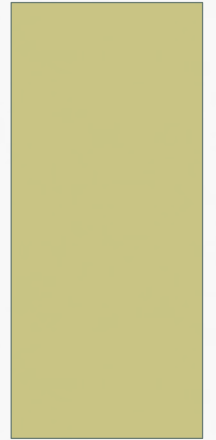


# GOVERNING AMERICA'S COMMUNITIES



# LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- Diversity of government structures
- More than 89,000 local government entities
- Confusion about responsibilities

# LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN THE U.S.

**TABLE 10-1 Local Governments in the United States**

<b>General Purpose</b>	
Counties	3,033
Municipalities	19,492
Townships	16,519
Total	39,044
<b>Special Purpose</b>	
School Districts	13,051
Special Districts	37,381
Total	50,432
<b>Total Local Governments</b>	<b>89,476</b>

*Note:* Data are for 2007.

*Source:* U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 2010, Table 416. Available at <http://www.census.gov/prod/2009pubs/10statab/stlocgov.pdf>.

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- Functions:
  - Managing conflict
  - Forging communities
  - Providing services
- Why Should We Care about Local Government?
  - Accountability
  - Representation

# LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUNCTIONS DIFFER BY STATE

- Counties, cities, and townships are referred to as **general-purpose governments**. They provide a wide range of services, from law enforcement to parks and recreation, human services, roads, and public works.
- Special districts and school districts are known as **special-purpose governments**. They are much more limited in the number of functions they perform for the public.

# COUNTY GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT

- Two Types: Rural and Urban Counties
  - Elected officials include county commissioners or supervisors with general responsibilities for all county functions, and some of the following: sheriff, auditor, treasurer, attorney, recorder, coroner, clerk, tax assessor, tax collector.
  - Many counties have professional administrators or county managers who oversee the administrative functions.

# TYPICAL COUNTY FUNCTIONS

- Assess and levy property taxes
- Maintain local roads and bridges
- Administer elections
- Provide law enforcement, jails, and courts
- Administer various health and welfare programs
- Offer conservation and recreation facilities and programs

# TYPICAL COUNTY FUNCTIONS

**TABLE 10-2 County Functions**

## **Traditional, Rural**

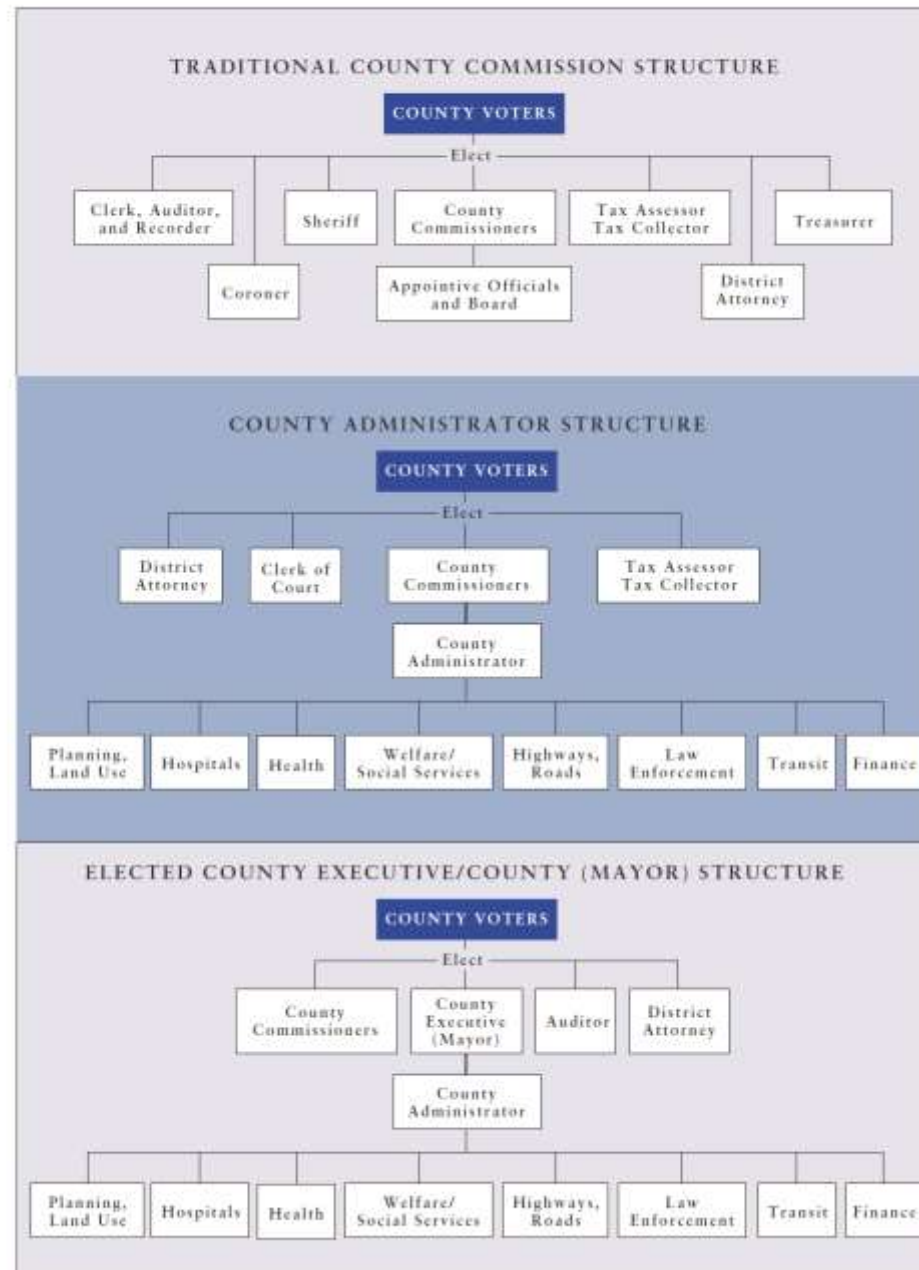
Property tax assessment and collection  
Election administration  
Judicial administration, including civil and criminal courts, probate, etc.  
Recording of deeds, mortgages, and other legal instruments  
Recording of vital statistics, including births, deaths, and marriages  
Local roads and bridges, construction and maintenance  
Law enforcement (sheriff and coroner)  
County jail maintenance  
Administer state welfare and social service programs  
Other: county fairs, agricultural extension service

## **Contemporary, Urban**

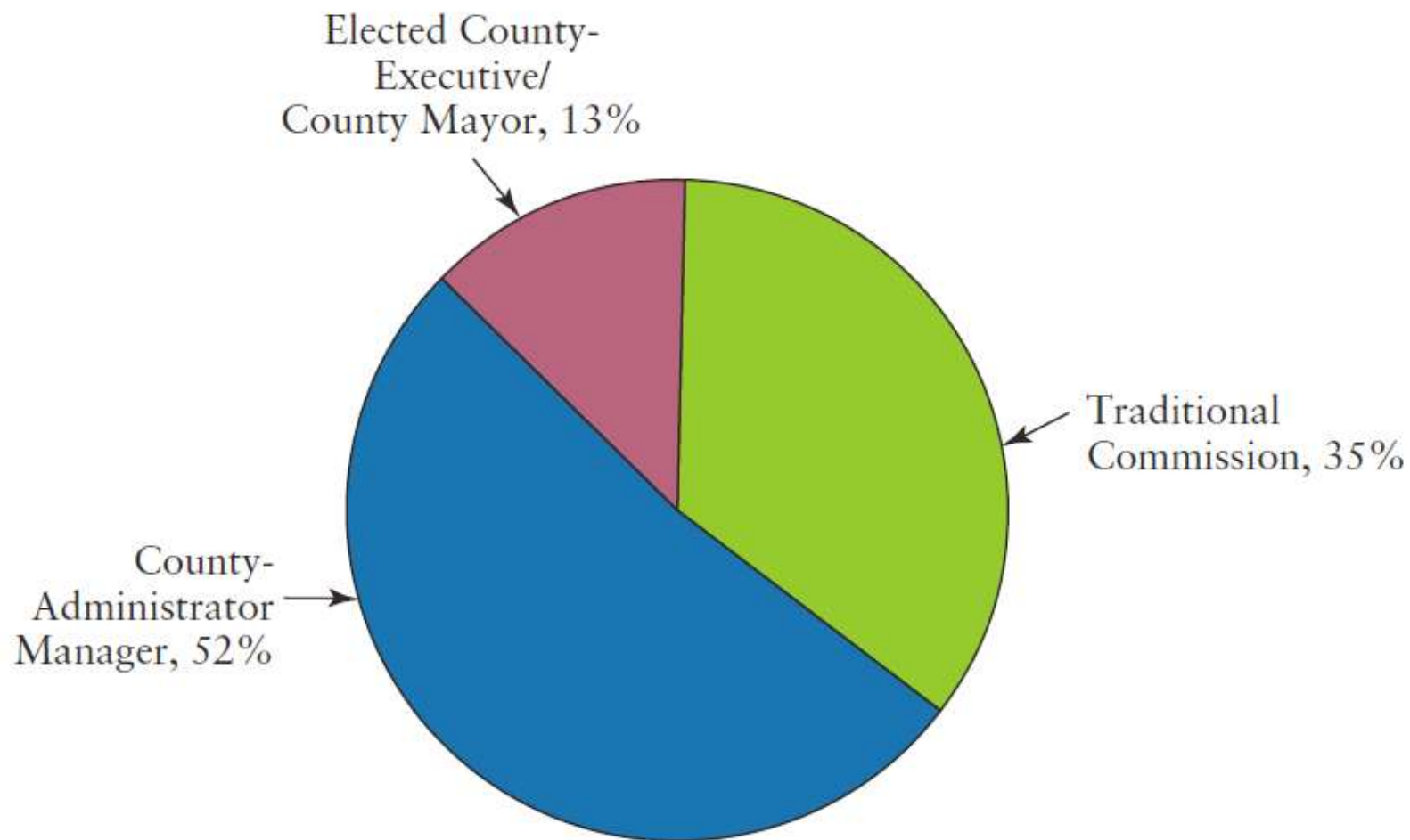
Mass transit  
Airports  
Libraries  
Water supply and sewage disposal  
Water and air pollution control  
Building and housing code enforcement  
Natural resource preservation  
Planning and land-use control  
Community development and housing  
Parks and recreation  
Stadiums, convention and cultural centers  
Public health, including clinics  
Public hospitals  
Disaster preparedness together with traditional functions



**FIGURE 10-1 Structures of County Government**



**FIGURE 10-2 Forms of County Government**



*Note:* Data are for 2007.

*Source:* International City/County Management Association, *The 2009 Municipal Year Book*, p. 23.

# TOWNS AND TOWNSHIPS

- Townships are often in the Midwest and towns in New England
- Subdivisions of counties providing similar services
- New England town meetings offer a distinguished form of representative government.

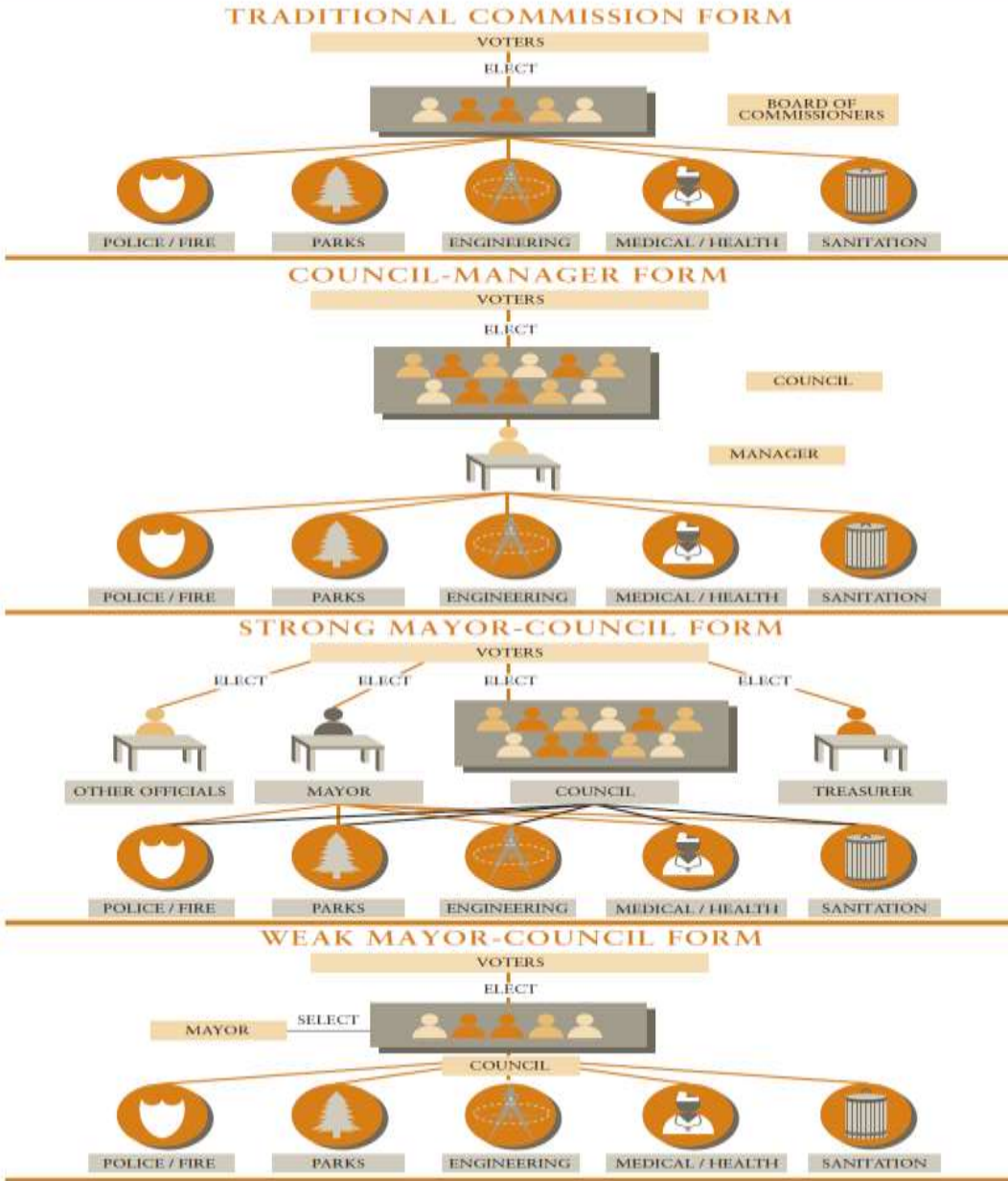
# MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS

- Usually created by state charter and provide common functions such as police, fire, streets, sewer, sanitation, parks, and welfare services
- Typically managed by a city council and mayor with varying degrees of authority and responsibility and often with a city manager leading the bureaucracy

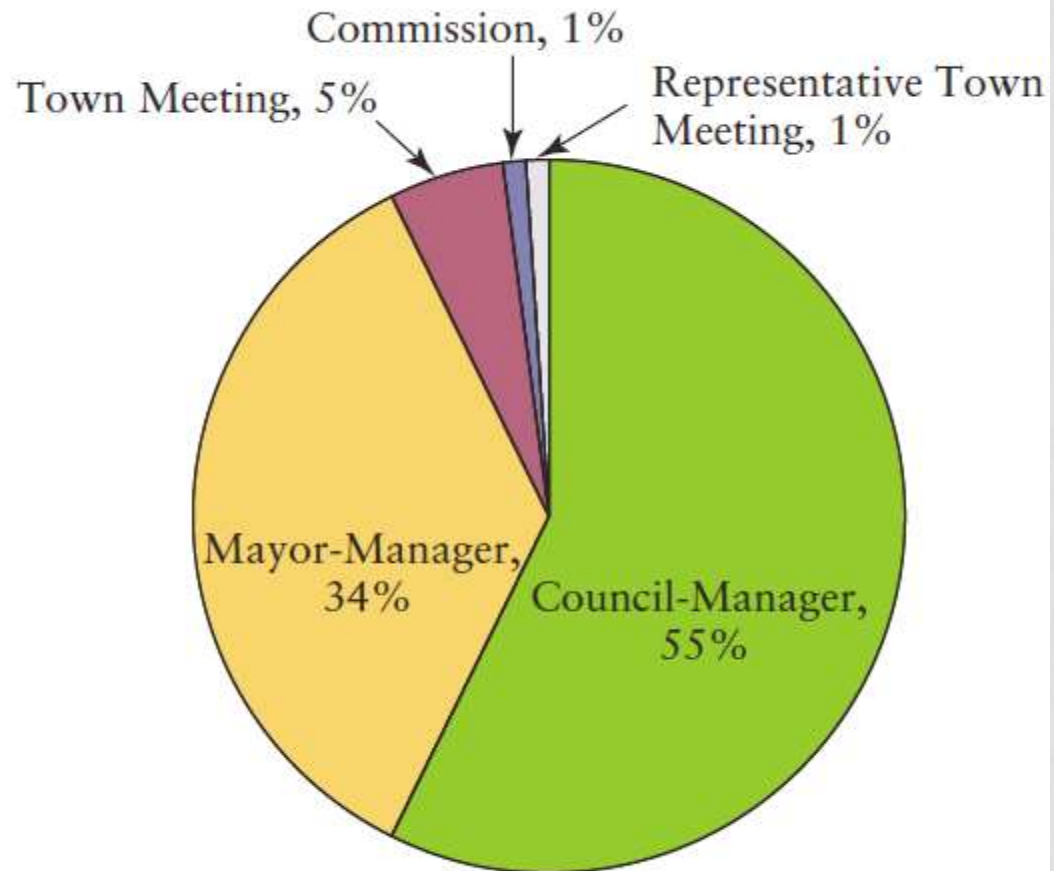
# MUNICIPAL CHARTERS

- Types of charters
  - Special Act
  - General Act
  - Optional
  - Home Rule
- Dillon's Rule
  - All cities in Virginia

**FIGURE 10-3 Forms of City Government**



**FIGURE 10-4 American Cities: Forms of Government**



*Note:* Data are for 2006. Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding.

*Source:* *The 2008 Municipal Year Book*, p. 28.

# TYPES OF ELECTIONS OPTIONS

- Partisan and nonpartisan elections
- At-large districts
- Single-member districts



# CONCERNS ABOUT AT-LARGE ELECTIONS

- Are they discriminatory?
- *Mobile v. Bolden* (1980)
  - Constitutional unless there is evidence of discriminatory intent
- Voting Rights Act of 1982
  - Established totality of circumstances test

# TYPES OF ELECTIONS OPTIONS

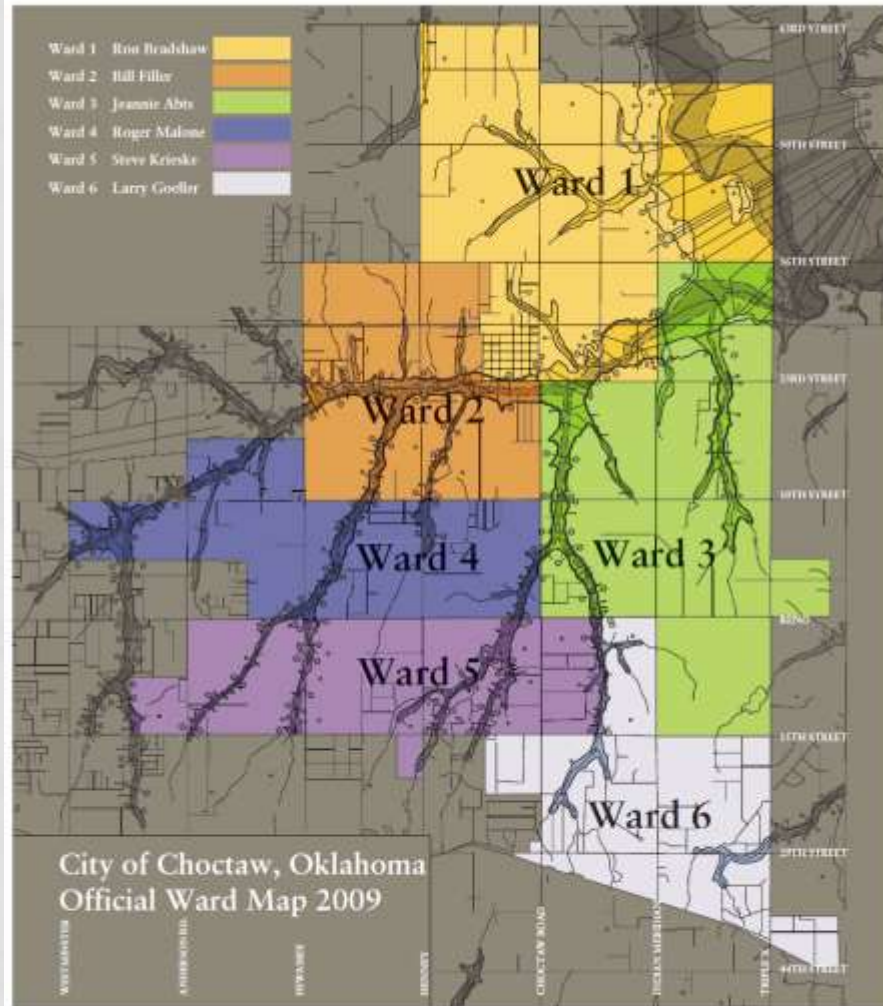
**TABLE 10-3 Voters Don't Always Approve Structural Changes**

Proposed Change	Percent Approved
<b>Form of Government</b>	
To mayor-council	5
To council-manager	35
<b>Election Method</b>	
From at-large to single-member district (ward) elections	42
From single-member district (ward) to at-large elections	48
To a mixed (combination) system with some at-large and some single-member district seats	45
The mix between the number of council members elected at large and the number elected by single-member district (ward)	37
The method of electing the mayor	56
<b>Powers of Mayor/Chief Elected Official</b>	
Increase powers/authorities	42
Decrease powers/authorities	56
<b>Size of City Council</b>	
Increase the number of council members	59
Decrease the number of council members	55
<b>City Manager/Chief Appointed Professional Administrator</b>	
Add the position of professional administrator or manager	72
Eliminate the position of administrator or manager	29

*Source:* Adapted from International City/County Management Association, "Municipal Form of Government Survey 2006." Data are for changes that occurred between 2001 and 2006.

# TYPES OF ELECTIONS OPTIONS

**FIGURE 10-5 Comparing Single-Member District and Mixed (Combination) Election Systems**



The City of Choctaw, Oklahoma, elects its city council members using a single-member district election system, also referred to as a ward system. A citizen may vote in only one council race—the one featuring candidates running from the district in which the voter lives.

Source: <http://www.ok.gov/choctaw/documents/City%20of%20Choctaw%20ward%20Map%202009.11.12.pdf>.

# SCHOOL DISTRICTS

- Organized to provide public elementary and secondary education
- Usually managed by a superintendent appointed by an elected school board
- Over 14,000 local school districts
- Community colleges may also fall into this category.

# SPECIAL DISTRICTS

- Provide specific services, usually a single function such as fire protection, mass transit, soil conservation, libraries, water and irrigation, sewage disposal, airports, sports, convention centers, etc.
- Over 37,000 special districts