

# Even Anarchists Need Mayors

“Mayor \_\_\_\_ welcomes you to Atlanta.”

This sign greeted me as I left the airport for home. I kind of liked it.

Now as an anarchist, I don't want any city governments, and I don't give a damn about Mayor What's-Their-Name, but I do give a damn about Atlanta. And like all cities I love, Atlanta has its own unique culture with unique values and customs.

Even if, God-willing, we managed to make Atlanta a city free from bureaucracies and governments, it would still help to have a figurehead for those values and customs.

We need someone who can cut ribbons, welcome people to town, organize volunteer events, and talk on important holidays. We need someone who can get up and say some nice things that more or less honor the shared values of a place. And we need them to have no constitutional or governing power over anyone whatsoever. Their power must derive from influence, respect, and earned authority from reputation and service, not coercion.

Look at the Queen: she doesn't hold all that much constitutional power in England, but she traditionally has played a useful role in embodying Englishness – and serving as a role model for behavior, speech, dress, etc.

Mayors in a free society could do the same – and heck, we could even have mayors at other scales: whole regions. Mayor of Appalachia? Mayor of the Lowcountry? Mayor of New England? Heck, there are some folks who were destructive as politicians who would be fine as mayors of America.

Abstract values sometimes need a human face, and most humans want someone to look up to and to represent the best we have to offer. There are natural hierarchies, and there are some people worthy of honor and suited to serving (not ruling) large groups of people. So why not keep mayors around?

*Originally published at [JamesWalpole.com](http://JamesWalpole.com).*