

Handbook Highlight from the Montana Municipal Officials Handbook

CLASSES OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

Municipal Classification (July 2010)

Classification	Population	Number
First Class	10,000 or more	7
Second Class	5,000 to 9,999	3
Third Class	1,000 to 4,999	40
Town	Less than 1,000	77
TOTAL		127

Note: Does not include the two consolidated governments of Anaconda-Deer Lodge and Butte-Silver Bow.

1.203 When and How to Change Classification

Unless a city or town undertakes its own direct enumeration of inhabitants, the basis for classifying Montana municipalities is the most recent federal decennial census. Whenever the federal census indicates that the population of a municipality has increased or decreased sufficiently to alter its classification, the city or town council must, by resolution, change the classification to conform to the classes established by [7-1-4111](#), MCA, as noted above. A certified copy of the resolution must be filed with the county clerk and recorder and with the Secretary of State's office in Helena. However, there are exceptions set forth at [7-1-4112](#), MCA.

[Click here](#) to read about reclassifying Montana municipalities.

POWERS OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

A municipality's governing power is its authority to act in order to carry out the lawful functions of a municipal government. In Montana, a municipality's authority to exercise governing power is derived from: (1) the state constitution; (2) enabling legislation; (3) a voter approved self-government charter; and (4) the interpretation of these sources of authority by the courts and by the opinions of the state's attorney general.

1.403 General Government Powers

Article XI, section 4 of the 1972 constitution provides that municipalities with general powers, (i.e. all of those municipalities that lack self-government powers) have the powers of a municipal corporation and other powers provided or implied by law, which is to say only those powers delegated to municipalities by the state legislature.

1.404 Self-Government Powers

Article XI, section 6, of the 1972 constitution provides that a local government, which adopts a self-government charter may exercise any power not prohibited by this constitution, law or charter.

[Click here](#) for a more thorough explanation of the general vs. self-governing powers.

FORMS OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

1.301 Forms of Government Defined

The 1972 Montana Constitution (Article XI, Section 3) requires the legislature to provide optional or alternative forms of government (emphasis added) that each unit or combination of units may adopt, amend or abandon by a majority of those voting on the question. In 1975, the legislature responded to this constitutional mandate by enacting [7-3-102](#), MCA, which requires that each unit of local government in Montana adopt one of the following forms of government:

- Town meeting form
- Commission form
- Commission-chairman form
- Commission-executive (council-mayor) form
- Commission-manager form
- Charter form

The form of government refers to a particular structural arrangement of the lawmaking (legislative) and law-enforcing (executive) structures of the local government.

For more information regarding *forms of municipal government* in Montana, [click here](#).

The chart below shows the class, power, and form of government for all incorporated Municipalities in Montana.

Characteristics of Montana Municipalities

Municipality	Class/ Group	Powers of Government	Form of Government
Alberton	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Bainville	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Baker	3	GEN	COM-EX
Bearcreek	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Belgrade	3	SELF	MGR (C)
Belt	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX (A)
Big Sandy	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Big Timber	3	GEN	COM-EX
Billings	1	SELF	MGR (C)
Boulder	3	GEN	COM-EX
Bozeman	1	SELF	MGR (C)
Bridger	TOWN	SELF	COM-EX (C)
Broadus	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Broadview	TOWN	SELF	COM-PO
Brockton	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Browning	TOWN	SELF	COM EX (C)
Cascade	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX (A)
Chester	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Chinook	3	GEN	COM-EX
Choteau	3	SELF	COM-EX (C)
Circle	TOWN	SELF	COM-EX (C)
Clyde Park	TOWN	SELF	COM-EX (A)
Colstrip	3	SELF	COM-EX (C)
Columbia Falls	3	GEN	MGR (A)
Columbus	3	GEN	COM-EX
Conrad	3	SELF	COM-EX (C)
Culbertson	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Cut Bank	3	SELF	COM EX (C)
Darby	TOWN	SELF	COM-EX (C)
Deer Lodge	3	GEN	COM-EX (A)
Denton	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Dillon	3	SELF	COM-EX (C)
Dodson	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX (A)
Drummond	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Dutton	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
East Helena	3	GEN	COM-EX
Ekalaka	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Ennis	TOWN	SELF	COM-EX (C)
Eureka	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX

Municipality	Class/ Group	Powers of Government	Form of Government
Fairfield	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Fairview	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX (A)
Flaxville	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Forsyth	3	SELF	COM-EX (C)
Fort Benton	3	SELF	COM-EX (A)
Fort Peck	TOWN	SELF	COM-EX (A)
Froid	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Fromberg	TOWN	SELF	COM-EX (A)
Geraldine	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Glasgow	3	SELF	COM-EX (A)
Glendive	3	GEN	COM-EX
Grass Range	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX (A)
Great Falls	1	SELF	MGR (C)
Hamilton	3	GEN	COM-EX (A)
Hardin	3	GEN	COM-EX (A)
Harlem	3	GEN	COM-EX
Harlowton	3	GEN	COM-EX
Havre	1	GEN	COM-EX
Helena	1	SELF	MGR (C)
Hingham	TOWN	SELF	COM-EX (A)
Hobson	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Hot Springs	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Hysham	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Ismay	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Joliet	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Jordan	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Judith Gap	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Kalispell	1	GEN	MGR (A)
Kevin	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX (A)
Laurel	3	SELF	COM-EX (C)
Lavina	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX (A)
Lewistown	2	SELF	MGR (C)
Libby	3	SELF	COM-EX (C)
Lima	TOWN	SELF	COM-EX (C)
Livingston	2	GEN	MGR (A)
Lodge Grass	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX (A)
Malta	3	GEN	COM-EX
Manhattan	TOWN	SELF	COM EX (C)
Medicine Lake	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX

Municipality	Class/ Group	Powers of Government	Form of Government
Melstone	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Miles City	2	GEN	COM-EX (A)
Missoula	1	SELF	COM-EX (C)
Moore	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Nashua	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Opheim	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Outlook	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Philipsburg	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Pinesdale	TOWN	SELF	T M (C)
Plains	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Plentywood	3	GEN	COM-EX
Plevna	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX (A)
Polson	3	SELF	MGR (C)
Poplar	3	GEN	COM-EX
Red Lodge	3	SELF	COM-EX (C)
Rexford	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX (A)
Richey	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Ronan	3	GEN	COM-EX
Roundup	3	GEN	COM-EX
Ryegate	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Saco	TOWN	SELF	COM-EX (C)
Scobey	3	GEN	COM-EX
Shelby	3	GEN	COM-EX
Sheridan	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX (A)
Sidney	3	GEN	COM-EX (A)

Municipality	Class/ Group	Powers of Government	Form of Government
St. Ignatius	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Stanford	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Stevensville	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX (A)
Sunburst	TOWN	SELF	COM-EX (C)
Superior	TOWN	SELF	COM-EX (C)
Terry	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Thompson Falls	3	GEN	COM-EX
Three Forks	3	SELF	COM EX (C)
Townsend	3	GEN	COM-EX
Troy	3	SELF	COM-EX (C)
Twin Bridges	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX (A)
Valier	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Virginia City	TOWN	SELF	COM-PO
Walkerville	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
West Yellowstone	TOWN	SELF	MGR (C)
Westby	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX (A)
White Sulphur Springs	3	GEN	COM-EX
Whitefish	2	SELF	MGR (C)
Whitehall	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Wibaux	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Winifred	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Winnett	TOWN	GEN	COM-EX
Wolf Point	3	SELF	COM-EX

Legend

Powers of Government

SELF	Self-Governing
GEN	General Governing

Form of Government

Charter (C)

COM EX (C)	Commission Executive
COM (C)	Commission
MGR (C)	Manager
TM (C)	Town Meeting

Non Charter

COM	Commission
MGR	Manager
COM EX	Commission Executive
COM (A)	Commission (Amended)
MGR (A)	Manager