

Government Basics

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On all levels, our government is a very complex organization; it would take volumes to describe and analyze any of those levels thoroughly. Our government also adapts; legislators come and go, departments are added or removed, laws are adopted, changed, or reversed, so that any serious study of government must be ongoing. This paper is meant to give an overview of our federal, state, and local governments. It outlines the basis, organizational structure, and major functions and responsibilities of each level. There is much, much more to know about government than appears in these pages. To help you dig deeper, we've provided links to websites and to PDFs with information you might want to print or download. Footnotes offer a guide to specific subjects.



U.S. Capitol, Washington, DC

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The United States is a constitutional republic—governing power is held by the people and exercised through their elected representatives, under the direction of a constitution that guarantees its citizens certain rights and protections. We are also a federal republic—our constitution grants our central (federal) government certain powers and reserves other powers for the federation of states that make up our country. Underlying it all, we are a representative democracy—as citizens we exercise our political will through the people we elect.

Our government is structured in three branches: legislative, executive, and judicial. At the federal level, both the executive branch (President) and the legislative branch (Congress) are elected by the people; the judicial branch is selected through executive nomination and legislative confirmation.

Federal Government and the Constitution

Federal law governs all 50 states; the basis of that law is the U.S. Constitution.¹ Article I, Section 8² of the Constitution grants 27 specific powers to the federal government, including the powers to regulate commerce, establish a uniform rule of naturalization, coin money, raise an army, and declare war. The constitution also gives the federal government implied³ and inherent⁴ powers.

The Constitution reserves certain powers for the states. Although not specified individually, the Tenth Amendment guarantees that any powers not specifically delegated to the federal government and not specifically prohibited to the state governments “...are reserved to the states respectively, or to the people.”⁵ Among other things, these reserved powers allow the states to regulate intrastate trade, oversee elections, and form local governments.

Article IV of the Constitution outlines how the states interact. Each state must give “full faith and credit” to the “...public acts, records, and judicial proceedings of every other state.”⁶ In other words, a birth certificate or a driver’s license issued by one state is valid in all states, as are business contracts, marriage licenses, and so on.

In addition to those powers reserved for either federal or state governments, some responsibilities—such as levying and enforcing taxes—overlap both, while others—called prohibited powers—are withheld from either the federal government or the states. As examples, the federal government can’t enact laws that prevent states from carrying out their responsibilities nor can states infringe on federal powers such as issuing money.

In a conflict between federal and state law, Article VI of the Constitution declares that federal law is the “supreme law of the land”⁷ so that federal law preempts state law when the two conflict.

Branches of Federal Government

To limit the power of any one person or group, the Constitution mandates three branches of federal government: the legislative, the executive, and the judicial.

Congress, the legislative branch, makes the laws. Congress is made up of the House of Representatives and the Senate. The executive branch, consisting of the president, the vice president, the Cabinet, and most federal

agencies, carries out laws. The judicial branch—all the courts including the Supreme Court—evaluates laws and the adherence or non-adherence to them.

A system of checks and balances allows each of these branches to exert certain controls over the powers of the others.⁸ The president can veto the laws that Congress creates; Congress, with a two-thirds majority vote, can override a presidential veto. The Supreme Court can determine laws unconstitutional and overturn them. The president nominates the heads of federal agencies; Congress confirms or rejects the president's nominees. The president nominates the Supreme Court justices; Congress confirms or rejects them. And under certain unusual circumstances, Congress can remove the president from office through the process of impeachment.

Legislative Branch

The law-making branch of government consists of the two chambers of Congress, the Senate and the House of Representatives, both elected by the people. There are 100 senators—two per state—and 435 representatives—one each per state and the rest allocated (apportioned) according to state population.

Senators serve six-year terms with one-third of the Senate up for election every two years; Senate elections are held in even-numbered years. Representatives serve two-year terms; in even numbered years, all 435 House members run for election. There are no term limits for either senators or representatives.

How a Federal Bill Becomes a Law

Anyone can have an idea for a law. Whether the idea comes from you, as a citizen, or from an elected official, that idea needs to be written up as a bill and sponsored by a member of Congress. It then goes through a series of steps in order to become a law.

Except for revenue-raising bills, which can only originate in the House of Representatives, a bill can start in either chamber of Congress. There it's assigned an identification number and, depending on where it originated, is sent to the appropriate Senate or House committee. That committee researches and discusses the bill and can also make changes to it.

The committee then votes to accept or reject the bill they've just studied. If they reject it, the bill dies in committee. If they accept it, the bill goes before all the members of the House or Senate for debate and possible amendment, before that chamber votes to accept or reject it. In either chamber, a simple majority is needed for a bill to pass.

If rejected, the bill dies; if accepted, it moves on to the other chamber of Congress to go through the committee-debate-vote process all over again. If both chambers approve the same version of the bill, it goes on to the president.

If the president signs the bill it becomes law. If vetoed, the bill is returned to Congress for another vote; a two-thirds majority vote will override the president's veto.

With Congress in session, if the president takes no action the bill automatically becomes law after 10 days. If Congress isn't in session the bill doesn't become law after that 10-day period.⁹

Executive Branch

The executive branch of government carries out the laws. It includes the president and vice president, elected together by the people; the Cabinet, appointed by the president; and numerous agencies and departments. A presidential term is four years; elections are in even-numbered years. Presidents are limited to two elected terms.

The Cabinet advises the president. The Cabinet consists of the vice president and the heads of the 15 executive departments.¹⁰ With the exception of the vice president, Cabinet heads are nominated by the president and confirmed by a simple majority of the Senate. Each new president selects a new Cabinet.

Various boards, commissions, and independent agencies also participate in executive operations and oversight.

The Cabinet

Vice President

[U.S. Department of Agriculture](#)

[U.S. Department of Commerce](#)

[U.S. Department of Defense](#)

[U.S. Department of Education](#)

[U.S. Department of Energy](#)

[U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#)

[U.S. Department of Homeland Security](#)

[U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development](#)

[U.S. Department of Justice](#)

[U.S. Department of Labor](#)

[U.S. Department of State](#)

[U.S. Department of the Interior](#)

[U.S. Department of the Treasury](#)

[U.S. Department of Transportation](#)

[U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs](#)

Judicial Branch



U.S. Supreme Court, Washington, DC.

The judicial branch, made up of the Supreme Court and other federal courts, interprets and applies laws. A chief justice and eight associate justices make up the nine-member Supreme Court. Supreme Court justices are appointed for life. When there's a vacancy on the Court through death or retirement, the president appoints a nominee and the Senate confirms or rejects that nominee.

The Supreme Court, located in Washington, DC, is our country's highest court. Most of the cases it hears are appeals from lower courts—cases that have worked their way up through a series of

appeals. Usually a case is forwarded from a lower *federal* court, but appeals can also come from *state* courts if the case involves federal law. In the rare event that the Court hears a new case, it's generally state vs. state or state vs. the federal government.

The process: The party on the losing side of a lower court case petitions the Court to review the decision. The justices study the petition and then vote on whether to review or not. If at least four justices agree to the review, they move on to written and oral arguments from both parties. The justices then vote and write opinions. First-draft opinions may lead to discussion and minds may be changed. Once the opinions are finalized, the majority opinion forms the court's decision. The justices who disagree with that decision write dissenting opinions.

State Governments

The federal government is a template for state governments. As with the federal government, all state governments are based on a constitution. Indiana's first constitution was adopted in 1816 when Indiana became a state and was rewritten in 1851; it has been amended many times since then.¹

Like the federal government, state governments also have three branches: executive, legislative, and judicial, with duties and responsibilities much the same as those of their federal counterparts.

In all states the chief executive officer is the governor, directly elected by the people. A state may also have other directly elected executive officers, such as a lieutenant governor, an attorney general, a secretary of state, an auditor, a treasurer, and others. The exact structure of the executive branch varies from state to state. The organizational chart in Figure 1 shows Indiana's governing structure for all three branches.²

All states also have directly elected legislatures and, with the exception of Nebraska, all state legislatures are bicameral (consisting of two chambers or houses). As with the federal government, the upper chamber is the Senate and the lower chamber is the House of Representatives. State legislatures vary in their number of senators (Alaska has 20; Minnesota has 67) and representatives (Nebraska has none; New Hampshire has 400). Indiana has 50 senators and 100 representatives, apportioned by population.

State judicial branches all have a state supreme court to hear appeals from the lower-level appellate courts and trial courts.

Indiana State Government



Executive: As the state's chief executive officer, the governor oversees executive branch functions. The governor can recommend legislation and sign or veto bills that have passed both legislative chambers. He/she is also commander-in-chief of the Indiana National Guard and the Indiana Guard Reserve; the governor may grant reprieves, commutations, and pardons.³ Indiana governors serve four-year terms with no overall term limits; however, governors may not serve for more than eight years in a twelve-year period.⁴

Indiana Statehouse, Indianapolis, IN.

Legislative: The Indiana General Assembly (IGA) is Indiana's legislative branch, consisting of 50 senators and 100 representatives. Senators serve four-year terms and representatives serve two-year terms. The IGA alternates long and short sessions, meeting for 61 days in odd-numbered years and 30 days in even-numbered years. The IGA makes the laws for the state. A bill becomes law in a manner very similar to the way in which federal legislation is passed.

How a Bill Becomes a Law in Indiana

A bill is introduced in either the House or the Senate.

The leadership of that chamber (president pro tempore of the Senate or speaker of the House of Representatives) can choose to call the bill for a first reading or not. If not, the bill dies; if called, the bill is read to the entire originating chamber.

If the originating chamber leader decides to advance the bill, it is assigned to a committee; otherwise the bill dies.

If assigned to a committee, the committee chairperson may choose not to schedule the bill for a hearing (bill dies) or the bill may be advanced, in which case a public hearing is scheduled. At the hearing, the pros and cons of the bill are discussed by the committee and public input is accepted.

After the hearing, the committee chair can call for a vote or table the bill. A tabled bill does not necessarily come back for a vote (bill dies). If a vote is taken, the bill may be defeated (bill dies) or it may advance back to the originating chamber for a second reading.

If the chamber leader schedules a second reading, anyone from the full chamber of origin may suggest amendments. The amendments are voted on by the full chamber, and if the amendments pass, the bill itself is voted on.

A yes vote advances the bill to a potential third reading, which the chamber leader may or may not schedule. If not scheduled, the bill dies. If a third reading is scheduled, the bill may again be amended. Up to this point the bill has advanced on a simple majority vote, but if amended now, a two-thirds majority vote is needed for amendment approval. If the amendments are approved, the bill comes up for another full-body, simple-majority vote.

If the bill passes in the originating chamber, it goes on to repeat this whole process in the other chamber.

The bill may die at any point in the second-chamber process. If it receives final approval as-is, it goes on to the governor for his signature.

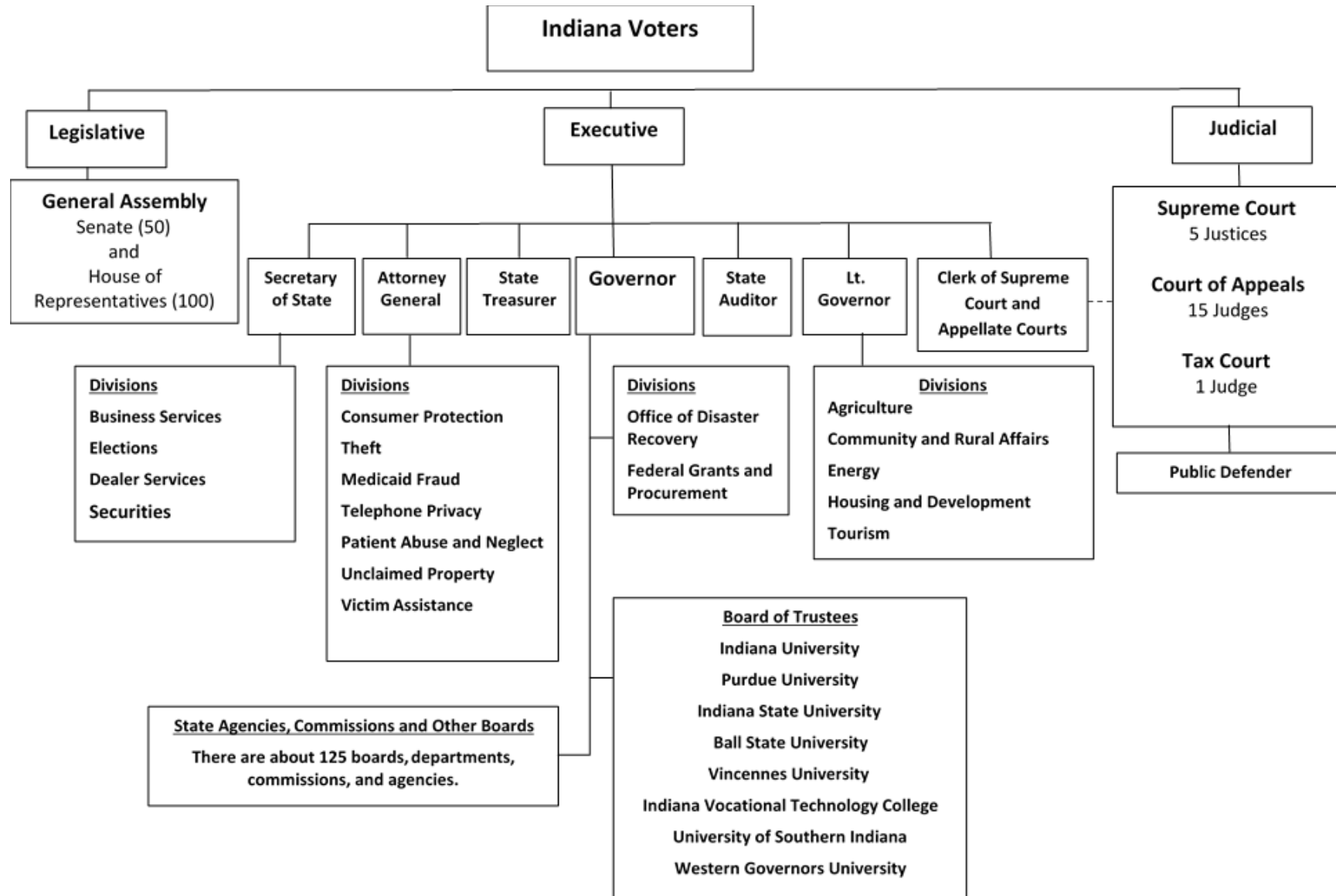
If the bill is amended in the second chamber, it must return to the first chamber where the amendments are approved or not. If approved, the bill is sent to the governor, otherwise the bill dies, unless...

...if both chambers want the bill but can't agree on the amendments, the bill is sent to a conference committee made up of two members—one Democrat and one Republican—from each chamber. If their differences can be reconciled, the bill is returned to both chambers for approval and, if approved, is sent on to the governor.

If the governor signs the bill it becomes law. If he does nothing it becomes a law after seven days. If he vetoes it, the General Assembly can override the veto with a simple majority vote in both chambers.

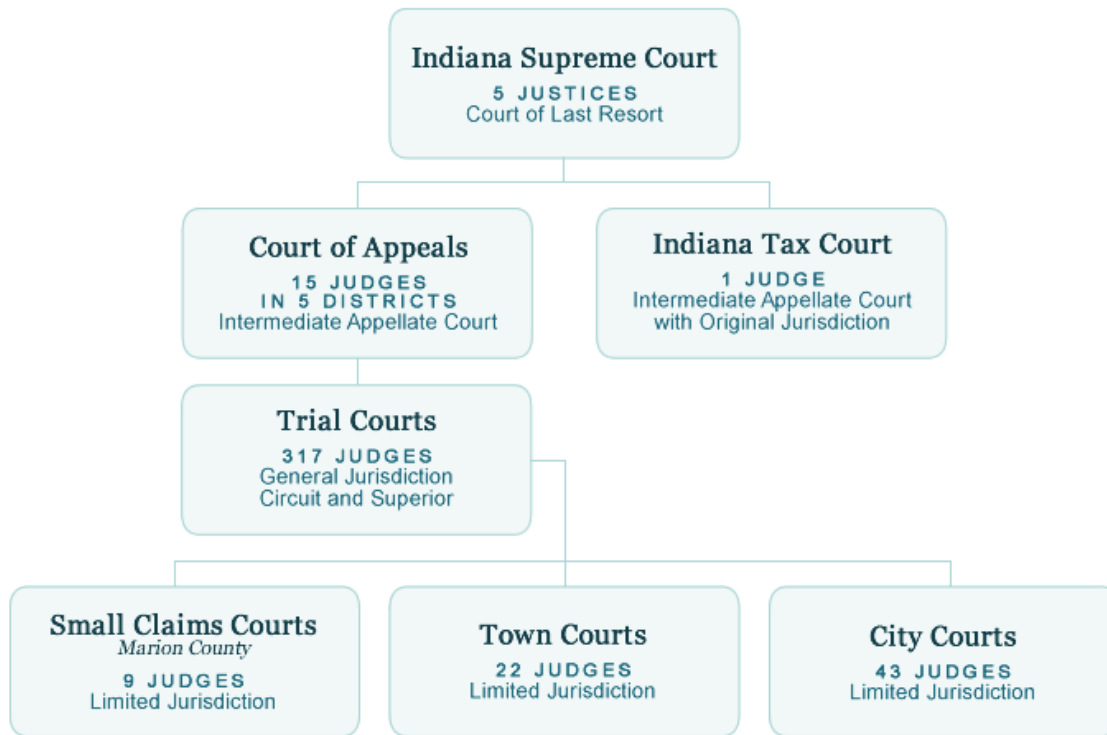
[Chart and Detailed Description of the Bill-to-Law Process in the Indiana General Assembly PDF](#)

Figure 1. Indiana state government organizational chart.



Judicial: The Indiana court system is described in Figure 2.⁵

Figure 2. Indiana judicial system organizational chart.



Indiana Courts

Indiana Supreme Court: 1 court, 4 justices plus 1 chief justice.

The Indiana Supreme Court reviews lower court decisions; the scope of its original⁵ jurisdiction revolves largely around the practice of law, and also appeals related to death sentences. Justices are nominated by a judicial nominating commission and appointed by the governor. After two years, a Yes or No retention ballot determines whether they go on to serve a ten-year term.

Court of Appeals: 5 districts, 15 judges (3/district); all of the judges select a chief judge, and the judges of each district select a presiding judge.

The Court of Appeals has jurisdiction over appeals not taken to the Indiana Supreme Court; its only original jurisdiction involves direct review of the final decisions of some administrative agencies. Judges go through the same nomination-appointment-ballot review process as supreme court justices, after which they serve ten-year terms with mandatory retirement at age 75.

Tax Court: 1 court (in Indianapolis; courts in seven other designated counties may conduct evidentiary hearings at the request of the taxpayer), 1 judge.

The Tax Court has original jurisdiction in all tax appeals; appeals of tax court decisions go directly to the Indiana Supreme Court. Selection and retention of judges is the same as the Court of Appeals.

All counties in Indiana have circuit courts and some have superior courts. Only Marion County has a separate small claims court; only St. Joseph County has a separate probate court.⁶

Both circuit courts and superior courts are trial courts—they can hear any civil or criminal case. Circuit courts, in most cases, have unlimited trial jurisdiction. They were, originally, the only courts in each county. Superior courts were created by the Indiana General Assembly in response to growing local need for more trial courts; the jurisdiction and the organization of superior courts is county-specific. Although the majority of Indiana counties have both superior and circuit courts, most of the trial courts are superior courts.⁷

Superior Courts: 201 judges (as of 1/1/2016); court organization is county-specific.

Superior courts exercise original and concurrent⁸ jurisdiction in all civil and criminal cases; they hear appeals from city and town courts. In all but four counties (Lake, St. Joseph, Vanderburgh, Allen), judges run for six-year terms in a general election.

Circuit Courts: 91 judicial circuits (of Indiana’s 92 counties, only Ohio and Dearborn counties share a circuit); 115 judges (as of 1/1/2016). Some counties, including Monroe, have successfully petitioned the IGA to “...remove the distinctions between circuit and superior courts found in the constitution.”⁹

Circuit courts exercise concurrent jurisdiction in all civil and criminal cases; they hear appeals from city and town courts. In all counties except Vanderburgh, judges run for six-year terms in partisan elections.

Probate Court: 1 court, 1 judge (St. Joseph Probate Court is Indiana’s only remaining separate probate court).

The Probate Court exercises original and concurrent jurisdiction in all civil and criminal cases. It hears appeals from city and town courts. The judge runs for a six-year term in a general election.

Small Claims Courts: Marion is the only Indiana County with a distinct small claims court; the court has nine divisions, one for each township.

With the superior and circuit courts, the small claims court exercises original and concurrent jurisdiction over civil cases with limited damage claims. Judges are elected by their township voters to serve four-year terms.

City Courts: 43 courts (as of 1/1/2016).

City court jurisdiction is based on city size. City courts have jurisdiction over city ordinance violations, misdemeanors and infractions. Judges are elected by the city’s voters to serve four-year terms.

Town Courts: 22 courts (as of 1/1/2016)

Town courts have jurisdiction over town ordinance violations, misdemeanors, and infractions. Judges are elected by the town’s voters to serve four-year terms.

Local Governments

Local governments play a significant role in our lives. Many of the laws and services that impact us daily are the product of our county or municipal (city or town) governments. Understanding how local governments work helps us to be more involved and pro-active citizens. If we don't understand, we won't participate, and if we don't participate, others will make decisions for us.

Under the U.S. Constitution, states are responsible for establishing the local governments within that state. Both the Indiana Constitution¹ and, subsequently, the Indiana Code² (the body of laws governing the state) establish the form and function of county, township, and municipal governments within Indiana. The Constitution and the Code devote many pages to defining and delineating the governmental powers of each entity as they relate one to another.

How *do* county, township and municipal governments relate to each other? Township and municipal governments, as well as school corporations, exist *within* the boundaries of a county but by-and-large are not governed *by* the county. The state assigns certain powers to each form of local government and dictates that one entity not usurp the powers of another. However, it doesn't require specific coordination among them, and as a result individual town/city, township, and county cooperation or integration varies from location to location.

County Governments

In Indiana, as in many states, counties are governing bodies whose boundaries are determined by the state legislature. By 1859, Indiana had divided itself into 92 counties and that number remains today.

County government is an aspect of local government and, like townships and municipal governments, it is overseen by the state. With the exception of providing for county "poor farms," the powers held by county governments were not initially spelled out. In 1980, a change made to the Indiana Code (IC 36-1-3)³ reversed the original determination and, rather than grant only those powers specifically stated in the constitution, it now grants to counties powers "...not expressly denied by the Indiana Constitution or a statute, or granted to another entity." Currently, Indiana county governments deal with many aspects of our everyday lives: public health and safety, property tax administration, planning, zoning, infrastructure, and many more.

Article 6⁴ of the Indiana Constitution specifies the required offices, terms of office, and necessary qualifications of county office holders. A county's constitutionally created offices include the clerk of the circuit court, auditor, recorder, treasurer, sheriff, coroner, and surveyor and "Such other county and township officers as may be necessary..." The "necessary" offices of county council, board of county commissioners, and county assessor were created by statute (written law passed by the legislature and now part of the Indiana Code). Article 7⁵ of the Indiana Constitution stipulates that counties have a prosecuting attorney and a circuit court judge, while statutes allow for superior court and county court judges.

Most counties in Indiana have a three-member board of commissioners and a six-member county council. The commissioners serve as the executive branch; they have both administrative and legislative responsibility, sharing the latter with the county council. The council holds sole fiscal responsibility for the county. However,

larger counties may elect to have a single county executive in place of the board of commissioners along with a nine-person council, in which case the council holds sole legislative function for that county. Lake, Marion, and St. Joseph counties have adopted the single executive model of county government.

Township Governments

A township is a geographic and political division of a county. The township trustee is the executive officer presiding over a three-person township board. The trustee and all three board members are elected to four-year terms. Townships have the authority to levy taxes; each township has a township board-approved budget.

One of the township trustee's primary functions is to provide emergency assistance to township residents in need. Both the form of the need and the eligibility requirements must follow written guidelines that the trustee prepares according to state statute (IC 12-20-5.5-2). The distinguishing aspects of township assistance are the speed with which it's administered (completed applications must be approved or denied within 72 hours) and flexibility.

Within each township, the trustee is also responsible for providing fire-fighting services, maintaining abandoned cemeteries, handling weed complaints, mediating fence line disputes, and seeing to indigent burials.

Municipal Governments

In Indiana, a municipality's classification as a city or a town is determined largely by population; population also determines a municipality's designation as a first-, second-, or third-class city. Cities with populations over 600,000 are first-class cities; populations ranging from 35,000 to 599,000 are second-class cities, and cities with populations from 2,000 to 35,000 are usually designated third-class cities. A city's classification determines how many legislative districts—and thus how many council seats—are required to represent a city that size. A municipality with a population under 2,000 must be designated as a town, but towns can also have more than 2,000 people and still opt to remain a town. Allowing for population changes, the Indiana code lays out specific steps that must be taken for a municipality to change its designation from town to city or from one city classification to another.⁶

The main difference between city and town governments in Indiana is that cities have separate executive and legislative branches (mayor and city council, respectively). Administrative duties are the responsibility of the executive branch (the mayor or another city officer or department). The power to make or change laws falls to the legislative branch (common council). Towns on the other hand have an elected town council which then selects one of its members to be the council president. The president has some executive functions, but also retains her/his council legislative responsibilities.

Cities and towns can but don't necessarily have courts. If they do, the courts have jurisdiction over city/town ordinance violations, misdemeanors, and infractions. Voters elect their city/town judges to four-year terms.

Monroe County Government

https://www.in.gov/core/mylocal/monroe_county.html



Monroe County Courthouse, Bloomington, IN

As of July 1, 2018, the U.S. Census Bureau estimates the population of Monroe County at 146,917¹, making it the 12th most populous county in Indiana. Monroe County encompasses 11 townships (Bean Blossom, Benton, Bloomington, Clear Creek, Indian Creek, Perry, Polk, Richland, Salt Creek, Van Buren, and Washington), one city (Bloomington), two towns (Ellettsville and Stinesville), and two school corporations (Monroe County Community School Corporation and Richland-Bean Blossom Community School Corporation). The county seat is Bloomington.

Because Bloomington is the Monroe county seat, the offices of both the city and the county are often in close proximity and may even have similar names; for instance, both Bloomington and Monroe County have a parks and recreation department. This may cause some confusion—especially for those who live within the city limits who may wonder if they’re supposed to abide by city or county regulations. However, the state is clear that municipal laws take precedence within the municipal boundaries and county laws hold in those parts of the county outside the municipal boundaries. There are occasional exceptions to this for certain county-wide ordinances, such as county-wide bans on smoking in public spaces.

Like most Indiana counties, Monroe has a three-person board of commissioners and a six-member county council. It divides its offices into four areas of responsibility: civil government, community, infrastructure, and justice.

Monroe County Government

Civil Government Offices

County Council
Board of Commissioners
Assessor
Auditor
Emergency Management
Human Resources
Legal
Recorder
Surveyor
GIS division
Technical Services
Treasurer

Community Offices

Airport
Animal Management
Coroner
Health Department
Monroe County Code
Parks and Rec
Purdue Extension
Soil and Water Conservation
Township Trustees
Veteran’s Affairs
Voter Registration
Youth Services Bureau
Boards and Commissions (40)²

Infrastructure Offices

Building Department
GIS Division
Planning
Highway Department
Solid Waste Mgmt. Dist.
Weights & Measures

Justice Offices

Clerk of Court
Monroe Circuit Court
Probation
Prosecutor
Public Defender
Sheriff

Civil Government Offices

Board of Commissioners <https://www.co.monroe.in.us/commissioners/>

Monroe County is divided into three districts for the Board of Commissioners. All three commissioners on the board are elected by the whole county but are required to live in the district they represent.

The commissioners are responsible for authorizing claims against the county; authorizing contracts; supervising county property, including constructing and maintaining roads and bridges; and for administrative functions, such as filling positions on boards and commissions (Monroe County Airport, Monroe County Emergency Management Department, the Health Department, Parks and Recreation, and the Planning Department), and appointing specific department heads. The Building Department, Monroe County Highway Department, Monroe County Technical Services Department, Extension Services, the Legal Department, Veterans' Affairs Department, and the Department of Weights and Measures are all under the direct supervision of the commissioners. They are also members of the Monroe County Solid Waste Management District Board of Directors. As well, the commissioners have the power to adopt ordinances, a power they share with the Monroe County Council.

Monroe County's three commissioner districts are:

District 1: Bean Blossom Township; Indian Creek Township; Perry Township precincts 1-6, 27, and 29; Richland Township; and Van Buren Township

District 2: Bloomington Township

District 3: Benton Township; Clear Creek Township; Perry Township precincts 7-26, 28, and 30-32; Polk Township; Salt Creek Township; and Washington Township

[Monroe County Commissioners District Map PDF³](#)

County Council <https://www.co.monroe.in.us/council/>

The council's primary responsibilities are authorizing the county budget and fixing the county tax rate, as well as working with the commissioners on the enactment of ordinances.

[Monroe County Council District Map PDF⁴](#)

Assessor <https://www.co.monroe.in.us/department/?structureid=21>

The assessor's office maintains the property records of townships within Monroe County, including value assessments and property sales.

Auditor <https://www.co.monroe.in.us/department/index.php?structureid=73>

The auditor is Monroe County's chief financial officer with responsibility for calculating and setting tax rates, as well as handling tax exemptions and deductions, tax sales, and property transfers. The auditor also prepares the County Council's budget and manages the payroll and the accounts for the county.

Emergency Management <https://www.co.monroe.in.us/department/index.php?structureid=19>

This department establishes an emergency management program to deal with disaster preparation, response, and recovery.

Recorder <https://www.co.monroe.in.us/department/index.php?structureid=23>

This department records and maintains county records in perpetuity.

Surveyor <https://www.co.monroe.in.us/department/index.php?structureid=72>

This office maintains section corners (markers from the original survey of the state), supports Geographic Information Systems (GIS), provides technical assistance for storm water management, and monitors site development.

Treasurer <https://www.co.monroe.in.us/department/index.php?structureid=75>

The treasurer's office collects property taxes.

Community Offices

Health Department <https://www.co.monroe.in.us/department/?structureid=12>

The Health Department strives to promote good health in the county. It issues birth and death certificates; inspects and issues permits for food establishments; inspects and issues permits for septic systems and campgrounds; and monitors environmental issues such as lead, radon, and mosquitos.

Parks and Recreation <https://www.co.monroe.in.us/department/?structureid=22>

This department administers and maintains a number of parks and green spaces including: Flatwoods Park, Jackson Creek Park, Will Detmer Park, and the Karst Farm Park, as well as the Athletic Complex, Dog Park, Disc Golf and Greenway. It also provides educational and recreational programs.

Purdue Extension <https://www.co.monroe.in.us/department/index.php?structureid=20>

The Monroe County Extension Agency provides education and information relating primarily to agriculture, natural resources, and consumer concerns.

Soil and Water Conservation <https://www.co.monroe.in.us/department/index.php?structureid=24>

A county-resident-elected board governs the Monroe County Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD). The district provides education and leadership regarding the county's natural resources and works in partnership with a number of state and local agencies including the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Purdue Cooperative Extension (Extension), and the City of Bloomington, among others.

Voter Registration <https://www.co.monroe.in.us/department/division.php?structureid=89>

This office maintains Monroe County's registered voter records.

Youth Services Bureau <https://www.co.monroe.in.us/department/?structureid=78>

Through its services in advocacy and education, the Youth Services Bureau promotes healthy family functioning and youth development.

Infrastructure Offices

Building Department <https://www.co.monroe.in.us/department/index.php?structureid=65>

This department issues building permits and handles the required inspections for construction, remodeling, and alteration projects to ensure they're in compliance with building and safety codes.

GIS Division <https://www.co.monroe.in.us/department/division.php?structureid=150>

GIS, a computer-based mapping program, is available online, free to Monroe County residents. It provides information on property boundaries, roads, emergency management, and health data, along with the ability to create custom maps for various needs.

Planning <https://www.co.monroe.in.us/department/?structureid=13>

This department is the coordinating agency for Monroe County's land use plans, both immediate and long-range. The services it provides assist the public, the Plan Commission, the Board of Zoning Appeals, and the Board of Commissioners.

Highway Department <https://www.co.monroe.in.us/department/?structureid=26>

The Highway Department has responsibility for roads, bridges, culverts, and traffic signs/signals. It issues driveway and utility permits and has administrative ties with the county's Drainage Board and Traffic Commission.

Solid Waste Management District <http://gogreendistrict.com/index.html>

Solid waste management districts were mandated by the Indiana legislature in 1990. The goal of Monroe County's Solid Waste Management District is to promote environmentally sound waste disposal practices through reduction, reuse, and recovery of recyclable materials.

Weights & Measures <https://www.co.monroe.in.us/department/index.php?structureid=71>

Ensures the accuracy of both the stated (on packaging) and the actual weight, count, or measure of products sold in Monroe County.

Justice Offices

Clerk of Court <https://www.co.monroe.in.us/department/index.php?structureid=18>

The office of the Monroe County Clerk of Court prepares, records, and maintains the documents needed to assist the circuit court judges and provides information as needed to government agencies, attorneys, the media, and the public in general.

Monroe Circuit Court <https://www.co.monroe.in.us/department/?structureid=104>

Monroe County's unified court system has nine divisions that manage all the cases that come before the courts, including felonies, small claims, family concerns, and traffic violations, among others.

Probation <https://www.co.monroe.in.us/department/?structureid=92>

A division of the Monroe Circuit Court, the Probation Department monitors and assists those offenders released under supervision instead of serving jail or prison time.

Prosecutor <https://www.co.monroe.in.us/department/?structureid=83>

Prosecutors serve a dual role. Together with law enforcement officials, they promote public safety and crime prevention; and they file criminal charges and prosecute cases on behalf of the state of Indiana.

Public Defender <https://www.co.monroe.in.us/department/?structureid=101>

Public defenders provide free criminal defense when a defendant's economic situation requires it.

Sheriff <https://www.co.monroe.in.us/department/?structureid=14>

The office of Monroe County Sheriff is responsible for public safety and law enforcement.

Townships

<https://www.co.monroe.in.us/department/?structureid=157>

Monroe County is divided into 11 townships: Bean Blossom, Benton, Bloomington, Clear Creek, Indian Creek, Perry, Polk, Richland, Salt Creek, Van Buren, and Washington.

Township trustees accept and act on applications for assistance from any township resident in need. As with all Indiana townships, Monroe County township trustees draw up their township's guidelines for granting assistance, adhering to state regulations; these guidelines must then be adopted by the township board. Guidelines are to be updated annually and posted in a highly visible public location.

Trustees also have responsibility for providing fire-fighting services, maintaining abandoned cemeteries, handling weed complaints, mediating fence line disputes, and seeing to indigent burials.

City of Bloomington

<https://bloomington.in.gov/>



City Hall, Bloomington, IN

City classifications are determined by size, and classifications dictate certain aspects of local government. With approximately 85,000 residents, including IU students, Bloomington is a second-class city. This means its council must be divided into six districts⁵ of roughly equal population. These districts must be contiguous, compact and, with certain exceptions, must not cross precinct⁶ boundary lines. An elected representative from each of the six districts plus three at-large members make up the Bloomington City Council.

The City Council is tasked with passing ordinances, orders, or resolutions and may also make loans and issue bonds. Upon recommendation of the mayor, the council can pass an ordinance to establish any executive department necessary to handle administrative functions to provide for the city's needs. Heads of these departments or agencies are then under the mayor's jurisdiction.

From its members, Bloomington City Council chooses a president and a vice president. A quorum (majority of to elected members) is required to take a vote.

A synopsis of our city government offices and departments, their responsibilities and services follows. An asterisk (*) denotes documents/information provided courtesy of Citizens' Academy, a division of the office of Housing and Neighborhood Development (HAND).

The City of Bloomington has 14 departments and 650 employees. Bloomington's organizational chart (Figure 3 and linked below) will help you understand how the various offices relate to one another. The numbers on the organizational chart can be used to associate each entity with the information provided below.

[Bloomington City Government Organizational Chart PDF](#) *

1. Mayor's Office <https://bloomington.in.gov/index.php/departments/office-of-the-mayor>

The mayor's office is the executive branch of Bloomington City government. By engaging with the public and working with the City Council, the mayor's office takes the leadership role in determining and carrying out the priorities set by the city's residents.

The mayor's office has three main areas of activity: Policy and Administration develops city policies and procedures and, with the City Council, supervises implementation; Communication provides information to both residents and visitors about the city's services, programs, policies, and events; and Innovation encourages creativity and experimentation to develop and improve city services.

[Bloomington Office of the Mayor Organizational Chart PDF](#) *

2. Bloomington City Council <https://bloomington.in.gov/council>

The Bloomington City Council has six council members who represent individual districts, and three at-large members who represent the city as a whole. Council members serve a four-year term; council terms are not staggered. The term for council members begins January 1 and runs through December 31 of the fourth year.

Find your district and City Council member using the City Council district interactive map:

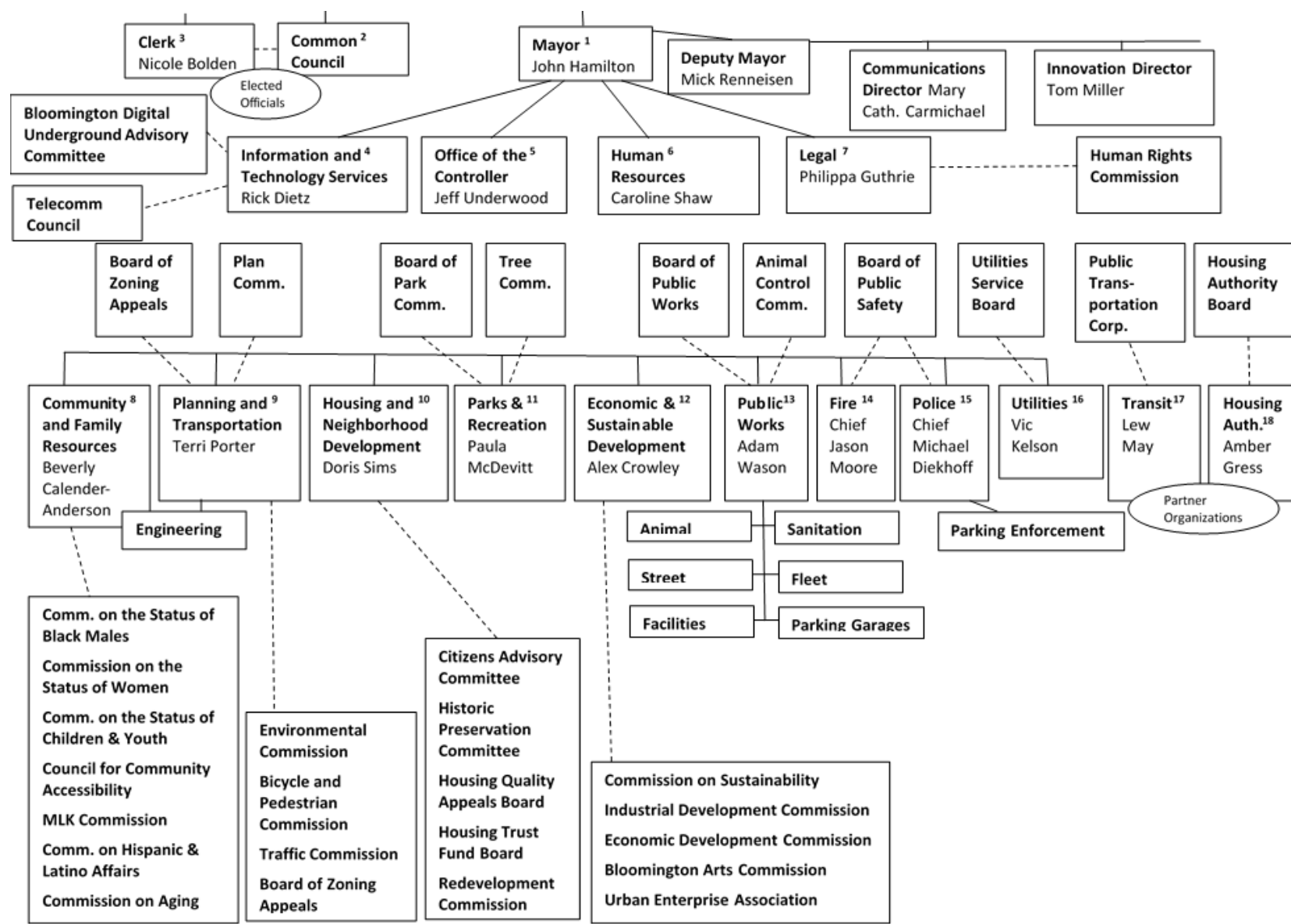
<https://bloomington.in.gov/interactive/maps/councilmap>.

A calendar of currently scheduled City Council meetings can be found at:

<https://bloomington.in.gov/council/meetings/2018>

As established by Indiana Code § 36-4-6-18, the council is responsible for setting city policy by enacting ordinances; adopting resolutions, orders, and motions for governing Bloomington; and approving and adopting the city budget.

Figure 3. Bloomington city government organizational chart.



3. Clerk's Office

The clerk's office maintains the Bloomington Municipal Code. As the record-keeper for the City Council, this office provides the public with information about the council and its activities. It also handles parking ticket appeals and can officiate at marriages.

The differences between the city clerk and the county clerk are outlined in the document:

[2016 City Clerk vs. County Clerk PDF](#) *

4. Information and Technology Services <https://bloomington.in.gov/departments/its>

The Information and Technology Services Department provides for the computer services, software development, and IT training needs of the city's many departments.

To help citizens connect with their government, Information and Technology Services has developed tools such as uReport (<https://bloomington.in.gov/ureport>) for reporting potholes and graffiti and similar problems; and inRoads (<https://bloomington.in.gov/inroads/events>), an interactive map showing road closings.

5. Controller's Office <https://bloomington.in.gov/departments/controller>

The controller's office prepares the city's overall annual budget and is responsible for seeing that public tax dollars are properly spent to provide services to Bloomington residents.

City departments prepare individual budgets with revenue and expense estimates. They present these to the City Council in August of each year. In September, the council holds public hearings on the budgets; budgets are approved mid-October. Approved budgets are submitted to the Indiana's Department of Local Government Finance (DLGF), which then issues a final budget order.

The city budget can be found at: <https://bloomington.in.gov/city/budget>

6. Human Resources <https://bloomington.in.gov/departments/hr>

The Human Resources Department manages the city's recruitment, selection, and hiring processes, fosters diversity, and promotes equal opportunity hiring policies.

7. Legal <https://bloomington.in.gov/departments/legal>

The Legal Department "...provides legal advice and representation to the Mayor, department heads, boards and commissions and city employees in all facets of City business."

The Human Rights Commission, <https://bloomington.in.gov/departments/legal/human-rights>, is administered by the Legal Department. Bloomington strives to be free of discrimination and to provide fair housing, fair employment, and accessibility.

8. Community and Family Resources Department <https://bloomington.in.gov/departments/cfrd>

The Community and Family Resources Department develops programs and provides services to enhance residents' quality of life. It strives to "... encourage active participation in government; connect community members to resources; encourage collaborations among area non-profits, businesses, organizations and agencies; and celebrate Bloomington's unique and diverse history, character and people."

The following commissions, councils, and coalitions fall under its umbrella:

Commission on the Status of Black Males <https://bloomington.in.gov/boards/status-of-black-males>

Commission on the Status of Women <https://bloomington.in.gov/boards/status-of-women>

Commission on the Status of Children and Youth <https://bloomington.in.gov/boards/status-of-children>

Council for Community Accessibility <https://bloomington.in.gov/boards/community-accessibility>

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday Celebration Commission <https://bloomington.in.gov/boards/mlk>

Commission on Hispanic and Latino Affairs <https://bloomington.in.gov/boards/hispanic-latino-affairs>

Commission on Aging <https://bloomington.in.gov/boards/aging>

Monroe County Domestic Violence Coalition <https://bloomington.in.gov/boards/domestic-violence>

Resource Directory:

https://bloomington.in.gov/sites/default/files/2017-07/2015%20Resource%20Directory_english.pdf

9. Planning and Transportation Department <https://bloomington.in.gov/planning>

There are three divisions of the Planning and Transportation Department:

- Development Services is responsible for zoning and land use issues, zoning ordinance enforcement, and environmental protection policy
- Planning Services is responsible for long-range and sub-area planning studies for land use and transportation policy, data analysis, address assignment, and permits
- Transportation and Traffic Services is responsible for the management of design, construction, and operation of transportation infrastructure, as well as for engineering safety and accessibility standards and permits.

10. Housing and Neighborhood Development (HAND) <https://bloomington.in.gov/departments/hand>

The department's *Welcome to Bloomington* webpage provides a wealth of information:

<https://bloomington.in.gov/welcome>

11. Parks and Recreation Department <https://bloomington.in.gov/departments/parks>

The Bloomington Parks and Recreation Department has been accredited by the Commission for Accreditation for Park and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) since 2001. The department handles more than \$50 million in Bloomington assets and manages 2,275 acres of property:

34 parks	3 community centers	22 tennis courts
1 golf course	1 fitness/recreation center	24 basketball courts
1 ice arena	3 natural resource properties	30 +/- miles of trails
2 pools	13 ball fields	

It also provides over 300 sports/recreation programs each year.

Appointed by the mayor, a four-member Board of Park Commissioners is the department's policy-making authority. The board meets at 4 p.m. on the fourth Tuesday of every month in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 401 N. Morton St.

12. Economic and Sustainable Development <https://bloomington.in.gov/departments/esd>

The Economic and Sustainable Development Department is concerned with social equity, a healthy environment, and sustainable development.

Current initiatives include:

Bloomington Trades District: <https://bloomington.in.gov/business/districts/ctp>

Solarize Bloomington: <https://bloomington.in.gov/sustainability/solarize>

Bike Share Project: <https://bloomington.in.gov/transportation/bike/bike-share-project>

Sustainability Action Plan: <https://bloomington.in.gov/sustainability/action-plan>

13. Public Works <https://bloomington.in.gov/departments/public-works>

The Public Works Department has five divisions that deal with infrastructure, operations, and services.

Public Works also handles information about sidewalks

(<https://bloomington.in.gov/transportation/sidewalks>).

Animal Care and Control Division: <https://bloomington.in.gov/animal-shelter>

Animal Control Commission: <https://bloomington.in.gov/boards/animal-control>

Fleet Maintenance Division: <https://bloomington.in.gov/locations/fleet-maintenance>

Parking Facilities Division: <https://bloomington.in.gov/transportation/parking/monthly-parking>

Sanitation Division: <https://bloomington.in.gov/sanitation>

Street Division: <https://bloomington.in.gov/departments/public-works/street>

The Board of Public Works (<https://bloomington.in.gov/boards/public-works>) monitors and grants final approval to commission resolutions and directives.

14. Fire Department <https://bloomington.in.gov/fire>

Fire Prevention and Education: <https://bloomington.in.gov/fire/prevention>

15. Police Department <https://bloomington.in.gov/departments/police>

Police Services: <https://bloomington.in.gov/police>

Crime Prevention: <https://bloomington.in.gov/police/crime-prevention>

16. Utilities Department <https://bloomington.in.gov/utilities>**17. Bloomington Transit** <https://bloomingtontransit.com/>

Route Schedules and Maps: <https://bloomingtontransit.com/>

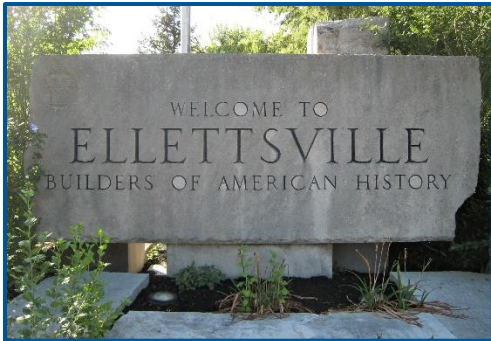
Complete System Map: <https://bloomingtontransit.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/SystemMap2015front.pdf>

18. Housing Authority <http://www.bhaindiana.net/>

Housing Authority Board: <https://bloomington.in.gov/boards/housing-authority>

Town of Ellettsville

<http://www.ellettsville.in.us/>

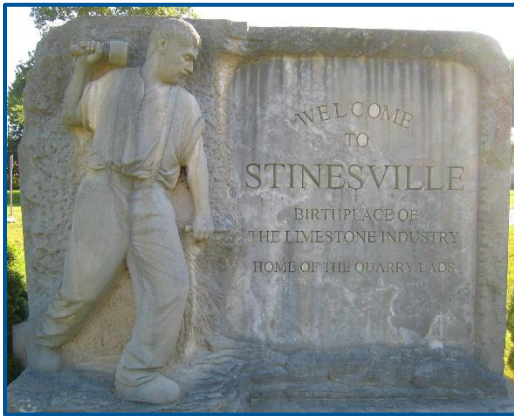


Founded in 1837, Ellettsville was incorporated in 1866. With a population of approximately 6,400⁷ Ellettsville is designated as a town rather than a city. Ellettsville's governing body is a five-member town council plus a clerk-treasurer. Together they manage Ellettsville's administrative and financial responsibilities. Other government offices include the town manager, Fire Department, Planning Department, Police Department, and Street Department. Ellettsville is in the Richland-Bean Blossom School Corporation district.

Ellettsville, Indiana Code of Ordinances:

[http://library.amlegal.com/nxt/gateway.dll/Indiana/ellettsville_in/townofellettsvilleindianacodeofordinance?fullTextSearch=yes&fn=default.htm\\$3.0\\$vid=amlegal:ellettsville_in](http://library.amlegal.com/nxt/gateway.dll/Indiana/ellettsville_in/townofellettsvilleindianacodeofordinance?fullTextSearch=yes&fn=default.htm3.0vid=amlegal:ellettsville_in)

Town of Stinesville



Stinesville, platted in 1855, had a population of 198 as of the 2010 U.S. census. Stinesville is governed by a town board consisting of four elected officials. Appointed positions include a town marshal and a four-person park board.

Stinesville does not have a community website; however, information on current office holders can be found in the LWV-BMC Officials List under Stinesville: <https://www.lwv-bmc.org/officials-list>

References

Branches of the Federal Government

- ¹ <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution/what-does-it-say>
- ² <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript#toc-section-8->
- ³ <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript#toc-section-8-> The final paragraph of Article I, Section 8 gives Congress the right to make laws that are “necessary and proper” for carrying out its specific powers. These are considered implied powers.
- ⁴ The Constitution does not list inherent powers. They are assumed given the nature of governments in general. <http://www.ushistory.org/gov/3a.asp>
- ⁵ <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/bill-of-rights/what-does-it-say>
- ⁶ <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript#toc-article-iv->
- ⁷ <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/constitution-transcript#toc-article-vi->
- ⁸ <https://www.usa.gov/branches-of-government>
- ⁹ <https://www.usa.gov/how-laws-are-made>
- ¹⁰ <https://www.usa.gov/executive-departments>

State Governments

- ¹ The Indiana Constitution <http://iga.in.gov/legislative/laws/const/>
- ² <https://www.in.gov/spd/files/eehandbook.pdf>
- ³ <https://faqs.in.gov/hc/en-us/articles/115005229568-What-are-the-duties-of-the-Governor->
- ⁴ Indiana Constitution Article 5, Section 1 https://ballotpedia.org/Governor_of_Indiana
- ⁵ State of Indiana website: <https://www.in.gov/judiciary/2681.htm>
- ⁶ Original jurisdiction refers to a court’s power to hear and decide a case for the first time as opposed to in an appeal. https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/original_jurisdiction
- ⁷ <https://www.in.gov/judiciary/2674.htm>
- ⁸ Concurrent jurisdiction refers to more than one court having the power to hear a case: https://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/concurrent_jurisdiction
- ⁹ <https://www.in.gov/judiciary/2681.htm>

Local Governments

- ¹ Indiana Constitution <http://iga.in.gov/legislative/laws/const/>
- ² Indiana Code <http://iga.in.gov/legislative/laws/2018/ic/titles/001> or <http://iga.in.gov/legislative/laws/2018/ic/titles/1/pdf/IC%201>
- ³ Indiana Code IC 36-1-3 – Home Rule http://iga.in.gov/static-documents/3/4/5/3/34539df7/TITLE36_AR1_ch3.pdf
- ⁴ Indiana Constitution Article 6 <https://www.law.indiana.edu/uslawdocs/inconst/art-6.html>
- ⁵ Indiana Constitution Article 7 <https://www.law.indiana.edu/uslawdocs/inconst/art-7.html>
- ⁶ Indiana Code <http://www.iga.in.gov/legislative/laws/2019/ic/titles/036#36-4>

Monroe County, Bloomington, Ellettsville, Stinesville

- ¹ Monroe County population <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/monroecountyindiana>
- ² Monroe County Boards and Commissions <https://www.co.monroe.in.us/boards/>

- ³ Monroe County Commissioners District Map
https://www.co.monroe.in.us/egov/documents/1530563314_9974.pdf
- ⁴ Monroe County Council District Map
https://www.co.monroe.in.us/egov/documents/1531670654_39718.pdf
- ⁵ Bloomington City Council District Map <https://bloomington.in.gov/interactive/maps/councilmap>
- ⁶ Monroe County/Bloomington precinct maps
<http://mcpl.info/sites/default/files/map-bloomington-precincts.pdf> and
https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/monroedems/pages/37/attachments/original/1345692578/MoCo_Individual_82_Precincts.pdf?1345692578
- ⁷ Ellettsville, U.S. 2010 census www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/ellettsvilletownindiana#
- ⁸ Stinesville, U.S. census https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml?src=bkmk

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The League of Women Voters of Bloomington-Monroe County would like to thank member Elaine Gaul for researching and preparing this document.