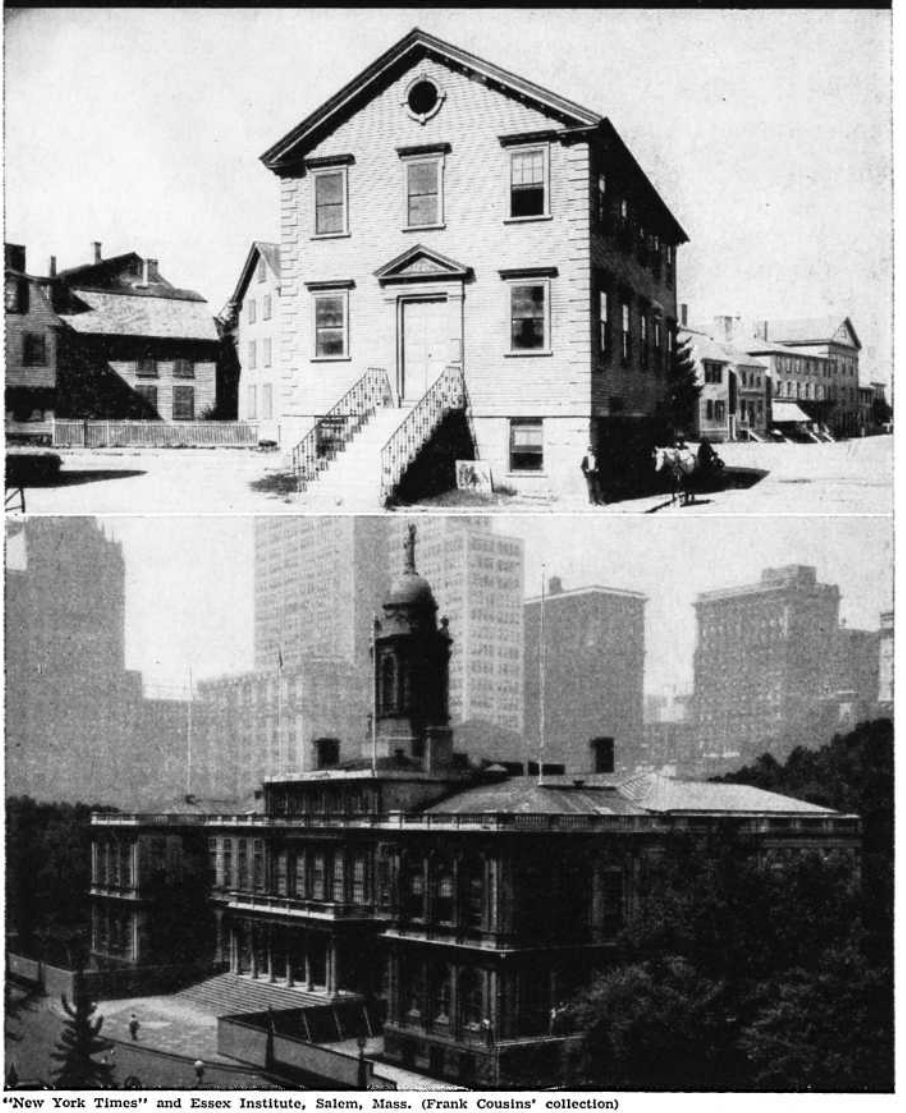
56. Municipalities, Townships, and Special Districts



"New York Times" and Essex Institute, Salem, Mass. (Frank Cousins' collection)

MUNICIPALITIES

A MUNICIPALITY is a public corporation that has been vested with general governing powers over a relatively small, densely populated area. As a public corporation it may sue and be sued, negotiate contracts, own land and other properties, and incur debts. The mere fact that there is a concen-

tration of people shows the presence of common bonds; otherwise these people would not have settled in one place. Hence a municipality is more nearly a "natural" political unit than any other governmental body. However, when this population nucleus obtains a municipal government its residents acquire yet another set of common interests, those associated with a formal political organization.

Types of municipalities

In the United States there are four types of municipalities: cities, villages, towns, and boroughs. It is important to remember that the hallmark of a municipality is its corporate status. A city, at least in the United States, is always assumed to be incorporated, so that all American cities are municipalities. However, there are instances in which villages, towns, and boroughs are not incorporated, so that they sometimes cannot be classed as municipalities. For example, the term "village" is often loosely applied to any hamlet whether or not it is incorporated; the "towns" of New England, New York State, and Wisconsin are not incorporated; and the five boroughs that comprise New York City are not regarded as municipalities. The prime factor in determining what is the type of a municipality, or what is the class of a city or village, is the size of its population. That is, State law or the State constitution provides that, for example, a given municipality is a village if its population is below a stipulated number, and may be a city if its population exceeds that number; classes of cities and villages are likewise fixed by numbers of population. In Ohio, for instance, in order to have the rank of city an incorporated place must have more than 5,000 inhabitants; otherwise it has the status of a village. In Pennsylvania there are four levels or classes of cities: first class, 1,000,000 or more inhabitants; second class, 500,000 to 1,000,000; second class *A*, 135,000 to 500,000; and third class, fewer than 135,000.

Traits of the city

Prominence: The city is one of the most prominent features on the twentieth-century American landscape. Half of the people in the United States reside in 168 so-called "metropolitan" areas, each composed of a central city with a population of at least 50,000 and its dependent suburbs, that dot the country from coast to coast. Between forty and fifty million people reside in the fourteen metropolitan areas each containing more than one million persons. In 1950 nearly two-thirds of all Americans lived in an area having municipal government; Table 42 shows the numbers and percentages of those living in cities (and other municipalities) in various population groups. New Jersey was the most urban of all States, with 86.6 per cent of its people in municipalities. North Dakota, with 26.6 per cent, was the least urban.

Problems Created by Cities: Cities cause a host of problems not found in a rural civilization, and many of these problems call for solutions by gov-

The Town House of Marblehead, Mass. (1727), Where Town Meetings Were Held for over 200 Years, and the New York City Hall.

ernmental means. Indeed, as the population of a city rises, the number of problems created and of solutions demanded rises at an even faster pace. The inhabitants of cities require a multitude of services, such as public transportation, a water supply, means for disposing of wastes, and fire and police protection. Inasmuch as cities are the chief location for industry, they are the principal sufferers from the ills of industrial society, notably periodic unemployment; most cities have undertaken vast welfare programs to cope with such ills. Whereas cities are not the sinks of iniquity that rural legend pictures them to be, they do have a higher crime rate than the countryside, resulting in a demand for greater protective services. Too, whereas farm districts are not typified by exalted standards of morality, vice in cities is apt to be professional and organized. Thus municipal government deals with a host of everyday personal matters concerning numerous people, and comes much closer to the average individual than the federal government does.

Political Status of Cities: To recapitulate and reemphasize what has been said previously, cities are agents of the State, designed to govern local areas. They are created by the State and vested with their powers by the State. Often the State government treats its cities in a manner that is either unsympathetic or negligent. Although the population in more than half the States is classed as predominantly urban, State legislatures tend to be controlled by representatives from rural constituencies; these representatives are frequently hostile toward cities, denying them powers needed to satisfy certain demands of their population. As a consequence the ruling groups in many cities have turned for aid to the federal government; cities, it is true, are underrepresented also in Congress, but not to the extent that they are in State legislatures. Thanks to some effective lobbying in Congress cities have managed to secure direct financial assistance from the national Treasury, without the intercession of the State authorities. Figure 131 describes in some detail the tasks of a city lobbyist.

TABLE 42. DISTRIBUTION OF THE MUNICIPAL POPULATION AMONG CITIES OF VARIOUS SIZES[1]

Population Size Group	Number of Municipalities	Per Cent of Total	1950 Population (Thousands Omitted)	Per Cent of Total
100,000 or more	106	0.6	44,313	46.1
50,000–100,000	126	0.8	8,932	9.3
25,000–50,000	250	1.5	8,737	9.1
10,000–25,000	751	4.5	11,485	11.9
5,000–10,000	1,094	6.5	7,582	7.9
2,500–5,000	1,562	9.3	5,529	5.8
1,000–2,500	3,422	20.4	5,402	5.6
Fewer than 1,000	9,467	56.4	4,125	4.3
Total U.S.	16,778	100.0	96,106	100.0

[1] United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Governments in the United States in 1952* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1953), p. 2.

Mayor Picks Col. Weed For City's Lobbyist

Mayor George Christopher named the man yesterday he wants as the city's lobbyist in Washington—Colonel Thomas J. Weed, the East Coast representative of the Port of San Francisco.

Mayor Christopher said he has asked the Board of State Harbor Commissioners to let San Francisco have half Colonel Weed's time. The Board has given its informal approval, he said.

The city would pay half of Colonel Weed's $16,000-a-year salary, the Mayor declared.

Christopher said he would ask the Board of Supervisors to approve the appointment tomorrow.

Colonel Weed, 63, has a lifetime of experience in shipping and transportation behind him and also has extensive contacts in Washington.

"He has a high personal regard for both of our Congressmen," Mayor Christopher said. "He can get along with them nicely."

"He is familiar with procedures in the General Services Administration, which has extensive properties here, and will be helpful in increasing traffic at San Francisco International Airport.

"He knows how foreign airlines make applications with the State Department for new routes."

COL. THOMAS WEED
He's Mayor's choice

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The Mayor said Colonel Weed was his choice over all other lobbyists.

"All the others have four, five or ten other clients," Christopher said. "There might be conflicts of interest.

"With Colonel Weed I am convinced there would be no conflict of interest.

"He would give us permanent representation in Washington. Before, we got perhaps one day a month at an annual cost of $30,000. Now we would have many times more service for less than one-third the cost."

EXPENSE MONEY

The Mayor said Colonel Weed would be granted—indeed, had asked for—a maximum of $1200 a year for expenses.

"Those expenses would be

Continued on Page 17, Col. 1

Lobbyist Nominated: Mayor Picks Col. Weed

Continued from Page 1

based on vouchers," Christopher said, "and he believes that's all he needs.

"He doesn't believe in elaborate expenditures. He believes a proper, logical and sensible approach to legislators is more effective. They don't want to be lavishly wined and dined."

(The city's present lobbyist, ex-Supervisor Marvin E. Lewis, who retires January 31, has been under fire for allegedly "lavish, wanton and extravagant" spending habits in the Nation's capital.)

CONFERENCE HERE

Colonel Weed flew here for a conference yesterday with the Mayor, State Board of Harbor Commissioners Chairman Cyril Magnin and Henry J. Budde, a board member.

When they emerged from the Mayor's office shortly after noon, Christopher announced the terms of a contract with Colonel Weed had been "arrived at informally."

He added that under the proposed contract Colonel Weed would pay his own office expenses and "will have us listed in the telephone book and on his door. These are things that never happened before."

The ex-Army man's salary from the city would be $4000 less than Lewis received.

LIMITED WORK

He, the Mayor and Magnin agreed that his work for the Port of San Francisco would be limited to the Washington area if the contract is approved.

Mayor Christopher said the Harbor Board wants to establish another office in New York, with a full-time employee, to solicit cargoes there and in other Eastern cities.

Colonel Weed has been working for the port on the East Coast since October, and Magnin said that at least some of the increase in tonnage noted in recent months is attributable to him.

ARMY CAREER

The Board of State Harbor Commissioners hired Colonel Weed away from the Port of Stockton.

Texas-born, Colonel Weed was an Army officer for 35 years. He retired in 1952. His service began in World War I and was climaxed by his command of the Army's Port of Embarkation at Le Havre, France, following the invasion of Normandy in 1944.

"San Francisco Chronicle," January 29, 1956, p. 1

Figure 131. Tasks of a City Lobbyist.

These arrangements sometimes increase the hostility of the State legislators from rural zones. The result is that in the legislatures of such States as Illinois and Michigan, there is often as clear a division between "city" members and "downstate" or "upstate" members as there is between Republicans and Democrats.

Forms of municipal government

There are three principal forms of municipal government in the United States today: (1) mayor-council; (2) commission; and (3) council-manager. Figure 132 sketches their major structural features. The mayor-council form

has two important subtypes: weak-mayor and strong-mayor. Each type also has certain minor variations from one State to another. Table 43 shows the number and percentage of cities with each form in several population groups.

Mayor-Council: The mayor-council form of city government possesses an executive branch—the mayor—and a legislative branch—the council. Hence it resembles the national government. (City courts, to reiterate, are in fact State courts.) However, although the executive and the legislative branches are distinct, there is not the degree of separation of powers that

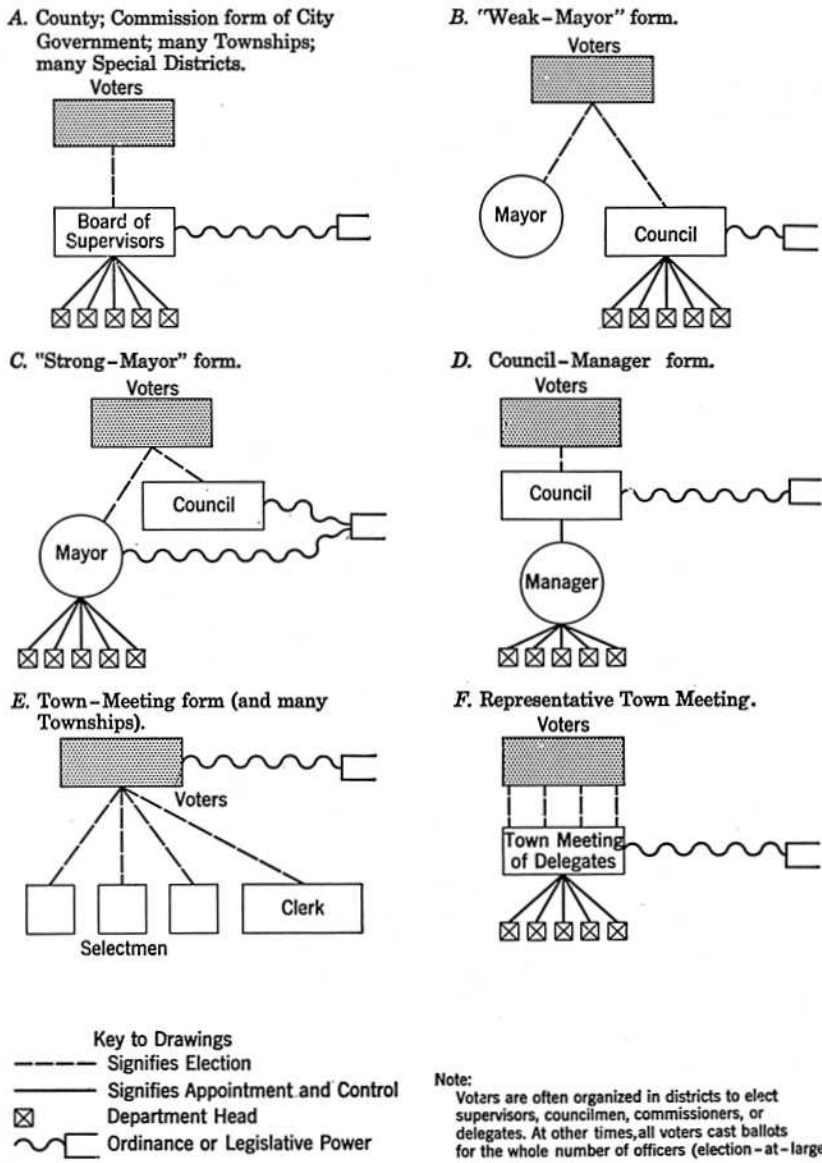


Figure 132. Major Structures of Local Government in America.

TABLE 43. FORM OF GOVERNMENT IN 2,527 CITIES (WITH POPULATIONS EXCEEDING 5,000)[1]

Population Group	Number of Cities	Mayor-Council		Commission		Council-Manager	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
More than 500,000	17	16	94.1	0	0.0	1	5.9
250,000–500,000	23	8	34.8	6	26.1	9	39.1
100,000–250,000	65	28	43.1	14	21.5	23	35.4
50,000–100,000	129	46	35.7	27	20.9	55	42.6
25,000–50,000	277	107	38.6	48	17.3	113	40.8
10,000–25,000	835	376	45.0	132	15.8	283	33.9
5,000–10,000	1,181	734	62.2	129	10.9	280	23.7
Total U.S.	2,527	1,315	52.0	356	14.1	764	30.3

	Town Meeting		Representative Town Meeting	
	Number	%	Number	%
50,000–100,000	0	0.0	1	0.8
25,000–50,000	3	1.1	6	2.2
10,000–25,000	24	2.9	20	2.4
5,000–10,000	27	3.1	1	0.1
Total U.S.	64	2.5	28	1.1

[1] *1955 Municipal Yearbook*, p. 57. These data include New England towns and other townships, which, being few in number, do not greatly influence either the totals or the percentages, save for those respecting town meetings and representative town meetings.

exists in the national government. For example, whereas neither the President nor any other executive officer in the national government can be forced to obey a congressional subpoena, a mayor may be obliged to surrender documents to the council on the demand of the council. In 1942 a New York State court ruled that the "theory of co-ordinate, independent branches of government has been generally held to apply to the national system and to the states but not to the government of cities."

THE MAYOR. Mayors have varying amounts and kinds of powers. In the weak-mayor form, which is gradually disappearing, the mayor may be little more than a figurehead. For instance, the office of mayor may be filled not by popular vote but by the council, which chooses one of its members to preside over council meetings. This sort of arrangement, as it happens, is much more frequent in commission and council-manager governments than in mayor-council governments. Table 44 shows how American mayors are selected.

The weak mayor typically has little appointive power; most executive offices are filled by popular election, saddling the voters with a long ballot. The weak mayor also may have a restricted veto power. The weak mayor does not have much to do with the framing of the budget. The strong mayor, by contrast, appoints a large number of executive officers, so that the people have a short ballot. He has considerable veto power; that is, his

veto can be overridden only by an extraordinary majority vote of the council. (It should be observed that the mayor does not have a pocket veto, for the council usually meets at least once a week during the entire year.) He frames the budget, perhaps with the aid of a budget director. He also proposes other types of ordinances for the consideration of the council.

A survey of the mayors of the twenty-five largest American cities in 1955 shows that mayors do not appear to have much in common except that they are politically active. The vast majority of these mayors had held some other political office; they had been members of the State legislature, sat on a State judicial bench, been aldermen, or occupied some other elective post. A candidate for the office of mayor in a large city, then, is apt to be a person of demonstrated political talent. In other respects, however, these men differed widely from one another. Fewer than half were lawyers; almost an equal number had been businessmen, in such fields as insurance and automobile retailing. Their ages at the times they were first elected mayor ranged from thirty-three to fifty-seven years. Fewer than half had held office in a political party. About one-third were Catholic.

The office of mayor in a great metropolis frequently represents the culmination of a political career; mayors of small cities sometimes do advance to Congress, but men who become mayors of cities with more than half a million people rarely go higher on the political ladder. One important exception to this principle in the 1950's is Frank Lausche, who became Governor of Ohio after serving as Mayor of Cleveland, and who in 1956 was seriously considered in some circles as Democratic candidate for President. Frank Murphy, a member of the federal Supreme Court in the 1940's, had at one time been Mayor of Detroit. On the other hand, Fiorello La Guardia and Norris Poulson were both members of the national House of Representatives before becoming mayors, respectively, of New York and Los Angeles. The fact is that the office of mayor in a large city may pay better than federal office, have more prestige, and be less exhausting for the incumbent.

THE COUNCIL. The council in mayor-council governed cities ranges in size from two members to fifty; outside of the largest cities, the typical coun-

TABLE 44. SELECTION OF MAYORS IN CITIES OVER 5,000 POPULATION[1]

Form of Government	Cities Reporting	Percentage of Reporting Cities: Direct Election	Council Election	Highest Vote in Council Election
Mayor-council	1,295	95	4	1
Commission	332	69	30	1
Council-manager	792	45	54	1
Town meeting	54	54	44	2
Representative town meeting	25	68	32	0

[1] *1956 Municipal Yearbook*, p. 58. These data include towns and townships as well as municipalities.

cil has fewer than ten members. With rare exceptions city councils are unicameral. Councilmen may be elected either from wards or at large. A few cities have attempted a variety of means for combining the two electoral systems. In some cities, such as Baltimore and Houston, most councilmen are elected by wards but a few are elected at large. In some other cities, councilmen are elected at large but nominated by wards. A few cities have experimented with proportional representation; New York City, however, discarded the system. In many cities councilmen are chosen in non-partisan elections. Tables 45 and 46 show a few of the characteristics of councilmanic elections.

Councilmen are chosen for terms that may be as short as one year or as long as six; four years is a common term, especially in large cities. In some cities councilmen's terms overlap. Although in the largest cities a council post comes close to being a full-time position, councilmen's salaries in mayor-council cities are not high; councilmen in St. Louis, for instance, are paid only $1,800 per year. However, those in Detroit receive $12,000.

A municipal council, as a policy-framing body, operates much like any other legislative organization. As noted above, it commonly meets once each week in the year. When the council is large it may subdivide itself into a number of committees for the consideration of particular sorts of proposed ordinances. Under these circumstances councilmen, like congressmen, defer to the judgment of the committees. As American mayors have grown stronger in relation to the councils, councilmen have come more and more to depend upon the mayor's office for a program. This is especially true of the drafting of the budget, which in an important way is the key to the whole program of the municipal government in that it shows the activities for which money will be appropriated.

TABLE 45. DISTRIBUTION OF PARTISAN AND NON-PARTISAN COUNCIL ELECTIONS[1]

Form of Government	Number of Cities	Cities Reporting	Partisan	Non-Partisan
Mayor-council	1315	1280	54.9	45.1
Commission	356	347	34.3	65.7
Council-manager	764	742	15.8	84.2
Town meeting	64	49	51.0	49.0
Rep. town meeting	28	23	26.1	73.9
Population Group				
More than 500,000	17	17	35.3	64.7
250,000–500,000	23	23	17.4	82.6
100,000–250,000	65	65	41.5	58.5
50,000–100,000	129	127	29.9	70.1
25,000–50,000	277	268	38.1	61.9
10,000–25,000	835	805	39.4	60.6
5,000–10,000	1181	1136	41.9	58.1
U.S. Totals	2527	2441	39.7	60.3

Commission: The commission form of municipal government consists primarily of a group termed a commission, made up commonly of five members. The commissioners are usually elected at large from the entire city (see Table 46). They serve as both legislators and executives. Each commissioner is the administrative head of one of the city departments; meanwhile the commission as a whole enacts ordinances for the city. In some cities the candidates for the city commission run for a particular administrative post; in other cities the candidates merely run for the commission, and are assigned to a particular administrative office after election. In this latter arrangement the administrative assignments are made by a majority vote of the commission itself; it is obvious that a considerable amount of pulling and tugging is done by commission members so that they may receive the most desirable offices. In certain municipalities the commissioners only assume responsibility for the proper operation of their administrative division; they appoint a trained administrator to do the actual work of the office. In other municipalities the commissioners themselves do the actual work.

Commission government has been credited with numerous advantages but has also been charged with many shortcomings. The principal advantage for which the commission form has been praised is that of making city government more efficient. Most criticisms of the commission form can be reduced to the simple proposition that this form does not supply leadership for the administration of the municipal government. For that reason the number of cities with the commission form is steadily dropping; for many years scarcely any city has adopted the commission form, whereas many others have abandoned it in favor of the mayor-council or council-manager form.

TABLE 46. METHODS OF ELECTING COUNCILS [1]

Type of Government	Number of Cities	Cities Reporting	At Large	By Wards	Combined
Mayor-council	1315	1273	38.2	36.6	25.2
Commission	356	340	98.8	0.9	0.3
Council-manager	764	740	74.5	14.7	10.8
Town meeting	64	45	97.8	2.2	0.0
Rep. town meeting	28	23	91.4	4.3	4.3
Population Group					
More than 500,000	17	17	29.4	41.2	29.4
250,000–500,000	23	23	60.9	13.0	26.1
100,000–250,000	65	64	62.5	15.6	21.9
50,000–100,000	129	129	60.5	17.0	22.5
25,000–50,000	277	264	54.6	22.7	22.7
10,000–25,000	835	800	60.8	21.9	17.3
5,000–10,000	1181	1124	59.7	27.0	13.3
U.S. Totals	2527	2421	59.4	24.0	16.6

[1] *1955 Municipal Yearbook,* p. 59. These data include New England towns as well as municipalities.

Council-Manager: The council-manager form consists primarily of a popularly elected council and a manager appointed by the council. The council, usually rather small, is chosen in a non-partisan election from the city at large or from wards. The council ordinarily names one of its members to serve as mayor, a post that requires little more than that the incumbent shall preside over council meetings and represent the city on ceremonial occasions. The council is chiefly a legislative body; it has the major function typical of legislative bodies, of overseeing the functioning of the administrative department.

The chief executive of the city is the city manager, appointed by the council for an indefinite term and responsible to the council. Supposedly the manager is a non-partisan, college-trained administrator whose principal duty is to supervise the execution of the ordinances enacted by the city council. One of the manager's most important duties is to draft a proposed budget for the city government; in larger cities he may have the assistance of a budget director for this task, but in smaller communities the manager may be budget director as well. The manager also frequently is in charge of the hiring of city employees under the career civil service system. These are both functions in which the policies of the manager are revealed. Finally, the manager also appoints all other principal administrative chiefs.

Presumably, so long as the manager directs affairs in a manner satisfactory to the council, he retains office; when he displeases the council, he may be dismissed. City management is an important career field. Because it is expected that the manager may come from some other city, managers may move from one city to another. Likewise, a council seeking a manager usually tries to hire one currently holding office in some other city.

Observers find much to praise, and little to censure, in the council-manager form. They assert that it improves the efficiency of the government. They concede that the council-manager form may be more expensive than the mayor-council form, but insist that it provides far more services for the money spent. They contend that the manager supplies the leadership that is absent in the commission form, and that on the other hand the manager cannot become as dictatorial as a mayor. They approve of an arrangement that separates the legislative and the executive functions, as a council-manager government does, yet makes it possible to hold some person or agency responsible for any given act of the government.

They admit that some cities have had unfortunate experiences with city managers, but maintain that the fault lay not in the system itself but in the way in which it was operated. For example, a manager may become involved in politics to the degree that he will urge the election of certain persons to the council and oppose the election of others. Under such conditions the manager is almost certain to be discharged if the candidates he opposed should be elected; such a discharge would be contrary to the theory of council-manager government since it would not be related to the administrative capabilities of the manager. Too, it is difficult for policy leadership to emerge in the council, since councilmen at least in theory are equals;

the council may in despair turn to the manager for leadership. Finally, some critics feel that the "non-political" nature of the council-manager system lessens public interest in, and awareness of, government issues which, they believe, are best brought to light and solved through partisan political debate.

If frequency of occurrence is a measure of success, the council-manager form of city government has been very successful; considerable numbers of cities adopt it every year, and few reject it. So far, however, it has been introduced almost entirely in medium-sized and smaller cities; the largest municipality ever to attempt it, Cleveland, discarded the system after a few years. The largest city with the council-manager form today is Cincinnati. It can be seen from Table 44 that the mayor-council form still predominates in the great metropolitan cities.

One important fact must be noted: the council-manager form itself is no assurance of efficiency and honesty in government. Rather, a government of this type may be as easily corrupted as any other. Where a formerly inefficient or corrupt mayor-council government has been superseded by a council-manager regime that is able and honest, it is certain that interests seeking an able and honest government have managed to secure control of the city. The council-manager form has not so much caused the change in the quality of the government as it has been the instrument through which these changes have been instituted.

Metropolitan areas

A metropolitan area may be defined as a central city and all the surrounding territory, whether suburbs or unincorporated zones, that is economically dependent upon the central city. The metropolitan area, then, is an economic unit; moreover, to a substantial degree it is also a social and a cultural unit. However, it is not a political unit; in fact, metropolitan areas may contain scores or even hundreds of different governments, including counties, municipalities, and school and other special districts. The consequence is a host of political problems, especially for the central city. These problems are accentuated today by the process termed "the flight to the suburbs," whereby millions of people, although they continue to work in the central cities, have taken up residence in the suburbs. The outlying cities and other areas have been gaining in population far more rapidly than the central cities. Between 1940 and 1950, among the fifteen largest metropolitan areas of the nation, the outlying populations increased from two to forty times more than the populations of the central cities.

There have been two important consequences, both largely financial. In the first place, as people have moved out of the central cities, property values have dropped there, compelling municipal authorities to seek other sources of revenue. In the second place, the growth of the suburban areas has made an increasing number of persons dependent upon services of the central city without paying taxes to support these services. Finally, the mere presence of numerous governments in these relatively small areas leads to confusion and waste. A number of political solutions have been attempted,

or at least proposed. Special districts are dealt with under their own heading below; the most important other solutions have been as follows:

Annexation of Unincorporated Territory: Many cities have annexed adjacent unincorporated territory. In 1955, for example, 526 cities with populations greater than 5,000 carried out annexations. Annexation of course affects both the central city and the hitherto unincorporated area in varying degrees. To the central city it often brings the task of supplying services to a larger area; it also gives the city more property to tax. It does add to the tax burden of the people living in the annexed territory; on the other hand, it usually provides them with facilities they did not previously enjoy. A survey of the areas annexed in 1955 shows that less than one-half were adequately supplied with any of such fundamental services as water supply, sewage disposal, and police and fire protection. The residents of an unincorporated area that a city proposes to annex often are hostile to the suggestion. They commonly fear the higher taxes that they will have to pay, and sometimes they feel that annexation to the central city will in one way or another depreciate their neighborhood. These sentiments may be instilled or stimulated by certain public officials who are interested in having the area remain unincorporated.

Annexation in most States requires the consent of the inhabitants of the area to be annexed; hence the whole proposition ordinarily must be made attractive to them in order to succeed. In Virginia, however, a city may annex territory regardless of the wishes of the persons in the area to be annexed, by simple authorization of a three-man court. In Texas and Missouri, annexation requires only the amendment of a home-rule charter, without recourse to a popular vote.

Consolidation of the Central City and the County: Consolidation of the central city and the county may take one of a number of forms. Primarily it involves merging all or part of the two largest governments of a metropolitan area. By the elimination of duplicating offices this arrangement can achieve important savings in governmental costs; by the same token a proposal of consolidation is apt to incur the hostility of all those whose offices would be eliminated. New York City, Philadelphia, and Baton Rouge have undergone extensive consolidations of city and county functions.

Separation of the Central City and the County: Sometimes a central city will be entirely separated from the county in which it is located; what remains of the county will be established as a new county under its own government. This procedure has been followed in such cities as Baltimore, Denver, St. Louis, and San Francisco; moreover, as soon as any city in Virginia has 10,000 people, it is at once separated from its county. This sort of arrangement may be favored by the central city because the residents of the city usually not only pay for their own services but also help to pay for those of the people in the unincorporated county areas; separation from the county relieves them of these added charges.

Voluntary Cooperation: Voluntary cooperation between different governments can provide a method for solving individual problems of a metropolitan district. Sometimes two or more cities may unite to deal with a

single matter of common interest, such as water supply or sewage disposal. Cities may also cooperate in dealing with a particular class of services that may concern more than one of them only occasionally, but that at that time may be much better administered by intercity cooperation; such services include police and fire protection. In still other instances, the central city may supply services to the outlying cities; some large cities, for example, sell water, either to the residents of the suburb or to the suburban government. In a fourth type of case, cities either depend upon counties to provide them with a particular service, or may cooperate with the county in furnishing a service. For instance, a county may administer a career civil service system for a small municipality; on the other hand, a county and a city may unite in carrying out planning and zoning tasks or in maintaining parks.

TOWNSHIPS

New England towns

Political Status: A New England town is a government for a given area rather than being, like a municipality, a government for a particular concentration of population; thus, it may often govern a rural area. Another frequent difference between a New England town and a municipality is that whereas a municipality is always a corporation a New England town is sometimes a chartered general corporation and at other times a quasi-corporation, which, like a county, has no charter. In either event, many New England towns have powers almost equal to those of municipalities because their government holds sway over an urban district whose population demands many services found generally in cities, such as police and fire protection, water supply, garbage and sewage disposal, welfare assistance, and public education. New England towns also serve as districts for the election of State legislators, the enforcement of State laws, and the assessment and collection of State taxes.

The Structure of Government: There are three general and interrelated types of government for New England towns. The classic type is that of the town meeting (see Figure 132*E*). In this type of government all the qualified voters of the town are authorized to assemble once a year, usually in the spring, to function both as the legislature and the electorate of the town. As a legislature their primary function is to enact the taxes and appropriate funds for the coming year; they also pass ordinances regulating local issues. Furthermore, the town meeting chooses the principal officers for the town.

The leading officers chosen are the selectmen, commonly three in number. They are the chief administrators of the town, obligated to execute the policies set forth by the town meeting but also in a position to impose their own policies on those of the meeting through the ways in which they enforce enactments of the meeting. Sometimes the selectmen are also empowered to appoint certain lesser administrative officers. Perhaps the most important individual elected officer is the town clerk; in many respects he actually sees to it that the selectmen execute the enactments of the meeting, he performs a great deal of simple administrative work, and he keeps the principal

legal records of the community. There may be a variety of additional elected officers, such as a tax collector, an assessor, a justice of the peace, members of the school board, a constable, and others. All of these officials are directly or indirectly responsible to the meeting, which, since it is composed of the qualified voters gathered in one place, may exercise rigid control.

A second form of town government is that of the "representative" or "limited" town meeting (see Figure 132*F*). This type is commonest in large towns, where it may be inconvenient or virtually impossible for all voters to assemble in one place. Under these circumstances the town may be divided into a number of districts; the voters in each of these districts then choose a considerable number of representatives or delegates, who sit as the town meeting. Otherwise this type is much like that of the simple town meeting. The third type of town government is known as the "town-manager" type. In this arrangement the town meeting (or sometimes the selectmen) names a single person to function as a manager, much like the chief administrator in a council-manager city. There are hundreds of town-manager governments in New England today, being unusually common in Maine. Their popularity results from their ability to deal with problems that might baffle the uncoordinated administrative organization of the typical town meeting government.

Townships elsewhere

Outside of New England there are townships with organized governments in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, eleven midwestern States, and Washington State. Like New England towns these townships are quasi-corporations. In many respects they are much more nearly subdivisions of counties, for in most of these States they are sheerly units for governing rural districts. Table 47 shows that almost two-thirds of all townships have fewer than 1,000 inhabitants. In about half of these States the townships officially are governed by a town meeting. The meeting selects officers and passes ordinances; however, it does not have so much power as a New

TABLE 47. TOWNSHIP POPULATION[1]

Population Group	Number of Townships	Per Cent of Total	1950 Population (Thousands Omitted)	Per Cent of Total
More than 50,000	36	0.2	3,569	11.3
25,000–50,000	104	0.6	3,542	11.2
10,000–25,000	335	2.0	4,923	15.6
5,000–10,000	639	3.7	4,438	14.1
2,500–5,000	1,218	7.1	4,245	13.5
1,000–2,500	3,889	22.6	5,942	18.8
Fewer than 1,000	10,981	63.8	4,894	15.5
U.S. Total	17,202	100.0	31,553	100.0

[1] United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Governments in the United States in 1952* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1953), p. 3.

England town meeting, nor is it ordinarily so well attended. In other States the voters of the township name their officers in a conventional general election. The most commonly found officers are a board of supervisors or of trustees, and a clerk. In some States there are a few other officers. By contrast, in New York and Illinois there is a single chief administrative officer called the township supervisor. In some heavily populated townships in New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin, township governments exercise powers similar to those of municipalities. In general, however, these townships have as their chief duty the maintenance of local roads and bridges, and occasionally the supervision of such facilities as libraries, cemeteries, land-use zoning, fire protection, garbage collection, and street lighting. Although township officials are a strong political force against change, it appears that townships in the Midwest may vanish in the near future, as their functions are more and more absorbed by municipal and county governments.

SPECIAL DISTRICTS

A special district is a governmental unit that has been created or authorized, usually by a State government, or by two or more State governments, to perform one specific function or a group of specific functions. Like a township, a special district is a quasi-corporation vested with sufficient powers along the line of levying taxes, incurring debts, and owning property, to carry out its functions; it is, however, solely an agent of the State. In 1952, there were, according to the Bureau of the Census, 12,319 special districts. (School districts, which resemble special districts in many ways, are not included either in this enumeration or in the discussion that follows; they are treated in the second part of Chapter 59.) There are some special districts in every State, but a few States have an exceptional concentration of these districts; the following six States contain half of all such areas in the nation:

Illinois	1,546
California	1,390
New York	968
Missouri	886
Kansas	724
Washington	644

That there are great numbers of special districts in some States, and relatively few in others, may be partly explained by the willingness of the ruling circles in some States to hand over the administration of many functions to existing units of government, and the insistence of the ruling circles in other States that these functions be administered separately. This logic helps to account for the small number of these districts in the southern States, where the county governments are very powerful. Usually a special district is governed by a board which may have some members serving ex officio. This board has little power beyond that of administering the relevant State laws.

TABLE 48. FUNCTIONS OF SPECIAL DISTRICTS[1]

Functional Class	Number	Per Cent of Total
Fire	2,272	18.4
Highways	774	6.3
Health and hospitals	371	3.0
Sanitation	429	3.5
Non-highway transport	159	1.3
Housing	863	7.0
Drainage	2,174	17.6
Soil conservation	1,981	16.1
Irrigation, water conservation	641	5.2
Other natural resources	428	3.5
Cemeteries	911	7.4
Urban water supply	665	5.4
Other	651	5.3
U.S. Total	12,319	100.0

[1] United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Governments in the United States in 1952* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1953), p. 5.

Special districts may be established to carry out any of a great number of tasks. However, more than half have any of three functions: fire protection; land drainage; and soil conservation. Table 48 above lists the numbers and percentages of special districts assigned to each major type of function. Many districts fill another general purpose; they serve as an additional means for handling the problems of a metropolitan region. Such districts may be established to administer only one problem in a metropolitan area, but one that affects several municipalities and perhaps some unincorporated territory as well. In this function the special district may be more acceptable to the suburbanites than any other arrangement, for it does not threaten them with total subordination to the government of the central city. The special district is also apt to be supported by any group interested in special treatment for the problem, and also by reformers who may believe that establishment of a special district will remove the function from politics. Actually the special district is not immune from politics; moreover, it introduces one more governmental unit to the scene, with consequent overlapping of authority and duplication of services and personnel.

QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS

1. Define a municipality. What are the several types of municipalities and what distinguishes each from the others?
2. Is your home State more or less urban than the United States as a whole? Do its urban centers have equal apportionment of representation in the State legislature?
3. Describe briefly the major forms of municipal government in the United States.
4. Describe the form of government of the town in which your college is situated or, alternatively, of your home town.

5. What general conclusions can be drawn from the backgrounds of the mayors of America's twenty-five largest cities?

6. What methods of choosing city councils, if any, are not used in electing county boards, and vice versa?

7. Describe in about 150 words the council-manager form of government.

8. What are some of the political and administrative results of the growth of metropolitan suburbs?

9. What reasons compel residents of: (1) incorporated suburbs, and (2) unincorporated areas, to fight for or against annexation to a metropolis?

10. Distinguish between the form and function of the New England town and the midwestern township.

11. Who would benefit from the abolition of the township, and who would gain nothing?

12. What are special districts? Why have they developed in large numbers? In what States are they most numerous?