



The Civic Federation

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A Brief Introduction to the City of Chicago

With [over 2.8 million residents](#), the City of Chicago is the largest city in Illinois and the third most-populous city in the nation. The city is 234 square miles in size and is the [county seat of Cook County](#). The City of Chicago is responsible for many of the day-to-day services that residents and visitors depend upon such as public safety and sanitation, road construction and repairs, public housing, cultural opportunities and restaurant inspections, among many others.

The City of Chicago's government is divided into two branches: the legislative, represented by 50 aldermen who serve four year terms without term limits, and the executive, [represented by the mayor](#), who likewise serves four year terms without term limits. The only other citywide elected officials besides the mayor are the [City of Chicago Clerk](#) and [Treasurer](#). The City of Chicago is divided into 50 wards, each administered by an alderman. [Click here for a map of the City's wards](#). Aldermen are traditionally responsible for administering ward-based services such as garbage pickup, parking permits and zoning requests, but are also legislators, crafting new laws and voting on the mayor's annual budget proposal.

The City also owns a large number of assets, including Midway Airport. Some of those assets, including the City's parking meters, the parking garages under Millennium Park and the [Skyway](#) have been leased to private operators for one-time payments. [Click here to read a Civic Federation issue brief about government asset privatization](#).

The City of Chicago levies a number of various taxes on individuals and businesses. The Civic Federation has prepared a [blog post](#) and [report](#) that lists taxes that consumers may be expected to pay. The City also levies a wide spectrum of fees such as the "city sticker" for automobiles, building permits and business licenses.

For more information about the City of Chicago, please visit the following links:

Government Information:

[The City of Chicago website](#)

[Information about the City of Chicago City Council](#)

[Information about taxes in the City of Chicago](#)

[The Office of the Mayor](#)

Transition Reports:

[Mayor Rahm Emanuel's Chicago 2011 Transition Plan](#)

Former Mayor Richard M. Daley's 2011 Mayoral Transition Report
[http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/narr/foia/transition_memo.html]

Civic Federation Research about the City of Chicago:

[Financial Challenges for the New Mayor of Chicago: Analysis and Recommendations](#)

[Analyses of City of Chicago budgets](#)

[All Civic Federation research pertaining to the City of Chicago](#)