

**Summary Report for the Lansing Charter Commission: Literature
Review on Forms and Efficiency of Municipal Government**

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Executive Summary

In 2023 Lansing voters authorized a potential revision of the City Charter by a narrow margin of 51.6%. As a result, a nine-member Charter Review Commission will spend the next three years researching and engaging with residents to draft a new charter. This report provides a summary of research on municipal forms of government to assist the committee in crafting the new charter.

The report is divided into two main sections. The first section discusses the mayor-council and council-manager systems of government and their impacts on public service performance. Currently, the City of Lansing operates under a mayor-council structure but is reconsidering the existing structure. The second section explores what might be the optimal number of council members needed to most effectively represent citizens. The key findings of the report are listed below.

Key Findings:

- Prevalence: Mayor-council and council-manager governments dominate nearly 90% of cities and municipalities in the United States (US).
- While cities frequently change forms of government, the trend shows that council-manager systems are becoming the majority, with 59% of cities in the U.S. using this model. However, among capital cities the mayor-council form of government is more pervasive (56%).
- Some cities use a hybrid approach, referred to as Type III cities or adapted cities, where municipalities may use aspects of both council-manager and mayor-council systems.
- Changes in municipal structure are primarily influenced by citizens' socioeconomic characteristics, particularly income per capita. Higher income communities tend to use the manager-council form of government.
- Overall, council-manager governments generally perform better than mayor-council governments in terms of efficiency, management, and financial status.
- A common rule of thumb suggests having between 5 to 7 council members for most effective citizen representation. Among U.S. cities with population size that are similar to Lansing, the number of council members ranges from 5 to 11.

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I. Mayor-council, council-manager, and type III cities

In the United State (US), two major forms of municipal government are mayor-council and council-manager, where more than 90% of cities in the US adopt either mayor-council (Type I) or council-manager (Type II) forms in their city charters.¹ However, in most city charters, governments also incorporate characteristics of other types, thus there is the third category of Type III cities (DeSanties and Newell, 1996; Frederickson, 1996; and Protasel, 1994). City residents vote to decide on the form of government, but these decisions are not permanent (Hassett and Watson, 2007); it is common for cities to change forms of governments over time (Choi et al., 2013; Cooper et al., 2018).

In the first section of this report, we introduce the main characteristics of mayor-council, council-manager, and type III cities. The goal is to inform what form of government is most suitable for different types of cities. In the second section, we discuss the research on the impacts of changing city charters and as well as the drivers of change. Within each section we discuss the relevance and implications for the city of Lansing.

(1) Mayor-council, council-manager, and type III city

The mayor-council and council-manager forms of government are predominant in most city and municipal institutions in the US. These structures involve four key players within the city or municipal government: the mayor, the council, the city manager, and the chief administrative officer (CAO). However, the functions of these players vary depending on the form of government.

In a mayor-council form of government, there are two major bodies that maintain a separation of powers: a mayor who serves as the main executive officer and a council that functions as the legislative body. However, within this structure, there are two sub-forms. The first is the strong mayor-council form of government, where the elected mayor has concentrated executive authority that includes preparing the city budget, having the power to veto legislation or policy, and appointing and removing department heads without council approval. The second is the weak mayor-council form of government. In this form, mayoral powers are more limited and are often shared with council members. Additionally, the mayor may be elected by residents at-large or appointed from among the city council members. The council in a weak mayor-council form of government typically has more

¹ The other forms of governments are City Commission, Town Meeting, and Representative Town Meeting.

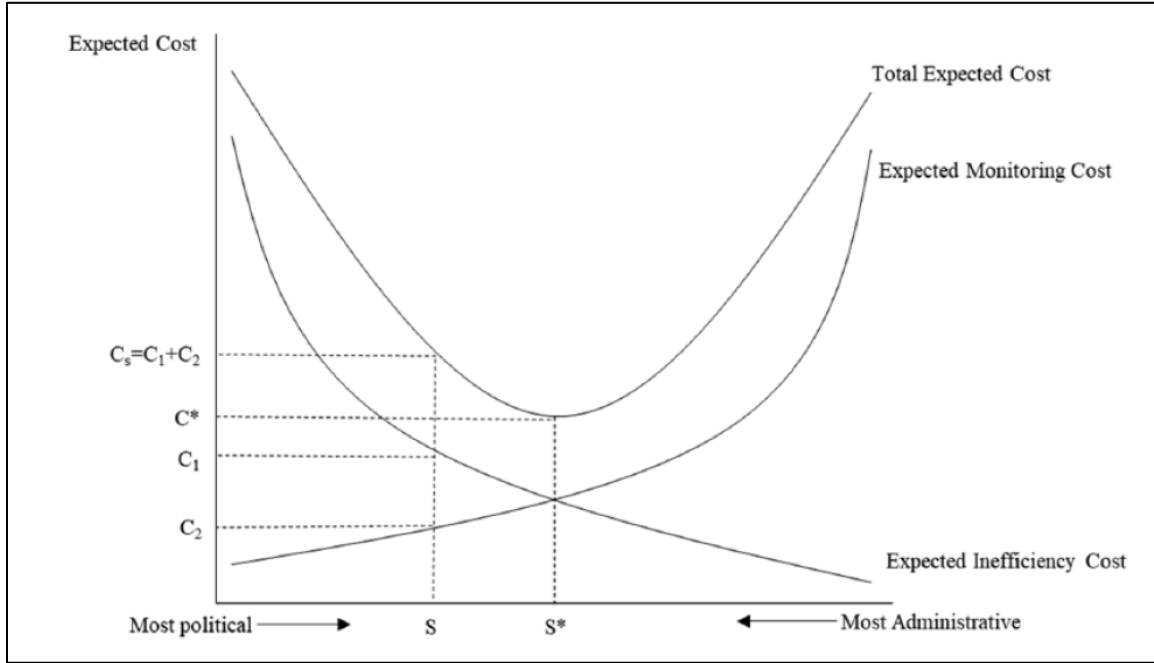
influence over policy decisions and manages the city's administration.

The council-manager form of government is a relatively modern approach that provides professional management of city administration. In this system, the city council is directly elected by the residents; it is the responsibility of the city council to make policy decisions, pass legislation, and provide a vision for the city. The city council does not execute policy but appoints a professional city manager to function as administrator and conducted daily operations, such as oversee and prepare the budget, supervise department heads and staff, and efficiently deliver public services. City managers are hired and dismissed based on performance by the city council.

The mayor-council and council-manager systems may appear to be two distinct paradigms, with only one typically specified in the city charter. However, in many municipalities, elements of both paradigms are present simultaneously (Svara and Watson, 2010). Wei et al. (2019) proposed a theoretical framework for determining the optimal paradigm. In a mayor-council form of government, inefficiencies represent a major cost, while in a council-manager government, monitoring costs arise. Due to these trade-offs, it is common for cities to adopt a hybrid approach in an effort to find the optimal balance between the two paradigms, as illustrated in Figure 1. The hybrid framework is referred to as an "adapted city" or "Type III city." Unlike the purely political (strong mayor-council government) and purely administrative (council-manager government) systems, a Type III city deals with both inefficiency costs and monitoring costs. Depending on the unique characteristics of each city, the mixture of the two paradigms and the optimal balance can vary.

For example, one method to improve the executive efficiency of a mayor-council government is for the mayor to hire a chief administrative officer (CAO) to manage daily operations. The roles of the city manager and the CAO are similar. Compared to the city manager, who is responsible for the entire administration, the CAO typically handles only a portion of the city's administrative functions and shares some of the executive responsibilities with the mayor.

Figure 1. Theoretical model of optimal municipal structure



Source: Wei et al. (2019)

According to Frederickson and Johnson (2001), there are six criteria for pure mayor-council and council-manager institutions, as shown in Table 1. The left column represents the most political form of government, while the right column represents the most administrative form. In the middle, the city of Lansing is used as an example to illustrate how a mayor-council city can adapt to a council-manager system.

The criteria for an adapted city include having a CAO, an approximately even mix of council members elected at-large and by district, and a mayor who may serve either full-time or part-time. The city of Lansing is not the only Type III city in Michigan. Carr and Karuppusamy (2009) examined 263 city charters in Michigan and classified each city according to the adapted cities framework. The analysis shows that in Michigan 76 (29%) cities are administrative cities, 179 (68%) cities are adapted cities, and only 8 (3%) cities are political cities.

Table 1. Criteria of Pure Political or Administrative Forms of Government

Most Political	City of Lansing (Adaptive city/Type III)	Most Administrative
No CAO.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charter §4-201 • The Mayor shall have an Executive Assistant who shall perform such duties and functions as may be required by this Charter or directed by the Mayor for the efficient operation of administrative services and functions 	Council does not have a staff that is devoted to council business
Council is paid and may have one staff		Members of the council are not paid
At least one council member is elected by district	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charter §5-103-8 • Four from each ward; four from at-large 	Council elections are at large
Elections are partisan		City council elections are nonpartisan
Mayor is directly elected	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charter § 2-101-1 • The elective officers shall be the Mayor, eight members of the City Council and the city Clerk 	Mayor is selected from among the council
Mayor is full-time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charter §4-101 • The Mayor shall be the chief executive officer of the City of Lansing and shall devote full time to the service of the City 	Mayor is part-time and paid less than \$10,000 per annum

Source: Frederickson and Johnson (2001); The charter of the city of Lansing.

During the nineteenth century, most American municipalities adopted a weak mayor system, a vestige of English colonial practices. In this system, city council members elected one of their own to serve as mayor. However, legislative, financial, and executive powers remained with the council members, rendering the mayoral role as largely symbolic.

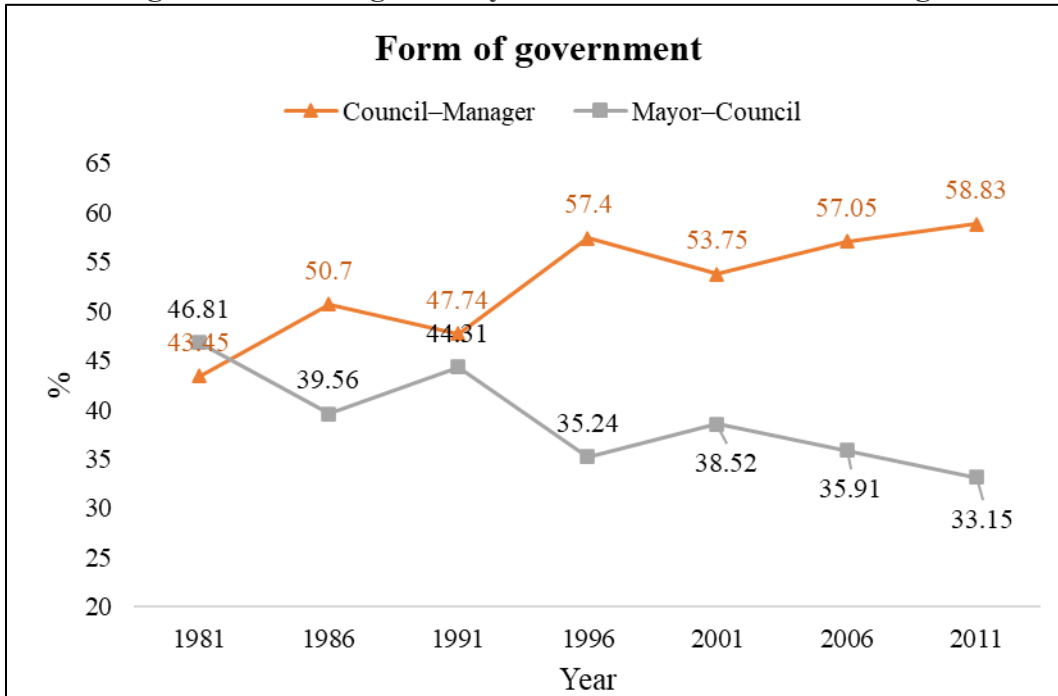
Starting in the 1840s, cities began transitioning from a weak mayor system to a strong mayor-council government. Under this new framework, mayors gained strong executive authority. Additionally, mayors were no longer appointed by council members but were elected at-large by the public. Two major factors drove this transition. First, Jacksonian democratic principles advocated for the direct election of mayors to better represent residents. Second, the inefficiencies of the weak mayor system prompted residents to seek more effective forms of government.

In the pursuit of improving efficiency, municipalities began appointing city managers as early as 1908. American municipalities evolved from mayor-council government to council-manager government (Gordon, 1968; Kessel, 1962; and Knoke, 1982). With the exception of the smallest and largest cities, the council-manager form of government has become the most widely used structure (Svara and Watson, 2010).

The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) surveys all cities and municipalities in the US, and the composition trends have changed over time (see Figure 1). In 1984, among all cities and municipalities with populations over 2,500, approximately 55.8% used the mayor-council form of government. However, this percentage has continued to decrease. After 1996, the percentage of cities adopting the council-manager form surpassed that of the mayor-council form and continued to grow. According to Ballotpedia, by 2011, the percentage of cities in the US using the council-manager form had increased to 59%, while only 33% employed the mayor-council form.²

² See Ballotpedia for more information: https://ballotpedia.org/Mayor-council_government#cite_note-encyc-12. The raw data is also sourced from ICMA.

Figure 1. Percentage of Mayor-Council and Council Manager



Source: Wei et al. (2019) and ICMA. The percentage represents cities in the dataset adopted mayor-council and council-manger governments, ignoring other types of institutional arrangements. Therefore, the sum of the percentages is not 100%.

(2) Determinants of Changing Form of Government (adoption and abandonment)

Building on the previous sections, the shift between different government forms is a dynamic process (Hirschman, 1982). The existing literature explores the drivers behind these changes, identifying three major theoretical perspectives: political conflict theory, social cleavages theory, and policy diffusion.

Kessel (1962) first developed political conflict theory, which suggests that different interest groups select various forms of government based on their political status, such as differing social norms, disadvantaged groups, or special interest groups.

The second major theory is social cleavages theory. This theory posits that preferences for different forms of government are influenced by social cleavages, including race, wealth, religion, and education. Groups tend to favor the government form that best aligns with their self-interest. Essentially, changes in form of government often result from conflicts between two main groups: the middle and upper classes versus the working class (Choi et al., 2013; Hays, 1974; Knoke, 1982; Lineberry and Fowler, 1967; and Simmons and Simmons, 2004).

The final theory is policy diffusion. Knoke (1982) argued that the decision to adopt the council-manager form of government is often influenced by the practices of neighboring regions.

Based on these theories, the research literature provides empirical examination of the factors influencing changes in government forms. Choi et al. (2013) found that social context factors, particularly economic conditions, affect both the adoption and abandonment of council-manager governments. However, much of the existing literature overlooks Type III cities. Wei et al. (2019) addressed this gap by using an index to measure different government forms and found that changes in municipal structure are associated with citizens' socioeconomic characteristics, particularly income per capita; higher per capita income is associated with a higher likelihood of the council-manager form of government

(3) Performance of Different Forms of Government

A key question is which form of city government is most effective. In the previous section, we demonstrated that while evidence shows cities frequently shift forms of government, the trend indicates that the adoption of the council-manager style is most common.

Svara and Nelson (2008) argued that cities with a council-manager system tend to perform better in terms of efficiency, financial status, and management. Similarly, Carr (2015) reviewed over 76 articles comparing the performance of different government forms in the US, providing both theoretical and empirical reasons for the growing preference for the council-manager model, citing its superior efficiency and management.

(a) Efficiency and Management

The form of government significantly affects the adoption of the preferred policies of different interest groups (Krause, 2012; and Carr, 2015). A notable example of this influence is evident in land-use decisions. In mayor-council systems, property owners have greater influence over decisions such as granting housing or building permits, approving density bonuses, and establishing growth boundaries.

In contrast, city managers in a council-manager system are motivated primarily by the goal of effective management rather than re-election. This focus on management reduces the incidence of corruption, as supported by empirical research (Nelson and Afonso, 2019;

and Afonso and Nelson, 2023).

Mayors have an incentive to adopt policies that will increase their chances in upcoming elections. Consequently, a mayor-council form of government may implement policies that serve the entire community, but often with significant benefits flowing to politically important interests or key supporters of the mayor (Feiock, Steinacker, & Park, 2009; Hawkins & Wang, 2013; Hawkins & Feiock, 2011).

Several studies have shown that voter turnout is significantly lower in council-manager governments compared to mayor-council governments (Carr, 2015). One reason for this difference is that council-manager governments tend to offer more mechanisms for resident participation in public matters beyond voting, which is the primary form of engagement in mayor-council forms of government (Nalbandian et al., 2013). For instance, Moon (2002) argued that the council-manager form of government is more open to adopting innovative policies, such as e-government initiatives. Empirical evidence indicates that cities in Florida with mayor-council governments are less likely to adopt government mobile apps (Lee, 2024).

Finally, Svava and Nelson (2008) observed that CAOs in council-manager systems often prioritize the mayor's interests over the city council's policy goals.

(b) Financial status

Most literature reports no significant differences in per capita expenditures between council-manager and mayor-council governments. However, municipal bonds are crucial for helping cities in the US meet their capital needs (Danison et al., 2009). Of special note, to reduce borrowing costs local governments need to maintain high credit ratings (Danison et al., 2007). Lee et al. (2023) provide empirical evidence that the form of municipal government influences credit ratings. Specifically, mayor-council governments tend to be associated with lower credit ratings.

(c) Municipally-owned public utility

There is no literature discussing the relationship between government forms and the performance of municipally-owned public utilities. In Michigan, 22 cities are members of the Michigan Public Power Agency. Among these only the cities of Niles and of Wyandotte, aside from Lansing, use a mayor-council form of government. Most cities with municipally-owned public utilities in Michigan use a council-manager governmental

structure. For example, in Traverse City, the city manager also serves as the chief administrative officer of the Traverse City Light & Power Board.

In California, the Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD) serves residents in the capital city and is one of the six largest municipally-owned power systems by the number of electric customers served. SMUD is governed by a Board of Directors, and unlike Traverse City, residents (customers) in Sacramento can elect one member to represent each district.

In the previous paragraphs, we presented evidence for why an increasing number of cities are adopting council-manager governments. However, most reviews focus solely on dichotomous forms of government, without considering Type III cities. Svara (2005) suggested that a city's chosen model might downplay the importance of government forms. One case study examines why many cities in Wisconsin have adopted either a strong mayor-council government or a mayor-council government with a CAO. Although empirical evidence indicates that cities with strong mayor-council systems experience the highest levels of conflict between the mayor and the council during decision-making processes, these cities also tend to have better financial conditions, as measured by bond ratings. This superior financial performance may be a key factor driving the increased support for mayor-council or mayor-council with CAO systems.

II. Optimal Number of City Council Members

(1) Optimal Number of Legislators

The question of the optimal number of legislators has been discussed since the time of ancient Greece. De Santo and Le Maux (2023) provides a literature review on determining the optimal number of legislators, summarizing that population size is the key factor.

In a seminal article, Taagepera (1972) introduced the *cube root law*, which suggests that the size of a representative body should grow more slowly than the size of the total population. In the model, n^* represents the optimal number of representatives, and N represents the total population.

$$n^* = \sqrt[3]{N}$$

De Santo and Le Maux (2023) utilized data from 139 countries in year 2017 and provided an empirical link between the size of parliament and population size.

$$\ln(n^*) = -1.560 + 0.421 \times \ln(N)$$

A caveat here is that most of the literature focuses on parliaments rather than the design of city councils. According to census data, Lansing's population is 112,796, with 8 city council members. According to the cube root law, the optimal number of representatives would be 48; by empirical estimation, the optimal number would be 25. Both numbers are significantly higher than the current number of city council members.

(2) Consequences of Larger Size of Legislature

Research shows that legislature size matters. Since the 1980s, Weingast et al. (1981) proposed a theory that the size of the legislature and government expenditure are positively correlated, known as the “law of 1/n” or “Pork Barrel”. The “law of 1/n” argues that legislators have an incentive to overspend for their districts when the tax burden is relatively small (i.e., when the number of legislators, n , increases) and transfer the cost to the entire polity. However, empirical research has not reached a consensus on the law of 1/n, as the impact of increasing legislature size varies across countries.

Only one article has discussed the effect of adding an extra council member under a mayoral system. This study, using Brazil as a case study (Mignozzetti et al., 2024), found that adding a council member who belongs to the mayor’s pre-electoral coalition improves social welfare, including increased primary school enrollment and reduced infant mortality rates. However, the social welfare effects of increasing council members under a council-manager system remain unknown.

The first article to discuss the causality of the size of local councils on the efficiency of local public services was provided by Lewis (2019). The author presented evidence that when the number of city council members increases, residents pay the same amount in taxes but have less access to public services. This research, too, is based on a mayor-council structure.

(3) Current Situation in City of Lansing and Other Cities of Similar Size

The council-manager government model is often criticized, particularly in larger cities, for its perceived lack of strong leadership (Frederickson and Johnson, 2001). However, there is a lack of literature discussing how to determine the optimal number of council members. Currently, a common rule of thumb suggests that the number of council members should be between 5 and 7.

To explore a practical number for city council size, we compared Lansing with other cities of similar size as shown in Table 2. According to the 2020 Census, we selected 51 cities with populations comparable to Lansing. Of these, 39 cities, approximately 76% utilize the council-manager form of government. On average, cities have 7 members on the city council, including the mayor. Most mayors are elected at-large, while only a few are elected from among the council members. When considering only the council members, 15 cities have members elected at-large, 16 by district, and 8 cities have council members elected from both at-large and district representations.

Among the group that uses the mayor-council government, the average city council size is 9 members, which is higher than the average for the council-manager group. Among all 51 cities, Waterbury, Connecticut has 15 city council members, while thirteen cities have only five city council members. Lansing has eight council members, with each member representing about 14,100 residents. Using population as an indicator, Lansing has better representation than the average among cities with similar population sizes.

Cities with council-manager governments need to pay particular attention to the number of city council members. For example, Billings, Montana, has 11 city council members. In contrast, there are 10 cities with council-manager governments that have only five council members, most of whom are elected at-large.

Table 2. Forms of Government for Cities of Similar Size to Lansing, Michigan

State	City	Population*	Number of Council Members (with mayor)	Ratio	Government Type	Council member Election Method
		(a)	(b)	(a)/(b)		
MT	Billings	117,026	11	10,639	Council-Manager	Mixed
IL	Peoria	112,792	11	10,254	Council-Manager	Mixed
NC	High Point	113,892	9	12,655	Council-Manager	Mixed
MA	Lowell	115,264	11	10,479	Council-Manager	At-large
CO	Westminster	116,304	7	16,615	Council-Manager	At-large
CO	Greeley	109,388	8	13,674	Council-Manager	By Districts
IL	Elgin	114,621	9	12,736	Council-Manager	At-large
CA	Burbank	107,320	5	21,464	Council-Manager	At-large

GA	South Fulton	107,623	8	13,453	Council-Manager	By Districts
CA	Temecula	110,086	5	22,017	Council-Manager	At-large
CA	Ventura	110,413	7	15,773	Council-Manager	By Districts
TX	Sugar Land	110,775	7	15,825	Council-Manager	Mixed
NM	Las Cruces	111,738	7	15,963	Council-Manager	By Districts
FL	Lakeland	112,558	7	16,080	Council-Manager	By Districts
TX	League City	114,686	9	12,743	Council-Manager	At-large
TX	Odessa	114,852	7	16,407	Council-Manager	Mixed
NC	Wilmington	116,146	7	16,592	Council-Manager	At-large
TX	Richardson	117,792	7	16,827	Council-Manager	At-large
FL	Pompano Beach	111,966	6	18,661	Council-Manager	By Districts
TX	Lewisville	112,336	7	16,048	Council-Manager	At-large
OK	Broken Arrow	114,024	5	22,805	Council-Manager	Mixed
TX	Beaumont	114,239	7	16,320	Council-Manager	Mixed
OR	Gresham	114,637	7	16,377	Council-Manager	By Districts
TX	College Station	118,441	7	16,920	Council-Manager	At-large
CO	Centennial	108,095	9	12,011	Council-Manager	By Districts
CA	El Monte	109,166	7	15,595	Council-Manager	At-large
CA	West Covina	109,345	5	21,869	Council-Manager	At-large
CA	Santa Maria	109,904	5	21,981	Council-Manager	At-large
CA	Murrieta	111,351	5	22,270	Council-Manager	By Districts
CA	Costa Mesa	111,723	7	15,960	Council-Manager	By Districts
CA	Downey	114,118	5	22,824	Council-Manager	By Districts
CA	Carlsbad	115,073	5	23,015	Council-Manager	By Districts
CA	Antioch	115,252	5	23,050	Council-Manager	At-large
FL	Clearwater	117,046	5	23,409	Council-Manager	By Districts
FL	Miami Gardens	111,085	7	15,869	Council-Manager	Mixed
CA	Inglewood	107,534	5	21,507	Council-Manager	By Districts
NV	Sparks	109,121	6	18,187	Council-Manager	By Districts
CA	Richmond	116,238	7	16,605	Council-Manager	At-large
MA	Cambridge	117,699	9	13,078	Council-Manager	At-large
State	City	Population*	Number of Council Members	Ratio	Government Type	Council member

		(a)	(without mayor)	(a)/(b)		Election Method
			(b)			
CT	Waterbury	114,159	15	7,611	Mayor-Council	At-large
NH	Manchester	115,354	14	8,240	Mayor-Council	Mixed
WI	Green Bay	107,114	12	8,926	Mayor-Council	By Districts
IN	Evansville	117,258	9	13,029	Mayor-Council	Mixed
MI	Lansing	112,796	8	14,100	Mayor-Council	Mixed
MI	Dearborn	109,657	7	15,665	Mayor-Council	At-large
WA	Everett	110,930	7	15,847	Mayor-Council	Mixed
CO	Pueblo	112,119	7	16,017	Mayor-Council	Mixed
FL	West Palm Beach	117,179	5	23,436	Mayor-Council	By Districts
UT	West Jordan	117,186	7	16,741	Mayor-Council	Mixed
SC	North Charleston	115,771	10	11,577	Mayor-Council	By Districts
UT	Provo	114,048	7	16,293	Mayor-Council	Mixed
GA	Sandy Springs	108,172	6	18,029	Mayor-Council	By Districts

*Population is from 2020 Census.

Table 3 presents information similar to that in Table 2, focusing specifically on capital cities in the U.S. Approximately 44% of these state capital cities use a council-manager form of government, whereas around 56% adopt a mayor-council form. The proportion of capital cities using the mayor-council system is relatively higher compared to the overall trend in the U.S. (see Figure 1).

In total, 20 capital cities operate under a council-manager government. On average, these cities have 8 council members, including the mayor, with each member representing approximately 30,000 residents. Although these cities utilize a council-manager system, mayors are elected at-large. Furthermore, council members can be elected at-large, by districts or wards, or through a combination of both.

It is noteworthy that two capital cities, Little Rock and Annapolis, identify as council-manager governments with strong mayors. In these cities, mayors possess veto power and the authority to hire city managers.

In contrast, the remaining 28 capital cities, which account for about 56% of capital cities, use a mayor-council government. On average, these governments have a higher number of city council members—about 12—compared to their council-manager

counterparts. Additionally, each council member in these cities represents fewer residents, averaging about 26,000. Nashville has the highest number of city council members at 41, while Boise has the lowest, with only 6 members.

Table 3 Capital Cities of Each State in United States

State	Capital City	Population*	Number of Council Members (with mayor)	Ratio	Government Type	Council member Election Method
		(a)	(b)	(a)/(b)		
ND	Bismarck	73,622	5	14,724	City Commission	At-large
SD	Pierre	14,091	5	2,818	City Commission	At-large
AK	Juneau	32,255	9	3,584	Council-manager	Mixed
AZ	Phoenix	1,608,139	9	178,682	Council-manager	By district
DL	Dover	39,403	9	3,940	Council-manager	By district
FL	Tallahassee	196,169	5	39,234	Council-manager	At-large
IA	Des Moines	214,133	7	30,590	Council-manager	Mixed
KS	Topeka	126,587	10	12,659	Council-manager	By district
KY	Frankfort	28,602	5	5,720	Council-manager	At-large
MT	Helena	32,091	5	6,418	Council-manager	At-large
NV	Carson City	58,639	5	11,728	Council-manager	At-large
NH	Concord	43,976	15	2,932	Council-manager	Mixed
NM	Santa Fe	87,505	9	9,723	Council-manager	By district
NC	Raleigh	467,665	8	58,458	Council-manager	Mixed
OK	Oklahoma City	681,054	9	75,673	Council-manager	By district
OR	Salem	175,535	9	19,504	Council-manager	By district
SC	Columbia	136,632	7	19,519	Council-manager	Mixed
TX	Austin	961,855	11	87,441	Council-manager	By district
VT	Montpelier	8,074	7	1,153	Council-manager	By district
WN	Olympia	55,605	7	7,944	Council-manager	At-large
State	Capital City	Population	Number of Council Members (without mayor)	Ratio	Government Type	Council member Election Method
		(a)	(b)	(a)/(b)		

AR	Little Rock	202,591	10	20,259	Council-manager	Mixed
MD	Annapolis	40,812	8	5,102	Council-manager	By district
AL	Montgomery	200,603	9	22,289	Mayor-Council	By district
CA	Sacramento	524,943	9	58,327	Mayor-Council	By district
CO	Denver	715,522	13	55,040	Mayor-Council	Mixed
CT	Hartford	121,054	9	13,450	Mayor-Council	At-large
GA	Atlanta	498,715	16	31,170	Mayor-Council	Mixed
HI	Honolulu	350,964	9	38,996	Mayor-Council	By district
ID	Boise	235,682	6	39,280	Mayor-Council	By district
IL	Springfield	114,394	10	11,439	Mayor-Council	By district
IN	Indianapolis	897,041	25	35,882	Mayor-Council	By district
LA	Baton Rouge	227,470	12	18,956	Mayor-Council	By district
ME	Augusta	18,899	8	2,362	Mayor-Council	At-large
MA	Boston	675,647	13	51,973	Mayor-Council	Mixed
MI	Lansing	112,644	8	14,081	Mayor-Council	Mixed
MN	Saint Paul	311,527	7	44,504	Mayor-Council	By district
MS	Jackson	153,701	7	21,957	Mayor-Council	By district
MO	Jefferson City	43,228	10	4,323	Mayor-Council	By district
NE	Lincoln	291,082	7	41,583	Mayor-Council	Mixed
NJ	Trenton	90,871	7	12,982	Mayor-Council	Mixed
NY	Albany	99,224	16	6,202	Mayor-Council	Mixed
OH	Columbus	905,748	9	100,639	Mayor-Council	By district
PA	Harrisburg	50,099	7	7,157	Mayor-Council	At-large
RI	Providence	190,934	15	12,729	Mayor-Council	By district
TN	Nashville	715,884	41	17,461	Mayor-Council	Mixed
UT	Salt Lake City	199,723	7	28,532	Mayor-Council	By district
VA	Richmond	226,610	9	25,179	Mayor-Council	By district

*Population is from 2020 Census.

If we focus only on capital cities with populations similar to that of Lansing (Trenton (NJ), Albany (NY), Springfield (IL), Hartford (CT), and Topeka (KS)) Lansing has the fewest city council members among these capitals. Most of these cities use a mayor-council form of government.

Table 4. Capital Cities in the U.S. with Populations Similar to the City of Lansing

State	City	Population	Number of City Council Members	Ratio	Government type
		(a)	(b)	(a)/(b)	
NJ	Trenton	90,871	7	12,982	Mayor-Council
NY	Albany	99,224	16	6,202	Mayor-Council
MI	Lansing	112,644	8	14,081	Mayor-Council
IL	Springfield	114,394	10	11,439	Mayor-Council
CT	Hartford	121,054	9	13,450	Mayor-Council
KS	Topeka	126,587	10	12,659	Council-manager

When focusing specifically on cities with similar populations in Michigan, most cities listed in Table 5 use the mayor-council form of government. Among these cities, Ann Arbor has the highest number of council members, with 11. Most other cities in this group have seven council members, which is the same number as Lansing. To summarize, for cities with a similar population size, the average number of council members is seven, with a practical range between 5 and 11.

Table 5. Top 20 population cities in Michigan

City	Population	Number of Council Members (with mayor)	Ratio	Government Type	Council member Election Method
	(a)	(b)	(a)/(b)		
Grand Rapids	198,917	7	28,417	Council-manager	By district
Warren	139,387	7	19,912	Council-manager	Mixed
Sterling Heights	134,346	7	19,192	Council-manager	At-large
Ann Arbor	123,851	11	11,259	Council-manager	By district
Troy	87,294	7	12,471	Council-manager	At-large
Farmington Hills	83,986	7	11,998	Council-manager	At-large
Wyoming	76,501	7	10,929	Council-manager	At-large
Kalamazoo	73,598	7	10,514	Council-manager	At-large
Novi	66,243	7	9,463	Council-manager	At-large

City	Population	Number of Council Members (without mayor)	Ratio	Government Type	Council member Election Method
	(a)	(b)	(a)/(b)		
Detroit	639,111	9	71,012	Mayor-council	Mixed
Lansing	112,644	8	14,081	Mayor-council	Mixed
Dearborn	109,976	7	15,711	Mayor-council	At-large
Livonia	95,535	7	13,648	Mayor-council	At-large
Westland	85,420	7	12,203	Mayor-council	At-large
Flint	81,252	9	9,028	Mayor-council	By district
Southfield	76,618	7	10,945	Mayor-council	At-large
Rochester Hills	76,300	7	10,900	Mayor-council	Mixed
Taylor	63,409	7	9,058	Mayor-council	At-large
Dearborn Heights	63,292	7	9,042	Mayor-council	At-large
Pontiac	61,606	7	8,801	Mayor-council	By district
Average		7	15,929		

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