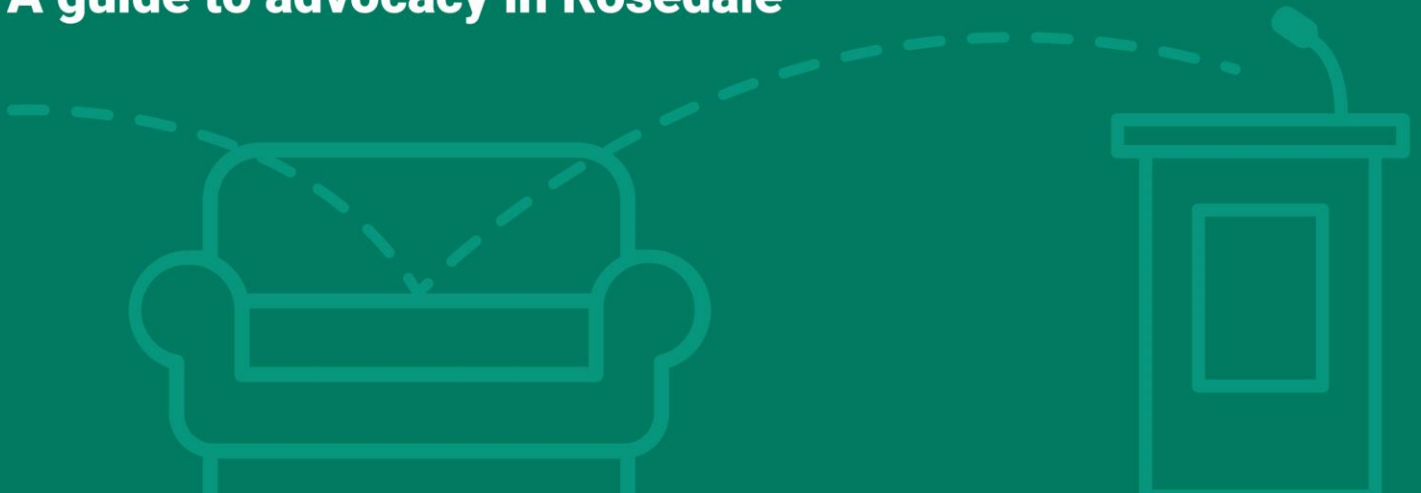# Couch to commission
A guide to advocacy in Rosedale

IF YOU'VE EVER HEARD OF OR PARTICIPATED in a Couch to 5K running program, you know that it provides a gradual approach to achieving an intimidating running goal. Just like many of us are intimidated by running, many are also intimidated by advocacy. We have hopes for our neighborhood, our city, our state, and our country; we have ideas for how to improve things; and we have opinions on issues and policies. But often we question whether our hopes are possible or whether our opinions matter.

In this guide you will find:

1. **STRATEGY GUIDE** (page 2), including **templates** (page 6) for effectively communicating with your elected officials using postcards, emails, video messages, social media posts, calls, neighborhood meetings, and speaking at Commission meetings.

2. **DECISION-MAKER MAPS**, both local and state, (page 10) showing which elected officials or agencies are responsible for various neighborhood issues and contact information for the people **representing Rosedale** (page 11).

3. **LOCAL PROCESS MAPS** (page 12) showing the steps our local government takes to decide an issue or policy, and where and how you can get involved.

4. **RESOURCE GUIDE** (page 15) with background information to help you be an informed and convincing advocate.

The Couch to commission guide is produced by Rosedale Development Association as a part of the Advancing Rosedale Community Health (ARCH) program.

![Rosedale Development Association logo]

1. Strategy guide

SOMETIMES, ADVOCACY IS AS SIMPLE AS SHOWING UP at the Unified Government of Wyandotte County and Kansas City, KS (UG) Commission meeting and saying your piece. More often though, you'll have a lot of work to do before your issue ever comes up for discussion. This section is presented as a step-by-step guide, but isn't meant to be followed rigidly. Use this as a starting point for figuring out the most effective way to make progress on your issue.

Step 1: Build a coalition

Advocacy takes teamwork! You need some great people on your team to make change happen. Begin reaching out to others who may want to be part of this effort. Think about:

Who is *impacted*?

Activist Glenn E. Martin says "Those closest to the problem are closest to the solution, but furthest from resources and power." Think about who in your community is closest to the problem.

Who *cares*?

Advocacy work can be hard and frustrating work. Who in your community cares enough about this issue to keep going, even when things get tough?

Who is *willing* and *available*?

People can be knowledgeable about an issue, care deeply about it and just not have the time or energy to devote to moving it forward. As you reach out to your community, *ask* if people are willing to make a specific time commitment, for example:

- "Would you be willing to go for a walk and talk about this with me?"

- "Would you be willing to meet on Sunday afternoons for two months with me and a couple of others to figure out a solution?"

DON'T ASSUME you know someone's availability! An old saying goes "if you want to get something done, ask a busy person to do it." People who are *impacted* and who *care* are often willing to make the time.

Step 2: Define the problem

With your team, write down a one-sentence explanation of the problem you are trying to correct. Make sure your team agrees on the problem before you move forward. Be specific and clear.

Examples:

- "42nd Ave., an important walking route for children at Frank Rushton and Hilltop residents who work on Rainbow Ave., has no sidewalks from Lloyd to Mission Rd."

- "There is no public community center in Rosedale."

- "34,000 residents of Wyandotte County do not have health insurance."

Step 3: Develop a (draft) solution

With your team, write down a one-sentence explanation of how you want to solve the problem. Be specific and clear.

Examples:

- "We need to complete the sidewalk on 42nd Ave. to provide a safe walking route for Frank Rushton students and Hilltop residents."

- "We need to create a safe, affordable, indoor place where people in Rosedale can exercise."

- "We need to expand KanCare to cover people who are uninsured."

In addition to your ultimate goal, identify a couple of smaller problems/solutions that will take you closer to your goal. This helps your group stay focused and keep from getting discouraged when the overall goal seems out of reach.

Examples:

- "Our neighborhoods' sidewalk priorities don't get a lot of attention, we'd like our policymakers to walk the neighborhood with us and see what we see."

- "It's hard for people in Rosedale to exercise, we need to raise awareness about Family Health Care's gym option."

- "Not enough Rosedalians have access to health care, we need to have a community event where people can get free health services."

CELEBRATE small victories and progress toward your goals — a sense of momentum keeps people going.

IMPORTANT: As you talk to decision makers and community members, you may learn new things that change your understanding of both the problem and the solution. Come back to steps 1 and 2 every so often with your team.
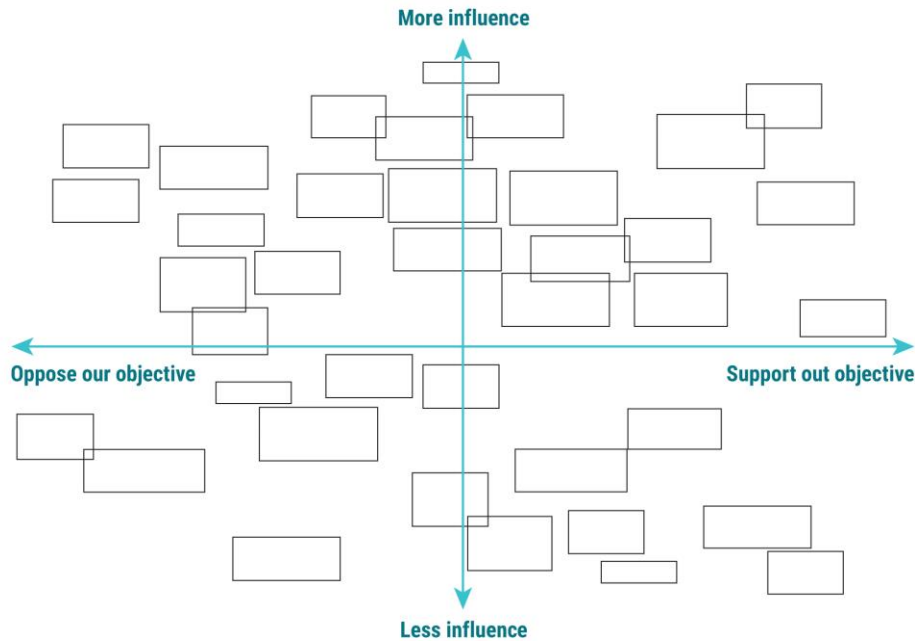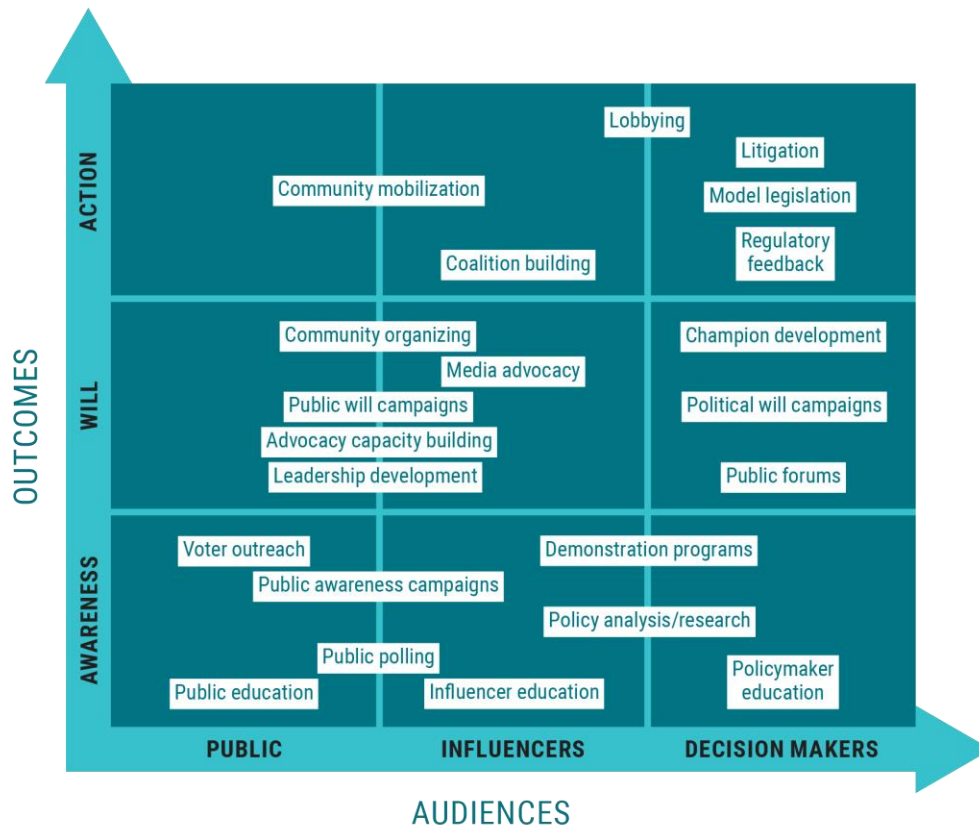
Step 4: Make a plan

With your team, make a plan that is both easy to understand and connects the problem to the solution. The tools below can help you conceptualize your plan.

Create a power map

A power map (sometimes called a faction map) helps a group visualize the many people who may influence whether your problem is solved and their differing viewpoints, loyalties, and positions in relation to your issue. This [template] from The Change Agency can help your group create a power map.

To fill out the power map, think about:

- **Decision makers**: use the decision maker map for help.

- **Influencers**: Who are the decision makers likely to listen to you? For example, the Commission will listen to the Public Works department when it comes to sidewalks, and to the budget office when it comes to funding improvements.

- **Core constituencies**: Who and what groups are the decision makers trying to serve? Think: churches, business, law enforcement, neighborhood groups, teachers, etc.

- **Organized stakeholders**: what other groups are working on this or related issues? Think: neighborhood groups, non-profits, advocacy groups, churches, etc.

- **Experts**: who knows the most about this issue?

- **Demographic groups**: how does this issue intersect with gender, race, age, or ideology in your community?

- **Geographic groups**: how does this issue intersect with specific blocks, neighborhoods, districts, our city, or our county?

4

A chart with vertical axis "OUTCOMES" (ACTION, WILL, AWARENESS) and horizontal axis "AUDIENCES" (PUBLIC, INFLUENCERS, DECISION MAKERS).

ACTION row:
- Community mobilization (Public)
- Coalition building (Influencers)
- Lobbying (Influencers/Decision Makers)
- Litigation (Decision Makers)
- Model legislation (Decision Makers)
- Regulatory feedback (Decision Makers)

WILL row:
- Community organizing (Public)
- Media advocacy (Public/Influencers)
- Public will campaigns (Public)
- Advocacy capacity building (Public)
- Leadership development (Public)
- Champion development (Decision Makers)
- Political will campaigns (Decision Makers)
- Public forums (Decision Makers)

AWARENESS row:
- Voter outreach (Public)
- Public awareness campaigns (Public)
- Demonstration programs (Influencers)
- Policy analysis/research (Influencers/Decision Makers)
- Public polling (Public)
- Public education (Public)
- Influencer education (Influencers)
- Policymaker education (Decision Makers)

Choose an approach

Now that you have a clear sense of the people and groups involved, it's time to choose some tactics. Advocates can employ a wide range of tactics to move their issue forward. This chart from the Center for Evaluation and Innovation organizes some of the options along two axes. The bottom axis relates to your power map — the public, influencers, and decision makers. The left axis relates to the goal of each tactic — building awareness, building the will to do something, and initiating an action.

Using the tactics chart

1. Look at your power map. Who do you first want to reach with your advocacy? Are they a part of the *public*, an *influencer*, or a *decision maker*?

2. Next, think about where that person or group is in relation to your issue. Are they completely disconnected and you need to build their *awareness*? Do they know about the issue, but you need to build their *will* to do something about it? Or are they already willing to help, and you just need to move them to *action*?

3. Finally, look at the chart to see some suggestions of tactics that fit the response you're trying to get from the person or group you've identified.

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Templates

Now that you've identified your issues, the decision maker, and the process your issue will go through, it's time to decide what you're going to say. Like everyone, decision makers may respond better to some types of communication than others. This section contains templates and suggestions for reaching out to decision makers.

Postcard

Postcards are short, easy, and can be visually compelling. They work best when large numbers of people send postcards along the same theme for a cumulative effect. Add color, a photo, or a graphic to grab more attention.

Postcard template:

Hello [decision maker], My name is [your name] and I live in your [district/city] at [cross street or area you live in].	It's important for decision makers to know that you are their constituent! You can also include your school, where you work, or any other details that emphasize why your opinion may represent a cross-section of their district.
[This issue] has been important to me because [a personal detail or story about your connection to the issue].	You won't have much room on a postcard, but a one-sentence personal story is still one of the best ways of convincing someone to listen to you.
[I hope you will/please consider/can I count on you to] [specific request]. Thank you, [Your name]	The more specific the better — "vote for full funding for X," "repair the sidewalk between the A and B blocks of C street" is more effective than "support sidewalks."

Email

Emails can contain more story and detail, and often get a quick response! They work best when you're interested in opening up a dialogue with the decision maker and maybe scheduling a meeting to talk further.

Email template:

Hello [decision maker],

My name is [your name] and I live in your [district/city] at [cross street or area you live in]. I'm writing to ask you to [specific request].

[This issue] has been important to me because [a personal detail or story about your connection to the issue].

Would you be willing to [specific request]? Please contact me at [your preferred method of contact] if you'd like to talk further.

Thank you,

[Your name]

Bonus: If your issue is something you can take a picture of, attach a photo! For example, a damaged sidewalk, outdated playground equipment, or an unkempt lot.

Video Messages

Video messages are often underused ways of communicating with elected officials. They work best when a) they are requested, as they were for the [Mayor's Task Force on Community and Police Relations](), b) they are part of a broader social media campaign where large numbers of people will be recording video messages, or c) when visually documenting the issue on video will help demonstrate the importance of an issue (say, filming people crossing a street in need of a crossing light).

Video message template:

My name is [your name] and I live in [district/city] at [cross street or area you live in], and I am making this video to let [decision maker] know about an important issue in my community.

[video footage of the issue] [This issue] has been important to me because [a personal detail or story about your connection to the issue].

[Decision maker] [I hope you will/please consider/can I count on you to] [specific request]. Thank you for your time, and please let me know how I can help [solve your issue].

Social media post

Social media posts that tag decision makers can be very effective in getting attention paid to your issue. They work best when a) they are part of a broader social media campaign, b) you already interact with your elected officials over social media, c) they are about something timely and of interest to a lot of people.

Before engaging with a decision maker on social media, do a little research. Which (if any) social media platforms does the decision maker use? Do you see the person actively engaging with their constituents on that platform?

There are two ways to go about engaging with decision makers on social media. The first is by directly addressing the decision maker and tagging their account, with a more personally directed message. The other way to get a decision maker's attention on social media is by participating or starting a campaign to spread awareness of the issue you are advocating for. This is usually done through using hashtags and sharing stories of how the policies they vote on impact the people in our community. With permission, give examples of the negative or positive impact their decisions are making on real people.

Example of a direct social media post:

Hello [elected official's name and/or social media handle], my [issue that has impacted you] is [state condition of issue]. Because of [the issue] our community [a personal detail or story about the issue]. We need your support. How can we collaborate to solve [this issue]?

Example of a social media campaign post:

Recently because of [your issue], I wasn't able to [consequence of issue] #myissue is a problem in my community, and we need [name of decision maker @decisionmaker]'s support to overcome this. Share your examples of #myissue and let @decisionmaker know what is going on in their [district/constituency].

Pictures receive more engagement and add credibility. If possible, always attach a photo of your issue. For example, a damaged sidewalk, outdated playground equipment, or an unkempt lot.

Face-to-face (or Zoom) meeting

Before the meeting:

- Gather evidence in the form of *data* and *stories* that demonstrate the problem you are trying to solve and point toward the solution.

- Decide who will share which evidence, and practice what you will say.

- Use an agenda, and send it to the decision maker you are meeting in advance. A basic agenda might look like:

Meet to Discuss [Issue]:

Date, time, place

1. Introductions

2. Overview of [issue]

    a. Problem/Impact on neighborhood [team member name]

    b. Proposed solution [team member name]

3. Questions and feedback from [decision maker]

4. Next steps

Speaking at a Commission meeting

Speaking at a Commission meeting can be intimidating, but it's the best way to get your issue in front of the people who have the power to make a change. Write out what you will say and practice beforehand. Make sure to time yourself — you will be cut off after three minutes, and you don't want to miss the opportunity to state important points.

Hello [decision makers],

My name is [your name] and I live at [address]. I [support/oppose] this issue because [one-sentence statement of the need you and your group agreed on].

I believe [solution your group agreed on] is the best way to address [need] because [first compelling reason] [data or story in support of reason].

In addition, [second compelling reason] [data or story in support of reason].

Finally, [third compelling reason] [data or story in support of reason].

I hope you will [support/oppose] this issue to [solution] [need].

2. Decision-maker maps

Who should I be talking to?

Use this chart to figure out which elected official(s) and agenc(ies) you should be talking to using the tactics and templates in the strategy guide.

ISSUE INVOLVING:	LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT	DECISION MAKERS
Local streets, curbs, sidewalks, streetlights, stormwater	Local	Public Works Commission
Parks, playgrounds	Local	Parks and Recreation Commission
Attracting new business or residential development	Local	Economic Development Commission
Building design and land use	Local	Urban Planning Commission
Problem building or lot	Local	Code enforcement Commission
Local policies and ordinances (i.e. Safe and Welcoming Ordinance, pitbull ban, mobile food vending)	Local	Commission or relevant department
Water and electric bills, light poles, Rosedale substation	Local	BPU Board of Commissioners
Public schools	Local, state (school funding)	Local: Building principals, USD 500 School Board State: KS Legislature
State highways (18th St. Expwy., Rainbow Blvd.)	State	KDOT
Medicaid expansion	State	KS Legislature
Food sales tax	State	KS Legislature
Most housing policy (LIHTC, Inclusionary zoning)	State	KS Legislature
SNAP participation	State	KDHE

Representing Rosedale

Rosedalians have elected the people below to represent them at the local and state levels. They are members of our community and work hard to listen and serve. Get to know them at neighborhood gatherings, and let them hear from you often — not just when something is wrong.

Local

DISTRICT 3 COMMISSIONER	AT-LARGE COMMISSIONER	AT-LARGE COMMISSIONER	MAYOR
CHRISTIAN RAMIREZ 701 N 7th St., Suite 979 Kansas City, KS 66101 913-573-5040 cramirez@wycokck.org	**MELISSA BYNUM** 701 N 7th St., Suite 979 Kansas City, KS 66101 913-573-5040 mbynum@wycokck.org	**TOM BURROUGHS** 701 N 7th St., Suite 979 Kansas City, KS 66101 913-573-5040 tburroughs@wycokck.org	**TYRONE GARNER** 701 N 7th St., Suite 926 Kansas City, KS 66101 913-573-5010 mayorgarner@wycokck.org

State

GOVERNOR	REPRESENTATIVE	SENATOR
LAURA KELLY 300 SW 10th Ave. Suite 241S Topeka, KS 66612-1590 785-296-3232 https://governor.kansas.gov/contact/	**LOUIS RUIZ** 300 SW 10th Ave. Room: 47-S Topeka, KS 66612-1590 785-296-7885 louis.ruiz@house.ks.gov	**PAT PETTEY** 300 SW 10th Ave. Room: 125-E Topeka, KS 66612-1590 785-296-7375 Pat.Pettey@senate.ks.gov

3. Local process maps

Issues come before the Commission via one of two paths:

Special Session

(Optional, information only, no action)

▶

Standing Committee

(Votes on a recommendation to Full Commission)

▶

Full Commission

If recommended by Standing Committee unanimously, will go on "consent agenda" and be voted on as a block with other items without further discussion. If vote from Standing Committee is not unanimous, will be debated and voted on as an individual issue.

Planning Commission/ Board of Zoning Appeals

(Votes on a recommendation to Full Commission)

▶

Full Commission

If recommended by Planning Commission unanimously, goes will go on "consent agenda" and be voted on as a block with other items without further discussion. If vote from Standing Committee is not unanimous, it will be debated and voted on as an individual issue.

Local process map, part 1

My local issue is coming up for discussion — what happens now?

Locally, most issues are decided by the Unified Government Commission, made up of <u>eight in-district Commissioners, two at-large Commissioners</u>, and <u>the Mayor.</u> Some items are first considered by a **Standing Committee**, the **Planning Commission**, or at a **Special Session,** and then sent on to the **Full Commission** for a final decision.

	SPECIAL SESSION	STANDING COMMITTEE	PLANNING COMMISSION
	Special Sessions are informational only — the Commission cannot vote during them. For an action to be taken, an issue has to go to Standing Committee.	Public Works & Safety, Economic Development & Finance, Neighborhood & Community Development, and Administration & Human Services	Board of Zoning Appeals and City Planning Commission
MEETS	Mondays or Thursdays at 5 p.m. (when called)	Mondays at 5 p.m.	2nd Monday of the month at 6 p.m.
FIND AGENDAS AND MINUTES	Go <u>here</u> and scroll to the bottom of the page.	Go <u>here</u> and scroll to the bottom of the page. Agendas are published 10 days before the Standing Committee meets.	Agendas, minutes, and staff reports (additional information on each item that includes a recommendation from Planning staff) are <u>here.</u> Materials are published by noon on the Friday before a Planning Commission Meeting.
PUBLIC COMMENT — Submit **written** comments in advance.	Email comments to <u>UGClerkRequest@wycokck.org</u>. Note: not all Special Sessions include public comment.	Email comments to <u>UGClerkRequest@wycokck.org</u>. Subject should be Item Name and whether you are **for** or **against**, email should include meeting date.	Email comments to <u>planninginfo@wycokck.org.</u> Subject line should read: "Public comment — (name of agenda item)" and include your full name and city of residence in the body of the email.
PUBLIC COMMENT — Request to **speak** at the meeting.	Call 913-573-5260 or email <u>UGClerkRequest@wycokck.org</u>.	Call 913-573-5260 or email <u>UGClerkRequest@wycokck.org</u>.	During discussion of your item, use the "raise hand" function on zoom to indicate that you'd like to speak, and you will be called on.
SPEAKING INSTRUCTIONS	Give your name, address, and phone number you are calling from (if applicable).		
SPEAKING INSTRUCTIONS	Limit comments to only three minutes.	Limit comments to only three minutes.	If you are calling in by telephone only email <u>planninginfo@wycokck.org</u> to speak.
DEADLINES		Thursday before Standing Committee at 5 p.m.	Many Planning Commission items are required to hold a public meeting for property owners within a certain radius of the proposal. If your property is within that radius, you will be notified of the meeting by mail.

AFTER AN ITEM HAS BEEN VOTED ON by a Standing Committee or the Planning Commission, it goes to the Full Commission for a final decision. See the next page for the procedures at Full Commission.

Local process map, part 2

The Full Commission discusses and votes on recommendations from the Standing Committees and the Planning Commission. Items that were *decided unanimously* at the earlier stage go on the consent agenda, meaning they are not open for further comment and they are voted on as a block with other items on the consent agenda. Items on the consent agenda can be removed from the consent agenda and discussed at the request of a commissioner or a member of the public.

		FULL COMMISSION
MEETS		Thursdays at 7 p.m.
FIND AGENDAS AND MINUTES.		Go here and scroll to the bottom of the page.
PUBLIC COMMENT	*If item is on consent agenda*	Email UGClerkRequest@wycokck.org, your commissioner, or the mayor and request item be removed from consent agenda, otherwise it will not be discussed. Give your reasons for asking that the item be discussed.
	Submit written comments in advance.	Email comments to UGClerkRequest@wycokck.org. Subject should be Item Name and whether you are **for** or **against**, email should include meeting date.
	Request to speak at the meeting.	Call 913-573-5260 or email UGClerkRequest@wycokck.org.
COMMENT INSTRUCTIONS		Give your name, address, and phone number you are calling from (if remote meeting).
		Limit comments to three minutes.
DEADLINES		Wednesday before Full Commission at 5 p.m.

4. Resource guide

IN THIS SECTION YOU'LL FIND BACKGROUND INFORMATION to help you become an expert neighborhood advocate.

Commission goals

The UG Commission has overall goals that guide how decisions are made and resources are invested. Take some time to think about how your issue fits in with these commission priorities:

01 Reduce blight

02 Increase safety and perception of safety

03 Increase community health

04 Increase economy for all citizens

05 Improve customer service and communication

06 Increase community cohesion

VISION

Uniquely Wyandotte — a vibrant intersection of diversity, opportunities, and distinctive neighborhoods.

An engaged community: healthy, fulfilled, and inspired.

Safe, healthy and diverse neighborhoods

People participate and prosper

UG budget

The Commission also has an adopted budget, and most issues require funding though the budget. You can find the current budget here. You can also find the Citizen and Community Stakeholder Budget Input Form, which should be filled out and submitted each year with your budget priorities.

The budget process changes a little each year, and is created one year in advance. Below is the process for the 2022 budget.

2022 PROPOSED BUDGET PROCESS CALENDAR
FOR 2021

Board of Commission 2022 Budget Planning	
February 25, 2021 (Thursday)	5 Year CMIP Special Session
March 4, 2021 (Thursday)	Commissioner Budget Retreat
March 11, 2021 (Thursday)	1st Public Hearing - Community Development/Budget Office (7PM)
County Administrator's Budget Workshops/Proposed 2022 Budget Presentation	
April 2021	CMIP - Committee of the Whole Workshops
May 6, 2021 (Thursday)	1st Budget Workshop
May 20, 2021 (Thursday)	2nd Budget Workshop
June 24, 2021 (Thursday)	County Administrator's Budget Presentation (5PM)
July 1, 2021 (Thursday)	3rd Budget Workshop/Commission Set Maximum Mill Levy
July 2, 2021 (Friday)	Publish Maximum Mill Levy
July 12, 2021 (Monday)	2nd Public Hearing - Community Development/Budget Office (5PM)
July 15, 2021 (Thursday)	Budget Adoption (7PM)

Other funding

Lack of funding can often be a major obstacle to your issue. One helpful strategy is to work with your decision makers and your community to find other sources of funding. A few places to start:

1. Consider organizing a fundraiser.

2. If you are working with your neighborhood group, the Neighborhoods Rising Fund offers grants up to $3,000 for community improvement projects. Wyandotte County neighborhood groups are also eligible for a small annual grant through Livable Neighborhoods.

3. If you are working with a nonprofit organization, you can look into grants that might help fund your issue. A couple local options are:

    a. Walmart Local Community Grant
    b. Unified Government Hollywood Casino Fund

Master Plans

A Master Plan is a tool for a community to set the direction of future development and land use. Rosedale has two Master Plans, one covering Eastern Rosedale and one covering the Southwest Blvd./Merriam Lane corridor. The UG has adopted both plans and committed to following the plans as development decisions are made. If your issue concerns development in Rosedale, consult the Master Plans to find out what the UG has already committed to.

What's going on with that building?

Wyandotte County has several tools available to find building ownership and development information in Rosedale. If you need information on a specific building or parcel to be a more informed advocate, you can look at:

1. UGmaps/Landsweb

    a. Land ownership

    b. Zoning

    c. Property lines (not exact)

    d. Tax status (Landsweb)

2. Mauwi

    a. Building permits

    b. Codes cases

    c. Business license, rental license

    d. Planning applications

3. UG Planning

    a. Staff reports: If you know when an item went to the Planning Commission, you can look up the planning staff's report on that item and the minutes of the meeting where it was discussed.

4. Is it for sale?

    a. Zillow for residential

    b. Loopnet for commercial

5. Need more info? Try:

    a. Calling Building Inspection: 913-573-8620.

    b. Calling Planning & Urban Design: 913-573-5750 (ask for Janet).

    c. Just go knock!

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