Cityhood in Georgia

Incorporating a municipality in Georgia requires the approval of the Legislature.

538 CURRENT CITIES IN GEORGIA

1733 Savannah, Georgia’s oldest city, founded 2017 South Fulton, Georgia’s newest city, founded

GEORGIA IS 1 OF 7 STATES THAT REQUIRE LEGISLATIVE APPROVAL FOR MUNICIPAL INCORPORATION

The current cityhood process looks like this:

A group decides to incorporate. Reasons vary, but include: desire for local control and increased representation.

The group must obtain sponsorship from a legislative member. The member will carry the enacting legislation and provide a letter for the group to commission a feasibility study.

The legislative sponsor files the bill, beginning a 2-session review process. The committee will study the proposed city over the interim and vote on the legislation during the second session after its introduction.

If the bill passes, the proposed city will be put to a referendum vote* of the city’s proposed population.

*Not legally required, but is common practice.

If the referendum passes, the city attains incorporation.

Generally, in order to obtain an approved feasibility study, the sponsoring group must meet the following qualifications*:

- The group must have nonprofit status
- The group must sign a contractual agreement with the entity conducting the study
- The group must provide a letter from the legislative member who is sponsoring the bill
- The group must obtain a map of the proposed city from the General Assembly’s Reapportionment Office

The following programs are currently authorized to conduct feasibility studies for cities and impact studies for counties:

- CARL VINSON INSTITUTE OF GOVERNMENT
- UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
- ANDREW YOUNG SCHOOL OF POLICY STUDIES
- GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY
- ENTERPRISE INNOVATION INSTITUTE
- GEORGIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

*Each entity that provides feasibility studies is different; specific requirements may vary.

A PROPOSED CITY MUST PROVIDE AT LEAST 3 OF THE FOLLOWING SERVICES:

- Law Enforcement
- Solid Waste Management
- Waste-Water Treatment
- Utility Services
- Code Enforcement
- Recreational Facilities
- Planning and Zoning
- Road Maintenance
- Water Supply or Distribution
- Storm-Water Collection
- Fire Protection

A FEASIBILITY STUDY CAN TAKE 6 MONTHS OR MORE TO COMPLETE AND COSTS APPROXIMATELY $30,000

AVERAGE RESIDENT POPULATION PER SQUARE MILE:

MINIMUM POPULATION OF PROPOSED CITY:

200

60% OF THE TOTAL NUMBER OF LOTS IN THE PROPOSED CITY MUST BE USED FOR RESIDENTIAL, COMMERCIAL, INDUSTRIAL, INSTITUTIONAL, RECREATIONAL, OR GOVERNMENTAL PURPOSES

MINIMUM POPULATION OF PROPOSED CITY:

200

Prepared by Molly Aziz