds like the right idea on its own, Lead’s vision begins to feel urgent under ongoing staffing challenges like the so-called retirement wave crashing over the public sector. In 2016, the magazine Governing, citing a Center for State and Local Government Excellence survey, reported that more than half of governments surveyed at the time reported a rise in retirements. Retirement-age baby boomers were found to hold a considerable chunk of senior management positions. Recruitment and retention stood out as the most pressing matter to surveyed governments, followed by succession-planning and professional development, Governing reported.

But even without that, many small to medium local governments find they’re not magnets for a new generation.

“The biggest challenge facing municipalities today is bench strength. Who will manage our communities in the coming years?” said League Business and Membership Development Director Jennifer Cohen. “Who will help create the sustainable, robust cities of
tomorrow? Lead for North Carolina gives us a chance to introduce talented young people to the industry of municipal government. Our hope is that a connection will be made and they will choose to live, work and lead here and make North Carolina an example of what our hometowns can and should be.”

Jennifer Cohen, NCLM Business and Membership Development Director

For its first year, Lead will prep and place 25 fellows in local government jobs in small to medium communities, like Shallotte and Wilson.

“Over half of our fellows for this year will be returning to their true hometowns,” Nail said, so important as young, local talent often leaves for college and looks for post-grad employment where they can find it – not often in the towns they grew up in.

Their training – in everything from budgeting to political cycles to public engagement – will take place at the School of Government, and partners including the League are helping to ensure the program is in step with these communities’ needs. Even during their placement, fellows will receive training.

Success isn’t hard to imagine. In building the program, Nail’s group surveyed hundreds of rising-star college students about what they look for in a post-grad career path, and found that local government fit almost all of the common criteria. Ranked by popularity, they were: meaningful work; being surrounded by a community of engaged peers; having mentorship and advancement opportunities; and skills training.

The fifth criterium was good compensation, and while Small Town, N.C. might not be able to match the HR-power of a metropolitan megacompany, Nail said town halls can create a totally fulfilling experience around the other pieces.

“Local leadership and local change is just as important as ever,” he said, “especially with paralysis in our national politics.”

More information is at lead4america.org, including a portal to apply for the program. For the current cohort, Lead facilitators as of this writing are finishing up recruitment for communities on a timeline to begin training this summer and place fellows for two-year commitments starting in August. Recruitment will continue for a new cohort in the following year.
National OnDemand selects Burlington for new Corporate Headquarters

National OnDemand plans to renovate the vacant Bank of America building located in downtown Burlington. With this project, the company will be investing $1.1 million and creating 33 jobs with an annual payroll of $2.3 million.

National OnDemand operates in the Midwest and southeast United States. The company has 1,000 employees operating out of 23 offices with-in 11 states. The Burlington headquarters will host the company’s core executive, finance and human resources.

“We are excited to purchase and renovate our new headquarters in Burlington, NC,” said Douglas Boteler, co-founder and CEO of National OnDemand, in a statement. “This new location will offer many great amenities for our employees and help us to attract new team members that will play a key role in the continued success of our company for years to come. The team did a great job working with both the city and the state to make this project become a reality and we are very thankful for all of their support.”

National OnDemand co-founder and COO Tim Standifer added, “This deal is a win-win all around, we are able to move into a beautiful building in charming downtown Burlington and the city gets a growing company to occupy one of the larger structures within its historic core. We recognize that Burlington has a lot of to offer our employees and we’re excited to grow with the city. I would like to thank Wade Boteler who worked closely with Peter Bishop and the city of Burlington to secure the grant. We are grateful for all of the hard work by Mr. Bishop and the city to make downtown Burlington our new home.’

The Building Reuse Program provides grants to local governments to renovate vacant buildings, renovate and/or expand buildings occupied by existing North Carolina companies, and renovate, expand or construct health care facilities that will lead to the creation of new jobs in Tier 1 and Tier 2 counties and in rural census tracts of Tier 3 counties. The funding will be granted to the company upon the completion of rehabilitation work and meeting job creation goals. National OnDemand plans to begin operations at the Burlington headquarters by summer of 2019.

Burlington Economic Development Director Peter Bishop stated, “We’re thrilled that National OnDemand has selected Burlington for their new headquarters. This project brings 33 jobs with excellent salaries into the middle of our emerging downtown, meaning more customers and activity for other merchants. Even better, National OnDemand is renovating and improving a prominent vacant building, activating dormant space with a vibrant company.

“The City worked closely and under tight timelines with the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina and NC Commerce’s Rural Economic Development Division to ensure Burlington could secure this headquarters project. We’re grateful their support.”

Talk of our Towns

National OnDemand selects downtown Burlington as its new headquarters.

Photo credit: City of Burlington
Southern City
2ND QUARTER 2019
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National OnDemand’s announcement joins a host of other new businesses, residences, art and events that are building momentum in Downtown Burlington. Burlington BeerWorks, North Carolina’s first cooperative brewery, will open in March while May Hosiery Lofts, a 67-unit historic apartment project, opens this fall. In February, artist Casey Lewis, of Beechwood Metals, unveiled the “Heart of Downtown,” a 7’ x 5’ welded steel heart, in a plaza on Front Street.

“An investment of this size in Downtown Burlington is an exciting step forward. The Burlington Downtown Corporation looks forward to working with National OnDemand as they bring jobs, technology, and vitality to a vacant space in our district,” said Burlington Downtown Corporation Executive Director Jessica Pasion. “I’m proud that our Downtown is a hub for innovation, and National OnDemand not only brings a new energy to that hub, but fits in seamlessly with the positive momentum here,” she added.

Raleigh Receives Grant Funding to Support 10-Minute Walk Campaign

Raleigh is one of 10 communities nationwide receiving funds as part of the 10-Minute Walk campaign from the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). The campaign aims to address the fact that one in three Americans don’t have a park within a 10-minute walk (or half-mile) of home. Raleigh Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources will receive $40,000 for public engagement efforts and data analysis.

About 70 percent of Raleigh residents currently live within a 10-minute walk to a park. The grant will strengthen public engagement and data analysis efforts and provide access to resources, including NRPA’s Park Metrics, TPL’s Park Serve® and ULI’s Advisory Services.

Mayor Nancy McFarlane is a proud participant of the 10-Minute Walk campaign, led by NRPA, The Trust for Public Land (TPL) and the Urban Land Institute (ULI).

“We are fortunate to have parks spread throughout our City,” said Mayor McFarlane. This grant will enhance our Parks and Recreation planning and will help us continue to move toward the goal of having parks within walking distance of all residents.”

“Parks are essential to the health, happiness, and prosperity of our nation,” said Jack Kardys, chair, NRPA Board of Directors. “We believe everyone deserves a great park and we’re proud to help lead this effort that prioritizes parks in cities and urban areas across the country.”

Launched in 2017, the 10-Minute Walk campaign establishes the ambitious goal that everyone in the United States should live within a 10-minute walk (or half-mile) of a high-quality park or green space. A bipartisan group of more than 220 mayors has joined this effort, including mayors from the nation’s largest cities to small towns.

Specifically, the campaign aims to work with mayors to bring about city and regional level changes in three main areas: planning, funding, and policies. These may include city bond measures; zoning changes to encourage park development; park master plans focused on access and quality; the expansion of “joint use” agreements that open school playgrounds, tracks, and gyms for public use after hours; and other innovations.

The campaign’s goal is to see a park within a half-mile of everyone in the United States. Pictured is the City of Raleigh’s Walnut Creek greenway trail. Photo credit: Todd Milam
The campaign was built on research that shows access to high-quality parks within a half mile of home deliver a wide range of benefits for urban residents and cities. These include reducing crime rates, improving mental and physical health outcomes (e.g., depression, anxiety and obesity), increasing city revenues, and protecting communities from more flooding, extreme temperatures and other impacts from climate change.

Winston-Salem Selected For ‘Watch For Me’ Campaign

Winston-Salem has been selected to participate in the state Transportation Department’s “Watch for Me NC” campaign to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety. The program aims to reduce pedestrian and bicycle injuries and deaths through a comprehensive, targeted approach of public education, community engagement, and high-visibility law enforcement. Participating communities receive technical assistance, materials and advertising assistance.

Matthew Burczyk, the city’s bicycle and pedestrian coordinator, said that the program can be summarized in four words: education, encouragement, enforcement and evaluation.

“They provide a lot of materials to help us educate residents and encourage them to help keep pedestrians and bicyclists safe,” Burczyk said, “and there will be training sessions for local law enforcement officers so that they are aware of the laws and how best to enforce them. And at the end, we will provide an accounting of the campaign and its results.”

The campaign will kick off in late May, Burczyk said, to coincide with Bike Month and the Winston-Salem Cycling Classic.

Watch for Me NC began in 2012 with a pilot program involving four communities. Since then, more than 50 communities have participated. Up to 10 communities are selected to participate each year.
Here We Grow: Hudson Project
continued from page 5

hold shows, contests and lessons on site.

It’s up and up from there, "hub" serving operatively in the name.

“We are anxious to see it grow as it becomes a vital part of the Hudson community and a destination point for all of Caldwell and surrounding counties,” said Bentley.  SC

From the Trust Perspective  continued from page 21

program offerings. This is a benefit only available to League members and isn’t typically available from commercial carriers.

Thank you to the many cities and towns across the state who participate in the League’s insurance programs. If your municipality is not taking advantage of this membership service, we welcome the opportunity to share the competitive coverage we offer and the value-added programming that will help keep your employees healthier and safer, your properties better protected, and your claims – and likely your premiums – down.  SC

Facing Forward  continued from page 32

Your disaster recovery plan should be aligned with your business continuity plan. Ensure you have cyber insurance and insurance necessary for the loss of business due to technology. Putting together a disaster recovery document with process and procedures can seem like a daunting task. However, thinking about it, engaging leadership and documenting will go a long way to ensuring a business stays in operations after a disaster.  SC

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The Local Elected Leaders Academy offers programs, workshops, and courses designed to instill needed leadership skills in today’s municipal and county elected officials. Participants will learn how to set and achieve strategic goals, strengthen existing bonds, and facilitate new connections as elected officials.

Thank you to Prudential for their support of training for elected officials.

THINK CREATIVELY ACT COLLABORATIVELY LEAD STRATEGICALLY

UPCOMING COURSES

Ethics for Local Elected Officials Webinar
Live Date: May 22 • 10:00 am • Available on-demand from June-October 2019

Top 10 Primer: Use of Social Media for Elected Officials Webinar
May 31 • 10:00 am

Basics of Economic Development
August 24–25 • Greensboro

REGISTER TODAY: CPLG.SOG.UNC.EDU/CPLG-FOR-ELECTED-OFFICIALS
During a recent Senate committee meeting in which a comprehensive land-use bill was taken up, based on a lot of the rhetoric tossed around the room, you might think that cities lived in a sort of vacuum as entities created by themselves and acting of their own volition, blobs on a map with independent thought and motion.

Of course, that is not reality. Cities are formed by people, and their actions are collective ones, based on the visions and wishes of local residents acting through their local elected and appointed officials.

When those locally elected officials fail to represent that collective will of local voters, they face the prospect of being tossed from office.

In this particular case, the land-use bill in question had been filed at the behest of the homebuilding industry. It is one of several filed on their behalf this legislative session which would usurp local authority in an effort to ease subdivision development. To accomplish its purpose, the bill being debated by the Senate committee would have incentivized land-use litigation and tilted property rights significantly in favor of the developer over the neighboring property owners adjacent to the development.

That last point is the one that is most significant here. Cities, as local regulators, do not create zoning and other land-use regulation to make life hard on developers. By and large, cities and towns welcome new development. They want economic activity and new businesses. They want new housing stock that makes their communities attractive to new residents.

But as local regulators, one of their primary duties is to protect existing, neighboring property owners and their investments. If those property owners are homeowners, that home is often the most substantial investment that they will ever make. If a neighboring development damages the value of existing development, then local regulators have not adequately performed their job.

In this role, cities essentially are upholding what Enlightenment thinkers like John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau called the social contract, which explained government as people coming together to create an implied contract to gain certain types of protections.

Interestingly enough, this latest land-use legislation, SB 355 Land-Use Regulatory Changes, ran into challenges and delays not just because of concerns expressed by the League and by cities, but by developers who understood the value of negotiations by cities on behalf of surrounding property owners.

Specifically, large mixed-use developers in the state’s major urban areas understood that provisions of the bill could restrict or even undo conditional use zoning and permits that are essential to the multi-million dollar high-rises in our state’s urban cores that house a mix of retail, office and residential space.

And what are these conditional use permits? They are the negotiated agreements that allow these large developments to proceed while addressing the needs and concerns of existing, surrounding property owners so that their objections won’t mean the scuttling of the project.

Obviously, all property owners should and do enjoy certain rights involving the use of that property. And cities, as regulators, attempt to balance the rights of each. Even as we may disagree where those lines should be drawn, and where the proper balance lies, state policymakers need to begin those discussions with a recognition of the legitimacy and the desirability of the local regulator as the protector of existing property owners and their rights.

If not them, who? SC
### 2018 at a Glance

#### 1:1 Meetings & Consultations
17 risk management, grassroots and/or operations consultants met with more than 1000 in-person consultations, including onsite hazard reviews, 170 HR/ Employment Liability consultations, 69 Law Enforcement Risk Review requests in process, and more.

#### Workers’ Comp
- **464** local government entities insured
- **23,648** municipal employees covered, including 4,537 police officers
- **2,228** new claims received

#### Business & Membership Development
- **2** new preferred partners added – Envirolink and PennCredit – to provide additional services to municipalities at a savings.

#### Media & Publications
- **147** periodic publications/broadcasts annually with a total distribution of 450,000+ among Southern City, League Letter, Legislative Bulletin, Trust Matters, Municipal Law Notes and the Municipal Equation podcast.

#### Events & Education
- **2,316** municipal officials attended 24 live trainings and networking events
- **13,000** municipal employees attended online risk management courses

#### Health Benefits Trust
- **17,263** covered lives across group health and voluntary benefits, including medical, vision, dental, short- and long-term disability, and basic life insurance.

#### Advocacy & Legal Assistance
- **112** bills tracked, including 69 high-level or critical issues
- **5** advocacy goals achieved

- Filed an amicus brief in one legal case and provided technical help with 10 other cases. Participated in six moot court cases.

#### Debt Setoff
- **$4,547,293** collected by the Debt Setoff Program in debts owed to 291 municipal participants in FY17-18.
- **$71,616,106** total collected since 2002.

#### Grant Funding
- **$142,000** in Wellness Grants to 48 projects
- **$85,000+** for body armor vests distributed to police departments.

#### Property & Casualty
- **403** local government entities insured
- **15,197** vehicles insured
- **15,586** structures insured
- **2,861** claims handled

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**NCLM**

**NC LEAGUE OF MUNICIPALITIES**
They get to see how their savings add up. One day they’ll see this as a learning opportunity.”

Suzanne B., Green Level Secretary, Town of Green Level Member since 2017