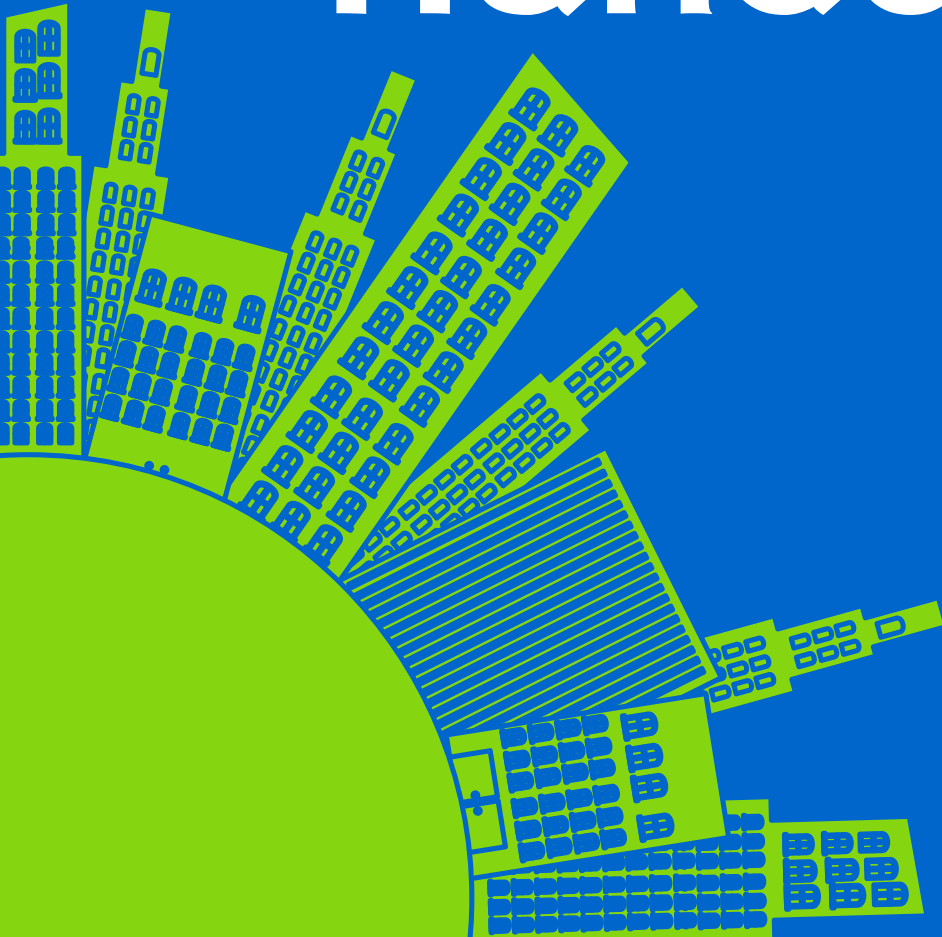




The Get Civic Handbook



Congratulations on receiving an Amplify Charlotte Get Civic Kit! We created the **Get Civic Handbook** for anyone who wants to get involved. This guide illustrates specific examples of how you can make your voice heard using the three community engagement principles: ***Voice, Representation, and Change***. You will also find ***Local Government at-a-glance***, a guide that illustrates the form and functions of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County government.

Why a Civic Handbook?

Advocacy is the key to enhancing social capital, specifically fostering relationships between community members and their governments, strengthening opportunities to break the cycle of poverty in Charlotte.

- Guide your community projects and priorities
- Pass this handbook along to your neighbor, classmate, family or friends
- Go to our website to share your story of how you changed your community

This special copy is for you. You can download extra worksheets online at www.amplifycharlotte.com

Christine Edwards
Founder, Amplify Charlotte



Get Civic Handbook: Voice

Most cities invite residents to make their voices heard by speaking to the local board. The schedule of public hearings, agendas and minutes can usually be found online. In most cases, speakers are given up to **3 minutes**. These tools will help you represent your community's concerns in a public forum.



How to Make Public Comments Example

My name is Jerome Arty, and I reside in the Sunny Grove neighborhood in the city of Charlotte. The purpose of my presentation today is to support the council's proposed action to ban gas-powered leaf blowers within the city limits. I am opposed to the use of these leaf blowers because they cause an environmental hazard as they idle and contribute to increased noise pollution in our community. I urge you to move forward with your action to ban leaf blowers city-wide.



How to Make Public Comments Template

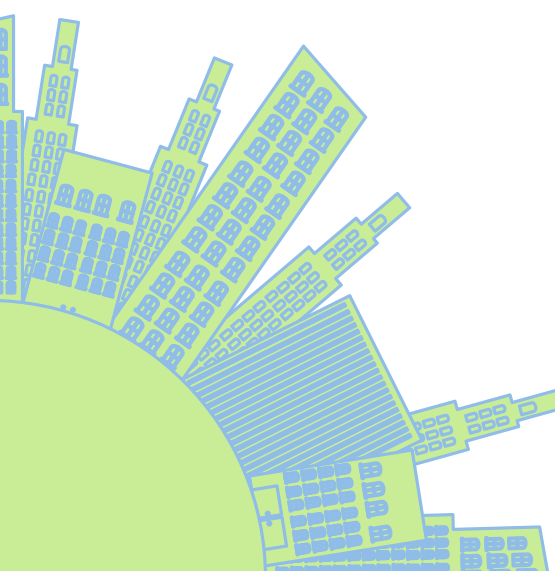
My name is _____ and I live in _____ (neighborhood), in the city of _____. The purpose of my presentation today is _____.

The reason I am _____ (For/Opposed)
_____ (proposed council action) is because _____.

This is important to me because _____.

Local Meeting Times

- Charlotte City Council regular meetings are 2nd and 4th Mondays at 6:30pm
- County Board of Commissioners regular monthly meetings are 1st and 3rd Tuesdays at 6 pm
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg School Board regular meetings are 2nd and 4th Tuesdays at 6 pm





How to Make Public Comments Checklist

- Fill out a speaker's card or sign up to speak online. Refer to Clerk to the Board for questions.
- Find out when the next meeting is being held.
- Read the council agenda ahead of time to learn when the public forum is expected to begin.
- Research the topic and write down your key points.
- Practice, practice, practice. If you're affiliated with a group, make sure your speech fulfils the group's intended message.
- When your name is called, walk directly to the podium.
- State name and purpose, greet the council/board and deliver your speech.

More Tips on Making Public Comments

- Acknowledge the chairperson and the members.
"Madam Chairwoman and honorable members of the council"
- Send any handouts ahead of time. You may not have a chance to approach the board during the meeting.
- Invite others to support your cause and have them sit in the audience or invite them to prepare a speech as well.
- Sit in on a public meeting to understand the order of events and get to know the board.
- Do not speak longer than the time allotted. Conclude your speech when the time is up.

Get Civic Handbook: Representation

Serving on an advisory board, commission or committee affords residents the opportunity to become engaged with their government and provide advice and recommendations from diverse perspectives. Writing a letter (in addition to your application) is the first step.



Writing a Letter to an Elected Official Example

Dear Councilman Sellers,

I am Tamela Warren, a resident of the University Area. As a resident of your district, I am writing to gain your support for a great endeavor. I am applying for the Keep Charlotte Beautiful Board for consideration in January 2019. I currently work as the lead compost specialist for Sunflower Environmental Services. The reason I'm applying for this open board position is to help to create better living spaces for Charlotte residents. I believe it is important for neighborhoods' quality of life to be enhanced over time; whether it be something as small as planting a community garden. I hope to have your support in this effort. Thank you for your consideration.

Tamela Warren



Writing a Letter to an Elected Official Template

Dear _____,

I am _____(name), a resident of _____(neighborhood) . As a resident of your district, I am writing to gain your support for a great endeavor. I am applying for the _____(name of board) for consideration in _____(month and year). The reason I'm applying for this open board position is _____.

I would be an asset to this board because _____.

I hope to have your support in this effort.

Sincerely,

Your Name



Applying to a Local Board or Committee Checklist

- Inquire if there's an opening on the board or committee you are interested.
- Be aware of application deadlines
- Take note of special eligibility like must work in a specific industry
- Take note of time commitment and meeting times
- Advocate for yourself by writing and calling your representative
- Plan to be present the night of council appointments
- If not appointed the first time continue to follow up with the Clerk to the board and sign up to be notified of future board or committee vacancies

Get started today

- What local causes do you care about?
- Which boards align with those causes?
- Who is your district representative?

Remember

- It is ok to write a letter to more than one councilmember
- It is ok to write a letter, send an email and call.
- Sign up to receive notification of board vacancies

Get Civic Handbook: Change

Are you involved in your neighborhood organization? These tools will help you become a more organized community leader, and help you foster collaboration between your group and local resource providers to help move your community projects forward.



Local Community Engagement Resource Examples

The **City of Charlotte's Civic Leadership Academy** is an 11 session crash course on city government and civic leadership. Participants are provided the opportunity to grow in their leadership style, connect with decision makers and gain useful tools to make a difference in their communities.

The **Neighborhood Matching Grants Program** awards funds to eligible neighborhood-based organizations for projects that make neighborhoods better places to live, work, and play.



Hosting a Community Meeting Template

Date:

Event Title:

Time:

Event Purpose:

Location:

Meeting Type:

Town Hall/Listening Session: an organized meeting format involving a presentation and an opportunity for public questions and comments.

Workshop: a public forum at which participants work together on prescribed assignments to provide specific input to a project.

Roundtable: gathering of a small group of people, usually with similar interests and varying stake in a chosen topic.

Panel Discussion: a group of people, usually subject matter experts, gathered to discuss a topic of interest in front of an audience.

Resource Fair: an event with activities and tables to provide information or raise awareness.



Starting a Community Project Checklist

- Describe your project in 1-2 sentences.
- Name the issue or problem your project will address (Recycling, Reducing waste, Social justice, Education, Food/air/water quality).
- Name the target audience or beneficiary. Who are your community stakeholders?
- Identify a project leader and a representative from each stakeholder group.
- How, specifically, will this impact the community? List specific goals.
- What specific resources do you need to make this project successful (materials, event space, etc.)?
- Decide on the recurrence of your project. Will this be a one-time event or an ongoing campaign?
- Describe other needs. Do you need a subject matter expert or community partner for this event?

Local government At-a-Glance

North Carolina

North Carolina General Assembly
 -NC House of Representatives
 -NC Senate
ncleg.net

State of North Carolina
NC.gov

City of Charlotte
charlottenc.gov

Mecklenburg County
Mecknc.gov

Charlotte Mecklenburg School Board
cms.k12.nc.us/boe



Population:
 10.3 Million

City of Charlotte Government Governed by: Charlotte City Council

- Main functions and services*
- Airport
 - Animal care & control
 - Street lighting
 - Streets
 - Traffic engineering
 - Public transportation (CATS)
 - Sidewalks
 - Garbage collection
 - Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police
 - Charlotte Fire
 - Water service
 - Planning department
 - Housing and Neighborhood Services
 - Economic and Community Development

Mecklenburg County Government Governed by: Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners

- Main functions and services*
- Public school funding
 - Community college funding
 - Public health
 - Immunizations
 - Park & recreation
 - Sheriff's office
 - Social services
 - Property tax collection and assessment
 - Restaurant inspections
 - Code enforcement
 - Medical examiner
 - Veterans services
 - Child support enforcement



Find more resources online at

www.amplifycharlotte.com

Twitter: @Amplify_CLT

Instagram: @AmplifyCLT

Facebook Page: Amplify Charlotte

christine@amplifycharlotte.com

Join our mailing list

