



# **Local Government**

**Essential Question:**

**How do local governments  
and special purpose  
governments work?**

# County Government

- Georgia has 159 counties, nearly 600 towns – each has a government
- **county**: subdivision of a state set up for certain governmental functions
- most Georgia counties are run by an elected Board of Commissioners

# Sharing Services

- Some city and county governments share services
- Fulton County is home to city of Atlanta
- Fulton County and city of Atlanta share zoning duties and library system
- Fulton and DeKalb counties share a hospital authority
- Fulton County and the City of Atlanta have separate school systems

# Officials in County Government

- Most counties have the following elected officials:
  - commissioners, superior court clerk, probate court judge, sheriff, tax commissioner, coroner
- Many officials are appointed:
  - county clerk, fire chief, road supervisor, emergency management director, attorney, planning and building inspector, etc.
- Larger counties have more officials

# City Government

- **municipality**: a city with its own government
- city receives charter from state legislature
- city charter explains what the city government can do
  - police protection, maintain streets and sidewalks, license businesses, control traffic, provide water and sewerage
- some city charters allow for a city-run school system

# Forms of City Government

- **Mayor-Council:** most common in Georgia
  - elected council, elected mayor
  - weak-mayor system: mayor has little power, figurehead
  - strong-mayor system: mayor has power to run the city, propose budget, can veto council
- **Council-Manager**
  - voters elect council members
  - mayor may be elected or appointed
  - council hires city manager for day-to-day operations of the city
- **City Commission**
  - voters elect commissioners
  - commissioners form department heads of the city
  - mayor chosen by the commissioners

# City-County Government

- some city and county governments merge when the region becomes more urban
- can reduce the cost of government
- Examples
  - Athens-Clarke County
  - Columbus-Muskogee County
  - Augusta-Richmond County

# Special Purpose Districts

- Created for a specific job or task
- Within certain guidelines, these districts are self-governing
- Examples
  - school districts
  - MARTA (Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority)
  - Public Housing Authority
  - Georgia Ports Authority

# Funding Local Government

- Sources of funding include state and federal grants and taxes on citizens
- **ad valorem taxes:** taxes paid based on the value of the property
- **user fees:** paid by the user of the service
- **sales tax:** added to purchases made in the city or county
  - general purpose local option sales tax: tax for general use
  - special purpose local option sales tax (SPLOST): approved by voters, adds sales tax to fund special projects such as parks or schools
- **bond issues:** a way for governments to borrow money; interest must be paid on the bonds

[Click to return to Table of Contents.](#)

# Citizenship

- If your parents are US citizens or you were born in the US, you have all the rights and protections of the US and Georgia constitutions
- **Naturalized citizen:** foreigner who chooses to become a US citizen
- Process to become naturalized citizen requires much time and effort
- Responsibilities go along with rights
  - participation in government (voting, running for office)
  - upholding the laws of the nation and state
  - defending the nation against enemies
  - serve on juries
  - serving the community

[Click to return to Table of Contents.](#)