

# THE MUNICIPAL

*The Premier Magazine For America's Municipalities*

June 2015

## Budget & Finance

### INSIDE:

ICC asks: Are you ready for your building safety experts to retire?

Civic crowdfunding

Infrastructure financing

Post-recession spending priorities



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## On the Cover

Code officials are set to retire in significant numbers — more than 80 percent — during the next 15 years. Municipalities, especially those with smaller building departments, will be hit hard, so it may be time to consider extending recruitment efforts in new directions. Find the story on page 10. (Shutterstock Photo)







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# Following the money



Jodi Magallanes | Editor

**A**CCORDING TO THE EVENING news, the recession has been declared officially over.

While Scott Pelley may be technically correct on that count, we know that it has come at the cost of a paradigm shift: one that we are far from finished paying for yet.

In most places, layoffs and the elimination of positions through attrition has hit the minimum level of staffing needed for a department to remain operable. Unfortunately, "operable" now means accepting the fact that equipment is still being run two or more years past its recommended replacement date and that customer service is more

difficult to provide than before due to those strained staffing levels. It's also widely known that infrastructure itself took one of the biggest hits.

The Municipal reporters took a look this month at both traditional and innovative funding methods. We've asked a few people who know how the municipal bond market is holding up, for example. The answer is pretty well, although the interest cap discussion is likely to return another day.

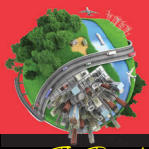
Grant funding has become key in making ends meet, and Lauren Caggiano's story notes that it can still help turn blighted neighborhoods into real estate that's desirable and can be developed. Perhaps most interestingly, Denise Fedorow highlights in her article, "Civic crowdfunding," that if residents recognize the value of a particular local project, they'll often put a few dollars toward

it. Websites now exist that will collect those funds, and they tend to cultivate interest and excitement in such initiatives. It's certainly a tool to add to the proverbial toolbox.

We're also pleased to present two festivals, one local and one regional, that have become significant sources of revenue for the cities in which they're located. Not every summer gathering is profitable, of course, for its locale, but these two — Folkmoot USA in North Carolina and Hodag Country Festival in Wisconsin — have grown into hugely popular, priority destination events that actually translate into profit for their hosts.

They look like a darn good time, too.

We hope you'll take a look, and we also hope that this month kicks off a summer of good news for your department's budget. According to the news, 2015-16 will slowly continue our road back to financial stability. I'd like to hold my colleagues at the news stations to that. **M**



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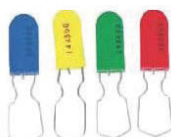
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# Will your municipality be ready for its building safety experts to retire?

**For more than a century, building codes have been implemented nationwide to protect the health, safety and welfare of their communities. To be effective, codes must have a robust development process and enforcement infrastructure. America's code administration and enforcement professionals serve as the backbone of such a code development and enforcement process.**

As the publisher of national model codes for construction, the International Code Council engaged in conversation with its Members and stakeholders about emerging issues of interest to the building safety industry and all affected by it. A survey conducted by the National Institute of Building Sciences on behalf of ICC revealed information that, if not addressed in the coming years, these issues may impact the public safety of thousands of U.S. communities.

The survey of 25 multiple-choice questions went to building code compliance professionals at the federal, regional, state and local levels last spring. A total of 3,850 code professionals, representing all 50 states, answered a range of questions from salary and job responsibilities to

educational background and retirement plans. The resulting data revealed an impending retirement exodus of the senior ranks of code officials.

Just as baby boomers are having an impact across other industries, code officials are making plans for retirement in significant numbers. More than 80 percent of respondents expect to retire within the next 15 years, and more than 30 percent plan to do so within five years (figure 1).

Such a massive exodus of public safety professionals could have a serious impact on municipalities — particularly those with smaller building departments. A third of the respondents work in departments of four or fewer employees; nearly a quarter have between five and nine (figure 2). These findings raise concerns about the ability to replace senior staff; opportunities for mentoring new entrants into the profession; and the maintenance of knowledge when staff retires.

Within departments, code professionals fulfill a variety of roles. Given the size of departments and the number of areas covered, most professionals have responsibilities in numerous areas. Respondents indicated that in addition to being responsible for safety inspections, 52 percent also reported responsibility for plan review and 46 percent in department management. (Respondents could select as many roles as applied to them.) A large-scale retirement could cause municipalities to face a backlog of plan reviews, safety inspections and permit requests that could slow construction projects.

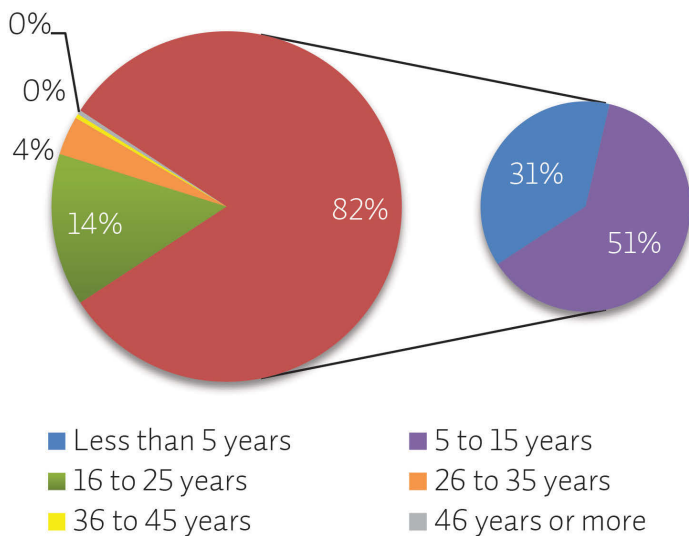


Figure 1: Plans to Leave the Building Regulatory Profession

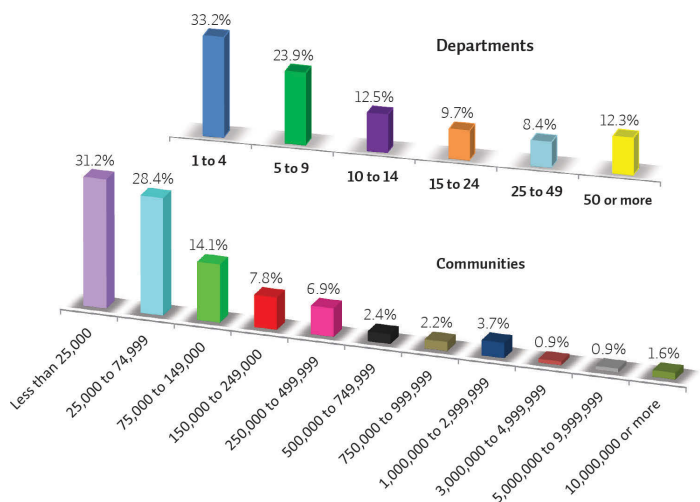
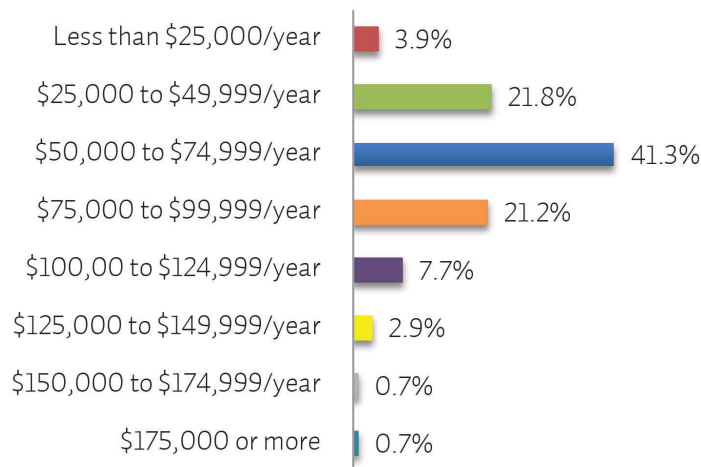


Figure 2: Size of Department/Size of Community



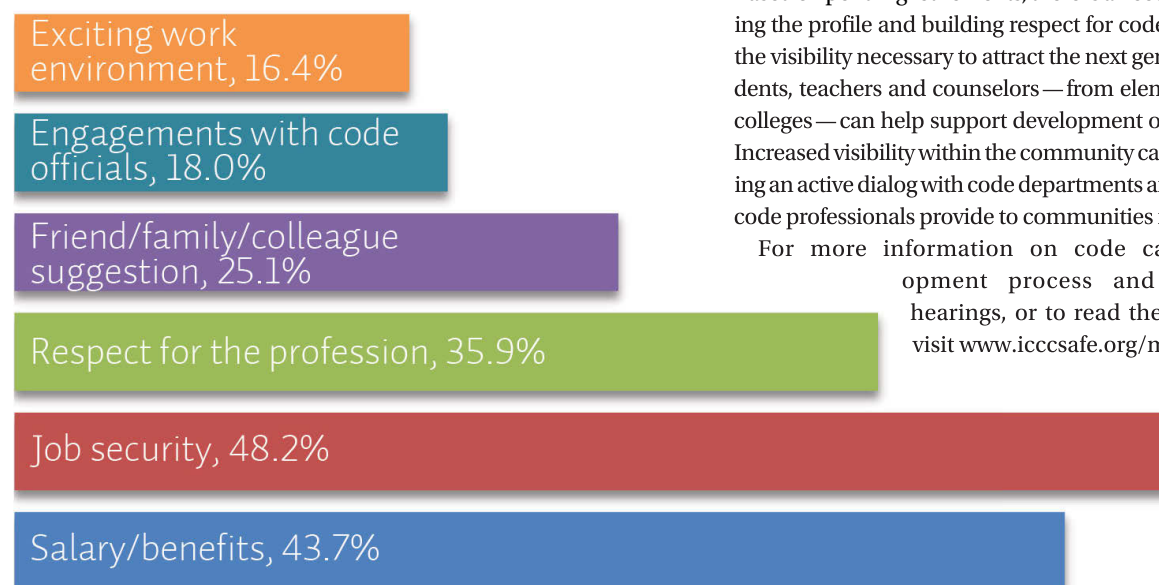
Figure 3: Respondent Salaries



#### Salary and reasons for pursuing

The median salary for those polled was \$50,000–\$74,999 per year (figure 3). There also appears to be a sizable opportunity for salary growth, as one-fifth of the respondents earn \$75,000–\$99,999 annually. Compared to the median household income of \$51,017 reported by the U.S. Census Bureau for 2012, code officials can earn a respectable living. In fact, many of the respondents cited salary/benefits just behind job security as one of the main reasons they pursued a career as a code professional (figure 4).

Figure 4: Reasons Respondents Pursued Career as Code Professional



#### How can a municipality prepare?

Municipalities must act now to recruit the next generation of code officials or risk a serious impact on public safety. Attracting new entrants relies on highlighting the important role code professionals play in community health, safety and welfare. The current generation of 20- to 30-year-olds entering the workforce is looking to make a difference, wants to work in exciting environments and wants to utilize the latest technology. A code-related career can fill these requirements.

Code professionals pride themselves on the role they play in assuring the health, safety and welfare of the communities they serve. A municipality can raise the profile of its code professionals and attract new candidates by highlighting contributions to hazard preparedness, public safety, sustainability and economic development. Establishing ties with parallel departments in the community, including police and fire, can be beneficial. Consistent messaging tied to important government initiatives, including resilience and sustainability, can also drive support.

Municipalities may consider extending recruitment efforts to disciplines not traditionally tied to construction. More than a quarter of survey respondents with bachelor's degrees earned them in unrelated areas — particularly business-related programs such as business, management, administration, finance and so on. The skills required to be an effective code official are increasingly shifting more to customer service, critical thinking and public administration, and less on technical skills.

A municipality can encourage its code professionals to engage with high school and community college programs such as career/professional days, mentoring and internships. Technical high schools, in particular, can offer opportunities. Code professionals can serve on advisory boards and support integration of code-related activities into the high school curriculum.

Besides recruiting millennials, bringing experienced members of the workforce into the profession remains a viable option. Although 74 percent of survey respondents are currently between the ages of 45 and 64, nearly 35 percent of respondents entered the profession in their 30s, and another 28 percent while in their 40s.

#### Conclusion

Based on pending retirements, there is a need for immediate action. Raising the profile and building respect for code professionals can provide the visibility necessary to attract the next generation. Engaging with students, teachers and counselors — from elementary to high school and colleges — can help support development of a pipeline of new recruits. Increased visibility within the community can be equally valuable. Keeping an active dialog with code departments and understanding the value code professionals provide to communities is essential.

For more information on code careers, the code development process and free-to-attend public hearings, or to read the complete survey results, visit [www.icccsafe.org/municipal](http://www.icccsafe.org/municipal). ■

Information provided by the International Code Council.



Focus on:

# Budget & Finance

JUNE, 2015

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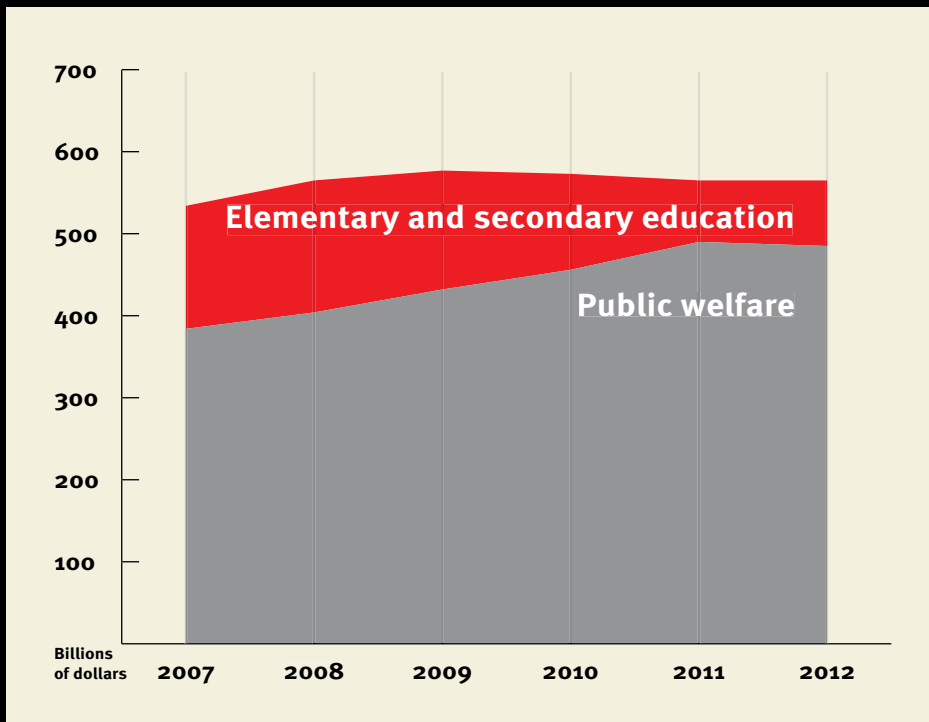
## BUDGET AND FINANCE

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*John A. Parker*

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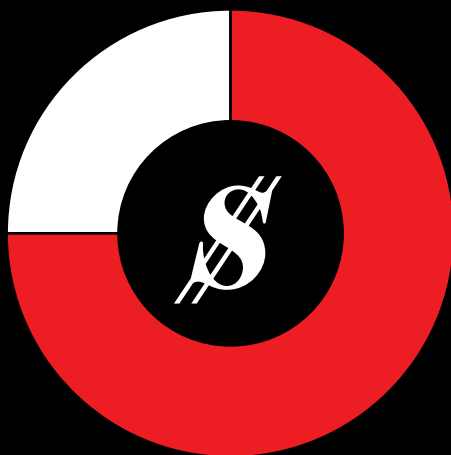




### State and local government select expenditures: 2007 to 2012

State and local government capital spending on education declined 7.9 percent, from \$91.7 billion in 2007 to \$84.5 billion in 2012; Elementary and secondary education capital spending largely contributed to this decline, falling from \$65.5 billion to \$51.1 billion from 2007 to 2012.)

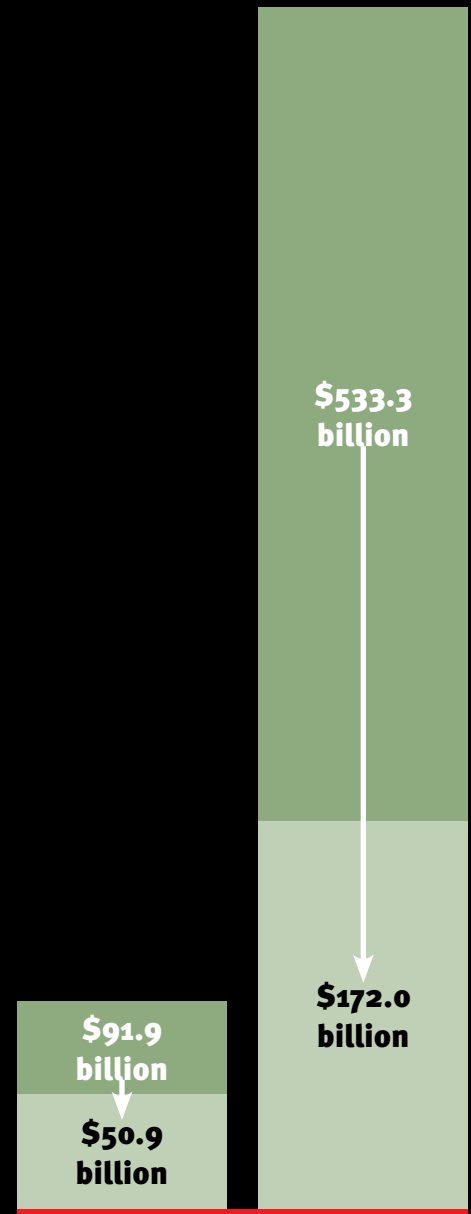
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007 and 2012 Census of Governments: Finance — Surveys of State and Local Government Finances



**75% Municipal bonds held by retail investors in 2013**

**25% Municipal bonds held by institutional investors**

Source: [www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/2013/06/28/8d608dbe-df8e-11e2-963a-72d740e88c12\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/2013/06/28/8d608dbe-df8e-11e2-963a-72d740e88c12_story.html)



### Did you know?

From 2007 to 2012 two major contributors to the decline in total revenues for state and local governments were employee retirement revenue, dropping 67.7 percent from \$533.3 billion to \$172 billion, and interest earnings, falling 44.6 percent from \$91.9 billion to \$50.9 billion.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2007 and 2012 Census of Governments: Finance — Surveys of State and Local Government Finances





**LEFT:**

A crowdfunding outreach event took place at the 2014 Touch-a-Truck event, held to raise money for the Summer Heatwave program in Gainesville, Fla. Pictured from left are Kat Forbes, Denese Wethy, Police Chief Tony Jones, Diane Latson, Kristy Crawford, Jameshia Boyd and Alicia Antone. (Photo provided)

**RIGHT:**

Crowdfunding allows less wealthy residents to be involved financially and hands-on in building the programs, parks and other community projects that they believe in, which in turn bolsters community spirit. (Photo provided)

# Civic crowdfunding

By DENISE FEDOROW | The Municipal

**As budgets get stretched tighter and tighter, everyone is looking for innovative ways to complete civic projects.**

**Civic crowdfunding is an avenue that has met with some success. Crowdfunding is defined as the practice of obtaining needed services, ideas or content by soliciting contributions from a large group of people and especially from the online community rather than traditional resources.**

There are many different crowdfunding platforms: GoFundMe; Kickstarter; Indiegogo; Fundrazr, an international platform; IOBY, which stands for In Our BackYard and is usually for low-income neighborhood projects; Tilt; and more. Just about anything can be crowdfunded, and the concept is not unique to the United States.

In 2011 crowdfunding received support from Washington, D.C., when President Barack Obama signed the Jumpstart Our Business Startup Act into law. The legislation aims to loosen regulatory burdens on small businesses and has legalized equity crowdfunding.

## **Civic crowdfunding platforms**

In 2012 Citizeninvestor, a crowdfunding platform strictly for municipal projects, was launched. Its founders said they wanted to solve the problem that “government never has enough resources to provide every project and services that citizens want.” Any government entity can post projects, and citizens can donate to it. Their donations are tax-deductible.

Joining Citizeninvestor is free, but an 8 percent fee is charged on projects that reach 100 percent. That fee is added to the amount posted for the project. An all-or-nothing platform, it promises donors that the project will be fully funded or they won’t be charged.

“It’s a commitment to our donors so they can be assured if they donate to a project, it will go forward,” said Tony DeSisto, Citizeninvestor co-founder.

DeSisto said what often happens is if a project is 75–80 percent funded, the city will put up the balance. Also, as the project goes live on the site, sometimes the city will receive donations from other local sources. Those amounts are added to the project fund total.

“We don’t charge them our fee for those donations,” DeSisto said.

Generally, 80 percent of project donations come from the local community. Twenty percent comes from outside the community, possibly former residents or people who have a passion for the project the city is trying to fund.

“We’ve never had a project that’s gone over 40 percent that hasn’t been funded,” DeSisto said.

Citizeninvestor provides a liaison on the team to help the city with email templates and other materials to help market the project.

“That’s the biggest contributing factor (to) whether a project gets funded or not,” he said.





***“It’s changing times—people want to act on something right at the moment.”***

#### **Success stories**

Several cities have used the platform more than once. Central Falls, R.I., and Noblesville, Ind., are among those that have returned with a second project.

Central Falls is the smallest city in the smallest state, and in August 2011 it became the first and only city in Rhode Island history to declare Chapter 9 bankruptcy.

Last year, however, the city repaired a beautiful clock tower with Citizenvestor funds, and this year 68 Citizenvestors raised \$10,044 to fully fund new public art/trash receptacles and recycling bins for Jenks Parks. Once the project was funded, residents gave input on the designs.

Noblesville successfully funded its 2014 Fourth of July festival through Citizenvestor and is in the process of raising funds for this year’s event. Cindy Benedict, community engagement manager, said community engagement is a “relatively new initiative of the mayor’s and that they have been exploring different ways the public can be better informed and participate. Her research introduced her to Citizenvestor.

“Our Fourth of July Festival is not funded by the city,” she noted. Volunteer committees do the work, and they have always relied on

corporations and businesses to put up the \$33,000–\$35,000 for a parade, live music, games, entertainment and a fireworks display.

Normally a project has a 90-day fundraising campaign on Citizenvestor, but last year Noblesville had very short notice to start its campaign. “We had a little under 30 days,” Benedict said.

“Citizenvestor worked with us very well and as we got sponsorships those were added,” she said. “It’s changing times—people want to act on something right at the moment, and everybody’s doing jars in businesses. It reaches a point where that becomes too much.”

Because of the short amount of time, organizers only raised a couple of hundred additional dollars from the Citizenvestor site, but still funded the project.

Part of Noblesville’s motivation for using Citizenvestor was to get the word out to the community about how much it really does cost to hold this festival each year and that no taxpayer dollars are used.

“These things cost and we think it’s great for the community: so if you agree, help us make it happen” was the message they wanted to send. ►

## **Fund your park**

The National Recreation and Park Association, a nonprofit organization funded through member dues, grants, registrations and charitable contributions, has started a crowdfunding platform for its members at [www.fundyourpark.org](http://www.fundyourpark.org).

Roxanne Sutton, senior marketing and communications specialist for NRPA, said the platform was launched last year.

“Seeing how some park and recreation agencies had benefitted from crowdfunding, we saw how this could be a useful tool for all of our members,” she stated.

Fund Your Park is dedicated to parks and recreation and helps the agencies with the process. An application is used to choose the projects: NRPA provides the chosen projects with one-on-one support, such as helping them choose the scope of the project, providing communications and marketing tools, according to Sutton.

The slate of projects is posted to gain critical mass. The first round of projects was launched in September 2014 and consisted of initiatives in Grand Blanc, Mich.; Bowling Green, Ohio; Edmund, Okla.; Sugarland, Texas; West Allis-West Milwaukee, Wis.; Porter County, Ind.; Riverside, Calif.; Santa Clara, Calif.; and Lake County, Ill. The projects ranged from student gardens to a sanctuary for veterans.

The campaigns are posted on the site for 45 days, and currently they are averaging two to three rounds of projects per year. NRPA has a 5 percent fee, and unlike Citizenvestor, the parks and recreation agencies keep whatever funds are raised regardless of whether or not the fundraising goal is met.





## Crowdfunding a Heatwave

Gainesville, Fla.'s Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs Department was looking for a way to double the number of youth served in its Summer Heatwave program when it was chosen by a local committee to pilot civic crowdfunding.

The program is a partnership with the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs Department, the Gainesville Police Department and the State Attorney's office. It's designed to provide a safe place for kids through basketball, pool parties, life skills and teen lounges with a game room, snacks and a place to just visit with each other.

"We want to remove the barriers that prohibit something positive and give them extra activities they're not exposed to normally," said Alicia Antone, development and partnership program coordinator.

"We were not involved in that initial phase of choosing Citizenvestor; we were just told 'you have been chosen to be the first source for crowdfunding,'" she said.

One of the reasons the department came to like crowdfunding was the time frame. Since the program started in July, attempting to get a grant wasn't conducive. But they had a 90-day window to raise funds on Citizenvestor.

"(Marketing manager) Kat (Forbes) and I spent a lot of time going to events where hundreds or thousands of people would be present to get the word out about the campaign," Antone said.

Citizenvestor told them that much of the electronic donations would come from outside the community, but that wasn't Gainesville's experience. But the women said the site helped with video pieces they could post on social media and they had banners and business cards designed. They were on the University of Florida's radio talk show, local television talk shows and in newspapers. The majority of funding was offline, but they did get online donations.

They said the platform "certainly gets you visible places where you were not before" and also allowed for methods of payments not available before.

Antone said she and Forbes partnered and spent time doing mailings, making one-on-one visits and lots of follow-up calls and contacts during the campaign to keep donors informed and afterwards to thank them for support. Having a small team or dedicated staff for that purpose is key, Antone said. Pre-planning is important, too.

With better pre-planning this year, they hope to see more online contributions. Both women said the platform is best suited to capital improvement projects like a performing arts center or dog park.

"Because people can visit it, see it and feel they contributed to it. Because we were (funding) a program, it was more of an uphill battle," Antone said.

She added that crowdfunding is "an old mission with a new name. The Salvation Army's bell ringing campaign is crowdfunding — getting hundreds of individuals to donate small amounts.

### Not so successful

Not every project gets funded, though. One city that didn't meet its goal was Tyler, Texas. It had been trying to raise \$55,000 for an addition to its animal care facility.

Susan Guthrie is the assistant city manager and was in charge of the crowdfunding project. She said Tyler is known for its low tax rate: .22 per \$100 of assessed value, which is on average two to four times lower than other cities its size.

"So public-private partnerships are part of our business model," she said.

City leaders tried a few other things to fund the facility before crowdfunding. They added PayPal to the city's website so people could donate directly online and then decided to try crowdfunding. Just like other municipalities, their thought was, "Let's try it as a pilot."

Guthrie said there are drawbacks to going this route. One is the administration fee; another is they had to go through Citizenvestor

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*Youth play basketball at the Martin Luther King Jr. Multipurpose Center during the Summer Heatwave program in Gainesville, Fla. The intervention program served as a pilot for the city's foray into crowdfunding last year. (Photo provided)*







*Youth play table tennis during the Teen Lounges that are a part of the Summer Heatwave program at the Martin Luther King Jr. Multipurpose Center in Gainesville. (Photo provided)*

to edit the site. But it allowed them to reach a broader audience and there was no risk.

Even though their project wasn't successful, Guthrie said she'd do it again. In hindsight, she can pinpoint some reasons for the lack of success.

"The timing was weird," she said. The lag time between when the project was ready to go and getting the community on board wasn't realistic, so she felt people may have believed it wouldn't happen.

Launching the crowdfunding campaign when "you're ready to pull the trigger on something" is key, according to Guthrie. "Timing is everything."

She also advised picking a project that resonates with the community: something they will be sentimental about. It wasn't that the citizens of Tyler don't care about animals, but she got the sense they felt this was something the government should finance, versus a recent performing arts theater project that they knew was up to them if they wanted it to happen.

Tyler does a lot with social media: Guthrie feels it's a great way to keep the citizens informed. They used it for the project, she said: "But could we have done more? Probably."

She said even though this project didn't succeed, "We'll definitely do it again; we'll just pick the right project and the right time."



## Examples of public projects that are currently crowdfunding

### IOBY

- Giant Puppet Dance Club — a group that wants to use giant puppets to perform choreographed events at summer festivals and parades in and around Northside, Pa.
- Delray Beach Children's Garden — a garden designed and built by local children

### GoFundMe

- Brecon Park Play Structure — a campaign by a young resident (that has his mayor's support!) to put one modern play structure at a park in Saline, Mich.

### Citizeninvestor

- Residents and stakeholders of Venice, Calif., are raising money to repair tree wells and sidewalks around the city's post office.

***"We'll definitely do it again; we'll just pick the right project and the right time."***

### Viability of municipal bonds and grants

Civic technologist and researcher Rodrigo Davis wrote a Jan. 29 article ([www.pbs.org/idealab](http://www.pbs.org/idealab)) comparing municipal bonds and crowdfunding. He said municipal bonds have been used for over 200 years, and while they also gave individuals the opportunity to invest in improvements to the city in a low-risk manner buying, a bond is complicated and expensive. Mainly wealthy people have access to them.

Crowdfunding, on the other hand, is more accessible. Davis' research showed that about one-third of the projects are parks and garden-related projects, 29 percent are event-based, and education and training are also popular campaigns. He also discovered that civic crowdfunding is concentrated in cities and that five states account for 80 percent of the projects. He contends questions are still unanswered about whether crowdfunding deters public investment or encourages it, and whether it widens wealth gaps. **M**

*Just about any project run by anyone can be crowdfunded, and municipalities are jumping on the bandwagon. Smaller projects that are dear to residents' sense of community tend to be the best candidates for crowdsourced funding. (Shutterstock photo)*



# Bond financing for small and mid-size cities



By ANDREW BUSS | The Municipal

**The National League of Cities recently noted how intergovernmental grants to municipalities are shrinking and becoming more competitive. As a result of this and other factors, local governments have been searching for other ways of obtaining funding, often with mixed results.**

Public finance experts hold that the municipal bond is still the best method of funding major projects for small and mid-sized cities. Specialists in this field include John Godfrey, a senior government representative at the American Public Power Association; Jason Rittenberg, director of research and advisory services at the Council of Development Finance Agencies; and Paul Jack, a managing director at the investment banking firm Estrada Hinojosa, all of whom offered their insights for newly elected and appointed city officials.

Godfrey explained how the Great Recession has affected the availability of intergovernmental grants.

"Since 2004, discretionary spending has fallen from 7.4 percent of gross domestic product to 6.8 percent of GDP. Discretionary programs are where grants come from, and that pot is shrinking. Also, the Budget Control Act of 2011 cut non-defense discretionary spending by about \$490 billion and

by another \$290 billion under sequestration. Those spending caps still apply and will apply until 2021. Prior to the Budget Control Act, they were expected to spend \$650 billion on non-defense discretionary programs. As a result of the act and sequestration, they are going to spend \$590 billion for this year."

Due to these cuts, the process for obtaining federal grants has become even more competitive, which means it is important for cities' proposals to pay attention to and meet specific grant criteria. Rittenberg stressed this point, saying, "You really need to know the purpose of the program and make sure that your narrative is clearly addressing the purposes of the grant. The people who administer the programs are very willing to have conversations with cities beforehand to let them know what they are looking for. In some cases, you can even get pre-scored, and these agencies will let you know what your scoring might be based on your project

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*Fixed-rate tax-exempt bonds are still in widespread use and reflect the strong market acceptability and interest for this kind of debt product. The type of bond to issue is dependent on a variety of factors. (Shutterstock photo)*

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or criteria, and that can be really helpful in making sure that you are applying for the right grant."

The recession has also meant fewer people participating in the labor market, which hampering the willingness to increase taxes. With limitations in the ability to obtain grants and raise taxes, local governments have been exploring different ways of funding their infrastructure projects. Although options such as lease-purchase financing and interest-rate swaps may have appeal for some, municipal bonds have a long track record of being a safe and reliable method for funding municipal projects.

Indeed, Godfrey recommends exercising caution when considering certain methods of financing.

"There are a lot of bright and shiny objects out there, a lot of new ideas and new tools that people are proposing to be used. Make certain that you have the expertise to assess whether that makes economic sense for you and your community... [Municipal bonds] are far less complicated transactions than a hundred-year lease where you have the anti-compete clauses or dedicated revenue streams or partial repayments and all these sorts of tensions and flips and twists... But you don't have to go with the new and fancy product. There's a pretty good one in the toolbox that has been used for centuries."

Municipal bonds may be commonplace tools; however, cities typically do not have the requisite knowledge or resources to handle an issuance entirely on their own. It can be a daunting task, even for those who have experience with the bond market. For this reason, Jack underscored the need for conducting due diligence when selecting counsel.

"Small communities are frequently visited by banks and underwriters who offer a multitude of services but who do not have a fiduciary obligation to protect the municipality's interests both in the short term and long term. ►





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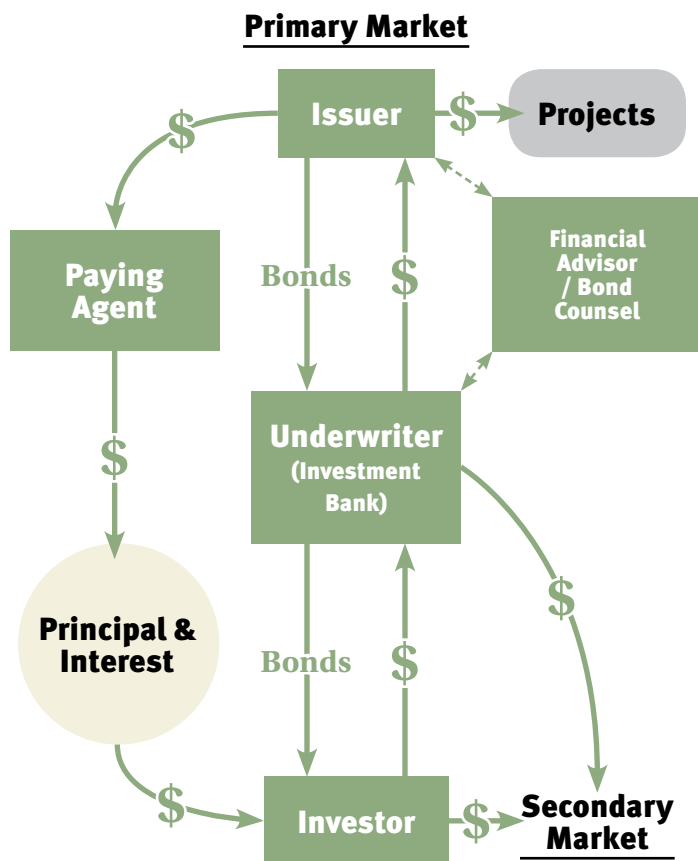
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We would recommend that small towns and cities obtain the services of a well-regarded and experienced municipal advisor who can serve as a guide to this complex world. With a qualified municipal advisor on their side of the table, the municipality can make better decisions that will provide the best services to the public at the lowest cost."

Advisory services are necessary due to the multiple options available in the world of municipal bonds. They can vary by the type of security, such as general obligation or revenue bonds; by the purpose or user, such as public-improvement or private-activity bonds; and by the structure, such as serial or term bonds. These intricacies will necessarily differ according to each municipality's goals and circumstances.

According to Jack, most cities issue fixed-rate tax-exempt bonds, and this reflects the strong market acceptability and interest for this kind of debt product. The type of bond to issue is dependent on a variety of factors, he added, but mainly based on the revenue source; the use of proceeds; the length of the bond issue; the state of the market and types of investor who will buy the issue; the credit profile of the issuer; and the tax status of the issue.

#### FLOW OF BONDS — BOND SALE:

*Because of the many moving pieces involved with any financial instrument, including municipal bonds, it's a good idea for a municipality that's thinking about issuing one to contract with a professional who can provide advice about the procedure.*  
(Diagram provided by Estrada Hinojosa)



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Qualified counsel is also engaged in helping municipal officials to navigate the regulatory, legal, contractual and internal issues that attend a bond issuance.

“Regulatory limits may involve disclosure-related requirements for the issuer to present in offering documents, as well as limitations for timing and the manner of bond issuance that affect the tax-exempt status of bonds, among others,” Jack said. “Legal limits may reflect state laws that require voter approvals, limit debt issuance based on certain metrics and allow for petition against certain

bond issues. Contractual limits may include bond restrictions based on covenants found in resolutions and trust indentures that are part of bond documents. Lastly, internal limits may be imposed by cities such as debt/budget policies and internal coverage requirements.”

Because of the many moving pieces involved with any financial instrument, Rittenberg recommended cities placing a priority on educating themselves on their options when going into a deal.

“You are going to work with a qualified professional when you do the issuance, but if you can come to the table already having a good idea of what is possible and what some good options are, then you’ll be able to make sure that you are going to do the best job that you can for your municipality.”

Consult the Government Finance Officers Association, the Municipal Securities Rulemaking Board, the Council of Development Finance Agencies or a state municipal agency or other qualified group able to provide the experience and valuable insights needed for navigating the various stages of a bond issuance. 



*Municipal bonds have a reputation for being a safe and reliable method for funding municipal projects. However, with limitations in the ability to obtain grants and raise taxes, local governments are also exploring different ways of funding their infrastructure projects. (Shutterstock photo)*



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*The difference in local governments' taxing abilities from state to state is playing a significant role in how quickly economic recovery trickles down. Property tax caps are hampering recovery, although municipalities in some states have the ability to levy an income tax in addition to the local property and sales tax. (Shutterstock photo)*

# Property tax revenue: *Awaiting the trickle-down*

By SARAH WRIGHT | The Municipal

**T**HE GOOD NEWS IS IN. ACCORDING to a recent Moody's report, property values are on the rise, albeit slowly. While this trend is favorable, local governments are finding their hands tied when it comes to capturing additional revenue from property tax growth because of the actions of states and the attitudes of voters toward property taxes.

The National League of Cities recently completed its own extensive survey, "Cities and State Fiscal Structures," which highlights city and state revenue sources. Christy McFarland, NLC research director, noted that generally speaking, most cities are seeing property values increase in both residential and commercial properties.

Some areas are seeing more improvement in property values than others, she noted. In general, the Northeast is a little stagnant. However, compared to other regions, they experienced growth early on during the recovery.

"Large metros are doing better; they are experiencing an influx of population growth.

Metros in the South and Southeast continue to grow," she said. Even so, "We still are not seeing the rate of growth needed. We are still only at 90 percent of the property revenue seen pre-recession."

External factors like state caps are often negating that growth for local governments. Property tax caps exist in many forms: rate caps place a ceiling on the property tax rate itself; assessment caps limit the annual increase in the assessed value of the property; and total levy caps restrict the annual increase in a locality's total property tax revenue. Caps of varying degrees exist in many states.

Director of State Affairs Chris Hackbarth with the Michigan Municipal League said back in the 1990s Michigan passed a proposition that limited property taxes to 5 percent or the rate of inflation, whichever is lower.

When property values decreased in the state during the recession, many local governments were impacted.

"For Wayne County and other townships it will take decades to comeback if they ever do," he said. "Our communities that weathered pretty well have the opportunity to grow—they can capture and take advantage of that (property value) growth."

With the cap, property tax increases are only allowed through new development, which has proven detrimental to already built-up communities.

While Michigan is recovering, Hackbarth added, it's not coming back quickly. This is underscored by the state property tax report and the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, where only a slight increase from \$12.8 billion in 2013 to \$13.0 billion in 2014 was noted in the amount of property taxes collected in Michigan.

"The existing property rate is not bouncing back," Hackbarth noted. However, revenue is there if there is room to build. "We are seeing growth, there is new construction happening; it's just the really built-up, stagnant cities that are struggling."

Prior to the recession a lot of development was occurring in Michigan. Then some went into bankruptcy with the economic downturn.

"We were seeing a lot of residential developments sitting vacant," he said. However, now they are displaying positive signs of recovery. "They are getting bought up and there is new home construction."

To aid with recovery efforts and support struggling local government, MML will focus on municipal finance for the next two years. ►

***"We still are not seeing the rate of growth needed. We are still only at 90 percent of the property revenue seen pre-recession."***





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*In Michigan property tax increases are only allowed through new development, which has proven detrimental to already built-up communities. (Shutterstock photo)*

***“We are seeing growth, there is new construction happening; it’s just the really built-up, stagnant cities that are struggling.”***

According to Hackbarth, in years past most local governments’ income came from community property taxes and revenue sharing with the state; however, there has been a \$6.2 billion loss in revenue sharing, which coupled with the hit to property tax revenue. “It’s a system that really needs fixed.”

Florida is one state seeing growth in its property values, though it, too, has yet to reach the highs of the pre-recession era.

“2007 (tax roll) is where we peaked at \$31 billion,” said Ken Small of the Florida League of Cities. “It dropped almost \$7 billion (during the recession).” Fortunately, the 2013–14 tax rolls show a recovery of approximately \$2.3 billion, which still shows room for improvement when compared to 2007’s high.

In particular, rural areas in Florida are seeing growth. Small noted one mayor of a rural city near Miami saw a 9 percent increase last year. “She’s expecting another robust growth.”

Florida does have limits on property tax and local governments’ abilities to increase it. In January 1995, the state amended its

constitution to limit the annual assessed value of property to 3 percent of the change or the Consumer Price Index, whichever is less. Additionally, certain millage rate guidelines must be followed. Local governments, however, are responsible for administering property tax, according to the Florida Department of Revenue, which then provides oversight and assistance to local government.

If local governments are using property taxes for infrastructure projects in Florida, Small said they would be doing so indirectly.

“They can go to voters with a referendum,” he said. But largely local governments are using other options. “The local option sales tax for infrastructure is a big one.”

Still, Small estimated the uptick in property values will continue in most areas of Florida. “Some will be left behind — some near the urban areas.” He noted it’s hard to determine why growth eludes some pockets and not others.

In some places of the country, states are allowing more flexibility and power when it

comes to local governments’ taxing abilities. Municipalities in Alabama, and two of Missouri’s largest municipalities, for example, are authorized to levy an income tax in addition to the local property and sales tax.

McFarland stated property tax is often about the relationship between cities and their state. In Texas for example, cities have traditionally enjoyed more free rein. She said local governments there receive less state aid and in return enjoy more local ability to raise taxes, but “There are bills in the (Texas) state house to control that.”

Similar efforts to limit the power of local taxing entities appear to be increasing across the U.S. McFarland said, they are now seeing a potential shift from cities having more local taxing power to them having less, with more state oversight. Local governments’ abilities to levy taxes will continue to be a topic of discussion, particularly as municipalities continue to recover from the recession and search for needed funds to keep operations afloat. Many municipal leagues are backing their local governments in the search for funding to help fill infrastructure needs, services and more. **M**

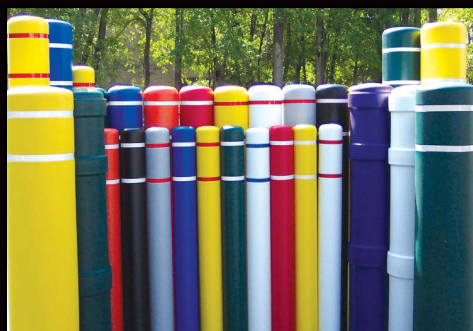


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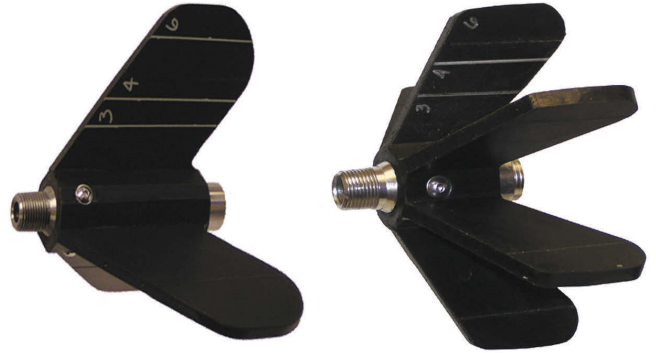
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# Are happier days here again?

## *Improvements indicate the beginning of a turnaround*



*Biddeford, Maine, is among the cities that still can't afford to do all that needs to be done to roads, sewers and buildings because of the impact of costs on the mill rate and continuing declines in state and federal funding. (Photos provided)*

By JULIE YOUNG | The Municipal

**A**LTHOUGH NO ONE'S GOING ON A SPENDING SPREE ANY-time soon, for the first time since the economic downturn, local, state and federal governments are loosening the purse strings a little. Vacancies have been filled in some departments, and a few much-needed infrastructure improvements are back on the table. Is this a sign that we are a nation on the mend?

It depends on how you look at it. While technically, yes, fiscal conditions are improving, we are still a long way from achieving pre-recession levels. According to the National League of Cities' latest survey, while 80 percent of city finance officers say they are better able to meet fiscal needs now than they were in 2013, revenue and spending trends continue to point to a weak and uneven recovery.

The poster child for economic stability is the state of Florida. It continues to lead the nation in fiscal recovery, despite being one of the first areas to feel the pinch in 2007. After the housing bubble burst, Florida lost more than 800,000 jobs and saw its unemployment rate

rise to 11 percent, causing Gov. Rick Scott to run for office on a platform that promised to turn the state around.

Thanks to Scott's "Keep Florida Working" budget, that's exactly what happened. By cutting taxes, investing record amounts in education, putting money back into the pockets of the people and improving workforce development, the state's debt has been reduced by \$7.5 billion since 2010 and they have recouped 728,000 new jobs. While there is still work to do, communities in the region say they can breathe easier than they have been able to in a long time.

"The most important thing is not to forget the hard lessons we learned along the way," said Bill Moss, city manager of Naples, a community of 20,000 year-round citizens and another 15,000 seasonal residents.

Moss said although there's a surplus in the state budget, it doesn't mean money will be passed on to local governments to spend as they wish. There's a backlog of projects that need to be accomplished on the state level, so municipalities are relying on property taxes as their main source of revenue. Of course, it's important to be good stewards of that revenue so that lasting improvements can be made while providing a consistent level of service to the community.

"When you are fortunate enough to have had some revenue like we did last year, there is a push to increase spending," he said. "However, we have no intention of increasing the number of employees at our organization during the next fiscal year. We plan to dedicate additional funding to maintenance, infrastructure, parks, traffic lights, sewer and other non-recurring areas."

While Naples seems to be on the road to success, other communities continue to struggle. Biddeford, Maine, Mayor Alan Casavant said although statistics suggest the economy is improving, he's yet to see the same vitality in his own community. There has been economic development in the mill district as well along Main Street: But the city is feeling pressure regarding taxes and budgets, especially within the context of infrastructure improvements. ►





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*Repairs to the Naples, Fla., public pier had been previously postponed. With the state better able to take care of itself now, property taxes have been made available for this and similar projects. The pier structure suffers from a high percentage of severe corrosion, and in some cases, total obliteration of connection hardware. (Photo provided)*

| Pier Substructure             | Status | Comments                                            |
|-------------------------------|--------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Decking Underside</b>      |        |                                                     |
| cracks                        | ○      | rare                                                |
| fiber splits                  | ✗      | about 25% fiber split-through                       |
| decay                         | ✗      | 85% decay of the exposed decking surface            |
| algae, fungi                  | ✗      | almost all underside, except new replacement boards |
| <b>Stringers</b>              |        |                                                     |
| cracks, splits, decay         | ○      | rare                                                |
| algae, fungi                  | ○      | mild growth in some locations                       |
| <b>Hardware</b>               |        |                                                     |
| totally consumed by corrosion | ✗      | about 10%                                           |
| severe corrosion              | ✗      | about 35%                                           |
| mild corrosion                | ✗      | about 55%                                           |
| <b>Other</b>                  |        |                                                     |
| concrete pier                 | ○      | sound                                               |
| beach access stair            | ✗      | may require total rebuilding                        |
| pipe/conduit and strapping    | ✗      | requires repair/replacement                         |

“Quite frankly, Biddeford cannot afford to do all that needs to be done with roads, sewers and buildings because of the large cost, the impact of those costs on the mill rate and continuing declines in state and federal dollars,” he said.

There are two significant issues contributing to the overall problem. Many people in the community are struggling in the post-recession economy, either because of a fixed income, reduced or stagnate wages. They are feeling the pressures of inflation, and tax increases are not something they can readily absorb: meaning there is pressure on the city council to keep taxes as stable as possible.

In order for the council to do that, it must reduce services or capital improvements. He says it is the capital improvement budget that is repeatedly hammered during the budget cycle, so now the city is facing millions, if not hundreds of millions, in needed sewer work, road reconstruction and building repairs. Not all of it can be absorbed into an annual budget because it would trigger a tax increase that would be unaffordable.

“There is more poverty than I have ever seen in my lifetime,” he said. “There are people in our community that cannot afford any increase, especially the elderly, living solely on Social Security. Inflation in their everyday lives forces constant decisions in terms of paying for TV, food, meds, taxes or whatever. This is what is so problematic and unfair with the current tax structure and system.”

According to the National Association of State Budget Officers, the quandary Casavant outlines is typical. While states may be better off than they were a few years ago, as the economy continues along a path of slow growth, fiscal challenges are likely to persist from rising spending demands and limited gains in revenue collections.

Scott Pattison, executive director for NASBO, said we are now adopting a new normal in state spending. The recession part is over, and states are returning to growth rather than decline: But we are still growing slower than we have in the past, and there is not a lot of new money available.

“All the trend lines are going in the right direction, but the economy is still pretty tepid,” he said. M

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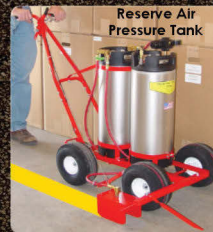
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# CDBG funding to fight blight



LEFT:

The Community Development Block Grant program, run by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, is designed to provide communities the flexibility to decide how to meet housing development—or demolition—needs. (Shutterstock photo)

BELOW:

Flint's anti-blight program is the way it mobilizes and empowers residents to clean sites, mow grass and to board and demolish vacant structures. (Shutterstock photo)

By LAUREN CAGGIANO | The Municipal

**It can be a nightmare for any neighborhood: A house or apartment complex in disrepair is ruining the block, and the landlord defies cleanup/renovation orders. Eventually, local government is tasked with taking matters into its own hands.**

Programs like the Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant are viable resources for gentrifying or demolishing unsightly areas. The block grant was designed to provide local communities the flexibility to decide for themselves how best to meet their own community development needs. After all, you are the ones in the trenches.

Since its signing, CDBG has helped cities, urban counties and rural communities with \$144 billion in funding to undertake a wide variety of activities, from improving public facilities to producing affordable housing. Each year, CDBG funds are distributed to state and local governments according to their population, poverty and other housing variables.

According to Brian Sullivan, public affairs supervisor, CDBG has a three-part goal:

eliminate slum and blight, benefit low-income residents and meet an urgent need, such as recovery from a natural disaster. Put another way, the program works to ensure decent affordable housing, to provide services to the most vulnerable populations in communities



and to create jobs through the expansion and retention of businesses.

The original funding model was more of a "salad bar approach," Sullivan said. However, the process for determining how much money was released was modified to better address community needs. A second formula — currently in use — was introduced to benefit slower-growing cities. HUD determines the amount of each grant by using a formula comprised of several measures of community need, including the extent of poverty, population, housing overcrowding, age of housing and population growth lag in relationship to other metropolitan areas. However, the change in formula did not affect the spirit of the program, which leaves decisions to ▶





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## ***“There are more houses and buildings available than there are people and businesses to fill them.”***

local authorities. This aspect of the program explains its popularity.

A total of \$26 billion in CDBG funds are distributed annually to about 1,200 locations. According to Sullivan, 70 percent of all CDBG funds go to support entitlement communities, which are comprised of central cities of metropolitan statistical areas; metropolitan cities with populations of at least 50,000; and qualified urban counties with a population of 200,000 or more (excluding the populations of entitlement cities). States distribute CDBG funds to non-entitlement localities not qualified as entitlement communities.

As with any government program, there are guidelines that must be followed by grantees. For example, over a one-, two- or 3-year period, as selected by the grantee, no less than 70 percent of CDBG funds must be used for activities that benefit low- and moderate-income persons.

Flint, Mich., is a prime example of a city that has used CDBG funds to revive its urban

core. On Oct. 28, 2013, Flint City Council unanimously adopted its first official master plan in more than 50 years. The Imagine Flint Master Plan for a Sustainable Flint provides a 20-year community vision for the city, which calls for the elimination of blight.

According to the executive summary, “Blight is used here to describe unwanted property conditions that stem from the presence of vacant properties in Flint, Mich. Vacant and abandoned properties are the source of blight in Flint today. A decrease in Flint’s population has generated an abundance of vacant and abandoned properties; there are more houses and buildings available than there are people and businesses to fill them. Blight is found on these properties, including dilapidated buildings, dumped debris, and unmaintained vegetation.” The closure of the Delphi Flint East plant didn’t help, either.

According to Raul Garcia, blight manager for the city, it has set aside \$60,000 in

CDBG funding to help with cleanup efforts in low to moderate income areas.

What’s unique about Flint’s anti-blight program is the way it mobilizes and empowers residents. They are stakeholders in the city’s future. To that end, the city facilitates regular projects, working with residents and other stakeholders to clean sites, mow grass, and board and demolish vacant structures. Demolition accounts for the majority of the total costs of blight elimination. According to Garcia, there is an average of five major cleanups in a weekend, engaging about 100 volunteers. Last year there were 80 total cleanups, he noted.

Garcia views these projects as much more than aesthetic enhancements. He says he believes the city is much more stable now and is hopeful the improvements will attract and retain residents. **M**

For more information about the CDBG program and Flint’s master plan, visit [www.hud.gov](http://www.hud.gov) and [imagineflint.com](http://imagineflint.com).

*In a 2013 study, Steel Valley, Turtle Creek and Twin Rivers Council of Governments in Pennsylvania found that their 41 collective communities had incurred \$10,720,302 in direct costs to municipal services; \$8,637,875 in costs related to the loss of tax revenue; and nearly \$250 million associated with a loss in property value from blighted properties. With CDBG support and the realignment of existing resources, or donations, they created revenue-neutral land banks and are revitalizing the neighborhoods. (Shutterstock photo)*



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# Where finance officers go to know



By ANNE MEYER BYLER | The Municipal

**W**HAT ISSUES ARE LOCAL FINANCE OFFICIALS DEALING with currently, and how are they managing them? A good place to get an overall picture is from the Government Finance Officers Association. Eighty-five percent of cities and counties with populations over 25,000 have members in the organization.

Regarding expenditures vs. revenues, for example, Mike Mucha, GFOA's director of the Research and Consulting Center, said, "Local governments face many challenges, such as rising pension and health care costs and the need for infrastructure improvements – along with many having constraints on the ability to raise revenue. GFOA provides financial resiliency tools, including resources on long-term financial planning to help organizations understand overall trends in long-term revenue and expenditures. With this information organizations can be better informed to do long-term planning and create fiscally sustainable strategies."

The GFOA does a survey every two years. Last year's survey showed these concerns at the top of the list for local financial officers:

- Expenditures outpacing revenues long term
- Retaining/attracting employees: Huge numbers will be nearing retirement, so recruiting the next generation of employees is essential.
- Dealing with regulatory financial reporting requirements from all levels of government
- Pension and health care costs: Some unfunded liabilities are increasing the percentage of local funding for pensions.
- Challenges of funding infrastructure

Sue Iverson is the director of finance and administrative services in Arden Hills, Minn., and a member of GFOA's Committee on

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*The Government Finance Officers Association aims to help all those responsible for local government finance issues understand the latest in municipal funding options, reporting requirements and finance trends. (Photo provided)*

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Treasury and Investment Management. She said one issue sure to make a splash in most state and local finance offices is a new Government Accounting Standards Board requirement: that state and local governments report future pension obligations as liabilities on their government-wide balance sheets, "So it's going to look like a problem of higher liability, but in actuality nothing has changed."

However, it will require an explanation.

"When financial statements are published, since the new standard is effective for financial statements ending on or after June 30, 2015, most will not see the change until late 2015 or 2016. This standard requires employers to report the difference between the actuarial total pension liability and the fair value of legally restricted plan assets as the net pension liability on the statement of net position. GASB Statements 67 and 68 give further information and explanation."

Minnesota happens to have a statewide pension system that is well funded, so the concern is only a matter of how the reporting will appear as each political subdivision will be required to report their share. Communicating this, when the financial statements are published, will be the challenge.

Arden Hills officials made its own change to a better health insurance system. That meant the city has seen only a net increase of 7.96 percent (cumulative) since 2008, not the yearly ▶

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*Sue Iverson, director of finance and administrative services in Arden Hills, Minn., and a member of the GFOA Committee on Treasury and Investment Management, said one notable issue for finance officers this year is the new requirement for state and local governments to report future pension obligations as liabilities on their balance sheets. (Photo provided)*



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***"It's going to look like a problem of higher liability, but in actuality nothing has changed."***

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*At city hall in Arden Hills, Minn., the decision to change to a better health insurance system meant that it only saw a net increase of 7.96 percent (cumulative) from 2008–present. Claims history went down and the city got more favorable rates from insurance companies. (Photo provided)*

double-digit increase many governmental entities experienced. Initially it worked with a co-pay medical insurance plan coupled with the option to have a flexible spending account. In that account, employees needed to show receipts, and the money was “use it or lose it” by the end of the calendar year.

They did some research, including a cost/benefit analysis, and found that a high-deductible medical plan — where the employee/family paid 100 percent of the costs of services up to the deductible amount, then the insurance plan pays 100 percent — coupled with a health savings account would greatly benefit the city. Even in a worst-case scenario, every employee would end up in the same situation or better as with the previous plan. Employees are given a set dollar amount to use for health costs, and what they don’t use on premiums goes into their HSA accounts, which keeps building from year to year.

As a result, employees shopped around more; the claims history went down; and the city got more favorable rates from insurance companies. Employees would go to minute clinics and virtual online sites with cameras, where they could talk to doctors or nurses for simple incidents that came up. Blue Cross Blue Shield has such a website. Some insurances give discounts for going to minute clinics.

In addition, employees shopped around for medications — getting better costs at stores like Costco and Sam’s Club. They could compare MRI and other service costs as well. Using their own money, even from an HSA, made them more aware of the costs.

As for rising costs of services, Iverson reported that Arden Hills held a public hearing to suggest a franchise fee on electricity and gas. In this case, when shown the various options, residents said they would rather raise taxes.

“The majority of people who show up at meetings are primarily those against it. Even though it’s a small percentage of the total population, it is the feedback the governing body gets. This creates a challenge as it can make it difficult to ascertain what the level of acceptance there really is when fees for services need to be raised.”

The GFOA website, [www.gfoa.org](http://www.gfoa.org), is a treasure trove of information, including over 150 best practices documents. The website says GFOA Best Practices “identify specific policies and procedures as contributing to improved government management.” GFOA Advisories “identify specific policies and procedures necessary to minimize a government’s exposure to potential loss in connection with its financial management activities.” Some of the documents are available to all; others require membership. Membership fees are per individual but based on the organization that the person works for.

In addition, GFOA holds an annual conference with the largest gathering of local finance officers in the country: around 4,000. This year’s conference just took place May 31–June 2 in Philadelphia.

The April issue of its publication, *Government Finance Review*, focuses on building a financially resilient government.

In terms of the current need for qualified employees, along with recruitment, governments can do succession planning activities to develop younger employees with leadership capabilities. When facing regulatory issues, on the other hand, Mucha said that the GFOA provides technical training in various subject areas related to public finance and other professional development opportunities, in order to help better prepare finance officers to meet the reporting requirements. A GFOA ongoing training program teaches classes approximately once per month across the United States. In addition, GFOA hosts webinars throughout the year. The schedule of webinars is on the website.

An example of one GFOA resource is the document “*Recovery from Financial Distress and Fiscal First Aid: GFOA’s 12-State Financial Recovery Process*.” Here administrative officers can learn about recovery by:

- Walking through the beginning-to-end process for recovery
- Seeing a catalog of fiscal first-aid techniques
- Accessing a list of other resources for recovery from financial distress
- Searching by Site Key

Find the document at [www.gfoa.org/products-and-services/resources/other-resources/home-gfoas-12-stage-financial-recovery-process](http://www.gfoa.org/products-and-services/resources/other-resources/home-gfoas-12-stage-financial-recovery-process).

Public services, in general, are always important to citizens. When asked how to balance revenues and expenditures in these cases, Iverson said that sometimes it is a matter of the governing body deciding on what level of service to provide given what the citizens are expecting.

“For example, in the city of Arden Hills snowplows go out when there is 2 inches or more of snow,” said Iverson. Some cities may plow at different points, giving a service level that could be changed if revenue gets tight. Other local governments may have cut back in other areas, such as trimming their medians between highways, park maintenance, etc. What is essential is to find clear ways to factually justify to the residents the need to raise costs. M





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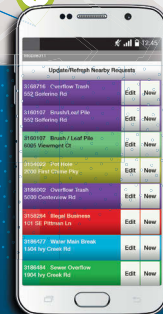
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# Booming with development: *Rockford, Ill.*



By PHOEBE MUTHART | The Municipal

*After a decade of setbacks and challenges, the \$29 million Morgan Street Bridge project in Rockford, Ill., was awarded in July 2011. The total cost of the project is \$40 million; it included extensive land acquisition, a railroad consolidation project and reconstruction of both College Avenue and Morgan Street. (Photo provided)*



**The city of Rockford, Ill., with a population of 150,251, is the third largest city in Illinois. Referred to as the “Forest City,” it’s known for various venues of cultural or historical significance.**

The settlement was incorporated as a village in 1839 and chartered as a city in 1852. Over the years the city has experienced growth in many areas: but now is a particularly remarkable time in infrastructure, job training and community development.

In 1999, city staff and a small group of area stakeholders kicked off what would become one of the most iconic public works projects in the history of Rockford: the Morgan Street Bridge. First constructed in 1916, and rehabilitated in 1960, it was deteriorating quickly and threatening east-west traffic flow on the near south side of the city.

“The city and state worked collectively to find the gap funding we needed in order to get the bridge built,” Rockford’s mayor, Larry Morrissey, said.

A new industrial park has provided a landing pad for more business growth and attraction in the city. There has been a lot of job creation within the park, which surrounds Chicago Rockford International Airport.

The park was originally created to attract and retain industrial jobs and provide the public and private sectors with the tools necessary to compete within the new framework of a global economy. Tax Increment Financing investment was critical to its success: Morrissey said that while TIF proved to be a good tool in the park’s development, it’s not always enough due to declining tax rates.

A 2 percent hotel/motel tax is now funding the conversion of an old factory in town into a sports center. The \$24 million capital improvement project required the joint effort of regional municipalities and state

legislative members. Each entity pledged funds, which will be used in conjunction with the 2 percent tax to build and manage the facility.

“The parties really came together,” said Julia Scott Valdez, director of human resources and deputy city administrator for Rockford, who added that the sports center is expected to be completed by May 2016.

Other projects are in the horizon. By the end of May, ground will have broken for a \$67 million upscale hotel. Rockford Suites is being built in a 13-story vacant building. “This is a unique project because it consists of historic preservation and new construction,” said Scott Valdez.

Historic tax credits and several other sources of revenue, such as E9, will pay for this project, which will hire local contractors.

In the past two years, Rockford’s downtown district has experienced major renovations. One of those projects, the Prairie Street Brewhouse, was underutilized for more than 50 years. The collective ►



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**LEFT:**

Rockford's City Market, located in downtown, features local growers and vendors who sell natural products and unique retail items. Visitors also enjoy live music, demonstrations and children's activities. (Photo provided)

**BELOW:**

Downtown Rockford district has experienced major renovations. Recent developments were funded through TIF funds, River's Edge Tax Credits and federal and historic rehabilitation tax credits. (Photo provided)



development team of local partners invested more than \$12 million to renovate, resulting in a popular mixed use residential, commercial and retail property, which employs 181 individuals.

Back at the airport, a \$5.1 million aviation maintenance training facility, Rock Valley College, is also being built. It's a twofold investment — higher education and economic development will provide critical new aerospace training opportunities and help alleviate a shortage of qualified aviation mechanics around the country. Classes will begin in mid-August.

Morrissey, who has been mayor for 10 years, is passionate about entrepreneurship.

"It's the heart of the community," he said. "We want to build a culture here."









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**RIGHT:**

*An old Rockford factory is being turned into a sports center. It is being paid for, in part, with a 2 percent hotel/motel tax. (Photo provided)*


**BELOW:**

*Rockford Suites is a \$67 million hotel project being built in a 13-story, vacant building. Work is expected to be done by the end of 2016. (Photo provided)*



The downtown city market is one example of entrepreneurship at its best, he said. Called Rockford City Market, as many as 5,000 people visit it each Friday. The initiative is a collaborative effort of several agencies, including Rock River Development Partnership, the city of Rockford and the Rockford Area Convention and Visitors Bureau. There is a new lot currently in construction that will include a pavilion and offer greater accessibility for vendors to market and sell products.

The 2014 Combined Spend Economic impact was nearly \$4 million dollars (\$2.4 million at the market, and \$1.5 million at downtown businesses) and an estimated total economic impact of \$8.7 million (Bureau of Economic Analysis assigns a 2.25 multiplier to the region).

"When people have jobs here, they eat, live and play here," said Scott Valdez. "Live, work and play is everything we do." 



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# Small-town solution:

## *Producing and blending liquids*



**LEFT:**

*The salt brine production and blending system hand-built by the village of Spring Grove, Ill., Public Works Department. (Photo provided)*

**RIGHT:**

*A local subdivision that was anti-iced in one lane prior to a minor winter event, using a blend produced in-house. (Photo provided)*

By JODI MAGALLANES | The Municipal

**By the numbers:**

**20–30 percent**

The usual amount of reduction in salt usage by departments using salt brine in pre-wet applications.



**W**HEN MATT WITTUM WAS promoted to public works supervisor for the village of Spring Grove, Ill., the pocket-sized agency on the state's northern border wasn't into liquids.

"Can't say as I was either," said Wittum. "I had the mentality of, 'It's just one more task I'd have to do,' at first."

Since 2006 six full-time employees and a job-shared building inspector, plus part-time seasonal workers, plow 156 miles of Spring Grove pavement, most of it on under-30 mph roads. The department is on call 24/7 for snow and ice, to clear six routes that are divided into four priority-levels of streets. Full staff is required from 3 a.m. to 9 p.m. during events, and the crew plows down first. The village winter

weather plan does include suspension of operations language.

The plowing and salting was getting the job done and achieving the results Spring Grove's policy said the public works department had to achieve. Only one truck was liquid-capable, and that liquid was purchased from a nearby township when needed.

Wittum listened in, though, on the chatter about producing and blending liquids. Eventually he was curious enough to inquire about its feasibility for Spring Grove. He was told that because of the size of the community he'd be better off not doing it. But circumstances encouraged a tenacious approach: The Spring Grove city council had recently reacted to skyrocketing salt prices by threatening to limit the amount they'd let the public works department purchase.

"It's the age-old adage, 'Do more with less,' they tell you. This actually lets you do that. Costs, especially for salt, just keep going up and up and up. In contrast, this can help you maintain at the current level. In fact, you can actually turn down your application rate."

Acknowledging that the subject has become tiresome for some supervisors, he recommends taking a low-key and practical approach to the question of adding liquids. First, he said, ask yourself what it can really do for you. Then ask how it can achieve the results that you're expected to achieve.

Not wanting to abuse the brine-borrowing relationship with its neighboring township, the village set about establishing its own production process. It turned out that a local farmer had troughs, tanks and pumps that would work. He took bartered asphalt chips





in trade, and the system was up and running for under \$100. Second and then third tanks were later added on to the trucks for pre-wetting.

The situation was functional, but not ideal.

"We had to use all of it, of course, before we could make more. When you have events back-to-back that doesn't work so well," Wittum said. In short order the single 1,100-gallon tank that was used for production and then storage, when the product was done, was replaced by a 1,500-gallon tank used strictly for storage. In 2008-09 GeoMelt was added to further reduce salt usage.

Pleased with the results, and deciding that maybe using liquids was an idea for them after all, Wittum went to the Spring Grove public works board with the argument for a liquid-capable truck that could hold a larger quantity. After the information and reports were presented the discussion turned to price. They were shut down.

"We wanted to get into anti-icing and be proactive. But it all came down to pricing."

The department went to work jury-rigging the existing liquids truck with PVC pipe, laying down some lines to



## Spring Grove, Ill., public works

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Pro:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimal cost to produce (2013/14: \$0.064 per gallon)</li> <li>• Least expensive to purchase</li> <li>• Good for anti-ice and pre-wet applications (especially when introducing your agency to liquids)</li> </ul> <p><b>2005/06</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three front line trucks liquid-capable</li> <li>• No pavement temperature sensors</li> <li>• Liquid: straight brine</li> <li>• Season avg. application rate: 398 lbs./mi.</li> <li>• 1,575 gallons of liquid used</li> </ul> | <p><b>Con:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only works when pavement temperatures are 15 degrees or higher in pre-wetting applications</li> <li>• Does not have a long-lasting residual in anti-ice applications</li> </ul> <p><b>2013/14</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All front line trucks liquid-capable</li> <li>• Pavement temperature sensors in all front line trucks</li> <li>• Liquid: 80/20 blend</li> <li>• Season avg. application rate: 227 lbs./mi.</li> <li>• 22,480 gallons of liquid used</li> </ul> |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

show what it could do and then photographing the results.

"We had the liquid, we had a tank. We bypassed what we had to bypass to do it. It wasn't super efficient — at 40 gallons per mile and a 70-gallon tank, we could do about a mile before we had to come back and fill up again."

But a picture's worth 1,000 words. The department got its truck in 2012, and another — both with 100-gallon tanks — in 2014.

By making the anti-ice mixture in-house the department saves the city \$30,000 a year and provides cleaner roads, faster, to residents.

"Application rates are my recommendation, but the guys have my full support to adjust them according to the conditions in front of them," he added.

In the 12 years since Wittum joined the village's public works department, its

deicing and anti-icing efforts have garnered several awards:

- Excellence in Snow and Ice Control, Fox Valley Branch APWA, December 2013
- Excellence in Snow and Ice Control, Chicago Metro Chapter, January 2014
- MP3 (model policy, program or procedure) Award (category: environmental), McHenry County Council of Governments, May 2014
- Safe and Sustainable Snowfighting Award, Salt Institute, February 2015
- First department featured at the "Department of the Month" in Public Works Magazine, April 2013
- Wittum was also featured in the Recognize Your Leaders series in the APWA Reporter in March 2015

For more information contact Wittum at [mwittum@springgrovevillage.com](mailto:mwittum@springgrovevillage.com) or the Village of Spring Grove at (815) 675.2121.

#### LEFT:

Matt Wittum, supervisor, Spring Grove Public Works Department, receives the Excellence in Snow and Ice Control Award from the Metro Chapter of the American Public Works Association last year. (Photo provided)

#### RIGHT:

The homemade anti-ice unit was made by converting a pre-wet unit to spray lines on the road. (Photo provided)





# Crisis-moment volunteer management



*Lake County, Fla., emergency management officials had planned and practiced for a volunteer reception center, so after a tornado hit volunteer management happened in an organized fashion. (Joseph Sohm / Shutterstock.com)*

By AMANDA MCFARLAND | The Municipal

**Following a major disaster, volunteers arrive on the scene, ready to lend a hand. For the most part, communities in crisis mode find volunteer help invaluable; however, if not managed properly, even good volunteers can become a liability.**

Kevin Peters with Leon County, Fla., emergency management listed some of the dangers of allowing volunteers to become disorganized.

"Any group, professional or volunteer, who is disorganized is not going to be efficient or effective in accomplishing a task," he said. "Also, there are a host of safety issues following a disaster. If your group just shows up to a disaster scene and starts working without a situation and safety briefing, you risk someone being hurt or killed."

In addition, any community that has just faced a major crisis is usually not prepared to receive a large number of volunteers.

"The power will be out, the grocery stores will be closed and there will be few, if any, hotel rooms available," Peters said. "An influx of volunteers who have not been requested to assist will place an enormous strain on the limited essential resources of the community."

Because of this, it's important for officials to be prepared long before a disaster ever strikes.

"In Leon County, we have a plan to establish a volunteer reception center," he said. "A volunteer reception center is a place where unaffiliated volunteers or groups from outside the community can check in, report their skills and capabilities, receive a situation and safety briefing and then be matched with a response organization that can use their skills."

Ideally, the center would be set up inside a public building like a library or a community center. However, the plan should be flexible enough that, if necessary, the center could operate out of a tent or other portable shelter.

Even the best-run reception center will be of little use if potential volunteers do not know how to find it. This is where communication comes in.

"There is also an outreach portion of the plan that our public information officer will follow to get the word out through traditional and social media," Peters said. "It says if you want to help, you need to report to the volunteer reception center."

Including local community organizations in on the plan can also be a big help.

"We also have Community Organizations Active in Disaster that serves the eight-county region that Leon is part of," Peters said. "Our COAD members are included in the planning for disaster volunteer management as well as the volunteer reception center."

Because no two disaster situations are ever the same, officials may also need to prepare to turn volunteers away. In such a scenario, Peters recommends open honesty.

"If they do not need volunteer assistance, they need to be very straightforward, with that message as part of their media efforts, both traditional and social," he said. "With the advent of social media, word spreads fast. Hopefully that can reduce the chance of someone showing up just to be turned away."

Peters also stressed the necessity of planning now for an emergency situation.

"Find out about the hazards in your community and make a personal emergency management plan," he said. "Once you are prepared, get involved in your own community. Find a group that focuses on disaster relief work and get trained today. Don't wait until the next disaster."

Following the deadly Groundhog Day Tornadoes of 2007, several communities in Lake County, Fla., found themselves needing to pick up the pieces. According to Lake County Emergency Management Director Jerry Smith, the category EF3 tornado first hit communities on the west side of the county, killing eight people, then lifting up and landing again on the east side, killing another 13 people.

"Geographically, it was a small area that was hit, but it devastated those areas," Smith said.

Help arrived almost immediately.

"We had a lot of affiliated volunteers through the various faith-based and non-faith-based organizations, but we did have a lot of spontaneous volunteers also," he said. ▶



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Emergency management officials had already planned and practiced for a volunteer reception center, so they were able to work with volunteers in an organized fashion. Officials were able to run background checks and to make sure there were no outstanding warrants. They were also able to learn about people's skills and abilities and place them in the right locations.


"We feel that it worked out extremely well," Smith said. "We had groups in from the Baptist Disaster Services, folks from AmeriCorps; we had an AmeriCorps group come in from Alaska." FEMA and Volunteer Florida were also major sources of help.

*Even if your area hasn't experienced a recent disaster, consider encouraging volunteer-minded residents to associate with a disaster relief group to receive training. They'll be a greater asset to their own city or to whomever they choose to assist following the next unexpected event. (Lakeview Images / Shutterstock.com)*

Debris cleanup was a major problem. Smith said that the way debris management works with FEMA, local governments can only pick up what they're legally responsible for. That meant anything on private property was the owner's problem. During this incident, the volunteers who showed up became a part of an effective and compassionate solution.

"What we worked out was, volunteers went and got a release from the property owners to go onto their property and they brought the debris to the roadway," Smith said. "Once it's in the roadway, then the local government is legally responsible for it. The only other way to get that done is, you would have to take code enforcement action, and we didn't want to take code enforcement action for people who just lost their houses and their loved ones."

While volunteers may not be the foremost topic on officials' minds immediately following a disaster, Smith believes that, if coordinated properly, they are crucial.

"I'm a big proponent of using volunteers," he said. "I know there's the cynical saying about the disaster within the disaster, but really and truly, we did not have that experience with the volunteers we utilized. We're very grateful for their assistance." 

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# The 4×4 size-up method

By BARB SIEMINSKI | The Municipal

**F**IREFIGHTERS APPLY CRITICAL SIZE-UP TECHNIQUES when they arrive at the site of a fire. Chief Rick Ennis of the Cape Girardeau, Mo., department has added a new dimension to this protocol by developing what he calls the “4×4 Size-Up Method” with others in the field.

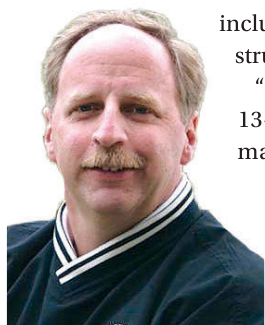
According to Ennis, size-up has been described as the mental evaluation made by the command officer that enables him to determine a course of action. An evaluation of a complicated incident is necessary before intelligent assignments of resources may be made, and that mental process involved includes all factors of the incident, weighed against available resources. In other words, what is the problem and what needs to be done to address it?

## Several aspects of that process are crucial, including:

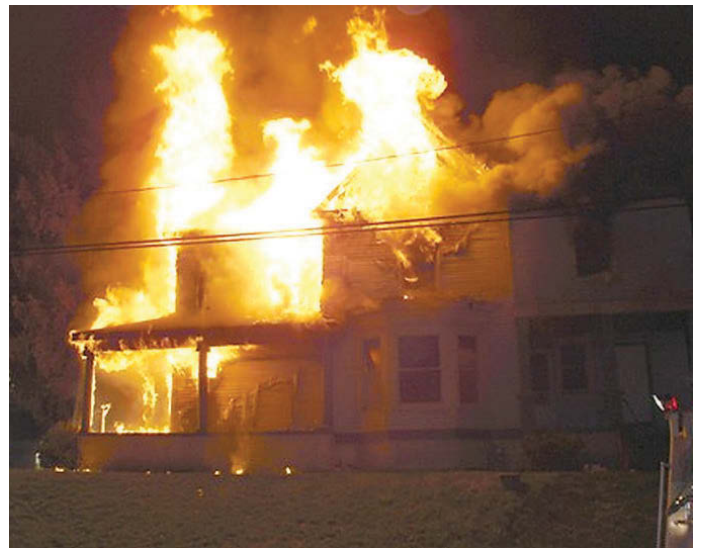
1. Conducting an accurate initial size-up upon arrival at a fire. This step is critical to safe and successful fireground outcomes.
  2. Size-up must not only be based on the current conditions as they appear at the moment, but must also take into account what the potential situation is predicted to be five, 10, or even more minutes out.
  3. Since the fireground is a dynamic place that is constantly changing, the officer must constantly be sizing up what is going on and be willing and able to adjust his plan of action accordingly.
- Many methods have been developed to help fire officers learn and recall the most common factors affecting size-up, including water supply, weather conditions, construction type and smoke conditions.

“Most discussions on size-up center on a 13-point list of size-up factors, which are summarized by the commonly referred acronyms

Chief Rick Ennis heads up the Cape Girardeau, Mo., Fire Department.  
(Photo provided)



*“the 4×4 method is simply a way to teach, develop and improve that process.”*



## ABOVE:

Most discussions on size-up center on a 13-point list of factors summarized by acronyms that are useful for the purpose they serve, but have limited application in actually conducting a size-up on the fireground. (Photo provided)

## BELOW:

The 4×4 size-up process can and should be utilized continually throughout operations until the fire is completely out and the department leaves the scene. (Steve Design / Shutterstock.com)

COAL WAS WEALTH OF WALLACE WAS HOT,” said Ennis. “These acronyms are useful for the purpose they serve but have limited application in actually conducting a size-up on the fireground.

“Years ago, when studying William Clark’s text, ‘Firefighting Principles and Practices,’ I noticed four of his 14 points of size-up dealt with resources available, including water supply, apparatus, manpower and internal protection. The remaining 10 points dealt with the problem at hand. I later I saw that these remaining 10 points could be broken down into three other categories: the building, the fire and circumstances relating to the incident.”

He began tinkering with the factors until he had four listed under each of the four categories. This not only created an easy method for remembering them, but placed them into useable groupings.





## Resources

- staffing
- apparatus/equipment
- water supply
- built-in protection

## Circumstances

- weather conditions
- time
- pre-planned information
- information at dispatch

## The Building

- size of the building
- construction type
- occupancy
- access and utilities

## The Fire

- amount of fire/smoke
- type of fire/smoke
- location of fire/smoke
- extent/travel of fire/smoke

*Ennis began tinkering with the fireground size-up factors until he had four factors listed under each of the four categories. This not only created an easy method for remembering them, but placed them into useable groupings. (Information provided)*

Many of the factors are interrelated: time of day may affect the occupancy load of the building, wind direction may affect the exposure problem and the response time may affect the size and location of the fire.

"The procedure of conducting a size-up at a fire truly is a process that command officers develop over time, and the 4x4 method is simply a way to teach, develop and improve that process." Ennis added that with the 4x4 method, in critical, time-sensitive decision-making moments, the decision-maker recognizes visual and sensory cues that drive his actions. These actions then rely on habit, muscle and memory to instinctively move through their size-up process.

Experienced fire officers will instinctively consider each factor as cues draw their attention to them, as opposed to going through a standard checklist of options.

The 4x4 method offers a practical format for those instincts.

"Also, new or inexperienced chiefs can be trained ... to consistently use the 4x4 size-up method until their size-up techniques develop into more natural, cue-based instinctive reactions."

Ennis developed the method by studying the groundwork laid by previous fire chief officers, saying that the 4x4 process is "simply my way of advancing these thoughts and techniques."

"I believe the 4x4 grouping is an improved way to remember the factors and, more importantly, arranges the factors in a more useable manner." **M**



*Cape Girardeau, Mo., fire Captain Ray Warner monitors conditions and directs resources from the command post using the 4x4 method. He was in contact with firefighters working the fire via two-way radios and made notes and diagrams on a whiteboard. (Photo provided)*



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*Bill Bishop,  
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# The 'stats' on parks and rec



By AMY WENGER | The Municipal

**P**ERHAPS IT'S FAIR TO SAY THERE WAS ONCE A MISCONCEPTION within the leadership of parks and recreation: that statistics were not always relevant and were even somewhat unnecessary.

While the issue is subject to debate, some directors have found inspiration behind the numbers and used them to create revolutionary ideas of both practicality and purpose. Those visions have resonated throughout communities situated from rural to metropolitan America.

Shannon Keleher, who serves as recreation manager for the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs in Gainesville, Fla., knows a little something about creating tangible, positive results. She spoke to the topic of statistical incorporation during a presentation at the National Recreation and Parks Association conference this past fall.

"Being able to speak the language of statistics is critical to success these days. Many

LEFT:

Learning to effectively use statistics can be like learning a foreign language. Gainesville, Fla., recreation manager Shannon Keleher recommends starting with the basics and building from there. (Shutterstock photo)

BELOW:

This info graphic from the National Recreation and Parks Association demonstrates how statistical data that has been collected can be presented for maximum impact on stakeholders. (Source: [www.nrpa.org](http://www.nrpa.org))

municipalities are striving to ensure they are operating in a transparent fashion and are doing so by providing statistics to their residents," said Keleher. "I think it's important to remember that numbers are important, but framing them in such a way that is useful to our citizens is even more important."

To further illustrate the necessity of statistics in daily operations and execution, Keleher offers examples.

"I feel statistical usage can benefit us in that it can help us evaluate the services we are providing, as well as help the public see how we are doing," she noted. "As professionals who are often facing limited budgets and always needing more funding, we can use our story plus statistics to tell our 'whole' story."

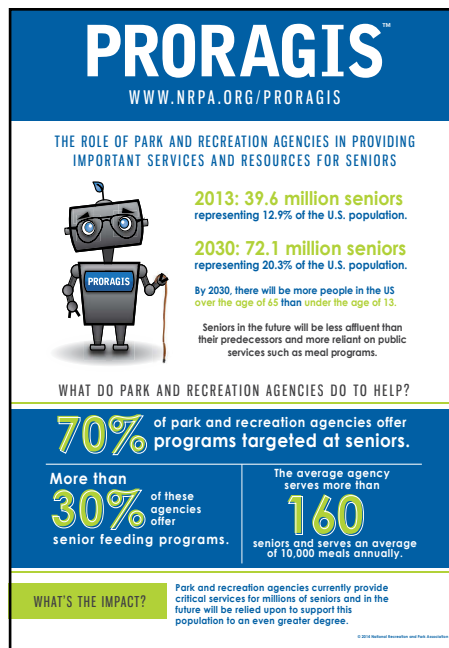
It's an endeavor that Keleher willingly entrusts to her staff.

"All employees should feel empowered enough to collect statistics that have been determined to be needed. The numbers that are col-

lected can help when applying for funding such as grants, can help people make decisions to donate and provide 'real' data to assist during times of budget cuts. It is important the public, the staff, the city commission, etc., know what is being collected, why it is being collected and what you hope to gain from it."

With financial constraints being noted as a primary factor, could there be other issues that hinder the use of statistics? Keleher is aware of perspectives to the argument.

"I don't believe there is a true resistance. I believe there is more fear due to the fact that most people cringe when they hear the word 'statistics.' In talking with other professionals, they share that they would like to be able to use statistics more effectively, or even at all, but many do not know where to begin. For many, learning statistics is like learning a





**TOP RIGHT:**

The NRPA's annual field report is one useful tool developed from statistics tracked by local departments and then uploaded to the PRORAGIS program to give a comprehensive look at parks and recreation trends. (Source: [www.nrpa.org](http://www.nrpa.org))



## NRPA's 2015 Field Report

A Parks and Recreation National Database Analysis



National Recreation  
and Park Association

**BELOW RIGHT:**

Sets of data collected by various departments in the city of Gainesville, Fla., including parks and recreation, were utilized during the first city hackathon, held in February. Community members were allowed access to the data and asked to analyze it. They then made problem-solving and efficiency recommendations. (Photo provided)




foreign language. It can seem overwhelming at first, but if you start with the basics, you can build from there."

She added there can be accomplishments reaped from the formation of specific committees geared to that specific task of assessing the reliability of numbers. This makes the mission seem less daunting.

"As part of an innovation team that I served on here in Gainesville, we made sets of data available to the public and hosted the first city of Gainesville hackathon. This is an example of a creative use of data that can help solve issues in the community by allowing the public access to it and asking them to analyze it and make recommendations."

The desire to unify and assist other park systems does seem to be tracking along an upward momentum, Keleher said optimistically.

"We should all be guided by our master plan, which tells us what our community is looking for and the accreditation standards set by the National Parks and Recreation Association, if we are accredited. NRPA has an amazing research component called PRORAGIS. They are encouraging communities to enter data that can then be used to help communities benchmark against each other. I see that more and more agencies are starting to realize the importance of the system, so I hope to see the amount of data continue to grow." 

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# Pothole reporting in the information age



*Turning the discovery phase over to the public via pothole reporting systems allows more time for crews to concentrate on repair. (Photo by Keith Knepp)*

By KEITH KNEPP | The Municipal

**A**S THE OLD JOKE GOES, SOME CITIES HAVE TWO SEASONS: winter and pothole repair. Each spring, keeping up with the dozens, hundreds or even thousands of miles of asphalt that need repair begins by identifying and prioritizing the potholes. This can be done by “hitting the pavement” in a vehicle and mapping and grading the severity of each one, but that can be a time-consuming and expensive effort—not to mention that new potholes appear seemingly overnight as the spring progresses.

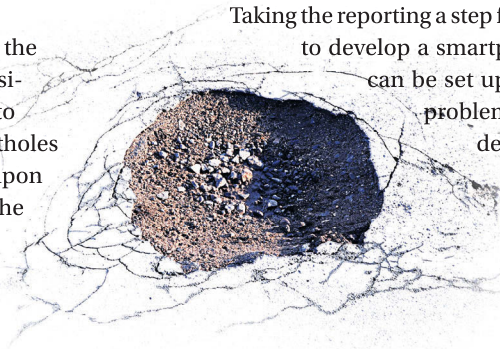
Many counties and municipalities have turned to the people on the front lines of the problem—the residents and drivers who use the roads every day—to help them keep up. While most drivers consider potholes a part of life, some more proactive citizens take it upon themselves to contact someone to let them know the particulars of the problem.

“Pothole hotlines” traditionally take one of two forms: online or telephone. In some cases, both

notification systems have been utilized. However, with changing technology has come new ways to report a problem.

Some places, such as the city of Portland, Ore., have begun to offer the option of using a smartphone app. The application asks users to take a photograph of the offending pothole and include contact information for the reporter. The app uses GPS technology to pinpoint the location of the problem, which is bundled with the photograph and sent to the Portland Bureau of Transportation.

Taking the reporting a step further, the city of Boston has partnered to develop a smartphone app called Street Bump, which can be set up to automatically sense and report a problem to the city using the phone’s motion detector as soon as a road disturbance is sensed. Using a system of algorithms, the phone’s GPS takes into account and filters out known road hazards, such as manhole covers and speed bumps, before reporting an unknown issue to a central server.





"What this technology allows us to do ... creates a new way for people to donate their data in solving public-good challenges," said Nigel Jacob, co-chairman of the Boston mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics, which manages the project.

Other places have partnered with broader websites, such as SeeClickFix.com, to allow their residents to pinpoint problems within the city limits. Some locales have utilized Facebook, Twitter and other social media sites to allow people to notify them of streets in need of repair by posting photos or locations. The same social media platforms can be used to notify motorists of particularly bad problems or ongoing pothole repair areas that drivers should avoid.


The most typical way of reporting potholes is still the telephone or a form filled out on the Internet, usually found on the website of the county, city or town that governs the repair of the street or roadway in question. The report asks for a specific location of the problem plus the contact information of the person asking for assistance. In some instances, users are asked to attach a digital photograph to the report to document the problem.

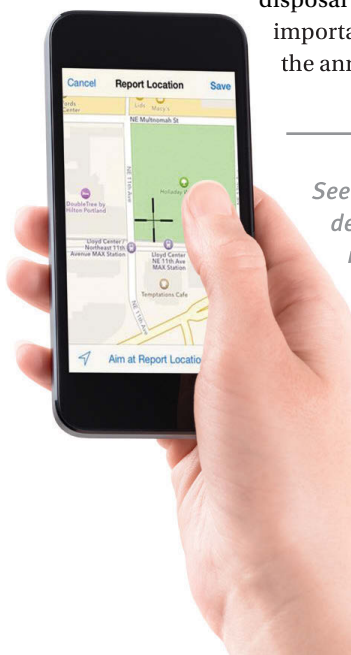
"We ask people for a description of the pothole, including a description of how big it is, such as 'as big as a hubcap' or another good indicator," said Ed Pickens, street superintendent with the city of Sioux Falls, Iowa, which offers an online form for reporting. "We also want to know how deep it is, whether it's two inches, four inches or whatever the case may be. They also can add landmarks, such as 'it's near a fire hydrant,' to give us a better idea of its location."

Pickens added that his department still learns of many of the problems through phone calls or word of mouth. They utilize the reports to most efficiently manage their time in manpower. For example, his crews check each morning to determine if complaints have been reported for the particular part of the city they are working in that day.

"The website works well," he said. "It's often our front line for learning about problems. It helps us to know where the trouble spots are so we can take care of them when we're in that area of the city."

Whatever the means of reporting, having the ability to pinpoint particular pothole problems through citizen reports has become an important tool that allows for better efficiency and cost savings in this age of ever-tightening budgets.

Until road engineers come up with a pothole-proof road, allowing people to assist by utilizing the technological resources at their disposal will, for the time-being, remain an important asset for highway departments in the annual battle against Mother Nature. 



*SeeClickFix, Facebook, phone and department websites all use public input to facilitate the prioritization of pothole repair. Facebook offers easy two-way communication, allowing departments to also warn residents of areas in need of repair that have not yet been addressed. (Photo by www.portlandoregon.gov and Shutterstock)*

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**ABOVE:**

A young reveler wears a hat depicting the Hodag, a forest creature purportedly captured by Rhinelander, Wis., Land Surveyor Eugene Shepard in 1893. Shepard admitted the hoax when the Smithsonian Institute asked to investigate his claim. (Photo provided)

**BELOW LEFT:**

The former county fairgrounds just north of Rhinelander are jammed with more than 50,000 visitors during the nine-day Hodag Country Festival, held each July. Millions of dollars pour into the community and the surrounding area during the event, which centers around a disproved legend. (Photo provided)

**BELOW RIGHT:**

Country singer Neal McCoy thrills the crowd with a rooftop appearance to sing his finale at a recent Hodag Country Festival concert. McCoy has performed for 20 consecutive years at the festival. (Photo provided)



# Hodag Country Festival

**A 120-year-old creature that never existed has literally given Rhinelander, Wis., the business.**

**The Hodag, a reptilian curiosity with “the head of a frog, the grinning face of a giant elephant, thick short legs set off by huge claws, the back of a dinosaur and a long tail with spears at the end,” was reportedly killed by land surveyor, timber cruiser and prankster Eugene Shepard in 1893.**

Upon inquiry by the Smithsonian Institute, Shepard admitted the hoax. But the town of 7,600 ran with the resultant publicity and has never looked back.

In 1978 four entrepreneurial residents initiated the first Hodag Country Festival, a two-day affair featuring Freddy Fender and country fiddler Jana Jae. It drew 500 attendees. Nowadays more than 50,000 revelers attend the festival, many for its entire nine-day run that takes place at the former county fairgrounds a couple miles north of city square. Featured country superstars have included Kenny Rogers, Reba McEntire, Garth Brooks, Tim McGraw, Kellie Pickler, Toby Keith and Eric Church. Neal McCoy has performed annually for two decades.

The municipality is a primary beneficiary of the festival, which culminates each year on the first full weekend after the Fourth of July.

The incoming swarm of visitors to Hodag also offers a boon to the fire department, whose members conduct a “Fill the Boot” campaign at one of the town’s main corridor intersections, reaping the department one of its most profitable fundraisers of the year.

“The benefit is undeniable,” said Dana DeMet, director of Rhinelander’s chamber of commerce. “Tens of thousands of people for multiple-night stays has a huge impact on retailers, lodgers and the town for return visits,” he said.

“We’re always trying to build on that to increase the returns,” added DeMet, who estimated a single visitor’s overnight stay yields about \$180 in lodging, food and miscellaneous purchases.

“For Hodag a lot of people camp out, so you can scrub off some of that,” he said. “Even so, we’re talking about millions of dollars. For retailers, that is their weekend and they stock up for it.”

The cost to the municipality is minimal. “We might have some additional costs for road repair, but nothing that outweighs the benefits.”

DeMet, gauging the municipality’s assessment of the event, finds it extremely positive.

“You would be hard-pressed to find someone in the city or in city government to say we would be better off without Hodag.” **M**





# Folkmoot, USA

**Waynesville, N.C., population 9,739, is an idyllic little burg nestled in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park and steeped in warm Southern hospitality. Its tree-lined Main Street is generously dotted with charming shops, galleries, cafes, restaurants and breweries. According to its website, [www.downtownwaynesville.com](http://www.downtownwaynesville.com), “Historic buildings, relaxing benches, public art and welcoming folks make Waynesville a thoroughly enjoyable place to live and visit.”**

But don't let the quiet veneer fool you. “We throw a street party at the drop of a hat,” said Marcy Onieal, town manager for the past three years.

Every July, for two weeks the town hops, skips, twirls and glitters with the kaleidoscopic regalia of dancers and musicians from all over the world during Folkmoot USA International Folk Festival, Waynesville's cross-cultural centerpiece since 1984. This year's festival will occur July 17-26.

Each year hundreds of groups apply to perform, but only about a dozen are chosen from seven or eight nations. Some of the 100 areas represented include Japan, Russia, France, Finland, Puerto Rico, Jordan, Indonesia, Poland, Kenya, Italy, Greece and Korea.

The benefits to the municipality of Waynesville are varied. According to Onieal, “for two weeks each summer we have this collision of cultures,” which has resulted in lifelong international friendships, a mutually educational exchange of cultures and even international marriages.

The city works shoulder to shoulder with the festival's organizers, corporate sponsors

and a legion of homegrown volunteers in team-building activities, Onieal said. “Planning starts many months in advance. The community has been amazingly welcoming throughout the years.”

Waynesville provides a yearly cash contribution to the festival's operating budget and has substantially supported the capital budget for the organizer's next building phase, which includes a museum, year-round cultural and community center, accommodations for international visitors and facilities to sponsor forums on world issues.

The festival attracts a large number of tourists to Waynesville for the first time, a good number of whom return each year.

The logistics of holding such an event are daunting: They include housing, feeding and transporting 200 performers, many of whom cannot speak English. But the returns are well worth the effort. A recent economic impact study tagged the festival's revenue generation at more than \$7 million for Haywood County, of which Waynesville is the largest city and county seat — an economic return that can make a municipality dance. **M**

Syneva Economics produced a quantifying, in-depth study of the local economic activity produced by Folkmoot events, including the direct, indirect and induced impacts. For a copy, contact Marcy Onieal, Waynesville town manager.



ABOVE:

*Puerto Rico, whose music and dance is said to be full of “rhythm, spice and color,” was one of eight visiting areas represented at the 2012 Folkmoot USA. Every July for two weeks, the city of Waynesville, N.C., hosts dancers and musicians from all over the world as part of the Folkmoot USA International Folk Festival, a regional cross-cultural centerpiece. (Photo provided)*

BELOW LEFT:

*A study tagged the revenue generation from Folkmoot USA, which takes place in several locations in and around Waynesville and Haywood County, N.C., at more than \$7 million. Waynesville is the largest city and county seat. (Photo provided) (Richard, I left this one uncropped)*

BELOW RIGHT:

*Dancers of the French delegation added a little something to their routine in the 2012 Folkmoot festival parade. The group, which hails from Provence, is composed of more than 100 members. (Photo provided)*







The four days of APWA's North American Snow and Ice Conference supplemented valuable strategy and planning sessions with news about recent updates to winter weather fighting technology. (Photo by Jodi Magallanes)

## 'You're only as good as your last storm:' APWA North American Snow Conference

**It's not a matter of if extreme winter weather will hit, but when. Negating its effect is all that matters.**

That was the reality at this year's gathering of American Public Works Association snow and ice professionals, who came to Grand Rapids, Mich., April 12–15 to hear strategies for making that happen faster, how to manage expectations and do some preseason planning.

As part of the four-day event, the biggest exposition floor in the history of the conference offered opportunities to understand recent improvements to winter storm fighting equipment. Upstairs during the educational sessions, presenters from the Midwest and Canada heard examples of successful emergency management and about the advantages of utilizing targeted weather data. Two experienced directors shared technical advice and best-practice usage information about liquid deicers.

Planning, even for the extreme winter weather event that you hope will never happen, was a theme reiterated at the conference. For more information about how to compile that plan, who to include and how to obtain buy-in, look for upcoming information in *The Municipal*: or plan to attend the 2016 APWA North American Snow Conference, which will take place in Connecticut. Keep tabs on [www.apwa.net/Snow](http://www.apwa.net/Snow) for updates and mark May 22–25 on the calendar. **M**

The exposition floor of the APWA snow conference gave drivers and managers the chance to check out and even drive some of the new equipment designed and developed over the past year. (Photo by Rees Woodcock)





# Fleet administrators gather in Florida



**NAFA Fleet Management Association's annual conference, held in Orlando, Fla., April 14–17, was three days filled with ride-and-drive opportunities, chances to catch up with friends and mentors in the fleet industry, information and training sessions and even time to enjoy a little of the Sunshine State.**

The education sessions provided high-quality training and actionable information in areas that included cost savings, technology, professional development and safety.

Once again, NAFA proved itself as the fleet association big enough and important enough to attract supplier-partner executives. A one-hour panel discussion with them answered questions about their views on the automotive industry's most pressing issues.

Law enforcement buyers were greeted this year with the return of a ride-and-drive event geared just for them that featured 2015's superstar automotive lineup. Test drivers could even try their hand at timed course events, and public safety and other emergency vehicles—including some equipped with new vehicle safety and awareness features—were on display as well.

At the always-anticipated Flexy Awards banquet on opening night of the conference, public and commercial fleets took home recognition for significant incorporations of green technology, management practices and other business-improving strategies. Those winners included: Outstanding Achievement in Public Fleet Management, Ricky Nieman, Texas Department of Transportation; Excellence in Public Fleet Sustainability Accomplishments, Douglas Bond, Alameda County, Calif.; Excellence in Public Fleet Safety, Christie Boone and Jason Allan, city of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada; and Excellence in Fleet Leadership, Ontario Ministry of Transportation Fleet Management Centre, Michael Cole.



## LEFT:

NAFA Institute and Expo's 2015 Flexy Awards were given out on the first evening of the conference. Winners were judged on advances they had made in greening and advancing the technology of their fleets, on fleet organization and on other considerations.

Pictured is Christie Boone, of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, winner of the Excellence in Public Fleet Safety. With her are, from left, presenters Kim Gross and Chris Smith of *The Municipal* magazine. Not pictured is Jason Allan, also of Edmonton. (Photo courtesy of NAFA)

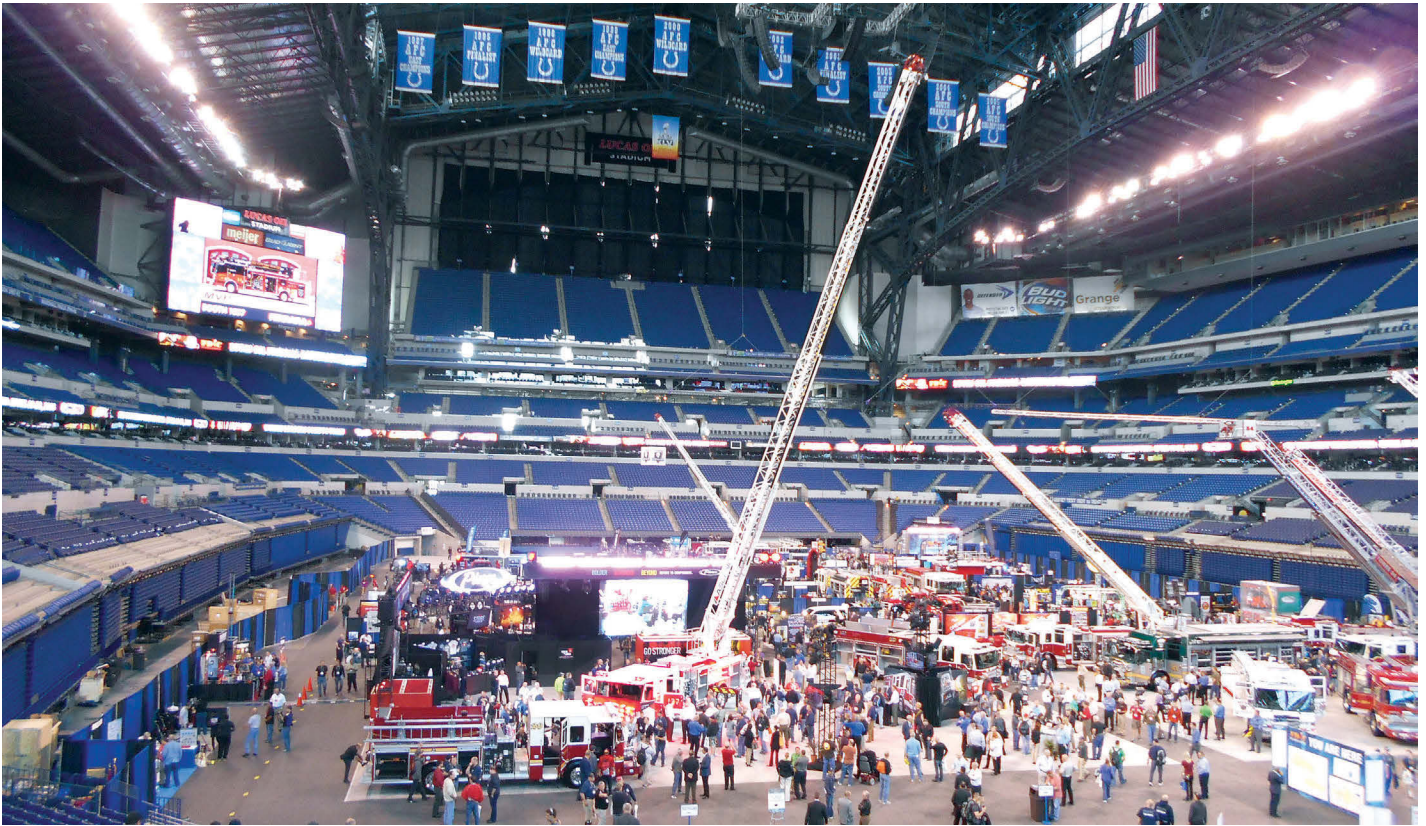
## ABOVE:

The exposition floor buzzed with interest in the latest vehicle products and services. Visitors even won prizes, and exhibitors made it the place fleet professionals wanted to be. (Photo by Chris Smith)

Additionally, NAFA's Member of the Year and Affiliate of the Year were awarded for their outstanding service and contributions to the association. Those honorees were: NAFA Member of the Year, Immediate Past President Claude Masters, CAFM, Florida Power & Light; and NAFA Affiliate of the Year, Phil Moser, vice president, Advanced Driver Training Services.

Plan to be on hand for next year's event, slated for April 19–22 in Austin, Texas. **M**





## ‘The World’s Largest Firefighter Training Conference’

**FDIC, the place every fire professional wants to be during one week in April, ended April 25 after six days of live burns, training rescues, over 100 experts sharing their experience in education sessions and three days of exhibits that filled both the Indiana Convention Center and nearby Lucas Oil Stadium.**

Downtown Indianapolis hosted the thousands of attendees, who engaged in hands-on training in advanced extrication, engine company water techniques and how to recognize flashover and other fireground situations. Maybe even more adrenaline-pumping was the annual Scott Firefighter Combat Challenge, which took place over the course of three days and yielded jubilant, deserving winners who went on to regional competition in Lake Charles, La., in May.

Inside the convention center, heavily attended presentations on handling crude oil derailments and the Boston Fire

Department’s response to the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing were just the tip of the iceberg. The sessions contributed heavily to the week’s elemental value.

FDIC 2016 will return to the same venue April 12–17, 2016. For all details and registration information, keep an eye on [FDIC.com](http://FDIC.com) and submit your budget request to attend! **M**

**RIGHT:**  
Relay teams competed Friday, April 24, in the Scott Firefighter Combat Challenge at FDIC in Indianapolis. (Photo by Jodi Magallanes)

*The single biggest firefighting training and education event took place April 20–25 in Indianapolis. Manufacturers of the rigs and equipment that career and volunteer departments depend on brought out all of the very latest products for attendees to browse. (Photo by Diana Likens)*





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To list your upcoming conference or seminar in The Municipal at no charge call (800) 733-4111, ext. 2392, or email the information to [jmagallanes@the-papers.com](mailto:jmagallanes@the-papers.com).

### JUNE

#### June 21–24 American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators Region II Conference

Montgomery, Ala.  
[www.aamva.org](http://www.aamva.org)

#### June 22–25 National Fire Protection Association Conference & Expo

McCormick Place, Chicago, Ill.  
[www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org)

#### June 23–24 Police Security Expo

Atlantic City Convention Center, Atlantic City, N.J.  
[www.police-security.com](http://www.police-security.com)

#### June 23–25 Pennsylvania Municipal League 116th Annual Convention

PPL Center, Allentown, Pa.  
[www.pamunicipalleague.org](http://www.pamunicipalleague.org)

#### June 24–26 League of Minnesota Cities Annual Conference

Duluth Entertainment Convention Center, Duluth, Minn.  
[www.lmc.org](http://www.lmc.org)

#### June 24–27 Snow & Ice Management Association 18th Annual Snow & Ice Symposium

Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center, Schaumburg, Ill.  
[www.sima.org/show/schedule](http://www.sima.org/show/schedule)

#### June 25–July 5 World Police & Fire Games

Multiple locations, Fairfax County, Va., area  
[fairfax2015.com](http://fairfax2015.com)

#### June 26–30 Georgia Municipal Association Annual Convention

Savannah International Trade & Convention Center, Savannah, Ga.  
[www.gmanet.com](http://www.gmanet.com)

#### June 29–July 2 International Parking Institute Conference & Expo

Las Vegas, Nev.  
[www.parking.org](http://www.parking.org)

### JULY

#### July 10–13 National Association of Counties 80th Annual Conference & Expo

Charlotte Convention Center, Charlotte, N.C.  
[www.naco.org](http://www.naco.org)

#### July 12–15 American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators Region I Conference

Hershey, Pa.  
[www.aamva.org](http://www.aamva.org)

#### July 13–15 Fleet Safety Conference

Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center Hotel, Schaumburg, Ill.  
[www.fleetsafetyconference.com](http://www.fleetsafetyconference.com)

#### July 14–18 Firehouse Expo 2015

Baltimore Convention Center, Baltimore, Md.  
[firehouseexpo.com](http://firehouseexpo.com)

#### July 16–19 Municipal Association of South Carolina Annual Meeting

Marriott Hilton Head Island, Hilton Head Island, S.C.  
[www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc)

#### July 17–21 Florida Fire Chiefs Association Annual Meeting & Executive Development Conference

Waldorf Astoria, Naples, Fla.  
[www.ffca.org](http://www.ffca.org)

#### July 19–23 National Association of Police Organizations 37th Annual Convention

The Westin Savannah Harbor Gold Resort & Spa, Savannah, Ga.  
[www.napo.org](http://www.napo.org)

### AUGUST

#### Aug. 1–5 NIGP: The Institute for Public Procurement Forum 2015

Kansas City Convention Center, Kansas City, Mo.  
[nsite.nigp.org/forum15](http://nsite.nigp.org/forum15)

#### Aug. 2–5 Institute of Transportation Engineers 2015 International Annual Meeting & Exhibit

The Diplomat Resort & Spa, Hollywood, Fla.  
[www.ite.org](http://www.ite.org)

#### Aug. 2–6 Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America Mid-Year Training Institute

JW Marriott Hotel, Indianapolis, Ind.  
[www.cadca.org/myti](http://www.cadca.org/myti)

#### Aug. 2–6 StormCon, the North American Surface Water Quality Conference & Expo

JW Marriott Austin, Austin, Texas  
[www.stormcon.com](http://www.stormcon.com)

#### Aug. 13–15 Florida Municipal League Annual Conference

World Center Marriott, Orlando, Fla.  
[www.floridaleagueofcities.com](http://www.floridaleagueofcities.com)

#### Aug. 22–25 International Municipal Signal Association 120th Annual Conference & 38th Annual School

Hyatt Regency, New Orleans, La.  
[www.imsasafety.org/2015conf](http://www.imsasafety.org/2015conf)

#### Aug. 24–26 Fleet Technology Expo

Long Beach Convention Center, Long Beach, Calif.  
[www.fleettechnologyexpo.com](http://www.fleettechnologyexpo.com)

#### Aug. 25–27 American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators Annual International Conference

Iowa Events Center, Des Moines, Iowa  
[www.aamva.org](http://www.aamva.org)

#### Aug. 25–27 Solid Waste Association of North America WasteCon

Gaylord Palms Resort & Convention Center, Kissimmee, Fla.  
[swana.org/Events/WASTECON.aspx](http://swana.org/Events/WASTECON.aspx)

#### Aug. 26–29 International Association of Fire Chiefs Annual Conference & Expo (FRI 2015)

Georgia World Congress Center, Atlanta, Ga.  
[www.iafc.org/micrositeFRIconf](http://www.iafc.org/micrositeFRIconf)

#### Aug. 30–Sept. 2 APWA International Public Works Congress & Exposition

Phoenix Convention Center, Phoenix, Ariz.  
[www.apwa.net/congress](http://www.apwa.net/congress)

### SEPTEMBER

#### Sept. 15–17 National Recreation & Parks Association Annual Conference

Mandalay Bay, Las Vegas, Nev.  
[www.nrpa.org/Conference2015/About](http://www.nrpa.org/Conference2015/About)

#### Sept. 15–19 EMS World Expo & World Trauma Symposium

Las Vegas Convention Center, Las Vegas, Nev.  
[emsworldexpo.com](http://emsworldexpo.com)

#### Sept. 16–18 Michigan Municipal League 2015 Convention

Traverse City, Mich.  
[www.mml.org](http://www.mml.org)

#### Sept. 17–19 Illinois Municipal League 102nd Conference

Hilton Chicago Hotel, Chicago, Ill.  
[conference.impl.org](http://conference.impl.org)

#### Sept. 20–23 Missouri Municipal League Annual Conference

Kansas City, Mo.  
[www.mocities.com](http://www.mocities.com)

#### Sept. 21–25 Fire Department Safety Officers Association Annual Safety Forum

The B Hotel, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.  
[www.fdssoa.org](http://www.fdssoa.org)

#### Sept. 23–25 Iowa League of Cities Annual Conference

Cedar Rapids Convention Complex, Cedar Rapids, Iowa  
[www.iowaleague.org](http://www.iowaleague.org)

#### Sept. 26–30 Water Environment Federation Annual Technical Exhibition & Conference

McCormick Place, Chicago, Ill.  
[www.weftec.org](http://www.weftec.org)

#### Sept. 27–30 ICMA Annual Conference

Seattle, Wash.  
[icma.org/en/icma/events/conference](http://icma.org/en/icma/events/conference)

#### Sept. 27–29 American Road & Transportation Builders Association National Convention

Hilton Philadelphia at Penn's Landing, Philadelphia, Pa.  
[www.artba.org/news/training-events](http://www.artba.org/news/training-events)

#### Sept. 28–30 FIERO Fire Station Symposium

Sheraton Ridge Raleigh Hotel, Raleigh, N.C.  
[www.fierofirestation.com](http://www.fierofirestation.com)

#### Sept. 29–Oct. 1 2015 Indiana Association of Cities & Towns Annual Conference & Exhibition

French Lick Resort, French Lick, Ind.  
[www.citiesandtowns.org](http://www.citiesandtowns.org)

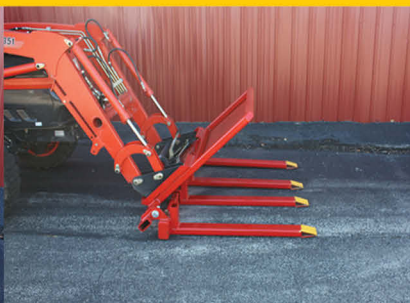
#### Sept. 29–Oct. 1 International Construction & Utility Equipment Exposition

Kentucky Exposition Center, Louisville, Ky.  
[www.icuee.com](http://www.icuee.com)



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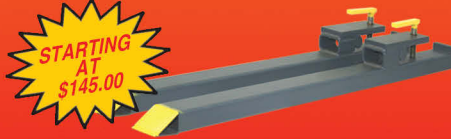
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# Gainesville Florida



**Settled 1700s**      **Pop: 127,488 (2013)**

Government type: Mayor, manager and city commission

[www.cityofgainesville.org](http://www.cityofgainesville.org)

The development of railroad transportation and commerce in the state of Florida figured quite largely into the design of the Gainesville, Fla., city flag.

Even as the population of north-central Florida swelled during the early and mid-1800s, rail service in the state lagged behind that of the rest of the nation. The first line built to traverse the peninsula, completed in 1861, was called the Florida Railroad but dubbed the "Cedar Key Railroad" by locals. It was designed to connect the region's many rivers and two coastlines and eliminated the need to pass through the Florida Keys: It ran between Fernandina on the Atlantic coast and Cedar Key on the gulf side.

In light of those plans, in 1852 residents of Alachua County had begun to lay out a town in the path of the train. They even petitioned the state legislature to allow a popular vote that would move the county seat to it. The move was completed, commerce boomed and Gainesville flourished.

The city's flag pays homage to its founding motivation by featuring a steam train as the lone icon. The image flies at city hall, the Matheson History Museum and in the Gainesville city commission chambers.

*Information provided by the city of Gainesville  
Illustration: Richard Aguirre & Shutterstock*

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# Toro: The name for easy grounds and landscape management



*Groundsmaster 7200 series zero-turn mower converts to the Polar Trac System in just four hours. (Photo provided)*

results they desire. This is accomplished through Toro's extensive product line that ranges from 32-inch walk-behind professional trim mowers, up to 16-foot-wide riding Groundsmaster rotary mowers that can mow over 17 acres an hour. Other products include highly maneuverable zero-turn and quad-steer mowers for increased productivity and getting those hard-to-reach areas in a single pass, along with the versatility to quickly be converted from mow to snow to expand the utility of the mower. For street and parks departments in northern climates, Toro ensures that many of the mowers are equally accomplished at clearing snow and ice, with proper attachments such as plow blades, snow blowers, salt spreaders and rotary brooms available for even more utility.

Toro's mid-range and heavy-duty Workman vehicles are built for the tough jobs, like hauling dirt and sand, top dressing, performing maintenance jobs, transporting, towing, grooming, debris clearing and landscape remodeling. This includes a new automatic version that eases training for new operators. Toro's infield groomers with attachments, such as the flex groomer, save time in maintaining parks and recreation fields while increasing consistency and playability.

A full line of products for municipal golf courses are also produced, including greens mowers and fairway mowers — like the new Reelmaster 5010-H Hybrid — along with application, aeration, and debris management equipment. Other products include Toro's water-saving irrigation controllers, sprinklers and soil sensors — in addition to ground-engaging equipment such as trenchers, augers, compact utility loaders, horizontal directional drills and construction equipment.

**The Toro Motor Company was founded on July 10, 1914, to provide engines for one of the early leaders in the tractor field, The Bull Tractor Company of Minneapolis. Although established as an independent company, the name “Toro” was chosen due to the company’s association with Bull Tractor.**

Following Bull Tractor's untimely demise, Toro shifted its focus to the mowing industry. It was then, in 1919, that Toro was approached by the Minikahda Club in Minneapolis to create a motorized fairway mower to replace horse-drawn equipment. By mounting five lawn mowers onto the front of a farm tractor, Toro developed the Standard Golf Machine and helped create the motorized golf course equipment industry.

Today, Toro is a global leader of innovative turf and landscape maintenance equipment and water-saving irrigation solutions to help

customers enrich the beauty, productivity and sustainability of the land. Through a strong network of professional distributors, dealers and retailers in over 90 countries, Toro proudly offers a wide range of products across a family of global brands to help golf courses, homeowners, professional contractors, agricultural growers, construction and rental companies, government and educational institutions — in addition to many leading sports venues and historic sites around the world.

Toro takes great pride in helping its municipal customers achieve the superior





Toro is equipped to help any municipality with all of its various landscaping needs, including:

- Complete turf care
- Irrigation
- Construction
- Grounds maintenance, including crew and tool transportation solutions to job sites
- “Hardscapes” maintenance, including walkways, bike paths and outdoor patios
- Training for maintaining sports fields
- Innovative solutions for turf maintenance that save time and money
- Financing solutions
- Internet-based asset management solutions (myTurf)

Financing is available to facilitate any purchase, and training is offered by the company on all equipment in order to provide customers with ease of operation and ensure that Toro’s superior products conform to expectations.

Governmental entities may purchase Toro’s full line of equipment and services through TCPN Contract R141201. This contract has been competitively bid by a government agency serving in the lead agency role. To learn more about TCPN, please visit [www.tcpn.org](http://www.tcpn.org). For more information and details on the complete line of Toro products, visit [www.toro.com](http://www.toro.com) or contact the Toro dealer in your city. ■

**ABOVE:**

*Toro presents the Workman HDX four-wheel drive utility vehicle with automatic transmission. (Photo provided)*

**BELOW:**

*The Groundsmaster 5900 rotary mower features a 16-foot width of cut. (Photo provided)*



Information provided by The Toro Company.



**2002 Volvo VHD Tandem Dump Truck**

Cummins ISMV 320 hp., 46,055 act. mi., Allison AT, 20,000# front axle, 40,000# rear axle, axle & wheel lockers, 80-100% tires, htd. mirrors, Henderson stainless steel dump bed, belly blade, plow hook up, 50 gal. chloride tank, rear hyd. .... **\$52,000**

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1-ton dually, Duramax diesel, 67,000 mi., AT, AC, 11' covered utility KUV knapheide bed, Rebuilt title. .... **\$14,500**

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**2003 International 7400**

(in service date 1/2005) DT530 eng., Allison 6 sp., TS, CC, AC, new front tires, exc. rear tires, air ride cab, front mount PTO pump, 20 yd. Heil Rapid Rail w/Python arm and 3 position camera system, super nice truck! .... **A steal at \$39,900!**

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**2006 Freightliner M2**

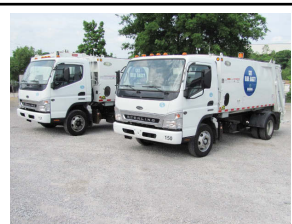
6.4L 230 hp. Mercedes eng., Allison 3500 RDS 5 sp. AT, 8,000# front, 17,000# rear, 25,500# total GVW, AM/FM stereo, AC, CC, 2 tool boxes, dual alum. fuel tanks, 11 yard Neway packer w/kickbar for small dumpsters, former municipal parks truck, well maintained. . . **Only \$55,900**

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DT466 eng., Allison trans., AM/FM stereo, AC, new front tires, 95% rear tires, only 44,000 act. mi., New Way 18 yd rear load packer w/drum winch, super sweet truck, serviced and ready to go to work! . . **\$72,500**

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**2011 International 7400**

Maxforce 9 DT 570 310 hp. eng., Allison 6 sp., 16,000# front / 40,000# rear axles AM/FM, AC, air ride cab, Heil Durapack 5,000, 25 yd rear load packer w/1 cart tipper and reeving cyl., 91,000 mi., 6,000 hrs. Nice truck! Inspected, ready to go to work! . . . . . **\$105,900**

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CAT 3208 diesel eng, 20,604 mi., Allison AT, top mount Waterous 1,250 GPM pump, 750 gal. water tank. . . . . **Call for price**

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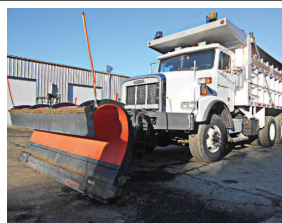
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Oklahoma truck, 250 hp. DT466, Allison AT, 33,000# GVW, all new snowplow pkg. w/central hyd. & stainless tail gate sanders.

**\$65,000**

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**\$56,800**

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**2005 INTERNATIONAL 4400**  
60' Lift-All Bucket Truck w/ Material Handler,  
DT466 Diesel, Allison AT, A/C, Stk.#694613



**2006 CHEVY C5500**  
4x4, 45' Versalift Bucket Truck, 6.6L Duramax  
Turbo Diesel, AT, Front Winch, A/C, Stk.#413782



**2003 IHC 7300**  
60' 2-man bucket truck, 4x4, DT466 diesel, 5 sp.,  
Allison AT, AC, CC, Stk.# 051513



**2002 INTERNATIONAL 4400**  
60' Lift-All Bucket Truck w/ Material Handler,  
Allison AT, CC, A/C, Stk.#509451



**2008 GMC C5500**  
4x4, 43' Hi-Ranger Bucket Truck, 6.6L Duramax  
Turbo Diesel, A/C, Stk.#415484



**2008 FORD F550**  
41' Altec bucket truck, 6.4L Power Stroke diesel,  
AT, AC, Stk.# C14260



**2008 DODGE RAM 5500HD**  
42' ETI bucket truck, 6.7L Cummins turbo diesel,  
AT, AC, CC, Stk.# 237898



**2008 FORD F550**  
42' ETI bucket truck, 4x4, 6.4L Power Stroke  
diesel, Auto, AC, Front Winch,  
Stk.# D17449



**2004 GMC C7500**  
60' Altec forestry bucket truck, 8.1L Vortec V8, 6  
sp., Kubota pony motor, Stk.# 519555



**2002 GMC C7500**  
60' Altec forestry bucket truck, 8.1L Vortec V8, gas,  
5-sp., 11' dump bed, Stk. #513719



**2002 GMC C7500**  
60' Hi-Ranger forestry bucket truck, 8.1L Vortec  
V8, 5 sp., Stk.# 516876



**2004 GMC C6500**  
11' Chipper dump truck, 8 cyl. Vortec V8, gas, rider  
cab, AC, CC, Stk. # 515575



**2011 FORD F350**  
4x4, 9' Service Truck, 6.7L Power Stroke Turbo  
Diesel, AT, A/C, CC, PW, PM, PL, Stk.#D04971



**2008 FORD F350**  
Mechanics truck, 4x4, 6.4L Power Stroke diesel,  
AT, 3200LB Auto crane, AC, CC, Stk.# C82799



**2008 DODGE RAM 5500 SLT**  
Mechanic's truck, 6.7L Cummins diesel, Auto crane,  
welder/gen, loaded, Stk. # 146477



**2006 CHEVY C4500**  
Mechanic's truck, 6.6L Duramax turbo diesel,  
6-Sp., Auto crane, Stk. # 410832



**2010 FORD F550 4X4**  
9' Flatbed, Stellar 3315 Crane, AT, 6.4L Power  
Stroke turbo diesel, Stk.# B25927



**2000 CHEVY C7500**  
Grapple Truck, chipper dump, 3126 Cat diesel, AT,  
Auto crane A72A, Stk.# 517821



**2008 FORD F350 XLT**  
4x4 Service Truck, 6.8L V10 gas, AT, AC, PM, PL,  
PW, CC, Stk.# A43616



**2009 FORD F450 4X4**  
9' Flatbed Truck, 6.4L Power Stroke diesel,  
4,299 Miles! Stk.# A28512



**2008 FORD F450**  
11' service truck, 4x4, 6.4L Power Stroke turbo  
diesel, AT, AC, CC, Stk.# D99376



**2008 FORD F450 XLT**  
4x4, 11' enclosed servi Oce truck, 6.4L turbo  
diesel, AT, PM, PL, PW, Stk.# D99353



**2008 FORD F350 XL**  
11' service truck, 4x4, 6.4L Power Stroke turbo  
diesel, AT, Inverter, AC, Stk.# D61548



**2008 FORD F350 EXT CAB**  
Service truck, 4x4, 5.4L V8 gas, AT, 9' Omaha  
utility body, AC, CC, Stk.# D08989



### IOP partners with Monroe Truck Equipment

*Avon, Ohio* — The Ohio Association of Emergency Vehicle Technicians will share the 23rd annual Emergency and Municipal Vehicle Maintenance and Repair program Monday, Sept. 21, through Friday, Sept. 25. The event is held at the Ohio Fire Academy, 8895 E. Main St., Reynoldsburg, Ohio. Target participants are maintenance chiefs or officers, firefighters, fire mechanics, technicians, fleet foremen, fleet managers, municipal technicians, service technicians and any other parties interested and responsible for vehicle and fleet maintenance and repairs at fire and public works departments for cities, counties, townships and village organizations.

The tentative schedule consists of classes including Darley Pump Repairs and F-3 Prep; Basic to Advanced Electrical; A/C Systems; Cummins Engines; 10 EVT Prep; Spartan Chassis; Kussmaul Electronics Troubleshooting and Repairs; Michelin Tire Clinic; Akron Brass; Weldon Multiplex; Horton Ambulance; Fire Research Products; and more. Go to [www.oaevt.org](http://www.oaevt.org) for a full calendar schedule.

Class tuition is \$425 and includes lunch all week and the Wednesday banquet dinner.

### CNG and fleets: New publication builds a case

*Golden, Colo.* — Fleets considering a compressed natural gas program now have an online resource to help evaluate cost-effectiveness.

Building a Business Case for Compressed Natural Gas in Fleet Applications, a new report from the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, helps readers assess the various aspects of a new CNG vehicle and fueling infrastructure project to determine viability. The publication details an enhanced version of a previous online modeling tool developed by NREL — the Vehicle Infrastructure and Cash-Flow Evaluation model — that helps fleets evaluate the financial soundness of CNG vehicle and CNG fueling infrastructure projects. The tool, VICE 2.0, can now help assess projects to acquire vehicles and infrastructure, or to acquire vehicles only.

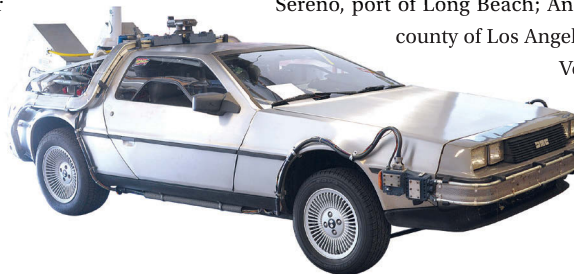
The report and model are especially beneficial to fleets that are well-suited to using CNG, such as those with routes that start and end in the same location and are, therefore, able to refuel at a central location. Access the report at [www.afdc.energy.gov/uploads/publication/business\\_case\\_cng\\_fleets.pdf](http://www.afdc.energy.gov/uploads/publication/business_case_cng_fleets.pdf).

### 'Back to the Future'

*Bellevue, Wash.* — So how does a time machine drain oil? The answer is simple: faster, because it saves time by using a valve from EZ Oil Drain Valve.

In cooperation with the company, and as part of a campaign to raise awareness and funds for Parkinson's Research, a DMC-12 "time machine" similar to the one featured in the hit movie "Back to the Future" is traveling to every state in the U.S., racking up over 40,000 miles as part of the "Drive to Cure Parkinson's." EZ Oil Drain Valves will be involved during the tour to help reduce downtime when the machine stops for frequent oil changes.

All donations collected will benefit the Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research through Team Fox. Those donations will act as fuel to help propel the campaign for future research. For more information, visit [www.tothefuture.org](http://www.tothefuture.org).



### American Traffic Safety Services Foundation announces scholarship recipients



Lyndsay Morgan



Andrea Pair

*Fredericksburg, Va.* — The American Traffic Safety Services Foundation awarded Roadway Memorial Scholarships to three applicants this year who are dependents of workers killed or permanently disabled in work zone accidents. The students are:

- Lyndsay Morgan, Cape Coral, Fla. (\$5,000)
- Carl Moser, Middletown, Md. (\$6,000)
- Andrea Pair, Spiro, Okla. (\$5,000)

Morgan's father, an employee of DBi Services, was killed in 2011 when he was struck by a motorist in a roadway work zone. Morgan attends Florida Gulf Coast University. Moser's father was an employee of the Maryland State Highway Administration. He was killed after being struck by a pickup truck in 2007. Moser will attend Franklin W. Olin College of Engineering in Needham, Mass. Pair's father was an employee of Time Striping, Inc. He was struck and killed by a car in 1998. Pair will attend Northeastern State University in Tahlequa, Ok.

The foundation seeks help in identifying and encouraging individuals who are eligible to apply for the Roadway Worker Memorial Scholarship. The deadline for 2016 scholarship applications is Feb. 15. For more information visit [www.atssa.com](http://www.atssa.com).

### ISI announces new envision review board

*Washington, D.C.* — The Institute for Sustainable Infrastructure announced recently the formation of the Envision Review Board to oversee the ongoing development of ISI's Envision sustainable infrastructure rating system, initially launched in 2012. The ERB held its first meeting April 30-May 1 in Washington, D.C. Its mission is to assure the continued integrity and efficacy of ISI's Envision sustainability rating system and its associated tools, resources and documents, and to provide for consistency in interpretation and development.

The 15 members were selected from the U.S. and Canada for their knowledge and expertise in the applications of the Envision rating system. The inaugural ERB includes the following members, who will serve one- to three-year terms: Timothy J. Barry, O'Brien & Gere; John Eddy, Arup; Lindsey Geiger, American Water Works Association; Andreas Georgoulas, Harvard University; Elizabeth Heider, Skanska; Kari Hewitt, VHB; Marty Janowitz, Stantec; Hal Kassoff, WSP/Parsons Brinckerhoff; Floren Poliseo, New York City Department of Environmental Protection; Andy Sauer, Burns & McDonnell Doug Sereno, port of Long Beach; Andrew Shaw, Black & Veatch; Youn Sim,

county of Los Angeles Department of Public Works; Ifetayo Venner, ARCADIS; and Michaela Wittmann, HDR

For more information, visit [www.sustainableinfrastructure.org](http://www.sustainableinfrastructure.org).

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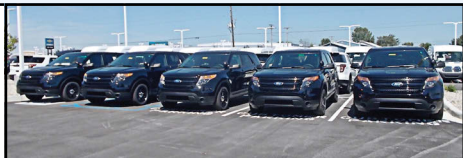
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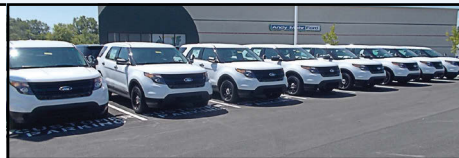


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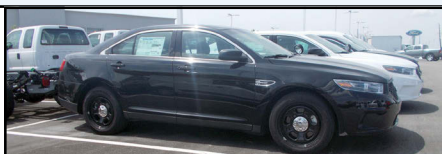
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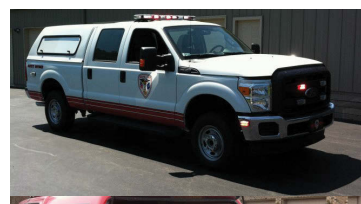
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# Legislative update:

## *preserving the tax-exempt status of municipal bonds*



**MIKE BELLARMINO** | Guest columnist  
Associate Legislative Director and Associate  
General Counsel,  
National Association of Counties

**S**INCE THE GREAT RECESSION, LAWMAKERS IN THE NATION'S capital have struggled to find ways to solve the enigma that is the federal debt and deficit. There have been countless committees, commissions and bipartisan groups that have put forth numerous proposals that are billed as the right plan to put our nation's fiscal house back in order.

But one proposal that continues to produce much concern for state and local governments is one that seeks to limit or cap the value of certain tax benefits, including tax-exempt interest on municipal bonds. This proposal is troublesome for not only the long-standing history of the muni-interest exemption it would alter, but also because of the detrimental impact it would have on infrastructure investment.

Since the original income tax code of 1913, the interest earned on municipal bonds has been exempt from federal income tax. This, in large part, is an acknowledgement of the partnership between federal, state and local governments and their respective roles in developing our nation's infrastructure.

The impact of municipal bonds is substantial. During the period from 2003–12, municipal bonds financed more than \$1.65 trillion of infrastructure investment. With state and local governments providing the funding for more than 75 percent of our nation's infrastructure, there is no other funding mechanism that could match the return for the federal government's dollar that produces such a compelling amount of infrastructure, and ultimately jobs.

But now, as many of the policymakers in Washington continue to search for ways to generate revenue, the idea of reversing history and partially taxing what is otherwise exempt income has emerged over the past few years. The idea first surfaced in 2010 as part of the Simpson-Bowles plan, which would have eliminated the tax-exemption for municipal bond interest. Since then, variations of that proposal have appeared in legislation and budget plans.

The most recent proposal including language that could impact municipal bonds was the president's FY 2016 Budget Plan, as it reiterates what the three prior proposals included, a 28-percent cap on certain tax benefits, including interest earned on municipal bonds. While the plan itself is generally a nonstarter in the budget process, it still can serve

as a base for future talks. It should be noted that in addition to the president's proposal, language was included in the FY 2014 Senate Budget Resolution that suggested the possibility of a cap on tax benefits, which could include tax-exempt interest.

In addition, now that we are in the 114th Congress, we can expect the tax-writing committees in both chambers to resume the work that was started in prior sessions. We'll take a brief look at what that previous work entailed, review where we are today and talk a little about what we can expect looking ahead.

In February 2013, under then-Chairman Dave Camp (R-Mich.), the House Committee on Ways and Means created 11 tax reform working groups. Each group focused on exploring reform options in a particular tax area, like manufacturing and real estate.

There was no one specific working group assigned for municipal bonds, but the full committee held a hearing in March 2013 titled "Tax reform and tax provisions affecting state and local government." A substantial amount of the hearing was spent discussing the exemption for municipal bond interest, and there appeared to be a solid, albeit small, base of committee members at the time that supported maintaining the exemption.

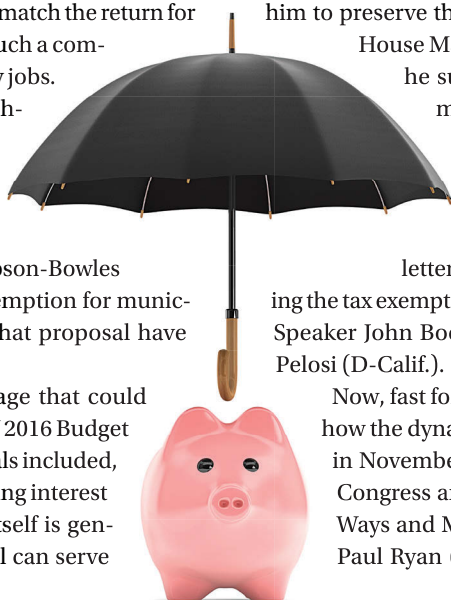
On the other side of the Capitol, under then-Chairman Max Baucus (D-Mont.), the Senate Finance Committee began a multi-week discussion series where members convened to talk about specific topics and provide feedback on options to enact tax reform. After each meeting, the tax reform option papers used to guide the discussions were posted on the committee's website. All tax reform options, including capping tax benefits like the exemption for municipal bond interest, were discussed.

However, there were some positive developments in the 113th Congress; 14 Democratic senators sent a letter to the president urging him to preserve the tax-exemption for municipal bonds and then-House Majority Leader Eric Cantor (R-Va.) publicly stated he supported maintaining the tax-exempt status of municipal bonds.

Also in the 113th, a bipartisan resolution in the House was introduced (H.Res.112) celebrating and acknowledging the importance of tax-exempt bonds. Additionally, a bipartisan

letter with over 130 representatives signed on supporting the tax exemption for municipal bond interest was sent to House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) and Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.).

Now, fast forward to the 114th Congress, one can readily see how the dynamics have changed since the midterm elections in November 2014. To start, both tax writing committees in Congress are now under new leadership. In the House, the Ways and Means Committee is led by former Budget Chair Paul Ryan (R-Wis.). In the Senate, with the Republican





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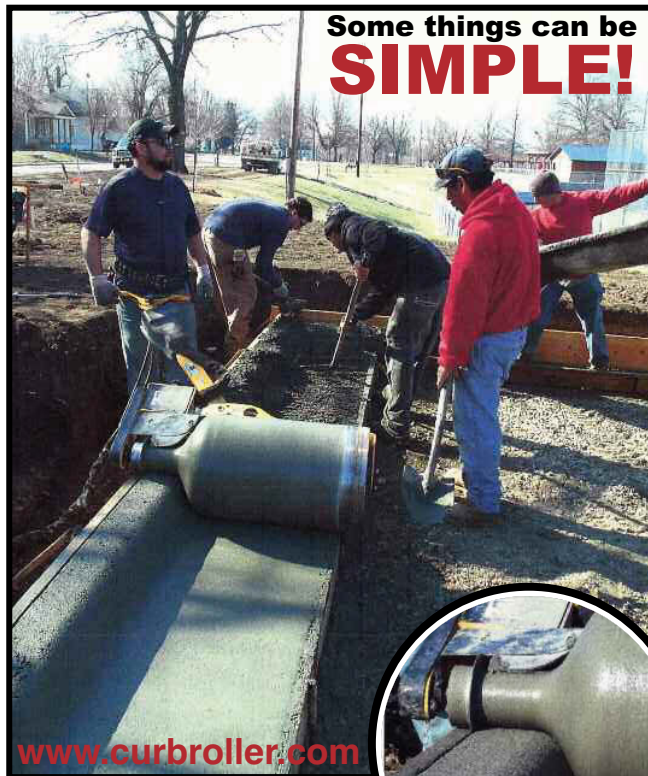
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takeover of the chamber, the Finance Committee gavel is now held by Senator Orrin Hatch (R-Utah). With the start of their chairmanships, each will likely want to put their own respective mark in any comprehensive tax reform process.

The Senate Finance Committee was the first to move this time around as Chairman Hatch and Ranking Member Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) created working groups among committee members to explore different areas of the tax code. The working groups recently closed a public comment period in which they sought feedback from any interested party on possible approaches to reforming the tax code. Potentially using some of the public feedback received, each working group is now tasked with developing recommendations on how to reform the code in its specific area.

Although it remains to be seen what the first step for the House Ways and Means Committee will be in this process, we have already seen some positive movement in the House. Municipal bond supporters once again successfully sent a bipartisan letter with over 120 representatives signed on to House leadership urging support for the exemption.



The bottom-line for state and local governments is that if history can properly serve as our guide, tax reform will be a multiyear process and not something that can happen overnight. Added into this mix is that Congress, despite Republicans controlling both chambers, still faces an uphill battle on any legislation it hopes to enact into law. The need for comprehensive tax reform enjoys wide bipartisan support; the path to get there is where disagreement is found in abundance. Further compounding this mix is that other issues, like how to solve the problem of transportation funding, will inevitably involve a discussion on tax reform given that the federal revenue side of the equation needs to be substantially addressed in order to get anywhere close on a long-term solution.

Therefore, for state and local officials, the work is far from being over. Members of Congress need to be reminded the tax-exemption has helped state and local governments pay for a majority of our country's infrastructure over the past century. It has survived two world wars, the Great Depression and the Great Recession — all times of fiscal challenge, yet the exemption continues to work for small and large governments alike. **M**

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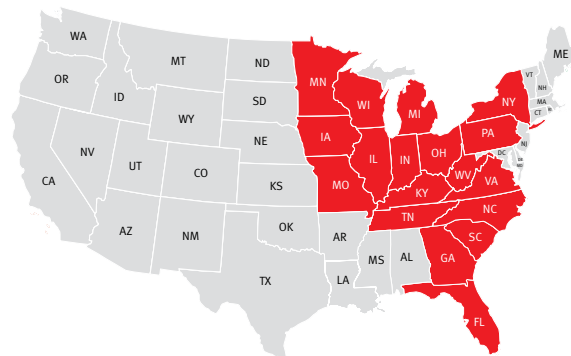
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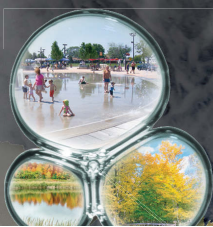
# M

## TOP TEN

# Safest U.S. cities from natural disasters



**8. Chicago, Ill.**



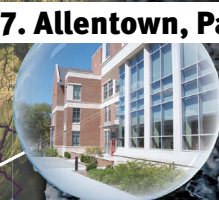
**10. Warren-Troy-Farmington Hills, Mich.**



**4. Buffalo, N.Y.**



**1. Syracuse, N.Y.**



**7. Allentown, Pa.**



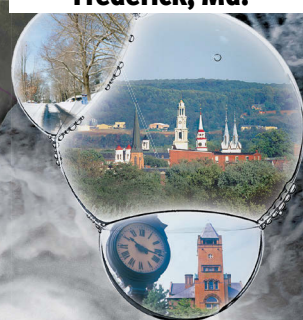
**6. Dayton, Ohio**



**9. Denver, Colo.**



**2. Cleveland, Ohio**



**5. Bethesda-Rockville-Frederick, Md.**



**3. Akron, Ohio**

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Source: [www.cbsnews.com/8334-505145\\_162-57599608/top-10-safest-u.s-cities-from-natural-disasters](http://www.cbsnews.com/8334-505145_162-57599608/top-10-safest-u.s-cities-from-natural-disasters)  
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