

# HOME RULE FACT SHEET CARBONDALE, ILLINOIS

## BACKGROUND

Home rule status is automatically designated when municipalities have at least 25,000 residents or have adopted home-rule by referendum. Following the completion of the 2020 Census, Carbondale's new population is 21,857, a decline from the 2010 census total of 25,902. This means that in order to maintain home-rule status, the City of Carbondale must seek approval from residents via referendum. At the November 8, 2022, General Election, you will be asked to vote on whether Carbondale should remain a home-rule municipality or become a non-home rule municipality. Carbondale has been a home-rule community since 1972.

## PURPOSE

Home Rule authority allows municipalities to solve city issues locally. Home rule authority permits municipalities to act as they see fit with some limitations from the State Constitution and State legislature. Without home rule status, municipalities may only exercise the powers granted to them by the State.

## ADVANTAGES

- Spreads tax burden from residents to non-residents through sales, gasoline, and other local taxes. Over half the sales tax generated in Carbondale are from non-residents.
- Helps Carbondale maintain a lower property tax levy. The City Council has maintained a flat real estate tax levy for over 20 years by using sales taxes to fund city services.
- Improves the City's bond rating, saving taxpayers in interest costs.
- Can opt out of some unfunded mandates as they are created, unless preempted by the State of Illinois.
- Allows the City to better protect residents through ordinances pertaining to zoning, property and building code enforcement, sanitation, civil disturbance, and all other matters of public health, safety, morals, and welfare.
- Allows the City to require business and landlord licenses.
- Gives the City the authority to require home inspections through the landlord rental registration program. Non-home rule communities can only inspect properties in response to a tenant complaint. Home-rule authority allows City inspectors to proactively enter and inspect all rental property every three years to ensure that they conform to the City's standards.
- Allows the City to enact animal control ordinances to provide protection to animals and residents. The City's Animal Control officer responds to nearly 500 calls annually.

## DISADVANTAGES

- Home rule grants municipalities broad taxing and regulation authority.
- Cities can only enforce laws where power has been granted by the State.

## REFERENDUM

The Illinois Election Code (10 ILCS 5/28-8) mandates that the Home Rule referendum question shall be stated as follows:

**Shall the City of Carbondale cease to be a home rule unit?**

- YES
- NO

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

**Question:** What does it mean if I vote “**Yes**” on the home rule referendum question?

**Answer:** Voting “yes” means that you want the City of Carbondale to lose home rule status.

**Question:** What does it mean if I vote “**No**” on the home rule referendum question?

**Answer:** Voting no means that you want the City of Carbondale to keep home rule status.

**Question:** How much does the City expect to lose in sales taxes annually if home rule status is revoked?

**Answer:** \$19.1 million, or 33% of total revenues.

**Question:** Does home rule authority mean higher property taxes?

**Answer:** No, studies have shown that in states granting more municipal discretion, municipalities impose lower property taxes and less total taxes. Currently, Carbondale’s portion of a resident’s real estate tax bill is approximately 3%. Carbondale has maintained the same annual levy amount since 2000. The City Council has been able to keep the levy flat by utilizing other sales tax revenues which are also generated by non-residents.

**Question:** If the City loses home rule status will my property taxes go up?

**Answer:** It depends. If the City loses home rule and residents want to keep their same level of service, a person with a \$100,000 home could expect that their City portion of the real estate tax bill could increase by as much as \$1,400 annually. This would be the only tool for the City to recoup the loss of sales taxes that would no longer be available as a non-home rule community. Another way to balance the budget would be to reduce services which could include police, fire, street maintenance.

**Question:** Do Home Rule municipalities have unlimited powers?

**Answer:** No, home rule powers are limited. All regulations must relate to local government and affairs and not conflict with laws already exclusive to the State government. Home rule authority allows communities to choose how they want to govern themselves versus statewide elected officials making those decisions.

**Question:** How does home rule authority affect funding for local schools?

**Answer:** Home rule has no effect on Carbondale school districts as they are independent taxing bodies that provide for their own funding through property tax. However, the tax advantages of home rule have benefitted Carbondale schools. In 1999, the City of Carbondale and Carbondale High School entered into an agreement for the City to provide \$16 million in funding for a new community high school. To meet this financial obligation, the City exercised its home rule powers and adopted a one-quarter percent sales tax to provide the needed revenue. This finance strategy allowed CCHS to move forward with the project without raising property taxes.

**Question:** What kinds of citizen requests can be granted by home rule?

**Answer:** One of the most common concerns voiced to the City is speeding in neighborhoods. Home rule has allowed Carbondale to lower the speed limit to 25 mph in certain neighborhoods following citizen requests. If Carbondale loses home rule, they will no longer be able to address this concern.

**Question:** Are there other home rule communities in Southern Illinois?

**Answer:** Yes, Murphysboro, Marion, Carterville, Crainville, Herrin, DuQuoin, Elkhart, West Frankfort, Johnston City, Benton, Mt. Vernon, Muddy, Mound City, Christopher, Sparta, and Sesser are many of the home rule communities within our region.

**Question:** How do residents oversee the use of home rule?

**Answer:** Citizens are encouraged to participate in City Council meetings. In the meetings, citizens may address the Council with any concerns they have. All documents are published to the City website prior to the meeting. Also, citizens can contact Council members and City employees via email or phone. For more information on home rule units of government, please visit [ilga.gov](http://ilga.gov).