

# **The City Charter, the City Council, Members, Elections, Terms, and Changes**

## **Options for Change**

### **Ways to Implement Changes**

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**Five routes provided by law for changing the mode of election of city council**  
 GS 160A-102 through 105

Route One	Route Two	Route Three	Route Four	Route Five
resolution of intent public hearing ordinance change is effective	resolution of intent public hearing ordinance subject to referendum referendum change is effective	resolution of intent public hearing ordinance referendum petition referendum change is effective	initiative petition referendum ordinance change is effective	local act by Gen. Assembly

**The menu of options for charter changes without General Assembly action**  
GS 160A-101

1. What to name the corporation
2. Whether to call the corporation City, Town, or Village
3. Whether the governing board is to be the City Council, the Board of Commissioners, or the Board of Aldermen
4. \*Whether the terms of board members are to be two years or four, or a combination, and staggered or not
5. \*What the number of members of the governing board is to be, between three and twelve
6. \*Whether elections are to be at-large or through districts, or a combination, and what kind of districts
7. \*Whether elections are to be partisan or non-partisan, and if non-partisan, what kind of non-partisan
8. Whether the mayor is to be elected by the voters or from within the governing board
9. Whether to use the council-manager form of government or the mayor-council form

**At-large elections, districts, and combinations permitted for North Carolina municipalities**  
GS 160A-101(6)

\*all members elected at-large

\*single-member districts

\*single-member districts and at-large representatives combined (no more than half at-large)

\*residence districts: nominations by all voters and election by all voters

\*residence districts and at-large representatives combined (no more than half at-large)

half single-member districts and half residence districts, with the districts being exactly the same

modified residence districts: nominations by district voters only but election by all voters

modified residence districts and at-large representatives combined (no more than half at-large)

drawing of district lines and apportionment of members to the districts "shall be done in all cases by the council." GS 160A-101(6)

**Options for types of elections permitted for North Carolina municipalities**  
GS 160A-101(7)

1. Partisan elections

This is the kind of election that Winston-Salem now has.  
There are party primaries in September and the nominees meet in November.  
9 North Carolina cities use this type of election (including Charlotte).

2. Nonpartisan plurality

This is the simplest type of election.  
One vote on general election day.  
Whoever gets the most votes wins.  
505 North Carolina cities use this type of election.

3. Nonpartisan election and runoff election

There is a vote in October.  
If a candidate receives a majority, there is no vote in November.  
For any seats without a majority in October, there is a runoff in November.  
15 North Carolina cities use this type of election (including Raleigh).

4. Nonpartisan primary and election

There is a vote in October to narrow the field to two candidates.  
There is a vote in November between the top two.  
25 North Carolina cities use this type of election (including Greensboro, Durham,  
Fayetteville).

## Statewide summary of government and election methods

	34 cities over 25,000	48 cities 10,000- 25,000	50 cities 5,000- 10,000	90 cities 2,500- 5,000	111 cities 1,000- 2,500	93 cities 500- 1,000	126 cities under 500	552 cities TOTAL
<b>STYLE OF CORPORATION</b>								
City	24	22	14	7	0	3	0	70
Town	10	24	34	80	110	86	118	462
Village	0	2	2	3	1	4	8	20
<b>STYLE OF GOVERNING BOARD</b>								
Aldermen	3	4	5	9	19	13	14	67
Commissioners	4	7	12	37	65	54	70	249
Council Members	27	37	33	44	27	26	42	236
<b>FORM OF GOVERNMENT</b>								
Council Manager	34	48	42	65	56	7	9	261
Mayor Council	0	0	8	25	55	86	117	291
<b>SELECTION OF MAYOR</b>								
By and from Governing Board	1	0	2	5	5	9	9	31
Council Member with the most votes	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
Elected	33	48	48	85	106	83	116	519
<b>MAYOR'S TERM</b>								
2 Years	16	21	22	42	55	50	82	288
4 Years	18	27	27	47	54	38	39	250
At pleasure of board	0	0	1	1	2	5	5	14
<b>NUMBER OF MEMBERS OF GOVERNING BOARD</b>								
11 members	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
9 members	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
8 members	4	6	1	0	0	0	0	11
7 members	7	6	2	1	0	1	0	17
6 members	14	10	6	16	9	3	1	59
5 members	6	18	27	55	72	69	69	316
4 members	1	8	14	17	28	16	27	111
3 members	0	0	0	1	2	4	27	34
2 members	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2
<b>TERM OF OFFICE OF GOVERNING BOARD</b>								
2	9	10	3	14	23	24	66	149
4	7	0	4	1	6	7	16	41
4S	18	36	42	72	82	60	41	351
4S/2	0	2	1	3	0	2	3	11
<b>MODE OF ELECTION OF GOVERNING BOARD</b>								
AL	15	28	38	77	100	92	126	476
AL/D	9	8	4	3	2	0	0	26
AL/DAL	2	3	1	2	1	1	0	10
D	6	4	2	2	3	0	0	17
DAL	2	5	5	6	5	0	0	23
D/DAL	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TYPE OF ELECTION</b>								
Majority	5	3	2	1	1	3	0	15
Partisan	4	3	0	0	0	0	0	7
Plurality	15	37	46	85	108	89	125	505
Primary	10	5	2	4	2	1	1	25

## Summary of cities above 200,000 population

Name	Style	Population	Form of Gov.	Governing Body	# Mem.	Mayor Selection	Mayor Term	Board Selection	Board Term	Election Method	Statutory Citations	Notes
Charlotte	City	731,424	Council Manager	Council Members	11	Elected	2 Years	AL/D	2	Partisan	SL 2000-26	Seven council members are elected from districts and four are elected at large.
Durham	City	228,330	Council Manager	Council Members	6	Elected	2 Years	AL/DAL	4S	Primary	SL 1975, c. 671 GS 160A-101	Three council members are elected from residence districts, and three are elected at large.
Fayetteville	City	200,564	Council Manager	Council Members	9	Elected	2 Years	D	2	Primary	SL 1979, c. 557, 794 GS 160A-101	
Greensboro	City	269,666	Council Manager	Council Members	8	Elected	2 Years	AL/D	2	Primary	SL 1959, c. 1137 SL 1973, c. 213 GS 160A-101	Five council members are elected from districts, and three are elected at large.
Raleigh	City	403,892	Council Manager	Council Members	7	Elected	2 Years	AL/D	2	Majority	SL 1949, c. 1184 SL 1957, c. 121 SL 1973, c. 319 GS 160A-101	Five council members are elected from districts, and two are elected at large.
Winston-Salem	City	229,617	Council Manager	Council Members	8	Elected	4 Years	D	4	Partisan	Pr. 1927, c. 232 Pr. 1933, c. 60 SL 1947, c. 601 SL 1965, c. 53 GS 163-279 GS 160A-101 SL 2011-141	Winston-Salem municipal elections held in even-numbered years, rather than odd-numbered years.