

Fall 2026 Volume 84, Issue 2

The Alabama

MUNICIPAL

Official publication of the Alabama League of Municipalities

Journal



Common Goals, Uncommon Service

MWCF Celebrates 50 Years of Service to Alabama's Municipalities! See page 56.

LEAGUE OFFICERS

Rusty Jessup - *Mayor, Riverside, President*
Jason Reeves - *Mayor, Troy, Vice President*
Greg Cochran - *Executive Director*

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2026 - 2027

From the First Congressional District

Ralph Hellmich - *Mayor, Foley*
Katherine Breeden - *Councilmember, Loxley*
Brandon Van Hook - *Mayor, Semmes*
Newton Cromer - *Councilmember, Saraland*
Ruthie Campbell - *Mayor, Robertsdale*

From the Second Congressional District

Joe Beaty - *Councilmember, Citronelle*
Gordon Stone - *Mayor, Pike Road*
Vacant
Stanley Stallworth - *Mayor, Evergreen*
Vacant

From the Third Congressional District

Joe Taylor - *Mayor, Rainbow City*
Katrina Hennings - *Councilmember, Springville*
Ron Anders - *Mayor, Auburn*
Eddie Smith - *Mayor, Opelika*
Scott Reeves - *Mayor, Hokes Bluff*

From the Fourth Congressional District

Jennifer Williams Smith - *Councilmember, Jasper*
Allen Dunavant - *Mayor, Glen Allen*
Chuck Ables - *Mayor, Geraldine*
Jill Oakley - *Councilmember, Albertville*
Willis Thompson - *Councilmember, Muscle Shoals*

From the Fifth Congressional District

Kyle Pike - *Councilmember, Decatur*
Dana Henry - *Councilmember, Athens*
Charles Black - *Councilmember, Priceville*
Jim McCamy - *Mayor, Scottsboro*
Alice Lessmann - *Councilmember, Madison*

From the Sixth Congressional District

Hoyt Sanders - *Mayor, Pinson*
Ashley Curry - *Mayor, Vestavia Hills*
Stan Hogeland - *Mayor, Gardendale*
Michael Gay - *Councilmember, Millbrook*
Theoangelo Perkins - *Mayor, Harpersville*

From the Seventh Congressional District

Bobby Scott - *Mayor, Center Point*
Graham Smith - *Mayor, Mountain Brook*
Gwendolyn Rogers - *Mayor, Linden*
Wardine Alexander - *Councilmember, Birmingham*
Sheldon Day - *Mayor, Thomasville*

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

(Active Past Presidents)

Sherry Sullivan - *Mayor, Fairhope (2025-26)*
Mark Saliba - *Mayor, Dothan (2024-25)*
Leigh Dollar - *Mayor, Guntersville (2020-21)*
Ronnie Marks - *Mayor, Athens (2019-20)*
Walt Maddox - *Mayor, Tuscaloosa (2013-14)*
Johnny Ford - *Councilmember, Tuskegee (1989-90)*

About ALM:

The Alabama League of Municipalities is a nonpartisan membership association of over 450 incorporated cities and towns. Since 1935, the League has worked to strengthen municipal government through advocacy, training and the advancement of effective local leadership. As the recognized voice of Alabama's cities and towns, ALM's member municipalities benefit from a variety of member programs, services and activities that are impossible to accomplish alone.



Go Digital!

Scan the QR code to see e-versions of *The Alabama Municipal Journal* available online. Between editions, keep up with ALM's daily activities via our social media channels. Photos from League events are also available for viewing and downloading on our Flickr page.



Follow us on X (formerly known as Twitter): @AL_League



Follow us on Facebook: @ALALM



Follow us on Instagram: @alabamacitiesandtowns



Follow us on LinkedIn: @alabama-league-of-municipalities



Follow us on Flickr: flickr.com/photos/alabamaleagueofmunicipalities/albums



Subscribe to our YouTube channel: @MyALMTV

Advertising with the League:

The Alabama Municipal Journal is published by the Alabama League of Municipalities, 535 Adams Avenue, Montgomery, Alabama 36104. Telephone (334) 262-2566. Website: www.almonline.org. Subscriptions are \$26.00 per year. Advertising rates and a circulation statement are available. Statements or expressions of opinions appearing within this publication are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Alabama League of Municipalities. Publication of any advertisement should not be considered an endorsement of the product or service involved. Material from this publication may not be reprinted without permission.

Editor: LORI JHONS Graphic Designer: KARL FRANKLIN



The Alabama MUNICIPAL Journal

Official publication of the Alabama League of Municipalities

Fall 2026 • Volume 84, Issue 2

In this Issue:

Executive Director's Fall Report	5	AI in Local Government: Best Practices for Responsible Use ...	40
Leadership Perspective	7-9	Building Stronger Alabama Communities Through Leadership: The Impact of UA's Community Development Institute	44
Legal Viewpoint: Consumable Hemp Products in Alabama: What Municipal Leaders Need to Know Before Saying Yes - or No	12	How Alabama Municipal Leaders Can Reduce Liability When Contracting with Outside Entities	50
Clanton Finds Retail Success After Economic Development Academy	14	ALM Welcomes Three New Team Members	53
Turning Potential into Participation: Fayette's ACE Journey ...	18	2027 Legislative Statements	54
From Washington to Alabama: Congressional Luncheons Strengthen Federal-Local Connections	22	Adding Peace of Mind for 50 Years: The Municipal Workers Compensation Fund Celebrates a Golden Anniversary	56
Understanding the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act: What You Need to Know	26	AMIC and MWCF Loss Control Division Hosts Successful Training Events Across Alabama	60
Unlock Your Community's Potential Through Live Locally Alabama	30	Hobson City: From Peril to Promise An AMIC/MWCF Loss Control Success Story	62
ALM Wishes Rachel Wagner a Happy Retirement!	34	The League Welcomes Our Newest Strategic Partner	65
A New EDA Tool to Strengthen Local Economic Development	36	American Rescue Plan Act: Important Deadlines	66



12



18



60



On the Cover:

The Municipal Workers Compensation Fund will celebrate its 50th anniversary on November 3, 2026! We hope you like the special edition logo that we have been using throughout the year to honor this significant achievement. We are proud that MWCF is the second oldest League insurance pool in the nation! Learn more about MWCF's services by reading pages 56-64. The special MWCF logo and cover were created by ALM Graphic Designer Karl Franklin.

Insuring the Future of Local Government



Is ***YOUR*** Future Covered?

www.amicentral.org

1-866-239-2642 (AMIC)

To find out more about AMIC and the protection we offer Alabama's municipalities, scan the QR code.



Executive Director's Fall Report

Gregory D. Cochran • Executive Director



As I sit here composing the words for my article, I am faced with the reality that summer is over; children are back in school while football, volleyball and soccer are being played on local fields and in gymnasiums throughout communities on Friday nights and Saturday mornings. In my opinion, the fall season is the best season. The arrival of cooler temperatures and folks venturing outdoors to enjoy their community's parks or strolling along store fronts on the way to their favorite restaurant brings happiness to my spirit.

Your ALM team had a productive summer, hosting several regional training workshops, in-state congressional luncheons and our annual standing and legislative committees' meeting day. Our summer events saw excellent engagement: regional training workshops reached capacity, requiring an additional workshop to meet demands; congressional luncheons were well attended; and standing and legislative committees' meeting day saw a 175% increase in attendance from last year — a record number! You can reference the ALM Committee on State and Federal Legislation's 2027 legislative statements on page 54. These events give us valuable opportunities to connect with our members and better understand the challenges they face. Our legal, advocacy and member services teams work hard to curate topics that help make the most of our officials' time.

We are also working to strengthen the Live Locally Campaign. Kayla, Lori, Ty and Karl continue to create materials local officials can use and share in their communities — whether through social media, traditional press releases or videos shown during civic club presentations. We have also partnered with Good Grit, a public relations firm, to expand the reach of the campaign's message and help municipalities tell their own stories.

We must become more confident in explaining how citizens' and business leaders' financial investments help build vibrant communities. Local elected officials understand better than anyone how resources are being used across their city or town. Baker Allen, ALM director of governmental affairs, often says, "We don't need the Alabama Legislature playing mayor from Montgomery." He is right. However, if legislators hear only from local business leaders and citizens calling for lower taxes, that is how they will respond.



Dependable public safety, infrastructure, parks and recreation, education and access to health care all help drive economic investment — and economic investment strengthens vibrant communities. Local taxes are instrumental when local elected leaders must evaluate local assets and balance budgets, work that cannot be done effectively or efficiently from the Alabama State Capitol complex.

Looking ahead to upcoming events, our team has finalized the ALM CMO Graduation and Municipal Leadership Institute conference in Mobile, October 20-22. We have several outstanding speakers lined up for this event. Additionally, during the National League of Cities' City Summit in Nashville, ALM will host a reception on Friday evening, November 20, for Alabama delegates. You will receive more information as the event nears regarding location and time.

Both of these events are great opportunities to network with your peers from across the state and nation.

We look forward to seeing you this fall and continuing to work with you in bringing resources and tools back to your community! ■

Peace be with you,
Gregory D. Cochran, CAE
Executive Director



William Scott, the former mayor of the town of Mosses and the owner of Tristatz Consulting Services, hosted his book launch for The Mayor's Journey on June 28, 2026 at the Embassy Suites in Montgomery, AL. Volume 1 of The Mayor's Journey spotlights 10 remarkable mayors from the state of Alabama. Scan the QR code for more information about the book.



Leadership Perspective

Mayor Rusty Jessup • Riverside • ALM President



Well, here we are, almost halfway through my year as your president. With the other half still to go, I want to encourage you to reach and learn to become more.

Our mission is to help you develop your skills as a mayor or city councilmember.

I hope you know that I, along with our ALM Board of Directors and the entire staff at the Alabama League of Municipalities, are all 100% committed to helping you become a successful, dedicated and effective leader in your city or town.

I strongly encourage you to take advantage of the courses offered through our Certified Municipal Official (CMO) program and work toward earning your CMO designation. Most importantly, we cherish your input — bring your ideas and get involved! Let us shape the future of our municipalities and the great state of Alabama together!

At the heart of my tenure as president is one simple but powerful conviction: true progress begins when we treat each other with Dignity and Respect. If you have heard me speak, you know that this subject is the theme of my presidency, and every time I get a microphone, I will express the concept that we all must learn to disagree with respect and dignity. The only thing that can truly divide us is not our differences, but in the way we choose to disagree.

Disagreement in public policy is not only inevitable: it is a healthy component of democracy. Different perspectives highlight blind spots and push us toward well-rounded solutions. Disagreements only become a barrier when pride replaces purpose. True municipal leadership demands an ongoing effort to reach a compromise whenever viewpoints collide. It does not mean we abandon a core principle; but rather, we must recognize that practical consensus serves our community far better than gridlock. No matter the issue on the table, effective leadership will look beyond disagreement and will strive in every way possible to bridge gaps, find shared priorities and build solutions that serve the greater good.



Progress will stall when internal collaboration breaks down. Working alongside your fellow city officials, your city employees and department heads requires an atmosphere where every voice can be heard without fear of condescension or dismissal. Respecting the lived experience and dedication of your fellow elected officials will turn potential friction into productive dialogue.

In municipal government, your success will not be measured by individual triumph. It will be measured by your collective progress. Every ordinance passed, every project funded and every service you deliver relies on a complex web of cooperation among your elected officials, your city staff and the community at large. No municipality can run smoothly or accomplish meaningful goals without leadership that is grounded in one fundamental principle: treating every person with Dignity and Respect. If we do this, we will strengthen our councils, empower our staffs and deliver real results for the communities we are privileged to serve. ■



**2026 MUNICIPAL
LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE**
.....
& GRADUATION CEREMONIES



Arthur R. Outlaw
Mobile Convention Center
.....
OCTOBER 20 - 22

**Join us in Mobile for 2026 MLI
& Graduation Ceremonies.**
Scan the QR code for more information.



Photo Credit: Visit Mobile

Leadership Perspective

Mayor Jason Reeves • Troy • ALM Vice President



Whether you are new to municipal government or a seasoned leader, the Alabama League of Municipalities offers opportunities to strengthen your knowledge, expand your network and bring new ideas back to your community.

If you have never attended the Municipal Leadership Institute (MLI) or National League of Cities' City Summit, this is the perfect time to experience what so many municipal officials and employees describe as the most valuable professional development available through the League. MLI provides practical education on the issues that matter most to local government, while City Summit brings together municipal leaders from across America to learn from industry experts, hear about emerging trends and exchange ideas with peers facing many of the same challenges on the national level. This year's City Summit will be held in Nashville, making travel more convenient than ever for many attendees and offering an exciting destination to complement an outstanding educational experience.

Beyond the educational sessions, both events offer something equally important — the chance to build relationships with fellow municipal leaders. The conversations between sessions, shared experiences and new connections often become lasting resources long after the conferences end.

Learning does not have to end when the events are over. The League's "Municipal Matters" podcast is another convenient way to stay informed throughout the year. Each episode features timely discussions on topics affecting Alabama municipalities, interviews with local leaders and insights that can help you better serve your community.

If you are already a MLI or City Summit attendee, invite a colleague or newly elected official to join you this year. And if you have not yet subscribed to "Municipal Matters," now is a great time to start! Be sure to share episodes with your coworkers, citizens and fellow municipal leaders so more people can benefit from the conversations shaping local government across Alabama.

Thank you for your service to our state through your municipal leadership, and I look forward to seeing you at MLI and City Summit. Your investment in learning today helps build stronger municipalities for tomorrow. ■





SAVE



THE



DATE!

2027 CMO Training Calendar



Make plans to join the League for training in 2027!

- Legislative Advocacy Day – February 10 | Montgomery
- NLC Congressional City Conference – March 13 - 17 | Washington, D.C.
- ALM Convention and Expo – April 27 - 30 | Mobile
- CMO Regional Trainings – Spring/Summer (full details TBD)
- In-State Congressional Luncheons – August (full details TBD)
- Standing Committees Meeting – Fall (full details TBD) | Montgomery
- Municipal Leadership Institute and ALM Graduation Ceremonies – October (full details TBD)
- NLC City Summit – November 16 - 20 | Houston, TX

**Visit almonline.org for ALM training and registration information
or nlc.org for upcoming NLC events.**



NAFECO®

FIRE APPARATUS & AMBULANCE

NAFECO STOCK AMBULANCE

- CHASSIS: Ford F450 Regular Cab
- BODY: Life Line Emergency Vehicles Superliner, 167", Type I
- TRANSMISSION: TorqShift 10-Speed Automatic
- ENGINE: 6.7L Power Stroke
- HORSEPOWER: 300 HP Diesel



LIFE LINE
EMERGENCY VEHICLES



STOCK TRUCKS



NAFECO STOCK 2 DOOR IH TM PUMPER

- CHASSIS: International MV607
- BODY: Rosenbauer FXR, 3/16" Aluminum
- ENGINE: Cummins L9
- HORSEPOWER: 360 HP
- PUMP: Waterous
- GPM: 1500 GPM
- TANK: 1000 Gallons Water/
20 Gallons Foam

 **rosenbauer**

Contact Your Territory Manager for Additional Information



NAFECO.com / FireTruck
info@nafeco.com • 800-628-6233



LEGAL VIEWPOINT

By Rob Johnston, Director of Legal Services, ALM; Mary Elizabeth Dial, Associate Counsel, ALM;
and Emily Butler, Associate Counsel, ALM

Consumable Hemp Products in Alabama: What Municipal Leaders Need to Know Before Saying Yes — or No

On May 14, 2025, Gov. Kay Ivey signed Act 2025-385 (H.B. 445, by Rep. Andy Whitt) regulating consumable hemp products. Effective January 1, 2026, consumable hemp products can be sold in Alabama by consumable hemp retailers licensed by the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board.

The act adds Chapter 12 to Title 28 of the Alabama Code, Ala. Code §§ 20-12-1 to 20-12-62. Final placement and text of 2025 legislation is subject to editorial action of the code commissioner.

With this new law in effect, retailers and restaurants have already contacted many municipalities about their consumable hemp products. We expect them to continue to reach out to municipalities and have developed this article to assist you in staying informed on key information related to this topic.

What are consumable hemp products?

Consumable hemp products include beverages, edibles and topicals that contain cannabinoids (CBD and/or THC) derived from the hemp plant. Hemp is grown and cultivated to contain less than 0.3% of naturally occurring THC. These consumable products are made by drying out harvested hemp plant material, extracting and testing the cannabinoids and infusing them into consumables like beverages, edibles and topicals that can be applied directly to the skin.

Who regulates consumable hemp products?

The act gives the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board (commonly referred to as the ABC Board) the responsibility for administering and enforcing the act's requirements. Section 28-12-3(a), Code of Alabama 1975. The ABC Board is also responsible for collecting and administering the Consumable Hemp Product Compliance Fund created by Section 28-12-4, and the 10% excise tax levied on the retail sales price of consumable hemp products by Section 28-12-5.

Are municipalities required to allow consumable hemp products in their municipality?

No, the act does not require municipalities to allow the sale of these products. What is good for one municipality may not be good for another, so the Alabama Legislature has allowed the governing body of each municipality to choose whether the sale of consumable hemp products is the best option for their community. If a municipality has not approved the sale of consumable hemp products, then the ABC Board will not be able to issue a consumable hemp sales license to a retailer in that municipality.

There is a trade-off that municipalities should consider: if a municipality does not allow the sale of consumable hemp products, then it will not receive any revenue from the 10% excise tax.

Can municipalities charge a sales tax?

Yes. Nothing in the act prohibits a municipality from charging sales tax on consumable hemp products sold under the act.

What is a municipality's role in this new law?

Effective January 1, 2026, consumable hemp products may be sold in Alabama by consumable hemp retailers licensed by the ABC Board. However, the ABC Board cannot issue a consumable hemp product license unless the governing body of the county or municipality where the licensee's facility is located first approves the application for licensure. Section 28-12-40(b), Code of Alabama 1975.

If a municipal council wants consumable hemp products to be sold in its municipality, it must show approval of the retailer's license. This decision is at the discretion of each municipal council.

If a municipality chooses to approve the application, what does the council need to do?

There is no statutory guidance on a method for how a municipality approves the application for licensure of consumable hemp products. Different municipalities have used different methods to show approval.

If a municipality wants to approve a consumable hemp product license, one method has been to adopt the same approval method that is used for liquor license approval. This may require amending your current liquor license ordinance to include licensing approval for consumable hemp products.

Some municipalities have passed a separate ordinance authorizing the sale of consumable hemp products, while others have passed a resolution. All these methods show municipal approval allowing the ABC Board to issue a consumable hemp product license to retailers in the municipality.

The League's legal department has sample ordinances and resolutions to get you started; you can also scan the QR code to view tips on drafting ordinances. One size does not fit all, and so you will need to work with your municipal attorney in drafting an ordinance or resolution that best serves your municipality. If you need assistance, please do not hesitate to contact our department at (334) 262-2566 or via our website at www.almonline.org. ■



Clanton Finds Retail Success After Economic Development Academy

Lori Jhons • Communications Director • ALM



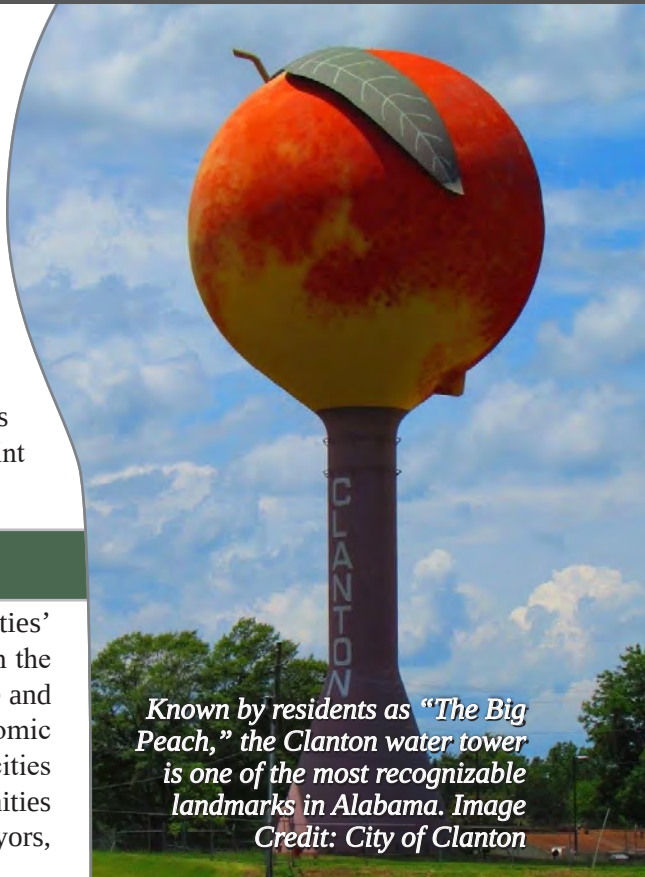
When you think of Alabama landmarks along Interstate 65, there are a few that come to mind, but none sweeter, quite literally, than “The Big Peach” water tower in central Alabama that signifies you have made it to the city of Clanton! Clanton is historically recognized as the state’s Peach Capital because over 80% of Alabama’s peaches are grown here or in its sister communities in Chilton County.

Originally known as Goose Pond, Clanton was established adjacent to the South and North Alabama Railroad (later called the Louisville and Nashville Railroad) that connected Montgomery with the Birmingham mineral district. Although Goose Pond was established in 1867, it was not until 1871 that the town became known as Clanton. Since then, Clanton has become home to 9,000 citizens and is seeking to expand its agricultural footprint to retail and industrial development.

Clanton Eyes Economic Development Opportunities

In 2024, the city participated in the Alabama League of Municipalities’ Economic Development Academy (EDA). The League, in partnership with the Alabama Community College System, created the EDA in 2021 to educate and engage municipal officials on the essential elements and phases of economic development. The EDA brings together elected officials from participating cities and towns with municipal peers from their region to prepare their communities for growth. Up to seven people can participate per community including mayors, councilmembers, city administrators, city clerks, economic developers, business leaders and more. The Clanton EDA team consisted of seven members: former Mayor Jeff Mims, Mayor Pro Tempore Billy Singleton, Councilmember Awlahjaday Agee, City Clerk Susie Ellison, Debbie Street, Mike Jordan with the Alabama Power Company and Connie Bainbridge with the Central Alabama Electric Cooperative.

“Participating in the EDA program provided the group with a cohesive vision in establishing and tailoring an economic development plan unique to the city of Clanton,” Councilmember Singleton said. “An equally important consideration involved obtaining the tools, skills and resources necessary to execute the plan once established.”



Known by residents as “The Big Peach,” the Clanton water tower is one of the most recognizable landmarks in Alabama. Image Credit: City of Clanton



Initially known as Goose Pond, Clanton was established adjacent to the Louisville and Nashville Railroad that connected Montgomery with the Birmingham Mineral District. Image Credit: City of Clanton

One of the initial keys to success in the EDA program is completing a community economic vitality survey to assess areas of strength and opportunity. One of the biggest economic challenges identified by the survey was that the city of Clanton is largely a commuter community. Each day a significant percentage of their population leaves the municipality to work and shop in adjacent counties, causing the loss of critical local sales tax revenue. Additionally, they discovered they need more retail space to attract national and regional brand retailers to the area as well as identified education and recreational opportunities as areas that require both short and long-term attention and investment.

Furthermore, the survey identified several strengths within the municipality that will contribute to expanding their economic base. These include access to the interstate and other forms of transportation, a central location in the state, available land for development, reasonable land prices, a motivated workforce, available health care and a low crime rate.

Establishing a Retail Recruitment Plan

The concept and importance of developing incentives to recruit retail was extremely important for a community that has limited experience in this economic development strategy.

Councilmember Singleton shared, “The challenge of finding the formula that is attractive to retail developers while benefiting the municipality is not one-size-fits-all and requires considerable thought, preparation and planning.”

Through participating in the EDA, Clanton developed two main focus areas for its economic development efforts: expand retail development along Interstate 65 and increase the recruitment and retention of retail businesses in the downtown area. While Clanton is fortunate to have three interstate exits and an alluring, iconic landmark, they discovered they needed more to entice commuters to visit their downtown and to keep their residents in



Frequent community events are critical in the effort to make the downtown area a destination for residents and visitors.
Image Credit: City of Clanton



A marker in Corner Park in Clanton memorializes Chilton County as being the geographic center of the state of Alabama.
Image Credit: City of Clanton

their community for work and shopping. City officials expect over 40,000 vehicles traverse their city each day on the interstate, which could equate to twice the number of individuals. It is important to note that the city not only provides emergency response services to their residents but also to those individuals traveling on the interstate.

Councilman Singleton said, “To help offset those costs, travelers need to be enticed to utilize one of our three exits to dine, stay overnight, shop or make other purchases to create revenue to support critical first response services provided by the city.”

He also shared that there is a tendency for retailers to abandon the downtown area to position themselves closer to the emerging interstate market. One major asset the city owns and is looking at developing is a 525-acre site adjacent to the interstate. Trying to balance the interstate development with the downtown development has become more challenging because the new Chilton County Courthouse has now moved outside of the downtown area. However, the area where the old courthouse stood will soon be demolished, leaving an opportunity for collaboration on how to reposition the area for future growth.



The Academy's Impact

EDA has been key to Clanton's latest accomplishments. In 2025, local incentives assisted the city in being selected for the expansion of a local automotive supplier, Adient Clanton, Inc., that created approximately 200 new jobs. Additionally, as part of the effort to make the city of Clanton and Chilton County more accessible for the recruitment of new businesses and the retention of existing businesses and industry, the city and county are working jointly to expand the local airport to accommodate business aircraft. A \$4.5 million project is currently being completed to extend the existing runway facility to a length of 5,000 feet.

“In the current competitive economic environment, a municipality may never know that a firm is considering locating a business in the area because much of the initial research is conducted utilizing online resources,” Councilman Singleton said. “We immediately identified the need to do a better job of providing statistical information and development opportunities on our website and through social media. Having this information readily available demonstrates that the city of Clanton is prepared and actively seeking compatible community partners.”

The city recently acquired more than 20 acres of land in the business district to attract additional economic development and has had two new businesses, a 96-room Hampton Inn Hotel and Wharf Casual Seafood Restaurant, open on portions of this property, with additional parcels available to be sold. Moreover, the city has recruited a second Waffle House restaurant, an automotive maintenance and repair service business, a 24-hour exercise facility and several other new retail businesses.

One of their best success stories comes from receiving an Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) grant in 2023. Through their partnership with ADECA, they were able to convert an abandoned, blighted building in downtown Clanton into Valle Grande Mexican Grill, which opened in 2024. Today, the restaurant contributes

significant sales tax revenue to the city and has become an integral part of the community, giving them another way to attract customers from surrounding counties. In 2025, Valle Grande Mexican Grill received the Business Council of Alabama's Small Business of the Year Award (for the 51-100 employees range) and the 2026 Chilton County Chamber of Commerce's Distinguished Business of the Year Award.

With all of their success in attracting new retail development, the city has been able to establish its first full-time fire department and ambulance service for residents!

**For more information
about the EDA program,
scan this QR code.**



Keeping the Momentum Alive

Some of the most frequent feedback Clanton officials receive from residents relates to the importance of maintaining their existing small-town atmosphere and sense of community. While this could be a daunting challenge, their participation in the EDA has prepared them to be successful in this endeavor.

“Successful economic development requires persistence, patience, the ability to adapt to an evolving marketplace as well as the vision required to ensure that economic development is pursued for the good of the community.”

Clanton's EDA participants shared that they found the discussion style sessions with presenters and peers an invaluable part of their growth in the academy and genuinely appreciated the follow-up calls and visits with EDA facilitators, Bryan Parker and Neal Wade, when developing their strategic plans.

Mayor Jeffrey Price, who was elected in 2025, said, “I commend Councilman Billy Singleton, Councilman Awlahjaday Agee and others for their commitment to professional development through the Alabama League of Municipalities' Economic Development Academy. Their dedication has helped position Clanton for thoughtful, strategic growth, and I remain fully supportive of their continued efforts to strengthen our economy, improve opportunities for our residents and preserve the qualities that make our community a great place to live and work.”

Reach out to Mary Jackson Pollard, director of professional and community development, if you are interested in learning more about the program, or scan the QR code to access the EDA webpage. ■



*The Clanton City Hall is located in historic downtown Clanton.
Image Credit: City of Clanton*



Turning Potential Into Participation: Fayette's ACE Journey

Ty Rayford • Digital Media Specialist • ALM



The Alabama League of Municipalities is thrilled to select the city of Fayette as this magazine edition's spotlight for our Alabama Communities of Excellence (ACE) program. Fayette is a rural city with an estimated population of 4,100 residents located in the broader west Alabama region. Nearly four years after the incorporation of the city in 1821, the Alabama Legislature created Fayette County on December 20, 1824 from parts of Marion, Pickens, Tuscaloosa and Walker counties. The county was originally named Lafayette in honor of Marquis de Lafayette, a French military officer and politician.

Fayette is known for its strong sense of community, historic downtown, local arts and culture and businesses with deep roots. The city is home to Bevell State Community College's Fayette campus and Golden Eagle Syrup, which has been produced locally for generations and remains one of the products most closely associated with Fayette.

Fayette entered the Alabama Communities of Excellence program as part of the class of 2005 and received its official ACE designation in 2007. The ACE program was established in 2002 as a 501(c)(3) organization with the mission of offering Alabama's smaller communities, ranging in population from 2,000 to 18,000 people, technical resources and tools to help them promote growth and prosperity by focusing on their distinctive assets and resources. For Fayette, that framework has provided a lasting foundation for collaboration, leadership development and community-driven progress.

Floyd Rodgers Jr. began serving as Fayette's ACE coordinator 15 years after their ACE designation from 2002 to 2017 before recently being elected to serve on the Fayette City Council. He believed his responsibility as the ACE coordinator was to keep the city's designation alive and the community-development framework active. To do this, Fayette had to continue to implement the strategic plan they created and keep the citizens up to date on those plans.

The Fayette County Courthouse showcased their patriotism for America 250.

Scan the QR code for more information about the ACE Program.



The strategic plan helped identify priorities, assign responsibilities and create a timeline for progress. Even after moving into elected office, Councilman Rodgers continues to support the strategic planning, leadership development, partnerships and quality-of-life work connected to ACE.

“Before and alongside that position, I worked in community engagement, nonprofit leadership, mentoring, reentry ministry, workforce and health outreach, business and real estate development,” Councilman Rodgers, a proud native of Fayette, said. “Those experiences taught me that successful community development is not only about buildings and budgets. It is also about people, trust, access, communication and giving residents a meaningful place in the process.”

For Councilman Rodgers, the ACE distinction was both an honor and a responsibility for the city. He believes it demonstrated Fayette’s capacity to develop leaders, plan and work toward long-term improvement. ACE has helped Fayette build a culture of collaboration, planning and leadership development and that foundation has enabled the city to turn shared goals into tangible improvements for residents not only in Fayette County but the broader west Alabama region as well.

Fayette has taken the approach that their original ACE planning must be treated as a living process, allowing changes to be made when necessary. Community conditions changed, leadership changed, funding opportunities changed, all because residents needed change. For that reason, leadership reviewed priorities regularly, reported what had been completed, explained what had been delayed and updated the plan with new information that required a different approach.

“The plan should guide budgets, grant applications, partnerships and public discussions — not sit on a shelf,” Councilman Rodgers said. “Fayette is working to grow by strengthening some of the foundations that make a rural community attractive: infrastructure, public safety, health care access and recreation.”

One of ACE’s greatest impacts on Fayette is the launch of the city’s first public transportation system on July 1, 2024, removing a major barrier for residents who do not drive or do not have reliable transportation. Fayette had never operated a city public transportation system, and now the Fayette transportation system provides safe, affordable and reliable transportation Monday through Friday. Councilman Rodgers said that the system’s mission is to provide transportation that supports the local economy and improve quality of life, with special attention to elderly residents and people with disabilities. This is a major quality-of-life and economic development accomplishment, because transportation affects access to many essential things: employment, health care, groceries, education and community life. ★

Another program that was created through the ACE process is the Fayette Junior City Council, which gives youth a visible place in city government. The Fayette Junior City Council members have helped organize and support community activities such as an open-mic event, an autism awareness basketball tournament and a back-to-school fun day. They have participated in candidate and civic events, volunteered in the community and supported Magnolia Ranch, a nonprofit that develops homes for foster children. The program has allowed students to practice public speaking, teamwork, event planning, service and civic leadership in real settings.

Furthermore, Leadership Fayette, a nine-month, adult leadership program revived through ACE participation, creates informed ambassadors who can explain how local systems operate. This experience is designed to provide participants with an awareness of community needs, challenges and opportunities; builds relationships with community volunteers and leaders;



The 2025 Fayette Leadership November session was all about agriculture and industry.



The city of Fayette launched its's first public transportation system in 2024.

and creates opportunities to examine, practice and develop leadership skills. The program brings together people from different occupations and backgrounds, gives them direct access to decision makers and challenges them to develop their leadership skills and complete team projects.

“Each of those accomplishments addresses a different need, but all three (the revival of Leadership Fayette, the creation of the Fayette Junior City Council and the launch of Fayette’s first public transportation system) reflect the ACE approach: identify a barrier, bring the right partners together, develop a plan and keep working until the idea becomes a sustainable community asset,” Councilman Rodgers said.

ACE also gave Fayette a reason and a structure to bring different sectors to the table. Through ACE-related work, they strengthened relationships among the city of Fayette, Fayette County, local schools, Beville State Community College, health care organizations, state and regional agencies, utilities, public safety officials, industries, community volunteers and much more.

All of those relationships are valuable because most small cities do not have enough staff, funding or expertise to solve every problem alone. A school may have access to students, a nonprofit may have volunteers, a business may have resources, a state agency may have technical assistance, and the city may have the authority to coordinate the effort, but ACE helps those pieces connect to each other and the surrounding communities.

“Connecting with surrounding communities helps us avoid duplication, learn from successful projects, pursue regional grants, coordinate transportation and workforce strategies and speak with a stronger collective voice,” Councilman Rodgers said. “Fayette’s future is connected to the future of Berry, Winfield, Vernon, Tuscaloosa and communities throughout west Alabama. Regional cooperation does not weaken local identity; it increases local capacity.”

Overall, Councilman Rodgers said that he has benefited from the League and the broader ACE network through training, examples from other municipalities, professional relationships and access to people with specialized knowledge in municipal government and community development. As a newly elected councilmember, continued participation in municipal training is important to him because ACE coordination and elected service require different but complementary skills.

Fayette’s experience offers valuable insights for any municipality considering participation in the ACE program.

“First, do not apply only for the designation. Apply because your city is ready to listen, plan and work. Second, choose a coordinator who can build relationships and follow up,” Councilman Rodgers said. “Third, build leadership development into the process. Projects matter, but people sustain projects. Finally, celebrate progress without pretending every problem is solved. Honest communication builds trust. Small wins create momentum, and momentum can produce major change.”

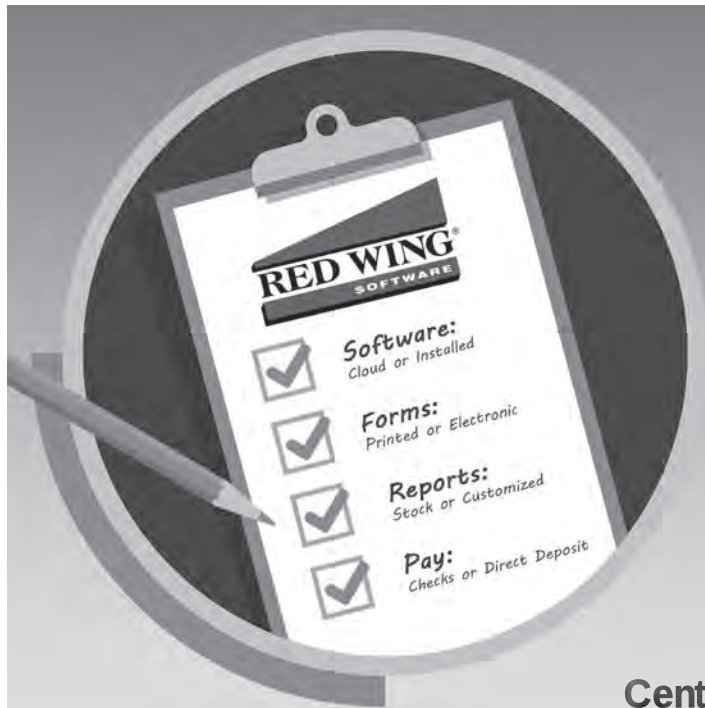
Fayette’s ACE story is one of turning potential into participation and well-thought-out leadership. All of their accomplishments exemplify what can happen when a small city refuses to think small about its people and continues its growth far beyond its beginnings. In the future, Fayette hopes to strengthen this work by publishing an easy-to-read annual ACE progress report showing completed projects, current priorities, responsible partners, funding status and the next opportunities for public involvement.

Councilman Rogers said, “Our next chapter should build on that foundation by keeping the strategic plan active, measuring progress, investing in youth and emerging leaders, improving access and inviting every part of the community to help shape Fayette’s future.”

With its people guiding the way, Fayette is poised to carry the promise of ACE into a future defined by a shared purpose and lasting progress. ■



The 2026 Fayette Junior City Council recently held their new members and officers' ceremony.



You are in Control.

CenterPoint® Fund Accounting and Payroll

To get your **FREE** guide visit:
www.csasoftwaresolutions.com/fundaccounting

Distributed By

CSAsolutions
Accounting & Billing Specialists

www.csasoftwaresolutions.com • 800.264.4465



Safety begins
with preparation.

Ickes Tree Service's TCIA Certified Treecare Safety Professional provides Comprehensive Safety Training for municipal teams — including chainsaw use, aerial lift operation, chipper operation, rigging, and more. Our training builds confidence, reduces risk, and keeps crews safe on every job.

Be proactive. Protect your people and your city.

Call Ickes Tree Service to schedule training today.



251.945.5144
ickestreeservice.com

MANAGED SERVICES



Alabama League of Municipalities' Cybersecurity & Technology Services

Need an IT support provider that understands municipalities? We help municipalities get out of the IT trenches and back to working on what matters.

VC3, the Alabama League of Municipalities' endorsed IT service provider, has been making IT personal, making IT easy, and getting IT right for more than 30 years. Serving over 1,100 municipalities of all sizes, VC3's Alabama-based engineers are supported by a deep bench of national talent.

Powered By



READY TO TACKLE YOUR CYBERSECURITY & TECHNOLOGY ISSUES?

Contact us today at
vc3.com/get-started

VC3.COM | 800-787-1160

From Washington to Alabama: Congressional Luncheons Strengthen Federal–Local Connections

Adam Kilpatrick • Grassroots Coordinator • ALM

Each year during Congress' August recess, the Alabama League of Municipalities hosts in-state congressional luncheons to give municipal officials an opportunity to connect directly with the congressional delegation and their staff. These luncheons have become an important part of the League's commitment to member engagement, providing a platform where local leaders can build relationships, share concerns and make sure the voices of Alabama's municipalities are heard at the federal level.

This August, more than 350 municipal officials took part in luncheons held throughout the state, hearing directly from their respective congressman, giving them the opportunity to ask questions about the issues that matter most to their communities.

The conversations covered a wide range of topics, including protecting municipal authority, effectively communicating with congressional staff and understanding what municipal leaders can expect for the remainder of the year. Just as importantly, these events provide an opportunity for members to put faces with names, strengthen existing relationships and establish new connections with individuals representing their communities in Washington, D.C.

We are grateful to U.S. Rep. Barry Moore, U.S. Rep. Shomari Figures, U.S. Rep. Mike Rogers, U.S. Rep. Robert Aderholt, U.S. Rep. Dale Strong and U.S. Rep. Terri Sewell for taking the time during the August recess to meet with municipal leaders in their districts. We look forward to hosting our District 6 Congressional Luncheon with U.S. Rep. Gary Palmer on October 29. We also appreciate the League's strategic partners whose support makes it possible to offer these luncheons at no cost to our members.

As we look ahead to the remainder of the year, these events remind us that one of the League's greatest strengths is the collective voice of our membership. When municipal leaders show up, engage in conversation and work together, Alabama's cities and towns are better positioned to make priorities known and advance the interests of the communities they serve. ■







Join an ALM Standing Committee and Be Heard!

The League has six standing committees comprised of mayors and councilmembers from each congressional district in the state. Each fall, the League's six standing committees convene in Montgomery to hear from state and federal resource advisors and to recommend any pertinent legislative considerations to the Committee on State and Federal Legislation ahead of the legislative session.

If you are a municipal official that would like to serve on one of the League's six standing committees, please email Lillian Pitman, ALM legislative policy analyst, at lpitman@almonline.org.

This is a great opportunity to get more involved with the League and advocate for issues important to cities and towns across the state!

Committee on State and Federal Legislation

Chair: Mayor Donna McKay, Wadley

Vice Chair: Mayor Richard Teal, Loxley

The League's six standing committees are:

- **Committee on Finance, Administration and Intergovernmental Relations (FAIR)**
Chair: Councilmember Crystal Smitherman, Birmingham
Vice-Chair: Mayor Stanley Allred, Millport
- **Committee on Energy, Environment and Natural Resources (EENR)**
Chair: Councilmember Willis Thompson, Muscle Shoals
Vice-Chair: Councilmember Melvin Duran, Priceville
- **Committee on Transportation, Infrastructure and Communication (TIC)**
Chair: Councilmember Don Mack, Centreville
Vice-Chair: Mayor Eddie Smith, Opelika
- **Committee on Public Safety (PS)**
Chair: Councilmember Wardine Alexander, Birmingham
Vice-Chair: Councilmember Clark Hopper, Rainbow City
- **Committee on Human Development (HD)**
Chair: Councilmember Kent Back, Gadsden
Vice-Chair: Councilmember Bridgette Jordan-Smith, Vincent
- **Committee on Community and Economic Development (CED)**
Chair: Councilmember Newton Cromer, Saraland
Vice-Chair: Mayor Jae'Ques Brown, Greenville



For an in-depth description of each committee, please scan the QR code.

**We are proud to support Alabama's
Firefighters through the state's first
supplemental cancer benefits policy**



Claims:

- 🔥 Dedicated 800 Claims Number
- 🔥 Dedicated Support Staff
- 🔥 Simplified Claim Filing
- 🔥 Endorsed by the Alabama League of Municipalities



Insurance Coverage Options:

- 🔥 Up to \$50,000 in Cancer Benefits
- 🔥 Up to \$3,000 in Monthly Disability Benefits
- 🔥 Guaranteed Coverage
- 🔥 Career Firefighters
- 🔥 Volunteer Firefighters
- 🔥 Certified and Non-Certified
- 🔥 Simple Quoting Process
- 🔥 Base & Enhanced Plans Available



www.alfrbp.com

1-800-23-CANCER cancerinsurance@alfrbp.com

Understanding the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act: What You Need to Know

Lauren Lowery • Director, Housing and Community Development • NLC;

Mike Wallace • Legislative Director, Housing, Community, and Economic Development • NLC

Following a year of negotiations among the U.S. House of Representatives, the U.S. Senate and the White House, the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act became law on July 11, 2026, with overwhelming bipartisan support in the Senate (85 – 5) and the House (358 -32).

The intent of the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act is to improve housing attainability nationally by:

- **Boosting the housing supply** through public and private sector assistance and incentives
- **Unlocking private capital** to increase lending for more housing types
- **Providing timely updates** to grant programs including the Community Development Block Grants Program and the HOME Investment Partnerships Program
- **Streamlining federal regulations** to speed up construction

Most provisions in this comprehensive housing package will require federal agencies to implement changes over the next one to two years.

For local governments, ROAD will offer new program

NLC

NATIONAL
LEAGUE
OF CITIES

flexibilities, financial incentives, federal regulatory relief along with technical and capacity assistance to increase housing supply and attainability. Nothing in ROAD requires local governments to change budgets, practices or regulations seeking housing solutions. To prepare your city to take advantage of these provisions, here are six things you need to know.

The 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act is budget neutral.

Unlike COVID-19 pandemic relief legislation, such as American Rescue Plan Act and the State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds program, which provided direct, formula-based funding to cities, this act requires local governments to competitively apply for most new authorized programs, while retaining formula funding



The National League of Cities Hill Day is always one of the highlights of the Congressional City Conference.

for Community Development Block Grants (CDBGs) and the HOME Investment Partnerships Program.

Following authorization of new programs, the next step is advocating for funding. The National League of Cities is advocating for Congress to fund the new programs. Local leaders can help by contacting their members of Congress

serving on appropriations committees and urging them to fund the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act's new programs.

The 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act provides new grant programs for local governments to competitively apply for.

Some new grant programs authorized under the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act include:

- **Regional Housing Planning Grants:** Grants awarded to regional agencies and local governments to plan for housing supply expansion and regional growth.
- **Innovation Fund:** Highly flexible grants awarded to localities that demonstrate improvement on housing.
- **Pattern Book/Pre-Approved Design Grants:** Grants for development and implementation of off-the-shelf housing designs of the type most in demand in a community. Pre-approved designs are a cost-savings incentive for developers to deliver housing with characteristics most important to the community.



Mayor Bobby Scott of Center Point, AL and U.S. Congresswoman Terri Sewell of Alabama discussed housing initiatives during a recent NLC event.



U.S. Sen. Tim Scott of South Carolina met with the National League of Cities' executive leadership team during the Congressional City Conference in Washington, D.C. in March 2026.

- **Whole-Home Repair:** Grants to preserve existing affordable housing.
- **Reside Grants:** Grants for conversion of vacant office buildings, such as industrial buildings, hotels or underutilized structures, to residential housing.

Funding for these new competitive and pilot programs could arrive as early as Fiscal Year 2027 or could stretch into 2028, but either way, strong advocacy from the National League of Cities' members will be critical to convince congressional appropriators to finalize funding for these programs.

The 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act authorizes capacity building and technical assistance to help local government staff tasked with making zoning, building and land use changes to make housing more attainable.

Provisions in the 21st Century Road to Housing Act that can help local government staff tasked with making zoning, building and land use changes more attainable include:

- Reduction of federal environmental reviews for targeted housing projects like infill development
- New opportunity zones incentives
- Local planning capacity and innovation grants

- Code innovation (single-stair permitting guidelines)
- New tools for faster housing development process (pre-approved plans and pattern books)
- Modular and manufactured housing reforms
- Pilot program for commercial-to-residential conversions and adaptive reuse

U.S. federal agencies will need to stand up new programs and implement regulatory changes authorized by the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act.

Many provisions in the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act authorize federal agencies 12 to 24 months to implement regulatory changes and roll out new programs.

Until then, local governments can expect many opportunities to weigh in on program implementation as proposed rules are made public over time.

Local governments looking to take advantage of competitive grants and regulatory changes in the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act should read the Housing Supply Accelerator Playbook.

Although improvements in the bill will not be immediately available, local governments can start thinking



NLC President Kevin Kramer, a Louisville, KY councilman, presided over a press conference during the National League of Cities' Summer Board and Leadership Meeting in Louisville, Kentucky in July 2026.

about how they would take advantage of new programs and regulatory changes now and incorporate that thinking into their local housing strategy.

A great place to start is reading the Housing Supply Accelerator Playbook: Solutions, Systems, Partnerships produced by NLC and the American Planning Association; scan the QR code to view it.



The playbook supports communities in navigating their housing supply challenges and provides practical, timely, as well as innovative solutions. The playbook encourages cities and both public and private sector partners to recognize:

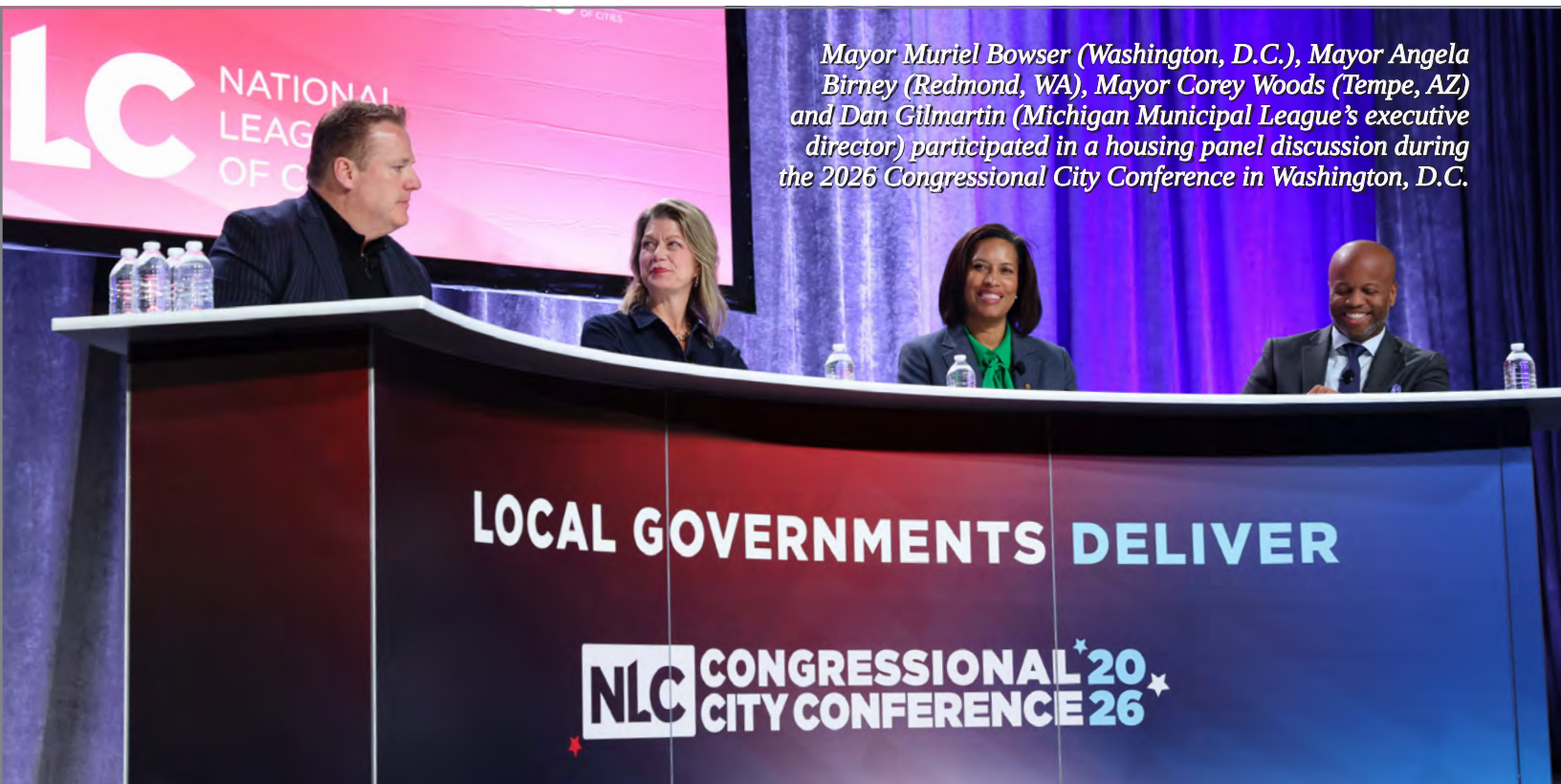
- **Shared Responsibility:** Overcoming the national housing shortage specifically requires local, coordinated action across every sector of the housing market.

- **A Systems Approach:** Construction, finance, regulation and workforce challenges are deeply interconnected — scaling proven practices offers the clearest path forward to addressing the housing challenges communities are experiencing.
- **Multi-Pronged, Local Actions Required:** Coordinated, multi-pronged strategies tailored to local needs reduces housing challenges.
- **Actionable Consensus:** Meaningful momentum relies on actionable consensus, not unanimous agreement.

Also, highlighted in the playbook are solutions featured in the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act with recommended strategies for implementation and case studies highlighting how cities have implemented these solutions into their communities.

Utilize the NLC Resources

NLC is your go-to for everything on the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act, having launched a new resource page with news articles, resources and events related to the law. To find the latest updates and information, and to join NLC's mailing list on the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act, go to nlc.org/roadtohousing by scanning the QR code. ■



Mayor Muriel Bowser (Washington, D.C.), Mayor Angela Birney (Redmond, WA), Mayor Corey Woods (Tempe, AZ) and Dan Gilmartin (Michigan Municipal League's executive director) participated in a housing panel discussion during the 2026 Congressional City Conference in Washington, D.C.

Unlock Your Community's Potential Through Live Locally Alabama

ALM's Quality-of-Life Campaign Celebrates Second Anniversary

Lori Jhons • Communications Director • ALM

Unlock YOUR community's potential and educate your citizens on what it takes to develop a place they want to call "Home" by utilizing the Live Locally Alabama campaign's many resources! With more than 80 FREE graphics and videos, along with a strategic plan, press releases, flyers and more, municipalities are empowered to promote their community's story.

This past September, the Alabama League of Municipalities celebrated the second anniversary of Live Locally Alabama! The mission of this statewide, quality-of-life campaign is to increase awareness of the critical role local governments play in our daily lives and to encourage citizens of all ages to engage in building stronger, more vibrant communities. Live Locally Alabama serves as a platform to highlight the range of services Alabama's 466 cities and towns offer, which depends on strong leadership, active community support and sustainable funding through local tax dollars, licenses and fees. Common examples include: police and fire protection; water and wastewater services; street and sidewalk maintenance; economic development; schools; garbage and recycling collection; parks, recreation and youth programs; libraries; and senior centers not to mention community events and festivals.

You know how fortunate you are to live in Sweet Home Alabama.

Do your citizens know?

You know how much it takes to keep a municipality moving in the right direction.

Do your citizens know?

What Is New?

During our annual convention in April, Executive Director Greg Cochran rolled out the second phase of the campaign. We have created a new set of videos and materials that focuses on data we received from a survey of our members that concentrates on the costs related to public safety; water, sewer and road infrastructure; and parks and recreation, which all typically account for the majority of a municipality's expenses outside of payroll. These data points are listed in the strategic plan along with talking points. Having our members help share this data can be a game changer.



Scan the QR code to view the new Day in the Life video. This video and other resources will help show Alabamians why their investment in their community is critical. We appreciate Alabama Public Television for airing our new commercials throughout the football season. We, and I mean all of us, must take the time to share how much it costs to build roads, develop parks and provide quality of life services for building strong communities where people want to live, work, play, shop, invest and raise families.

Over the summer, our team surveyed the membership about barriers to utilizing the campaign. We appreciate those of you that participated in it. Based on the feedback, we have created a Quick-Start Guide to walk you through the four short steps to get your municipality involved! We have also created a Social Media Starter Guide for those needing help on that front. Scan the QR codes to access those now.

Throughout the past two years, we have promoted the campaign at all of our events; shared it with state and federal leaders; conducted several interviews on TV and radio; aired over 200 TV spots on Alabama Public Television; and contracted Yellowhammer News and Soulgrown to share articles, video reels and ads on their platforms.

Additionally, in 2026, our communications team hosted quarterly webinars to train members on how to get engaged with the campaign. If you want to watch them, visit our YouTube channel or email me, and I will send them to you. We also distributed flash drives with all the campaign materials to members and strategic partners that attended our congressional luncheons along with other useful, printed materials. Furthermore, we have partnered with Good Grit, a female-led marketing firm and magazine company, to work alongside the League to help communities across Alabama tell their stories with clarity, consistency and purpose.



www.almonline.org/LiveLocallyAlabama



DIGITAL CAMPAIGN RESOURCES



Day in the Life Video



Quick-Start Guide



Social Media Starter Guide



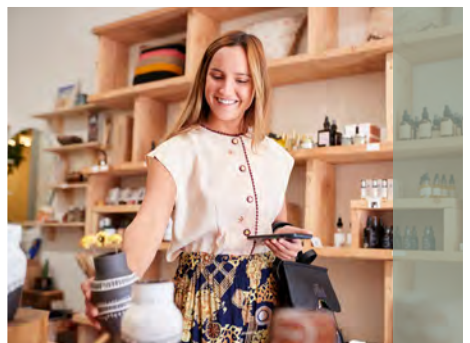
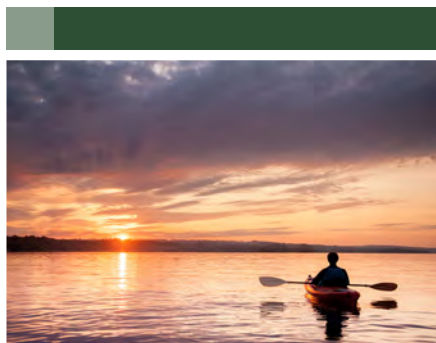
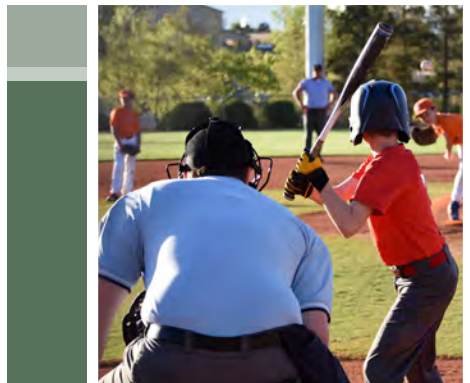
Live Locally Alabama Webpage

How Can I Get Involved?

Make the campaign your own! There is no right or wrong way to get engaged with the campaign. Consider:

- Posting campaign photos and videos on your website, social media and newsletter platforms
- Incorporating the data points into your conversations with the public and elected officials at every level of government at events, council meetings, civic club lunches, student leadership visits, schools, etc.
- Setting up media interviews to discuss how your community provides a good quality of life for your citizens
- Sending a press release in support of Live Locally Alabama to local media outlets
- Asking your local TV or radio station to air the campaign videos
- Visiting the schools in your community and talking about civic education by sharing our Your Municipality and You booklet
- Creating a volunteer Live Locally Alabama committee to help your community get involved by creating positive social media content or planning events
- Asking a community celebrity to do a video tour of what they love about your community or challenging every elected official in your community to do it

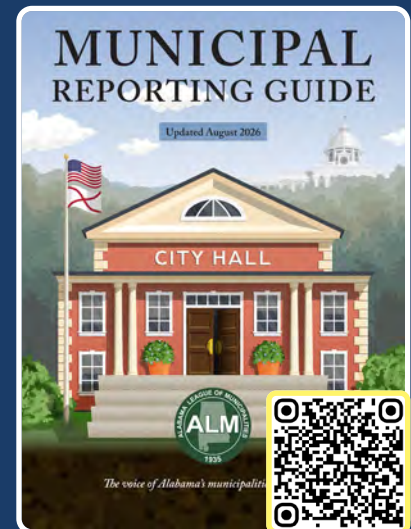
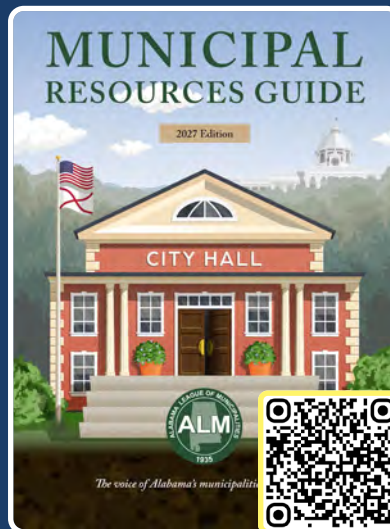
For more information, engagement ideas and stories from communities across the state, visit our website by scanning the QR code on the previous page. As you can see, the possibilities for getting involved are endless. Be sure to thank my teammates, Karl Franklin and Ty Rayford, for their incredible work creating such beautiful campaign resources. Reach out to me any time at ljhons@almonline.org if you need help or want to discuss ideas.



The Alabama League of Municipalities has recently updated our **Municipal Resources Guide** and **Municipal Reporting Guide**!

As part of our mission to support our members, the League created these one-stop guides to ensure our municipalities are aware of various state resources they can apply for and laws that require local governments to provide annual reports on specific municipal operations. While these guides do not include all the information about each grant program and law, they do provide an overview of the requirements, contact information and deadlines. Please reach out to any member of our team at (334) 262-2566, if you need assistance.

Both guides are living documents that are updated each year. Members, legislators and other elected officials are encouraged to share these great resources. They can be accessed online at almonline.org or by scanning the QR codes.



Have you seen the latest episode of "Municipal Matters?"



YouTube: @MyALMTV

Subscribe



Like



Share



Be sure to watch the League's monthly video series, "Municipal Matters," filmed in our studio in Montgomery! The goal is to educate municipal leaders on a variety of topics including League services and programs, grant opportunities, legal and legislative updates, state and federal initiatives and more.

Please feel free to send us your feedback or suggestions for future shows and do not forget to like, share and subscribe to our YouTube channel @MyALMTV! ■

ALM Wishes Rachel Wagner a Happy Retirement!

Rachel Wagner • Financial Services Assistant • ALM



After 33 years with the Alabama League of Municipalities, I have decided to retire from ALM. I am deeply grateful for my time with this amazing association. While I am sad to leave the League and my wonderful colleagues, I am excited to begin this new chapter as a full-time grandmother — Ray Ray — to my grandchildren.

I joined the League staff in May 1993 as a part-time librarian while I was in college and newly married. In 2002, I moved into a full-time role and began working with the Alabama Municipal Insurance Corporation and Municipal Workers Compensation Fund's Loss Control Department and finance department. In 2017, I transitioned fully into the finance department, supporting MWCF, the Municipal Intercept Services program, the Alabama Municipal Funding Corporation and the Municipal Revenue Service program. These many roles and programs have given me the opportunity to build lasting relationships across the League, and those relationships are what I will carry with me the most.

During my time at the League, I have had the privilege of working under outstanding leaders, including three executive directors: Perry Roquemore, Ken Smith and Greg Cochran. Each of these great men have led the League with integrity and kept the League's best interests at heart. I have also been blessed to work under the leadership of Steve Martin, Richard Buttenshaw and Barry Crabb during my last several years at ALM. I have learned so much from each of them and hold them in the highest respect. Their patience and grace over the years have meant more to me than they know.

I have worked with so many ALM staff, colleagues and municipal officials whom I have grown to love. You are all like family to me, and I will miss you greatly. ■



The logo is a circular emblem. The outer ring is dark blue with the words "ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT" in white at the top and "ACADEMY" in white at the bottom. The center of the logo features a light blue map of Alabama. Overlaid on the map is the acronym "ALM" in large, bold, white letters with a dark blue outline.

Director of Professional and Community Development • ALM

Economic development decisions are stronger when they are supported by reliable data. One tool that can help local leaders move from assumptions to evidence is the Alabama League of Municipalities' newly acquired software called REGIS Online, which was created by software development company SitesUSA. The League is proud to offer this service to previous and future graduates of our Economic Development Academy (EDA). This online market and retail analysis platform provides our EDA communities with information that can help identify market opportunities, understand consumer and shopper activity, and make more informed decisions about business recruitment and community development.

For a mayor and council, this can provide a valuable starting point for conversations with economic development professionals, chambers of commerce, property owners and prospective businesses.



Turning Community Wants into Tangible Data

Community leaders frequently hear residents say, “We need a grocery store,” “We need a chicken restaurant” or “Why don’t we have a _____ retailer?”

Those comments are important, but they are only the beginning.

Our software can help determine whether there is evidence to support those perceptions. A community can examine its market and identify retailers that operate elsewhere in the larger trade area, but do not currently have a location in the community.

It also provides information about the closest existing stores when a retailer is absent from the target area. This distinction matters. A retail gap does not automatically mean a business will succeed. However, identifying a gap gives economic development professionals a place to begin asking the right questions. This can help leaders understand whether a potential customer base is currently traveling outside the community to access that business.

Understanding the Bigger Market

A community does not operate in isolation. Residents shop, work, dine and spend money across municipal boundaries. Our software allows users to compare the number of locations within a studied area with the number of locations in a larger market. The larger comparison market may include the surrounding metropolitan statistical area (MSA) or another appropriate trade area. This broader perspective can be especially useful for municipalities competing for new investment.

Instead of simply saying, “Our community doesn’t have this retailer,” leaders can begin asking:

- Is the retailer growing?
- How many locations does it have in the surrounding market?
- How far do residents have to travel to reach the nearest location?
- Are there enough potential customers to support another location?
- What other businesses commonly operate alongside this retailer?
- Is the opportunity realistic for our community?

These questions create a more informed economic development conversation.

Identifying Businesses with Growth Potential

Another useful feature is the expansion rate. The report shows the rate at which a selected retailer has grown, or declined, over the previous year at both the national and



ALM members participated in the Economic Development Academy refresher course in August 2026.



ALM hosted a panel discussion with state leaders during the Economic Development Academy refresher course in Prattville.

MSA levels. For community leaders, this information can help distinguish between a retailer that simply has no local location and one that may represent a growing recruitment opportunity.

For example, if a retailer is expanding nationally and within the region, but has no location in your community, that may warrant further investigation. Conversely, if a retailer is shrinking nationally, a void may be less compelling as a recruitment target. The goal is not simply to find a missing business. The goal is to find a viable and sustainable opportunity.

Learning Where Customers Come From

Our software can also provide information beyond the businesses themselves. Its mobile-visit data can identify home or work locations associated with visitors to selected stores. A heat map can then illustrate the density of visitors within an area, while the trade area analysis shows where the top two-thirds of visitors originated. For local officials, this information can help visualize the geographic reach of a business.

It can also help answer questions such as: Are people traveling from our community to shop elsewhere?

That is an important economic development question. When residents regularly leave a community to purchase goods and services, some of that spending is leaving the local economy as well. Understanding those patterns can help communities identify opportunities to capture more local spending.

Using Retail Neighbors to Think about Development

Our software also identifies common co-tenants — the retailers most commonly found alongside a selected retailer. This information can help communities think beyond recruiting a single business. A successful development may depend on a combination of businesses that complement one another. Understanding common co-tenancy patterns can provide clues about the types of retailers, restaurants or services that may work well together.

For mayors and councilmembers, this can support conversations about commercial corridors, downtown development, shopping centers, redevelopment sites and new mixed-use projects.

From Data to Action

Our software is not a crystal ball, and a retail void should never be interpreted as a guarantee that a particular business will locate in a community. Site availability, demographics, income, traffic, competition, workforce, infrastructure, incentives and corporate strategy all influence business decisions.

Instead, the software should be viewed as a decision-support tool. It gives local leaders and economic development professionals a common set of data with which to begin a conversation. The most effective process is to identify a potential opportunity, study the supporting market data, evaluate available sites, understand the community's competitive advantages and then develop a targeted recruitment strategy.

A New Tool for Local Leaders

Economic development is increasingly about being able to demonstrate why an opportunity makes sense — not simply identifying what a community wants. This software gives municipalities another way to tell their economic development story using data.

For mayors and councilmembers, the value is straightforward: better information can lead to better questions, better strategies and ultimately better decisions for the community. Whether your community is looking to recruit its first major retailer, strengthen an existing commercial corridor, support downtown revitalization, fill a vacant space or better understand where residents are spending their money, our software can help provide the data needed to take the next step.

Scan the QR codes to learn more about the EDA and to view a PDF guide to using a void analysis. If you want to inquire about this new service, email me at mpollard@almonline.org. ■

**For more information
about the EDA program,
scan this QR code.**



**To view a guide for using
the void analysis,
scan this QR code.**





WE ARE

ALABAMA'S

Largest

PROVIDER OF
**HEALTHCARE
TRAINING**

Featuring 33 healthcare programs, the Alabama Community College System is preparing more than 22,000 individuals to begin careers as Alabama healthcare professionals. When more healthcare professionals stay and serve close to home, care is stronger, communities thrive, and more Alabamians have access to the support they need.

AC | MAKE *Life*
CS | **BETTER**



AI in Local Government: Best Practices for Responsible Use

Teneé Frazier • Senior Specialist Legal Editor • Thomson Reuters

Introduction

More and more local governments are adopting Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools to assist with government functions. Why? Because AI can save cities time and money by increasing productivity and efficiency. However, it is important that local governments are just as aware of the risks of using AI as they are of the benefits. Common risks include cybersecurity threats, exposure of sensitive data, hallucinations and lack of human oversight. If left unaddressed, these threats could have a disastrous effect on city services, infrastructure and the communities they serve as a whole.

This article provides guidance on the best practices local governments can use to mitigate these risks and ensure that local government officials and employees use AI tools responsibly while safeguarding confidentiality, accuracy and public trust.

What is AI?

AI refers to systems designed to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as learning, reasoning and problem-solving. Some common AI tools that local governments use to assist with government functions include:

Generative AI (GenAI) - Creates new content, including text, images, audio, code and other content in response to user prompts based on its training data

Predictive AI - Uses historical data to identify patterns and predict future outcomes

Agentic AI - Operates autonomously and performs complex multi-step tasks with minimal human oversight

AI-Enabled Chatbots - Respond to a large number of inquiries in a short period of time using natural language

AI Summarization Tools - Condense text, audio and video into shorter summaries

3D Mapping and Digital Twins - Create interactive virtual representations of a local government's physical landscape, infrastructure and systems

AI-Enabled Drones and Smart Cameras - Use high-resolution cameras and computer vision to capture and analyze images and video in real time

AI-Enabled Traffic Lights - Use cameras, radar, and other sensors to monitor traffic conditions and adjust signal timing

AI-Enabled Smart Sensors - Monitor changes in critical infrastructure to detect anomalies and maintenance needs

How Are Local Governments Using AI?

Local governments use AI tools to assist with a range of functions, including:

- Drafting public communications and official documents
- Transcribing audio and video recordings
- Responding to online city service inquiries
- Summarizing meeting minutes and legislative acts
- Monitoring blight and detecting code violations
- Monitoring infrastructure maintenance needs
- Optimizing traffic flow and detecting traffic violations
- Supporting budget planning and revenue forecasting
- Improving emergency response efforts and disaster planning
- Supporting urban planning and economic development

Best Practices for Using AI Tools

It is imperative that local governments implement safeguards to mitigate the risks associated with using AI tools. This section outlines key best practices to ensure data security, transparency, accountability and responsible AI use.

1 Adopt an AI Governance Policy

To ensure officials, employees and other authorized users use AI tools in accordance with state and local government standards, local governments should adopt an AI policy that addresses:

- Permitted, Restricted and Prohibited Uses of AI
- Protection of Sensitive, Confidential and Nonpublic Information
- Human Oversight, Accountability and Final Decision Authority
- Accuracy, Bias Mitigation and Content Review Requirements

- Transparency, Disclosure and Labeling of AI-Generated Content
 - Cybersecurity, Procurement Controls and Public Records Compliance
 - Training, Enforcement and Incident Response
- AI policies should be reviewed annually and updated as often as needed. Officials, employees and other authorized users should be required to complete training on the policy's provisions before using any AI tools.

② Use Approved AI Tools and City-Authorized AI Accounts

- Only use preapproved generative AI tools for city-related work, per the city's AI policy.
- Only use city-authorized AI accounts and email addresses for city-related work – never use a personal account.
- Never use city-authorized AI accounts for personal, unauthorized or illegal purposes.

③ Protect Sensitive, Confidential and Nonpublic Information

NEVER enter sensitive, confidential or nonpublic information into free or public AI tools. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Personally identifiable information
- Tax information
- City bank account information
- Vendor transactions
- Credit card information
- Confidential business information
- Draft request for proposal (RFP) requirements
- Personnel records
- Information protected by attorney-client privilege

Note: Free versions of public AI tools such as ChatGPT, Copilot, Claude or Gemini do not guarantee privacy and cannot protect your information from a data breach or disclosure. These tools may also reuse your prompts and any other information you provide as training data. Paid or enterprise versions of these tools may offer different data protections.

④ Implement Data Security Measures

Implement data and cybersecurity measures to protect AI systems and critical city infrastructure from data breaches, unauthorized access and malicious attacks. Measures should include:

- Firewalls, data encryption and multifactor authentication
- Access controls and continuous monitoring for unauthorized use
- Compliance with applicable data privacy laws and regulations
- Verification that third-party AI products meet the city's cybersecurity standards
- Frequent vulnerability assessments, software updates and incident-response tests

⑤ Maintain Human Oversight

AI-generated drafts are not final outputs and should not be used as a substitute for professional judgment. Human users — not the AI system — are responsible for all AI-generated content. Always require a qualified human user to review, validate and finalize all AI-generated content before publishing the content, using it for official purposes or relying on it to make a final decision.



6 Verify the Accuracy of All AI-Generated Content

AI-generated content may contain hallucinations or biased information. Hallucinations are instances in which inaccurate, fabricated or misleading information is presented as fact.

Always:

- Review, revise and fact-check all AI-generated content for accuracy. This includes facts, laws, regulations, website links, citations and context included in the content.
- Remove any inaccurate, biased, discriminatory, offensive or copyrighted information.
- Use trustworthy sources and consult department heads to confirm the accuracy of the information provided in the generative AI content.
- Check the AI tool's knowledge cutoff or training date, as its content may be outdated.

7 Attribute Copyrighted Information

Review AI-generated content for copyrighted material, including text, images, video, audio and source code. Always attribute copyrighted material to the original creator and ensure its use complies with applicable copyright laws and licensing terms.

8 Disclose the Use of Generative AI

To promote transparency and accountability, disclose when generative AI is used to draft content. Disclosure requirements vary, with some local governments requiring disclosure only when all or a substantial portion of public-facing content is AI-generated. The New York State Office

of Information Technology Services' 2026 Acceptable Use of Artificial Intelligence Technologies policy serves as one example of an AI disclosure standard. Officials and employees should refer to their state or local government AI policy to determine when and how disclosure is required. Local governments should also disclose when users are interacting with an AI-enabled chatbot and not a live person. The warning or popup message should be displayed before or at the beginning of every interaction.

9 Comply with Public Records and Retention Laws

Prompts and any other information entered into an AI system, as well as AI-generated content related to city work, may be considered a public record subject to the Alabama public records law and retention schedule. As such, this information may be subject to public records requests. To ensure compliance, always retain prompts and any other information entered into the AI system along with AI-generated content or outputs.

10 Follow Procurement Laws and Policies

Always follow federal, state and local procurement laws and policies before purchasing, downloading or using an AI tool for city-related work.

When evaluating an AI vendor, local governments should review the vendor's:

- Security certifications
- AI governance, compliance and risk controls
- Intellectual property rights
- Data privacy and cybersecurity standards and policies
 - Training data practices
 - Data storage practices, including use of third-party subcontractors
 - Contract termination and data deletion provisions

11 Adopt Escalation Procedures

Local governments should adopt escalation procedures that address internal issues with AI tools, as well as issues reported by residents, customers or members of the public. This includes incidents involving AI tools:

- Providing inaccurate, inappropriate or biased information
- Exposing sensitive, confidential or nonpublic information
- Being misused or used without permission
- Engaging in copyright infringement
- Exhibiting cybersecurity concerns
- Posing a liability risk

Escalation procedures should identify:

- When and how to report an AI incident
- The officials or departments responsible for receiving and responding to AI incident reports

▶ CAUTION: A.I. MUST HAVE HUMAN OVERSIGHT ◀

CAUTION: A.I. MUST HAVE HUMAN OVERSIGHT



CAUTION: A.I. MUST HAVE HUMAN OVERSIGHT

▶ CAUTION: A.I. MUST HAVE HUMAN OVERSIGHT ▶

- The level of response required based on the potential harm
- When to pause, restrict or limit use of the AI system
- Strategies to prevent further damage and resolve the issue
- Disciplinary consequences for policy violations
- The city of San José's AI Incident Response Plan provides a model for local governments.

★ Conclusion

Local governments have a duty to balance innovation with accountability. They must remember that while AI can improve efficiency and productivity, it is not foolproof and must be used responsibly to mitigate inherent risks. By adopting sound governance policies, limiting use to authorized tools, safeguarding sensitive information and maintaining human oversight, local governments can establish a strong foundation for secure, accountable and responsible AI use. ■

Teneé Frazier is a senior specialist legal editor at Thomson Reuters where she develops practical legal guidance for state and local government attorneys. She has written and presented extensively on generative AI in state and local government, authoring articles and conducting webinars on AI policies, best practices and emerging public-sector legal issues. She is a member of the Alabama State Bar and the International Municipal Lawyers Association (IMLA).



Alabama's only state tax refund municipal debt recovery program

(FREE to eligible participating members!)

www.alintercept.org

Why use Municipal Intercept Services (MIS) when you already have a debt collection service?

MIS is NOT a debt collection agency or service. MIS does not do what debt collection services do and debt collection services cannot offer what MIS does. MIS is a unique way to attempt to recover money owed to your municipality by "intercepting" an individual's Alabama State tax refund. Debt collection agencies CANNOT offer you this service. MIS is a legislatively sanctioned conduit with the Alabama Department of Revenue (ADOR) that enables ADOR to recover delinquent debts owed by individuals to your municipality by collecting this debt from the individual's Alabama state tax refund. This system was made possible by an Alabama legislative change enacted in 2014 through which ADOR agreed to process these debts through only two clearinghouse organizations: the Alabama League of Municipalities (ALM) for municipal entities and the Association of County Commissions of Alabama (ACCA) for county entities. In 2015, ALM formed MIS to act as the clearinghouse on behalf of its municipal entities. **NOTE:** If the debtor is not eligible for an Alabama State tax refund, no money can be collected.

Who is eligible to use the MIS system?

Only municipal entities within Alabama are eligible to use the MIS system. This includes cities, towns, certain utility boards, housing authorities and hospitals. **For more information, visit our website at www.alintercept.org or scan the QR code.**



Building Stronger Alabama Communities Through Leadership: The Impact of UA's Community Development Institute

Mary Jackson Pollard • Director of Professional and Community Development • ALM

Strong communities do not happen by accident. They are built by people who understand their community's strengths, recognize its challenges and have the knowledge and relationships necessary to turn ideas into action. For community leaders across Alabama, the University of Alabama is one of the many hosts of the Community Development Institute (CDI) program for the Community Development Council, which oversees the Professional Community and Economic Developer (PCED) certification program. CDI brings together community leaders, economic development professionals, elected officials, nonprofit leaders, educators, business representatives and others from across the southeast region who play important roles in shaping the future of their communities.

The University of Alabama's Community Development Institute is a professional development program designed to strengthen the capacity of individuals who are involved in community and economic development in 3-year increments. Participants can choose to fast track the modules in one year by attending three institutes across the southeast region or attend one year at a time.

At its core, CDI recognizes that successful community development is about more than recruiting new businesses or securing funding.

Communities must also create an environment where residents

want to live, work, raise families, start businesses and become involved. CDI helps you see the eagle eye view of your community. In this article, I will share with you the key takeaways I found most beneficial from participating in the program from 2024-2026 and earning my PCED certification.

Carousel of Placemaking

One of CDI's greatest strengths is its ability to connect education with real-world community development. The four-day institutes help connect experts in economic development, workforce development, rural development, placemaking, planning, finance and leadership to the students. Interactive sessions and knowledgeable presenters help give students the tools for their toolbox to return home and use.

The emphasis on leadership development is especially important as Alabama communities compete for residents, businesses, workers, investment and talent. Communities must increasingly think strategically about what makes them attractive and how they can communicate and strengthen those assets. One of the most helpful tools from the session "Quality of Place – Creating a Development Ready Community" is what I call the 'Carousel of Place' based on the Center for Conscious Design presentation that Allison Brantley, director of economic development for the University of West Alabama's Division of Economic and Workforce Development, discussed in the second year of



my training in the program. This carousel is the essential check box for communities to reference when considering placemaking for their citizens. She called it the Power of 10 – your community needs 10 focal points to keep someone [either visiting or living] there. Does your community have 10 of these in your place? Scan the QR code to view it online.



Brantley mentioned during site selection processes with industry and economic developers, the top three areas of importance when considering a community are 1) Labor Costs, 2) Transportation and 3) Quality of Life.

Almost all of the presenters emphasized the importance of having a working strategic and comprehensive plan in your community. Strategic plans are 3-5 year plans with more immediate actionable items while comprehensive plans focus on 20-30 years and are utilized by your planning commissions. Both of these plans require your community's participation, and they are built by and for your citizens. I have always said, "If you don't have a plan, how do you know where you are going?"

Community Development Is Everyone's Work

Perhaps one of the most important lessons of community development is that no single organization can do it alone. Economic developers need strong partnerships with local government. Local governments need engaged residents and businesses. Schools, colleges, nonprofits, chambers

of commerce, health care organizations and civic groups all have a role to play. CDI reinforces the importance of these partnerships by bringing people from different sectors together.

As the metaphor says, "shine your own pearl." Apply this to your community too. Focus on what you have, know where you are and pretend to be a first-time visitor to your community — find the local flavor, shops and spots where visitors are going when they come to your city.

The Community Development Council created the Community Development Process, which is outlined in the *Community Development Handbook used throughout the institute. It outlines 10 simple steps to start:*

1. **Begin the process (DO SOMETHING! – Think Big/Start Small)**
2. **Engage the community and legitimize the process**
3. **Form an organizational structure (stakeholders and committees)**
4. **Develop a strategic vision and action plan**
5. **Seek feedback and commitment from the community**
6. **Publicize the plan**
7. **Implement the plan**
8. **Evaluate the effort**



9. Celebrate the success!

10. Create an ongoing development process

REPEAT THE PROCESS, as your community continues to grow!

Presenter and author Robert Pittman, PhD, PCED, wrote the book “*Rebooting Local Economies: How to Build Prosperous Communities*” and provided excellent roadmaps for us to easily understand how to make our communities thrive. Scan the QR code to order the book.



This roadmap was continually flagged, earmarked, highlighted and referenced throughout my tenure in the program.

For Alabama communities facing complex issues such as workforce shortages, population changes, housing needs, infrastructure challenges or the revitalization of traditional downtowns, collaboration is not simply beneficial. It is essential.

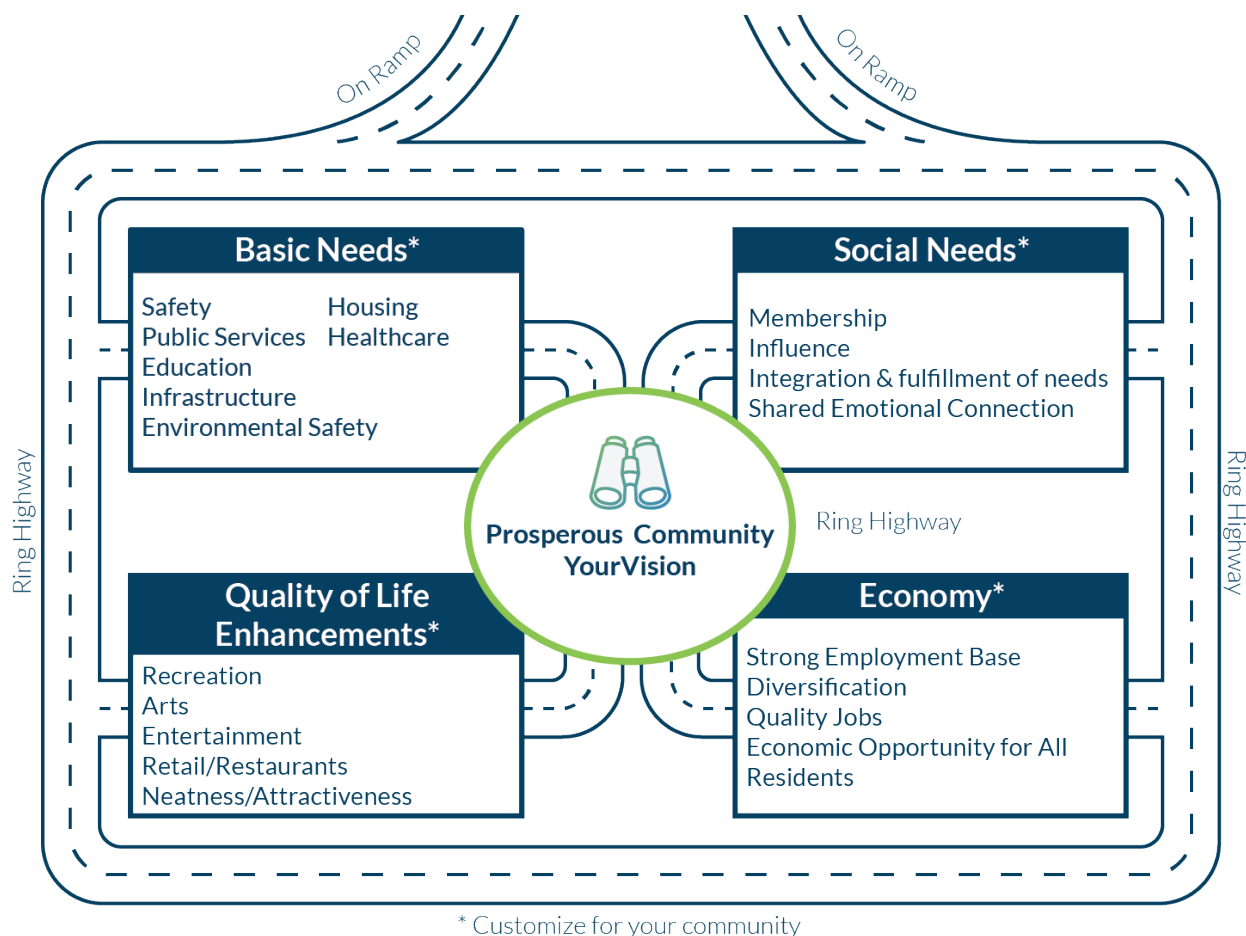
Marketing Your Community: It's All About the Brand

Jimmy Hart, former vice president of marketing and communications for Visit Tuscaloosa, said, “Tourism is the first date to economic development!” During his session on

Marketing Your Community in June 2025, he outlined the five steps to establish a brand. I interpreted them as this:

1. Uncover your reputation – why do people come to your community?
2. Define your audience – who do you want to come?
3. Clarify your beliefs and mission – how do you want others to see you?
4. Know your position – what do you want to be known for?
5. Build your brand
6. Know Your Workforce and the Challenges They Face in Your Community

Donny Jones, West Alabama Works! executive director and chief workforce officer for The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama, always delivers an excellent presentation on how to understand the obvious issues most of our communities and their citizens face with working locally. He exposes the hard truths and top three challenges many people who want to work in our cities face: child care, transportation and housing.



Rebooting Local Economies: How to Build Prosperous Communities, 2022, Pittman, Robert; Phillips, Rhonda; Sutt, Amanda. Business Expert Press, 2022.

If you want to build a strong workforce, potential and current industries need these five things from the employable members of your community:

1. Pass a drug test
2. Show up on time
3. Work your entire shift (do not leave early)
4. Get along with others
5. Problem solve and think critically

Why Should Community Leaders Participate?

Community leaders should consider CDI because community development is constantly changing. The strategies that worked a decade ago may not be enough to address today's challenges. Participating in CDI gives leaders an opportunity to step outside their normal responsibilities and think about their community from a broader perspective.

- **First, CDI builds leadership capacity.** Participants gain tools and ideas that can help them become more effective leaders and collaborators.
- **Second, CDI expands professional networks.** The relationships developed through the institute can provide access to new ideas, resources and partnerships.
- **Third, CDI encourages a broader view of community development.** Participants learn that economic development, quality of life, workforce development,

leadership, housing, tourism, entrepreneurship and community engagement are interconnected.

- **Finally, CDI inspires action.** Learning is most valuable when it leads to implementation. CDI encourages participants to take what they learn and apply it to real challenges in their communities.

Investing in Alabama's Future

The future of Alabama will be shaped not only by major economic announcements or large infrastructure projects, but also by the everyday decisions made by community leaders.

For community leaders looking for new ideas, stronger partnerships and practical tools to make a difference at home, CDI offers more than professional development. It offers an opportunity to become a more informed, connected and effective community leader — and to help build a stronger Alabama one community at a time.

I encourage you to visit the CDI website by scanning the QR code to learn more about the program. Registration for the 2027 session, which is on June 7-10, will open in the coming months. Some community leaders may even be eligible for the John G. Burton Endowment Scholarship to assist with paying for the program. If you have any questions, contact Jennifer Hayes at hayes@ua.edu. ■



Mary Jackson Pollard participated in the CDI program from 2024-2026. She is pictured in the back row, third from the right, in this 2026 CDI group photo.





TRUCKWORX

Proud Sponsors of the Alabama League of Municipalities!

**YOUR 2024 NORTH AMERICAN KENWORTH TRUCK DEALER OF THE YEAR
AND RECIPIENT OF THE GOLD AWARD FOR OVERALL DEALER EXCELLENCE!**



Contact Truckworx today to see how you can save money



Allie Lashley

Cell: (334) 791-5615

Email: AllisonL@truckworx.com



Audrey Freeman

Cell: (334) 224-2509

Email: AudreyF@truckworx.com



Carl Cummings

Cell: (205) 283-0878

Email: CarlC@truckworx.com



Grayson McCall

Cell: (334) 368-2033

Email: GraysonM@truckworx.com

IT'S A WIN-WIN

DRIVE THE WORLD'S BEST FOR LESS



City of Oxford



City of Birmingham

and operate brand new Kenworth tractors and dump trucks!



Kytes Shockey

Cell: (334) 220-6245

Email: KytesS@truckworx.com



Heith Pike

Cell: (205) 446-3028

Email: HeithP@truckworx.com



Jessica Perez

Cell: (334) 651-3898

Email: JessicaP@truckworx.com



Robby Jaye

Cell: (251) 359-1154

Email: RobbyJ@truckworx.com

How Alabama Municipal Leaders Can Reduce Liability When Contracting with Outside Entities to Support Mutual Interests

Sean Duke • President • AMIC

Everyone has heard some version of the story about the little Dutch boy and the dike. The hero of the story discovers a small hole in the dike and uses his finger to plug the leak saving his town from catastrophe. As elected officials you may relate to this fictional character. Every year our municipal members are expected to do or provide more with limited resources, leaving one to figure out which leak requires immediate attention and how to plug it.

Alabama's municipalities provide the greatest level of direct service to their citizens with the fewest resources and the weakest protection. In an effort to plug as many holes as possible, municipalities enter into agreements with other municipalities or governmental bodies to "pool" or share personnel, equipment or supplies to meet a shared goal or interest. They also enter into agreement with private entities to perform services that they may be unable to perform themselves. Sometimes these agreements get too focused on meeting the need and neglect to adequately protect the city from the risks associated with the pooling or sharing of these assets or the performance of the service.

When you allow another entity to use your personnel or equipment, you should always consider who will be responsible for any property damage or liability associated with the borrowed property or employee(s). These agreements come in many forms, making it impossible to discuss every scenario, but they all fit into these five categories.

1. Municipality to Municipality

Members often lend their property or employees to another municipality. It is part of being a good neighbor. The problem arises when they do so and agree to retain the related liability for that borrowed property or employee. In doing so, you unknowingly lend your insurance as well.

Whenever you lend property or employees to another entity there should always be a written agreement. In that agreement there should be language stating that the borrowing entity agrees to be liable for any damage or liability associated with their use of the property as well as acceptance of liability for any acts of the employee(s) while under their supervision and control. The borrowing entity should accept liability and agree to defend and indemnify the lending entity for any liability it may incur, and the borrowing entity's commitment should be supported by a policy of insurance. In the absence of this language, it is possible that you can be held liable for any damage or liability associated with the loaned equipment or employee(s) even



though they were not under your supervision and control or being used on behalf of your municipality. It also creates the potential for a plaintiff to “stack” insurance policies and coverage limits of both the borrowing municipality and the lending municipality.



2. Municipality to County

These agreements typically contain terms that protect the county participant more than the municipal participant. Municipalities typically pay counties to provide services or enter into agreements to provide employees in support of a county-controlled function while agreeing to retain all liability for their participation. Anytime a municipality is paying a county to provide a service, the county should retain the liability for their performance. At the same time, if a municipality loans its equipment or employee(s) to a county-controlled function, and that equipment or employee is under the county’s supervision and control, the county should retain the related liability. The terms of the agreement should also require that the county defend and indemnify the municipality.

What may not be common knowledge is the fact that most counties have insurance limits significantly lower than municipalities and greater levels of immunity. The insurance carried by most counties will have a \$1 million limit per occurrence and a \$3 million liability aggregate limit per policy period. Meaning it is possible, depending on claims filed during the policy period, that the available limits, if any, are below the \$1 million occurrence limit. At the same time, the immunity afforded to counties is much stronger because they originate from the Alabama Constitution while municipalities are only afforded those immunities granted by the Alabama Legislature. When these partnerships take a wrong turn, it is often the municipality that is left holding the bulk of the liability.

3. Municipality to State

Agreements between municipalities and the state of Alabama typically involve local participation in some form of state-controlled task force. These agreements present some of the same problems we see in agreements with the counties. There are; however, two major distinctions. First, the state of Alabama is self-insured. Since it is self-insured it can be difficult, if not impossible, to obtain a defense or indemnification. Any defense would require approval of the Alabama attorney general, and any indemnification would require approval of the Alabama Board of Adjustments. Second, the state of Alabama enjoys sovereign immunity. The opportunities for success in litigation against the state are very narrow. In the event litigation arises for the actions of an employee participating in something under the supervision and control of the state, the easier target for the plaintiffs’ bar is the municipality. State agencies are also quick to point out that the Alabama Constitution will not allow them to assume liability even though they have the greatest resources and protections.

4. Municipality to Federal Government

These agreements almost always contain terms that are most beneficial to the federal government when it comes to liability. There are usually statements regarding the intent of the relationship and the potential for protection, but they stop short of establishing a contractual right to protection against liability. The agreements typically allow the municipality or its employee(s) to request defense and indemnity from the U.S. Department of Justice but stops short of creating an entitlement to that defense. They even go so far as to acknowledge that the employee(s) are to be considered federal employees for the purposes of workers’ compensation or tort actions but stop short of guaranteeing any protection. To distract from the risk associated with participation, they will sometimes offer financial incentives.

5. Municipality to Non-Governmental Entity

These should be the easiest to address but always seem to be the hardest. We constantly see agreements where municipalities have agreed to defend and indemnify non-governmental entities they are paying to perform a service. It is also very common for these agreements to contain clauses requiring the municipality to add the contractor as a named insured, extending it the same rights under the policy as the municipality while also requiring that the municipality agree



that its insurance is primary over any that may be held by the contractor, releasing the contractor's insurance from any obligation to contribute to the defense or indemnification of a claim. It is also common for these agreements to contain clauses requiring the municipality to waive any right it, or its insurer, may have to seek reimbursement for any loss caused by the contractor.

The practical effect of these clauses is that the municipality is lending its insurance to an entity it is paying to perform a service when it should be just the opposite. Municipalities should require these entities to name them as additional insureds and impose the additional requirements upon the contractor. We typically hear that these requirements are common and are intended to discourage litigation between participants. I agree, they are common in the private sector, and they do discourage litigation between the participants, but our members are municipal governments, which are entrusted with public funds and the Alabama Municipal Insurance Corporation (AMIC) is a not-for-profit mutual insurer owned by its municipal members who pay their premiums with these same public funds. So, when you lend your insurance in these situations you are essentially aiding a private corporation, which is prohibited by Section 94 of the Alabama Constitution.

There are instances where it is permissible to do so, and there is a lengthy list of case law and opinions



on the topic. The Alabama League of Municipalities has published a Selected Reading article on the topic of municipal liability, which can be found on their website by scanning the QR code. I recommend every public official read it, and refer any questions to your city attorney. Lastly, it is important to note that even though you may be indifferent to the lending of your insurance, no insured can waive any of its insurer's rights under the policy without the insurer's consent.

Going back to the story of the little Dutch boy, while it may not always be possible, the goal should always be to plug a hole without unintentionally creating another. ■

Sean Duke was named president of the Alabama Municipal Insurance Corporation (AMIC) in March 2022. Sean is a 1993 graduate of Auburn University Montgomery with a bachelor's degree in finance. He spent five years in the mortgage industry, primarily in mortgage pools and cash flow operations data evaluation. Sean then spent 24 years in the insurance regulatory industry as an insurance examiner with the Alabama Department of Insurance, involving financial and market conduct examinations and analysis of insurance and insurance related entities as well as company licensing and alternative risk. When Sean became AMIC's third president, he brought extensive knowledge of Alabama's insurance regulatory framework, laws, regulations and bulletins from his years of service to the state of Alabama.





ALM Welcomes Three New Team Members

Emily Butler, Associate Counsel

Emily Butler joined the League's legal department as associate counsel in August 2026 and is responsible for advising municipal officials and employees from more than 450 member cities and towns, writing legal articles and addressing municipal officials, employees and attorneys on municipal matters.

Prior to joining the League, Emily practiced civil defense litigation where she represented insurance carriers and insureds in litigation matters throughout Alabama. Before attending law school, she worked as a legal assistant in Dothan, gaining experience in both personal injury and criminal defense. While attending Thomas Goode Jones School of Law, Emily served as chief justice of the Honor Court, articles editor for the Faulkner Law Review and competed on the national trial team. She maintains membership in the Alabama State Bar, the Montgomery County Bar Association and the Hugh Maddox American Inn of Court.

Emily grew up in Tuscaloosa before moving to the Wiregrass as a teenager. She earned her Bachelor of Science in psychology, magna cum laude, from Troy University in 2022. She received her Juris Doctor, cum laude, from Thomas Goode Jones School of Law in 2025, where she was recognized with the Ellen Brooks Merit for Public Service Award. Away from her desk, Emily enjoys antiques, crocheting, caring for her houseplants and spending time with her cats.



Casady Davis, Loss Control Assistant Coordinator

Casady Davis became the loss control assistant coordinator in August 2026, bringing nearly nine years of experience with the Alabama League of Municipalities and the Alabama Municipal Insurance Corporation. Beginning her career as a receptionist at AMIC in 2018 before transitioning to the claims department in 2022, she has developed a strong understanding of municipal operations while building relationships with local officials and employees across Alabama.

Although she spent most of her childhood moving with her military family, Casady has proudly called Alabama home since her teenage years. She and her husband of one year, Dawson, live in Prattville where they enjoy working in the yard, making their house a home and spending time with their dog. They are members of Centerpoint Fellowship Church.



Mary Claiborne Dean, Financial Services Assistant

Mary Claiborne Dean joined the League in September 2026. She earned her Bachelor of Science degree from Auburn University and began her career with Jackson Thornton. During her four years with the firm, she spent three years in auditing before transitioning to utility consulting.

Mary Claiborne currently resides in Wetumpka with her husband, Marshall, and their son, Hampton. They are members of First Baptist Church Montgomery. Mary Claiborne enjoys spending weekends at the lake and cheering on the Auburn Tigers.





LEGISLATIVE STATEMENTS

September 3, 2026

Committee on Community and Economic Development (CED)

- The League supports increased investment in tourism, retail, and recreation economic development.
- The League supports the extension of the Alabama Historic Tax Credit Program.
- The League supports increased funding and increased rural access for site development programs.
- The League supports maintaining existing local authority over data center development.

Committee on Energy, Environment and Natural Resources (EENR)

- The League supports the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) Loan Program.
- The League supports the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) Loan Program.
- The League supports the Alabama Brownfields Redevelopment State Revolving Loan Fund Program.

Committee on Finance, Administration and Intergovernmental Relations (FAIR)

- The League supports collecting revenue from online sales and that any changes to SSUT benefit all municipalities.
- The League supports a property tax structure that provides sustainable and reliable revenue for funding municipal services.
- The League supports the need for local authority to establish and administer business licenses.
- The League opposes unfunded benefit mandates that are not financially sustainable.

Committee on Human Development (HD)

- The League supports legislation as it relates to citizens, primarily juveniles, being placed in protective custody, upon assessment by a licensed physician, if they are thought to be a risk to themselves or others, until formal psychiatric evaluation has been performed.
- The League supports the expansion of Medicaid and increased allocation for municipal governments and/or municipal interests.
- The League supports screentime reduction policies and safe-screentime legislation to better the mental well-being and educational opportunities of juveniles.

Committee on Public Safety (PS)

- The League supports local governments' authority to use automated license plate recognition systems for law enforcement purposes while establishing reasonable public safeguards for citizens.

Committee on Transportation, Infrastructure and Communications (TIC)

- The League supports consistent year-over-year funding for the Alabama Transportation Rehabilitation and Improvement Program—II (ATRIP-II).
- The League supports expanding and codifying additional funds for the Rebuild Alabama Grant Program.

NORTH
ALABAMA

Where the Lakes meet the Mountains



ALABAMA MOUNTAIN LAKES TOURIST ASSOCIATION

WWW.NORTHALABAMA.ORG

(800) 648-5381

*Call or scan for your
free Travel Guide!*



@VisitNorthAL

Adding Peace of Mind for 50 Years: The Municipal Workers Compensation Fund Celebrates

Richard Buttenshaw • President • MWCF

Recently, I was reflecting on a simple truth that has guided the Municipal Workers Compensation Fund for five decades: the strongest organizations are built when people come together to solve a common challenge. That spirit of cooperation is exactly what led to the creation of MWCF in 1976 and continues to define our mission today.

This year, the Municipal Workers Compensation Fund proudly celebrates its 50th anniversary with a special 50th MWCF logo and a commemorative hand delivered crystal paperweight for the first fifty members of the fund who are still with MWCF today (you can view all fifty by scanning the QR code to access the photo album). What began as a bold response to an insurance crisis has grown into one of Alabama's most successful municipal partnerships and one of the oldest public entity risk pools in the nation. Established by the Alabama League of Municipalities on November 3, 1976, MWCF is recognized as the second-oldest League insurance pool in the United States.

The story of MWCF began during a turbulent period for the insurance industry. Throughout the mid-1970s, many commercial carriers were withdrawing from public-sector markets and sharply increasing premiums. Municipalities across Alabama found themselves facing limited options for workers' compensation coverage at a

Top: The 2013 MWCF Board consisted of (from left to right) Ozark Mayor Billy Blackwell, Uniontown Councilmember Don Moore, Oxford Mayor Leon Smith, Guin Mayor Phil Segraves and Center Point Mayor Tom Henderson.

Middle: The 2017 MWCF Board was comprised of (from left to right) Satsuma Mayor Tom Williams, Lincoln Councilmember Sadie Britt, Center Point Mayor Tom Henderson, Elba Mayor Mickey Murdock and Bessemer Councilmember Jesse Matthews.

Bottom: MWCF's current board of directors is led by (front row, left to right) Chairman Jason Reeves, mayor of Troy, and Vice Chair Sherry Sullivan, mayor of Fairhope along with (back row, left to right) Priceville Councilmember Charles Black, Riverside Mayor Rusty Jessup and Muscle Shoals Councilmember Willis Thompson.



a Golden Anniversary

time when the demands placed upon local government employees continued to grow. Recognizing the challenge, municipal leaders and the Alabama League of Municipalities chose collaboration over uncertainty. Rather than relying on an increasingly unstable commercial market, they created a member-owned, self-insured workers' compensation group fund designed specifically for Alabama municipal entities. MWCF was created by Alabama municipalities for Alabama municipalities, ensuring that the unique needs of local governments would always remain the organization's primary focus. That local commitment continues today and remains one of the fund's defining characteristics.

Few could have predicted just how successful that vision would become. Over the last fifty years, MWCF has evolved from a groundbreaking concept into one of the most trusted municipal service programs in Alabama. Today, the fund serves more than 720 municipal entities throughout the state, providing workers' compensation coverage designed specifically for the unique needs of Alabama's municipalities. Supporting Alabama has always been central to MWCF's mission. Through partnerships with Alabama-based professionals and service providers, the organization works to keep resources, expertise and service dollars in the communities it serves while providing responsive local support to members across the state.

The success of MWCF has never been measured solely by financial statistics. At its core, the fund exists for one purpose: protecting people. Every claim handled by MWCF represents an employee who was injured while serving their community. Whether restoring power after a storm, responding to an emergency call, repairing a roadway or maintaining essential public services, municipal employees perform work that keeps Alabama communities functioning. For five decades, MWCF has remained committed to helping those employees receive quality care and support so they can recover and return safely to work and family life.

From the beginning, MWCF recognized that the most effective worker's compensation claim is the one that never occurs. As a result, the organization invested heavily in safety and prevention programs designed to reduce workplace injuries before they happen.

One of the most significant developments occurred in 2002 when MWCF established a joint Loss Control Division. Today, the division provides a wide range of training, education and risk-management resources tailored specifically to Alabama municipal operations providing specialized risk management assistance and delivering training resources designed around the real-world needs of Alabama municipalities. Because these services are developed with Alabama communities in mind, they remain closely aligned with the practical challenges your municipal employees face every day. These programs reflect a philosophy that extends beyond insurance. MWCF is not simply a provider of coverage. It is a partner in creating safer workplaces across Alabama.

Another factor that distinguishes MWCF is its governance model. Unlike commercial insurance companies driven by shareholder expectations, MWCF remains governed by Alabama municipal officials who understand the realities of municipal government in the state. This structure ensures that decisions remain focused on the best interests of this state's municipalities and their employees.



Scan the QR code
to watch the latest
MWCF Board Report.



Members of the loss control team answer questions during the League's Municipal Marketplace exposition.

That member-focused philosophy has also produced remarkable financial results. Throughout its history, MWCF has consistently returned value to participating members through its renewal dividend program. Rather than distributing profits to outside investors, the fund returns an annual dividend directly to eligible renewing members. Those dollars then remain in Alabama communities, supporting local priorities ranging from infrastructure improvements to public safety investments and quality-of-life initiatives.

The individuals who helped shape the organization throughout its history deserve tremendous recognition. Generations of elected officials, board members, staff and municipal leaders have contributed their time, expertise and dedication to ensuring the fund remains strong and responsive. Their commitment to responsible stewardship has allowed MWCF to adapt to changing workplace environments, evolving regulations and emerging risks while maintaining financial stability and exceptional service. From its inception in 1976 as the Municipal Workmens Compensation Management Company, under the stewardship of such visionary giants in Alabama local politics as Mayor Harold Swearingen and Mayor James Nix, with the help of the Alabama League of Municipalities second Executive Director John Watkins and MWCF's first Operations Manager Thomas Wilkinson, to 1988 when they restructured the fund under the new name of the Municipal Workers Compensation Fund giving us the fund we know today.

Special appreciation is owed to my predecessor, Steve Martin, who steered MWCF daily for twenty-five of those fifty years, growing and managing the fund into what you see today. Even after his retirement, he remained not just my mentor but a friend whose counsel I sought on numerous occasions after I had the honor of following in his footsteps. His focus on long-term sustainability created the strong foundation upon which the organization continues to build today.

As we celebrate this milestone, it is also important to look ahead. The challenges facing municipal employers today are very different from those encountered in 1976. Modern workplaces are influenced by new technologies, changing workforce expectations, evolving safety standards and increasingly complex claims environments. Yet the principles that gave birth to MWCF remain just as relevant as ever: Alabama's cities and towns working together, sharing resources and supporting one another.

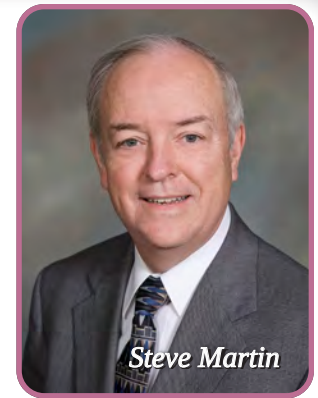
Most importantly, the mission remains unchanged.

For fifty years, MWCF has provided peace of mind to municipal leaders who rely on the fund to protect their employees and communities. It has stood beside Alabama's cities and towns through economic cycles and workplace challenges.

As we commemorate this golden anniversary, the current board and I extend our sincere gratitude to every member, employee, former board member and municipal leader who has been part of this journey. MWCF's success can ultimately be traced to the simple idea of "The MWCF Difference:" Common Goals, Uncommon Service.

As we begin the next chapter of our story, we remain committed to the promise that has guided us since 1976: protecting those who serve Alabama's communities and helping ensure they return home safely at the end of every day to their families.

MWCF is YOUR local worker's compensation provider. ■



Steve Martin





City of Alabaster



City of Warrior



Town of Silverhill



Town of Ragland



City of Bay Minette



City of Fultondale



City of Adamsville



Loss Control Division

AMIC AND MWCF LOSS CONTROL DIVISION HOSTS SUCCESSFUL TRAINING EVENTS ACROSS ALABAMA

Will Strength • Loss Control Manager • Loss Control Division of AMIC and MWCF

The Loss Control Division of the Alabama Municipal Insurance Corporation and the Municipal Workers Compensation Fund is committed to helping members reduce risk and improve workplace safety through quality training opportunities. This year, we hosted both regional Loss Control Seminars and Commercial Vehicle Operator Courses, drawing strong participation from municipalities throughout Alabama.

During August and September, the Loss Control Division hosted regional Loss Control Seminars in Saraland, Greenville, Vestavia Hills and Athens. These seminars attracted 152 participants, representing 70 municipal entities served by AMIC and MWCF. We extend our sincere appreciation to each of our host cities for helping make these events possible.

The seminars featured a variety of presentations on important topics, including ergonomics, driver safety and social media awareness. Attendees also participated in an interactive safety-themed Jeopardy competition and engaged in roundtable discussions focused on sharing ideas, challenges and best practices. The willingness of our members to share their experiences and learn from one another continues to strengthen safety and risk management efforts throughout Alabama's municipal community.

We introduced the Commercial Vehicle Operator Course (CVOC) this year as a new training initiative in partnership with Better Safety and Training of Albertville, Alabama. Given the strong attendance and positive feedback, the program has exceeded expectations and helped fill an important training need for our members. We would like to thank the cities of Helena, Guntersville and Prattville for hosting these events. Together, these three locations welcomed 200 attendees, representing 36 cities, towns and municipal entities insured by AMIC and MWCF.

The one-day, 8-hour course was designed for operators of Class A and Class B commercial vehicles, including tractor-trailers, buses, dump trucks, garbage trucks and other heavy municipal vehicles. Participants received training on rules of the road, safe vehicle operation, legal requirements, backing procedures and load securement. The strong participation and positive responses from our members have been extremely encouraging, and we look forward to offering the Commercial Vehicle Operator Course again in 2027.

We are excited to announce the final CVOC event of the year will be hosted in Dothan on October 20-21. Members who have not yet had the opportunity to attend are encouraged to register by visiting www.losscontrol.org.

We extend our sincere appreciation to all of our host cities and every participant who helped make these training events a success. Through continued education, collaboration and the sharing of best practices, our members are helping create safer workplaces and communities across Alabama. ■





Hobson City: From Peril to Promise

An AMIC/MWCF Loss Control Success Story

Ty Rayford • Digital Media Specialist • ALM

In 2002, the Alabama Municipal Insurance Corporation (AMIC) and the Municipal Workers Compensation Fund (MWCF) created a joint loss control division. Through property inspections and loss control evaluations, one important responsibility of this division is to help municipalities identify workplace safety hazards, liability exposures and property risks. By working collaboratively to address these issues, municipalities can improve employee safety, reduce losses and better serve their communities. Loss control representatives serve member municipalities by completing an initial property inspection of a municipality as well as reinspections to check the status of any upgrades that need to be made.

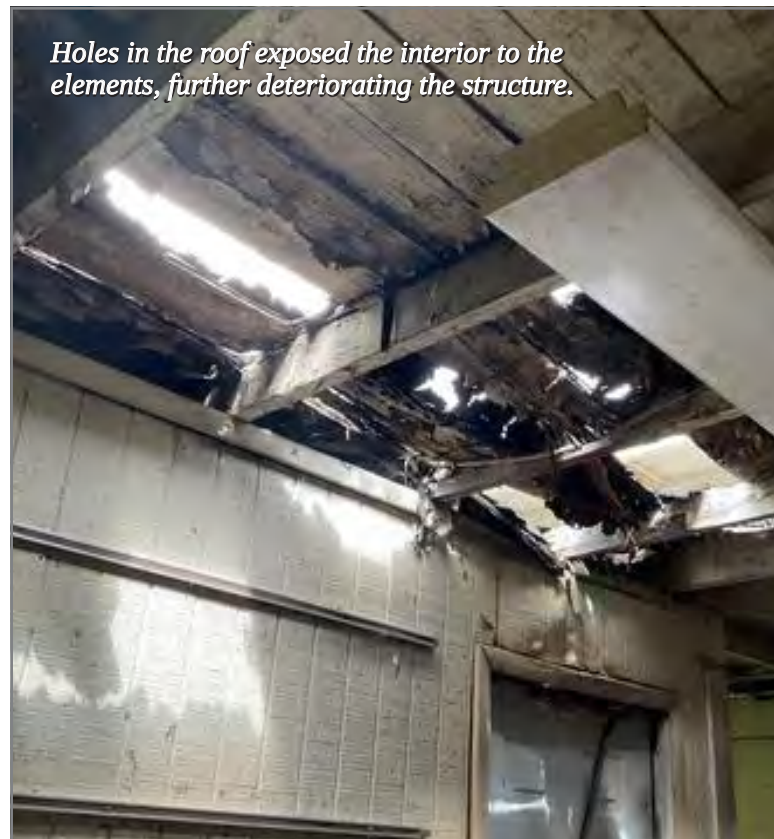
In April of 2024, Cody Marcum, AMIC/MWCF loss control deputy manager, traveled to Hobson City to conduct a standard property inspection. Before going into detail about his discoveries, let us learn about Hobson City's significant history. Hobson City is a small town located in Calhoun County, 65 miles east of Birmingham and 88 miles west of Atlanta, Georgia. At the time of incorporation in 1988, the town's population was just 135 people consisting of 12 families. Now, Hobson City has grown to a little under 2,000 residents. It was first known as Mooree Quarter, a black settlement that was part of Oxford, Alabama and was named after Richmond Pearson Hobson, a hero in the Spanish-American War. Notably, it is the oldest black municipality in the state and the second oldest in the nation.

When Marcum began to review the city hall building of this historic town, he noted that the conditions of the front of the building were in great condition; however, the same could not be said about the inside of the building. There was a portion toward the rear of the building that was closed off to staff and the public and a "No Trespassing Beyond This Point" sign accompanied the marked off area. As Marcum toured the area, with the blessing of Mayor Alberta Cooley McCrory, he started to question the insurability of the building.

Marcum said, "There was flooding and standing water in the floor. There were electrical hazards; open electrical panels with live wires or rather unknown if they were live or not; and also, the roof was falling in and doors were off their frames."

By the end of the tour, Marcum had documented numerous safety and structural concerns that could adversely affect the building's insurability. He communicated these findings to the mayor and submitted his observations to the underwriters. Based on the conditions identified, the underwriters subsequently determined that the building was not insurable in its current condition.

"We had a real serious problem. I mean, everything was just going on at one time," Mayor McCrory said. "But with loss control coming and making the assessment that they made, it was a good motivator, and we came up with a plan. And we stuck with that plan."



Holes in the roof exposed the interior to the elements, further deteriorating the structure.

Equipped with the knowledge of the enhancements that needed to be made, Mayor McCrory knew the first step was finding funding for the renovations, which was difficult for the city hall that was once a schoolhouse. Funding was a major challenge and the main reason for why fixing these damages was stagnant. Mayor McCrory said that originally they wanted to borrow money from the local bank but were denied because the bank did not make loans to municipalities. One of the biggest contributors was a contractor who grew up in Hobson City. He told the mayor that in exchange for his help with constructing the renovations, he only expected enough payment to pay his workers.

“He’s built homes in this community and renovated homes in this community. He came to me and told me that he would help me,” Mayor McCrory said. “We had gotten people to come in and give estimates, and they would say, ‘Well, what kind of grant are you getting?’ or ‘When is the grant coming in?’ and ‘if you’re not getting a grant, people don’t want to help you.’”

So, with the promised help from the contractor secured, they also started a fund with the community foundation and encouraged residents to contribute. Additionally, the local Ace Hardware in the Oxford area stepped in to provide the community with building supplies and even offered the town a limitless line of credit. By the end of the city hall renovations, or what the mayor called phase one, the town had completely paid off that line of credit. All together, the town paid a little over \$200,000 to upgrade the building.

“Mayor McCrory was able to take this in stride, and she and I have had numerous conversations,” Marcum said. “It was almost



Some doors were off their frames in city hall, exposing the building to additional hazardous conditions.



City hall hallway before repairs.



City hall multipurpose room before repairs with standing water.

monthly; at times just to say, ‘Hey, Cody, we’re doing this. We’re doing that.’ and it’s truly been a blessing working with Hobson City.”

With the guidance of AMIC/MWCF’s Loss Control Division, Hobson City can now boast clean and safe spaces inside of city hall. The mayor said that these areas can be used for community programs, small businesses and office spaces. Yet, there is still more work to be done.

According to Councilmember Carthell Green, who also serves as the town’s sanitation coordinator, part of the next phase of this project is the reconstruction of the water and sewage systems, other parts of city hall that were not renovated and the community gymnasium.

“The gym is something very dear to the mayor’s heart for the kids in the neighborhood and it’s somewhere we can have events. It’s going to be a major renovation,” Councilmember Green said. “The gym’s most important upgrades will be the flooring, the windows and a new coat of paint.”

Hobson City was placed on the Alabama Historical Commission’s Alabama’s Places in Peril list in 2009. This list is typically focused on historic sites and buildings like cemeteries, houses, churches or schools; not entire towns. Out of this discredit came a reason for the town to continue to grow and preserve its heritage.

“Now, one of our mantras is *from peril to promise, tell them we are rising*,” Mayor McCrory said. “And that’s where we are now. We are rising.”

Learn more about the loss control division, by visiting www.losscontrol.org. ■



City hall hallway after repairs.



New gym inside of city hall.



Following the renovations, Hobson City designated this room as the Parents of Murdered Children and Amani Justice room.



The League Welcomes Our Newest

STRATEGIC PARTNER



WHERE LEGENDS ARE MADE®

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA®

NLC

NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES



NASHVILLE

CITY SUMMIT | PRECONFERENCE & EXEC. ED NOV. 18

NOVEMBER
19-21
2026



REGISTER TODAY
at citysummit.nlc.org



AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT

IMPORTANT DEADLINES

DEC. 31
2024

All funds must be **obligated** by **December 31, 2024**.

DEC. 31
2026

All funds must be **expended** by **December 31, 2026**.

SEPT. 30
2026

However, if funds are used for **surface transportation projects or projects eligible under Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974**, the funds must be **expended** earlier, by **September 30, 2026**.

After the deadline to expend the funds, municipalities are required to return any remaining funds to the U.S. Department of the Treasury.



Scan the QR code to access more information about ARPA on the League's website. almonline.org/AmericanRescuePlan



Scan the QR code to learn more about the State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) program. home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/coronavirus/assistance-for-state-local-and-tribal-governments/state-and-local-fiscal-recovery-funds

The Municipal Workers Compensation Fund has been serving Alabama's municipalities since 1976 and is the second oldest league insurance pool in the nation!



- Directed by Veteran Municipal Officials from Alabama
- Over 600 Participating Municipal Entities
- Free Safety Video Library & Online Training
- Since 1976, MWCF has returned over \$89.5 million to its members as Renewal Dividends.
- Free Medical Cost Containment Program
- New Member Discounts
- Loss Control Services Including:
 - Proactive Driver Training (SKIDCAR)
 - Firearms Training System (FATS)
- Claims Analysis
- Safety Discounts Available

Contact Us!
Quick Quotes
available online.
www.almwcf.org

Richard Buttenshaw
President, MWCF
P.O. Box 1270
Montgomery, AL 36102
334-262-2566

Terry Young
Marketing Manager, MWCF
P.O. Box 43769
Birmingham, AL 35243
1-888-736-0210
email: tyoung@mrm-llc.com

Does your city or town need help financing local projects?

No Problem. Contact AMFund today!



The **Alabama Municipal Funding Corporation** was developed by the Alabama League of Municipalities in 2006 to assist Alabama's cities and towns in funding local projects, equipment purchases and refinancing existing debt.

AMFund can help you place the financing for pretty much **any type or any size of local project**. Projects such as buying a new fire truck, building a new library, road improvements, wastewater plant upgrades, building a new park, drainage projects and the list goes on. AMFund has supported projects from \$250,000 all the way up to \$5 million.



Apply for an AMFund loan in three easy steps:

- 1 Complete Application**
- 2 Provide 3 Most Recent Audits**
- 3 Sign & Submit**



Visit our website to find out more about how AMFund can assist your community! www.amfund.com

