

Communicating With Council: Practical Suggestions from Mayor Adler's Office

We want to hear from you, and we want to help you. Here are a few suggestions to help you help us.

Do's

- Do your research. The more specific your request, concern, or action item, the more likely it is to see some movement. Dates, times, names, etc.
- Work the system. It's important to understand Boards & Commissions, each council office appointee, and the Committee system.
- Go through aides. You might be amazed at how much quicker you get a response if you contact aides directly.
- Be patient. Sometimes the flow of incoming communication and information is tsunami-like. It may take a little time to get through the process.
- For Austin Energy and Austin Water, call Customer Care first. That's who we will deal with when you call us, and calling us first just lengthens the process. If Customer Care doesn't or can't help you, then call us.
- Present solutions. While we appreciate, understand, and expect complaints, we like it when potential solutions accompany complaints.
- Be nice. Working in a council office is oftentimes a thankless job underneath a bright light and a microscope. Being nice, even when angry, goes a long way.
- Leave a voicemail when you call.
- Be choosey. Communicating on too many issues can dilute your effectiveness.
- If you have a time-sensitive request, please make sure to state why (dates/times/etc.) during your communication.
- Ask our advice. If you want to know how to approach an issue with an office, ask for advice.

Don'ts

- Don't call council members at home unless they've said that's okay with them.
- Don't expect a same-day meeting to be scheduled.
- Don't show up unannounced or without a meeting scheduled and expect to see someone. Many council members have complex and detailed schedules.
- Don't use "form" e-mails to communicate with council. If you use suggested language in an e-mail, personalize it to the best of your ability.
- Don't use council members' personal e-mails to communicate with council members.
- Don't publicize ways to communicate with council offices without first checking with the office. Each office is different, and you may have incorrect information. Council offices are always working to improve their communications methods, so things evolve over time. It never hurts to check in.
- Don't "flood" offices with communications. Many communications coming all at once tends to overwhelm offices. Spread them out for maximum effectiveness.
- Don't send faxes or letters. They take a long time to work their way into our hands. If you desire written communication, hand delivery is the best method.
- Don't be afraid to follow up. Due to the high volume of incoming communication, things can and do slip through the cracks. If you don't hear anything after a few days, please follow up.
- Don't message us on Facebook or Twitter if it is urgent. We have trouble keeping up with just the e-mails and phone calls.