

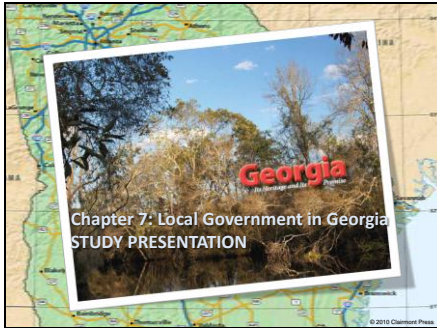
Georgia: Its Heritage and Its Promise

Chapter 7: Local Government in Georgia

QUICK NOTES

Name: _____

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Section 1: County Government

➤ Essential Question:

- What is the purpose of county government in the state of Georgia?




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Section 1: County Government

➤ What terms do I need to know?


- county
- county seat
- unincorporated area
- ordinance
- home rule
- regional commissions



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Origin of Georgia's Counties

- Georgia's Constitution of 1777 created the first eight counties of the state which lay along the coastal areas and the rivers.
- The earliest county structures in each **county** were a courthouse and a jail.
- Town with the courthouse became the **county seat**:
 - The site was important because people came there to pay taxes, record property deeds, and go to court.
 - It was the market center for trading, buying supplies, selling farm products, social gatherings, plus sharing news.

 Georgia has 159 counties – maximum number allowed by the Georgia Constitution.



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County Services

➤ County officials deal with basic state services and enforce state policies within county boundaries:

- conduct Georgia's elections and voter registration
- set up state courts and probate courts
- administer public assistance (welfare)
- build and maintain county roads
- collect motor vehicle taxes and issue car tags
- maintain property record;
- carry out county health departments disease-prevention measures (vaccines, flu shots)



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County Services

➤ County services are also provided to an **unincorporated area** (area of the county not included in any city boundary):

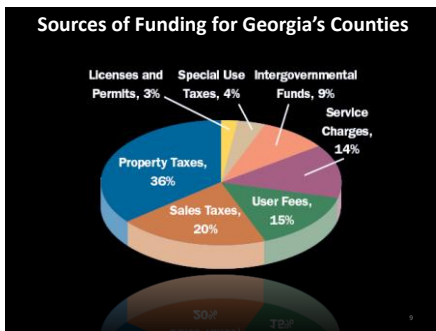
- may be rural areas, farmland, wetlands, mountains or populated with neighborhoods, etc.

➤ The Georgia Constitution gives county governments the authority to provide municipal services such as:

- police and fire protection
- public health facilities and services
- animal control
- sewage collection and disposal
- garbage collection
- water utilities
- parks, libraries
- public transportation
- terminal and dock facilities, etc.



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County Officials

➤ Positions to be filled by elected officials (as specified in the Georgia constitution) are called "**constitutional officers**" and are elected to four-year terms:

- sheriff
- judge of the probate court
- clerk of the superior court
- tax commissioner (combined in most counties with a tax receiver and a tax collector)



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Regional Commissions

- The Georgia Department of Community Affairs was created to help local governments:
 - provides technical and research assistance
 - is the state's key agency in housing finance and development, comprehensive planning, and solid waste reduction
- There are 12 regional commissions:
 - range in size from 10 – 18 counties
 - help local governments with services that otherwise would not be able to staff, e.g., draw up plans for the county's future growth, write grants for historic preservation, etc.




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Section 2: City Government and Special-Purpose Districts

- Essential Question:
 - Why are there different forms of local governments?




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Section 2: City Government and Special-Purpose Districts

- What terms do I need to know?
 - municipal corporation
 - incorporated
 - charter
 - strong mayor-council form
 - weak mayor-council form
 - council-manager form
 - consolidated government
 - special-purpose district
 - local independent authority
 - revenue bond




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Georgia's First Cities

- The correct legal term for **city** is **municipal corporation** or **municipality** which has been incorporated (created) by the **Georgia legislature**:
 - Unlike counties, cities are formed at the request of the people living in a particular geographic area.
 - People formally petition the legislature for a **charter** (a written document giving a city the authority and fundamental law to exist and function) to become incorporated.
- The area wanting to be incorporated as a city:
 - must have at least **200 residents**; and
 - at least **60%** of its area must be divided into **tracts** (parcels of land) for various uses, i.e., residential, commercial, governmental, etc.





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Municipal Services

➤ Since 1995, state law requires that municipal corporations provide at least three of the following services:

- law enforcement
- fire protection / fire safety
- road and street maintenance or construction
- solid waste management
- water supply and / or distribution
- wastewater collection and disposal
- electric or gas utility service
- code enforcement (building, housing, electrical, etc.)
- planning and zoning
- recreational facilities



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Municipal Government

➤ **Strong Mayor-Council Form**

- The elected mayor is the city's chief executive officer.
- His responsibilities include seeing that city's laws are carried out and that departments do their jobs.
- The mayor can appoint department heads and city staff, prepare the city's budget, and implement it once approved by city council.
- Atlanta and Macon have a strong mayor-council form of government.



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Municipal Government

➤ **Weak Mayor-Council Form**

- The elected city council has more power than the mayor (whose role is primarily ceremonial).
- The council enacts ordinances, sets policies, shares job of carrying out laws, and takes lead in developing city budget.
- The mayor might appoint department heads which must be confirmed by city council.
- Smyrna has this type of government.



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Municipal Government

➤ **Council-Manager Form**

- The city's residents elect a council that enacts city ordinances and sets its policies.
- The council hires a professional manager (usually a professional public administrator) who is responsible for day-to-day operations.
- The mayor may be elected citywide or selected by city council from among its members.
- Governments like this are Valdosta and Savannah.



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City-County Governments

- A **consolidated government** is one that has merged its county operations and governance with one or more cities in the county:
 - reduces costs by eliminating duplicated services
 - combines law enforcement personnel, fire protection, solid waste (garbage) collection, land use planning, and zoning functions
- Columbus-Muscogee County was the state's first to consolidate (1970).

Note: Only 40 of the counties in the U.S. have consolidated governments – 7 are in Georgia.




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Special-Purpose Districts

- A **special-purpose district** is a “mini-government” set up for a particular purpose or a particular service area.
- School districts are the most common form of special-purpose districts:
 - 159 county school systems and 21 independent city school systems exist in Georgia
 - locally elected boards of education govern them
 - property taxes are collected for their operation




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Special-Purpose Districts

- **Local independent authorities** generate their own financing through revenue bonds.
- **Central business improvement district** (CBID – established to redevelop or improve a central business district):
 - Property taxes are imposed on commercial landowners in the district.
 - Revenue is used to make improvements (e.g., street lighting, landscaping) which attract new businesses.



Additional Notes:

