

# LEGISLATIVE GOAL STATEMENTS

## RECOMMENDED BY THE NCLM BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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*The following goal statements are grouped by subject area but NOT listed in any priority order.*

- Expand federal and state resources for affordable housing.
  - Housing affordability is a growing problem across North Carolina, affecting cities and towns of all sizes and people across different income levels.
  - Increasingly, the lack of affordable housing acts as a major impediment to business and workforce recruitment.
  - Ongoing state and federal revenue streams to address housing affordability are extremely limited, with much of the burden for solutions left with cities and towns
- Revitalize vacant and abandoned properties with enhanced legal tools and funding.
  - Abandoned and vacant properties, often the subject of so-called tangled titles, can affect the ability of communities to revitalize areas and improve economic conditions.
  - The abandoned properties, with enhanced legal tools to help heirs clear up title issues and sell properties at market rates, could help address local housing needs.
  - Many towns do not have the funding to adequately address abandoned properties.
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- Create an adequate and permanent funding stream for local infrastructure.
  - Infrastructure – including roads, water, sewer, stormwater, parks and beaches – are critical to economic development and job creation.
  - Many cities in the state are growing, creating a constant need for investment to keep pace with population growth; many cities and towns also have aging infrastructure that must be replaced.
  - Creating more permanent funding streams for local infrastructure, such as a dedicated tax source, would allow for better planning to meet needs.



- Allow municipalities to use local resources and capabilities to expand broadband access in their communities through innovative partnerships.
  - Slow and unreliable internet service threatens educational and professional opportunities, and the economic future of entire communities.
  - Municipalities own existing infrastructure – including dark fiber, towers and electric poles – that could be utilized in innovative partnerships and assist in making broadband service more affordable.
  - Failure to utilize local government assistance and assets will continue to create digital gaps that have real-world consequences for North Carolinians.
  
- Extend deadlines for completion of federal infrastructure projects.
  - Current deadlines for the allocation and expenditure of American Rescue Plan Act funding may make more complex infrastructure projects unrealistic.
  - High inflation and worker shortages are leading to higher project costs; extending ARPA and other funding deadlines will spread projects out and may help lower costs.
  - Cities and towns require flexible deadlines to get the best bang for their buck out of this funding.
  
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- Expand state transportation funding streams for construction and maintenance for municipal and state-owned secondary roads.
  - Current Powell Bill and other state funding is not adequate to address transportation needs, particularly as they affect municipal and state-owned secondary roads.
  - In many cities and towns, major commuting corridors are not receiving the level of investment needed to keep pace with traffic.
  - More investment is needed for these roads if existing residents are to embrace business and residential growth.

- Support integrated and multi-modal transportation solutions.
    - Today, cities and towns seek to make downtowns and other areas accessible to residents and visitors, whether traveling by foot, bike, car, mass transit and other means.
    - Making areas accessible in this manner requires integrated planning and funding with the state.
    - Only through recognizing the need for multi-modal transportation solutions can cities and towns maximize tourism and other economic opportunities, ensuring that local businesses thrive.
  - Increase state funding for public transportation operations.
    - Road construction is not keeping pace with transportation needs in any many areas, and public transportation provides a means to reduce the burden of building roads.
    - Investment in public transportation can improve traffic safety, air quality and residents' accessibility to businesses and public services.
    - One of the biggest impediments to economic growth is traffic and commuting times, which can be alleviated through public transportation options.
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- Expand incentives and funding for local economic development.
    - Funding is simply inadequate in many cities and towns to encourage job growth.
    - State grants and incentives are often targeted in ways that fail to assist the areas in greatest need of job creation.
    - Maintaining or expanding funding for film tax credits, major industrial site development, downtown development and renewable energy tax credits helps cities and towns across the state.

- Expand incentives that encourage regionalization of water and sewer, as well as other municipal services, when appropriate.
  - A number of municipal water and sewer systems continue to financially struggle with deferred maintenance needs.
  - These challenges came about largely due to population and job losses in rural areas, leading to an erosion of taxpayer and ratepayer bases.
  - While legislators and municipalities have begun to address these issues with the creation of the Viable Utility Reserve and the use of ARPA funding, state estimates show needs still exceed expenditures by several billion dollars.
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- Enhance state systems and resources for local law enforcement officer recruitment, training, and retention.
  - Municipalities across the state are facing law enforcement staffing shortages, in many cases severe shortages.
  - State training resources are limited, and the cost of local law enforcement agencies to send recruits and existing officers to NC Justice Academy locations can be prohibitive.
  - Grant writing assistance is one of several options that might provide better access to the large volume of federal law enforcement grant funding that is available.
- Provide state assistance for yearly financial audits, ensuring that an adequate number of auditors is available.
  - Several dozen local governments have been placed on the state Unit Assistance List due to late audits.
  - Often these audits are late due to staffing shortages, changes in financial personnel and a growing shortage of private auditors willing to perform this work.
  - Addressing this challenge would lessen negative portrayals of local government financial controls.



- Revise state contracting laws to better protect public entities from the effects of inflation.
    - Labor and materials costs have been rising at a rapid rate, leaving municipalities with few options when project bids and costs exceed expectations.
    - Additional flexibility regarding the contracting process could assist municipalities in protecting taxpayers from inflation and escalating costs.
    - Without contracting law flexibility, projects can be delayed and costs can further increase.
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  - Update annexation petition thresholds to make voluntary annexations easier to initiate.
    - Voluntary annexation by petition currently requires 100 percent consent from all property owners, a threshold that can be impossible to meet even if a majority of property owners can benefit by utilizing their property for business or residential purposes.
    - Lowering the threshold from 100 percent represents a middle ground that would still reflect the will of property owners but not handicap communities' ability to economically thrive.
    - The ability of a city or town to grow and reflect its urban footprint is vital to its financial health; city services are relied on by residents whether they live in or near municipal boundaries.
  - Provide authority to municipal water systems to recoup costs of clean-up from polluters.
    - Local municipal water systems are increasingly being looked to for the clean-up of PFAS and other "forever" chemicals found in surface waters.
    - State regulators plan to set surface water standards for these chemicals and propose Maximum Contaminant Levels for PFAS chemicals in drinking water.
    - To date, cities' only recourse to try to recoup the cost for utility ratepayers is through the courts.
  - Provide local revenue options beyond property tax.
    - Roughly 40 percent of municipal general fund revenue is generated by local property taxes.
    - Cities have little to no authority to raise significant revenue in other ways.
    - A lack of diverse, local tax options can affect economic growth, as well as cause large swings in revenue based on economic changes.
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