

Chapter 25: Local Government and Finance

Section 2

Lecture Notes

The title 'AMERICAN GOVERNMENT' is centered on the page. 'AMERICAN' is written in a white, serif font with a thin black outline. 'GOVERNMENT' is written in a large, bold, yellow, sans-serif font with a thick black outline. The text is set against a background of a stylized American flag with blue stars and red and white stripes.

AMERICAN GOVERNMENT

PEARSON

► Objectives

1. Explain the process of incorporation and the function of city charters.
2. Contrast the major forms of city government.
3. Evaluate the need for city planning and list some major municipal functions.
4. Outline the challenges that face suburbs and metropolitan areas.

▶ Key Terms

- **incorporation:** the process by which the State establishes a city as a legal body
- **charter:** a city's constitution
- **mayor-council government:** city government with an elected mayor as chief executive and an elected council as the legislative body
- **strong-mayor government:** city government where a mayor heads the city administration and has considerable authority
- **weak-mayor government:** city government where the mayor shares executive power and has less influence

▶ Key Terms, cont.

- **commission government:** city government where elected officials both run individual departments and act together as the city council
- **council-manager government:** city system where the city council hires a professional manager to be the city's chief administrator
- **zoning:** practice of setting aside areas of a city for specific uses, such as residential, commercial, or industrial
- **metropolitan areas:** cities and the areas around them

▶ Introduction

- How do city governments serve the needs of residents and other Americans?
 - Cities provide a wide range of public services to their residents.
 - Cities also plan for their own growth and development through zoning laws.
 - They do so by setting policies using various forms of city government to divide executive and legislative power.

▶ Incorporation and Charters

- Checkpoint: How are cities established?
 - Each State constitution sets out its own rules of incorporation.
 - This usually requires that a minimum number of people live within a given area and that they request to become a city.
 - Each city creates a charter that names the city, sets its boundaries, creates its legal identity, and describes its powers and the structure of its government.

▶ Mayor-Council Form

- The mayor-council government is the most common form of city government.
- It features a mayor as the **chief executive** and an elected council as the legislative body.
- Its disadvantages are that it requires a good mayor, can be stalled by a mayor-council dispute, and can be hard for citizens to understand.
- The **city council** usually has from five to nine members, each elected from a city district to a four-year term.

► Mayors

- Voters usually elect the mayor.
- Mayors preside at council meetings and recommend legislation.
- Mayor-council governments are often described as strong-mayor or weak-mayor.
- Richard Daley (right) served as mayor of Chicago from 1955 to 1976.



▶ Commission Form

- A commission government is a rare form of local government that has **between three and nine popularly elected commissioners**, each heading a different department of city government.
- One commissioner is chosen as mayor.
- It has three key weaknesses:
 - It lacks a chief executive
 - Each commissioner tends to protect the interests of their own departments
 - City government lacks coordination

▶ Council Manager Form

- The council manager form of city government has a **weak mayor chosen by voters, a strong elected council, and a professional manager named by the council.**
- The city council makes the policies that are then carried out by the manager.
- The manager can be dismissed by the council at any time.
- This system is widely used.
- It is simple, fairly transparent in operation, and relies on trained experts.

▶ Council Manager Form, cont.

- The city manager directs all city departments and has the power to hire and fire all city employees.
- The city manager also prepares the city budget.
- In practice the manager also influences the policies created by the city council.
- Critics dislike the fact that the chief executive—the manager—is not popularly elected.
- They also argue that this form lacks strong political leadership.

Alternate Forms of City Government

How does each form of government divide executive power?



▶ City Planning

- Early cities grew without any plan for development.
- Now most cities have formed planning agencies to correct past mistakes and guide future growth.
 - Most federal grant and loan programs require cities to have development plans.



▶ Zoning

- Checkpoint: What is the purpose of zoning?
 - Zoning ordinances set certain areas in cities aside for specific uses to aid in city planning.
 - Common zones are industrial, residential, and commercial.
 - Zoning laws also set limits on the size and type of buildings in an area.
 - Zoning laws can put limits on a person's use of their property, but must be reasonable in doing so.

▶ Municipal Functions

- Cities provide many different **public services** for their residents.
 - They offer police and fire protection.
 - They build and maintain streets, side-walks, libraries, bridges, hospitals, libraries, parks, schools, public housing projects, and so forth.
 - They also operate water, gas, electrical, sanitation, sewer, garbage collection, public health, and transportation systems.

▶ Suburbs

- The suburban boom began after World War II.
- Today, about half of all Americans live in suburbs.
- People moved to suburbs for more room, cheaper land, better schools, lower taxes, and less crime.
- Businesses and industries also followed this population shift.
- The move to the suburbs has taken financial and social resources away from city centers.

► Suburbs, cont.

Farms, Cities, Suburbs

How do different forms of settlement affect the responsibilities of local government?



1790

Nearly all Americans live on farms or in small towns.



1920

For the first time, more Americans live in cities than in the countryside.



Today

Suburbs are home to half of all Americans.

SOURCE: U.S. Census

▶ Metropolitan Areas

- As cities have grown, they have taken control of outlying areas.
- Some cities create special districts.
 - Oregon's Metro agency (right) handles transportation planning in and around the city of Portland.
- In some cases, counties have begun providing expanded services.



▶ Review

- Now that you have learned about how city governments serve the needs of residents and other Americans, go back and answer the Chapter Essential Question.
 - How local should government be?