

# Preface

A DISTINCTIVE FEATURE of North Carolina government is that, essentially, all local government responsibilities are placed in counties and municipalities (or cities). The state has fewer special districts, authorities, and other political subdivisions than most states do. All of the state's citizens live in one of the 100 counties, while slightly more than half live in one of the 550 or more municipalities as well. This book is intended to help the state's citizens, and the local government officials who serve them, better understand North Carolina's system of local government.

*County and Municipal Government in North Carolina* is a School of Government publication that replaces our separate textbooks on county government and municipal (or city) government in North Carolina. It consists of fifty separate articles, each devoted to an aspect of local government in this state. The individual articles may be viewed and purchased separately on the School's website. By making the articles available separately, rather than only as a set of chapters in a bound book, we expect to more regularly update them as changes in law or practice necessitate.

This book is designed primarily to meet the needs of local government elected officials and key administrators—those who are chiefly in charge of the day-to-day operation of the state's counties and municipalities. Citizens, civic leaders, high school and college students, reporters, and many local government employees will also find the various articles helpful. As a group, the articles tell how counties and cities are established and organized; what their powers, functions, and financial resources are; and how they operate in North Carolina.

The book offers a general introduction to North Carolina local government, setting out the legal framework within which local government operates and suggesting the range of administrative organization and practice found among North Carolina's counties and cities. Although they may give more detail about powers, practices, and procedures than most citizens need, the articles do *not* contain all the detailed information in many areas that responsible local government officials will want to have available. For example, all aspects of the property tax are discussed in a single article, which is enough information about the assessment of property and the collection of property taxes to meet the needs of most governing board members and managers. A county tax collector or a city attorney with a property tax problem, however, will want to have available the more detailed School of Government books on the property tax. (Most of the articles include a list of publications that discuss the article's subject in greater detail.)

With six exceptions the articles in *County and Municipal Government in North Carolina* have been written by members of the School of Government faculty. Two articles, number 12, "Civil Liability of the Local Government and Its Officials and Employees," and number 27, "Community Development and Affordable Housing," were written by Anita R. Brown-Graham, a former School faculty member who is now head of the Institute for Emerging Issues at North Carolina State University. Andrew L. Romanet Jr., general counsel of the North Carolina League of Municipalities, wrote number 6, "Governance in Mayor-Council Cities," and Patrice C. Roesler, assistant executive director of the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners, wrote number 30, "The County Jail." Chet Jernigan, director of training at the North Carolina Justice Academy, wrote number 29, "Law Enforcement." And Candace Goode Vick, a faculty member at North Carolina State University and former director of its Recreation Resources Service, wrote number 48, "Parks and Recreation." I am grateful to all of them, as well as to my colleagues who contributed to the book.

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