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## < PACESETTER AWARDS 2022

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Technology

# Atlanta's Neighborly Software connects residents with needed funding

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Jason Rusnak, co-Founder and president at Neighborly Software.

BYRON E. SMALL



By Gary McKillips – Contributing Writer, Atlanta Business Chronicle  
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*Editor's Note: This story is part of Atlanta Business Chronicle's Pacesetter Awards, a series where we recognize the fastest-growing private companies in metro Atlanta. Neighborly Software is the fastest-growing company in the business services category.*

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Finding a unique niche and capitalizing on pandemic-induced opportunities turned Benevate, Inc., known as Neighborly Software, into the third fastest-growing company on the Atlanta Business Chronicle's Pacesetters list for 2022. It is also the fastest-growing company in the business services category.

Seven years ago, [Jason Rusnak](#) and co-founder [Chris Behm](#) left ADP to create a firm to help companies provide housing assistance for employees. It quickly pivoted by adapting its software product to federal government-funded programs primarily available through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The change took place when Neighborly was working with one of its first clients, the city of Savannah. Originally, city leaders asked the company to develop a program to help its employees buy houses. "They loved the software [for the employee program]," Rusnak, who serves as Neighborly's president, explained, "but it was only about 2 percent of what they do on a daily basis. [So] they asked if we could build out a comprehensive economic and community development solution."

### Pacesetter Awards: Business Services

Benevate Inc., dba Neighborly Software

*Principals:* [Jason Rusnak](#), co-founder and president; [Chris Behm](#), co-founder and chief operating officer

*Founded:* 2016

*Headquarters:* Atlanta

Once Rusnak and his team created that initiative, "we received calls from places such as North Miami Beach, West Palm Beach and other cities," he said. "At that point, we knew we were onto something."

Neighborly Software has gone from 12 employees in January of 2021 to 65 today, largely as a result of the pandemic, which created a variety of government-funded programs. These included the CARES Act of 2020, which helped small businesses and individuals with mortgage, utility and rental assistance. Following that, explained Rusnak, the government launched Department of Treasury emergency rental and homeowner assistance programs. Neighborly has the lion's share of the emergency rental assistance market and also administers mortgage programs for people who can't afford their mortgages and are at the risk of foreclosure.

The company has approximately 350 clients in 43 states and administers the two largest rental assistance programs in the country in California and Texas.

[Chris Behm](#), chief operating officer and co-founder with Resnik of Neighborly Software, said one of the keys to the company's success was acting quickly when COVID hit and some \$50 billion in government funding rental assistance became available.

"There needed to be a software platform to facilitate taking applications from individuals and families who would qualify for these programs," said Behm, adding that as the funding targeted low- to middle-income families, "that's who our software was designed to help."

As for the future, company president Rusnak said the firm will build on its current niche but is launching disaster-recovery software for use HUD funding for victims of hurricanes, tornados, wildfires and other natural disasters. In addition, Neighborly Software is planning to enter the Housing Choice Voucher market, which helps low-income households find rental housing.

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