

Worksheet: Make A Plan To Get Involved



Civic Participation

Our democracy involves much more than voting. There are a number of ongoing opportunities to get involved with your local government.

Civic participation includes any means by which your views are expressed to those in power. Participation includes everything from writing a letter or signing a petition, to getting involved with an advocacy group to participating in a protest. All of these are legitimate and often effective ways of making your voice heard. Now let's talk specifically about ways to get involved within the City of Vancouver's organizational structure.



Identifying Issues


Start with the big picture. The City of Vancouver is responsible for a wide range of policies, programs and services that affect your everyday life. What are you fired up about? What services work for you? Which ones don't work for you? What solutions would you like to contribute to the problems facing our city?

The first step is finding out if the city is actually responsible for the topics and issues you're interested in. Some of the major service areas that the City of Vancouver oversees include planning; roadways; utilities; waste management; emergency services; licenses and inspections; and social development. The City's structure is online at <https://vancouver.ca/your-government/organizational-structure.aspx>. Take a moment to find out what different departments do and how their work affects your life. You can do this by clicking on the blue boxes that represent different City departments.

Step two is identifying an issue or issue that you care about (within the City's jurisdiction), and what you would like to see changed. Write this down in the table at the top of the next page.

Worksheet: Make A Plan To Get Involved

	I Care About...	And I Want to Change ...
	For example: Parks and Green Spaces, Housing, Diversity and Inclusion, Public Transportation ...	For example: I want to build more community gardens, enable all members of my community to participate in decision-making, make my neighbourhood more walkable, make public transit more affordable ...
1		
2		
3		



Step three is to think about what skills, experiences or knowledge you have that might allow you to make a contribution? What are your passions? Below are some options to put these thoughts into action

Opportunity	What does this look like?	Resources
Join A Civic Agency	Civic agencies are established by the City to provide advice to council and staff, and contribute to a specific policy area. Some agencies require a particular background or knowledge base, but many are open to any interested individual.	More information, including current opportunities to become a member of an agency, is available at https://vancouver.ca/your-government/advisory-boards-and-committees.aspx . Most meetings of civic agencies are open to the public, so one way to find out more is to attend one and observe in person what goes on.

Worksheet: Make A Plan To Get Involved

Opportunity	What does this look like?	Resources
Participate in a Public Consultation	The City regularly hosts open houses, conducts surveys or develops online tools to collect public feedback on particular issues, initiatives or policies as they are developed or revised.	These consultations are often advertised in newspapers and posted at https://vancouver.ca/share-your-views.aspx . You can also call 3-1-1 for information on current consultations.
Present to City Council	City Council collects direct public input throughout the year at City Hall. Council meets in committees several times each month to discuss particular issues; public hearings are held regularly to deal with zoning or heritage matters; and special council meetings are held to deal with emergent issues as required.	At any of these meetings, you can ask to make a five-minute presentation to City Council. Presentations are typically oral, but you have the option of having visual aids as well. During the pandemic, public presentations are being done over the phone. Visit vancouver.ca/councilmeetings to see what's coming up on City Council's agenda. Each agenda has information on who to contact to make a presentation.
Write to Your Elected Representatives	You can send a letter or email to the Mayor and City Council sharing your thoughts on any municipal issue.	A list of Mayor and Council and their contact information can be found online at https://vancouver.ca/your-government/city-councillors.aspx or by phoning 3-1-1 .
Connect Online	The City of Vancouver is using new tools to connect with the community.	Online discussions and consultations take place at talkvancouver.com and Shape Your City . The City also uses tools like Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Flickr to share information and gather feedback. Visit vancouver.ca/socialmedia.htm for a list of accounts.

Worksheet: Make A Plan To Get Involved



Take Action!

Consider joining a **civic agency** if you have a particular area of knowledge or interest that you want to contribute to; if you are able to commit to the agency for a longer period of time; and if you are comfortable being in a public leadership position.

Consultations are an opportunity to discuss a specific initiative in a relatively short period of time. They are typically held before recommendations are presented to City Council. If you'd like to get involved in a specific initiative early in its development, then a public consultation might be for you.

If you are comfortable speaking in public and can clearly and succinctly articulate a position, **making a presentation to City Council** might be an option for you.

Writing is an easy but important way to express your views to your representatives. Remember that elected officials receive very large volumes of mail and email, so make your contribution stand out by writing clearly, succinctly and persuasively.

Social media allows you to share your ideas quickly and publicly. It makes the City more accessible and easier to connect to.



Putting It Together

Go back to the issues that you care about. Now that you've seen the ways you can get involved, start planning out how to achieve the goals you set out.




Worksheet: Make A Plan To Get Involved

As you plan how you will take action, think of the following questions:

- How much time can you commit to this project?
- Which ways of participating are you naturally inclined toward? Which ways are more challenging for you? Can you think of friends or family who you can join forces with?
- What areas do you have experience or knowledge about? What areas would you like to learn more about?

	I Care About This Issue...	And I <u>Will</u> Get Involved By...
1		
2		
3		




Tips For Effective Participation

Here are some guidelines to help you through the process:

Know Your Stuff

Double-check facts or figures and explain how you've developed your views

Be Succinct

Present your arguments clearly and briefly.



Worksheet: Make A Plan To Get Involved

Respect Alternative Points of View

Democracy exists precisely because we don't agree on everything. Give credit to others, and assume that their convictions are just as strong as yours. Try to see the issue from other points of view, and debate ideas instead of attacking those who have them.

Have Fun!

Be realistic, but challenge yourself as well. Bite off a little more than you can chew.

