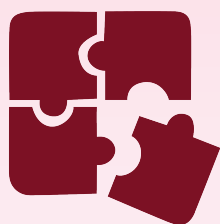


# How City Council Decisions Are Made

Once elected, City Council is responsible for setting a vision for the city and making decisions that shape how residents are able to live, work and play. Council establishes strategic priorities that highlight the main items they want to focus on throughout their term. Those priorities range from topics like reconciliation to addressing the housing crisis. The decisions council makes are informed by city staff, public opinion gathered from community engagement, and debates amongst fellow council members.

## How the Government Makes Decisions



### Vision & Strategy

The city council sets the priorities and strategies with the advice of staff, who work in specialized areas.



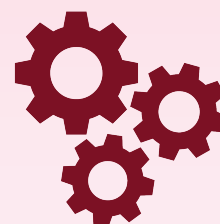
### Plans & Policies

Staff consult with council, experts, and the public to develop plans, reports, and policies.



### Decisions

Council votes to approve, amend, oppose, or to send plans and policies back to staff for revisions



### Implementation

The city council sets the priorities and strategies with the advice of staff, who work in specialized areas.

## Types of Decisions Made by City Council

The city makes decisions that affect many aspects of our lives including access to affordable housing, the creation of bike lanes, efficient transportation routes, noise restrictions, and many more. Examples of city council decisions:

- Allowing ride-hailing apps like Uber and Lyft
- Creating the bylaw that ensures property owners and landlords provide heating in residential homes
- Allocating funds to buy snow plows for efficient snow clearing in the winter
- Determining where child care spaces can be developed and issuing licenses

# ...AND HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN THEM

City hall regularly seeks input from Vancouver residents for its plans and decisions. Here are some ways you can make sure that your opinions are considered in the City's decision-making processes:

## Vote!

Voting is a key way to ensure that the people governing your city represent your values and priorities. Municipal elections across BC are held on the third Saturday in October every four years. Vancouver elections are held “at large”, meaning candidates run to represent the entire city rather than a particular neighbourhood or area of the city.

Sometimes, there are specific spending allocation questions voters are also asked to respond to for example, “Do you support the City [of Vancouver] borrowing money for three areas of major capital projects, as outlined in the Capital Plan.”

**Tip:** You can fill out or leave blank as much of the ballot as you want and your vote will still be counted.

### Voters always vote on:

- 1 mayor
- 10 city councillors
- 7 Park Board Commissioners
- 9 Vancouver School Board trustees

### To be able to vote, you need to:

- Be 18 years old or older on election day
- Be a Canadian citizen
- Have lived in BC for at least 6 months
- Live in Vancouver or own property registered in your name in Vancouver
- Not be disqualified by law from voting



## Speak at meetings

Anyone who has an interest in Vancouver's decisions can speak at council or park board meetings. For example, if you're someone who commutes through, works in, or owns a business in Vancouver you can still speak at meetings - but the chair may ask you to state whether you're a resident.

Here are some helpful things to know:

- You can speak by phone or in person.
- You can only speak on agenda items that will be voted on (members' motions and reports that include recommendations).
- Speakers have 3 minutes or 5 minutes to address council or park board depending on the type of meeting and if you're speaking on behalf of a group.
- The meeting chair can allow accommodations for people who need additional time, for example, if you are using a translator or need more time to speak due to a disability.
- Speakers must sign up by 5 pm the day before a regular council meeting to get their allotted speaking time. For public hearings, speakers are encouraged to sign up to speak beforehand, but there is no deadline.

## Submit written comments or email council

Members of the public can provide feedback through the City of Vancouver's website and respond to specific agenda items or leave general comments. However, if you want to speak to a particular issue or agenda item it may be more effective to send an email with your feedback directly to council members. Their official email addresses can be found on the City of Vancouver website.

## Organize with others

There is strength in numbers! Getting together with other people in the community who care about the same issues is a great way to create change. You can:

- Run an issue-focused campaign to grow awareness and support for issues you care about, with people who are just as passionate as you. For a step-by-step guide on how you can do this, check out our Cities Organize toolkit.
- Send letters and emails to the mayor, council, and city staff
- Speak with council members at events or ask for a meeting with your community group
- Connect with community organizations or groups who are active on the issues you care about



## Stay informed

Keep up to date with the latest city news:

- Watch council meetings online or in person
- Sign up for the City of Vancouver's monthly newsletter on their website
- Sign up for notifications when council meeting agendas are published
- Follow the City of Vancouver's social media accounts to hear about engagement opportunities
- Run an issue-focused campaign to grow awareness and support for issues you care about, with people who are just as passionate as you. For a step-by-step guide on how you can do this, check out our Cities Organize toolkit.
- Send letters and emails to the mayor, council, and city staff
- Speak with council members at events or ask for a meeting with your community group
- Connect with community organizations or groups who are active on the issues you care about



[www.womentransformingcities.org](http://www.womentransformingcities.org)  
[info@womentransformingcities.org](mailto:info@womentransformingcities.org)

© 2024 by Women Transforming  
Cities International Society

The work of WTC in Vancouver takes place on the stolen ancestral territories of the x̱wəθḵwəyəm (Musqueam Indian Band), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish Nation), and səlilwətał (Tsleil-Waututh Nation). We acknowledge the leadership of Indigenous women for time immemorial, and seek to learn and unlearn our own colonial practices as we work in cities as sites of resistance.