

Scope of Work
LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN DEKALB COUNTY:
HOLISTIC REVIEW OF THE IMPACT OF POTENTIAL MUNICIPAL EXPANSION
ON COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL SERVICE PROVISION

August 16, 2018

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE:

This proposal has been prepared in response to a request from the general purpose local governments within DeKalb County (the county government and most of the municipal corporations through the DeKalb Municipal Association) which desire to comprehensively examine municipal and county service delivery responsibilities among general purpose local governments with jurisdiction inside DeKalb County. The assistance proposed to be provided consists of consideration and analysis of current service levels in unincorporated and incorporated areas with special attention to the county special tax districts (Police and Designated Services) and the impact of annexation and incorporation on county government as it relates to current service delivery responsibilities and levels of service that are provided throughout the county to both incorporated and unincorporated areas. The stakeholders have espoused a goal of reaching a consensus vision for ensuring adequate service levels throughout the county and guidelines to inform the decision-making of both local and state elected officials regarding future development of local government boundaries and corresponding service delivery in DeKalb County.

PROJECT GUIDANCE:

This research will be a partnership between the Institute of Government, DeKalb County government (County), and the municipalities within the boundaries of DeKalb County through the DeKalb Municipal Association (Cities). It is contemplated that a steering group representing both the County and the Cities will be created to which Institute faculty can seek direction and feedback over the course of the project. To facilitate communication between the Institute of Government and decision making within the steering committee, the steering committee membership should include representatives of the County and the City but not have a membership exceeding 10

persons. We expect the steering group will meet soon after the contract has been executed and periodically throughout the contract time period. The steering group will select its own co-chairs that will assist with presiding over committee meetings and coordinating notice to steering group members.

SCOPE OF WORK:

The Carl Vinson Institute of Government will research the potential impacts of an expanding municipal footprint in DeKalb County with an appreciation of five underlying aspirational principles:

- Citizens countywide should have access to a “standard”, i.e., minimum level of service for a defined set of local government services, but these are likely to be at different levels and funded by different tax or fee rates in different jurisdictions.
- The demarcation of future local government boundaries should take service efficiency into account.
- A series of benchmarks for determining what constitutes standard levels of service and local government fiscal capacity should be identified.
- Local government officials have the responsibility to decide on the service levels and delivery mechanisms that they believe best meet the needs and expectations of their constituents.
- The fiscal sustainability of every local government in DeKalb County benefits all local governments within DeKalb County.

Under this framework, the Institute of Government will research options to ensure standard service levels for all county residents and consider the impacts of annexation and incorporation on the County and the Cities. To better understand the impacts of potential annexation and incorporation, the Institute of Government may, at the direction of the steering committee, analyze hypothetical municipal expansion scenarios including, specifically, one or more current municipal expansion plans and current proposed incorporations as well as one or more recent annexations or incorporations.

Any such analyses may include the fiscal effect of any stranded county investments as well as any potential increase in demand on county-owned capital assets such as the

water and sewer system and transportation infrastructure associated with the areas proposed for annexation or incorporation by virtue of increased density otherwise unavailable in the unincorporated area or due to physical isolation of county facilities or services resulting from annexation or incorporation. In addition, as part of the examination on annexation impact, faculty will research the concept of “balanced annexation” that seeks to encourage annexation of properties that include varying types of commercial and residential properties. The report will also include a discussion about ensuring appropriate service investments in all areas of the county including the “cost-sharing” role of the respective local governments in DeKalb through tax levies or by intergovernmental agreement.

The Institute of Government will undertake an assessment of the service costs (for current levels of service) and available revenues for unincorporated area as well as the revenues needed to ensure a baseline or “standard level of service. The steering group will instruct the Institute of Government on what constitutes the service standards for specific services. Based on input from the steering committee, the Institute can also consider a limited number of scenarios where portions of unincorporated land would be incorporated. Based on policies and programs in other states and the academic literature, the Institute will discuss options to address the potential financial mismatch between available revenues and necessary services for this area.

DELIVERABLES:

The Institute of Government will develop fiscal and service criteria in addition to measurable metrics such as tax base per capita as a basis for considering annexation and incorporation proposals to ensure that municipal expansion does not jeopardize the fiscal sustainability of the local governments in DeKalb and, in particular, the level of services provided by the county to the unincorporated areas of the county.

The findings will include options to ensure a standard level of service for all county residents, any consensus reached among the steering committee and other stakeholders, and an analytical framework for considering the impacts of annexation and incorporation on the remaining unincorporated areas of the county.

The Institute of Government will provide an executive style .pdf report on findings, including criteria and other metrics, from the research. It is understood that honest disagreements may remain among steering group members at the end of the project; accordingly, the final report will note areas of consensus and points of departure between the varying perspectives represented on the steering group. All recommendations made in the study are advisory and shall be non-binding on the County and the Cities.

PROJECT TIMELINE:

The Carl Vinson Institute of Government foresees this project beginning in November, 2018 and assuming full and timely cooperation by all stakeholder governments in committee appointments, scheduling, and data provision, concluding in a final report being delivered by December 1, 2019.

To ensure the Institute can properly conduct this research, the local government stakeholders acknowledge they must assist in providing requested data in a timely manner, such as within one week for most requests. Delays in providing the data will likely result in a later project completion date.

PROPOSED FEE:

This proposal is contemplated as being funded by DeKalb County, through funds appropriated from the county general fund. This is acknowledged as the appropriate source for a project intended to be of county-wide benefit in both the incorporated and unincorporated areas. As the County is the steward of this fund, the County will be the contracting party. Any required compliance with the Georgia Open Meetings Act, O.C.G.A. Section 50-14-1, shall be the County's responsibility. The Institute of Government will provide the services outlined in this proposal including all personnel services, operating supplies, computer time, travel, etc., at cost not to exceed \$84,000.