LOCAL GOVERNMENT in NORTH CAROLINA

THIRD EDITION

GORDON P. WHITAKER

The School of Government at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill works to improve the lives of North Carolinians by engaging in practical scholarship that helps public officials and citizens understand and improve state and local government. Established in 1931 as the Institute of Government, the School provides educational, advisory, and research services for state and local governments. The School of Government is also home to a nationally ranked graduate program in public administration and specialized centers focused on information technology, environmental finance, and civic education for youth.

As the largest university-based local government training, advisory, and research organization in the United States, the School of Government offers up to 200 courses, seminars, and specialized conferences for more than 12,000 public officials each year. In addition, faculty members annually publish approximately fifty books, book chapters, bulletins, and other reference works related to state and local government. Each day that the General Assembly is in session, the School produces the *Daily Bulletin*, which reports on the day's activities for members of the legislature and others who need to follow the course of legislation.

The Master of Public Administration Program is a full-time, two-year program that serves up to sixty students annually. It consistently ranks among the best public administration graduate programs in the country, particularly in city management. With courses ranging from public policy analysis to ethics and management, the program educates leaders for local, state, and federal governments and nonprofit organizations.

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Preface

EVERY DAY, local government touches the lives of North Carolinians and provides the services essential for functional communities, growing businesses, and healthy families. It is local government that supplies water to our faucets, collects our trash, moves traffic through our downtowns, and cuts the grass in our parks and ball fields. It is also local government that delivers care and counseling to those facing difficult times and responds with qualified personnel to life's emergencies. Our cities and counties provide critical services, but they do it without a lot of fanfare.

Emergency medical assistance is one of the many services local governments provide to keep people safe and healthy.
Courtesy of Currituck County Fire-EMS.

The members of the North Carolina City and County Management Association are proud to work for local elected officials and provide the professionalism, education, and training required for delivering services to the public. We believe that we have one of the most rewarding jobs in the world, managing departments that reach thousands of people every day. Those of us who make careers in local government are committed to public service. We understand that much of the work we do is behind the scenes and taken for granted. There are times, however, when cities and counties need to hear from the public. For instance, elected officials want to hear from all affected parties when they are considering adding or eliminating programs,

formulating a plan to recover from the loss of a major community employer, or deciding on capital projects to be funded by a bond referendum. Managers and department heads want to hear from the public about community problems—such as malfunctioning traffic lights, neglected or abandoned buildings, and animals that are being mistreated—as well as suggestions for improving everyday services.

Elected officials and staff are constantly seeking input from the "customers" of local government, but they have become accustomed to hearing from only a few voices. Tools such as citizen and youth academies, special commissions and boards, cable broadcasting of board meetings, citizen surveys, websites offering detailed information and direct access to local government officials, and the creation of public affairs offices are all attempts to open those lines of communication. Our association's Civic Education Project is another approach to fostering involvement in local government.

For the past twenty years, the North Carolina City and County Management Association's Civic Education Project has been educating communities about local government. This work began in 1989 when the Committee developed its first classroom resources on local government. In the early 1990s, Dr. Gordon P. Whitaker, Professor of Public Administration and Government at the School of Government at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, volunteered many hours to researching and writing the first edition of this text. The textbook was published and made available free of charge to public high school classrooms in 1993. A second edition of the text was published in 2003, and, again, textbooks were made available to North Carolina classrooms.

In 2008, the North Carolina City and County Management Association received funding from the International City/County Management Association's Fund for Professional Development to update the content and delivery of this text. Unlike previous editions, this edition of *Local Government in North Carolina* has been designed exclusively for online viewing and dissemination. Teachers and students can access the text online at any time and print individual pages or chapters as needed. We thank the ICMA Fund for Professional Development for making this third edition possible, and we hope that teachers will use the online publication as they educate their students about local government.

It is my distinct honor to lead the association's Civic Education Committee. It is our hope that today's students will gain a solid understanding of the functions of city and county government in North Carolina and become active, involved citizens in their communities. And if some of those students choose to become local government staff members or elected officials, we will be pleased to have played a role in sparking that commitment to public service.

Eddie Smith
Chair, Civic Education Committee
North Carolina City and County Management Association
Assistant City Manager, City of Kannapolis

About the Author

Gordon P. Whitaker is Professor of Public Administration and Government in the School of Government of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His research interests include citizen participation, local government organization and management, alternative public service delivery arrangements (including nonprofit agencies), civic education, and professional education for public service. In 1997 he helped found the North Carolina Civic Education Consortium, and he serves as its faculty adviser.

Professor Whitaker's research has been supported by grants from the National Science Foundation, the National Institute of Justice, the North Carolina Governor's Crime Commission, and the Jesse Ball duPont Fund. In 1997 he received the International City/County Management Association's Award for Local Government Education for his work in civic education.

Professor Whitaker has taught at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill since 1973. He served from 1980 to 1993 as director of the UNC Master of Public Administration Program. His teaching includes courses in performance evaluation, organization theory, public management and leadership, and state and local government. Before coming to UNC, he was on the faculty of Brooklyn College/City University of New York. Professor Whitaker received his Ph.D. in Political Science from Indiana University in 1972.

To the Teacher

This book will help students understand how local government in North Carolina works. Students will be able to see how they are affected every day by local government. They will learn that they can play an active role in their own communities and be personally involved in maintaining an effective government.

Each chapter in this book includes definitions of **key terms** in the margins for quick reference, **articles from local newspapers**, and **discussion questions**. The newspaper articles relay current events and help students understand the relevance of certain aspects of local government. Use the discussion questions at the end of each chapter to involve your students in a conversation about how government works around them. Students may answer the questions on a separate sheet of paper in small groups or simply discuss them as a class.

Encourage students to talk about what they learn with friends and family and to ask questions of government employees or volunteers in their community. This book is designed to help students understand the many facets of local government and see how people working together make a difference. By studying this material, they will appreciate what local government does for them and what they can also do to participate in their government.

Acknowledgments

The third edition of this book was made possible with the support of the International City/County Management Association's Fund for Professional Development and the North Carolina City and County Management Association (NCCCMA). I thank the members of NCCCMA for their continuing enthusiastic support of this project. The leadership of Bob Morgan of Greensboro and Eddie Smith of Kannapolis, past and current chairs of the NCCCMA Civic Education Committee, has been essential to the success of this edition.

Jason Damweber updated data for the tables, collected pictures and news stories, and helped assemble all the materials for this edition. His research assistance helped keep the book current. Kelley O'Brien, director of the NC Civic Education Consortium and NCCCMA's Civic Education Coordinator provided key administrative and editorial support for the project. The editorial staff of the UNC School of Government translated all these materials into this lively, readable online presentation.

Many people helped me write this book. Their contributions have made it more accurate, more interesting, and easier to read. In the listing that follows, I indicate people's affiliations at the time I drafted the book or revised the second edition.

Previous research assistants on this project—MPA students Hana Kohn, Tim Leshan, Marcy Onieal, Eric C. Peterson, Roger Schlegel, and Erin Norfleet—located materials and provided many useful ideas and suggestions on various versions of the manuscript. The MPA office staff, Jean Coble and Kathy Frymoyer, helped me coordinate the original project with NCCCMA. Jan Boyette, NCCCMA's Civic Education Coordinator, took over those responsibilities and also translated earlier editions to the Web.

I also thank my faculty colleagues for their careful review of the manuscript. Dr. Carolyn Grubbs of Meredith College, Dr. Nanette Mengel of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill MPA Program, and Professors David Lawrence and Warren J. Wicker of the UNC Institute of Government each gave me valuable suggestions.

Several high school teachers also took time to read earlier versions of the book. I appreciate greatly the help of James T. Coble, Hickory High School, Hickory; Judy Daniels, Hoggard High School, Wilmington; Pat Gurley, Mt. Olive Junior High School, Mt. Olive; Ann Heafner, West Lincoln High School, Lincolnton; Vennie James, Smithfield-Selma High School, Smithfield; Ricky McDevitt, Madison High School, Marshall; Marcie Pachino, Jordan High School, Durham; Peggy Shonosky, Laney High School, Wilmington; and Darnell Tabron, Jordan High School, Durham. Doug Robertson and John Ellington of the NC State Department of Public Instruction provided valuable assistance. Local government leaders have also contributed. The members of the NCCCMA Civic Education Committee and Reading Committee provided valuable direction for the project. City council members and county commissioners all across the state voted to pay to make this book available to the state's public school students. Many local government professionals also shared

their comments on the manuscript. My special thanks go to Raymond Boutwell, Wake County; Margot Christensen, NC League of Municipalities; Debra Henzey, NC Association of County Commissioners; James Hipp, Lenoir; J. Thomas Lundy, Catawba County; R. Lee Matthews, Hamlet; J. Michael Moore, Thomasville; Robert Shepherd, Land-of-Sky Regional Council; Robert Shepherd Jr., Kernersville; Kenneth Windley, Davie County; and John Witherspoon, Cabarrus County.

Most especially, I thank Carolyn Carter, Bob Slade, and Brian Hiatt, who each chaired the NCCCMA Civic Education Committee in earlier years, for their encouragement and support. They, along with Bob Morgan and Eddie Smith, provided the leadership that directed and sustained this project.

Gordon P. Whitaker
Chapel Hill
2009

1. Local Government and You

LOCAL governments affect our lives in many ways. They supply the water we drink. They provide police and fire protection. They operate the public schools, parks, and libraries. They help people in need. They regulate how land is used and enforce state and local laws. They work to bring new jobs to our communities. Local governments are important to you because they help determine how well you and your neighbors live.

In this book, you will learn about local governments (cities, towns, and counties) in North Carolina. You will explore the ways that local government affects people and the ways that people can influence their local government. You will examine how local governments are organized and the ways they operate. You will also be introduced to some of the people who make local government work.

Parks, schools, and libraries are among the many services local governments provide.
Courtesy of Foster Hughes, City of Asheboro Parks & Recreation.

Three Ways Local Governments Make Life Better

The purpose of local government is to make life better for the people in the community. Local governments try to do this in three ways.

- First, local governments provide services. Water supply, fire protection, schools, parks, and libraries are among the many services they provide. Most people use some of these services every day. There are also services that help people with special needs or help people in times of crisis.
- Second, local governments encourage community improvement. For example, they encourage businesses to create new jobs, they sponsor clean-up days to make neighborhoods safer and more attractive, and they organize human relations commissions to help overcome tensions between people.
- Third, local governments protect people from harm. Making and enforcing laws to protect the public are important local government responsibilities. Although the state government in North Carolina makes most of the criminal laws, local law enforcement agencies investigate most of the crimes and make most of the arrests. Crime is not the only kind of harmful behavior. People may also harm others without intending to do so. Local governments set regulations to prevent this. For example, local governments might restrict factories from locating next to houses or they might regulate where and when people park their cars.

National, State, and Local Governments

Often when people speak about "the government," they mean the United States government, but we have three distinct levels of government in this country: national, state, and local. In our **federal system** of government, national, state, and local governments each have their areas of responsibility and authority. The national government in Washington, DC, is responsible for dealing with problems that affect the entire country. We often call our national government the "federal" government because it is made up of states. North Carolina is one of 50 states that make up the United States of America. Each state government is responsible for problems within its **jurisdiction**. Each state has also established local governments to deal with the particular "close to home" needs of the people.

Fire protection is only one of the important public services for which local governments must provide an adequate supply of water. Why else is a public water supply important to you?
Courtesy of Town of Nags Head.

Local governments sponsor public events to enrich community life.
Courtesy of Downtown Goldsboro Development Corporation, City of Goldsboro.

Police officers, fire fighters, and other local government employees help keep the community safe.
Left: *Courtesy Town of Matthews*
Right: *Courtesy of Karen Richter, City of Concord.*

federal system: the sharing of power between the central and state governments

jurisdiction: the right to use legal authority, or the territory over which a government can use its authority

The United States; North Carolina; Union County
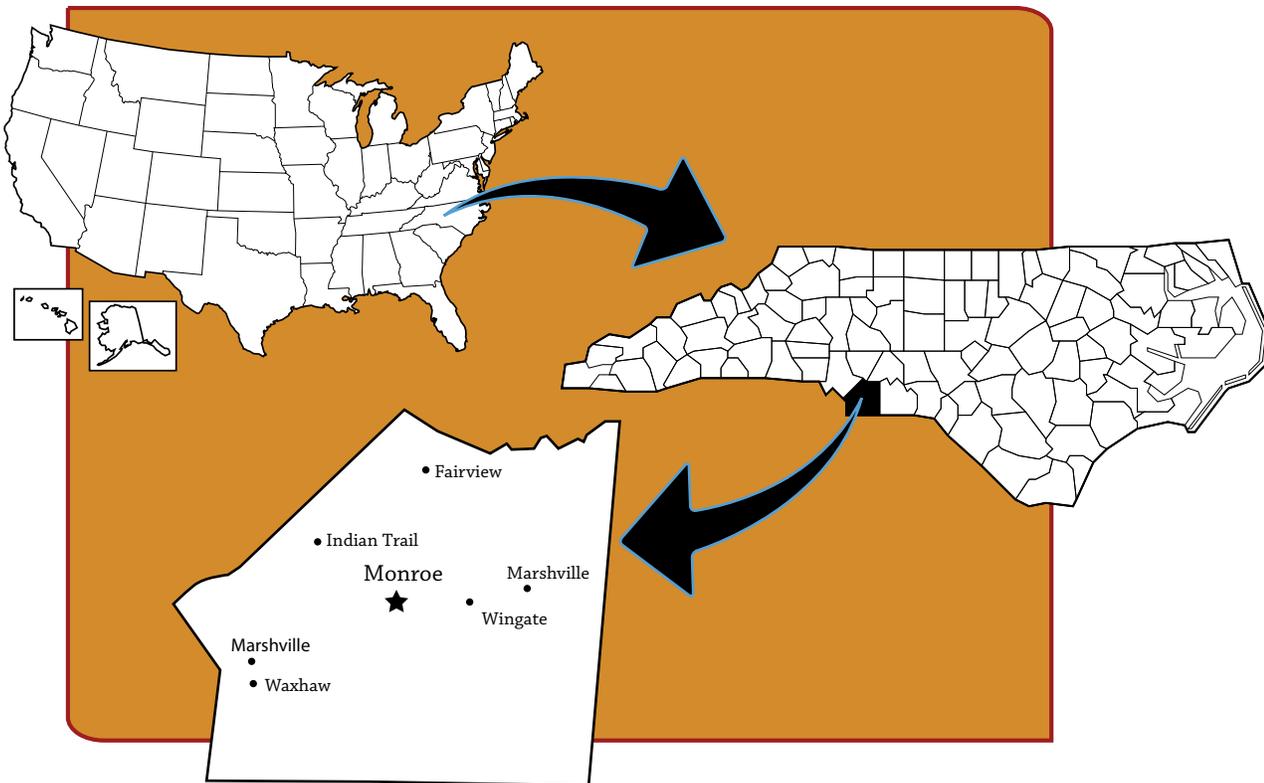
Each citizen of the United States is also a citizen of the state and county where he or she lives.

Each government has:

- the responsibility to serve the best interests of the people in its jurisdiction,
- the authority to make and enforce laws and to provide services to all those people, and
- the authority to tax to raise funds to support its work.

Each government—federal, state, county, and municipal—is governed by elected officials. Each type of government provides certain services, regulates certain kinds of activity, and undertakes programs to improve public well-being.

National Government

The national government makes laws and carries out policies that affect the entire country. The United States Constitution applies to all residents of the United States and to all governments in the United States. State and local governments may not pass or enforce laws that contradict the Constitution. For example, the Constitution requires that state and local governments provide "equal protection under the law" to all people.

Among the services operated by the federal government are mail delivery; Social Security benefit payments; and recreation opportunities in national parks, forests, and recreation areas. The national government regulates activities such as the

manufacture and sale of medicines, the sale of stocks and bonds, and the operation of nuclear electrical generating plants. National government programs for the general well-being include defense, research, and transportation. The Army, Navy, and Air Force provide national defense. The National Science Foundation, the National Institutes of Health, and other agencies support studies of diseases and possible cures. Federal government grants support highway and airport construction.

State Government

North Carolina state government also provides many services. It is responsible for building, maintaining, and policing the state's highways. State government provides recreation opportunities in state parks, forests, and recreation areas. It helps people locate jobs and provides unemployment benefits to those who are unemployed. The state government regulates such matters as insurance rates, waste disposal, and development along the North Carolina coast. Among the state's programs to improve the general well-being are recruitment of industry to the state, agricultural research, and promotion of the arts.

Federal and state governments influence local governments in many ways. Through **mandates** federal or state governments require local governments to provide a service or to carry out services in specified ways. Mandates say how counties should operate programs of assistance such as Medicaid and food stamps. Federal and state governments also provide **grants** to help fund some local government programs such as police services or housing repairs.

mandate: a legal order by which one government requires actions by another government

grant: money given by state or federal government to local governments to fund local projects

Federal and state governments greatly influence some local governments through their decisions about the location and operation of facilities such as hospitals, prisons, parks and forests, and military bases. Closing a hospital or military base, expanding a prison, or changing policies on timber harvest or tourism on state or federal land often has a major impact on the local economy. Local governments near those facilities are directly affected by these decisions.

In North Carolina, local governments can do only things the state government gives them authority to do. Thus, the state can also prevent local governments from doing things opposed to state policy.

Local Government

Local governments focus on local issues. Like other governments, they provide services, make and enforce laws, and collect taxes to support their work. Local governments also have the responsibility to serve and protect everyone in their jurisdiction. They also often undertake programs to improve the local community.

Everyone in a local government's jurisdiction is responsible for obeying its local laws and paying local taxes. This includes not only the residents of the jurisdiction but also people who work, shop, or visit there and people who own property there. Everyone, regardless of place of residence or citizenship, has the right to be treated fairly by local government officials of every local jurisdiction in the United States.

Greene Sheriff's Office granted authority to give, receive aid: What was professional courtesy now official policy

By Vanessa Clarke

The Greene County Sheriff's Office now officially has the authority to request help from other law enforcement agencies—and to give it—in times of need.

The Greene County Board of Commissioners voted Monday to give the sheriff's office the power to enter into mutual assistance agreements.

Mutual aid agreements allow the various law enforcement agencies to work together in case of an emergency, such as a natural disaster or an officer in danger.

"If we have a disaster and we need help from another county or if another county needs help, it gives me the authority to send equipment and officers out to other counties," Greene County Sheriff Lemmie Smith said Wednesday.

Smith said the county has worked in such arrangements before, but he only recently discovered he needed a resolution passed by the county commissioners to make it official.

"It's something we've been doing for years, helping one another out," he said.

For example, Smith said Greene County received aid from Carteret and Orange counties during Hurricane Floyd in 1999.

Lenoir County Sheriff's Maj. Chris Hill said he thought it was a great idea for Greene County to get the legality of the issue out of the way before an emergency arose.

"If you go ahead and set those things up, you don't have time to do that once an emergency occurs," he said. "The county has to agree to it. You wouldn't have the luxury during an emergency."

Hill said mutual aid agreements help law enforcement agencies when they can't gather sufficient manpower to deal with a situation.

Counties benefit from these agreements because they are able to tap what Hill called "an emergency reserve."

"It's a rarity that we ever invoke that mutual aid agreement because (the Lenoir County Sheriff's Office) is fairly well staffed," he said. "But other counties that may not be as well staffed as we are would benefit in that we would have an officer that we would be able to send them."

Reprinted with permission from *The Free Press*, Kinston, NC, May 22, 2008

Often there is considerable overlap between local issues and broader interests. One town's use of a river to carry away its wastewater can interfere with the use of that same river as a source of drinking water by towns downstream. Local governments often work closely together to deal with such problems. Most local governments in North Carolina participate in one of the 17 **regional councils** in the state. Local governments join together in the Council of Governments in their area. They pay dues to support the work of the regional council and appoint representatives to meet to discuss problems they share and to work out ways to deal with those problems. You can access the North Carolina Association of Regional Councils website at NCARC's homepage (www.ncregions.org).

Local governments also cooperate directly with each other. They usually have **mutual aid agreements** to help each other fight fires or deal with other emergencies. Often a county and the municipalities within it work together in various ways, including building libraries or parks, setting up recycling or economic development programs, planning and controlling land use, and collecting taxes.

Local governments often cooperate directly with each other.
Photograph by Diane H. Miller, City of Havelock.

regional council: an organization of local governments established to deal with mutual challenges; 17 exist in North Carolina

mutual aid agreements: commitments by local governments to assist each other in times of need

People and Local Government

You and the other people who live in your county, city, or town make up its **population**. These **residents** are the people who most regularly use the services your local government provides. The **community** that your local government serves is made up of the residents and others who work, shop, visit, or own property in its jurisdiction. If you have lived in your community for some time, you probably identify yourself with your local government and feel some pride in it.

Any group of people who share common bonds can be thought of as a community. You may also think of yourself as belonging to other communities—a neighborhood or an ethnic or religious group, for example. However, these informal communities do not have governmental authority or responsibility. They play a very different part in your life than do local governments. Local governments have the authority and the responsibility to regulate what people do and also the authority to make people pay to support and protect the community.

All people who are born in the United States or whose parents are United States **citizens** are automatically U.S. citizens. People who are not U.S. citizens by birth can become citizens by meeting requirements set by the U.S. government.

Each citizen of the United States is also a citizen of the state in which he or she lives. Citizens of North Carolina are also citizens of the county in which they live. Those who live within city or town limits are also citizens of that **municipality**. Of course, there are also many people in each jurisdiction who are not citizens of that particular governmental unit. For example, when you travel to another state you do not automatically become a citizen of that state. Even having a job in another state does not make you a citizen of the state in which you work. Many people live in and remain citizens of South Carolina although their jobs are in Charlotte, North Carolina, for instance.

Some people who are citizens of other countries also travel, work, or live in North Carolina. The U.S. government issues documents that regulate how long citizens of other countries (**aliens**) may stay and what they may do here. But not everyone who comes to the United States is able to get permission from the U.S. government, so there are also many "undocumented" aliens here. Because all aliens—documented or not—do not have the rights of citizenship, they cannot vote or run for office. However, all aliens, whether they have documents or not, are responsible for paying taxes and obeying laws. Although some government services are available only to citizens or documented aliens, all levels of government are responsible for providing basic public services and protection to everyone in their jurisdiction.

It is often difficult to decide how best to meet the needs of all the people in a local government's jurisdiction. People may disagree about whether they need another swimming pool or new tennis courts, about where to locate a landfill or sewage treatment plant, or about the need for sponsoring a teen center. They may disagree about the need to increase local taxes to pay for public services.

population: the total number of people living in a designated area such as a city or county

resident: a person who lives in a designated area such as a city or county

community: people who share important interests, such as living in the same area or identifying with each other

citizen: a person who has a legal right to full rights in a country because he or she was born there or has been given those rights by the country

municipality: a city, town, or village that has an organized government with authority to make laws, provide services, and collect and spend taxes and other public funds

alien: a person living in a country where he or she is not a citizen

Local elected officials have the difficult responsibility of deciding what the needs of the community are and what the government should do. As representatives of the people, they have the authority for deciding the policies and programs of local governments. Elected officials select local government employees (either directly or indirectly) and oversee their work. In later chapters we will explore the specific responsibilities of various elected officials.

Local government employees include lifeguards at your local swimming pool, public librarians, and city or county managers.
Courtesy of City of Concord.

Local government employees carry out the work of local government. They make sure that safe drinking water is readily available. They answer calls for police assistance, fight fires, maintain public buildings, and help those who need public assistance. Local government employees include lifeguards at the public swimming pool, your public librarian, and the city or county manager. Public employees are responsible for putting local government policies and programs into practice. You will learn more about their work in later chapters.

All those who live, work, own property, or otherwise have an interest in a community have the right to request public services from the local government and to let local government officials know about their concerns. There are several ways to share concerns. You can call city, town, or county offices; talk to local elected officials; write letters to the local newspaper; or attend public meetings.

People in a community can learn about local public issues by reading the newspaper and by talking to friends. For links to newspapers in North Carolina, go to NC News (www.ncpress.com/ncpa/newspapersonline.html). In more and more communities, local public-affairs television programs and local government Web pages are available. For municipal web pages, go to NC Cities and Towns (www.sog.unc.edu/library/cities.html). For county web pages, go to NC Counties (www.sog.unc.edu/library/counties.html). You can expand your knowledge of public issues and programs by reading materials from newspapers and government websites and by discussing issues with local government officials.

Voters in local government jurisdictions have a great impact on local government decisions. Voters can affect decisions indirectly by voting for officials who reflect the voters' views and directly by voting in local referendums. In addition to voting, citizens can affect local government decisions by running for and being elected to public office or by voicing their concerns to local government officials. The people in a community also work together and with government officials to improve their communities. What you do with and for others in your community makes a big difference in how safe and happy you and your neighbors will be.

Neighborhood watch programs bring people in a community together to fight crime. See, for example, this story from the Greensboro *News-Record*: "Kicking Crime to the Curb" (www.news-record.com/node/5947).

In the

12-year-old garners support for Wrightsville Beach skate park

By Jennifer Roush

Twelve-year-old Fisher Hardee has a vision. And it's one many local residents have—to build a skate park in Wrightsville Beach.

He started going door to door with a petition he made before finding it more productive to receive the help of area businesses: Surf City Surf Shop, Sweetwater Surf Shop and Café Del Mar, where he is keeping petitions. He plans to take all his signatures to the Aug. 23 Wrightsville Beach Board of Aldermen meeting and the Sept. 10 Wrightsville Beach Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee meeting.

A skateboarder since his seventh birthday, Hardee finds limited places to skate in the area and finds it difficult to make it to the new Carolina Beach skate park.

"When I want to go to a skate park, most of the time I can't because it's too far for my parents to drive," he said. "I'd just like to have a skate park near here and come back to my house as I please."

Since skateboarding is prohibited in most places in the community, Hardee and his friends have ramps and quarter- and half-pipes at their houses.

"It's harder because it's a smaller area (Wrightsville Beach)," he said. "And surfing is more popular down here. There's not that many places to skate at all."

Beverly Hardee of the South Harbor Island area thought that she would let her son go with the idea, which she thought would fizzle out. Instead, Fisher has taken off with it.

"He got interested in it because (recently) he wanted me to take him to Carolina Beach to the skate park," she said. "I said, 'No, I'm not taking you all the way down there.' He said, 'If Carolina Beach can get one, Wrightsville Beach can get one.' . . . I've let him run with it. He printed out the petition he made himself."

Lisa Weeks, president of the Parks and Recreation Foundation, which is a private entity spun off of the municipal advisory committee, said her board is going to make a presentation to the board of aldermen on Aug. 23 regarding the long-term master plan for the needs of Wrightsville Beach. And one of the top 10 issues is a skateboarding facility.

"One thing the residents say they wanted to see (when surveyed) was a skate park facility that allows them to go somewhere other than the tennis courts or parking lots or driveways to skateboard," she said. "So that was a pretty high number of surveys (with) residents indicating that's something they want to see in some capacity. . . . I think the residents would like to see something done."

Fisher Hardee obtains a signature from Mike Ickes supporting construction of a skate park in Wrightsville Beach.
Staff photo by Joshua Curry.

Ted Lashley, parks and recreation director at Carolina Beach, said their liability concerns about building a skate park were put to rest when Senate Bill 774 passed in the North Carolina General Assembly. Two months ago, the fenced-in, concrete skate park was built in Carolina Beach for $176,000. As long as they posted proper signage about protective gear and being an unsupervised park and enacted a town ordinance according to specifications, the bill states the town faces limited liability.

Reprinted with permission from *Lumina News*, Wrightsville Beach, August 16, 2007

Learning about Local Government

When you need public services, where can you get them? How can local governments help you resolve public disputes? What are your responsibilities to your local government? How can you participate in making your community a better place to live?

Because local governments affect your life in so many ways and because they should be open to your participation and influence, you need to know about your local government. In the chapters that follow, you will read about how North Carolina's cities, towns, and counties provide public services, how they protect the public from harmful activities, and how they improve the community you live in.

This book includes interviews with some of the people who make local governments work. It also includes excerpts from newspaper stories about local government. The interviews and stories are examples of the kinds of information you can collect about local governments in your own part of the state.

Some of the terms used to discuss government may be new to you. The words in **bold** are defined in the margins for a quick reference and are also in the Glossary. If you encounter a word that is unfamiliar, first check the Glossary. If it is not included there, look for the word in a dictionary.

Discussion questions at the end of each chapter are a further guide for applying what you learn from this book to your own city, town, or county. There is a list of books, magazines, and Web addresses on topics discussed in this book under "For Further Reading." Many of these books and magazines should be in your school library or in the local public library.

Is your school board considering year-round classes? Is the board of county commissioners considering areas for a new landfill? Is the city council debating what to do about noise complaints? As you watch the news on television, read the newspaper, or hear discussions about local government, you will notice issues that affect you. This book can help you understand the ways local governments make decisions about those issues and your responsibilities and opportunities for participating in local government.

Discussion Questions

1. In which local governments' jurisdictions do you live?
2. What services do local governments provide for you and your family?
3. Reread the news story on page 8 about a skateboard park for Wrightsville Beach. What part did young people in that town play in getting the town to consider building the new park?
4. Local governments have many programs to improve the community. Identify such a program of your local government. Which government is involved? What activities does the program involve? How are these activities supposed to improve the community? Is anyone opposed to these activities? If so, why are they opposed?
5. The chart below lists government agencies and private businesses, nonprofit organizations, and others involved in Dare County's Emergency Operations Plan. What do you think each of these might do to help deal with a major storm on the Outer Banks and the resulting damage to public and private property?

Dare County Emergency Operations Plan

County Departments
- Emergency Management
- Sheriff Office
- Fire Departments
- Water Department
- Public Relations Department
- Social Services
- Health Department
- Finance Department
- Public Works Department
- Communications Department
- Dare County Airport
- SPCA

Municipal and Regional Affiliates
- Town of Duck
- Town of Southern Shores
- Town of Kitty Hawk
- Town of Kill Devil Hills
- Town of Nags Head
- Town of Manteo
- Outer Banks Chamber of Commerce
- Dominion Power

Municipal and Regional Affiliates (*continued*)
    Cape Hatteras Electric Coop
    Embarq
    Volunteers Active in Disaster (VOAD)
    Interfaith Community Outreach

Mutual Aid from within North Carolina
All counties within the state have a signed agreement with the North Carolina Division of Emergency Management to provide mutual assistance during disaster. This also allows counties to utilize resources from the cities and municipalities if requested and can be made available.

State Cooperating Agencies
The State Emergency Response Team (SERT) is activated by the governor during disaster. This includes all agencies within state government.

Assistance from Outside North Carolina
North Carolina is part of a national mutual aid agreement compact that allows resources to be requested from any state during disaster.

Federal Assistance
A federal disaster declaration by the President allows any federal government agency to provide resources to state and local areas.
    Key agencies would include:
- FEMA
- American Red Cross
- U.S. Military
- U.S. Coast Guard
- U.S. Marshal Service
- National Weather Service
- National Park Service

2. North Carolina Municipalities

PEOPLE live near one another for many reasons: to conduct business, to live near their workplaces, and to enjoy the company of others, for example. There are many advantages to living in cities and towns, but there are also disadvantages that create issues—issues that affect the community at large.

One such issue is water supply. When houses are close together, individual wells for each house are likely to become contaminated unless there is a public sewer system or other provision for safe disposal of wastes. Moreover, private wells may not provide enough water for fighting fires. Fire threatens an entire community when houses are close enough that fire can easily spread from one house to another. Similarly, noise becomes an issue when people live close enough together to be bothered by the sounds others make.

Municipal governments have been established so that the people living in each place can deal with issues they face as a community. In North Carolina, municipal governments are called cities, towns, or (in a few cases) villages. These terms carry no special legal meaning in North Carolina. All three terms refer to a municipality created by the state that is authorized to make decisions for a community and to carry

out the policies and programs that have been approved. (In common usage, "towns" are often thought of as smaller than "cities," but this is not always true. The Town of Cary, for example, is now the seventh largest municipality in North Carolina. It had more than 120,000 residents in 2007.) North Carolina law establishes the powers and responsibilities of each municipality.

The Development of Towns and Cities in North Carolina

European settlers established the first municipal governments in North Carolina in the early 1700s. Although they encountered Native American villages and sometimes built their own towns on the same sites, the Europeans established municipal governments based on English models. Each town was an independent municipality authorized under English, and later North Carolina, law.

Early North Carolina towns maintained public wells, established volunteer fire departments, and set up town watches to keep the peace. For example, the commissioners of Newbern (as it was then spelled) detailed the duties of the town watch in 1794 as follows:

> "The gentlemen on watch are to use their best endeavors to prevent house breaking, and thieving, of every kind, and to seize and secure every person found committing, or attempting to commit any such offenses . . .
>
> "The watch will take up all suspicious and disorderly persons, who may be found in or strolling about the streets, after nine o'clock at night . . .
>
> "On discovering any danger by fire, one of the watch will immediately ring the church bell, one other of them will then inform the person, who has care of the water engine, and the others are to alarm the persons near where the greatest danger appears, and use their utmost endeavors, to assist those in distress."

By 1800 there were more than a dozen municipalities in North Carolina, but only four—Edenton, Fayetteville, New Bern, and Wilmington—had populations of 1,000 or more. North Carolina was a **rural**, agricultural state, and few people lived in cities or towns. The state remained largely rural throughout the nineteenth century. In 1850, Wilmington, the state's major port, was the only municipality in the state with more than 5,000 residents. Wilmington's population reached 10,000 in 1870. By 1880 Asheville, Charlotte, and Raleigh also each had more than 10,000 residents.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the North Carolina General Assembly (the state legislature) revised the laws regarding municipalities. Under an act passed in 1855, all municipalities were given the same powers. They could tax real estate; liquor dealers; tickets to shows; dogs; and freely roaming hogs, horses, and cattle. They could appoint a town constable, regulate public markets, prevent public nuisances, protect

These houses in Wilmington were built when Wilmington was North Carolina's largest city. Like most houses in cities and towns, they were built close together. *Courtesy of Cape Fear Coast Convention & Visitors Bureau.*
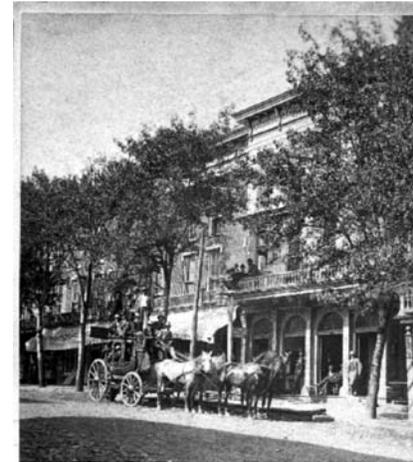
Around 1880, the Eagle Hotel in Asheville welcomed travelers who arrived by stagecoach. *North Carolina Collection, Pack Memorial Public Library, Asheville, NC.*

rural: of or relating to the countryside; area where fewer people live

public health, keep streets and bridges in repair, and regulate the quality and weight of loaves of bread baked for sale. As time passed, the General Assembly took away some authority and gave additional authority to individual municipalities and groups of municipalities. As a result, each North Carolina city or town may now have a somewhat different set of powers and responsibilities.

Population growth brought the need for new municipal powers and responsibilities. More people created new problems for municipal governments. For example, adequate supplies of safe drinking water became a problem as cities became larger and more densely populated. The General Assembly established the State Board of Health in 1877. One of its initial concerns was the threat of waterborne diseases in the state's cities and towns. Intestinal diseases like typhoid are caused by bacteria that live in water. These diseases are spread by water that has been contaminated with human wastes.

To help prevent disease, Asheville built a system to supply filtered water to its residents in 1884. Water from the Swannanoa River was pumped four miles from the filtration plant to the city. The year after the filtration plant was built, the State Board of Health reported that Asheville's new municipal water supply was the safest in the state and that there had been "a marked decrease in typhoid" in Asheville.

Not everyone in Asheville benefited from the new system, however. Although the city owned and operated the water-supply system, it charged 25 cents per thousand gallons of water. This was expensive for workers who supported their families on $300 per year. Asheville city water was, therefore, "not in general use among the poorer classes," according to the Board of Health report.

In fact, Asheville's water rates were lower than those in many other cities. Unlike Asheville, most North Carolina city governments did not operate water systems. Instead private companies supplied water to city residents. In Charlotte, the private water company charged 50 cents per thousand gallons, and in Raleigh, the water company charged 40 cents per thousand gallons. Many people could not afford to buy water at these rates. They continued to rely on unsanitary sources of water. Water supply, like many other services, did not become a municipal responsibility in many cities and towns until the twentieth century.

During the early years of the twentieth century, North Carolina towns and cities grew rapidly. By 1920, 20 percent of the state's 2.5 million people lived in municipalities. More cities and towns paved their streets as automobiles became common. They also set up full-time police and fire departments and adopted building codes to regulate construction and reduce hazards to health and safety. Cities and towns bought private water and sewer companies during this period or started their own systems to make these services more widely available to their residents. A number of cities even started their own electric utilities to bring electricity to their communities.

Urban growth continued throughout the twentieth century. Municipal services continued to expand to meet the needs of the state's growing urban population. Well before 2000 almost all cities and towns had public water and sewer systems, paved

Water supply to Raleigh residents improved following construction of this water tower in 1887.
Courtesy of North Carolina Office of Archives and History.

Water towers such as this one recently constructed in Salisbury are vital for providing citizens with water.
Photograph by Karen Wilkinson, City of Salisbury.

urban: area where people live close together; most are incorporated as municipalities

Table 2.1   North Carolina Municipalities by Population Size

Population of Municipality	Number of Municipalities of This Size	Total Population in Municipalities of This Size
Fewer than 2,500	340	286,875
2,500 to 9,999	136	655,925
10,000 to 49,000	56	1,191,165
50,000 or more	16	2,690,153
All cities and towns	548	4,824,118

Fire protection is an important service for growing urban populations. *Photograph by Doug Barrick, Town of Cornelius.*

streets, and police and fire protection. Other services such as garbage collection, parks, and recreation programs became increasingly common in municipalities throughout the state during the twentieth century.

By 2007 Charlotte had more than 670,000 residents, Raleigh had more than 375,000, Greensboro had more than 245,000, and Durham and Winston-Salem each had more than 215,000. Most North Carolina cities and towns continue to be small places, however. As table 2.1 shows, over 60 percent of North Carolina cities and towns had fewer than 2,500 residents in 2007.

How Municipalities Are Created

State government establishes cities and towns as municipal **corporations**. Like private corporations, municipal corporations can own property, form **contracts**, and be **sued**. The owners of a corporation give the responsibility of running the corporation to a board. The board acts on behalf of the owners in deciding what the corporation should do. A municipality's "owners"—the citizens of the jurisdiction—elect a board, which is responsible for running the municipality. Because a municipality is a corporation, a citizen's **liability** for municipal debts is limited to the amount of tax the citizen owes the municipality.

Municipal corporations differ from private corporations in important ways. For one thing, citizens become the "owners" of a municipal corporation simply by living within the municipality's jurisdiction. They do not buy the corporation's stock the way owners of a private, for-profit corporation do. Municipal corporations also have different powers than private corporations. Private corporations can engage in any legal activity they choose. North Carolina municipalities can engage only in those activities for which the General Assembly has given its permission, and the General Assembly may change municipal authority as it wishes. For example, the legislature might remove a city's authority to license taxicabs or to operate swimming pools, and that city could then no longer carry out the activity. On the other hand, unlike private corporations, municipal corporations are governments. Therefore, municipal corporations have authority to make and enforce laws and to **levy** taxes.

Cities and towns must be **incorporated** by the General Assembly. The General Assembly may require the approval of the voters of the new municipality, but it does not need to do so. An incorporated municipality has defined geographic boundaries

corporation: a group of persons formed by law to act as a single body

contract: an agreement made between two or more people or organizations

sue: to ask a court to act against a person or organization to prevent or pay for damage by that person or organization

liability: something for which one is obligated according to law

levy: to impose a tax by law

incorporate: to receive a state charter, officially recognizing the government of a municipality

and an approved **charter**, the rules under which it conducts its business.

A new city or town is generally incorporated after the development of a settlement in the area. Some towns grew up around county courthouses and were then incorporated. Others like Ahoskie, Carrboro, and Durham developed around mills or railway stations. The town of Princeville was incorporated by the General Assembly in 1885, 20 years after it was settled as a freedmen's camp by former slaves at the end of the Civil War. People ask for their town to be incorporated because they want to have a local government. They want public services, a means for providing public order and improving the community, and the right to participate in making local decisions.

> **Citizens are often divided on the decision of whether to incorporate their community. This editorial from *The Herald* in Johnston County points out some reasons for those different views: "A Tale of Two Communities" (www.theherald-nc.com/opinion/story/4626.html).**

The extension of municipal boundaries is called **annexation**. When territory is annexed to a city or town, that territory comes within the municipality's jurisdiction and its residents become part of the town's population. Voters in the annexed territory automatically become eligible to vote in the municipality's elections, and the municipality must provide services to the new residents. Cities and towns may annex territory through an act of the General Assembly, by petition of the owners of the property to be annexed, or by **ordinance**. Annexation by ordinance requires that the territory is adjacent to the municipality and that it has already reached a certain level of urban development. Also, the municipality has to show that it will provide services to the annexed territory.

In addition to following its own charter, each North Carolina municipality must also obey state laws and regulations. Some laws apply to all cities or towns of a certain size. These general laws provide most of the authority for North Carolina municipalities. However, sometimes a city wants to do something not authorized by general law or by its charter. Often in such cases the city asks the General Assembly to approve a **local act**. By custom, the General Assembly approves local acts that are favored by all of the representatives to the General Assembly from the jurisdiction that requests the local act.

charter: the document defining how a city or town is to be governed and giving it legal authority to act as a local government

annexation: the legal process of extending municipal boundaries and adding territory to a city or town

ordinance: a law, usually of a city or county

local act: a state law that applies only to the local government specified in the law

Rolesville delays project

By Sam LaGrone

Traffic concerns, questions about townhouses and other considerations delayed rezoning approval for a subdivision that has the potential to double the size of Rolesville.

On Monday, the Town Board of Commissioners held a rezoning request for the Averette Farms subdivision until its Oct. 16 meeting.

Commissioners spoke highly of the project during the four-hour meeting and approved incorporating the 355 acres into Rolesville's town limits.

"It'll be a great product and a great tax base for us," said commissioner Jacky Wilson. "I'm for this project."

What held the project for two weeks were minor questions over improvements.

Tom Parker, a resident near the proposed development, worried that the development would increase traffic on Averette Road ahead of the proposed Rolesville bypass that aims to shunt the majority of traffic around the town.

Another couple worried about bright street lights.

Several residents griped about potential traffic problems on the north side of the development near Wait Avenue and N.C. 98.

Town commissioners were also wary of the townhouses that were included as part of the proposal.

Commissioner Ronnie Currin and Mayor Pro-Tem Frank Eagles suggested minimum prices for the homes as part of the development agreement, but were dissuaded by town staff.

Wilson also wanted to include a series of fire safety proposals a board committee has been drafting since two fires in the nearby Village of Rolesville claimed four homes.

Once an annexation request is approved, Rolesville has 60 days to set zoning for the annexed land.

The board voted to draft the conditions in a revised zoning agreement.

With a working name of Averette Farms, the plan totals 355 acres—a combination of 16 tracts, mostly former farms ranging from 20 to 80 acres.

Developer Andy Ammons did not attend Monday's meeting but said later that he did not anticipate problems in getting zoning approval for the proposal.

The project is proposed on one of the last major undeveloped tracts in northeastern Wake County. If approved, the residential component would consist of 676 single-family homes and 155 townhouses.

"You don't find tracts of lands with water and sewer that are 300 to 400 acres anymore," Ammons said in August.

Ammons also plans to devote 23.3 acres for mixed-use projects near the intersection of Averette and Jones Dairy roads, just north of the center of town. The goal is to combine ground level retail with second floor apartment space.

Averette Farms follows other nearby Ammons projects—Heritage East, a residential development, and Traditions, a 900-acre development in Wake Forest.

Governing Cities and Towns

Each municipality has its own governing board, elected by citizens of the city or town. Like the state legislature, a local governing board represents the people of the jurisdiction and has the authority to act for them. In many North Carolina cities and towns, the governing board is called the council, although "board of commissioners" and "board of aldermen" are also names for municipal governing boards.

Regardless of whether they are called council members, commissioners, or aldermen, the members of the governing board make official decisions for the city. The governing board establishes local tax rates and adopts a budget that indicates how the city will spend its money. The governing board sets policies for municipal services, passes ordinances to regulate behavior, and enters into agreements on behalf of the municipality.

The voters also elect a mayor in most North Carolina cities and towns. In a few places, however, the governing board elects the mayor. The mayor presides over the governing board and is typically the chief spokesperson for the municipality. In some

other states, the mayor is also the chief administrator for the municipality, but this is not the case in North Carolina.

Except for some of the smallest towns, North Carolina municipalities hire a professional manager (or administrator) to serve as chief executive. Under the **council–manager plan**, the manager is responsible for carrying out the council's policies and for running city government. The city (or town) manager is responsible for hiring and firing municipal employees, for coordinating their work, for advising the council on policy issues, for proposing a municipal budget, and for reporting to the council on municipal activities. The manager "serves at the pleasure of the council." That means the council can fire the manager whenever a majority of the council members decide they want a new manager. A manager must work closely with the council in developing policies for the city and with city employees in seeing that city policies are carried out.

Each municipality also has a clerk. In some cities and towns, the manager appoints the clerk. In others, the council appoints the clerk. Regardless of who makes the appointment, the municipal clerk reports directly to the governing board. The clerk keeps official records of the board's meetings and decisions. The clerk may also publish notices, keep other municipal records, conduct research for the governing board, and carry out a wide variety of other duties, as assigned by the board. The clerk is usually a key source of information for citizens about their municipal government.

Many small municipalities do not have a manager. Where there is no manager, the governing board directs administration of the town's business. The board hires and directs town employees and manages the town's affairs together, as a committee, or assigns day-to-day oversight responsibilities for different departments to different board members. Instead of a manager, some smaller towns hire an administrator who helps the town governing board run the town, but who does not have all the powers of a manager. In towns that have no administrator, the clerk often "wears many hats," in effect holding several different jobs to carry out town business.

Municipal employees do much of the work of city and town governments. City **personnel** include police officers, firefighters, water treatment plant operators, recreation supervisors, or others who provide services directly to city residents. Their work is supported by other city personnel: accountants, analysts, engineers, lawyers, administrative assistants, and a variety of other staff. These personnel provide expert advice, train employees, pay bills, prepare reports, and do the many other things it takes to conduct a city's business.

City personnel are organized into departments. Each department specializes in a particular service, such as police work, fire protection, water supply, or recreation. Typically, the city manager selects department heads. They work with the city manager in planning and coordinating the activities of employees in their departments. In many cities, the manager relies on department heads and/or a personnel department to recruit applicants for city jobs, screen job candidates, and hire new employees. Department heads organize and supervise the employees in their departments.

Ayden Town Manager Adam Mitchell oversees town services and keeps the town commissioners informed about town business.
Courtesy of Town of Ayden.

council–manager plan: an arrangement for local government in which the elected legislature hires a professional executive to direct government activities

personnel: the people who work for a government, company, or other organization

In the

Five cities and towns benefit from Al Leonard's experience and expertise

By Matt Lail

To say that Al Leonard is disciplined would be an understatement.

A couple of years ago, as a New Year's resolution, Leonard vowed to only drink water for the entire year, just to see if he could do it. And Leonard is a guy who loves diet soda.

"I did that," he recalls with a chuckle. "I sure did."

Of course, one has to have a measure of self-discipline to be a town manager. Leonard obviously has that. But here's the thing: Leonard doesn't just do the duties of town manager for one municipality. He is a de facto town manager for five communities in Columbus County: Tabor City (his full-time job), Boardman, Brunswick, Cerro Gordo and Fair Bluff (the last four as an advisor).

"It's a unique situation," admits Fair Bluff Mayor Spruell Britt.

But the elected officials in those places wouldn't have it any other way.

"We don't know what we'd do without Al," says Boardman Mayor Randy Williamson. "We'd be in the dark."

All for one and one for all

All agree that the success of this symbiotic relationship works because of Tabor City and its trust in allowing Leonard to help out the neighboring communities.

"It starts with Tabor City. That's my full time job. That's where I live. That's where my family is," says Leonard. "The board there has made it clear, 'You've got to put in your hours here.'"

Leonard does just that, though he finds time for the others, either in person or on the phone. On Wednesdays, however, it's off to Fair Bluff and then to Cerro Gordo. If he has to take a trip to the county seat of Whiteville, which he

Al Leonard at work.

does quite often, then Leonard will stop in on Brunswick. The only town that doesn't regularly get a visit from Leonard is Boardman, which at 30 miles is the longest trek from Tabor City.

"When they call me, I come out," says Leonard of Boardman.

To a person, the elected officials in the municipalities state that when Leonard is in their town, his undivided attention is paid to their needs.

Excerpted with permission from *Southern City*, January 2008

The people who live in a city or town also play an important role in providing municipal services. Volunteers help supervise recreation programs, organize recycling, and even fight fires. Citizen advisory committees, boards, and commissions help city councils and city employees review and plan programs. Individual citizens influence city policies through petitions, public hearings, and conversations with city officials. Residents also help carry out city programs. They sort their trash for recycling. They call police or fire departments to report dangerous situations. Many municipal services cannot be provided effectively without the active cooperation of residents.

Municipal governments help people make their communities better places to live. They provide services to make life safer, healthier, and happier for the people who live there. They offer incentives for improving the appearance and economy of their community. They make and enforce laws to deal with public problems.

Discussion Questions

These questions are about the city or town where you live. If you do not live in a municipality, answer the questions for a nearby city or town. To answer some of these questions, you may need to do some additional research.

1. Why do people move to your city or town? Why might they move away?

2. When was your city or town first settled? Why did people come to live in that place? When was it incorporated?

3. Assume that the average family in Asheville used 3,000 gallons of city water per month in 1884. How much did they spend on city water each month? What percentage of a family's income of $25 per month was spent for water?

   In 2008 city water in Asheville cost $4.61 per thousand gallons. An average family used 9000 gallons per month. How much did the average Asheville family spend for water per month in 2008? If a family's income was $3000 per month in 2008, how much of their income did they spend on water?

   How much does water cost per thousand gallons in your city? How many gallons does your family use each week? (Note: Your city's water rate may be based on cubic feet of water, rather than gallons. There are 231 cubic inches per gallon, about .134 cubic feet per gallon.)

4. What is your municipal governing board called? How many members does it have?

5. Does your city or town use the council–manager plan of government? If so, who is the manager?

6. How many personnel does your city or town have? How many departments are there? What is the largest department of your municipal government?

7. How have you or someone you know helped your city provide services or improve the community?

3. North Carolina Counties

NO MATTER where you live in North Carolina, you live in a county and have a county government. Unlike municipalities, counties were not established to deal with the specific problems of living close together. Rather, counties were created to provide basic services that are important to people wherever they live. Every part of North Carolina is a part of one of the state's 100 counties.

When you think of county government, you might visualize the courthouse. The county's central offices are usually located in the courthouse. Official records of births, deaths, marriages, divorces, and property—sometimes stretching back hundreds of years—are maintained there. But county government does not stop at the courthouse steps. Counties operate facilities ranging from health care clinics to jails.

There are two kinds of services that counties provide. Just as cars come with standard equipment and can also have optional equipment added, all counties provide some standard services and can also offer optional services. The standard services must be provided under state law. Because the state requires them, they are called **mandated services**. Part of the reason that the General Assembly has divided the state into counties is to ensure that every resident of North Carolina will have easier

Halifax County courthouse. *Photograph courtesy of Halifax County.*

mandated service: a program that local governments must provide because of requirements from state or federal government

access to mandated services through his or her county government. In this way, you might think of your county as a "branch office" of the state government.

But counties do more than carry out state requirements. Like cities and towns, counties are a special kind of corporation, with the power to own property, to enter into contracts, and to levy taxes. As local governments, counties have authority to regulate certain personal behavior (development of land or disposal of trash, for example), to encourage county improvement, and even to provide many of the same services cities and towns provide. In addition to the mandated services they must provide, most counties also adopt regulations, encourage community improvement, and provide other services. Depending on the needs of the area and the requests of local citizens, county officials may decide to provide various **optional services**. For example, water and sewers, or parks and recreation are becoming more popular services for counties to provide.

Most county services are available to all county residents, whether they live inside or outside a city or town. However, some services may be provided only to the **unincorporated** part of the county (the area outside city or town limits). For example, because most municipalities have their own police department, the county sheriff's department usually provides police patrol and criminal investigation only in unincorporated areas.

In this chapter, we will see how North Carolina's 100 county governments developed and how they are organized. We will also take a look at services provided only by counties. Chapter 4 will discuss other services that may be provided by either municipalities or counties.

Courthouses like this one in Lee County often house important county documents and other official records. *Courtesy of Chip Pate/Pate and Associates Marketing for Lee County Economic Development.*

optional service: a program that a government decides to provide to meet the needs or requests of its residents

unincorporated: the part of a county outside the cities and towns in that county

History of North Carolina Counties

North Carolinians are especially proud of their counties and often identify themselves by the county where they live. Although county governments are similar in many ways, each county has a distinct personality that reflects the character and history of the people who live there.

Counties were a key part of colonial government in North Carolina. As British control and European settlement extended westward from the coast, the British authorities set up new counties to provide government for the colonists. The colonial governor appointed justices of the peace in each county. The justices served as both the court and the administrators for the county. The justices appointed constables to enforce the law. The justices appointed a sheriff to collect taxes, and they appointed wardens to care for the poor. The justices also appointed a surveyor to mark land boundaries and a register of deeds to keep property records. Establishing land boundaries and maintaining records of property were very important to the farmers and planters who settled the colony. Having government officials nearby was especially important before the development of modern transportation, because it could take many hours to travel only a few miles.

North Carolina Counties, 1775–1776

(map of North Carolina counties with the following labels: Granville, Hertford, Northampton, Chowan, Perquimans, Currituck, Surry, Orange, Bute, Halifax, Bertie, Pasquotank, Guilford, Edgecombe, Martin, Tyrrell, Rowan, Chatham, Wake, Johnston, Pitt, Hyde, Tryon, Cumberland, Dobbs, Craven, Beaufort, Anson, Duplin, Mecklenburg, Onslow, Carteret, Bladen, New Hanover, Brunswick)

0   25   50 miles
0   25 50 kilometers
Albers Equal-Area Projection

There were 35 counties in North Carolina when the state declared its independence from Great Britain in 1776. After independence, North Carolina state government continued to use counties to organize local citizens and provide basic government throughout the state. The General Assembly also continued to create new counties to bring government closer to the people. By 1800 there were 65 counties and by 1900 there were 97. In the twentieth century, only 3 additional counties were created to bring the total number of counties to 100.

Diverse North Carolina Counties

There is no "typical" North Carolina county. North Carolina's 100 counties are diverse. In area, they range from Chowan County (173 square miles) to Robeson County (949 square miles). The population differences are even greater. In 2007 Tyrrell County had the smallest population with just over 4,000 residents and Mecklenburg County had the largest population with more than 865,000 residents. Population density varies widely across counties too. Hyde County had only about 10 people per square mile, whereas Mecklenburg County had more than 1,600 people per square mile.

The land in the western part of the state is mountainous. Many of the **mountain counties** are heavily forested. In the eastern part of the state, the land is a flat **coastal plain**. Some counties on the coastal plain are also heavily forested, but many are rich agricultural areas with many highly productive farms. Most of the mountain and coastal plain counties are rural. Agriculture and forestry are important economic activities in both parts of the state. Tourism is also especially important to the economy of the mountains and the coast. Fishing is important along the coast. There are few urban counties in either area. Only Buncombe (Asheville) in the mountains, and Cumberland (Fayetteville) and New Hanover (Wilmington) on the coastal plain are predominantly urban and had more than 250 people per square mile in 2000.

mountain counties: the western region of North Carolina, extending eastward from the Tennessee border to the eastern boundaries of Alleghany, Wilkes, Caldwell, Burke, and Rutherford counties; includes 23 counties

coastal plain: the eastern region of North Carolina, extending approximately 150 miles inland from the coast; includes 41 counties. The western border of the region is usually defined as the western boundaries of Northhampton, Halifax, Nash, Johnston, Harnett, Hoke, and Scotland counties

North Carolina Counties Today

Macon – County name
1828 – Year established

Source: U.S. Census Bureau
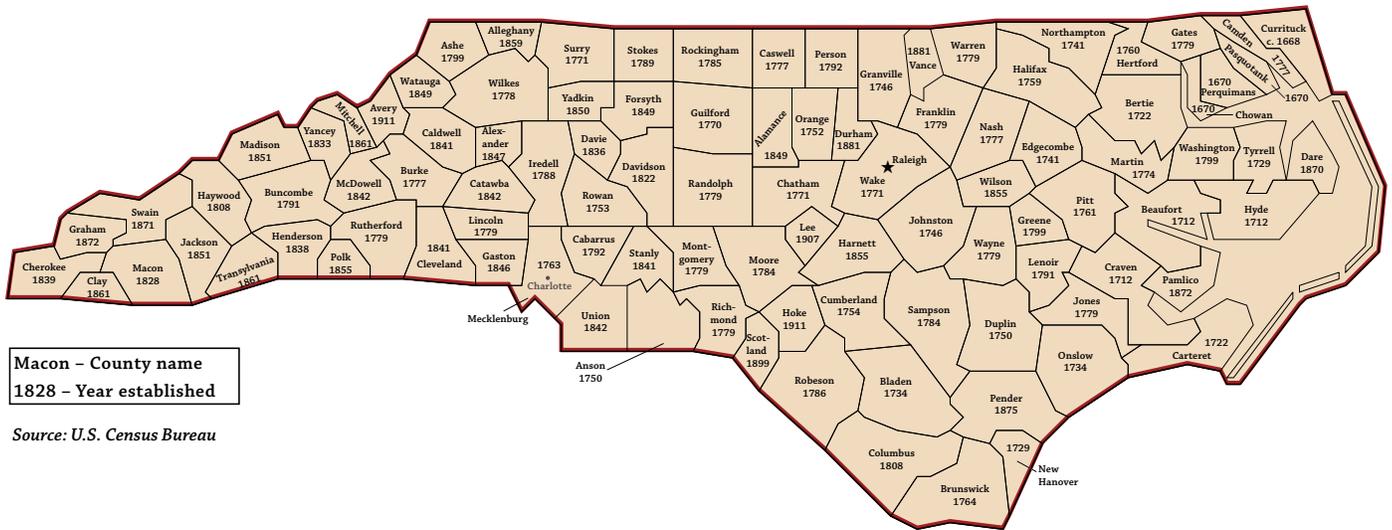
North Carolina's Rural and Urban Population, 1900–2000
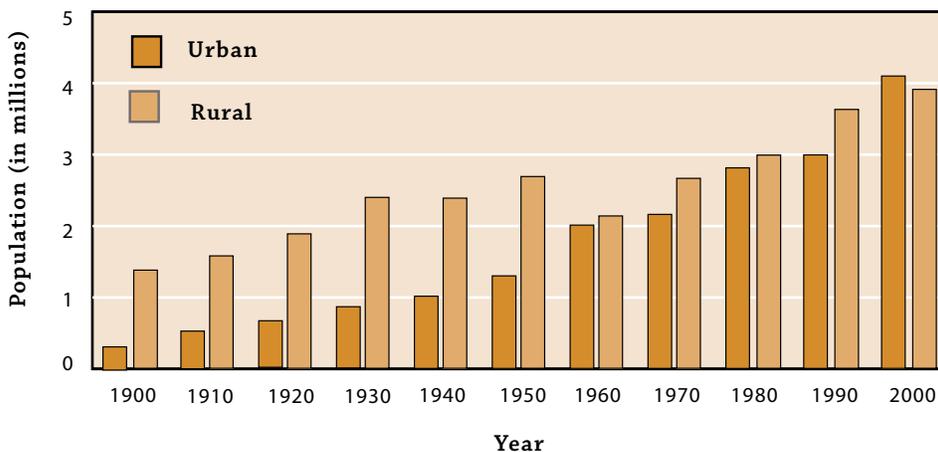
The **piedmont**, in the central part of the state, is an area of rolling hills. North Carolina's biggest cities are in the piedmont. Ten piedmont counties are largely urban—Alamance, Cabarrus, Catawba, Durham, Forsyth, Gaston, Guilford, Mecklenburg, Orange, and Wake. However, most piedmont counties are largely rural. Farming is a more important part of the economy in the eastern piedmont counties than in the western piedmont counties. Manufacturing has been particularly important in the western piedmont counties, even in many rural counties. Since 2000, however, many of the traditional industries (textiles, clothing, and furniture) have left the state, creating considerable economic hardship and change as the state economy shifts to new industries.

Throughout the twentieth century, North Carolina's urban population grew more rapidly than the rural population. As the bar graph on this page shows, over half of the state's 8 million people lived in cities, towns, or villages by 2000. Rapid growth continued in several of the state's urban centers, and by 2007 North Carolina's population had passed 9 million people.

piedmont: the central region of North Carolina including Surry, Yadkin, Alexander, Catawba, and Cleveland counties on the west to Warren, Franklin, Wake, Chatham, Lee, Moore, and Richmond counties on the east; includes 36 counties

County Population Changes, 1950–2000

- **Rapid growth (greater than 125% increase)**
- **Average growth (75%–125% increase)**
- **Slow growth (up to 75% increase)**
- **Decline**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau
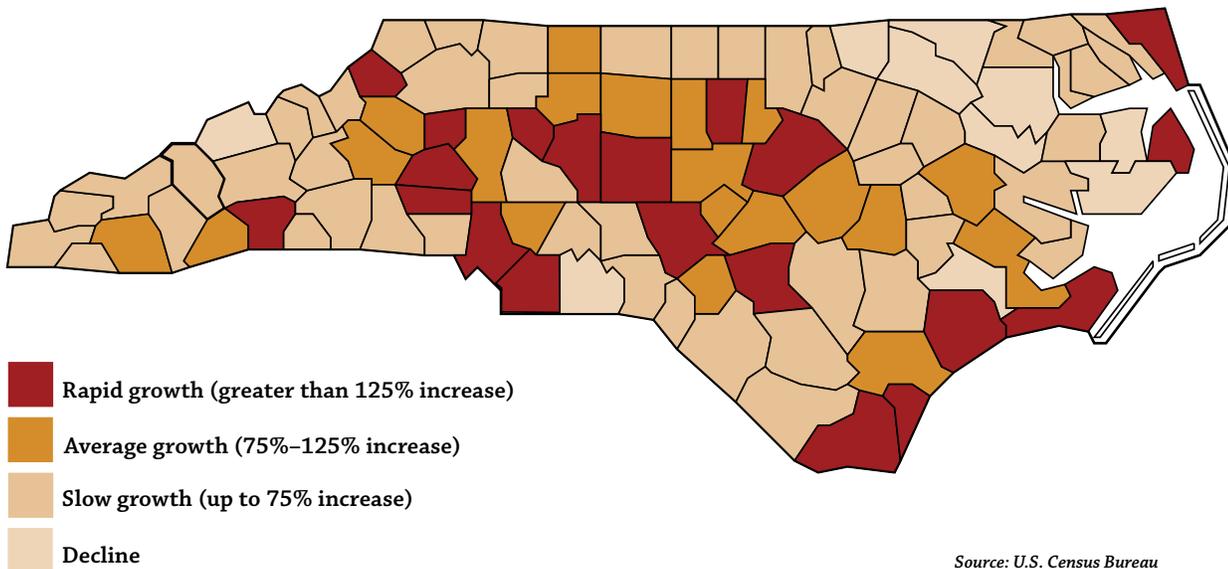
Counties Respond to Population Changes

Population change greatly affects county governments. A change in the number of residents means a change in the demand for services, as well as a change in the amount of taxes needed to pay for those services. Since 1950 some North Carolina counties have become more densely populated, others have maintained their population, and still others have experienced a decrease in population. Overall, the population of the state doubled from 1950 to 2000, but most of that increase was concentrated in about half of the state's counties. The map above shows how each county's population changed during that time.

New Residents, New Jobs, New Service Needs

Three kinds of development have contributed most to population growth since 1950. New and rapidly expanding businesses created jobs and led to increased population in some counties. Much of this kind of growth occurred in the piedmont, with Mecklenburg and Wake counties having the greatest population increases. Military base development contributed much to the population growth in some coastal plain counties, especially Cumberland (Fort Bragg) and Onslow (Camp LeJeune). Resort and retirement community developments also contributed to major population growth in several counties, particularly in the mountains (Henderson, Watauga) and at the beach (Brunswick, Currituck, Dare).

Johnston Co. planning 2 new high schools

By Molly McGuire

Johnston County has bought land to build two high schools within the next three years that will pull from Clayton and West Johnston high schools, both faced with overcrowding.

But as the plans come closer to fruition, other details—including when they will open and how many students they will hold—are once again in dispute.

School officials have asked county commissioners to sell bonds early so that both schools could open in 2010, pushing up the opening of the school in the Cleveland community by a year.

At the same time, some county commissioners and school board members are questioning whether plans to build the schools to hold 1,200 students a piece—a smaller size meant to foster better academics and community unity—is practical.

Both schools, estimated to cost $30 million each and fill two 100-acre lots, were part of a $99 million bond referendum voters approved last year.

The school north of Clayton—near the Archer Lodge and Corinth-Holder communities—will ease overcrowding at Clayton High, which has almost reached capacity again after a new wing opened last school year.

But school officials are now warning that crowding at West Johnston is becoming severe. The school is expected to house 2,300 students in the coming school year, 700 over its capacity. By 2011, enrollment is projected to surpass 3,000 students.

Commissioners are waiting for word from their financial advisers on whether they can move up the bond sales, said board Chairwoman Cookie Pope.

"We have to keep our financial house in order," Pope said.

Educators say the smaller schools allow for a better learning environment, minimize discipline problems and let more students participate in sports and clubs.

But Pope, long a proponent of smaller schools, said it may be time to reconsider plans to keep the schools small given how fast the county is growing.

"I'm just partial to smaller schools, but I'm not so closed-minded that I can't understand why we might need to make more space," Pope said. "It may serve us better to have a larger school."

School board chairman Kay Carroll said he plans to bring up the idea of building larger schools at a board retreat next month.

Reprinted with permission from
The News & Observer, **Raleigh, NC, January 24, 2008**

In each case, additional jobs were also created as people moved into these developing counties. Whether they came to take jobs created by expanding businesses, to serve on military bases, or to retire, new residents needed housing, food, clothing, banking, and other goods and services. This need led to the expansion of other businesses and to the creation of additional jobs.

As a result of the development of new jobs, people in counties with population growth generally have higher incomes than those who live in counties with little or no population growth.

Population growth creates the need for additional government services. Not only are there more people to be served, but the kinds of services needed may also change as the population increases. For example, housing developments outside city limits may require public water and sewer systems to protect the public health. New school buildings and other public facilities are also needed as the population increases. County governments must pay for these new facilities and hire new employees to serve their larger population.

As counties grow, they often must decide how undeveloped land can be used. Citizen input is typically requested and considered by county officials.
Courtesy of Randolph County.

Needs of Counties That Have Not Grown

In North Carolina, many counties that are primarily agricultural have had little population growth or have even experienced a decrease in population since 1950.

Machines replaced people for many farming operations during this period. In 1947, 42 percent of North Carolinians worked in agriculture. By 1987 only 3 percent of North Carolinians worked in agriculture. In some rural counties, manufacturing or tourist jobs replaced agricultural jobs. In other counties, however, there were few new jobs to replace those lost on the farms. Often the jobs that are available pay low wages. These are the counties that lost population or had little population growth. These are also usually the counties where **per capita** income is lowest.

Counties with constant or declining population often have special problems. High unemployment and low wages mean that a larger proportion of the population needs financial assistance and health care from the county government. At the same time, poorer people pay less in taxes. A county with a low per capita income may have trouble raising funds to assist its needy residents. For this reason, government programs to create new jobs may be particularly important in such counties. You can read more about **economic development** in Chapter 5.

Citizens choose the members of their county commission by casting their votes on election day. *Courtesy of Catawba County.*

per capita: by or for each person

economic development: activities to create new jobs and additional sales and other business

Governing North Carolina Counties

Local voters in North Carolina could not select their own county officials until after the Civil War. Up until that time the state appointed county officials. The North Carolina Constitution of 1868 provided for the election of the sheriff, the coroner, the register of deeds, the clerk of court, the surveyor, and the treasurer. Under the 1868 constitution, voters in each county also began to elect a board of county commissioners. The board of county commissioners replaced appointed justices of the peace as officers of general government for the county. These county boards were responsible for the county's finances, including setting its tax rates.

Today, voters in each North Carolina county elect a board of county commissioners, a sheriff, a register of deeds, and a clerk of court. The clerk of court is no longer an office of county government, however. The General Assembly consolidated all county courts into a statewide court system, and the clerk, although elected by the county's voters, is an employee of the state courts. Judges and district attorneys are elected by judicial districts. Some judicial districts include only a single county, but in many cases they include several counties. Regardless of the size of the judicial district, however, judges and district attorneys are state officials, not county officials. Voters also elect members of the local school board, which may cover an entire county but sometimes includes only a part of a county. Thus, the county commissioners, the sheriff, and the register of deeds are the only county officials elected by voters in each of the 100 counties.

The Board of County Commissioners

The board of county commissioners has general responsibility for county government. It sets the local property tax rate and adopts the county budget. It passes ordinances, resolutions, and orders to establish county policies. Each board of county commissioners appoints a clerk to keep official records of the board's meetings and decisions, to publish notices, to conduct research, and to carry out other duties, such as providing information to citizens about their county government.

Unlike a city or town governing board, the board of county commissioners shares authority for setting county policy with other officials—state officials, the sheriff, the register of deeds, and independent county boards. The General Assembly and various state agencies are often directly involved in setting policy for county governments through mandates that require the county to provide certain services or follow specific procedures. As elected officials, the sheriff and the register of deeds have authority independent of the board of county commissioners and may set policies for their departments. Furthermore, state law provides for separate independent boards with responsibility for alcoholic beverage control, education, elections, public health, mental health, and social services policy.

Independent Boards

The independent boards in North Carolina counties appoint directors for their agencies and make local policies regarding agency operations. County social services boards hire a director for the county department of social services and advise the director on program needs and budget requests. Because many social service programs are funded by the United States government and/or state government, federal and state regulations set much of the policy for social services delivered by counties.

The county elections board sets policies for operations of local voter registration and elections and selects an elections supervisor to manage these operations. Their work is regulated by the State Board of Elections.

Several smaller counties join together to form public health districts and mental health "local management entities" (LMEs), with boards made up of representatives from each of the participating counties. In counties where alcoholic beverages may be sold, an Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) Board controls ABC stores in the county.

Most North Carolina counties have a single, countywide administrative unit for public schools, although some counties have more than one school system. Except for a few city school districts with appointed boards of education, the voters of each district elect the board of education for each school unit.

None of the independent boards has the authority to levy taxes. County funds to support these services must be raised by the board of county commissioners. All of the independent boards must also have their budgets approved by the board of county commissioners. The responsibility for financing operations and the power

to control **expenditures** gives the board of county commissioners the ability to co-ordinate county policy for the services with independent boards. Because it raises and **allocates** county funds, the board of county commissioners has the potential to influence all government programs that depend on county money, including even the schools, which operate as separate administrative units.

expenditures: money spent

allocate: to set aside money for a specific purpose

The County Manager

In all North Carolina counties, the board of county commissioners hires a manager. The county manager directs the general operations of county government. He or she has the authority to hire and fire personnel in departments directly under the authority of the board of commissioners, but not those who are responsible to an independently elected official (sheriff, register of deeds) or work for the state personnel system or an independent board (education, elections, health, social services). The county manager prepares a budget for the county and manages the county's expenditures. He or she also reports to the board of commissioners on county government operations and on public problems facing the county. Like the city manager, discussed in Chapter 2, the county manager is typically a professional who has studied public administration and belongs to the International City/County Management Association (www.icma.org).

Services Provided by County Governments

North Carolina counties provide many essential services for all North Carolina residents. The county register of deeds maintains legal records of all property transactions and of all marriages, births, and deaths. The county board of elections registers voters and conducts elections. The county sheriff operates a jail to hold people awaiting trial and people convicted of minor crimes. Counties provide emergency medical services either through county departments or through support for volunteer emergency medical service squads. Counties also have responsibility for social services, public health services, and mental health services. Funding the public schools is also a major county responsibility.

Social Services

North Carolina counties have important responsibilities for assisting people with low incomes and other social problems. County departments of social services help children through programs like foster care, adoption, and family counseling. They investigate suspected abuse of children and disabled adults. They offer services to help the elderly and the disabled live at home, as well as programs to help people prepare for new jobs. County departments of social services often work closely with religious and other charitable organizations in providing these services.

News...

In the

New Social Services director named

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By Dee Henry

The county's new director of Social Services doesn't want to make too many waves—at least not at first.

John Eller said his own self-set first goal is to learn.

"Initially, my main goal will be to sit back and see how the agency flow operates," Eller said. "I want to get to know the staff first. I don't want to make any changes that may have any unforeseen effects."

Humble talk from a person who comes into his new position with more than nine years of experience in social services.

"I feel fortunate and blessed to have this opportunity. I admire Bobby Boyd and have my work cut out for me. He has set the bar high," Eller said. "But I have a love and desire for this work. It's my calling."

Catawba County Manager Tom Lundy admits Boyd, who retires Nov. 1, was an exceptional director, serving the county for more than 30 years. However, he feels Eller is a good fit for the current staff.

"John Eller brings leadership experience as a director, and a commitment to service, and we look forward to his long service as he joins our management team and becomes part of the Catawba County community," Lundy said.

Eller's experiences have kept him in this part of North Carolina, working most recently in the same position in Cabarrus County. While working there, he said he saw advances in the department's use of technology.

"They needed to use technology better, and they came a long way during my time there," he said.

Eller, 32, is originally from West Jefferson and earned his undergraduate degree in social work from Appalachian State University. He is currently working on a master's of business administration degree at Queens College in Charlotte.

Eller said a highlight of his career came when he was director of the Adult Services Division at the Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services. While there, he said he was most proud of the staff's help in the recovery effort following Hurricane Katrina.

He lists helping people through the current economic environment as important.

"I'm concerned about how to better serve those in the community who are working to support their family, but still barely making ends meet," he said. "This would include affordable health insurance for our children."

Karyn Yaussy, chair of the Catawba County Board of Social Services, said the search for a new director was intensive, using the help of county staff and community leaders.

"We believe John will be the kind of leader to keep moving this department forward for many years to come," Yaussy said.

Eller referred questions concerning his salary to the county Human Resources Department, adding that the exact amount was still being determined.

Reprinted with permission from
The Hickory Daily Record, September 5, 2008

In providing some services, the county must follow very specific regulations. For example, counties must operate **food stamps** and **Medicaid** programs according to strict federal regulations. Counties must follow these regulations in determining who is eligible to receive assistance from these programs and in organizing and operating their departments of social services to carry out the programs. This is because a majority of the funds for these programs comes from the U.S. government. To be eligible for funds from the U.S. government, states must have programs that meet federal requirements. Most of the 50 states use a department of state government to administer public assistance, but North Carolina is one of a few states that chose to assign administrative responsibility to counties. Still, the state (which also pays part of the cost) has to assure the U.S. government that federal requirements are being met. Strict regulation of county operations is one way to do this.

Another reason for strict regulation of public assistance programs is concern about welfare fraud. Many people believe that having very strict regulations will help ensure that only those who really need public assistance will receive these benefits. Others argue that too many regulations make it difficult for people to get the public assistance they need and also drive up the cost for those who do receive benefits.

food stamps: a program to help people with financial need buy food; vouchers to be used like money for purchasing food; federal program, but administered by county departments of social services in North Carolina

Medicaid: a program designed to pay for medical care for people in financial need; federal program, but administered by county departments of social services in North Carolina

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News...

In the

Wake to open benefits office: New social services hub off Capital will serve a needy and fast-growing population

By Michael Biesecke

Wake's Human Services Department will open a new branch office to serve the increasing number of its clients who live on Raleigh's north side.

Wake County commissioners last week approved a six-year lease for 13,307 square feet in a two-story office building at 2809 E. Millbrook Road.

The lease will begin in September, but renovations are expected to take weeks or months before the office can open.

The new location will provide social services for residents who qualify for public-assistance programs, including welfare, food stamps and Medicaid.

Wake leaders picked the site after a series of computer-generated maps plotting the home addresses of those receiving public assistance showed a large and fast-growing cluster of clients in neighborhoods along the Capital Boulevard corridor, especially in Brentwood and Mini City.

"In these programs we saw the highest growth in the coming years to be in that area," said Bob Sorrels, the deputy director for Wake Human Services.

By opening the satellite location, county officials hope to provide added convenience to social services clients throughout North and Midtown Raleigh.

They also hope to lessen the strain at the department's central office off Swinburne Street near WakeMed's east Raleigh campus.

Sorrels said wait times at the central Raleigh location often run many hours.

"If you have visited in the last couple years, depending on the hour, you would have noticed an extreme overload of volume and work and stress and chaos, and the potential for danger, in the main service intake area," Sorrels told county commissioners.

The department already has satellite offices in the county's regional centers in Wake Forest, Zebulon and Fuquay-Varina.

"We're taking the work to the people, rather than expecting the people to come to central Raleigh and further congesting our roadways and waiting times in our facilities," Sorrels said.

Reprinted with permission from *The News & Observer*, Raleigh, NC, August 27, 2008

In order to provide greater flexibility in meeting people's needs for financial assistance, North Carolina counties also operate **Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)** programs. Under TANF, local departments of social services use federal, state, and local funds to provide support to families that do not earn enough money for basic living expenses. TANF can provide families money for a limited period of time while the parents find new jobs. TANF also provides job training so that people can qualify for higher paying jobs and helps pay for childcare, transportation, or other services the parents may need in order to keep a job.

Many counties have also established their own general assistance programs. These optional programs help people deal with emergencies and situations not covered by federal and state programs. The county social services board establishes the rules for general assistance in its county, and the board of county commissioners allocates county funds to pay for general assistance. Government programs do not cover all basic needs, however. Religious groups and other charitable organizations operate shelters for the homeless and for battered women, food banks and hot meals programs, clothing distribution centers, and other projects to meet the basic needs of those who cannot earn enough to provide for themselves. Some of these agencies also receive funding from county government to help them deliver specific social services.

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF): federal government program of support for families in need; provides small payments to cover basic living expenses and assistance to help adults find and keep jobs

Counties play a large role in providing public education to their young citizens.
Courtesy of NC Civic Education Consortium.

Health

In North Carolina, each county is served by two departments concerned with health. Local public health departments remove health hazards from the environment, educate people and give shots to prevent illness, and provide care for those who are physically ill and cannot afford to pay for care. Local management entities coordinate services from a variety of nonprofit and for-profit organizations to help people facing mental illness, developmental disability, or substance abuse. Each of these departments may be organized for a single county or for two or more counties.

Each public health department must provide certain state-mandated services. It must inspect restaurants, hotels, and other public accommodations in the county to be sure that the facilities and the food are safe. It must also collect information and report to the state about births, deaths, and communicable diseases in the county.

Local public health departments also typically provide many other services. They have programs to prevent animals, such as mosquitoes and rats, from spreading human diseases. Many public health departments also enforce local sanitation ordinances for septic tanks or swimming pools and local animal-control ordinances. County nurses and health educators teach people about good nutrition and how to prevent illness. Most public health departments operate clinics to diagnose and treat illnesses and to provide health care for expectant mothers, infants, and children who cannot otherwise afford health care. County nurses also care for people in their homes and at school. They also give shots to prevent certain diseases.

Community-based treatment of mental illnesses, mental disabilities, and the abuse of alcohol and other drugs are coordinated by each single-county or multi-county local management entity. These services are another important part of each county's responsibilities for health education and care.

Public Schools

In North Carolina, the public schools are both a state and a local responsibility. The state pays teachers' basic salaries and establishes qualifications for teachers. Teachers are considered state employees. The state does not hire teachers, however. Teachers are hired by local school boards, and local school boards are also responsible for deciding to keep or dismiss teachers.

The North Carolina State Board of Education establishes overall policies for the schools, including the minimum length of the school year, the content of the curriculum, and the textbooks that may be used. Local boards of education must meet the state's guidelines for school policy in all of their decisions about how the local schools will operate. Local school boards hire all local school personnel: teachers, staff, and administrators, including principals, superintendents, and their assistants. Local school boards decide what texts to use and what courses to offer. They set the calendar for the local schools and decide on school attendance policies.

Local school boards also adopt a budget for operating the schools. Although teachers' basic salaries are paid by the state, most other costs of the schools are a local responsibility. These include buildings, furniture, and equipment; books and other supplies; maintenance; and utilities. Many local school systems also pay teachers a salary bonus. The local school board decides how much it needs to spend to support the local schools. Then it presents this budget to the board of county commissioners. The school board has no authority to tax. The county commissioners decide how much county money to spend to support local schools. In most counties, schools receive the largest share of county money. Sometimes there is considerable discussion between the school board and the commissioners about how much money the schools should receive.

Each local school board hires a superintendent to coordinate planning for the schools, to select teachers and other school staff, to prepare and administer the budget, and to provide general administrative direction for the schools. Each school has a principal who has similar responsibilities for that school. In many parts of the state, schools are also beginning to involve teachers and parents more directly in helping plan for the school and in making decisions about how the school is run. Some schools also have advisory committees of people from local businesses and other members of the community.

Each county is required by the state to pay for and maintain certain public facilities, such as this jail in Sampson County. *Courtesy of Moseley Architects.*

The public schools have the responsibility of helping their students prepare for life. Some public school programs help prepare students directly for work. Other programs help students prepare for college. All public school programs should result in making students responsible citizens—people who take pride in their community and help make it a better place to live and work.

Public Facilities

Counties must also provide certain public facilities. Each county's board of county commissioners is required by the state to pay for building and maintaining a jail and for providing adequate office space for other mandated services. In addition, the board of county commissioners is responsible for providing suitable space and equipment for the state's district and superior courts.

Dealing with Changing Mandates

When the state requires counties to provide a service, the county must carry out that mandate. Mandates change, however. The General Assembly has changed counties' service responsibilities many times over the years. For example, one early responsibility of county governments in North Carolina was the construction and maintenance of rural roads and bridges. During the 1930s, however, the General Assembly transferred all responsibility for rural roads and bridges to the state highway department, now the North Carolina Department of Transportation.

Counties get new responsibilities too. In the late 1980s, the General Assembly passed laws requiring all counties to provide for the safe disposal of solid wastes produced in the county. This new mandate put all 100 counties in the business of managing solid waste. Many counties for the first time began programs to recycle, reuse, or compost solid wastes or to encourage people to create less waste material.

North Carolina county government is complex. The Board of County Commissioners has general responsibility for the county's finances and for many county services. However, state mandates, independently elected officials, and other independent boards also determine policy for many county-funded services. Counties are both local governments and divisions of state government. Counties are local governments in that they provide a government through which citizens can address local problems and opportunities. Counties are also a division of state government because they have to carry out many state programs that are mandated by North Carolina state law. Regardless of where you live in North Carolina, county government helps shape your daily life.

By law counties must provide for the safe disposal of solid wastes produced in the county. *Courtesy of Orange County Solid Waste Management.*

Discussion Questions

1. Find your county on the map on page 24. Now try to locate your county on the map on page 23. Had it been formed as a county by 1775? If not, what county was it part of at that time?

2. What do you know about how your county was formed and how it got its name? You can find this information at the library or county historical society.

3. Locate your county on the map on page 25. What changes in population has your county experienced since 1950?

4. How many municipalities are in your county? What is your county's population? What proportion of county residents live inside incorporated areas? What proportion live in unincorporated areas? (Hint: Census data are available at http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/37/37063.html.)

5. How important is each of the following to your county's economy?
   agriculture
   manufacturing
   tourism
   military bases
   hospitals, colleges and universities, or other institutions
   research and information technology
   banking and insurance
   warehouses and retail stores
   transportation
   fishing
   forestry

   What are the major employers in your county? What is the current unemployment rate? What kinds of jobs are most readily available in your county?

6. What county services have you or people you know used in the past month? How have these services affected you, even if you have not used them yourself?

7. Who are your county commissioners?

8. What major issue is your board of county commissioners currently discussing? Will this issue have an effect on you or your family? If so, what is the effect?

9. How does your county government cooperate with other local governments?

4. Public Services

- You turn the handle on the faucet and water flows into your glass.
- You put your trash out, and it is picked up and carried away.
- You swim in the pool or play ball at the park.
- You call the police or sheriff about a break-in at your house, and an officer comes to investigate.

SAFE drinking water, regular trash collection, recreation opportunities, and police protection are among the many services provided by local governments. You and your family may use some of these services—water, for example—many times each day. Other services, such as trash collection or recreation, may be used only once or twice a week. Still other services—criminal investigations, for instance—may be used only rarely but are available whenever you need them.

Local governments provide many services, including regular trash collection, recreation opportunities, and police and fire protection.

Upper left: *Courtesy of High Point Fire Department.*
Upper right: *Courtesy of Kristi Grubb, Town of Surf City.*
Lower left: *Courtesy of Town of Manteo.*
Lower right: *Courtesy of Town of Black Mountain.*

In this chapter you will go "behind the scenes" to see how a few public services are produced. You will look at water and sewer services, trash (solid waste) collection and disposal, recreation, and policing. These services are just examples of the many services local governments provide. Counties, cities, and towns also operate public libraries, provide fire protection, support hospitals, maintain animal shelters, and conduct many other public services.

The chart on page 38 lists all the major services that North Carolina county and municipal governments have authority to provide under state law. No one government provides all of the services on this list. As we saw in Chapter 3, counties must provide certain mandated services. Except for the mandated services, municipalities and counties choose which services they will provide, depending on the needs and interests of their citizens.

Often local governments provide these services themselves. For example, they set up departments to operate water supply facilities, to collect trash, or to police the community. Sometimes, however, local governments hire a private business, a non-profit organization, or another government to produce a service. Government hiring of a business to produce a public service is called **privatization**. The government buys the service from a business or nonprofit rather than hiring government employees to produce the service.

Regardless of who produces public services, however, government pays for them. Governments raise most of the money to pay for services through taxes. For some services, the local government charges users of the service to help cover the cost of providing the service. For example, most governments charge their customers for the water they use.

Many public services are particularly beneficial to the people who use them directly. For example, you benefit directly when you drink clean water, get rid of your trash, swim in the pool, or have a crime investigated.

Even these "user-focused" public services benefit the community at large, too. Having a safe, abundant water supply protects everyone in the community from diseases spread by contaminated water and also supports firefighting. Safe, efficient waste collection and disposal helps keep the community healthy and attractive. Public recreation also supports a healthier, happier community. Criminal investigation helps protect the entire community from crime.

This chapter concerns "user-focused" services. Not all local government services have direct users, of course. Some affect the entire community but have no individual "customers." We will explore "community-focused" services in Chapter 5.

Rescues and medical emergencies require "user-focused" services that are critically important to the people who are gravely sick or injured.
Courtesy of Michael J. Legeros.

privatization: government buying a service from a business instead of producing the service itself

Major Services Provided by Counties and Municipalities in North Carolina

This chart shows a general listing of the services local governments are authorized to provide. Counties and municipalities may choose to contract for many of these services rather than operate them directly.

Services Usually Provided by Counties Only

1. Community colleges
2. Cooperative extension
3. Court facilities (construction and maintenance only)
4. Elections
5. Jails
6. Mental health services
7. Public health services
8. Public schools
9. Register of Deeds
10. Social services
11. Soil and water conservation
12. Tax assessment
13. Youth detention facilities

Services Provided by Both Counties and Municipalities

1. Airports
2. Ambulance service
3. Animal shelters
4. Art galleries and museums
5. Auditoriums/coliseums
6. Building inspection
7. Buses/public transit
8. Cable television regulation
9. Community and economic development
10. Community appearance
11. Emergency management
12. Environmental protection
13. Fire protection
14. Historic preservation
15. Human relations
16. Industrial development
17. Job training
18. Law enforcement
19. Libraries
20. Open space and parks
21. Planning, land use regulation, and code enforcement
22. Property acquisition, sales, and disposition
23. Public housing
24. Recreation programs
25. Rescue squads
26. Senior citizen programs
27. Sewer systems
28. Solid waste collection and disposal
29. Storm drainage
30. Tax collection
31. Veterans' services
32. Water supply and protection

Services Usually Provided by Municipalities Only

1. Cemeteries
2. Electric systems
3. Gas systems
4. Sidewalks
5. Street lighting
6. Streets
7. Traffic control
8. Urban development

Water Supply

The water supply cycle involves several steps: source, treatment, distribution, and wastewater collection and treatment. First, water is pumped from the source into a treatment plant where it is treated to make it safe to drink. Then the water is pumped into storage tanks, from which it is distributed through pipes to the people who will use it. Finally, wastewater is collected and treated. Controlling water pollution is important to ensure a safe supply of drinking water. Sewage collection and treatment systems and storm water management are also important for safe water supply.

Water is collected, treated, and tested before it reaches your faucet.
Courtesy of Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utilities.

Water Supply Sources

Wells are one important source of water in North Carolina. Wells tap into underground water. They allow water to be pumped out of the layers of sand, gravel, or porous rock, where it is trapped. In places where there are large pockets of underground water, wells can provide a steady source of water for public water systems. Rain and other water on the surface of the earth is filtered as it seeps down to replace the **groundwater** that is pumped out. In rural areas where there is no public water system, each house may have its own well. Local governments also use wells to supply public water systems where ground water is abundant. In some places along the coast, sea water has seeped into the ground water because so much water has been pumped from wells. In these places, local governments now have to take the salt out of their well water through a process called **desalinization**.

groundwater: water that collects underground

Rivers and reservoirs are also important water sources for public water systems. North Carolina has many rivers. Rainfall ensures that they flow all year long, although sometimes a severe drought can cut the flow to a trickle. Some cities located near a river simply pump their water from the river. Where there is no convenient river with enough water, reservoirs must be built to catch and hold rainwater until it is needed. Most of North Carolina's larger cities, and many smaller ones, depend on water from reservoirs. Water from rivers, reservoirs, and lakes is called **surface water**.

desalinization: the process by which the salt is taken out of water

All of the land that drains into a stream is called the **watershed** for that stream. Watershed protection can reduce contamination of surface water. Many local governments now have stormwater management programs to catch the dirty water that runs off streets, roofs, and bare ground so that the pollution does not go into rivers and reservoirs. However, surface water is still likely to be more contaminated than ground water.

surface water: all waters on the surface of the Earth found in rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, and so on

watershed: an area that drains water into a stream or lake

In the

More cities restricting water use: Drought is worse in Western N.C.

By Wade Rawlins

Drought conditions persist, particularly in parched Western North Carolina, but more local governments are conserving water than a year ago, and water supplies are in better shape.

Of the 660 public water systems in the state, 54 percent had water restrictions in place in July, said Wayne Munden, with the state Department of Environment and Natural Resources' Public Water Supply Section. Munden addressed a meeting Thursday of the N.C. Drought Management Advisory Council.

A year ago, Munden said, 12 percent of the systems had conservation measures in place. The cities of Raleigh, Durham, Cary and Chapel Hill all have water-use restrictions in place.

"People are conserving," Munden said. "We have extreme problems in the west, but at least the message is getting out."

A report by the U.S. Drought Monitor shows that 24 North Carolina counties, all in Western North Carolina, are in exceptional drought, the worst condition. More than a dozen are in extreme drought. Moderate drought conditions prevail in the Triangle, through parts of Orange and Chatham counties are classified as being in severe drought.

Tony Young, water control manager for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, said Falls Lake and Lake Jordan benefited from rainfall in July and are about 1 foot below normal.

Falls Lake, which supplies water for most of Raleigh and Wake County, has 90 percent of its water supply remaining. Last year at this time, the lake was about 4 feet below normal, with tree stumps poking through the mud and lake managers warning boaters about dangerous shallows.

"We're definitely in a little better shape than last year," Young said. "Even if we were to get a repeat of last year, the fact that we're starting off with 90 percent of supply is going to help."

Jordan Lake has more than 95 percent of its supply.

Typically, rainfall over winter months helps refill reservoirs and recharge streams.

Ryan Boyles, state climatologist at N.C. State University, said long-term forecasts based on ocean temperatures suggest normal winter rainfall. Rainfall in the Triangle averages 3 to 4 inches a month from November through March.

Meanwhile, harsh drought continues to grip Western North Carolina.

Curtis Weaver, a hydrologist with the U.S. Geological Survey, said the "worst of the worst" stream flows were in river basins in Western North Carolina: the French Broad, the Upper Catawba River and the Upper Yadkin basins.

Weaver said flow gauges along streams and rivers in those basins had recorded a number of record low flows at 17 sites in June and at 22 sites in July. More than 30 sites were on track to set record lows in August.

"This time last year, the bull's eye was over the central and eastern parts of the state," Weaver said. "At this point, that focus is over the western part. We just can't seem to shake this drought."

Reservoirs are much more expensive water sources than rivers. Building a reservoir requires buying the land, which will be flooded by the new lake, and constructing a dam to contain the water. Engineers must first design a dam and map out the area the new lake will cover. Then the agency building the reservoir can begin to buy the land. Many reservoirs are built specifically to supply water. Some dams that provide water are built for other purposes, however. The federal government, working through the Army Corps of Engineers, builds reservoirs for flood control. Some private companies build reservoirs for electric power generation. If a city has to build its own reservoir, the cost of the reservoir is paid by the customers who use the water. Thus, cities that must build reservoirs to ensure an adequate supply of water usually have higher water rates than cities that are able to get all the water they need from wells, rivers, or reservoirs that also serve other purposes.

Water Treatment

The kind of treatment water needs depends on how clean it is. Water from wells sometimes has almost no **impurities**. It has been filtered naturally as it collects underground. However, underground water can become contaminated if harmful substances are buried nearby. To help prevent contamination of ground water, federal and state governments have passed several environmental protection laws. One outlaws the discharge of dangerous chemicals into a stream or into the soil. Another requires landfills to be lined so that water cannot seep out of them and carry materials into the ground water. Still another requires underground storage tanks (such as those for gasoline) to be rustproof so they will not leak.

Surface water picks up such things as oil and grit from streets and parking lots; the fertilizer and pesticides from fields; chemicals from trash or waste that is left exposed; and even soil particles. Stormwater management can keep some of these **pollutants** out of rivers and reservoirs. Even so, surface water generally requires more treatment than well water.

The first step in treating surface water is to filter it. At the water treatment plant, filtering and sedimentation remove solid particles from the water. (Sedimentation involves adding chemicals to the water that cause the suspended solids to clump together and sink.) The water must next be treated chemically to kill harmful bacteria. Chlorine compounds are typically added to the water for this purpose. In many places, fluorine compounds are also added to the water to reduce tooth decay. Water plant operators must constantly monitor the water through each stage of treatment to be sure they are adding just the right amount of each of the chemicals they use. All this costs money.

Housing developments create hard surfaces that do not soak up rainwater and the pollution it carries. Small retention ponds, like the one above, keep storm water from flowing into streams and reservoirs. *Courtesy of Town of Aberdeen.*

impurities: materials that pollute

pollutant: anything that harms the quality of air, water, or other materials it mixes with

Water Distribution

Treated water is pumped into elevated storage tanks so that it can flow through underground pipes to all the places it will be used. Each house, school, office building, store, or factory using water from the public water system is connected to the water distribution lines. Another expense in providing a public water supply is the construction of the water lines.

A meter at the point of connection measures how much water flows out of the line and into each customer's property. These meters are read periodically, and the customer is billed for the water that has passed through the meter.

Besides distributing water to users, the water lines provide another benefit. Fire hydrants connected to the lines give firefighters ready access to water to fight fires. Public water systems need to deliver enough water for firefighting, as well as enough for residential, commercial, and industrial uses.

Sewage Collection and Treatment

The liquid wastes from houses, schools, stores, offices, and factories are potentially dangerous. If they are not treated, these wastes can contaminate water with the chemicals or bacteria they carry. To avoid contaminating drinking water, hazardous chemicals, such as oil and many industrial and cleaning products, should not be poured on the ground or down the drain.

In many areas, household drains go into septic tanks in which harmful bacteria are killed by natural processes. In these areas each house usually has its own **septic tank**. However, septic tanks cannot be used in densely populated areas or in areas where the soil will not readily absorb the water that has been treated in the tank. In these areas, wastewater should be collected in sewers, which deliver it to a sewage treatment plant.

At the sewage treatment plant, chemical and biological processes eliminate harmful chemicals and bacteria from the wastewater and separate solids from the liquid wastes. The solid material separated from sewage is called **sludge**. Properly treated sludge is safe to use for fertilizer and is often recycled in that way. Properly treated water from sewage is safe to release into rivers or lakes. It is safe to drink and becomes a part of the water supply for residents farther downstream.

Wastewater treatment plants like this one in High Point are used to remove harmful chemicals and bacteria from wastewater. *Courtesy of City of High Point.*

septic tank: a container in which wastes are broken down by bacteria

sludge: the solid material separated from sewage

Public Water Systems

Most cities and towns operate their own water supply and wastewater systems. An increasing number of counties have also begun to operate water distribution and sewage treatment facilities in unincorporated areas where wells and septic tanks cannot provide safe water and safe wastewater disposal. Some cities and counties cooperate with one another in producing water or sewage services. In a few parts of the state, special water and sewer agencies or partnerships have been created by local governments to operate water and sewer facilities for the entire area. Examples include the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Utility and the Orange Water and Sewer Authority. Other counties, such as Catawba, loan money to local municipalities so that they can extend water service to unincorporated areas.

Solid Waste Management

Everything you no longer want or need has to go somewhere. The solid wastes you generate—old newspapers, food scraps, used packaging, grass clippings—have to be disposed of safely. Chemicals from casually discarded trash can contaminate water. Garbage and trash also create a health hazard by providing a home for rats and other disease-bearing pests. Burning trash does not solve the problem of safe disposal because the smoke can pollute the air.

Local governments help solve the problem of safe disposal of solid waste. They support recycling, help collect trash and garbage, and provide sanitary landfills or

incinerators so that wastes that cannot be recycled are safely buried or burned.

But safe (and low cost) solid waste disposal also requires your cooperation and that of everyone in the community. The least expensive way to deal with waste is simply not to create it in the first place. Cutting out the use of packaging and disposable items, for example, can reduce waste considerably. Recycling and safe disposal of waste also depend on public participation.

Aluminum and tin cans can be recycled and made into new ones.
Courtesy of Orange County.

Recycling

Recycling wastes means using them as a resource to make new products. Thus, waste paper can be recycled to make new paper and old glass bottles can be recycled to make new bottles. In order to recycle materials, they must be separated—the paper from the glass, for example. Some recycling can be done at home. For instance, grass clippings and leaves can be turned into **compost** or **mulch**. One problem is that many people are not used to sorting their trash or reusing it at home, but that is changing.

Local governments encourage recycling by urging people to separate materials that can be recycled and by telling people how they can reuse materials. They also support recycling by collecting recyclable materials. Some local governments pick up materials for recycling by sending collection crews out to houses. An alternative is for local governments to operate recycling centers where people can deliver their recyclable materials.

Most of the manufacturing of new products from discarded materials is done by private industry. Paper companies use wastepaper to make new paper. Glass companies use discarded bottles to make new bottles. Local governments that collect these recyclables sell them to the manufacturing companies. The money the governments receive from these sales helps pay for the cost of collecting the materials.

Some cities and counties are also actually making recycled products themselves. Several cities and counties have begun to use yard wastes (grass clippings, leaves, chipped wood) to make compost or mulch. Local governments also support recycling by buying products made of recycled materials. By using recycled paper, for example, the governments create a greater demand for the old newspapers to sell to the companies that make recycled paper.

Governments support recycling to protect natural resources. Government officials also have a more direct interest in recycling: saving money. Burying trash in a sanitary landfill is very expensive. Burning solid wastes safely is even more expensive. Recycling is an excellent way to save money because it reduces the amount of material going into landfills.

compost: decayed material that is used as fertilizer

mulch: material spread around plants that prevents the growth of weeds and protects the soil from drying out

News...

In the

Duplin saves money with recycling

By Michael Connolly

ROSE HILL—From June to July last year, Duplin did not throw away 3.2 million pounds, or 1,635 tons of trash—rather they sold the material and gave it away, keeping it from the landfill. Enough money was made by the recycling program last year that the program broke even, and paid for a full-time and a part-time position at the recycling center.

That is what Duplin County's Recycling Coordinator, Bee Barnett, and his assistant, Peggy Murphy, said Wednesday, as he gave a tour of the facility to *The Sampson Independent*.

Large wooden pallets used for shipping, said Barnett, are given to a local business, Parker Bark, of Rose Hill. The pallets are

ground down and are used in flower-bed mulch. According to Barnett and Murphy, the pallets are free to the company. It is a win-win for everyone, Barnett said, "We don't make any money off that. That is just four tons that would not have gone to the land fill."

Other recyclable items collected by the county include, mixed paper, cardboard tubes, cardboard, plastics, and glass. Those items are not given away, said Barnett, they are sold—for an average of $90 per ton, depending on the market price. Yearly intake for the material is estimated at $147,150.

Most of Duplin's business comes from Carolina Fibre, a recycling company based in North Carolina "They take the mixed paper; they take the tubes, card-

board, and plastics 1 and 2," said Barnett.

The county does a good job of separating the material, said Barnett, so they get paid a little more than market price. However, if material like glass is mixed up in the wrong containers money is deducted from the payment.

According to the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Duplin ranks among the top counties in the state for recycling. Of the 100 counties, last year Duplin ranked 15, with a per capita recovery of 159.83 pounds of recycled material per person.

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Solid Waste Collection

Most cities and towns provide for house-to-house collection of solid waste. Once or twice a week, the "garbage truck" comes down each street and the crew empties the trash from the cans outside each house. (Usually, these are city crews and trucks. In some municipalities, however, the city hires private companies to collect solid wastes.) The truck, called a "packer," is specially designed to crush the waste and press it together tightly so that it takes up as little space as possible.

Most larger municipalities and some counties also have door-to-door recycling collections. Recycling collections are usually made on a different day and with another kind of truck. The recycling truck has bins for different sorts of material. As the recycling crew empties the containers of recyclables left outside each house, they separate the different kinds of materials. Some recycling can occur from wastes that have been mixed together. In a materials recovery operation, people sort through the solid wastes that have been collected and pick out things such as glass and cardboard. Then the remaining wastes can be passed through magnets to remove iron and through another process to remove aluminum. Materials recovery from mixed waste is done rarely because it is very expensive. Separation at the source is much less expensive and much more frequently done, but it requires active public support to be effective.

Most counties and many small towns do not provide house-to-house solid waste collection. Instead, residents of unincorporated areas either hire a private company to collect their trash or they take it to a waste collection site themselves. Bins for recyclable materials are also often placed at waste collection sites. Most counties operate

In addition to house-to-house collection, some municipalities collect waste in large dumpsters at businesses and apartment complexes. *Courtesy of Town of Carrboro.*

several waste collection sites. Sometimes the waste collection site consists of a large (usually green) box into which people put their trash. The box is emptied regularly into a very large packer truck. But if the box is not emptied often enough, or if people are not careful how they handle their trash, waste can spill out of the box. "Green box" sites can become very smelly trash-covered places and create health hazards.

An alternative is the supervised waste collection site. Supervised sites have a packer right on the site. The packer operator sees that people put their trash into the packer, which immediately crushes the trash. Both the supervision and the immediate packing of the waste help prevent the mess and hazard of "green box" sites.

Some dangerous materials require special handling. State and federal regulations prohibit radioactive wastes and hazardous chemicals from being mixed with other solid wastes. These materials (including motor oil; paints; and other household chemicals, tires, and batteries) must be kept separate and cannot be collected through the regular collection system. You, your family, and other people in the community are responsible for sorting out these materials and making sure that they are collected appropriately.

Solid Waste Disposal

Once solid waste has been collected, local governments must dispose of it. Wastes can be buried or burned. Each of these disposal methods requires special equipment and techniques to ensure public safety. In North Carolina, each county is responsible for making sure solid wastes produced in the county are disposed of safely. Most counties operate their own landfills. Some counties hire private businesses or contract with other local governments to dispose of their solid wastes.

Local governments help solve the problem of safe disposal of solid waste by operating sanitary landfills. *Courtesy of Wayne County.*

The most common way to dispose of solid waste is to bury it. Safe burial of wastes requires the construction and operation of a sanitary landfill. State and federal regulations require that solid wastes be buried only in a properly constructed landfill. Special care must be taken to ensure that the landfill does not pollute the water or air. The landfill pit must be lined with plastic so that rainwater will not carry chemicals from the waste into the ground water. Any liquids or gases that do escape from a landfill must be captured and treated before being released. Each day's waste must be covered with soil so that animals that might spread diseases are not attracted to the site. No fires are allowed. When the landfill is finally full, it must be covered more deeply with soil, planted with grass or trees, and monitored to make sure that any leaking liquids or gases are properly treated. Landfill operators direct the unloading of waste and see that it is properly covered. They must be specially trained to ensure safe handling of the wastes.

The costs of the land, of constructing the landfill, and of operating it according to state and federal regulations are considerable.

The safe burning of wastes is even more expensive. This process is called **incineration** and requires very special equipment. First, materials that will not burn (glass, metal, and rock, for example) must be sorted out. Then the burnable materials must be shredded. Special furnaces are required to burn the wastes at very high temperatures so that as many harmful chemicals as possible are destroyed by the fire. There is some smoke, however, even from a very hot, clean-burning fire. This smoke must be filtered and treated carefully to prevent air pollution.

incineration: the safe burning of wastes

To help pay these costs, many counties charge users "tipping fees" for all the waste they unload in the landfill or incinerator. Some cities and counties charge individual households or businesses for the costs of collecting and disposing of their solid waste. The more waste they produce, the more they pay. Other local governments finance solid waste collection and disposal with taxes. The public can help keep these costs as low as possible by cutting down on what they throw away, by sorting out recyclable materials from the rest of the trash, and by buying products made from recycled materials.

Parks and Recreation

Many local governments provide recreational opportunities for their residents. They build and maintain parks, which may have picnic tables, swing sets, ball fields, basketball and tennis courts, swimming pools, or other facilities. They operate recreation programs, which may include organized sports leagues, supervised swimming, instruction in crafts or games, and physical fitness programs. Parks provide safe, attractive places for people to enjoy themselves and relax. Recreation programs extend opportunities for healthful exercise and relaxation.

Many local governments provide recreational opportunities for their residents.
Courtesy of Chip Pate/Pate and Associates Marketing for Lee County Economic Development.

Parks and recreation programs are staffed by people with many different specialties. A supervised swimming program, for example, requires a staff of qualified lifeguards. Not only must they know lifesaving techniques, but they must also know how to operate the pool's filtering system and how and when to add chemicals to keep the water safe for swimming. They also need to know how to communicate well with pool users to ensure safe use of the pool.

Similarly, the recreation assistants who referee games, teach sports, or lead crafts sessions need to know not only the rules and techniques specific to that activity, but also how to communicate effectively and treat everyone fairly. Park maintenance workers use a range of skills to keep parks safe and clean. Park and recreation directors need to know about all of these operations and how to plan and coordinate them. Many directors have studied recreation administration in college.

In the

Parks and Rec: What's the future?

By Rochelle Moore

Laquita Farmer walked around the Wilson Recreation Center pool this week videotaping her children as they learned to swim.

This is the first year her 5-year-old son and 7-year-old daughter took lessons, and her first real experience of using city rec services, even though she grew up in the city.

"I've heard really good things about the rec center and the programs they have available," she said. "They've got a lot of good programs. My kids are pleased and so am I."

As Farmer sat on a bench at the pool, she didn't notice the age of the center as much as she did the quality of the swimming program. It didn't matter to her that the center is at least 50 years old and originally built for a population about half the size of Wilson today.

"They've done really good with keeping it up," Farmer said. "It serves its purpose."

For years, city leaders have considered whether to open a new recreation center in the city, with the target location being the J. Burt Gillette Athletic Complex. The long-range plan for the Recreation Department is to build a new center along with a 25- or 50-meter swimming pool, a gym, locker rooms, multi-purpose fields and tennis courts.

The Recreation Department's main administrative offices could also be located in the facility, said David Lee, city recreation director. The center is estimated to cost about $12 million, which city leaders would probably pay for through a bond.

"There's always talk about a new center and a new pool," Lee said. "At some point in time, we're going to have to address a new center and aquatics center. It's coming, it's a matter of when."

City Councilman James Johnson III says that the addition of a recreation center will be driven by the public's interest and need in future years.

"We had two facilities that were top in the state for 20 years for a town of 20,000 people and we've just outgrown everything," Johnson said, referring to the Recreation Center and the Reid Street Community Center, which were both built in the mid-1950s. "I think the use alone at the facilities show that we need more space, but that's a want and not a need. I would not be comfortable (adding a new center) unless we had a bond referendum. The rec is something that the city has to jump in and support."

The Wilson Recreation Center on Sunset Avenue and the Reid Street Community Center on Reid Street have been the two main centers used by the public for years. In addition, the city has 40 other parks or recreation locations, including Buckhorn Lake, Lake Wilson and Wiggins Mill, which have been added to the city's parks and recreation system through the years.

The purchase of the Burt Gillette property in 1999 added 113.5 acres to the city park system. The property is near Toisnot Park, which eventually could lead to connecting walking trails between the two parks.

The Gillette Athletic Complex, on Corbett Avenue, currently has six soccer fields, a playground for children with disabilities and, opening next year, four new Little League baseball fields. Development of the baseball fields started this week with an expected completion by the spring baseball season.

But still, with the city's population now nearing the 50,000 mark, more park space will be needed to provide adequate opportunities.

"The more that the city is expanding, the more we'll need to look at more park space," Lee said. "We need more park land for sure and especially if the city keeps growing like it is."

The city's Little League teams have doubled during the past few years, enrollment is up in soccer and basketball programs and gymnasium space is becoming more and more limited, Johnson said.

"Most stuff is going to be driven by what the public wants," Lee said. "The public kind of takes you to your next step. Our numbers in all our programs this summer have been packed out. All of our programs and facilities are just filled up."

In 2006, the spring Little League baseball teams had 248 players. This year, participation increased to 487 players. More than 500 youth are playing basketball and 2,375 are playing soccer.

Johnson, during a Wilson City Council meeting earlier this year, asked staff to explore the city's chances of securing a bond or floating a bond referendum for a new recreation center. That inquiry, however, was put on the back burner after city leaders learned that they would be limited in their spending because of a tight city budget.

"It was just tabled because the revaluation came back so lopsided," Johnson said. "We're just going to have to continue as we are unless we can get some support for a bond issue."

If a new center is built, city leaders would need to evaluate whether to close or keep open the city's two current recreation centers.

Susanne Pedigo of Wilson is more than happy with what the city offers now.

"We haven't done a whole lot yet because of the age of our children," Pedigo said this week from the Recreation Center, as she watched her two daughters learn how to swim. "They seem to offer a wide range of activities and with what I've seen, I've been impressed. There's art classes, gymnastics, ballet and in the summer, they have play camps. We have trouble each season figuring out what they can do because there's so many choices."

Pedigo didn't think it was necessary to add another pool, since the pools at the Recreation Center are in good condition and enjoyable for her girls.

"I guess it's aging but they don't need anything fancy," Pedigo said. "The pools look good."

Reprinted with permission from
The Wilson Daily Times, **Wilson, NC, August 2, 2008**

Buying the land for a park, landscaping it, and building park facilities are major investments for local government. Each park needs to be designed and built for heavy public use. After all, a park is a success only if people use it. But heavy use creates much wear and tear. Thus, parks also require constant maintenance. Equipment wears out and must be repaired or replaced. Keeping a park clean and in good repair costs money. Vandalism—the purposeful destruction of property—creates an even greater need for maintenance. Often a city or county does not have enough money to repair or replace park equipment that is broken before it would normally wear out.

People contribute to the success of a park by using it and by using it in ways that do not destroy the facilities or others' use and enjoyment of the park. Public cooperation is an essential part of every park and recreation program.

Police Protection

Local law enforcement officers are available to help every North Carolina resident. Except for some of the smallest towns, each municipality in the state has its own police department. Gaston County also has a police department, and Mecklenburg County gets police protection from the Charlotte police department. In the other 98 counties, sheriff's deputies provide police protection in unincorporated areas of the county and in towns without their own police department. Police officers and sheriff's deputies have similar duties and authority. In this section, we will often refer to them collectively as "police."

Police officers are required to go through specialized training. They study both criminal law (which defines illegal behavior) and constitutional law (which defines your rights). They learn how and when to use weapons and other self-defense measures. They learn how to gather information and evidence.

Police officers also study ways to communicate clearly and to understand, respect, and deal with the differences among people. In fact, communicating with people and responding to their concerns for safety are essential parts of police work. Most police officers realize that they need the respect and trust of the public to do their jobs well. The people and the police must work together to have safe communities.

Criminal Investigation

Although crimes are defined by the state legislature, most of the criminal investigation and crime prevention work in North Carolina is done by local police departments and sheriff's departments. Most criminal investigations begin when the victim or a witness calls the police. In many cities and counties, a special emergency telephone number, 911, reaches police and sheriff's departments. (Fire departments and emergency rescue squads can generally be reached through the 911 number as well.) Trained telephone operators ask the caller to describe the problem and the location of the victim.

Local law enforcement officers help keep order and ensure the safety of citizens.
Courtesy of Town of Waxhaw.

If the crime is in progress, if the victim is injured, if the crime is very serious, or if a suspect is still on the scene, the **dispatcher** will radio police to respond immediately. The caller will usually be asked to stay on the line to inform responding officers about changes in the situation and help direct them to the location.

Responding officers will stop any additional injury from happening and will make sure that emergency medical services are provided. The police will also arrest any suspects on the scene, interview the victim and witnesses about what happened, and inspect the scene.

After the responding officer interviews victims and witnesses and inspects the scene, he or she will write an **incident report** describing the crime and any suspects. Responding officers turn in their incident reports before they leave work each day. Their supervisors review these reports and decide which crimes should be investigated further. The most serious crimes are usually assigned to detectives who specialize in criminal investigation.

Criminal investigations seek to identify the person(s) suspected of the crime, to gather evidence that can be used in court to convict the suspect, to arrest the suspect, and to recover any stolen property. Public cooperation is essential to effective criminal investigations. In the first place, police rely on victims and witnesses to report crimes. Unless people are willing to tell police about incidents that appear to involve a crime, most crimes will never come to police attention. Moreover, most suspects are identified from witness accounts. Much of the work of criminal investigation is interviewing victims and witnesses to obtain as complete an account of the incident as possible. People must be willing and able to tell police what they saw if police investigations are to be successful.

Most criminal investigation and crime prevention work in North Carolina is done by local police departments and sheriff's departments. *Courtesy of Town of Black Mountain.*

Crime Prevention

A large number of police activities are intended to help prevent crime. Police patrols (usually by car; sometimes on foot, bike, or horse) help discourage crime by making police visible throughout the community. Police sometimes concentrate their patrols in areas where there have been frequent reports of crime. In addition to patrols, police attempt to prevent crime by informing people about ways to protect their property and themselves. Police also help people learn nonviolent ways to solve arguments and find ways to avoid getting involved in criminal activities. After all, police cannot be everywhere at once. Crime prevention depends on the entire community.

Dispatchers radio police and EMS personnel in order to get help to citizens faster and more efficiently. *Courtesy of Catawba County.*

dispatcher: a person who gives emergency workers information so that those workers can respond to emergencies

incident report: a report that a police officer writes describing a crime or other problem situation

Police roll out truancy program

By Michael Abramowitz

The Greenville Police Department has added new tools to its crime prevention toolbox in coordination with the Greenville City Council and Pitt County Schools, Chief William Anderson said this week.

The new GPD truancy program, designed to return students who skip school to their classrooms, became effective when classes resumed this week.

In addition, Greenville's new youth protection ordinance, which will become effective on Monday, imposes a curfew on juveniles—anyone under the age of 16. It will be unlawful for them to be present or remain in any public place or at any establishment within the city during curfew hours unless they qualify under a list of exceptions explained in the ordinance.

"Of course, the curfew ordinance and truancy program won't solve all crime problems, but they can be used to solve some," Anderson said.

Both allow for potentially harsh consequences, but Anderson said law enforcement's role is to act as part of a committed relationship among schools, government, families and the community at large.

"I think parents will see all the information we share with them about watching out for their children and making sure they are in school and understand that it is helpful to them, rather than from a punitive point of view," he said.

How it works, who is affected

State statutes define a truant as a juvenile between the ages of 7 and 16 who is absent from school without an excuse.

When law enforcement officers make contact with possible truants, Anderson said, they will interview them within strict guidelines that respect privacy rights, to determine whether the child likely is truant. If so, the officer will take the child to the principal of the school where the youngster is determined to be enrolled.

Pitt County Schools also has procedures for documenting truancies, informing parents of their responsibilities and legal obligations, and working with them to keep students in school and productive, said Travis Davis, executive director of student services for the school district.

Further steps, including criminal charges, are available to school administrators and officers who believe parents have been negligent.

Juveniles are more directly accountable, however, for curfew violations, according to state statutes. A juvenile who violates curfew provisions could be found guilty of a misdemeanor and possibly be judged as delinquent, the ordinance states.

Three-pronged approach

Anderson explained the initiatives as a three-pronged approach to finding solutions to juvenile crime.

The first goal is to keep youngsters away from situations where they might become victims of crime after dark, he said. The second is to prevent youths from becoming engaged in criminal activities during curfew hours. Finally, the truancy program keeps children in school who might otherwise become engaged in risky behaviors or dangerous places during daylight hours.

"We want to use all the tools we have to deal with crime issues, so we reach into this huge toolbox we have. The youth protection ordinance and the truancy program are more tools in that box, and others will emerge as we evaluate all the things we do," Anderson said.

Along with the Weed and Seed program for community redevelopment, he said, they are part of the overall goal of the City Council to make Greenville a safer community. He said officers and administrators must continually change tactics and strategies to deal with crime issues.

"We can't be one-dimensional; we have to think out of the box and take a multi-dimensional approach to dealing with all our issues," the police chief said. "We now have these new programs to go with our Area Policing Plan, the Police Athletic League, the Gang Prevention and Education program and more; all part of our overall effort to maintain a safe community."

It fits schools' approach

Anderson found favor with Pitt County Schools for his efforts against youth truancy.

"We're supportive and appreciative of anything that GPD can do to help bring the kids to school," said Heather Mayo, schools spokeswoman.

The school district follows comprehensive procedures established by the state to remediate issues that interfere with school attendance, Mayo said.

"No matter how many great things we're doing in the schools and the classrooms . . . if the students are not in class, it doesn't do them any good," Mayo said. "We try to do all we can to work with parents and keep kids in school before we turn to the magistrates for solutions."

Jesse Hinton, director of safety and security for Pitt schools, said he sees the practical value of the new initiatives.

"We often talk about the concept that it takes a whole village to raise a child. With the police and other entities working with school officials, that gives us more eyes looking at children, encouraging them to be in school. So my expectation is that with more adults involved in kids' lives there will be less truancy," Hinton said.

Spreading the word

Public awareness and transparency, Anderson said, are vital to the success of law enforcement efforts, because cooperation among stakeholders is required to achieve their shared goals.

"It's important that we do as much as we can to inform the entire community before we start having contacts with juveniles, and even after that we must

work with parents to determine why their children are out on the streets at such times," he said.

In addition to explaining his intentions, Anderson said he intends to spread the word into the entire community by sending letters to all churches and including flyers with every water bill.

"(Enforcement) will not come as a surprise to anyone, whether in the most affluent neighborhood or the poorest," he said.

Anderson talked about the likelihood that some residents or interest groups will perceive that the youth protection ordinance and truancy program are targeted toward particular segments of the community or particular ethnic groups.

"The reality is that we will also see more truancy and kids out and about late at night in some areas and more police presence there than in other areas, and some folks are going to have a problem with that," Anderson said. "But we will enforce the ordinance consistently across the board."

Anderson said there is no alternative that he knows of or has heard about that can accomplish what the youth protection curfew ordinance can.

"Right now, nothing is being done," he said. "All parents, myself included, have a responsibility to know where their children are and what they are doing. I can't leave that responsibility to someone else. I have to step up to the plate and do what's right for my child. So this is better than doing nothing."

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***The Daily Reflector*, Greenville, NC, August 28, 2008**

Who Benefits from Public Services?

User-focused public services have both individual and community-wide benefits. If only the customer benefits, private business can provide the service. People will buy a service because they want it. No public money or authority is needed. Local governments provide services when public officials decide there are important community-wide benefits. These include the benefits of seeing that everyone has access to essential services, as well as improvements for the community as a whole.

Discussion Questions

1. Where does your drinking water at home come from? What is the source of the water? How is it treated? Who treats it? How is the water distributed? Who distributes it? How does your family dispose of wastewater from your house?

2. How does your family get rid of garbage, trash, and other solid waste? Do you recycle any of these materials? How does your local government help you recycle or dispose of solid waste?

3. When was the last time you used a city or county park or recreation program? What do you like best about your local parks? What would you change about your city or county parks and recreation program?

4. What local government provides police protection to the area where you live? Have you ever called on the police for help? What did they do in response to your request?

5. Which of the services listed in the chart on page 38 does your county provide or pay for? For each of these, does the county carry out the service itself or hire others to produce the service?

6. Which of the services listed in the chart on page 38 does your municipality provide or pay for? For each of these, does the municipality carry out the service itself or hire others to produce the service?

7. Which services listed in the chart on page 38 are provided jointly by county and municipal governments where you live? Who carries out these services?

8. Does any other government, private business, or community organization provide any of the services listed in the chart on page 38? What are they? How is the service provided by these organizations different than it would be if local government provided it?

9. What services would you like local government to provide differently than it does now?

5. Improving the Community

MAKING the community a better place to live is a major goal of local governments. In one way, of course, all public services help improve the community. As you learned in Chapter 4, user-focused services (such as waste disposal and criminal investigation) help not only the people who use the service directly but also their neighbors and even people who only work or shop in or travel through the community. Most public services help both people who use them directly and the community at large.

Planting flowers and trees in public areas is one way local government helps make the entire community better.
Courtesy of Town of Southern Pines Public Service Division (both pictures).

This chapter focuses on services that do not have direct users. These services are specifically intended to help make the entire community better. Planting flowers in public areas, encouraging economic development, and improving human relations are examples of these "community-focused" services. They are intended to change the physical, economic, or social setting in which people live and work. These services are designed for the benefit of an entire neighborhood or other community. This chapter discusses programs that improve physical conditions, economic conditions, and social conditions in the community.

Governments can support community improvement in three ways:

- by delivering public service,
- by encouraging private action, and
- by regulating private behavior.

In the public service approach to litter control a government finds someone to pick up the litter. (A government may assign its employees to pick up litter. Or it may recruit **volunteers** to pick up litter.) Governments can also help control litter by encouraging people not to throw trash away in public places. ("Keep Our City Beautiful" campaigns are an example of this alternative.) Finally, governments can regulate private behavior by making littering illegal and imposing fines on those who litter.

This chapter focuses on the first two approaches: public service and public encouragement of private action as ways to make the community better. Chapter 6 addresses government regulation of private behavior.

The Community's Physical Condition

Local governments seek to change or protect the physical condition of their communities. To do this, local governments establish programs to protect people and property from natural hazards and pests, as well as programs to make their communities more attractive places to live and work. Volunteers or nonprofit organizations often work with local governments to support community improvement.

In many places, local governments build and maintain drainage ditches or levees to help prevent flooding. Coastal towns have programs to replenish the sand on eroded beaches. Cities in the piedmont and mountains have programs to remove snow and ice from their streets. These services are typically carried out by the local government's public works department.

Counties throughout the state have programs to control mosquitoes, rats, stray dogs, and other potentially harmful animals. The public health department sprays for mosquitoes and poisons rats. Many local governments also have an animal control office. Voluntary animal protection societies often contract with local government to operate shelters for dogs, cats, and other stray animals and to encourage responsible pet ownership.

Historic preservation programs identify and protect buildings and areas that have special significance in a community. These programs encourage pride in the community and its heritage. The programs also prevent old buildings and neighborhoods from becoming run-down and help renovate those that are run-down. Local governments support historic preservation in several ways. Many governments have sponsored building inventories to identify and describe buildings of historic or

Citizens like these in Wayne County volunteer to pick up roadside litter to help beautify their community.
Courtesy of Wayne County.

volunteers: people who donate their time and effort

Most municipalities have programs to remove snow and ice from their streets to make them safer for citizens.
Courtesy of Town of Zebulon.

architectural interest. Publication of the inventory may encourage the owners of listed buildings to maintain them or even restore them to their original appearance.

Local governments can also provide incentives for maintaining and restoring historic buildings, such as making low-interest loans available. Banks or other local companies may also join with local government in support of historic preservation or other efforts to prevent the deterioration or to encourage the restoration of neighborhoods.

Preservation of historic buildings and homes like these in Ayden encourages pride in the community and its heritage.
Courtesy of Town of Ayden.

Sometimes buildings are in such poor condition that they are beyond repair and unsafe to use. Local governments can buy these buildings and demolish them to remove the hazard.

Government beautification programs include planting trees and flowers and installing public art displays, flags, and holiday decorations. Efforts like these are often paid for by counties or municipalities and carried out by government employees or volunteers. Sometimes, however, the government might hire a private company to do the work or assign the work to people who have been convicted of driving while intoxicated or other offenses.

> The federal government provides financial assistance to local governments to help clean up environmental hazards, as in this story from the Greensboro *News-Record:* "City Earns EPA Grant for Cleanup" (www.news-record.com/node/5398).

Local governments also encourage garden clubs or civic organizations to help with community beautification and litter control. The general public can be encouraged to help, too. Campaigns publicize the benefits of an attractive community and urge people to "pick up, paint up, fix up." Contests to see who can pick up the most litter or produce the most beautiful flowerbeds provide a way to recognize outstanding efforts. Often, much of the work to improve the physical condition of a community is done by volunteers—people who give their time and effort to making their neighborhoods safer and more attractive.

The Community's Economic Condition

Local governments are interested in attracting and keeping businesses in their communities because businesses provide jobs and pay taxes. The people in a community need jobs to earn income. Taxes paid by businesses can help reduce the taxes residents have to pay to support local government. For these reasons, many local governments seek to play an important part in shaping the community's economy.

Many cities and counties support economic development by helping fund the local **chamber of commerce**. Chambers of commerce provide information about communities to people who may be interested in doing business there. Links to local chamber of commerce websites for cities and counties throughout North Carolina are listed at www.ncchamber.net.

chamber of commerce: a group of business people formed to promote business interests in the community

Development plans are under way in Richlands: New homes, shopping center, sidewalks in works

By Amanda Hickey

More than 100 new homes, a new shopping center and new sidewalks and curbs are in the works as the town of Richlands heads out of a dormant growth period and into a busy development stage.

"We're looking at a lot of growth in the next several years . . . we'd been stagnant for several years," said Town Administrator Gregg Whitehead.

The wastewater moratorium, which was lifted by the Division of Water Quality in June, allowed Richlands an immediate 65,000 gallons per day wastewater flow allocation from ON-WASA. The allocations, however, will not come until the wastewater rehabilitation begins. After a new wastewater treatment plant is built and the rehabilitation begins, Richlands will have gained a total of 130,000 gallons per day in wastewater flow allocation. The moratorium, which was based on high flows in 2003 prohibited new connections to the 250,000 gallons-per-day wastewater system.

Development plans, however, are underway in the town of about 1,071.

Currently in the works is Trifield Estates, which will bring about 85 homes. Carolina South Builders also plans to develop 36 lots for single-family homes, and a shopping center is in the works by Jones Builders, Whitehead said.

"You know the saying, 'If you don't grow you die.' As we grow, we get increased tax pay, so it's less of a burden on current residents and businesses," Whitehead said.

Attempts to reach Rhc Construction and Realty, which is developing Trifield Estates, were unsuccessful.

Carolina South Builders will develop the single-family homes off of Com-fort Highway and Wilmington Street. Prices will run between $130,000 and $175,000, Vice President Danny Whaley said.

"We're in the development stage, getting permits and, of course, waiting for the OK for the sewer allocations from (the Onslow Water and Sewer Authority)," Whaley said.

Construction will not begin until the permits and sewer allocations fall into place.

"We're getting our plans and everything in line now. I hope to be able to break ground in two or three months," Whaley said, explaining that it will take six months to develop the land.

Marketing the homes may take a bit longer.

"It's hard to say (how long it will take). Two years ago I would have said we could be out of there in a year and a half. I would like to say we'd be out of there in a year and a half to two years, but that's all market driven," Whaley said.

Whitehead expects to see more growth coming to Richlands, especially now that the sewer moratorium, which was in place for four years, has been lifted.

"Richlands has a lot to offer in terms of community, a place to live. We have what I term rustic charm. We have good people . . . a good sense of community, the best schools in the county and I think if you walked our streets you'd see they're pretty peaceful. We have low crime surrounded by nice farm land. We're just a nice place to live," he said.

Whitehead believes Richlands will remain true to its past.

"Growth is going to happen and I think the best we can do is manage it, plan it and turn it into our view of what we think our town should be," he said.

Many improvements are in the works as well, Whitehead said.

"We're still going to pursue upgrading and improving the community building. It's an ongoing project, we're going to do it in stages," he said.

So far, the community building has received about $30,000 worth of work, including a new roof and an upgraded heating ventilation and air conditioning system.

Whitehead expects another $60,000 to $70,000 to go into the building for interior work, including enlarging and updating the bathrooms, improving the kitchen and resurfacing the wood surfaces.

"We're going to bring it back to its 1935 state as best as possible," he said, explaining that it is used often for parties and receptions. "That was the town's true community center some time ago. Some people remember going to Saturday night dances there."

Curbs and sidewalks are also being eyed for improvements.

"It's a balancing act of what should come first," he said. Neither will be coming for about a year.

Pete Jones Road and Foy Street are also on the list of things to improve, Whitehead said.

While Pete Jones Road has a "ripple effect," Foy Street has seen the wear and tear that comes with utility work and serving two schools, he said.

The work, however, will not be definite until next year.

"Then we'll have an idea of where we can go and, of course, it'll be a new budget year," Whitehead said.

Reprinted with permission from
The Daily News, Jacksonville, NC, July 26, 2008

More than 75 North Carolina counties have formed economic development commissions to improve their local economies. Economic development commissions attract new industries and other businesses and support existing business and industry. The commissions collect information about the local economy and work force, advertise the advantages of their communities, and help businesses organize support they may need from local government and others. For example, the economic development commission may work with businesses, local schools, and community colleges to help the schools and colleges develop job training needed by the businesses. Or the economic development commission may work with a **business development corporation** to create an industrial park or to renew a downtown area.

Examples of special efforts that help make a community more attractive to businesses and industry include preparing property for development by installing water lines, sewers, and roads; constructing buildings; offering low-interest loans; and coordinating job training with schools and colleges.

Cities often focus economic development efforts on downtowns or other areas with empty buildings. They may work with counties or others. They may also work with other cities to encourage economic development. For example, more than 90 North Carolina cities that operate electric utilities have joined together in an association called ElectriCities. You can read about their economic development activities at www.electricities.com.

Because tourism is a major part of the economy in many parts of North Carolina, some cities and counties dedicate considerable efforts to make their communities more attractive to tourists. Tourism is especially important to the economy of the mountains, the coast, and the sand hills in the south central piedmont. In addition, all of the largest cities in the state actively seek to host conventions, adding another aspect to the tourism industry. The 43 cities that belong to the North Carolina Association of Conventions and Visitors Bureaus sponsor a website (http://visit.nc.org) and conduct other promotional activities to attract paying visitors to their communities.

Special efforts to promote tourism include festivals like Spivey's Corners' "Hollerin' Contest" and outdoor dramas like Boone's "Horn in the West." Advertising is important, too. Brochures and maps identify interesting places and events to entice visitors. Coliseums, stadiums, museums, and arts centers also help attract tourists. Cities and counties support these places, in part at least, for the tourist business they generate.

Historic sites are major tourist attractions throughout North Carolina. One benefit of historic preservation programs is that they help develop and maintain areas of historic interest to tourists. Similarly, community beautification, recreation, and arts programs that local governments support for the benefit of their own residents frequently help attract tourists as well. These same features may also help attract new businesses and industries.

Revitalizing downtown districts can help attract and keep new businesses. *Courtesy of Jennifer R. Staley, Town of Asheboro Parks & Recreation.*

business development corporation: a group of people legally organized as a corporation to encourage economic development

Towns along the coast have encouraged development of vacation facilities. This attracts visitors who spend money and boost the local economy. *Courtesy of Town of Manteo.*

Music and food attract people to events like Yanceyville's "Bright Leaf Hoedown." *Courtesy of Ann Gunn Everitt.*

In addition, an abundant supply of safe water, adequate sewage disposal capacity, good police and fire protection, good schools, and other public services that support a high quality of life are important to business and industry leaders who are looking for new locations for facilities. Thus, good "user-focused" services also contribute to economic development.

Social Relationships in the Community

Local governments also work to improve social relations in their communities. Some local governments have countywide or citywide programs to promote understanding among different racial, ethnic, or religious groups and to encourage fair treatment of all people in the community. These efforts may be organized through a human relations commission. Another approach concentrates on improving relations among people in a particular neighborhood. Local governments support these efforts through community action agencies, through neighborhood or residents' associations, or even through police community-relations offices.

In North Carolina, most human relations commissions were established to improve race relations. Even today, some relationships among North Carolinians of African, European, and Native American descent continue conflicts that began centuries ago. European settlers fought with Native Americans (whom the English colonists called "Indians") for control of the land. Some Europeans began to bring captive Africans here as slaves.

Myths about differences between races and attitudes about European superiority that began during the Indian wars and during slavery continue to be learned and believed by some people. After the Civil War, slavery was abolished and the former slaves became full citizens. African American North Carolinians participated actively in politics and were elected to state and local public offices, as well as to Congress. However, many whites in North Carolina continued to fear and look down on the former slaves (and on the few Native Americans still living in the state). In the late nineteenth century, a white majority in the General Assembly passed laws requiring segregation of the races. These minorities were denied basic civil rights, and government officials even overlooked violence against them. By 1900, few of North Carolina's African American or Native American citizens were able to vote or hold public office.

Not until the 1960s did African American and Native American North Carolinians regain their basic civil rights including the right to vote. Federal voting-rights laws ended **poll taxes** and other practices used to keep people from voting. Only then was segregation ended. Many white North Carolinians supported ending segregation and assuring civil rights for all North Carolinians. However, some whites continued to fear African Americans and Native Americans and to feel superior to them. At the same time, some African Americans and Native Americans continued to resent whites because of a long history of discrimination and mistreatment.

poll tax: tax people had to pay in order to be allowed to vote

Human relations commissions were established primarily to find ways to ease racial tensions and to eliminate racial discrimination. The commissions hold public meetings to discuss potential problems among racial groups. Much of their work entails encouraging people of different races to talk and listen to one another. The commissions try to help people realize that cultural differences do not need to be threatening. An important step in eliminating racism involves getting past stereotypes and recognizing each person as an individual.

In recent years, new **immigrants** have come to North Carolina especially from Latin America and Asia. In fact, since 2000 North Carolina has had one of the fastest growing Spanish-speaking populations in the United States. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, North Carolina was home to over 614,000 foreign-born people in 2006, making up 6.9 percent of the state's total population. Nearly 60 percent of the foreign-born population living in North Carolina emigrated from Latin America. Sometimes immigrants are the subject of discrimination or abuse by others who fear or resent them because of their race, origin, or language.

immigrant: a person who comes to live in a country from another country

For more information about immigrants in North Carolina, see "Immigrants in North Carolina: A Fact Sheet" (www.sog.unc.edu/pubs/electronicversions/pg/pgfal08/article4.pdf).

Human relations commissions also deal with problems of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or gender. For example, there is a growing variety of religious affiliations in North Carolina. Protestants remain the largest group, but there are also Catholics and people of other Christian denominations, as well as Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and those of other religions and no religious affiliation living in the state. Human relations commissions try to help promote people's understanding of religions other than their own and to prevent acts of religious discrimination.

A somewhat different social problem concerns relationships between women and men. Many deeply held attitudes about the roles of men and women developed when almost all women were married and worked full time at home. In recent years these social patterns have changed. Now most women work outside the home. Many women are single heads of households. Laws and social expectations about how men should treat women are changing. Married women now have the same property rights as their husbands, for example. Domestic violence is no longer treated as a "family" matter but is now a crime of assault, which means the police and the courts are now responsible for domestic violence cases. Human relations commissions help set up ways for men and women who are concerned about these changes to communicate with each other in order to understand the issues and each other better.

Local governments may also work with residents of a neighborhood to help build trust and a sense of responsibility. Crime and other social problems are often greatest in areas where people do not trust their neighbors or do not believe that they can or should do anything for each other. Community Action Programs and other

neighborhood-based programs help people work together on projects to benefit the neighborhood. Residents' councils can promote cooperation and improvement in public housing or help fight youth drug abuse.

Police can also encourage neighborhood cooperation. For example, Greensboro police set up Police Neighborhood Resource Centers in the city's public housing communities. Each of these police mini-stations had two officers permanently assigned there. The officers patrolled the housing communities on foot and got to know the residents. In addition to criminal investigations and emergency response services, these officers helped residents get the social services and health services they needed. Some services were even provided right in the mini-station. The officers also organized recreation for neighborhood youth. As a result of the police officers' efforts, people began to trust each other and the police, increasing residents' willingness to report crimes, ask for police assistance, and assist the police. Increased cooperation with the police reduces crime and makes the neighborhoods safer for all the residents.

Police help encourage community cooperation by getting to know the residents and helping them work together to make their neighborhood a safer place.
Courtesy of Downtown Goldsboro Development Corporation/City of Goldsboro.

Deciding What to Do

People sometimes disagree about what local government should do to improve the community. One source of disagreement is differences about how much change is desirable. Some people might want more drainage ditches or beach erosion–control efforts, but others might want to limit human interference with natural drainage or beach movement. Another source of disagreement concerns the relative importance of various public programs. Some people place high value on an attractive community and want to see public funds spent on improving community appearance. Others may argue that public funds should be spent on other public services that they consider more important. People might also have differing opinions about the kinds of new industry that government should encourage, or even whether additional economic development is good for their community. People can also have different views about desirable social relations in the community.

In the

Downtown planners asked for realistic plans

By Don Worthington

Architects working to plan downtown Fayetteville's future were given a shot of reality Friday by residents—dreaming is fine, but focused ideas that can be developed, not sit on the shelf, are needed.

"We have been overplanned and underdeveloped for years," Fayetteville businessman David Wilson said. "People are jaded by plans."

"This process is like shooting a shotgun instead of rifle," said Milt Wofford, a member of the Public Works Commission and former City Council member.

Wilson's and Wofford's comments came during the third and final visioning session conducted by the Urban Design Assistance Team.

Nine architects from across the state are updating a downtown plan created by landscape architect Robert Marvin in 1996.

Bill Wilson, leader of the team, said the architects are using Marvin's plan, results of the visioning sessions and interviews with more than 300 people to develop a "Fayetteville plan" to help guide future use of 3,000 downtown acres—roughly an area bounded by Fayetteville State University, Martin Luther King Jr. Freeway, Eastern Boulevard, the Cape Fear River and Cross Creek.

The results will be presented at 8 a.m. Wednesday at the Airborne & Special Operations Museum.

Wofford and Wilson offered some ideas to the architects.

Wofford said downtown Fayetteville needs to decide what it wants to be and then aggressively go after it.

If downtown wants to become a cultural center, then Fayetteville needs to have a world-class magnet school for the arts in the downtown, he said.

Several of the architects are looking at downtown as a cultural center.

Wilson said the architects also need to revisit the idea of a downtown baseball park. A ballpark would give people a reason to come downtown, he said. Marvin proposed a stadium at the corner of Russell and Gillespie streets.

The site is now being developed as the Cumberland County jail.

Other ideas suggested Friday were building a historical museum, taking advantage of the area's natural resources such as the Cape Fear River, preserving the city's historical resources, building a one-stop senior center and converting a vacant hotel into senior housing.

Another suggestion was constructing more high-rises to attract economic development.

Several speakers suggested a change in attitude is needed to help move the architects' work from ideas to reality.

George Breece, chairman of the city's All America committee, said the architects needed to take an eraser and remove all the boundaries from their study.

The boundaries create an us-versus-them mentality that makes change difficult, he said.

John Spiesberger said the city needs to look at the 3,000-acre study area and find ways to consolidate properties. The numerous small parcels make development difficult, he said.

"Developers go outside the city because there is not a tract big enough downtown to build on," Spiesberger said.

Proposals for public programs to improve the community are usually presented long before any action is taken. Often, an initial discussion at a meeting of the city council or board of county commissioners introduces a proposal to both elected officials and the public. Proposals may be developed by the city or county manager, by other staff members, by appointed advisory boards, by elected officials, or by private citizens.

News reporters play an important role in spreading word of a new proposal to the public. Stories in newspapers or on the radio or television inform people in the community about the proposal. Groups of people with similar interests may also pay particular attention to the topics discussed by the governing board and alert their members when an issue of particular concern comes up. For example, the local real estate agents' association and environmental protection groups like the Sierra Club might both be interested in a proposed change in drainage ditches, although for different reasons. The real estate agents might support the plan in order to protect buildings or to create more building sites. On the other hand, the environmental protection groups might oppose the plan because they fear it would harm wildlife or water quality.

proposal: a suggestion put forward for consideration or approval

People who favor or oppose a proposal can express their concerns about it in various ways. They may write blogs, send letters to the editor of their local newspaper, or give interviews to television reporters. They may speak or send e-mails to friends and to members of groups with whom they share common interests. They may speak at public meetings or talk to the city or county manager or other staff members. Most importantly, however, they must communicate their concerns to members of the local government's governing board. The elected representatives on the governing board have the authority and the responsibility to decide whether or not to approve the proposal. People call or write their elected representatives and present **petitions** signed by many voters to express their opinions about a proposal. According to North Carolina's "Open Meetings Law," the governing board's meetings must be open to the public. Thus, reporters can cover the debates and publicize the arguments for and against proposed programs. **Proponents** and **opponents** can attend these meetings and express their opinions to elected officials.

Public hearings are one way local governments gauge public opinion regarding community issues. *Courtesy of Downtown Goldsboro Development Corporation/City of Goldsboro.*

Often, proposals are changed to reflect the concerns of opponents while continuing to meet the most important objectives of the proponents. Sometimes, however, elected officials are unable or unwilling to adopt a program that pleases everyone. Opponents who feel strongly about a planned program may continue to try to prevent it even after it has been adopted. They might file a lawsuit, asking the courts to stop work on the program. Or they might campaign against elected board members who voted for the program, hoping to elect others who will vote to stop the program. Those who supported the proposal are likely to continue their interest in it and to go on backing the members of the board who voted for the plan.

petition: a request for government action signed by a number of voters who support the same request

proponent: one who is in favor of something

opponent: one who is against something

Once a program has been authorized by the governing board, local government employees begin to carry it out. Many approaches to community betterment also require active public cooperation to succeed. The organized cooperation of businesses, community groups, schools, and other parts of the community is very important for many community improvement activities. For example, programs that are designed to encourage people to fix up their property, pick up litter, or work with their neighbors to improve community relations all depend on the people in a community for their success.

Discussion Questions

1. What programs does your city or county have to improve its physical condition?

2. What programs does your city or county have to improve its economic condition?

3. What programs does your city or county have to improve its social condition?

4. How could you, your family, or your school help with these improvement programs?

6. Regulating Harmful Behavior

ONE OF the most powerful tools local governments have to improve their communities is the authority to regulate harmful behavior within their jurisdictions. North Carolina state law gives counties and municipalities authority to regulate various activities to protect people from harm. For example, local governments can pass "leash laws" requiring owners to control their dogs, thereby reducing the danger of people being bitten. Local governments can adopt building restrictions to prevent people from constructing buildings in areas that are likely to be flooded. City governments set speed limits and other regulations for traffic on city streets.

What kinds of behavior do North Carolina cities and counties frequently regulate? How do they enforce these regulations? Who decides what behavior is likely to be harmful enough to need regulation? How are these decisions made? This chapter will answer these questions.

Traffic signals help prevent accidents at busy intersections.
Courtesy of City of Concord.

In the

Cameras credited with cutting crashes

By Bruce Siceloff

Say what you will about those ruthless robot red-light cameras that send you $50 traffic tickets with photographic proof that your car ran a red light.

New numbers in Raleigh say that, thanks to red-light cameras installed at 11 bad intersections five years ago, we're sending fewer people to the hospital these days.

Right-angle "T-bone" crashes have fallen by 83 percent at the intersections since 2003, when Raleigh installed cameras to catch drivers who run red lights there.

The crash count fell from 337 in the four years before cameras to 58 in the four years after.

"The numbers we're looking at here in Raleigh show an increase in safety at the intersections where we've installed them," said Jed Niffenegger, a senior transportation engineer who oversees Raleigh's cameras.

That's a steep drop in one of the worst kinds of crashes that happen when cars collide at intersections. A driver has a green light, another runs a red light— and one gets hit broadside.

Some critics have said that red-light cameras actually cause more crashes.

A national, seven-city study of red-light cameras in 2004 found a 15 percent increase in rear-end collisions, along with a 25 percent drop in T-bone crashes. The overall numbers were higher for rear-enders, so the combined number of rear-end and right-angle crashes stayed about the same.

But rear-enders cause less damage and far fewer injuries, said Forrest Council, a senior researcher at the UNC Highway Safety Research Center in Chapel Hill, who took part in the national study. Researchers saw a healthy drop in crash injuries.

"If you get hit in an angle crash on the driver side, you can actually get hit by [your own] car buckling in on you," Council said. "It's much more severe than a rear-end crash."

When green lights turn yellow at intersections where cameras are installed, drivers are a bit more likely to hit the brakes to avoid getting ticketed for running a red light. So they're more likely to get smacked from behind by somebody tailgating them.

Niffenegger did not have complete local numbers on rear-end wrecks, but he said it appeared that eight of Raleigh's camera intersections had about two more rear-enders per year than they did before the cameras were installed. Other intersections did not show an increase.

Raleigh has focused its red-light cameras on busy intersections where there were many T-bone crashes in the past. Niffenegger considers the program successful for reducing serious crashes, even with the increase in rear-enders.

"Usually that's a trade-off we're willing to live with, because of the severity of those angle crashes," he said.

Raleigh's camera program, called Safelight, has issued more than 89,000 tickets since 2003. The $50 violation does not affect a driver's traffic record or insurance costs.

Most of the proceeds from ticket payments go to the company that handles the cameras, with a modest amount forwarded to the Wake County schools. Affiliated Computer Services Inc., based in Dallas, this month won a three-year contract to manage Raleigh's Safelight program for $795,000 a year.

Regulating Personal Behavior

Governments regulate personal behavior that threatens people's ability to live and work together in safety and security. Many of the laws against disruptive behavior are made by the state General Assembly. For example, state laws declare certain acts to be **crimes**. Crimes are offenses against all of the people of North Carolina, not just the victim who is harmed directly by the act. State laws also provide rules for the safe operation of cars and trucks on the state's highways. State laws apply to the entire state.

crime: an act that is forbidden by law; an offense against all of the people of the state, not just the victim of the act

Local governments also have the responsibility to determine what kind of behavior they want to regulate within their jurisdictions. But there are limits to their authority to regulate. Local government regulations must not violate either the state or federal constitution, and local governments must have authority for their regulations from the state of North Carolina. Local governments in North Carolina have broad authority to regulate behavior that creates a public nuisance and threatens the public health, safety, or welfare. Other kinds of local regulation require special acts of authorization by the General Assembly.

Burning of household trash, prohibited by both state law and local ordinance, led to this fire in a Wadesboro neighborhood.
Photography by Marlene Tanner, The Express News.

Behavior that is acceptable in one community may be regulated as a nuisance in another community. For example, while some local governments have ordinances that require dog owners to keep their dogs penned or on a leash, some do not. Some cities and towns have ordinances regulating the loudness and/or the time of noisy behavior in residential areas. Some local governments prohibit burning trash or leaves. For example, see Wadesboro's ordinance on open burning on page 67. Views about the seriousness of the harm caused by an activity often vary from place to place across North Carolina.

Views about the harmfulness of an activity also change over time. For example, many cities and towns in North Carolina used to require stores to be closed all day on Sunday. Over the past 40 years, most of those ordinances have been repealed. In many parts of the state, more people wanted to shop on Sunday, and more merchants wanted to sell on Sunday. Fewer people believed it was wrong to conduct business on Sunday (or, even if they believed it was wrong, they did not believe that the government should keep others from shopping on Sunday). Not everyone agreed, however. Often, as change occurs, some people continue to hold on to their old views of an activity, while others come to see its harmfulness quite differently.

Many local governments have now banned smoking in government buildings, restaurants, stores, and other public places.

Another example is the controversy over regulation of smoking in public places. The old view was that smoking was not a public problem. In fact, the use of tobacco was even seen by some North Carolinians as a sort of patriotic duty. Tobacco was North Carolina's chief crop. Much of the state's economy depended on raising tobacco, wholesaling it, and manufacturing cigarettes and other tobacco products. This traditional view began to be challenged as medical researchers linked tobacco smoke to cancer, heart disease, and breathing disorders. Studies showed that nonsmokers' health could be harmed by breathing others' second-hand smoke. This research increased the conviction among many people that smoking should be prohibited in public places. And as fewer and fewer people in the United States smoke, tobacco has also become a smaller part of the state's economy.

Wadesboro Code

Chapter 94: Fire Prevention, Explosives; Fireworks
Fire Hazards § 94.01 Open burning; control and prohibitions.

No person shall cause, suffer, allow or permit open burning of refuse or other combustible material except as may be allowed in compliance with divisions (A) through (F) of this section, or except by a permit issued by the town, or by a permit issued by the North Carolina Board of Water and Air Resources. The following types of open burning are permissible as specified if burning is not prohibited by ordinances and regulations of governmental entities having jurisdiction. The authority to conduct open burning under the provision of this section does not exempt or excuse a person from the consequences, damages or injuries which may result from such conduct nor does it excuse or exempt any person from complying with all applicable laws, ordinances, regulations, and orders of the governmental entities having jurisdiction even though the open burning is conducted in compliance with this section:

(A) Fires purposely set for the instruction and training of public and industrial firefighting personnel.

(B) Fires purposely set to agricultural lands for disease and pest control and other accepted agricultural or wildlife management practices.

(C) Fires purposely set to forestlands for accepted forest management practices.

(D) Fires purposely set in rural areas for rights-of-way maintenance.

(E) Camp fires and fires used solely for outdoor cooking and other recreational purposes or for ceremonial occasions.

(F) The burning of trees, brush and other vegetable matter in the clearing of land or rights-of-way with the following limitations:

(1) Prevailing winds at the time of burning must be away from any city or town or built-up area, the ambient air for which may be significantly affected by smoke, fly-ash, or other air contaminants from the burning;

(2) The location of the burning must be at least 1000 feet from any dwelling located in a predominantly residential area other than a dwelling or structure located on the property on which the burning is conducted;

(3) The amount of dirt on the material being burned must be minimized;

(4) Heavy oils, asphaltic materials, items containing natural or synthetic rubber or any materials other than plant growth may not be burned;

(5) Initial burning may generally be commenced only between the hours of 9:00 A.M. and 3:00 P.M., and no combustible material may be added to the fire between 3:00 P.M. of one day and 9:00 A.M. of the following day, except that under favorable meteorological conditions deviations from the above-stated hours of burning may be granted by the air pollution control agency having jurisdiction. It shall be the responsibility of the owner or operator of the open burning operation to obtain written approval for burning during periods other than those specified above.

('76 Code, § 4.27) (Ord. passed 1-11-71) Penalty, see § 10.99

In the

Commissioners: Dog ban may be necessary

By Tina Ray

Hope Mills may soon consider the possibility of banning vicious dogs in town limits, after a report that an officer shot a dog over the weekend.

Police Capt. John Smith said police were called to a home on Byrd Drive at about 5:20 p.m. Saturday. Neighbors reported that a pit bull had jumped its homeowner's fence and was in the adjoining yard.

When Officer Thomas Dailey arrived on the scene, the dog allegedly tried to attack the officer, who shot it.

The dog was not killed and is reportedly recovering at the home of its owners.

"The dog was aggressive and went toward the officer, and he had to defend himself," Smith said.

The town's animal control officer, Paul Howard, is still investigating the matter, Smith said.

At Monday night's Board of Commissioners meeting, Commissioner Eddie Maynor raised the prospect of dealing with animal control issues in the city.

"I think we need to do whatever it takes," Maynor said. "If it's banning them within the city, then so be it."

Commissioner Tonzie Collins agrees. He served as police captain prior to Smith.

"Through all my years of law enforcement, pits, Doberman and Rottweilers have been the most vicious," Collins said. "I'm concerned about the public safety and the citizens."

Maynor had raised the issue of vicious dogs at previous board meetings, citing phone calls received from residents concerned about their presence on the Hope Mills Walking Trail and in other parts of town.

"I'm not opposed to anyone having pets or dogs. My concern is the safety of the citizens within the town," Maynor said.

He has requested that Town Manager Randy Beeman conduct comparison studies to see what other municipalities have done in addressing the issue and that Town Attorney John Jackson study the legalities of banning vicious dogs in town.

The first step, Maynor said, would be to determine what constitutes a vicious animal. He also thinks it is vital to explore the avenue of more owner liability and accountability, and is open to recommendations of the citizenry and officials.

He does not want anymore incidents such as Saturday night.

"That could have been a very ugly situation," he said. "Luckily, it turned out as well as it did that no one was seriously injured in that altercation."

Reprinted with permission from *The Fayetteville Observer*, Fayetteville, NC, August 20, 2008

Regulating the Use of Property

Local governments regulate the use of property to protect the physical environment, to encourage economic development, or to protect people's health and safety. Several different kinds of property regulations are commonly used.

In many jurisdictions, a land use plan serves as the basis for much of the regulation of property use. City or county planners (or outside consultants) study the physical characteristics of the land. (Where are the steep slopes? What areas are subject to flooding?) They map existing streets, rail lines, water lines, sewers, schools, parks, fire stations, and other facilities that can support development. They also note current uses of the land. (Where are the factories, the warehouses, the stores and offices, the residential neighborhoods?)

On the basis of their studies, the planners prepare maps showing how various areas might be developed to make use of existing public facilities and to avoid mixing incompatible uses (keeping factories and junkyards separate from houses, for instance). The maps may also indicate where new water lines and sewers might be built most easily. These maps are then presented to the public for comment. After the public has reviewed the maps, the planners prepare a detailed set of maps showing current and possible future uses of the land. The local governing board may review and vote on this final set of maps itself or delegate planning authority to an appointed

**NORTH CAROLINA
LAND USE PLAN
AND CAMA COVERAGE**

N

LAND USE PLANS
- None
- Land Use Plan
- CAMA County

North Carolina
Department of
Commerce
**Division of
Community
Assistance**
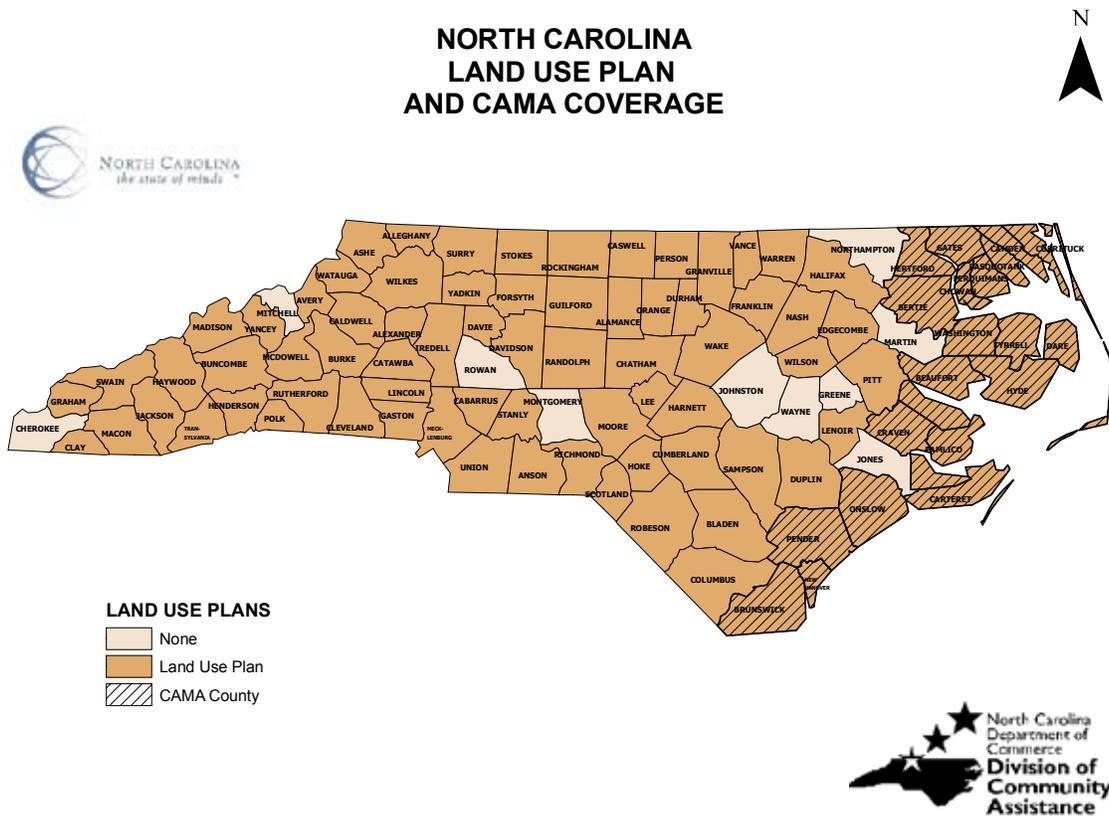
planning board. The approved maps and supporting narrative become the official land use plan for the community, called a Comprehensive Plan.

All except the smallest North Carolina cities and towns have land use plans. Municipal land use plans typically cover an area one mile beyond the municipal boundaries. The area outside the city limits, but under the city's planning authority, is called the **extraterritorial land use planning jurisdiction**. With the approval of the county commissioners, a city may extend its extraterritorial land use planning jurisdiction even farther.

Counties have authority to regulate land use only over the parts of the county not subject to city planning. Because of cities' extraterritorial jurisdiction for land use planning, the county land use planning area is even smaller than the unincorporated area of the county. By 2007 all but 10 North Carolina counties had adopted land use plans.

Local officials can use land use plans to guide their decisions about where to locate new public facilities. Some governments use them only for these nonregulatory purposes. A land use plan also establishes a basis for regulation of property uses. However, the plan itself does not set up a system of regulation. **Zoning** and **subdivision regulations** are systems of regulation based on a land use plan.

extraterritorial land use planning jurisdiction: the area outside city limits over which a city has authority for planning and regulating use of the land

zoning: rules designating different areas of land for different uses

subdivision regulation: rules for dividing land for development

Sample Zoning District Map

	Zones: Lowest to Highest Density Uses
A	Agriculture and Single-Family Large Lot Residential
R	Single-Family Low-Density Residential
MR	Medium-Density Residential/ Cluster Housing
MU	Mixed Use Development: Multi-Family Residential (apartments), Office, Business
O	Office
C	Commercial/Business: Central Business District including Government Center
I	Industrial/Manufacturing
━━	Street/Thoroughfare
▦	Buffer Area (landscaping/ screen fences)

Zoning

Zoning sets up restrictions on the use of land. The local governing board establishes categories of land use. Then the categories are applied to specific areas of the jurisdiction, creating zones for different kinds of development. The categories specify the kinds of activities the land can and cannot be used for and various requirements for developing and using the land.

For example, one residential category might be for single-family homes. That category might prohibit any apartments, office buildings, or industrial plants in the zone. It might also require that each lot must have a minimum size and that buildings be constructed a specified distance from the boundaries of the lot and under a maximum building height. Another zoning category might be commercial. It might prohibit industrial activity in the zone and require that a certain number of parking spaces be built for every 1,000 square feet of commercial floor space built. Districts allowing mixed-use developments such as apartments, offices, and low-intensity business uses that are compatible in the same area can also be regulated by the zoning code.

Burlington approves bigger homes

By Robert Boyer

The Burlington City Council has approved changes in city zoning ordinances that pave the way for larger homes to be built throughout the city.

Until Tuesday, homes built in Burlington could be no more than 30 percent of a lot's size. That means the ground floor and any accessory buildings can cover a maximum 30 percent "footprint" of a lot.

The council, by unanimous vote, set up a sliding percentage based on lot size.

The new percentages and maximum footprints are:

45 percent for a 6,000-foot (R-6) lot.

40 percent for 12,000- and 9,000-square-foot lots.

35 percent of 30,000- and 15,000-square-foot lots.

The council also heeded the recommendation of the city's planning and zoning commission to increase the height limits on new construction to three stories or 45 feet. Heights for commercial buildings can climb to 60 feet if side yards are at least 25 feet each. The height requirement is subject to zoning restrictions from the city's airport overlay zoning restrictions and Federal Aviation Administration requirements.

The council also increased front yard setbacks to a minimum of 40 feet. The old minimum was 15 feet.

A demand for larger homes and elderly residents' desire for more accessible and larger one-story homes were behind city planners recommendations to relax the city's 30 percent rule, Planning Director Bob Harkrader said.

The council's vote came after Burlington real estate broker Richard Parker questioned the wisdom of allowing a 45 percent standard for R-6 lots. Parker worried that such a standard was "over the top" and might lead to new homes in established neighborhoods that are out of character with existing homes.

The housing market and economics will have more of an impact on future home sizes than the zoning changes, Harkrader said.

IN OTHER BUSINESS, the council approved a request from Wakefield Development Co. to rezone to office and institutional 500 feet of property along Danbrook Road south of Interstate 85/40. They also approved a request from the Lisa Kirkpatrick, the owner of the former Kirk's Motor Court property, to rezone 600 feet along North Main Street for general business use.

The Danbrook property was zoned conditional mixed-use residential district; Kirkpatrick's property along North Main Street had a residential zoning.

Kirkpatrick wanted to unify the zoning as part of her plans to build another business on the site of the former motel.

The zoning change to the 475-foot-deep section of Wakefield property was part of the Raleigh company's informal agreement with the council to bring the property in line with the latest revisions to the city's land use plan for the area. Wakefield is developing Mackintosh on the Lake, a 2,000-home community adjacent to the Danbrook Road property.

To develop property that has been zoned, the builder must obtain a zoning certificate from the planning department. The planning department staff checks the building plans for the property to see that all zoning requirements are met. The department then issues a zoning certificate. The building department can then issue a building permit to allow construction to begin if the building plans conform to the local and state building codes.

Zoning applies to both existing and new uses of property. For example, an existing store in an area zoned residential would not be forced to close if it was constructed before the zoning took effect. It would be considered a legal nonconforming use. However, expanding the store or changing its use to a factory might be prohibited by the zoning ordinance.

Minor exceptions to the zoning regulations can be made by the board of adjustment. This board is appointed by the council or commission. Boards of adjustment for cities with extraterritorial planning jurisdictions must include representatives from that area. The board of adjustment hears appeals about the decisions of the

Before building, citizens must obtain a zoning certificate from the local government's planning department.
Courtesy of Randle Brim, Randolph County Planning Department.

Currituck says no to island living—But approves wind energy ordinance

By Brenda Kleman

Hopes of building homes on some of Currituck County's 21 islands were squashed Tuesday when the Board of Commissioners voted to deny an amendment that would allow such development.

The commissioners voted 3-2 to deny an amendment to the county's Unified Development Ordinance after some expressed concerns over the county's future liability to provide public services to homes on the islands.

The amendment request was submitted for an unnamed client by John DeLucia, an engineer with Albemarle Associates. The client was seeking to build a home on Long Point Island in the Intracoastal Waterway.

"Currituck County is a sportsman's paradise," DeLucia told the commissioners. "There are several islands that would be beautiful home sites."

A similar request was submitted in 2005, but withdrawn before it reached the commissioners. Last month, the county's Planning Board voted to recommend approving DeLucia's request, but Commissioners Ernie Bowden, Owen Etheridge and Barry Nelms voted against it.

During discussions Tuesday, Bowden said there is precedent for island development and cited hunt clubs that were built on at least three islands, including Monkey Island, in the 1900s. However, Bowden changed his mind when Nelms voiced concern about the county's obligation to provide schools, police, fire and emergency services.

County Attorney Ike McRee said the county was not legally liable if there was an inability to provide timely services. McRee suggested that notification be placed on a homeowner's final plat and/or permit for construction indicating that county services are limited and may not be available in a timely manner.

Nelms said future owners of the property might not see the waiver and expect the services. He added that fire, police and EMS would try to respond to an emergency call anyway and it could endanger more lives.

"Our responsibility is to protect the health, safety and welfare of the people," Nelms said.

Wind ordinance approved

In other matters Tuesday, the commissioners voted unanimously to approve an amendment to the UDO that allows both residential and commercial wind turbines in the county.

Except for a few changes, the commissioners adopted an option proposed by county staff that allows wind turbine systems in all zoning districts with setback requirements.

Several business, energy and environmental representatives praised the amendment. They also praised Planning Director Ben Woody and Planner Maureen O'Shea for developing one of the most workable and progressive wind energy ordinances in the country.

The wind energy ordinance allows for small scale turbines up to 120-feet in height on residential lots of 20,000 square-feet or more; large systems with a maximum height of 250-feet on five plus acres; and utility scale turbines with a maximum height of 500-feet on 25 or more acres.

Small scale turbines are permitted in all zoning districts by right, and the large and utility scale systems will require a Special Use Permit. All applications will be subject to property setback requirements, and the utility scale facilities will also have to meet environmental standards.

The amendment also included language that addressed noise and gave the county authority to shut down a turbine if it exceeded a certain decibel reading. However, that line was removed at the request of Nelms.

O'Shea said the sound from a wind turbine sounds similar to a refrigerator, but can be louder if the system is not working properly.

Currituck is now one of four counties in the state that have adopted a wind energy ordinance.

planning staff. It also hears requests for exceptions to the zoning regulations, called **variances**. Board of adjustment decisions usually cannot be appealed to the local governing board. Instead, appeals are made to the courts. This procedure is intended to keep political pressures from influencing land use decisions.

variance: permission to do something different from what is allowed by current regulations

Local Government in North Carolina

Because major land use and zoning decisions can affect property values, traffic levels, noise levels, and many other aspects of life in a community, they are frequently controversial. To ensure opportunities for public discussion, all zone change requests require public hearings. Also, major developments such as shopping centers require "special-use permits" which can be granted only after a formal public hearing on the project.

As building proceeds, inspectors check to see that construction meets state and local building code requirements. Building codes set standards for safe construction, including plumbing and electrical systems. Inspectors also check to make sure the zoning requirements are being followed. Before the new building can be occupied, inspectors must certify that it meets all state and local requirements, including the zoning regulations. An occupancy permit is then issued.

All of North Carolina's larger cities and towns have zoning regulations that the city council has adopted by ordinance. A municipality's zoning authority also covers the extraterritorial planning jurisdiction, as well as the area within the municipality. Almost two-thirds of the counties also have zoning for at least some of their area not under municipal jurisdiction. Most of the areas of North Carolina that are not covered by zoning regulations are primarily agricultural, although popular resistance to having local government regulate land use has also prevented the adoption of zoning in some more densely populated counties.

Local government inspectors check each stage of construction to make sure new buildings conform to the local and state building codes.
Top: Courtesy of Catawba County.
Bottom: Courtesy of Stacie Galloway, Town of Morrisville.

Subdivision Regulation

Subdivision regulation establishes a process for reviewing a landowner's request to divide a piece of land into building lots. With subdivision regulation, the local government will not approve dividing land into lots for houses until the landowner satisfies certain conditions. These conditions typically include building adequate streets and providing appropriate drainage. The conditions might also include laying water and sewer lines, if the new development is to be served by public water supply and sewers. In addition, each lot must be checked to see that it includes a safe building site. The landowner may also be asked to donate land for a park or **greenspace**. If the local government has established subdivision regulation, the register of deeds cannot record the boundaries of the new lots without approval of the local government. This assures that all regulations are followed.

Subdivision regulation is intended to prevent developments on land that cannot support them (because it floods, for example, or because the soil does not allow septic tanks and no sewers were provided). Subdivision regulation is intended to ensure that adequate streets and drainage are provided by the **developer,** so that residents (or the local government) are not left with the expense of building adequate roads or drains. Because many of these problems developed in earlier subdivisions, subdivision regulation is being used

greenspace: an area that is kept undeveloped to provide more open land in or near a city

developer: a person or business that builds houses or prepares land for building

more and more. Rural counties where little development is occurring are least likely to have subdivision regulation.

Minimum Housing Codes

Minimum housing codes establish basic requirements for a place to be "fit for human habitation"—that is, acceptable as someone's living place. Typical requirements include structural soundness (to prevent the collapse of walls or floors), adequate ventilation (to provide the occupants with fresh air), and a safe water supply and toilet facilities (to prevent the spread of disease). If an inspector finds that a building does not meet minimum standards, the inspector can order it to be repaired or closed. A local governing board can adopt an ordinance ordering that a building which is beyond repair be demolished. Most of North Carolina's larger cities and counties have minimum housing codes.
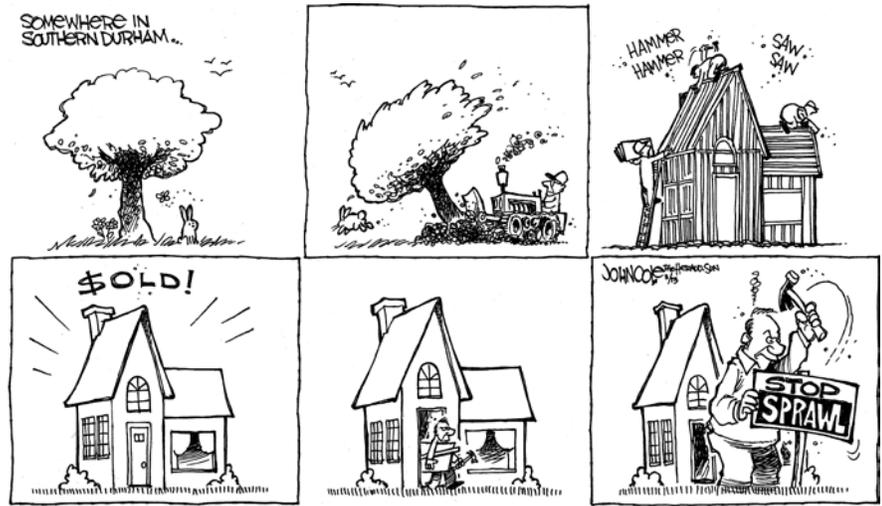
Regulation change permitting new development is often controversial because not everyone agrees how land should be used.
John Cole, The Herald-Sun.

Other Regulations

Other regulations also help protect the physical environment. Local governing boards may regulate community appearance. For example, they can prohibit signs they decide are too large or disturbing. They can regulate changes to the outside appearance of buildings in historic districts. Local governing boards can also protect fragile environments. For example, they may regulate activities that cause soil erosion or regulate building in flood plains or in reservoir watersheds. Like most land use regulations, ordinances regulating community appearance and environmental protection are usually enforced by building inspectors or by the planning staff.

Local governments regulate building near reservoir watersheds to preserve water quality.
Courtesy of Town of Black Mountain.

Local governments also regulate the ways people use public property. They frequently adopt ordinances setting up rules for the use of parks or other facilities open to the public. Cities and towns regulate traffic on their streets. For major thoroughfares (streets that carry traffic into and out of the city), the city or town shares this authority with the state. The city council itself can decide to put up stop signs or traffic signals or to set speed limits on most city streets, but not on some of the busiest. The city council must request state action to regulate traffic on thoroughfares. Because all rural public roads are the state's responsibility, county governments must ask for state action to control traffic in unincorporated areas. Both local and state officials must approve a thoroughfare plan for all major streets and highways.

In the

The case of smoking regulation in Greensboro

In June 1988, Greensboro resident Lori Faley presented the Greensboro City Council a petition asking the council to regulate smoking in public places. Ms. Faley started the petition after someone blew smoke in her face while she stood in a supermarket checkout lane. The petition she brought to the city council had more than 500 signatures and called for an ordinance regulating smoking in stores and restaurants, as well as in publicly owned buildings.

There was immediate opposition to the ordinance, especially from tobacco companies and workers in Greensboro. (More than 2,300 people were employed in the tobacco industry there.) The city council held a public hearing on the request and then appointed a committee to study the issue. The committee was to be made up of representatives from the council, the county commission, the county health department, and business owners and managers. It finally held its first meeting in July 1989.

Ms. Faley and her group, which became known as GASP (Greensboro Against Smoking Pollution), were frustrated at the council's response and did not wait for the study committee to meet. GASP began to collect signatures on another petition. This petition took advantage of a provision in the Greensboro Charter for procedures called initiative and referendum. (Greensboro is one of only a few North Carolina cities with provisions for initiative and referendum.)

The GASP petition called for the council to vote on the ordinance regulating smoking in public places. It also called for a referendum on the ordinance if the council failed to adopt it. The initiative petition required the valid signatures of 7,247 Greensboro voters to force a referendum.

In August 1989, GASP submitted its petition. Although more than 10,000 people had signed the petition, only 7,306 signatures were certified as those of registered Greensboro voters. Still, that was more than the number necessary to require a vote. The council refused to adopt the ordinance, and the referendum was placed on the ballot for the November election.

Greensboro tobacco companies spent tens of thousands of dollars urging voters to defeat the ordinance. GASP did not have similar financial resources, but the group did have the names of those who had signed the petition. GASP members called those people to urge them to vote for the ordinance. The ordinance passed by a very narrow margin: 14,991 votes for and 14,818 against.

That did not end the controversy, however. Tobacco workers in Greensboro began an initiative petition of their own. This time, the petition called for a referendum to repeal the smoking regulation ordinance, which the voters adopted in 1989. The petitioners collected the required number of signatures, and another election was held in 1991. In this election, voters rejected repealing the ordinance by more than two to one. Although thousands of people in Greensboro were still unhappy with the city's regulation of smoking in public places, Greensboro voters overwhelmingly supported keeping the ordinance.

By 2008, the regulation of smoking in public places had become much less controversial. In 2007, the North Carolina General Assembly banned smoking in all state-owned buildings effective January 1, 2008. Many local governments also banned smoking in their buildings and in restaurants, stores, and other public places.

Using the Authority to Regulate

To regulate an activity, the local governing board must first have the appropriate authority from the state. Local governments have been given authority to regulate many kinds of behavior. If state law does not already permit local government regulation of an activity, local officials must ask the General Assembly to pass a bill granting that authority. Next, the local governing board must adopt an ordinance. The ordinance is a legal description by the board of the behavior that is being regulated and the actions the government will take against people who do not follow the regulation.

Frequently people disagree about whether a particular activity is harmful enough to require regulation. Local governing boards often hold public hearings to encourage full discussion of the arguments for and against a proposal to regulate. Sometimes an advisory board or a committee of residents also reviews the arguments about a proposed regulation and presents these to the governing board. People also often speak directly to board members about proposed regulations they particularly favor or oppose. However, the decision to regulate must be made by the local governing board.

Unless a majority of the board thinks regulation is appropriate, no action will be taken. Except in a few cities (for example, Greensboro) that have **initiative** and **referendum** provisions in their charters, an ordinance can be adopted only by the board.

Governments regulate either by requiring certain actions or by prohibiting certain actions. If someone fails to act according to the requirements of the ordinance, the government can either refuse them certain public services or impose penalties on them. The ordinance specifies what service may be withheld or what penalties may be imposed. Some regulations are enforced by withholding public services until the person acts as the regulation requires. For example, a person who wants to connect his or her home to the public water supply must get permission from the water department. To protect the water supply, local regulations specify the kind of plumbing the owner must install. Then, before the water department turns on the water, an inspector checks the plumbing to be sure it meets specifications.

Frequently, people who violate an ordinance must pay a **civil** penalty of a specified amount of money. When an official enforcing the ordinance determines that a violation has occurred, the official issues a **citation** to the violator, assessing the civil penalty. Sometimes there are other penalties, too. For example, the ordinance regulating parking may include a provision for towing cars parked in parking places reserved for the handicapped. Violations of some ordinances may also carry a fine or time in the county jail. People charged with violating these ordinances have a hearing at which a magistrate or district court judge determines whether they are guilty of the violation and, if so, what their sentence will be.

Police officers are given responsibility for enforcing many local ordinances, but other local officials are also responsible for enforcing specific ordinances. These include fire inspectors, housing inspectors, and zoning inspectors. Often these same local officials are also responsible for enforcing state laws and regulations. Local police enforce North Carolina's criminal laws, as well as local ordinances. Local fire inspectors enforce the state fire-prevention code in addition to any local fire-prevention code. Local ordinances must not conflict with state laws and regulations.

Many regulations require popular support to achieve their purposes. For example, most people must cooperate with restrictions on smoking in public places or requirements to keep dogs under control in order for these ordinances to be effective. Police enforcement can help make people aware of the law, but the police cannot be everywhere at once and cannot deal with widespread violations of such ordinances. Fortunately, most people accept their responsibility to obey laws, even when they disagree with them. This is the basis for the success of most government regulations.

Local governing boards often hold public hearings to encourage discussion of proposed local regulations. *Courtesy of Town of Aberdeen.*

initiative: a way in which citizens propose laws by gathering voter signatures on a petition; only a few cities and no counties in North Carolina have provisions for this

referendum: a way for citizens to vote on state or local laws; an election in which citizens vote directly on a public policy question

civil: concerns government's role in relations among citizens

citation: an official summons to appear before a court to answer a charge of violating a government regulation

Discussion Questions

1. Are there any controversies over regulation of personal behavior or land use in your city or county? If so, find out as much as you can about the arguments for and against the regulation. What arguments are most convincing to you? Why?

2. Who will decide whether or not to adopt and enforce this controversial regulation? What do you expect them to decide to do? Why?

3. Schools have their own rules to regulate disruptive behavior. What are some of these rules at your school? What sorts of harm does each protect against?

7. Paying for Local Government

LOCAL government services and programs cost money. Cities and counties have to pay the people who work for them. Local governments must also provide the buildings, equipment, and supplies for conducting public business. They must pay for public services they buy from businesses or community groups.

In North Carolina, local government services and programs cost billions of dollars each year. In 2007 North Carolina county governments spent more than $12.6 billion, and North Carolina cities and towns spent more than $9.2 billion to provide services for the people of North Carolina. Within limits set by the state, local officials are responsible for deciding what to spend for local government and how to raise the money to cover those expenses.

A **budget** is a plan for raising and spending money. North Carolina law requires each city and each county to adopt an annual budget every year, including planned **revenues** and **expenditures** for the following year.

The State of North Carolina sets very strict requirements that local governments must follow in managing their money. This was not always so. During the 1920s, many cities and counties in the state borrowed heavily. When the stock market

Local governments have to adopt a budget every year in order to pay for services such as waste removal. *Photograph by Chip Vanderzee, City of High Point.*

budget: a plan for raising and spending money

revenue: the income that a government collects for public use

expenditures: money spent

crashed in 1929 and thousands of people lost their jobs, many local governments went even more heavily into debt. By 1931 the state's local governments were spending half of their property tax revenues each year on debt payments. More than half of the state's cities and counties were unable to pay their debts at some time during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

To restore sound money management to local government, the General Assembly created the North Carolina Local Government Commission and passed a series of laws regulating local government budgeting and finance. The Local Government Commission enforces those laws and, with the School of Government at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, provides training and advice to local government budget and finance officers.

State regulation provides a strong framework for sound money management. But local officials still have primary responsibility for using city and county funds wisely and well. During the past 50 years, North Carolina local governments have established a national reputation for managing public money carefully and providing the public with good value for their dollars.

Budgeting

In North Carolina, local government budgets must be balanced. That is, the budget must indicate that the local government will have enough money during the year to pay for all the budgeted expenditures. Expenditures can be paid either from money received during the year (revenue) or from money already on hand at the beginning of the year (**fund balance**). A balanced budget can be represented by the following equation:

fund balance: money a government has not spent at the end of the year

Expenditures = Revenues + Fund Balance Withdrawals

Thus, if a local government plans to spend $1 million, it must have a total of $1 million in revenues and fund balance. If it plans to raise only $900,000 in revenue, it needs to be able to withdraw $100,000 from the fund balance. If it plans to raise $950,000, it will need to withdraw only $50,000 from the fund balance.

The fund balance is like the local government's savings account. It helps the government deal with unexpected situations. Local government revenues are discussed later in the chapter. However, it is important to note here that the budget is based on revenue estimates—educated guesses about how much money the city or county will receive during the coming year. To be safe, local officials usually plan to spend nothing from the fund balance. That is, they budget expenditures equal to estimated revenues. Then if actual revenues are less than expected, they can withdraw from the fund balance to make up the difference. If revenues exceed actual expenditures, the money is added to the fund balance. If a government regularly withdraws from its fund balance, it will eventually use its entire savings and have no "rainy day" money left.

Deciding What to Spend

In North Carolina, annual budgets run from July 1 of one calendar year to June 30 of the following calendar year. This period is called the government's **fiscal year** because it is the year used in accounting for money. ("Fisc" is an old word for treasury.) "Fiscal year" is often abbreviated "FY." FY 2010, for example, means the fiscal year from July 1, 2009, to June 30, 2010. Each year the local governing board must adopt the next annual budget before the new fiscal year begins on July 1.

Several months before the fiscal year begins, each local government department estimates how much more or less its services will cost in the coming year. For example, if a solid waste collection department is going to continue collecting the same amount of waste from the same number of places at the same frequency, its costs will be about the same. Fuel for the trucks may cost a little more, but if services do not change, next year's expenditures should be similar to this year's expenditures.

If, in the previous example, the city council decides to reduce the number of trash collections from twice a week to once a week, the department can reduce the number of employees and the number of miles driven by the trucks. The department will pay less for salaries and fuel bills. Perhaps the city will not have to buy new trucks as often, too. The change in services will therefore reduce estimated expenditures for the department.

On the other hand, if the city plans to annex several neighborhoods, the department may need to add trucks and crews to collect solid waste there. These new expenses for additional service will add to estimated expenditures for the department.

After department heads determine how much money they think they will need for the next fiscal year, they discuss these estimates with the manager. The manager also looks at expected changes in the other expenditures. For example, employees' salaries may have to be increased in order for the local government to stay competitive with private employers. In addition to department requests, the manager must add these increases to the projected expenditures.

At the same time, the manager also prepares revenue estimates for the coming year. After all the estimates for both expenditures and revenues are complete, the manager compares the totals. If estimated revenues exceed estimated expenditures, the manager may recommend lowering local tax rates, adding to the fund balance, or beginning new programs and services. If estimated expenditures exceed revenues, the manager may recommend cutting expenditures, raising taxes or fees, or making withdrawals from the fund balance. It is the manager's responsibility to propose a balanced budget to the governing board. ("Balanced" means that total budgeted expenditures equal total budgeted revenues plus fund balance withdrawals.)

The proposed budget lists the amount of money each department will spend in the coming year. It also lists the amount of money expected from each revenue source for the coming year and the amount the manager proposes to withdraw from (or add to) the fund balance.

Budget office personnel like these in Wayne County gather information from department heads to assist the manager in developing a budget to propose to the governing board. *Courtesy of Wayne County.*

fiscal year: the 12-month period used by the government for record keeping, budgeting, taxing, and other aspects of financial management
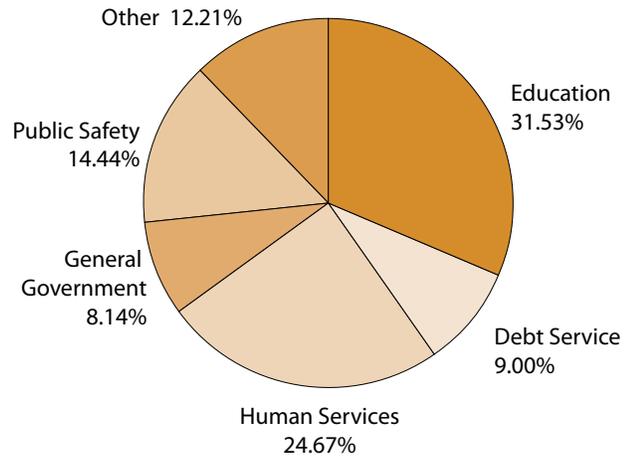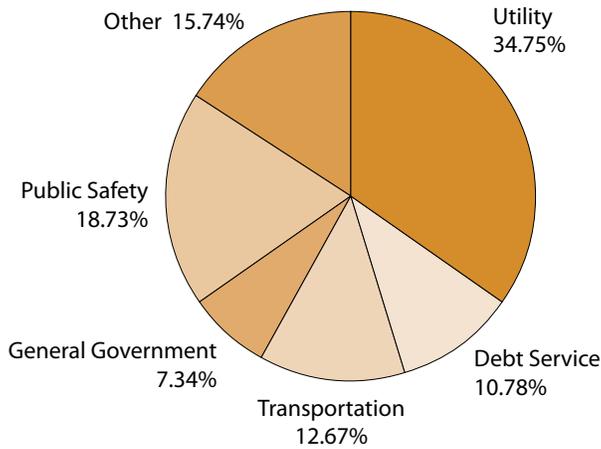
Total Municipal Expenditures	FY 2007
Expenditures by Function	
Utility	$3,220,709,027
Debt Service	998,839,807
Transportation	1,173,799,373
General Government	679,917,479
Public Safety	1,735,627,591
Other	1,458,464,710
Total	**$9,267,357,987**

Total County Expenditures	FY 2007
Total Expenditures by Function for the Group	
Education	$3,989,600,222
Debt Service	1,139,506,432
Human Services	3,122,286,146
General Government	1,029,894,380
Public Safety	1,827,385,048
Other	1,545,629,449
Total	**$12,654,301,677**

The governing board reviews the proposed budget. With the proposed budget is information about the current year's budget, expenditures, and revenues. Council members and commissioners usually pay particularly close attention to proposed changes in spending to decide whether the services their government provides are the best use of public funds. They also pay careful attention to proposals to raise tax rates or the fees people pay for services.

Before the governing board adopts the budget, it must hold a public hearing. This provides people in the community an opportunity to express their views about the proposed budget. At any point in its review, the board can change the proposed budget. The annual budget must be adopted by a majority of the board.

Spending Public Funds

In adopting the budget, the governing board **appropriates** the expenditures. That is, the board authorizes the amount to be spent for each department during the coming fiscal year. The finance officer keeps records of all expenditures. Before each bill is paid during the year, the finance officer checks to see that there is enough money left in the department's appropriation to pay that bill. Expenditure records also help the manager coordinate government operations and help in planning the next year's budget. If the government needs to spend more than the amount listed in the budget for a particular purpose, the council (or commission) must pass a budget amendment.

appropriate: to assign government funds to a particular purpose or use

Each local government's budget reflects the choice of services the local governing board has made. Local government budgets also reflect the way the General Assembly has allocated service responsibilities. Most municipalities spend much of their money on utilities, public safety, and streets. Most counties spend a majority of their money on education and human services.

The circle graphs on page 81 show how North Carolina local governments spent their money in the 2006–2007 fiscal year. (The most recent figures and additional detail can be found on the state treasurer's website at http://ncdst-web2.treasurer.state.nc.us/lgc/units/unitlistjs.htm.)

Local governments that borrow money to build new facilities must repay what they have borrowed—the **principal**—plus **interest**. Typically, these payments are spread over several years. These payments are called **debt service**. Debt service is often part of local government budgets, for reasons discussed in the following section.

Capital Projects

When a city buys land for a new park or a county builds a new jail or landfill, the project usually costs too much to be paid for from current revenues or from fund balance. Major purchases like land or buildings are called **capital** projects. Local governments usually borrow money to finance large capital projects, although annual revenues or fund balance may be sufficient for small projects.

Borrowing has several disadvantages. Borrowing money is expensive. The borrower (in this case, the city or county) must pay interest to the lender. Borrowing also commits the government to payments on the debt for a period of years, often 20 or more. Debt service payments will need to be included as expenses in each annual budget until the debt is paid off.

However, borrowing for capital projects also has advantages. One advantage is that by borrowing, the government can do the project right away. A new landfill or jail may be needed very soon—much sooner than the government would be able to save enough money to pay for the project. Another advantage to starting the project right away is that the costs of land and construction may go up while the government waits for funds to become available. While costs go up, the value of the dollar may go down due to **inflation**. Inflation helps the borrower, however. Because of inflation, the dollars the government pays back may be worth quite a bit less than the dollars the government borrowed several years earlier. Borrowing for capital projects also places responsibility for paying for the project on those who will use it. Capital projects have many years of useful life. Borrowing spreads out paying for the project over many of those years.

Governments borrow money by issuing **bonds**. Two kinds of bonds are used by North Carolina cities and counties. **General obligation (G.O.) bonds** pledge the "faith and credit" of the government. That is, the local government agrees to use tax

When a city buys land for a new park or a county builds a new jail, often the local government borrows money to finance the capital project.
Top: Courtesy of Town of Southern Pines.
Bottom: Courtesy of Catawba County.

principal: the amount of money borrowed

interest: a charge for borrowed money that the borrower agrees to pay the lender

debt service: payments of principal and interest on a loan

capital: land, buildings, and other equipment used to make other goods and services

inflation: a continuing rise in prices

bond: a contract to repay borrowed money with interest at a specific time in the future

general obligation bond: a loan that a government agrees to repay using tax money, even if the tax rate must be raised

News...

In the

Voters approve four bond issues

By Michael Biesecker and David Bracken

Wake and Raleigh voters approved more than $275 million in new bonds by better than a 2-to-1 margin today, giving local leaders the money and the mandate needed to continue a public sector building boom.

County residents approved a trio of bond referendums totaling $187 million in spending that will benefit Wake Technical Community College, expand library branches and preserve undeveloped land for wildlife habitats and watershed protection.

Raleigh residents approved $88.6 million in bonds for new and expanded parks and recreation facilities, including a new aquatics center and senior center.

The votes affirmed the willingness of a majority of city and county voters to approve new spending on community projects, even if paying off the debt requires tax increases.

Several voters leaving the polls said they supported at least some of the bond measures on the ballot, though they complained of some "bond fatigue" after approving $970 million in bonds for school construction in 2006.

Betty Clay voted yes on all the bonds, saying the spending was necessary so that the city and the county can maintain the public facilities needed to keep the quality of life in Wake County high.

"They're all essential for our situation," Clay, 80, said of the multiple bond

Wake County Bond Referenda; Oct. 9, 2007

Purpose of Bond Order	Bond Amount	Votes in Favor	Votes Against
Bonds for Public Libraries	$45,000,000	37,920	16,232
Bonds for Wake Technical Community College	$92,000,000	36,521	17,581
Bonds for Open Space Preservation	$50,000,000	38,473	15,399
Bonds for Raleigh Parks and Recreation Facilities	$88,600,000	19,302	7,360

questions on the ballot. "We're growing so fast."

Laura Owens, 58, said she considered all the projects worthy of taxpayer support, even if she had reservations about the number of bond measures on the ballot in recent years.

"I don't know where they're going to get the money," Owens said.

Even residents who said they voted against some of the bonds questions voted yes on others.

Raleigh resident Ransom Bennett said he voted for the Wake County library bond and the Raleigh parks bond, but against bonds for Wake County open space and the Wake Tech bond.

Bennett, 80, said he is sympathetic to all the projects that were seeking bond money, but he lives on a fixed income and is worried about his taxes getting too high.

"There's got to be a limit somewhere," Bennett said.

A Raleigh resident who lives in a $200,000 home could see his or her combined city-county tax bill increase by about $80 next year to pay for the bonds.

Ann Daniel Croft, a teacher who lives in North Raleigh, said she voted for the Wake Tech and the library bonds because they would improve education in the county. She voted against the Raleigh parks bond and the Wake County open space bond, saying the rising cost of gasoline and other items has made her think twice about approving further tax increases.

"Everywhere you turn the cost of things are [*sic*] going up," Croft said. "Every [election] it's lots of bonds."

Wake voters can expect another round of bonds on the ballot in 2008. County commissioners and school board members have said another $1 billion in bonds are needed to keep pace with rapid growth in school enrollment.

Reprinted with permission from *The News & Observer*, Raleigh, NC, October 9, 2007

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money if necessary to repay the debt. Bondholders can even require local governments to raise taxes if that is necessary to repay the debt. **Revenue bonds** are repaid from revenues the project itself generates. Thus, if a parking deck is built with revenue bonds, the debt is repaid with revenues from fees paid by those who park there.

Under the North Carolina Constitution, G.O. bonds cannot be issued unless a majority of the voters approve. A **referendum** must be held to allow voters to approve or reject any G.O. bonds proposed by city councils or boards of commissioners. G.O. bonds are typically used for non–revenue-producing projects like schools,

revenue bond: a loan that a government pays off with fees collected through operating the facility built with that loan

referendum: a way for citizens to vote on state or local laws

courthouses, parks, or jails. Sometimes government officials also prefer to use G.O. bonds for revenue-producing projects such as sewer plants, parking decks, or convention centers. This is because G.O. bonds usually have a lower **interest rate** than revenue bonds. Investors feel more secure about the repayment of their money when a bond is backed by a local government's power to tax.

The **installment–purchase agreement** is an alternative to borrowing. Under this arrangement, someone else (a business or a civic group) builds or buys the facility the government needs. The government then gets to use the facility in return for an annual payment. Unlike rental agreements, however, in this kind of contract, the government is actually buying the property through its payments. Governments cannot pledge their taxing power when entering into installment–purchase agreements. The debt is backed by the property being purchased. If the government fails to complete its payments, the facility belongs to those who are leasing it to the government.

Revenues

Local governments get most of their money from taxes, user fees and charges, and funding from other governments. There are also several smaller revenue sources, including interest the government earns on its fund balance. The local economy and decisions of state and federal governments play a major part in local government funding. Local officials have only a few ways to increase the amount of revenue their local government receives.

Local Taxes

The **property tax** is the most important local tax. Property taxes are often the largest single source of revenue for a local government, sometimes providing more than half of all revenues. The property tax is based on the **assessed value** of property. County government is responsible for assessing property.

Assessing establishes the value of property for tax purposes. **Real property** must be reassessed every eight years, although some counties do so more often. **Personal property** (cars, trucks, business equipment) is reassessed each year. According to North Carolina law, tax assessments are supposed to be at the fair market value of the property. That is, the assessed value should equal the likely sale price of the property. If a property owner thinks an assessed value is too high, he or she may appeal it to the county commissioners when they meet as the "board of equalization and review."

Economic development increases the value of property in a city or county, thereby increasing its **property tax base**. New real estate developments are assessed as they are completed, so they immediately add to a jurisdiction's **total assessed value**. Unless there is new construction, however, real property is reassessed only every eight years in most counties. The market value of property may change a great deal during the eight years between reassessments.The **property tax rate** is the amount of tax due for each $100 of assessed value. If a house and lot are valued at $100,000 and the property tax rate is $.90 per $100, the tax due on the property will be $900.

interest rate: a percentage of the amount borrowed that the borrower agrees to pay to the lender as a charge for use of the lender's money

installment–purchase agreement: an arrangement to buy something in which the buyer gets to use the item while paying for it in regularly scheduled payments

property tax: a tax placed on the assessed value of property to be paid by the owner of that property

assessed value: the value assigned to property by government to establish its worth for tax purposes

real property: land and buildings, and improvements to either

personal property: things people own other than land and buildings

property tax base: the total assessed value of all taxable property

total assessed value: the sum of the assessed value of all the property a city or county can tax

property tax rate: a percentage of the assessed value of property that determines how much tax is due for that property

$100,0000/$100 = $1,000 $.90 x 1,000 = $900

The property tax is one of the few sources of revenue that the local governing board can influence directly. For this reason, setting the property tax rate is often the last part of budget review. To set the rate, local officials must first estimate how much the city or county expects to raise from all other sources. That figure is subtracted from the total expenses the local government plans to have. The balance is the amount that must be raised through property taxes.

To set the property tax rate, the amount that the government must raise through property taxes is divided by the total assessed value of property in the jurisdiction. That gives the amount of tax that needs to be raised for each dollar of assessed value. To get the tax rate per $100 of assessed value, we multiply by 100. For example, if a city has a total assessed value of $500 million and needs to raise $4 million from property taxes, its property tax rate would be $.80 per $100 of assessed valuation.

Local governments charge user fees for using certain services, from public golf courses to water and sewer systems.
Photograph by Larry Wright, City of Cherryville.

$4,000,000/$500,000,000 = .008   .008 x $100 = $.80

The higher the assessed value of taxable property, the lower the tax rate needed to produce a given amount of revenue. If the assessed value of property in our last example were $600 million, the city could raise $4 million from property taxes with a property tax rate of only $.67 per $100 of assessed value.

The property tax rate for the next fiscal year is set by the local governing board when it adopts the annual budget. Sometimes there is considerable controversy over raising the property tax rate. Many people are quite aware of the property tax. Property owners get a bill from the local tax collector for the entire amount each year. Thus, people know exactly how much they pay in local property tax. (In contrast, the sales tax is collected a few pennies or a few dollars at a time. Most people lose track of how much they pay in sales tax.) Also, the connection between the property tax and the services government provides may be difficult to see. After all, people receive public services all year long, but the property tax bill comes only once a year.

Most property owners pay their taxes. In North Carolina, more than 97 percent of all property taxes are typically paid each year. When taxes on property are not paid, the government can go to court to take the property and have it sold to pay the tax bill.

Property tax bills are sent out in August, early in the new fiscal year, yet no penalties for late payment are imposed until January. Therefore, most people wait until December to pay their property taxes. Local governments must pay their bills each month. They cannot wait until they have received property tax payments to pay their employees and suppliers. This is another reason the fund balance is important. Local governments need to have money on hand to pay their bills while they wait for property taxes to be paid.

County vows to pursue city taxes 'aggressively'—
Council members concerned about collection rate

By Reggie Ponder

Vance County officials promised Henderson officials Thursday they would collect city taxes aggressively.

The discussion was part of a meeting between the Vance County Board of Commissioners and the Henderson City Council.

The county tax office collects city taxes. Members of the city council have been concerned about the collection rate on city taxes.

Councilwoman Elissa Yount pressed the county to follow its contract with the city, which indicates delinquent taxes will be turned over to the attorney for collection after two years. Currently, the county turns over delinquent taxes after four years.

But county officials agreed Thursday that the county should follow the contract.

Commissioner Deborah Brown, who chairs the county board, asked that the next meeting of the county Intergovernmental Committee with the city FAIR (Finance and Intergovernmental Relations) Committee look closely at the contract.

City Manager Jerry Moss said everyone had faced tough times collecting revenues the past 8-10 years. He said the city was struggling to collect utility bills.

He mentioned that there are remedies in tax collection that cities can't use in collecting utility bills, such as seizure of property and sale at public auction. Also, he said Durham had hired two full-time deputies to work on tax collection.

"These are harsh things, but most of the folks sitting around this table are paying their tax, and when somebody is not paying that means that everybody is paying more," Moss said.

The city would like to see "a more aggressive approach to looking at more ways than we are presently using," he said.

Moss said he thought Sam Jones, the county tax collector, was working hard on the problem.

"This is certainly no reflection on Sam at all," he said.

He suggested that the tax office "go after the big ones first."

But a question arose as to how many "big ones" were left in Vance County.

County Manager Jerry Ayscue noted the loss of large industries.

City Councilman Bobby Gupton asked about businesses owing $60,000 or more in taxes.

"Are we pursuing those aggressively?" Gupton asked.

"Yes, sir," Jones replied.

Ayscue said the county began using the state's "debt set-off" program three years ago, which takes overdue county taxes out of someone's state tax refund. The county garnishees wages and attaches bank accounts, he said.

"I think there are some good signs there that things are going in the right direction," Ayscue said.

Jones said the county tax office had sent 173 parcels to the attorney, with 120 now in process. Three foreclosed properties will be sold next week, he said.

"Of course this is generating a whole lot of money," Jones said, adding that probably half the foreclosures were located in the city.

Jones said the county had collected 99.53 percent of the city's 1996 tax.

The county needs some big businesses and big payers, Jones said.

Commissioner Terry Garrison asked that compassion also be part of the tax collection policy.

"Our economy took a nosedive in the 1990s and it has never recovered," Garrison said.

Some people would do better if they could afford to, he said.

Yount said the city's concern was only that the county tax office follow the contract in collecting city taxes.

"But my statement applies to both the city and the county," Garrison said.

Commissioner Danny Wright said the contract needed to be followed or changed. Commissioner Scott Hughes agreed.

"I don't want to be part of a group that's going to pick and choose about the contracts they want and the contracts they don't want," Hughes said.

Wright also noted the correlation between poverty and the tax collection rate. It's apparent statewide, he said.

"You just can't get but so much blood from a turnip," he said. Wright also echoed Garrison's point about compassion.

Reprinted with permission from
The Daily Dispatch, **Henderson, NC,**
July 28, 2007

In addition to the property tax, some counties and cities have gotten authority from the General Assembly to levy certain other taxes. These include taxes for the privilege of doing business, keeping a dog or other pet, or owning an automobile. More than 85 counties and a few cities have authority to levy occupancy taxes on hotel and motel rooms. A smaller number of local governments have authority to levy a tax on the price of restaurant meals or on transfer of land. The General Assembly limits the amount of these taxes, usually to a few dollars each.

State-Collected Taxes

Sales tax provides a substantial part of most local governments' revenues. In North Carolina, only counties can levy sales taxes, but they must share the proceeds with cities. State law limits the sales tax rates county governments may levy. Businesses collect the sales tax money from their customers at the time of sale. The state collects sales tax receipts from businesses throughout North Carolina and then returns the local portion of the sales tax to the counties and the municipalities within them.

sales tax: tax levied on a product at the time of sale

Sales tax revenues are divided between county and municipal governments according to formulas established by the General Assembly. Each board of county commissioners decides whether sales tax revenues will be divided within that county's municipalities on the basis of a population formula or on the basis of the amount of taxes collected in each jurisdiction. City councils have no control over how much sales tax revenue they receive, and county commissioners can only decide whether to divide sales tax receipts with cities either according to population or according to where the tax was paid. Only the state legislature can raise the sales tax rate. Neither city nor county officials have control over how much money the sales tax produces for local government.

Because the sales tax rate is limited by the General Assembly, the amount of revenue in any year depends on economic conditions. The more people spend on purchases, the greater the sales tax revenue. When the economy slows down and people buy less, sales tax revenues go down too.

North Carolina has a separate tax on the sale of gasoline. A part of the state **gasoline tax** is distributed to each municipality in the state. This money, called **Powell Bill** funds, can be used only for the construction and maintenance of city streets. In FY 2007, more than $94 million in Powell Bill funds were transferred from the state to cities and towns. Counties have no responsibility for building and maintaining roads, so they get no Powell Bill funding.

gasoline tax: a tax placed on purchases of gasoline

Powell Bill: a North Carolina state law that allocates part of the state's gasoline tax to municipal governments to build and repair city streets

Because the gasoline tax is a tax on each gallon of gasoline purchased, when gasoline prices go up and people buy less gasoline, Powell Bill funds go down. This leaves cities with less money for streets.

Cities and counties also receive money from the state for taxes on such things as beer and wine sales. The state also pays local governments money to replace some of the revenue lost when the state removed some property from the local **tax base**. Local

tax base: the assessed value of the property, sales, or income being taxed

officials have no control over these revenues, however. The General Assembly sets these tax rates and determines how the funds will be distributed.

User Fees

Local governments charge customers for many of the services they use. These charges are called "user fees." You pay a fee to swim at the public pool or play golf at the public park. You pay a fare to ride on the city bus. Cities and counties with public water supplies and sewer systems charge water and sewer customers based on the amount of water used. Some North Carolina cities also operate the local electric service and charge customers for the electricity they use. These charges are all based on the cost of providing the service. The people who use these services help to pay for the direct benefits they get from them.

City and federal tax funds help subsidize bus service. *Courtesy of City of Salisbury Public Transit Division.*

In many cases, the users do not pay the entire cost of providing the service, however. Governments **subsidize** services because the public also benefits from the service. For example, city bus fares are usually heavily subsidized because if people ride buses, fewer cars are on the streets. Bus riders help reduce traffic congestion and parking problems as well.

subsidize: to reduce the amount users pay for a service by funding some of the cost from another source

Local governing boards have the authority to set user fees. Next to the property tax, user fees are the largest source of local government revenue that local officials can control. As local governments have been asked to do more, local officials in many jurisdictions have begun to rely more on user fees to raise the necessary revenue. Fees for collecting solid waste have been established. Fees for building inspections and other regulation have also been increased to cover more of the costs of conducting these regulatory activities.

Increased reliance on user fees means that more and more of the cost of public service is paid directly by the customer who gets the service. Less is paid as a **subsidy** from other sources, and so the cost for each user goes up. When the public has a great interest in seeing that everyone gets the service, regardless of ability to pay, user fees are kept low and taxpayers subsidize the cost of the service. User fees set at the full cost of service may mean that public benefits are lost. For example, if bus riders have to pay the full cost of buying and operating the buses, fares may be so high that most riders choose to have their own cars, adding to traffic congestion and the need for more streets and parking.

subsidy: a payment that reduces the cost to the user

State and Federal Aid

Local governments get some of their revenue from state and federal governments. Grants and other aid programs help local governments meet specific needs. During the 1960s and 1970s, **intergovernmental assistance** was a major source of local revenue. During the 1980s, many federal grant programs were abolished or greatly

intergovernmental assistance: money given to local governments by state and federal governments to help meet specific needs

In the

Grant gives teen center some room to grow

By Shelby Sebens

Oak Island teens will get some much-needed room to stretch, thanks to a state grant that will help expand their tiny activity center at Middleton Park.

The town parks and recreation department has secured the rest of the money needed to expand the center and renovate the park bathrooms through a $99,000 matching N.C. Parks and Recreation Trust Fund grant.

"We're excited. The kids are really excited. It's like a whole new start," the center's special facilities program coordinator, Karen Derr, said.

Now approximately 12 teenagers can fit in the building that is about the size of a typical family room, but during the school year more than 30 teens have been known to use the center.

The new building, including the park bathrooms, will be 2,250 square feet. During construction the teens will relocate to Templeton Park, where they will be able to play video games, read and hang out in a double-wide trailer.

The grant will be matched with the $104,000 the town council earmarked for the center.

"I'm not sure how else we would have been able to get the building that we feel the teens really need," Oak Island Parks and Recreation Director Kellie Beeson said of the grant and town support.

Part of the town's contribution for the new center and bathrooms came from capital reserves, and the rest rolled over from the parks and recreation department's 2006-07 budget.

John Poole, the state's grants program manager, said this is the sixth trust fund grant that Oak Island has received in the 10 years of the program. He said that "speaks volumes" of the town's success in implementing these grants.

Plans in process

The state awarded 54 grants totalling more than $17 million to local governments this year through the trust fund program. Poole said the agency received 80 applications. He said the state looks at planning, public involvement, what is being proposed and suitability of the site for the project among other factors when awarding these grants.

Beeson said now the department is working on a site plan and general building design so it will be ready to go out for bids after Oct. 1, the contract start date for the grant. "It's going to be a really good start," she said.

Derr said the added space will allow more teens in and give them more opportunities for things to do. "We can offer more," she said.

The center is now finding out what the teenagers would like to see added in terms of clubs and activities.

"We're just trying to see what everybody wants to do," she said.

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Wilmington Star News Online,
Wilmington, NC, September 1, 2007

reduced and intergovernmental assistance became a much smaller part of local government revenues. Still, several important aid programs remain.

Community Development Block Grants help cities and counties improve housing, public facilities, and economic opportunities in low-income areas. Projects funded under this federal program include installation of water and sewer lines, street paving, housing rehabilitation, and other community improvements.

Many social service benefits, such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, Medicaid, and food stamps are paid largely with federal funds. State grants also help to pay for some social service programs. Local employees administer these programs. They determine who is eligible and see that appropriate benefits get to those who qualify.

State and federal funds also help support public health and mental health services. A complex set of programs and regulations governs how these funds are used.

Other Miscellaneous
12.78%

Property Tax
18.75%

Debt Proceeds
11.88%

Intergovernmental
10.13%

Utility
31.76%

Sales & Services
6.44%

Sales Tax
8.26%

Other Miscellaneous
5.07%

Debt Proceeds
16.52%

Property Taxes
36.65%

Intergovernmental
15.87%

Other Taxes
3.55%

Sales & Services
8.39%
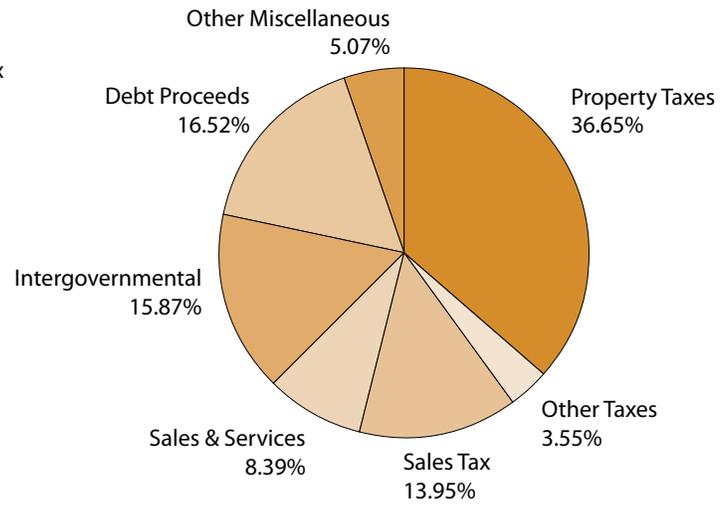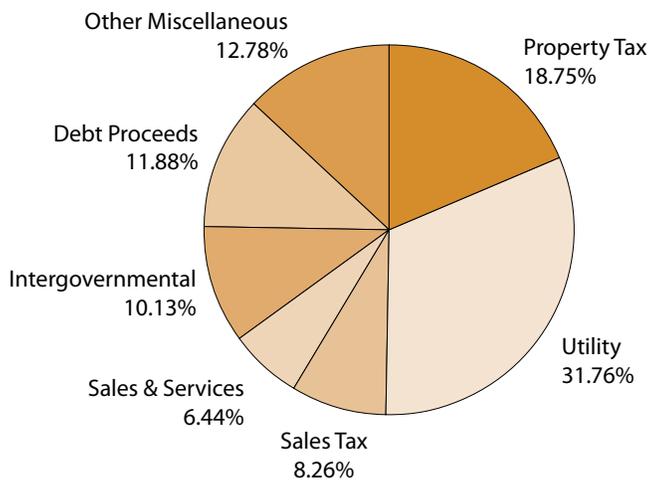
Sales Tax
13.95%

Municipal Revenues	FY 2007
Totals for the Group	
Revenues by Source	
Property Tax	$1,908,820,337
Utility	3,232,661,888
Sales Tax	840,419,110
Sales & Services	655,823,182
Intergovernmental	1,031,698,270
Debt Proceeds	1,208,981,731
Other Miscellaneous	1,301,305,298
Total	**$10,179,709,816**

County Revenues	FY 2007
Total Revenue for the Group	
Property Taxes	$4,972,274,016
Other Taxes	481,947,739
Sales Tax	1,892,366,466
Sales & Services	1,138,605,165
Intergovernmental	2,152,485,205
Debt Proceeds	2,240,750,843
Other Miscellaneous	688,134,769
Total	**$13,566,564,203**

Other Local Revenues

When a city or county extends water and sewer lines to new areas, the owners of the property getting the new lines typically pay the local government a special **assessment**. The assessment helps cover the cost of constructing the new lines. Having public water supplies and sewer service available to the property increases its market value, so the owner is charged for the improvement. Similarly, cities usually charge property owners along a street for paving the street or building sidewalks.

Interest earned on the fund balance can be another important revenue source. Most local governments try to maintain a fund balance equal to 15 to 20 percent of annual expenditures. This provides a ready source of funding for months when tax collections are slow. A sizable fund balance can also help cover an unexpected decrease in revenues. (Remember, local officials have little control over most of their revenues and cannot change the property tax rate until they adopt the next annual budget.) Until the funds are needed, the fund balance can be invested and the interest added to government revenues.

For most municipalities, utility user fees are the biggest source of revenue. Property taxes are the county's largest source of revenue. The graphs on this page show the various sources for FY 2007 municipal and county revenues.

assessment: a charge imposed on property owners for building streets, sidewalks, water lines, sewers, or other improvements that government makes

Report to the People

At the end of each fiscal year, every local government in North Carolina prepares an annual financial report. This document summarizes all of the government's financial activity: what it has received, what it has borrowed, what it has spent, what it is obligated to spend, and what it has in the fund balance. Each local government publishes its annual financial report, has it audited by an independent accounting firm, and files a financial summary with the Local Government Commission.

The report helps local officials better understand the financial situation of their government. The independent audit and the report to the Local Government Commission serve as checks on the accuracy of the report and the legality of the government's financial dealings. The publication of the report also informs citizens about their local government's financial condition.

Discussion Questions

1. Why is the annual budget important to each local government in North Carolina?
2. Why do local governments try to maintain a sizable fund balance?
3. How do user fees differ from taxes? What are the advantages of user fees as local government revenues? What are the disadvantages?
4. Get a copy of the annual budget for your county or city. How much did the county or city government spend and receive last year? How large was its fund balance?
5. What are the local property tax rates for your county and city? How much additional revenue would an increase of one cent in the property tax generate for each?

8. Making Government Work

GOOD government does not just happen. Good government is the result of people working together to decide what needs to be done for the community and then working to carry out those decisions. People make government work.

Who are the people involved in local government? This chapter explores the answer to that question. We consider six groups: voters, elected officials, local government employees, volunteers, members of appointed boards, and the general public.

People may be in several of these groups at once. For example, all voters are members of the general public, and all elected officials are also voters. Government employees may also be volunteers in other public agencies. They are almost always voters too. This chapter discusses the different groups separately to indicate the different ways people help shape the way government works.

Left: To be a voter, you must first register with the local board of elections in the county where you live. Seventeen-year-old citizens may register if they will be eighteen years old by the next general election.
Courtesy of Gina Childress, Forsyth County.

Right: Residents of Orange County wait to cast their votes on election day.
Courtesy of Orange County.

Voters

The voters in each jurisdiction choose the members of their local governing boards. The voters in each county also elect a sheriff and a register of deeds. The voters must also approve any agreement by their local government to borrow money that will be repaid with tax receipts. Through voting, the people determine who their government leaders will be and give the officials they elect the authority to govern. Voting is, thus, an essential part of representative democracy. Voting is both a very special responsibility and a very important civil right.

Who can vote?

Struggles over the right to vote have continued ever since the United States gained independence from Great Britain. At independence, only free male citizens who were 21 years of age or older and paid taxes could vote for members of the lower house of the North Carolina General Assembly. Only men who met all these qualifications and also owned at least 50 acres of land could vote for members of the state senate. (There were no local elected officials.) Most African American men were held as slaves and could not vote at all. In 1835 the General Assembly prohibited even free men of African descent from voting in North Carolina.

The Civil War ended slavery, and in 1870 the Fifteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution extended voting rights to all male citizens 21 and older, regardless of "race, color, or previous condition of servitude." For the next few years, African Americans were able to vote as the Constitution permitted. In 1890 more than 1,000 black North Carolinians held office. But some white leaders feared an alliance between black voters and poor white voters. To prevent that alliance, some white leaders stirred up racial fears among whites and pushed racial segregation. The segregation laws were called "Jim Crow" laws. By the end of the nineteenth century, the North Carolina General Assembly had devised means of keeping most nonwhite men from voting, and the federal government refused to enforce the Constitution.

Women could not vote in North Carolina at the beginning of the twentieth century either, even though some people had long been seeking voting rights (or "suffrage") for women. Finally, in 1920 the women's suffrage movement was successful. That year the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution extended the right to vote to female citizens 21 and older.

Although white women began to vote in North Carolina in the 1920s, most African American and Native American citizens of North Carolina were kept from voting until the 1960s. A major accomplishment of the civil rights movement, which also ended racial segregation in North Carolina, was the guarantee of voting rights for all adult citizens.

News...

In the

Young voters highly motivated

By Joel Burgess

Torre White was so excited about the spring primary election that she beat most North Carolina voters to the polls, casting her ballot April 17, the first day of the early voting period.

It was her first time picking candidates. The 17-year-old West Asheville resident and Asheville High School student was able to register and vote because of a state law that allows anyone who will be 18 by the Nov. 4 general election to participate in a primary.

She was one of 286 Buncombe County 17-year-olds who were registered to vote by April 11, according to N.C. State Board of Elections records. White and several others said a sense of history and responsibility drew them to the polls.

"I believe that my opinions mean something. And I can't talk about what's wrong and the need to change things if I don't make the effort," she said. "The first step is registering to vote. And that isn't enough. You need to go out and vote."

A historic presidential election also motivated her.

White voted for Sen. Barack Obama, a candidate she felt would help people get health insurance. Her mother, Irene Pickens, works part time at Asheville's Senior Opportunity Center and made too much for government-sponsored Medicaid and too little to afford private insurance.

The city recently extended health care to Pickens, but the situation left an impression on White, who will study nursing next year at Gardner-Webb University in Boiling Springs.

"It was about a year she didn't have insurance," she said.

She said she likes Obama's Democratic primary opponent, Sen. Hillary Clinton, but feels it's time for someone to hold office who is not linked to past administrations.

Wells Fanning, 17, lives in Candler but goes to Asheville High School. Long political discussions with family members made him ready to vote in the primary, he said.

"Politics is a big deal. We talk about it all the time," he said. "Sometimes it gets a little heated, but it's all in good fun."

A Republican, Fanning said he preferred a one-time candidate, former Sen. Fred Thompson. But Fanning said he would support GOP nominee, Sen. John McCain.

"I think McCain has a good chance to win the general election," he said.

Inna Zhuravleva, meanwhile, is an unaffiliated voter who plans to vote in the Democratic primary. The Woodfin 17-year-old came to the United States with her Ukrainian parents as a child and now goes to Erwin High School. She is not sure which presidential candidate she will choose, but she is interested in the idea of Clinton as the first female president.

"I'm not very feministic, but her being a lady wants to make me vote for her," she said.

In North Carolina, 17-year-olds may vote in the Tuesday primary if they will be 18 by the Nov. 4 general election. In Buncombe County, 286 17-year-olds had registered by April 11.

Reprinted with permission from
The Asheville Citizen-Times, **Asheville, NC, May 4, 2008**

The last extension of voting rights came in 1971 when the Twenty-sixth Amendment to the United States Constitution guaranteed the right to vote to younger citizens. Now all citizens who are at least 18 years old are eligible to vote. Anyone who was born in the United States is a citizen. So are children born in other countries if either of their parents is a United States citizen. Other people who are born in other countries may become United States citizens through naturalization, a procedure administered by the U.S. State Department.

Being eligible to vote does not make you a voter, however. To be a voter, you must first register with the local board of elections in the county where you live. Seventeen-year-old citizens may register if they will be eighteen years old by the next **general election**. Thus, you can register and vote in a **primary election** when you are seventeen if your eighteenth birthday comes before the November general election.

To vote, you must also cast your **ballot**. Each county is divided into voting **precincts**. The county board of elections establishes a place to vote—a **polling place**—in each precinct. Registered voters may cast their ballots in person at the polling place on Election Day. Many county boards of elections also establish spe-

general election: a regularly held election for public offices

primary election: an election in which voters select candidates for a general election

ballot: the list of candidates on which you cast your vote

precinct: a geographic area that contains a specific number of voters

polling place: an official place for voting

cial "early voting" polling places where any voter registered in the county may vote during a period set by the state board of elections. Voters who are unable to get to a polling place because of illness or travel may vote by **absentee ballot**.

People vote because they want to exercise their rights. They vote to support candidates, parties, or issues. They vote to oppose candidates, parties, or issues. They vote to make their communities better. They vote to show that the government belongs to them and because they feel responsible for helping to select public leaders.

County commissioners, like these in Warren County, have the authority to pass ordinances and make other decisions affecting everyone in the county. Courtesy of Warren County Board of Commissioners, Warrenton.

Elected Officials

The elected leaders of local governments are the members of their governing boards. For counties, these are the county commissioners. For municipalities, they are the council members (or "aldermen" or commissioners) and mayor. These officials have the authority to adopt policies for local government and are responsible to the people for seeing that local government responds to public needs and works well to meet those needs.

The governing board is the local government's legislature. The members discuss and debate policy proposals. Under state law, the board has the authority to determine what local public services to provide, what community improvements to pursue, and what kinds of behavior and land use to regulate as harmful. The local governing board also sets local tax rates and user fees and adopts a budget for spending the local government's funds. The board appoints the manager, who is chief administrator for the government. All of these are group decisions. Board members vote, and a majority must approve any action.

Each local governing board has a presiding officer—someone who conducts the meetings of the governing board, speaks officially for the local government, and represents the government at ceremonies and celebrations. In cities and towns, this is the mayor. Voters elect the mayor in most North Carolina cities and towns. In a few of the state's municipalities, however, members of the local governing board elect a mayor from among the members of the board. The presiding officer for a county is the chairman of the board of county commissioners. In most North Carolina counties, the board elects one of its members as chairman. In one county, the voters elect the chairman of the board of county commissioners.

The sheriff and the register of deeds are elected to head their respective departments of county government. The sheriff's department operates the county jail, patrols and investigates crimes in areas of the county not served by other local police departments, and serves court orders and subpoenas. The register of deeds' office maintains official records of land and of births, deaths, and marriages. Both the sheriff and the register of deeds hire their own staffs. They are not required to hire on the basis of merit, although their employees must meet basic requirements set by the state.

absentee ballot: an official list of candidates on which voters who cannot get to the polling place on election day indicate their votes

School board members are also local elected officials. School boards are like city and county governing boards, except their authority is more limited. They are responsible only for policies regarding the local public schools, and they cannot set tax rates or appropriate funds. The county commissioners determine how much money the county will spend to support local public schools.

Campaign signs line the street in New Bern just before the 2008 election for county, state, and federal officials. *Courtesy of Judy Hills.*

All local elected officials represent the people of their jurisdiction. People often contact these elected officials to suggest policy changes or to express their opinions on policy proposals that are being considered by the board. Boards hold public hearings on particularly controversial issues to provide additional opportunities for people to tell the board their views on policy proposals.

Elected officials get their authority from the people. Campaigning for office gives candidates an opportunity to express their views about local issues and to hear what citizens want from their elected officials. Elections give voters the opportunity to choose candidates who share their views on issues. Through elections, voters give elected officials the authority to make decisions that everyone will have to obey. Through elections, voters also hold elected officials accountable. People can vote against an elected official who does not represent them and defeat that official in the next election.

Elections are held every two or four years, depending on the term of office established for each office. In jurisdictions where board members are elected by district or **ward**, each voter votes only for the candidate from his or her own district. In jurisdictions where members are elected at large, each voter may vote for as many candidates as there are positions to be filled. (Some jurisdictions have at-large elections for board members, but require that candidates live in and run for seats representing specific districts.) Election by district may produce a more diverse governing board if minority groups are concentrated in some parts of the jurisdiction. Districts can be drawn around those population concentrations so that a group that is a minority in the total population is a majority within the district. Because of a history of denying African American citizens the right to vote, federal courts have required district elections in some counties and municipalities that have substantial African American populations but have failed to elect African American board members.

ward: a section of a jurisdiction for voting, representative, or administrative purposes

Elections for county commissioners are held on the Tuesday after the first Monday in November in even-numbered years, along with elections for state officials and members of Congress. The county sheriff and register of deeds are elected then too. In practice, the sheriff and register of deeds are often re-elected, term after term. Often sheriffs and registers of deeds serve until they choose to retire. Frequently their successors have served as their deputies. Sometimes, however, these elections are highly contested—especially the elections for sheriff.

partisan: involving political parties

political party: an association of voters with broad common interests who want to influence or control decision making in government by electing the party's candidates to public office

County elections are **partisan**. That is, candidates run under **political party** labels. Primary elections are held several months before the November general election. Primary elections are elections among the candidates of a party to choose the party's candidates for the general election. In the primary election, members of each party

vote only for their party's candidate. Candidates may also be placed on the ballot by filing petitions.

Elections for city council members (or aldermen) are held in odd-numbered years. Election for mayor is held at the same time in those cities and towns where the voters elect the mayor. Most cities and towns have **nonpartisan** elections. That is, candidates do not run under party labels. These municipalities may have local voters' organizations that support candidates, but parties are not permitted to run candidates in most North Carolina municipalities. Only a few cities and towns hold primary elections.

Firefighters are among the many local government employees serving the people of North Carolina. *Courtesy of Warren County.*

nonpartisan: not affiliated with a political party

Most school board elections are also nonpartisan. School board elections are in even-numbered years, with some at the time of the general election, some at the time of the primary election, and some on special election dates.

Altogether, more than 700 elected officials serve the state's county governments and more than 3,200 serve in North Carolina municipalities.

Why do people run for a seat on the local governing board? They may be interested in getting local government to adopt a particular policy proposal. They may want to help shape the future of the community more generally. They may feel an obligation to serve the public. They may want to explore politics and perhaps prepare for seeking state or federal office. They may enjoy exercising public responsibility or being recognized as a public leader.

Local Government Employees

Counties and municipalities hire many different kinds of workers. Counties hire teachers, nurses, social workers, sanitation inspectors, librarians, and many other specialists to perform county services. Similarly, cities hire police officers, engineers, machinery operators, recreation supervisors, and a wide variety of other specialists to carry out their services. In addition, both city and county governments hire accountants, clerks, maintenance workers, secretaries, administrators, and other staff to support the work of the government. These employees organize government activities, keep government records and accounts of public money, clean and repair government property, and pay the government's bills.

North Carolina local governments employed over 360,000 people in 2007. Local governments thus employed, on average, about 28 people for every 1,000 residents of the state.

nepotism: hiring or giving favorable treatment to someone based on kinship

Most North Carolina local governments have well-established systems for hiring employees on the basis of their qualifications for the job. In some other states, people who work for local government get their jobs because of personal or political connections. Hiring based on kinship is called **nepotism**, hiring based on friendship is called **favoritism**, and hiring based on political support is called **patronage**. Most North Carolina local governments have and enforce rules against nepotism, favoritism, and patronage. Instead, local governments in North Carolina usually hire

favoritism: showing partiality; favoring someone over others

patronage: hiring or giving favorable treatment to an employee because he or she is a member of one's political party

Managing a community where citizens are involved

By Matt Lail

Cal Horton knows that there are times when outsiders read about town of Chapel Hill issues in the newspapers and wonder, "what in the world is going on there?"

But Horton doesn't see his town that way. In fact, he believes Chapel Hill is a special place with a distinct relationship between the local government, the citizens and UNC-Chapel Hill. And for 16 years, Horton was at the center of that relationship, serving as town manager. He recently retired after 40 years in local government.

"I've felt good about it ever since" beginning work in local government in 1967, he says. "I guess it's a little late to change."

Horton's career began in the Charlotte personnel department in 1967. He would work there until 1974. That city allowed him to go back to school, so from 1971-72 Horton worked toward his masters of public administration at UNC. "I've been in Charlotte's debt ever since," he says. He's made every effort over the years to pay the Queen City back by sending them qualified employees who either interned or got their starts in Chapel Hill. "We're still sending good people to Charlotte to help pay that debt off."

From Charlotte, Horton became the city manager in Decatur, Georgia, where he would stay for 15 years. It was then off to Chapel Hill in June 1989 as public safety director. A year and a month later he was town manager.

"I've been fortunate to only work in good communities," Horton says, "where people really care about a place."

At any moment, hundreds of Chapel Hillians—beyond the elected officials and town staff—may be involved in town activities through advisory boards, commissions or just by showing up to meetings.

"There's a civic engagement level here that is unique in North Carolina and is rare in the rest of the country," says Horton. "We tug on the heartstrings of lots of people."

Chapel Hill's civic engagement means that rarely does a matter come before the town or the board that does not receive a more-than ample amount of discussion; the opportunities for citizen feedback are varied and numerous.

Take the example of a standard zoning process. Chapel Hill ordinances require the presentation of a concept plan for major developments, including special-use permits, rezoning and subdivisions, among others. In short, the developer must present the concept to the council "before they've spent a lot of money," according to Horton. The council can then react to the proposal in an informal way; the citizens are also able to comment early on in the process. Next, the developers can make alterations before submitting the actual plan for consideration. That is followed by standard public meeting notices, then a series of board reviews.

"We may have a few more boards" than other municipalities, jokes Horton. It would not be unusual for an issue to go before the transportation advisory board, the bicycle and pedestrian advisory board, the greenways commission, the parks & recreation commission, the historic district commission, or others. A review time follows which allow citizens multiple opportunities to hear about and comment on the project.

"And many of them do."

From there, the issue is on to a planning board review, then to the council (with more public hearings).

All of those levels of checks-and-balances result in a populace that has had ample time to comment, criticize and tweak/approve/shoot down a project. According to Horton, there is very little ignorance of goings-on in Chapel Hill.

"I can't remember occasions where citizens have said 'we didn't understand this until it happened.' We are fortunate to have good process and participation but also good coverage (in the press).

"Most people know what's going on."

Excerpted with permission from *Southern City*, **September 2006**

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people who have the training and experience to do the job they are being hired for. This is known as hiring based on **merit**. Local governments in North Carolina hire people on the basis of merit because their primary concern is having employees who can provide the best government services for the lowest cost. In a merit system, people are also promoted or dismissed on the basis of their job performance, rather than for personal or political reasons.

Except in the smallest North Carolina local governments, the governing board appoints a manager who is responsible for hiring, promoting, and dismissing government employees. The board judges the manager on how well services are provided and how well government funds are used. Thus, the manager wants to be sure that employees are doing their jobs well.

merit: hiring or promoting based on a person's qualifications, ability, and performance

Family camaraderie burns within them

By Francine Sawyer

Dinner came late recently for 10 firefighters of Company B at the New Bern Fire Department.

That is nothing new for the men who eat and sleep at the station. As veteran firefighter Bob Bordeaux said, "You never know what is going to happen next, no days or nights are ever alike."

He has been with Company B for 18 years. And it's the uniqueness of each day that he loves.

Rookie Sean Ostmann, 25, is new to Company B. He left his job at the Ocean Isle fire department for the New Bern job. The night a Sun Journal reporter and photographer were set to spend the night, Ostmann was putting sheets with fire trucks and engines on his Murphy pull-out pull-down bed.

The other men in the dormitory were calling him Martha Stewart, as he showed an easier way to get the sheets on the bed. He said he didn't know New Bern fire department supplied linen. As he was putting sheets on his bed his sister gave him, men around him watching said, "Yeah, your sister gave them to you, right".

While nighttime at the station is not a big frat party, the men are quick to tease each other.

"But we are family; we care about each other," said Dwayne Massenburg, the only minority in Company B.

Watching him interact with his colleagues is to see that Company B is color blind, as is Massenburg.

"One of the greatest things I have learned is how to have to have trust in another person," Massenburg said.

While the 10 men at Company B are protecting the city, six others are at the Elizabeth Avenue Station and four are at the Thurman Road firehouse.

Company A and C have female fire fighters while the Company B unit at the main station does not.

Collectively the men said women would be welcome.

Some men are married, some single, some with children some without children.

Eric Mullis is commander of the B shift at the main station. He said the men's family is used to them being away from home.

"It does take the family some time to get used to the dad or husband being away from home. Often family members might bring by children for a visit," Mullis said.

While the picture of firefighters playing cards around a table is so Norman-Rockwell-yesterday, Mullis said he is struck by how the fire department has changed.

Mullis joined the New Bern Fire Department in 1987.

"If you would have told me then that one day the department would have multi-million dollar equipment and a new state-of-the-art station, I would not have believed it," Mullis said.

Equipment carried in response to fire calls varies, but all have been deemed essential over time.

Mullis said the high cost of energy is putting a focus on the public safety budget.

However with 20 paid firefighters on at any given time for the city and with volunteer fire departments willing to assist, the city appears to be protected.

On this night New Bern fire specialist Doug Soltow, who is chief of the Rhems Volunteer Fire Department, said his lower back was aching.

"When my back starts bothering me, it usually means there is going to be a call," he said.

That call was not coming for several hours.

Earlier in the day the men were in classroom training and answered four fire calls.

Before answering a call their 60-pounds of turnout gear is arranged strategically near the engines. They even have periodic training to hone putting on their gear in a safe and swift manner.

They have to clean their gear each time they return from a fire call.

Training is a constant, and the department's burn academy is often a site for refining their skills.

They work on all aspects of their job including, but not limited to, inspections of equipment; procedures for putting hose down, using ladders, hoisting and lowering victims or fire fighters using ropes, knots and rescue harnesses; opening walls and ceilings, or studying ventilation procedures; and tactical training as well as emergency medical certification.

They also work on salvaging a fire scene.

Dinner didn't start until after 9 p.m.

Chris Wintemute, co-workers call him "Mute," is on cooking duty.

The cooks rotate just as all the men rotate duties at the station.

When the appointed cook has food duty, if classroom work is on the day's assignment, he usually does a dish that can cook itself.

Wintemute made a stew beef with carrots over noodles.

The men pay for their food. The average is $7 per day for two meals.

The department has three refrigerators, and three storage areas in the kitchen area for the three shifts of A, B and C.

"If another company borrows something they usually put it back," Wintemute said.

A firefighter assigned to buy groceries for the day drove to a nearby store.

The department does not want the station to be shorthanded.

If the men have a craving for restaurant food usually they ignore the craving because it's a logistical nightmare. The fire trucks have to go in case they are called into service.

"It just doesn't look good to have fire trucks in the parking lot of a restaurant," Mullis said.

A firefighter from the Elizabeth Avenue Station drove to the main station to borrow a toilet plunger.

In the

"After you drove downtown for that you are going to have more than a plunger problem when you get back," one of the main station firemen said with a chuckle.

One thing the men do not laugh about is cleanliness. Equipment is cleaned for the next fire call or next shift. An inventory is taken to be sure all the equipment that went on the most recent fire call is back in the station and ready to go into service.

That includes cleaning the kitchen for the next shift. Not only do the pots and pans and dishes get cleaned but the floor is mopped after each meal.

So the night is winding down and the men are going to their dorm rooms, the study room or workout room.

Mullis is going to his office where a stack of paperwork is waiting for him.

As the men slip into more comfortable clothing which turnout gear can quickly be put over, many will try to sleep, especially after an active day.

The men do not get in the showers all at once. They never know when an alarm will come in. They do stay downstairs at least until 8:30 p.m. if all of their work is done.

That includes making sure the fire fighting gear is where it is supposed to be.

Wintemute said when the men go into their dorm rooms someone will start dozing off and the rest of the men will start falling asleep.

"Its lights out," said Wintemute.

Soltow said when the firefighters are awakened for a call they usually can go back to sleep. "Especially if it is a false alarm," he said.

Lt. Scott Gladson is on the B shift. He is teased by his fellow firefighters because he was recently awarded the department's employee of the year award.

"He voted for himself, we sure didn't vote for him," teases Wintemute.

It's getting near 10 p.m.; the men excuse themselves and go to their dorms.

They came on duty at 7 a.m. and will leave the next day at 7 a.m.

Sleep is interrupted around 5 a.m. An alarm screeches through the building. The men were two hours away from the other shift coming on, and them leaving.

The fire is confined to a planter outside a book store near Wal-Mart. It's small, and easily extinguished.

They get back to the station, clean the gear and put everything back in order and it's about time to leave.

The men will be off 24 hours and back on again for 24 hours until the cycle ends and starts over again.

"We're all family here," said firefighter Jeremy Banks. "You usually can't pick your family, but we are with each other more than our real families."

In larger counties and cities, the manager assigns much of the work of hiring and supporting the government's employees to a human resources (or personnel) department. To guide its work, the human resources department prepares job descriptions for all employees.

An employee's job description lists the duties of the job. When a job becomes vacant, the local government uses the job description to advertise the position. The personnel department accepts job applications from people who would like to be hired for the vacant position. In filling out the job application, the applicant lists his or her education, job training, skills, and previous work experience. The personnel department reviews the applications and selects the applicants who appear to be best qualified for the job. Applicants are often asked to provide the names of **references**. References are often asked about the applicant's performance or work ethic. The final set of applicants is then selected and interviewed, usually by the person who would supervise their work if they were hired. That person is usually responsible for recommending who gets hired.

references: people who know how well someone did on a previous job or about that person's other qualifications for a job

Most local government employees enjoy their jobs and working for the public. They are honest, hard-working people who care about making their community a better place.

Volunteers

Volunteers also help carry out important public services. In many places in North Carolina, volunteers fight fires and provide emergency rescue services. Volunteers assist in programs for children, youth, the elderly, homeless people, and other groups with special needs. The volunteers may be organized through a city or county's fire department, recreation department, social services department, or other division of government. The volunteers may also be organized through a nonprofit organization that works in cooperation with local government.

Like their full-time, paid counterparts, volunteer firefighters and emergency medical service technicians are required to have extensive training. In fact, most of the unincorporated areas of the state and most of the small municipalities depend on volunteers for firefighting. Also, many counties rely on volunteer emergency rescue squads to provide medical assistance and rescue work.

Many volunteer fire departments are organized as nonprofit corporations. They have contracts with a local government to provide fire protection to a specific area. The volunteer fire department receives public funds to buy equipment and supplies needed in fighting fires. Similarly, municipal and county governments often provide buildings or funding for emergency shelters, senior citizens centers, hot lunch programs, youth recreation leagues, and other services operated by nonprofit organizations and staffed by volunteers.

Volunteers assist in a number of ways, including running programs for children, collecting canned goods for homeless people, and picking up litter.
Top: *Courtesy of Town of Emerald Isle.*
Center: *Courtesy of Wayne County.*
Bottom: *Courtesy of Stacie Galloway, Town of Morrisville.*

Members of Appointed Boards

Local governments also have appointed committees, boards, or commissions. These provide opportunities for many other citizens to assist the elected governing board in shaping public policy. State law requires that some of these (such as Alcoholic Beverage Control boards, and boards of elections, health, mental health, and social services) play a direct role in selecting agency heads and setting operating policies for the agency. Other boards are established by the local government to provide policy direction for airports, civic centers, public housing, stadiums, or other public facilities. Still other boards advise elected officials directly on matters ranging from the environment to human relations, from recreation to job training, from open space to transportation. Large cities and counties may have more than 30 appointed boards and commissions, and many hundreds of citizens may serve on the boards of a large local government.

On some boards, at least some of the members must be appointed from specific groups in the community. For example, a mental health local management entity board must include, among others, two people with financial expertise, a person with management or business expertise, and a person representing the interests of

children. Other boards or commissions may require that members be residents of various parts of the jurisdiction to provide broad geographic representation. County boards of elections must include both Democrats and Republicans, with the party of the governor having the majority of members.

> **Some local governments, like Guilford County, reimburse fuel costs for volunteers who must travel to help provide county services, as this story from the *News-Record* explains: "Guilford Volunteers Get Help with Travel Expenses" (www.news-record.com/node/6735).**

Appointed boards advise elected officials regarding government policies.
Courtesy of Town of Aberdeen.

People volunteer to serve on appointed committees, boards, and commissions for many of the same reasons people run for election. Having a particular concern for the subject the board deals with is especially important for many volunteers. Appointed boards have a narrower range of concerns than city councils or county commissions. Appointed boards provide an opportunity for people with a particular interest in historic preservation, nursing homes, or other public policy area to work on policy for that particular concern.

The General Public

Everyone uses local government services, is affected by the decisions local government makes, and influences local government decisions. Sometimes people are not aware of how they are influencing public policy. Other times they might be trying very hard to change local government policies. People unintentionally influence local government policies through the use of government services, through cooperation (or noncooperation) with government programs, and through public behavior that helps or harms others.

How does using government services affect public policy? Government officials often consider use to indicate the public's wants or needs. According to this view, the more people use a service, the more of that service the government should try to provide.

Local governments may sometimes be unable to provide more of a service, or officials may decide they cannot afford to do so. In such a situation, officials may try to limit use, but limiting use is also a government policy.

For example, the more often people use a ball field, the fewer hours it is available for other users. Government officials might respond to this increase in use by putting up lights so the field could also be used at night. They might also build additional fields so that more teams could play at the same time. These are examples of adding more service in response to increased use. But the local governing board might decide it could not afford to add lights or new fields. Instead, officials might decide to limit use of the existing field. They might require people who want to use the field

to reserve it in advance, pay a fee, or join a league that schedules games on the field. These are all ways of **rationing** the service.

Cooperating or failing to cooperate with government programs also influences public policy in important ways. Many programs can succeed only if people cooperate. Consider the problem of solid waste disposal, for example. Many local governments have recycling programs to reduce the amount of waste that goes into landfills. Most of these recycling programs depend on people sorting their own trash so that recyclable materials can be collected separately from waste for the landfill. If people do sort their trash, the program succeeds. If they do not, the program will not work, and officials will have to find other ways to get rid of the trash people produce.

Behavior that helps people may reduce the need for public programs. For example, if people help look after their elderly neighbors, there may be less need for county social services to provide visiting nurse services. Behavior that harms people helps shape public policy because it can create a problem that local government attempts to reduce through regulation. When some people in a community indicate that they are offended, annoyed, or hurt by dogs running loose, for example, local officials have to respond. The officials may decide that the action is so harmful that it should be regulated, or they may decide that the action is not causing enough of a problem to justify regulation.

Influencing Public Policy

Talking directly to public officials is one very important way to influence policy. People can call officials or visit them in person to discuss problems they think require government attention. They may also speak at public hearings or other meetings attended by public officials. Letters to public officials or petitions signed by large numbers of people are also ways people communicate their views about what government should do.

Often it is important to organize public support for a proposal. Officials are frequently persuaded by the reasons people provide in arguing for or against a proposal, but they can also be persuaded when large numbers of people agree. To organize support, people publicize the problem and the response they think government should make. They may hold news conferences or demonstrations to get the attention of newspapers, radio, and television. They may also write letters to the editor.

People can and do seek to use government for their own personal purposes. But many people are also interested in helping make the entire community a better place to live and work. People may disagree about whether a particular proposal is in the public interest, and debate is important. It is important to ask how the community would be better off if a proposal is adopted. This helps focus attention on the public benefits of government action. People who want the government to act should be able to explain how they think the proposed action will help improve conditions in the community.

Good government depends on the public being aware of the problems and opportunities facing the community. Good government requires that many people learn about public issues and try to influence public policy. Good government requires that people register to vote and then actually do so. Good government requires that many people volunteer to help government, including running for elective office. Good government requires that well-qualified people make full-time careers serving as employees of local government. Good government will increasingly depend on you, as you become an adult in your community.

Discussion Questions

1. Who do you know who works for local government? Who do you know who volunteers with local government? Who do you know who has been elected to local office? Who do you know who serves on appointed boards?

2. What was the most recent local election in your city or county? How many people voted? How many people are registered to vote in your city or county? What was the voter turnout in the most recent election? (That is, what percentage of the registered voters voted in that election?) Are elections in your city or county by district or at large? How does that affect representation in your local government?

3. How have you or your family, friends, or neighbors been involved in influencing local government decisions?

4. Newspaper articles and radio and television newscasts often mention disagreements over whether or not local government should regulate certain behavior. Identify a local government law or regulation that has been the subject of disagreement where you live. Which government regulation is involved? What activities does the law or regulation apply to? What are the arguments in favor of this government regulation? Hint: Who might be harmed without the regulation? How might they be harmed? What are the arguments against this government regulation? Hint: Who might be harmed by the regulation? How might they be harmed? If you had to decide whether or not to pass this law or regulation, what would you decide to do? Why?

For Further Reading

Books

The Big Click: Photographs of One Day in North Carolina, April 21, 1989, Mobility, Inc., Richmond, VA, 1989. This collection of color photographs taken by numerous photographers shows different activities that people in North Carolina undertake at similar times in a single day.

Bledsoe, Jerry, *Carolina Curiosities—Jerry Bledsoe's Outlandish Guide to the Dadblamedest Things to See and Do in North Carolina*, Fast and McMillan Publishers, Inc., Charlotte, NC, 1984. This funny guidebook of places to see and things to do in North Carolina includes the site of Babe Ruth's first home run, Hog Day, the home of the man with the world's strongest teeth, and other oddities.

Corbitt, David Leroy, *The Formation of the North Carolina Counties, 1663–1943*, State Department of Archives, Raleigh, NC, 1969. This history of North Carolina counties includes how they evolved and how their geographical boundaries have changed.

Couch, Ernie, and Jill Couch, *North Carolina Trivia*, Rutledge Hill Press, Nashville, TN, 1986. This fun trivia book about North Carolina includes questions on geography, history, sports, and science.

Crutchfield, James, *The North Carolina Almanac and Book of Facts*, Rutledge Hill Press, Nashville, TN, 1988. This extensive collection of facts about North Carolina discusses prominent North Carolinians and the history of the state.

Fleer, Jack D., *North Carolina Government and Politics*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, NE, 1994. This overview of state government and politics examines the context of local government in North Carolina.

Gade, Ole, and H. Daniel Stillwell, *North Carolina: People and Environment*, Geo-APP, Boone, NC, 1986. This compilation of geographical information and other data about cities, counties, and rural areas in North Carolina includes predictions about the future of each region.

Jones, H.G., *North Carolina Illustrated 1524–1984*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC, 1983. This book is an extensive collection of historical photos from North Carolina with explanations of the significance of each photo.

Lawrence, David, *County and Municipal Government in North Carolina*, University of North Carolina School of Government, 2006. (online at http://www.sog.unc.edu/pubs/cmg/). Written for county officials to use as a reference, this book includes information about administering county and city governments, elections, government finance, property taxes, and the many services counties and cities conduct.

Luebke, Paul, *Tarheel Politics 2000*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC, 1998. This is a revised and updated version of Luebke's earlier *Tarheel Politics: Myths and Realities*. The author is a college professor who also serves as a representative in the North Carolina General Assembly.

Massengill, Steven, and Robert Topkins, *A North Carolina Postcard Album, 1905–1925*, Division of Archives and History, North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, Raleigh, NC, 1988. This collection of picture postcards depicts North Carolina people and scenes in the early years of this century.

Orr, Douglas M., Jr., and Alfred W. Stuart, *The North Carolina Atlas*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC, 2000. This collection of maps, pictures, and articles includes information about North Carolina's land, people, economy, government, and society. It also contains considerable details about the state's counties and municipalities.

Powell, William S., *Dictionary of North Carolina Biographies*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC, 1979. This four-volume set of biographies includes prominent North Carolina citizens who have made a difference in the state.

Powell, William S., *North Carolina: A Bicentennial History*, Norton, New York, NY, 1977. This history of North Carolina from the colonial period to the 1970s gives readers a thorough background of the state.

Powell, William S., *The North Carolina Gazetteer*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, NC, 1968. This geographical dictionary of North Carolina discusses how land formations, lakes, mountains, rivers, towns, and counties in the state were named.

Schumann, Marguerite, *The Living Land: An Outdoor Guide to North Carolina*, Dale Press of Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC, 1977. This guide to natural resources in North Carolina includes listings of lakes, forests, mountains, and beaches that are accessible to the public.

Periodicals

County Lines, Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Association of County Commissioners. This newsletter discusses information and issues about counties in North Carolina and the people who work for those counties.

NC Insight, Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research. Written by the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research, this journal presents North Carolina policy issues and makes recommendations for improving public policies.

North Carolina Historical Review, Raleigh, NC: North Carolina Historical Commission. This compilation of articles about the history of North Carolina includes important people, events, and anecdotes.

Popular Government, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina School of Government. This journal contains articles about North Carolina government and current concerns of its citizens.

Southern Cities, Raleigh, NC: North Carolina League of Municipalities. This newsletter includes stories about the people in city and town government, issues facing municipal government, and innovative programs for dealing with these problems.

Websites

www.sog.unc.edu is the website of the School of Government at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. This site provides access to North Carolina local governments' websites and to the websites of newspapers throughout the state, as well as to the publications, resources, and programs of the School of Government.

www.sog.unc.edu/library/counties.html provides links to the websites of North Carolina counties.

www.sog.unc.edu/library/cities.html provides links to the websites of North Carolina municipalities.

www.civics.org is the website of the North Carolina Civic Education Consortium. This site provides access to resources for teaching and learning about government and public policy in North Carolina and other states.

www.ncgov.com is the official website of the state of North Carolina. This site provides access to official state agencies and to many other sources of information about government and public policy in North Carolina.

www.ncpress.com/ncpa/newspapersonline.html provides links to North Carolina newspapers.

Glossary

absentee ballot: an official list of candidates on which voters who cannot get to the polling place on election day indicate their votes (p. 96)

alien: a person living in a country where he or she is not a citizen (p. 6)

allocate: to set aside money for a specific purpose (p. 29)

annexation: the legal process of extending municipal boundaries and adding territory to a city or town (p. 16)

appropriate: to assign government funds to a particular purpose or use (p. 81)

assessed value: the value assigned to property by government to establish its worth for tax purposes (p. 84)

assessment: a charge imposed on property owners for building streets, sidewalks, water lines, sewers, or other improvements that government makes (p. 90)

ballot: the list of candidates on which you cast your vote (p. 95)

bond: a contract to repay borrowed money with interest at a specific time in the future (p. 82)

budget: a plan for raising and spending money (p. 78)

business development corporation: a group of people legally organized as a corporation to encourage economic development (p. 57)

capital: land, buildings, and other equipment used to make other goods and services (p. 82)

chamber of commerce: a group of business people formed to promote business interests in the community (p. 55)

charter: the document defining how a city or town is to be governed and giving it legal authority to act as a local government (p. 16)

citation: an official summons to appear before a court to answer a charge of violating a government regulation (p. 76)

citizen: a person who has a legal right to full rights in a country because he or she was born there or has been given those rights by the country (p. 6)

civil: concerns government's role in relations among citizens (p. 76)

coastal plain: the eastern region of North Carolina, extending approximately 150 miles inland from the coast; includes 41 counties. The western border of the region is usually defined as the western boundaries of Northhampton, Halifax, Nash, Johnston, Harnett, Hoke, and Scotland counties (p. 23)

compost: decayed material that is used as fertilizer (p. 43)

community: people who share important interests, such as living in the same area or identifying with each other (p. 6)

contract: an agreement made between two or more people or organizations (p. 15)

corporation: a group of persons formed by law to act as a single body (p. 15)

council–manager plan: an arrangement for local government in which the elected legislature hires a professional executive to direct government activities (p. 18)

crime: an act that is forbidden by law; an offense against all of the people of the state, not just the victim of the act (p. 65)

debt service: payments of principal and interest on a loan (p. 82)

desalinization: the process by which the salt is taken out of water (p. 39)

developer: a person or business that builds houses or prepares land for building (p. 73)

dispatcher: a person who gives emergency workers information so that those workers can respond to emergencies (p. 49)

economic development: activities to create new jobs and additional sales and other business (p. 27)

expenditures: money spent (pp. 29, 78)

extraterritorial land use planning jurisdiction: the area outside city limits over which a city has authority for planning and regulating use of the land (p. 66)

favoritism: showing partiality; favoring someone over others (p. 98)

federal system: the sharing of power between the central and state governments (p. 2)

fiscal year: the 12-month period used by the government for record keeping, budgeting, taxing, and other aspects of financial management (p. 80)

food stamps: a program to help people with financial need buy food; vouchers to be used like money for purchasing food; federal program, but administered by county departments of social services in North Carolina (p. 30)

fund balance: money a government has not spent at the end of the year (p. 79)

gasoline tax: a tax placed on purchases of gasoline (p. 87)

general election: a regularly held election for public offices (p. 95)

general obligation bond: a loan that a government agrees to repay using tax money, even if the tax rate must be raised (p. 82)

grant: money given by state or federal government to local governments to fund local projects (p. 4)

greenspace: an area that is kept undeveloped to provide more open land in or near a city (p. 73)

groundwater: water that collects underground (p. 39)

immigrant: a person who comes to live in a country from another country (p. 59)

impurities: materials that pollute (p. 41)

incident report: a report that a police officer writes describing a crime or other problem situation (p. 49)

incineration: the safe burning of wastes (p. 46)

incorporate: to receive a state charter, officially recognizing the government of a municipality (p. 15)

inflation: a continuing rise in prices (p. 82)

initiative: a way in which citizens propose laws by gathering voter signatures on a petition; only a few cities and no counties in North Carolina have provisions for this (p. 76)

installment–purchase agreement: an arrangement to buy something in which the buyer gets to use the item while paying for it in regularly scheduled payments (p. 84)

interest: a charge for borrowed money that the borrower agrees to pay the lender (p. 82)

interest rate: a percentage of the amount borrowed that the borrower agrees to pay to the lender as a charge for use of the lender's money (p. 84)

intergovernmental assistance: money given to local governments by state and federal governments to help meet specific needs (p. 88)

jurisdiction: the right to use legal authority, or the territory over which a government can use its authority (p. 2)

levy: to impose a tax by law (p. 15)

liability: something for which one is obligated according to law (p. 15)

local act: a state law that applies only to the local government specified in the law (p. 16)

mandate: a legal order by which one government requires actions by another government (p. 4)

mandated service: a program that local governments must provide because of requirements from state or federal government (p. 21)

Medicaid: a program designed to pay for medical care for people in financial need; federal program, but administered by county departments of social services in North Carolina (p. 30)

merit: hiring or promoting based on a person's qualifications, ability, and performance (p. 99)

mountain counties: the western region of North Carolina, extending eastward from the Tennessee border to the eastern boundaries of Alleghany, Wilkes, Caldwell, Burke, and Rutherford counties; includes 23 counties (p. 23)

mulch: material spread around plants that prevents the growth of weeds and protects the soil from drying out (p. 43)

municipality: a city, town, or village that has an organized government with authority to make laws, provide services, and collect and spend taxes and other public funds (p. 6)

mutual aid agreements: commitments by local governments to assist each other in times of need (p. 5)

nepotism: hiring or giving favorable treatment to someone based on kinship (p. 98)

nonpartisan: not affiliated with a political party (p. 98)

opponent: one who is against something (p. 62)

optional service: a program that a government decides to provide to meet the needs or requests of its residents (p. 22)

ordinance: a law, usually of a city or county (p. 16)

partisan: involving political parties (p. 97)

patronage: hiring or giving favorable treatment to an employee because he or she is a member of one's political party (p. 98)

per capita: by or for each person (p. 27)

personal property: things people own other than land and buildings (p. 84)

personnel: the people who work for a government, company, or other organization (p. 18)

petition: a request for government action signed by a number of voters who support the same request (p. 62)

piedmont: the central region of North Carolina including Surry, Yadkin, Alexander, Catawba, and Cleveland counties on the west to Warren, Franklin, Wake, Chatham, Lee, Moore, and Richmond counties on the east; includes 36 counties (p. 24)

political party: an association of voters with broad common interests who want to influence or control decision making in government by electing the party's candidates to public office (p. 97)

poll tax: tax people had to pay in order to be allowed to vote (p. 58)

polling place: an official place for voting (p. 95)

pollutant: anything that harms the quality of air, water, or other materials it mixes with (p. 41)

population: the total number of people living in a designated area such as a city or county (p. 6)

Powell Bill: a North Carolina state law that allocates part of the state's gasoline tax to municipal governments to build and repair city streets (p. 87)

precinct: a geographic area that contains a specific number of voters (p. 95)

primary election: an election in which voters select candidates for a general election (p. 95)

principal: the amount of money borrowed (p. 82)

privatization: government buying a service from a business instead of producing the service itself (p. 37)

property tax: a tax placed on the assessed value of property to be paid by the owner of that property (p. 84)

property tax base: the total assessed value of all taxable property (p. 84)

property tax rate: a percentage of the assessed value of property that determines how much tax is due for that property (p. 84)

proponent: one who is in favor of something (p. 62)

proposal: a suggestion put forward for consideration or approval (p. 61)

rationing: controlled distribution of scarce resources (p. 104)

real property: land and buildings, and improvements to either (p. 84)

references: people who know how well someone did on a previous job or about that person's other qualifications for a job (p. 101)

referendum: a way for citizens to vote on state or local laws (p. 83); an election in which citizens vote directly on a public policy question (p. 76)

regional council: an organization of local governments established to deal with mutual challenges; 17 exist in North Carolina (p. 5)

resident: a person who lives in a designated area such as a city or county (p. 6)

revenue: the income that a government collects for public use (p. 78)

revenue bond: a loan that a government pays off with fees collected through operating the facility built with that loan (p. 83)

rural: of or relating to the countryside; area where fewer people live (p. 13)

sales tax: tax levied on a product at the time of sale (p. 87)

septic tank: a container in which wastes are broken down by bacteria (p. 42)

sludge: the solid material separated from sewage (p. 42)

subdivision regulation: rules for dividing land for development (p. 69)

subsidize: to reduce the amount users pay for a service by funding some of the cost from another source (p. 88)

subsidy: a payment that reduces the cost to the user (p. 88)

sue: to ask a court to act against a person or organization to prevent or pay for damage by that person or organization (p. 15)

surface water: all waters on the surface of the Earth found in rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, and so on (p. 39)

tax base: the assessed value of the property, sales, or income being taxed (p. 87)

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF): federal government program of support for families in need; provides small payments to cover basic living expenses and assistance to help adults find and keep jobs (p. 31)

total assessed value: the sum of the assessed value of all the property a city or county can tax (p. 84)

unincorporated: the part of a county outside the cities and towns in that county (p. 22)

urban: area where people live close together; most are incorporated as municipalities (p. 14)

variance: permission to do something different from what is allowed by current regulations (p. 72)

volunteers: people who donate their time and effort (p. 54)

ward: a section of a jurisdiction for voting, representative, or administrative purposes (p. 97)

watershed: an area that drains water into a stream or lake (p. 39)

zoning: rules designating different areas of land for different uses (p. 69)