Local Government and Citizenship

Chapter Preview

Character education word:
Citizenship

Terms: county, board of commissioners, county seat, municipality, mayor-council form, figurehead, council-manager form, commission form, special-purpose district, ad valorem taxes, user fee, general local option sales tax, special purpose local option sales tax, bond issue, urban area, rural area, metropolitan area, urban sprawl, political party, interest group, lobbyist, general election, citizenship, naturalized citizen

Places: Camden County, Woodbine, Fulton County, St. Marys

Local governments are the most numerous of all governments in the United States. Georgia has 159 counties, and each of these counties has a government. In addition to the counties, there are almost six hundred cities in Georgia. Each of them has a government. Finally, there are special district governments with legal powers and jurisdictions.

Not only are local governments the most numerous, they are also the closest to the people and the most likely to affect people directly. Local governments get their powers and their right to exist from the Georgia state constitution. In this chapter, you will examine the different types of local government in Georgia.

Below: Thomas County was created in 1825 from portions of Decatur and Irwin counties. The county and its county seat, Thomasville, were named for a hero of the War of 1812, General Jett Thomas. The courthouse was built in 1858.

Signs of the Times

Population: Fulton County is the largest county, with a population of over 816,000 citizens in 2000. The least populous county in 2000 was Taliaferro, with a population of just over 2,000. The largest city is Atlanta, followed by Augusta, Columbus, Savannah, and Athens.

Life Expectancy: 74.9 years

Literature: Georgia writers include Eliot Wigginton of Raburn County, author of the *Foxfire* series. Joyce Blackburn of Glynn County has written biographies and children's books. Lewis Grizzard of Moreland wrote humorous books and newspaper columns. Atlantan Celestine Sibley has written newspaper columns and books, including *Christmas in Georgia*. Pat Conroy of Atlanta is known for such books as *The Prince of Tides, The Lords of Discipline,* and *The Great Santini*.

Cost of Living: Highest in Metropolitan Atlanta, where the average per capita income is $36,000; the lowest is in southwest Georgia, where the average per capita income is $22,393.

Education: Georgia has 180 local school systems, 159 are countywide systems and 21 are city school systems. There are 1,999 schools listed by the State Department of Education: 361 high schools, 406 middle schools, 1,224 elementary schools, and 8 K-12 schools.

Art/Architecture: Georgia's county governments are located in some famous and historic old courthouses. The Chattahoochee County Courthouse, built in 1854, is the only wood-frame courthouse left in Georgia. The Clay County Courthouse in Fort Gaines was built in 1873 and is a Greek Revival building made of red brick. The Randolph County Courthouse in Cuthbert was built in 1887 and is in Queen Anne style. Georgia has a Historic Courthouse Tour on famous courthouses located on Highway 27.

Music: Athens claims to be "Live Music Central." *Rolling Stone* magazine named the city as the #1 College Music Scene in America. The city is home to ten recording studios, a number of independent record labels, and major bands and musical groups including the B-52's, Pylon, REM, and Widespread Panic.

Fads/Fashions: To save money, there is a move to consolidate county and city services. In some cases, county and city governments have merged. In other cases, counties and cities have agreed to merge selected services, such as fire protection.

Leisure Time: Today, the consumer-citizen allocates less time for leisure activities and spends much of that time with family-oriented events rather than individual pursuits.

Transportation: Georgia has over 113,000 miles of federal, state, and local roads. Nine Welcome Centers to greet visitors to our state are located along the five major interstate highways.

Science/Inventions: Electronic voting systems have replaced most older voting systems. Computerized state and regional records have made data available even to previously remote areas. The Internet facilitates access to information, services, goods, and products for Georgians in every community.

Figure 75 Timeline, 1733–1945

1733
Savannah founded by James Oglethorpe

1777
Georgia constitution provided for 8 counties

1837
Atlanta founded

1854
Conyers incorporated

1924
Georgia's youngest county, Peach County, formed

1932
Milton, Campbell, and Fulton merged into Fulton County

1943
Warner Robins incorporated

1945
Legislature set a limit of 159 counties for state

1750   1800   1850   1900   1950

1841
Dallas, Texas, originally settled

1858
Denver, Colorado, established

1870
Miami, Florida, founded

1881
Long Beach, California, laid out and settled

1890
Oklahoma City incorporated

County Government

Counties are subdivisions of the state set up to carry out certain governmental functions. The state constitution sets out county powers. The state constitution also requires that all county governments be uniform (organized the same way). However, the General Assembly may, in any county, establish commissioners of roads and revenues, consolidate the offices of tax receiver and tax collector into the office of tax commissioner, and abolish the office of treasurer. Most county governments are headed by elected boards of commissioners. Because all county governments are similar, the governmental structure of one county, Camden County, can serve to show how a county operates.

A Look at One County

Camden County is located in southeast Georgia on the coast. It has about 45,000 residents. The major employer is Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base, which is the home of the Atlantic Trident nuclear submarine fleet and which employs about 6,700 people. The original industries that marked Camden's growth were pulp and naval stores industries, shipping, fishing, and paper mills. The last paper mill in Camden County closed in 2002, leaving tour-

Below: At the entrance to the Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base is an exhibit that features the sail (conning tower) of the decommissioned submarine U.S.S. *George Bancroft*. The exhibit was dedicated in 2000.

ism, the naval base, and service industries that support the base as the major elements of the local economy.

The Spanish first settled the area in the 1500s. Camden was one of the first eight counties established by the Georgia state constitution on February 5, 1777. It was formed from St. Mary's and St. Thomas parishes. Camden County was named for the Earl of Camden, Charles Pratt, chief justice and lord chancellor of England, who had opposed the overly strict attitude of the British government toward the American colonies.

Did You Know?

Harris County was the **first** county to have a board of **county commissioners**. It was formed in **1868**.

Figure 76 Camden County Services

The various services provided to the citizens of Camden County are typical of those provided by most of Georgia's county governments.

Animal Control Services: Collects stray animals, operates humane society, responds to dangerous animal threats, maintains animal disease-prevention and data collection programs, enforces animal protection and control ordinances.

Bryan Lang Library and Camden Public Library: Operates historical archives, county library, and public library for county residents.

Building and Planning Services: Regulates county building and zoning ordinances, issues building permits, and monitors flood plain regulations.

Children's and Family Services: Provides child support, child protection service, day care service, and administers Department of Family and Children's Services assistance programs.

Coroner: Provides death certificates, investigates suspicious deaths, and performs autopsies.

Court Services: Operates Department of Juvenile Justice, Juvenile Probation Office, District Attorney's Office, Magistrate Court, Probate Court, and Superior Court.

Emergency Services: Provides fire departments, emergency medical assistance technicians, ambulance services, and 911 emergency assistance program.

Environmental Health Services: Regulates wells and septic tanks, licenses and inspects food services establishments, monitors rabies and rabies-prevention programs, regulates travel and tourist accommodations, and monitors public swimming pools.

Health Department, Mental Health Department: Provides health services, child care programs, immunization and disease prevention programs, elderly assistance programs, and new mother assistance programs.

Parks and Recreation Services: Provides and maintains system of countywide parks and recreational areas and sponsors and monitors organized public sports and recreational programs.

Road Department: Responsible for roads, bridges, drainage maintenance, and right-of-way maintenance.

Sheriff's Department: Responsible for law enforcement, jail operations and maintenance, and legal services for court system.

Tax Assessor: Establishes appraisals for property values.

Tax Commissioner: Collects taxes and sells tags and licenses.

Waste Services: Operates yard waste facility and solid waste landfills.

Camden's county government consists of a five-member board of commissioners. The commissioners are elected by the voters for four-year, staggered terms. The board of commissioners has the authority to establish county policies, adopt county ordinances (laws), establish the county budget, establish tax rates, and provide services for the citizens of the county. A *county administrator*, appointed by the board of commissioners, serves as the chief administrative officer. The county administrator manages the day-to-day operations of the county and implements county policies.

Camden County includes three sizable cities—Woodbine, the county seat (the city or town where the county government is located), St. Marys, and Kingsland. The county and cities work together on some services for residents including parks and recreation programs and a business development and tourism authority.

The county's schools are managed by an elected five-member board of education and an elected school superintendent. The school district includes fifteen public schools that serve a student population of over 10,000 children.

Sharing Services

Some cities and counties cooperate in sharing services. Fulton County is the most populous county in Georgia and the center of Georgia's state government. It was originally created in 1853 by the Georgia General Assembly. Fulton County was enlarged in 1931 when Milton and Campbell counties merged with it. Fulton County covers 523 square miles; Atlanta occupies about 117 square miles, or 22 percent, of the county. Nine other incorporated cities are also located within Fulton County: Alpharetta, College Park, East Point, Fairburn, Hapeville, Mountain Park, Palmetto, Roswell, and Union City.

Fulton County's board of commissioners consists of seven members elected to four-year terms. Four commissioners are elected from geographic districts, and three are elected from the county at large. The Fulton County board of commissioners appoints a county manager as its chief executive officer. The county manager's chief function is to carry out policies set by the county commission. With the commission's approval, the county manager appoints all department heads except those who are elected or whose appointments are specifically provided for in the law.

Through contract agreements, the county provides financial support to shared ventures, such as the Fulton-DeKalb Hospital Authority, which operates Grady Memorial Hospital. Property zoning is a joint function of the county and Atlanta. Library services to residents of Fulton County are provided by Atlanta in a contract between the two governments.

The school system for the county, including all nine incorporated areas outside the Atlanta city limits, is operated by the Fulton County Board of Education, which is elected by the voters and which appoints a superintendent of schools. The elected Atlanta Board of Education appoints a superintendent of schools for the city.

Officials in County Government

Based on its population, each county has a different number of officials. Most counties have at least the following elected officials: commissioners, clerk of the superior court, judge of the probate court, tax commissioner, sheriff, and coroner.

Most county officials are appointed rather than elected. Examples of some appointed county officials include: county clerks, attorneys, tax assessors, emergency management services directors, fire chiefs, planning and building inspectors, registrars, roads supervisors, animal control officers, surveyors, and environmentalists.

Figure 77   Georgia's Ten Most Populous Counties, 2000

1. Fulton County
2. DeKalb County
3. Cobb County
4. Gwinnett County
5. Clayton County
6. Chatham County
7. Richmond County
8. Muscogee County
9. Bibb County
10. Cherokee County

It's Your Turn

1. What is the maximum number of counties allowed in Georgia by law?
2. How many counties were established in Georgia by the state's first constitution?
3. Name at least six services counties provide for Georgia's citizens.

Spotlight on the Economy

Levels of Taxes

The services that county governments and municipalities provide to citizens must be paid for, and the major source of revenue for local governments is taxes. In 2001, for example, Georgia's county governments collectively raised revenue totaling $5.7 billion. Georgia's municipal governments collectively raised revenues of just over $4.5 billion. The three consolidated county and city governments in that same year raised revenues of $625 million. Where did these local governments get this money?

The major source of revenue for local governments is taxes. In 2001, Georgia's counties collected about 36 percent of their revenues from property taxes, while the state's municipalities collected about 10 percent of their revenues from property taxes. There are basically three types of property taxes:

● Real property taxes on immovable property (real estate) such as land and buildings,
● Personal property taxes on movable items such as automobiles, boats, business machinery, and warehoused merchandise, and
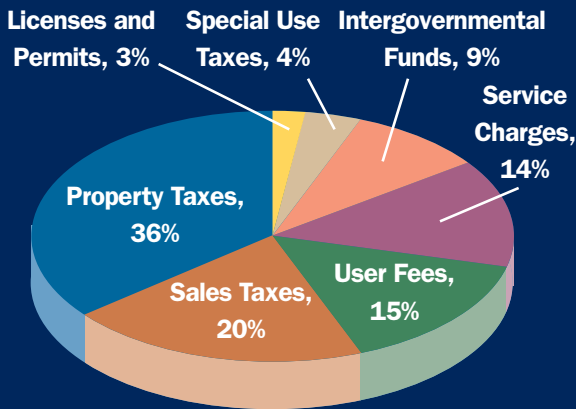● Intangible property taxes on such items as stocks and bonds.

According to Georgia law, property taxes may be charged on 40 percent of an item's *fair market value*, or what the item would be expected to bring if sold. This taxable amount is called an **assessment**.

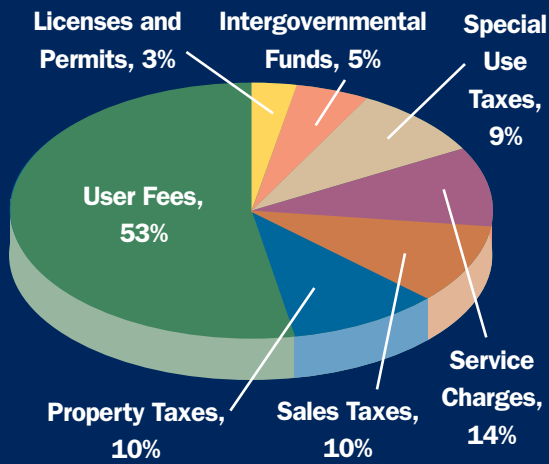**Below:** What do you suppose the fair market value of this home in Madison is?
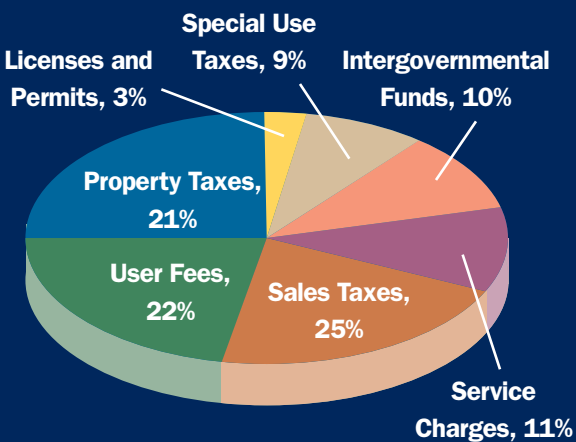
Figure 78
Sources of Revenue for Local Government

County Governments

Licenses and Permits, 3%
Special Use Taxes, 4%
Intergovernmental Funds, 9%
Service Charges, 14%
Property Taxes, 36%
User Fees, 15%
Sales Taxes, 20%

Municipal Governments

Licenses and Permits, 3%
Intergovernmental Funds, 5%
Special Use Taxes, 9%
User Fees, 53%
Service Charges, 14%
Property Taxes, 10%
Sales Taxes, 10%

Consolidated Governments

Special Use Taxes, 9%
Licenses and Permits, 3%
Intergovernmental Funds, 10%
Property Taxes, 21%
User Fees, 22%
Sales Taxes, 25%
Service Charges, 11%

Above: These shoppers at Atlanta's Lenox Square will pay a sales tax on any of their purchases.

The sales tax is another source of funds for local governments. Sales taxes are placed on the sale, rental, and storage of goods and services. The state sets a base sales tax. Each county can add to that base rate by a general local option sales tax. Anytime you go to the store and purchase an item, you pay the state sales tax and the local sales taxes. In 2001, Georgia's counties took in about 20 percent of their total revenues, or $1.1 billion, from sales taxes. Georgia's municipalities received $458 million, or about 10 percent of their total revenues, from sales taxes.

Another source of tax revenue for local governments is the special use tax. One special use tax is on alcoholic beverages. Franchise taxes are imposed on utility companies (telephone, cable television, electricity, and gas companies) for the privilege of doing business in the state (having a franchise). Local governments collect insurance premium taxes on life, health, and accident insurance policies that Georgia citizens have. The taxes, collected by the state insurance commissioner, are sent back to the local counties where the citizens owning the policies reside. Hotel and motel taxes are paid by visitors traveling in an area and using local motels or hotels. Finally, local governments may collect occupational taxes on such businesses as builders and construction companies or plumbers.

Altogether, these special use taxes add up. In 2001, they accounted for 4 percent of the total revenues for counties and for 9 percent of the total revenues for municipalities.

Local governments also gain monies from user fees, licenses, and permits. In addition, local governments receive funds from federal and state governments through a variety of grants and funding programs.

City Government and Special-Purpose Districts

A city with its own government is called a **municipality**. Georgia's first city was Savannah, which was founded by James Oglethorpe in 1733. Augusta was the state's second city. Because of its Spanish ancestry, St. Marys claims to be the second oldest city in the United States after St. Augustine. There appears to be much pride and considerable dissent involved in the arguments over who was first.
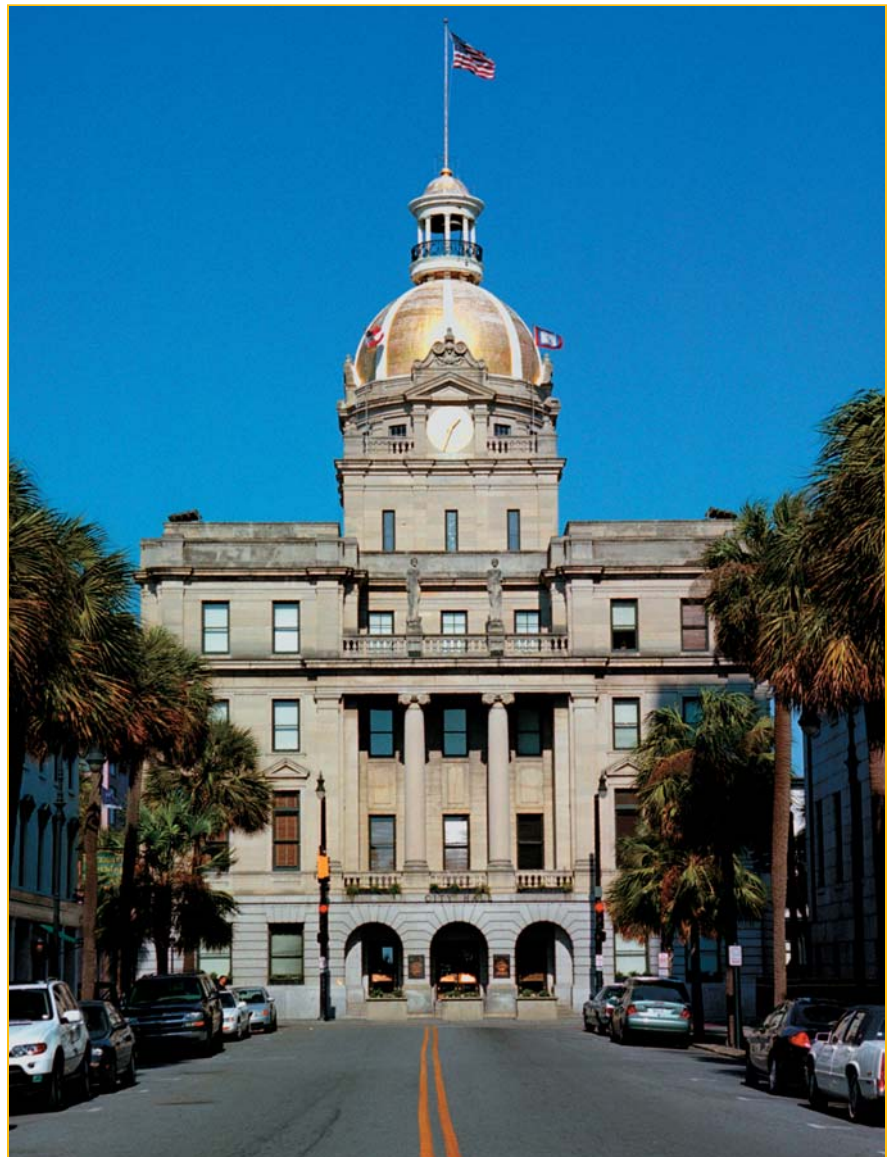
Figure 79
Georgia's Ten Largest Cities, 2000

1. Atlanta
2. Augusta
3. Columbus
4. Savannah
5. Athens
6. Macon
7. Roswell
8. Albany
9. Marietta
10. Warner Robins

Right: Savannah's City Hall is on Yamacraw Bluff overlooking the Savannah River.

Maynard Jackson

To the sounds of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra and Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" and the voice of famous soprano Mattiwilda Dobbs, Maynard Holbrook Jackson was sworn in as Atlanta's youngest and first African American mayor in January 1974. His swearing-in ceremony had to be held in the Atlanta Civic Center because the traditional site, City Hall, was not large enough for the thousands of Atlantans who were celebrating his election. On June 28, 2003, at that same civic center, Atlantans were joined by thousands from around the nation to say goodbye to Maynard Jackson. Who was Maynard Jackson, and what made his tenure as major of Georgia's largest city so special?

As a child, Jackson was very smart. He earned a B.A. degree in political science and history from Morehouse College at age 18. He graduated from North Carolina Central University Law School in 1964. He worked as an attorney in Atlanta until he entered politics and was elected mayor of Atlanta in 1973.

Called by many the "ultimate mayor," Jackson created "neighborhood planning units" to give local community citizens a voice in city politics. He tackled charges of police brutality and made changes in the organization and administration of the police and fire departments and city government. He led the development and expansion of MARTA. He expanded Hartsfield International Airport into one of the largest, busiest airports in the world, and he used airport construction to develop a minority participation plan that served as a model for governments throughout the nation. He put into action a belief that expanding economic opportunity for more people increased the prosperity of all people.

Jackson was a lifelong supporter of the arts. He established a Bureau of Cultural Affairs in 1975 and provided financial support to arts programs throughout the community. He used community development funds to hire artists

Above: Maynard Jackson, Atlanta's first black mayor.

and to found the Atlanta Contemporary Art Center, IMAGE, and Art Papers. He also had funds set aside in each construction project for works of art. In this way, MARTA stations, Hartsfield Airport, and City Hall became noted for their arts displays. He pushed for funds to restore the historic Cyclorama because it was such an important artistic representation of the city's history.

As one of his final legacies to Atlanta, Jackson led the efforts to secure Atlanta's selection as the host city for the 1996 Olympic Summer Games. His speech to the Olympic Committee, delivered in large part in fluent French, spoke eloquently of Atlanta's great record for racial diversity and humanitarianism. The committee recognized that record by awarding the games to Atlanta.

Maynard Holbrook Jackson died in 2003. In recognition of his many achievements, Atlanta's airport was renamed Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport.
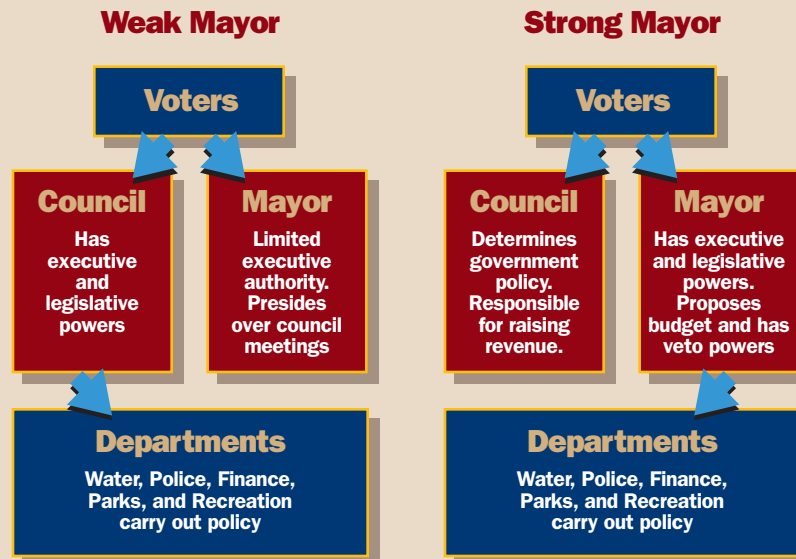
Figure 80
Mayor-Council Forms of Government

Weak Mayor

Voters

Council
Has executive and legislative powers

Mayor
Limited executive authority. Presides over council meetings

Departments
Water, Police, Finance, Parks, and Recreation carry out policy

Strong Mayor

Voters

Council
Determines government policy. Responsible for raising revenue.

Mayor
Has executive and legislative powers. Proposes budget and has veto powers

Departments
Water, Police, Finance, Parks, and Recreation carry out policy

Figure 81
City Commission Form of Government

Voters

Commissioners
Make laws and serve as heads of city departments to carry out policy

Health

Finance

Water

Police

Parks and Recreation

A city exists as a political unit when it receives a charter from the state legislature. To be chartered as a city, an area must meet three requirements: (1) It must have at least 200 residents; (2) It must be located at least three miles from the boundaries of the nearest city; and (3) It must have 60 percent of its land divided into *tracts* (parcels of land) or being used for residential, business, industrial, institutional, or government purposes.

A city government can do only what it charter authorizes it to do. For example, most city charters allow cities to provide police protection, license businesses, maintain streets and sidewalks, control traffic, and provide water and sewerage services. Other services to the citizens may be provided if they are included specifically in a city's charter. For example, Atlanta and twenty other cities in the state operate their own school systems because that power was granted by the state in their charters.

Forms of City Government

The most common forms of city government are the mayor-council form, the council-manager form, and the commission form.

In the **mayor-council form** of government, the elected city council is responsible for making the laws. An elected mayor acts as the city's chief executive officer and is responsible for seeing that the laws are carried out and that city agencies do their jobs. The mayor may be either "weak" or "strong." In a *weak-mayor system*, the city council has both legislative and executive powers. The mayor has limited powers, appoints few city officials, and has little veto power. The mayor is primarily a **figurehead** (a person who is the head of an organization but who has no powers) who presides over council meetings and performs other ceremonial duties. Smyrna has a weak-mayor system. In the *strong-mayor system*, the mayor is a strong leader who proposes legislation, prepares the budget, appoints all department heads, and has veto power. Atlanta has a strong-mayor system.

In the **council-manager form** of government, the voters elect a city council that establishes laws and policies. There is a mayor who may be elected or named by the council. The council hires a city manager who is responsible for the day-to-day operation of the city. The city manager ap-

points the heads of city governments and sees that they carry out their jobs. Savannah has a council-manager form of government.

In cities with a commission form of government, the voters elect commissioners. Each commissioner is the head of a department within the city government, such as finance, streets, public safety, and so on. The mayor is elected by the commissioners from among themselves. Decatur has a commission form of government.
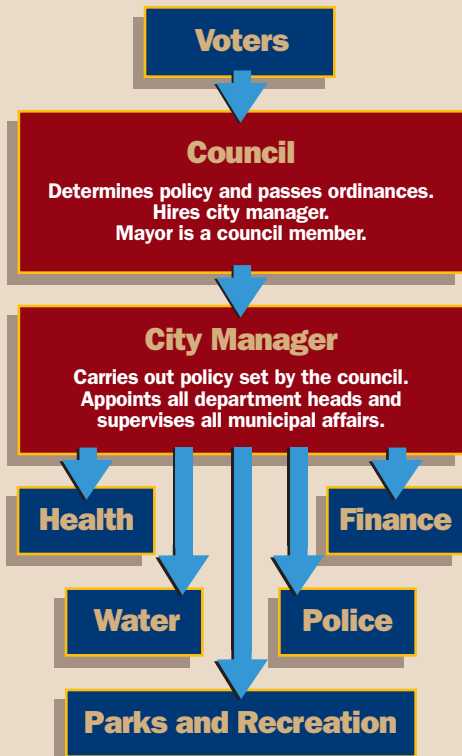
City-County Government

Some counties provide services outside of incorporated municipalities for things such as water, sewage, sanitation, and fire protection. As long as city and county governments provide different types of services in the same area, they do not get in each other's way. However, as a county becomes more urban, city and county governments may provide the same services to the same people.

One way to avoid this duplication is for city and county governments to form a single government. Several such mergers have taken place. For example, the city of Columbus and Muscogee County merged in 1971, and Athens and Clarke County formed a single government unit in 1991. Augusta and Richmond County merged in 1995, becoming the third consolidated government in Georgia.

Special-Purpose Districts

There are a number of special-purpose districts in Georgia. Generally, a special-purpose district is created for a single job or single group of tasks. Most such districts govern themselves. A school system is one example of a special district. State law requires children to attend school, but much of the control of that school is

Figure 82
Council-Manager Form of Government

Voters

↓

Council
Determines policy and passes ordinances.
Hires city manager.
Mayor is a council member.

↓

City Manager
Carries out policy set by the council.
Appoints all department heads and supervises all municipal affairs.

Health · **Water** · **Parks and Recreation** · **Police** · **Finance**

Did You Know?

Georgia has many small municipalities, five of which have less than 100 residents: Aldora, 98; Ranger, 85; Riverside, 57; Talking Rock, 49; and Edgehill, 30.

Left: The Athens-Clarke County City Hall houses the mayor's office and a variety of city-county government offices.

left up to a local board of education and the school district office. Within the guidelines set by state law, local school systems can establish starting and stopping times for the school day, spell out standards of behavior and punishment, determine dress codes, and schedule students' time during the school day.

Within the metropolitan area of Atlanta, the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) is another special-purpose district. MARTA runs a bus and rail system, determines the cost of fares, selects routes, and schedules public transportation times. The Public Housing Authority is a special-purpose district. It provides services such as determining the location of public housing, constructing and maintaining the buildings, renting the units, and drawing up tenants' rules and regulations.

Other special-purpose districts include community fire departments, parks and recreation authorities, and airport and port authorities. No matter what individual special-purpose districts are called, they all have one thing in common: they exist to provide for the public's welfare.

Funding Local Government

Local governments obtain money to provide services for their citizens from a variety of sources, including state and federal grants. However, the major source of funds comes from local property taxes, which are called **ad valorem taxes**. Property taxes are paid to local governments based on the value of the piece of *real property* (land, buildings or homes) or *personal property* (motor vehicles, boats, trailers, airplanes, mobile homes).

User fees paid by citizens are another source of funds for local governments. These fees might be for such services as garbage collection, recycling and waste disposal, water and sewerage, parking, and use of libraries and recreational facilities.

Two major types of sales taxes also provide funds for local government operations. A **general local option sales tax** is a countywide sales tax that is added onto and collected at the same time as the required state sales taxes. Counties can also approve **special purpose local option sales taxes** (SPLOST), which voters have agreed to support over a five-year period in order to finance specific local improvement projects such as public facilities, roads, and bridges. The SPLOST monies are divided between the county and the cities within that county.

Voters can also approve **bond issues**, in which some level of government asks permission to raise money for a public project. For example, some schools, libraries, and hospitals have been built with public money approved by the voters on a bond issue. The money raised from bond issues must be repaid, with interest.

Above: Special-purpose districts, such as school systems, get most of their funding from local property taxes. Those taxes pay for such expenditures as teacher salaries and school buses.

Did You Know?

The **property tax** rate is expressed in *mills*. One mill produces **$1** for each **$1,000** of property **value**.

It's Your Turn

1. What are the three major types of city government?
2. Who can charter a city?
3. What are ad valorem taxes?
4. What is SPLOST?

Where Do Georgia's Citizens Live?

Georgia is one of the nation's fastest-growing states. Between 1990 and 2000, Georgia's population grew by over 26 percent, twice the rate for the United States as a whole. Georgia's population is estimated to be about 10 million people in 2010.

Georgia's Hispanic population quadrupled between 1990 and 2000, growing from 108,9000 to 435,200. You can see this in the growing number of multicultural restaurants and businesses and a rapid increase in Hispanic-language newspapers and magazine publications.

The number of Georgia citizens over sixty-five is growing twice as fast as the number of people under sixty-five. Georgians are living longer, and more people are retiring to the state from colder sections of the country.

Georgia's people live in urban areas and in rural areas. An **urban area** is a city with a population over 2,500 or a city and its surrounding area with over 50,000 residents. A **rural area** is a town or community of less than 2,500 people. Today, over two-thirds of all Georgians live in a **metropolitan area**, a central city of over 50,000 residents or a city and its surrounding counties with a total population of 100,000 or more.

Today, just over 50 percent of Georgians live in the Atlanta metropolitan area, and over 70 percent of the state's total population live in urban areas. This is in sharp contrast to fifty years ago when the majority of the state's citizens (almost 70 percent) lived in rural areas. At that time, Georgia was mainly an agricultural state. However, in the latter half of the twentieth century, agriculture began to decline and business and industry began to expand. Many Georgians moved from rural areas to the cities, where most businesses and industries were headquartered and where jobs were plentiful.
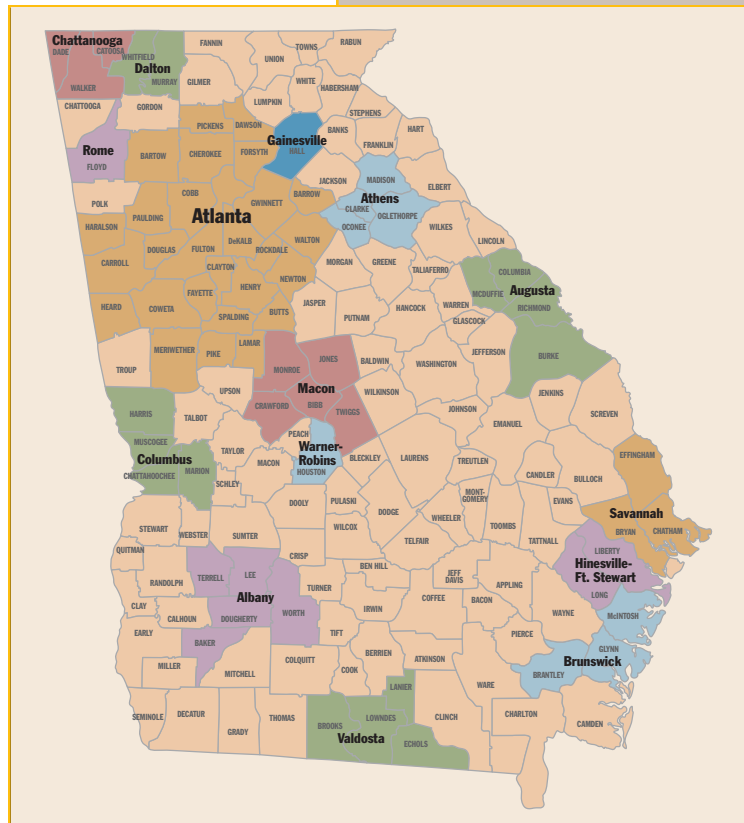
Urban Sprawl

In the 1960s and 1970s, another population trend began in Georgia. People began moving out of the inner cities and into the suburbs. The growth of the suburbs was followed by an expansion of businesses to the suburban areas.

Section Preview

As you read, look for:
• **how Georgia's population has changed,**
• **the growth of cities and suburban areas, and**
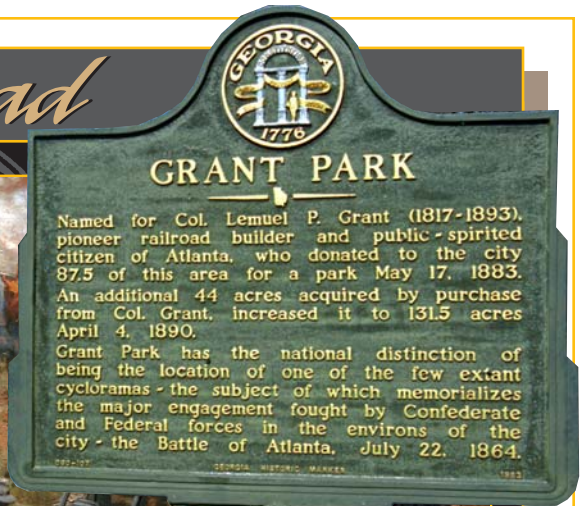• **vocabulary terms:** urban area, rural area, metropolitan area, and urban sprawl.

Map 54
Georgia's Metropolitan Areas

Map Skill: How many counties are considered part of the Atlanta metropolitan area?

By the Side of the Road

One of Atlanta's major tourist attractions is Grant Park, the city's largest park. The park is home to Lemuel Grant's antebellum home and the fortifications of Confederate Fort Walker. It is perhaps best know for the world's largest cyclorama, a big circular painting of the Battle of Atlanta. The painting revolves around the audience, with sound and light effects and a narrative about the highlights of the painting. Visiting Grant Park is a must for Georgia students interested in our state's history.

One of the major roles of city and county governments is providing parks, leisure opportunities, and recreational activities for local citizens. The citizens of Atlanta did just that with Grant Park in 1883 and it remains a thriving park, zoo, and historic site attracting visitors and residents alike.

GRANT PARK

Named for Col. Lemuel P. Grant (1817-1893), pioneer railroad builder and public-spirited citizen of Atlanta, who donated to the city 87.5 of this area for a park May 17, 1883. An additional 44 acres acquired by purchase from Col. Grant, increased it to 131.5 acres April 4, 1890.

Grant Park has the national distinction of being the location of one of the few extant cycloramas - the subject of which memorializes the major engagement fought by Confederate and Federal forces in the environs of the city - the Battle of Atlanta, July 22, 1864.

Above: *The Battle of Atlanta* depicts the intense battle that took place in the vicinity of the Troup-Hurt House.

In many parts of the state, inner cities have lost population and industry while the neighboring suburban areas have flourished.

This population shift has led to a problem generally known as **urban sprawl**. Because city planning laws and building codes and guidelines do not apply in suburban areas, the growth of the suburbs is generally unplanned and uncoordinated. Often the infrastructure does not exist to support rapid growth. Georgians leaving cities and moving into suburban areas need sewer systems, water systems, garbage collection services, streets and highways, bridges and other infrastructure. Local, state, and federal funds have to be spent to build that infrastructure. Often, adequate support systems do not come until after people have already moved into suburban areas.

Another problem resulting from urban sprawl is the economic hardship cities undergo. When people move out of the city to suburban areas, businesses leave to follow their customers. The residents and businesses and industries that move out take their property taxes with them, leaving a city with a declining tax base. However, many of the residents who move out of cities still travel to and from the city for work. They still need the infrastructure of the city, but they no longer pay city property taxes that maintain that infrastructure.

The millions of cars commuting to and from work daily create another major problem. Not only must new highways, perimeter roads, and bridges be built because of urban sprawl, but those same highways create massive traffic flow,

traffic jams, and air pollution. State, regional, and federal officials have worked to reduce the numbers of commuter cars on highways by encouraging the use of public transportation services and car-pooling by commuters.

Urban Revitalization

As the tax base in cities decreases, the power of cities also declines. In many cases, political power (based on numbers of voters) belongs to the highly populated suburban areas. Cities are left with little money, little political power, and fewer jobs for those residents who would not or could not move out. Once-thriving parts of central cities are abandoned after the workday ends and left open for decay and crime.

Georgia's cities have been working to revitalize downtown and other areas. One successful venture has been to focus on tourism by building convention centers and attracting millions of tourists. Some cities have renovated historic areas and encouraged suburban dwellers to return to the city in restored neighborhoods such as Atlanta's Virginia Highlands, Little Five Points, and "Sweet Auburn" areas. Cities have renovated decaying business areas to attract new tenants. Savannah, for example, revived its historic waterfront by renovating the warehouses along Bay Street and Factor's Walk and by building new convention facilities along the waterfront.

Augusta has made "Riverwalk Augusta" the center of its restored downtown. The old river levee along the Savannah River has been converted to a brick esplanade with seating overlooking the river. The area is active day and night with playground and picnic areas, historical displays, major hotels, shops, and restaurants. The new Augusta Museum of History is a part of the Riverwalk area, along with the National Science Center's Fort Discovery and the Morris Museum of Art. As an attraction, the city commissioned replicas of a canal cargo boat to tour the Augusta Canal. The boats were built on Tybee Island.

Top: In northeast Atlanta lies the Virginia Highlands neighborhood. Many of the buildings and homes have been renovated, and the area now attracts many diners.
Above: The Riverwalk in Augusta is a popular destination for those looking to relax and enjoy the view of the Savannah River.

It's Your Turn

1. What are the fastest-growing segments of Georgia's population?
2. What do you think happens to a state when the population continues to diversify or change?
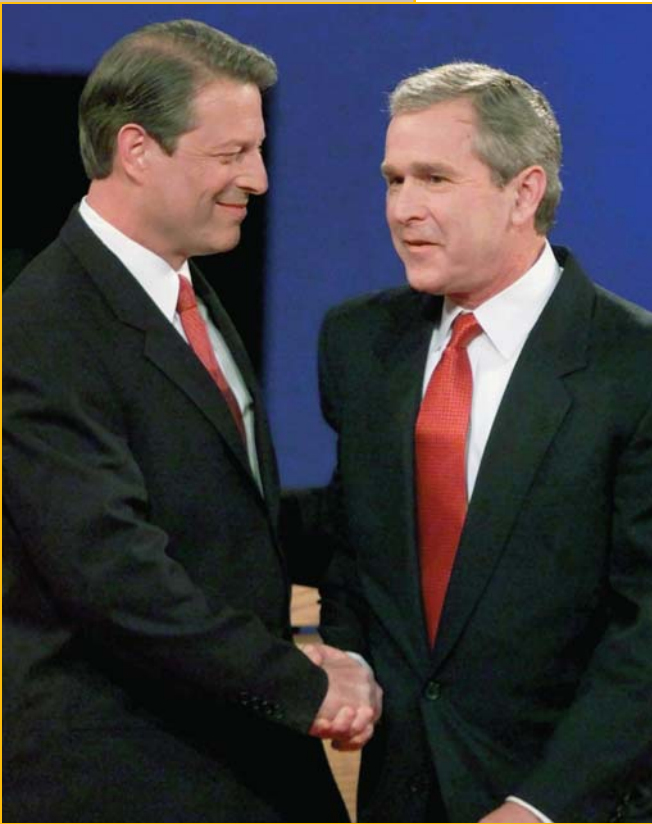3. What is urban sprawl and how have cities combated the loss of residents and businesses?

Participation in a Representative Democracy

In Chapter 14, you learned that we live in a representative democracy. Who, or what, influences decision-making in the federal, state, and local governments of the United States? Obviously, you do! But major influences can be explained by considering four factors: (1) political parties, (2) interest groups, (3) voters, and (4) public opinion.

Political Parties

Political parties are organized groups of people who share common ideals and who seek to influence government policies and decisions by electing members of their party to government offices. The first political parties in the country were the Federalists and the Antifederalists who fought over the powers of a central government as the Constitution was being written and ratified. These two groups evolved into two political groups known as the Federalists and the Democratic-Republicans. While these early political parties have changed over the years, we have maintained a two-party system.

Today, America has two major political parties—the Republican party and the Democratic party. Members of these groups share common beliefs about government's role in American life and the policies that government should support. People who are not members of these two major parties are usually referred to as *independents*.

There are minor political parties that do not have enough members to win major elections, but who do have an important role in the democratic process. Minor parties bring attention to specific minority ideas. As minor parties gather political support from more people, their ideas influence the thinking and the principles of party leaders in the two major political groups.

Interest Groups

Interest groups are people who share common goals and objectives and who band together to influence government policies on issues related to their goals and objectives. Unlike political parties, interest groups do not typically exist to elect their representatives to government positions; instead, they

Above: Democrat Al Gore (left) and Republican George W. Bush shake hands before the first televised debate of the 2000 presidential election.

The Art of Politics

Cartoonist Thomas Nast developed the symbols for both the Republican and the Democratic parties. In 1874, Nast drew an elephant (above) to symbolize the size of the Republican party. Nast first drew the donkey in an 1870 cartoon. In the 1873 cartoon on the right, Democratic congressmen are shown as donkeys blowing inflation bubbles after the Panic of 1873.

try to influence office holders to act in a certain way when their particular issues arise.

There are many different types of interest groups. These interest groups may be concerned with economic issues, labor issues, agricultural issues, and particular professional issues.

Interest groups use basic persuasive tactics to influence government decision-making. They have **lobbyists**, people who are paid to represent them in Washington or Atlanta and to keep pressure on government officials to favor their interest group. Interest groups make contributions to political campaigns in hopes of gaining favor when legislation related to their interests is involved. They may endorse (support) particular candidates for office when those candidates favor the interests of their group.

On the Road Again

Lyndon House Arts Center

As you travel throughout the state, one "must stop" is the Lyndon House Arts Center at the end of Jackson Street in Athens. The house was originally known as the Ware-Lyndon House and has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1976. The two-story home was built by local physician Dr. Edward R. Ware in 1850. It was purchased in 1880 by Dr. Edward S. Lyndon.

During World War II, the Lyndon House was used as a USO site. The city of Athens purchased by the house 1939 and used it as a park and recreation center for young people. Today the mission of Lyndon House is to support local artists and provide community education in the arts.

The Lyndon House Art Center offers classes as well as equipment, studio space and workshops, community art activities, and art education services. Each year, the Lyndon House holds a juried show (a professional art competition) featuring works in diverse media. It also has a gallery season featuring local artists. A stop by the Lyndon House is time well spent when you are visiting Athens.

Voters

The major influence on government decision-making is made at the polls on election day by people who vote. Voters in our democratic form of government elect representatives to political office and decide major questions and issues.

To register to vote in Georgia, a person must be at least eighteen years old and a citizen of the United States. An individual must also be a legal resident of Georgia and the county in which he or she registers.

Voting in national, state, and local elections takes place according to the Georgia Election Code. As the chief election official, the secretary of state makes sure candidates meet the qualifications to run for office. This official also schedules elections, prints ballots, and provides all election materials to Georgia's counties. After an election, the secretary of state checks the results in each county and publishes them.

A **general election** is held in November in at least every even-numbered year. This is when major federal and state officials are selected. Other elections are held as needed to select public officials at all levels of government: national, state, county, or city.

Voters select the most important state officials. These officials, in turn, appoint others who work for and with them. Therefore, a citizen can, by voting, influence all of government. Voters also have the right and respon-

sibility to decide some issues. Because it requires a vote of the people to change the state constitution, proposed amendments sometimes appear on the ballot.

No matter what the purpose of an election, low voter turnout is a matter of serious concern. Many people fear that democratic government will not last if so few people are concerned enough about the issues and individuals to vote. Some fear that government will be taken over by wealthy, well-organized interests that have only their self-interest at heart. Effective, democratic government needs voters who are interested in the common good of all citizens of the nation, state, or community.

Public Opinion

A final major influence on government decision-making is public opinion. Since the men and women who run our governments receive their powers from the people, the opinions of the people make a difference. Today, television, radio, newspapers, and magazines keep the public informed about what is going on in Washington and Atlanta. Those news media also keep our elected officials aware of what the general public thinks about issues.

One of the best examples of the power of public opinion as expressed through the news media came in the 1960s and 1970s during the U.S. war in Vietnam. In the early 1970s, large numbers of the American people turned

Above: Cathy Cox was first elected secretary of state in 1998. She was re-elected in 2002. Cox is the first woman to serve as Georgia's secretary of state. **Below:** In the 1960s and '70s, students protested the Vietnam War and influenced the government.

against the war in Vietnam. They protested and demonstrated against the war. In both 1968 and 1972, U.S. involvement in Vietnam was a major political issue in the presidential and congressional elections. As public opinion ran more and more against the war, America's political leaders heard the people's message and U.S. involvement in Vietnam ended in 1974.

Citizenship

When you studied the development of the U.S. Constitution at the Convention of 1787, you learned that one principle of the new government set up by our founding fathers was *sovereignty*, the concept that power and authority rest with the citizens. Another principle was *federalism*, a system where the national, state, and local governments share authority over the same land and the same people. The government gives to us, America's citizens, the status of **citizenship**. If your parents are U.S. citizens or if you were born in the United States, then you are a U.S. citizen. You are entitled to all of the protections and rights afforded by the federal and state constitutions.

Naturalized citizens are foreign nationals (those who were born in other countries) who choose to become American citizens and give up their citizenship in those other countries. People who are eighteen years of age, who have lived in this country for at least five years, and who entered the country legally can apply for citizenship. They must meet certain requirements – an ability to read, write, and speak English; a knowledge and understanding of U.S. history and government; good moral character; and a belief in the principles of the U.S. Constitution. Taking an oath of allegiance is the final step in the naturalization process.

Along with the rights that come with being a citizen of the United States, the state of Georgia, and a particular county and town are certain responsibilities. One is participation in government by running for office if you choose, but by voting for candidates for office even if you elect not to serve yourself. Another is upholding the laws of the nation. A third is defending the nation against its enemies. As a citizen, you may be called upon to serve in your community by participating in juries. You may also be called upon to serve in wartime by joining a branch of the military.

Above: These children are dressed in the traditional garb of their native countries at a July 4 naturalization ceremony. What countries do you suppose they represent?

All young men are required to register with the Selective Service Board when they turn eighteen.

Most important, however, you can fulfill your responsibilities as a citizen by participating at local, state, and even national levels. You can serve on library boards, zoning commissions, and volunteer civic organizations. You can share your talents and your time with your community to make it a better place to live.

A Final Note

Voting, the most basic responsibility of citizens to participate in their government, is suffering in Georgia. In the last presidential election year, Georgia ranked 48th out of the 50 states in the percentage of eligible adults who voted. Never in the state's history have over 50 percent of the state's eligible voters actually gone to the polls. Who votes most frequently? Older residents between the ages of 60 and 64 are the most active voters, with 71 percent turning out. Unfortunately, the youngest voters, those between the ages of 18 and 24, have the lowest voter participation, with only 21 percent taking the time to vote.

Most of you are between the ages of 13 and 15. Now is the time to decide where Georgia will rank five years from now! It's up to you!

It's Your Turn

1. What are the two major political parties in the United States today?
2. How old does a person have to be to vote in Georgia?
3. When are general elections held in Georgia?
4. What are the two ways a child becomes a U.S. citizen?

Chapter Summary

- In the United States, government is carried out at three levels—federal, state, and local—but local government is the closest to the people.
- Local government includes county, city, and special-purpose governments.
- Georgia has 159 counties, the maximum number allowed by law, and over 600 cities or municipalities
- Most county governments are led by elected boards of commissioners.
- The most common forms of municipal government are the mayor-council form, the council-manager form, and the commission form.
- Governments gain most of their operating funds from taxes, especially property, or ad valorem, taxes.
- Seventy percent of Georgia's citizens live in urban areas.
- Urban sprawl is one of Georgia's most pressing problems involving the state's continued population growth.
- Participation in a representative democracy stems from four areas: political parties, interest groups, voters, and public opinion.
- The minimum voting age in Georgia is eighteen.
- Effective government needs voters interested in the common good of all and who turn out to participate in elections at all levels.

ChapterReview

Reviewing People, Places, and Terms

Provide a brief definition of each of the following terms.

1. ad valorem taxes
2. citizenship
3. metropolitan area
4. SPLOST
5. urban sprawl

Understanding the Facts

1. What is the most common form of county government in Georgia?
2. Are counties or cities generally in charge of school systems?
3. What is Georgia's oldest city?
4. What are the requirements to become a city?
5. What major problems have been created by urban sprawl?
6. Where do counties and municipalities get most of their operating funds?
7. What are the major influences on government decision-making in America?
8. Name three responsibilities of citizenship.
9. What are the requirements for becoming a naturalized American citizen?

Developing Critical Thinking

1. Georgia, although a sizable land area, has a lot of counties. Critics argue that the state should redraw county lines and have a smaller, more manageable number of counties to reduce the costs of government. Do you think Georgia should reduce the number of counties? Why are some people opposed to such a reduction? List the arguments for and against reduction. List advantages and disadvantages to changing Georgia's county structure.

2. Duplication of services between cities and counties is expensive. A move to consolidate city and county governments has gained momentum in the state. Some areas are considering consolidating some services. Do you favor mergers of services, consolidations, or leaving city and county governments as they are? Explain and defend your answer.

3. Why do you think so few people now vote in general elections? Could the Untied States someday be governed only by special interest groups if citizens fail to exercise their right to vote?

Checking It Out

1. Investigate your own county and the cities within it. What shared or merged services do they provide? What duplicated services do the two governments provide?

2. Who do you turn to for help and for services? Once you have investigated your own local city and county government, check out where to

go for help in the following cases:

a. To obtain a driver's license

b. To obtain a marriage license

c. To establish that a will is valid

d. To complain about potholes in the road to your home

e. To get help for a wounded wild animal in your neighborhood

f. To report a rabies threat

g. To report a break-in at your home

h. To obtain a business license

Writing Across the Curriculum

1. Government documents are often difficult to understand because they are usually written in "bureaucratic language." Try your hand at being a journalist and translate a local ordinance into simple, everyday language for local residents. Remember, newspaper articles cover basic facts: *Who*, *What*, *Where*, *When*, *Why*, and *How*. They also cover information in a short or terse style and use graphics or illustrations and pictures to complement the story.

2. Write an open letter to the newspaper explaining why it is important that every citizen vote in the next election. In your letter, explain the concept of sovereignty, which is one of the basic principles of American government.

Exploring Technology

1. Use your favorite search engine and your Internet skills to obtain information on the difference between the costs of operating consolidated city-county governments such as Athens-Clarke, Augusta-Richmond, or Columbus-Muscogee and the cost of operating similar-sized governments in nonconsolidated cities and counties.

2. Local government is all about services. Explore the website of your local government if it has one. Compare the home page with comparable counties or cities across the state. Can you suggest changes to the web page that would improve an ordinary citizen's access to information? Work out a plan to improve citizens' access to information about government services in your own community.

Applying Your Skills

1. Every city and county government is a little bit different. Develop an organization chart that shows the operation of your county and your city governments. Identify the people who are elected and those who are appointed to positions of authority in those governments. Compare your county government with that of the two counties highlighted in the textbook—Fulton County and Camden County.

2. Examine historical maps of Georgia in the 1780s and county maps of today. The original parishes were converted to eight counties under Georgia's first constitution. Examine those counties' land areas and identify which modern-day counties were pulled from those original 8-county tracts.

3. Time is important. Which Georgia counties are the oldest and which are the youngest? You already know the eight original counties are the oldest, but find out which ten counties are Georgia's youngest counties. Using a county map, list the dates of creation of all Georgia counties.