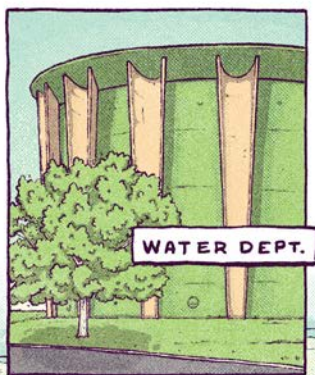
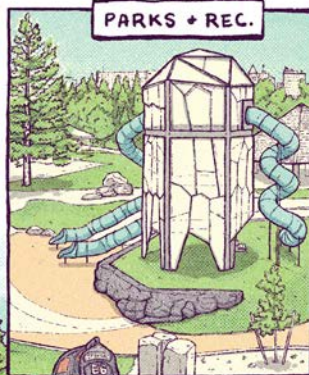
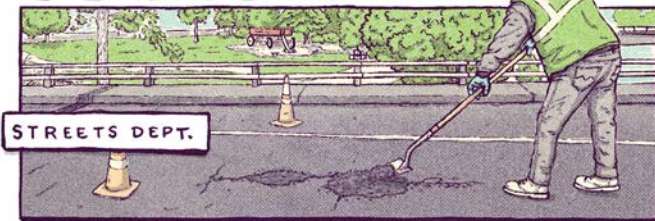
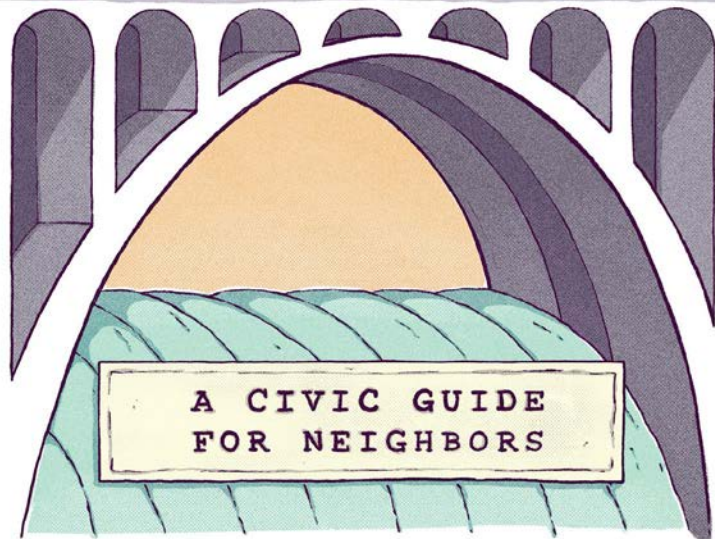


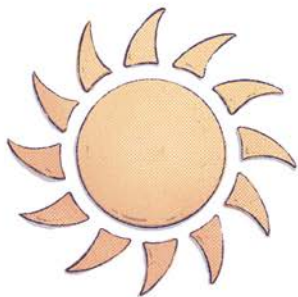
OUR CITY DEPARTMENTS



T H I S I S

SPOKANE





In Spokane We All Belong

Community involvement is the foundation of a successful local government. The goal of this publication is to provide an easy, interesting, and (dare we say) fun way to learn more about how the City of Spokane operates...and how you can get involved! This zine (short for magazine) will introduce you to local municipal structures, everyday processes, decision making, and better understanding of how and where you fit in.

Did you Know? The Spokane City flag, designed by local artist Derek Landers, was adopted after several rounds of public voting in 2021.

There is no better time than now to build a more engaged and inclusive form of government. We can do this, together. After all, in Spokane, we all belong!

A more inclusive city government is possible when all communities have a voice in decisions that affect them; but where do you start? It is our hope that this zine will be a back-pocket tool and a refresher on the different ways to organize and advocate for a city that works for and with YOU.

Come on, let's dive in!

Welcome to the City of Spokane! A beautiful community woven from 29 neighborhoods and home to more than 230,000 residents. Our city is divided into three voting districts, each with two elected City Council Members and an at-large City Council President.

The City of Spokane has about 2,000 employees and operates as a Mayor-Council, or "strong mayor," form of government.

This means that the Mayor is responsible for managing city departments and appointing key leaders like the City Administrator, Police Chief, and Fire Chief. Meanwhile, the City Council retains power over budget allocations, the purchasing process, and contracting procedures.

Our Mayor and City Council work closely with various City departments, each other, and regional partners to propose and implement plans, policies, and projects that address the City's needs. They also work together to draft and approve the City's budget.

CITY STRUCTURE

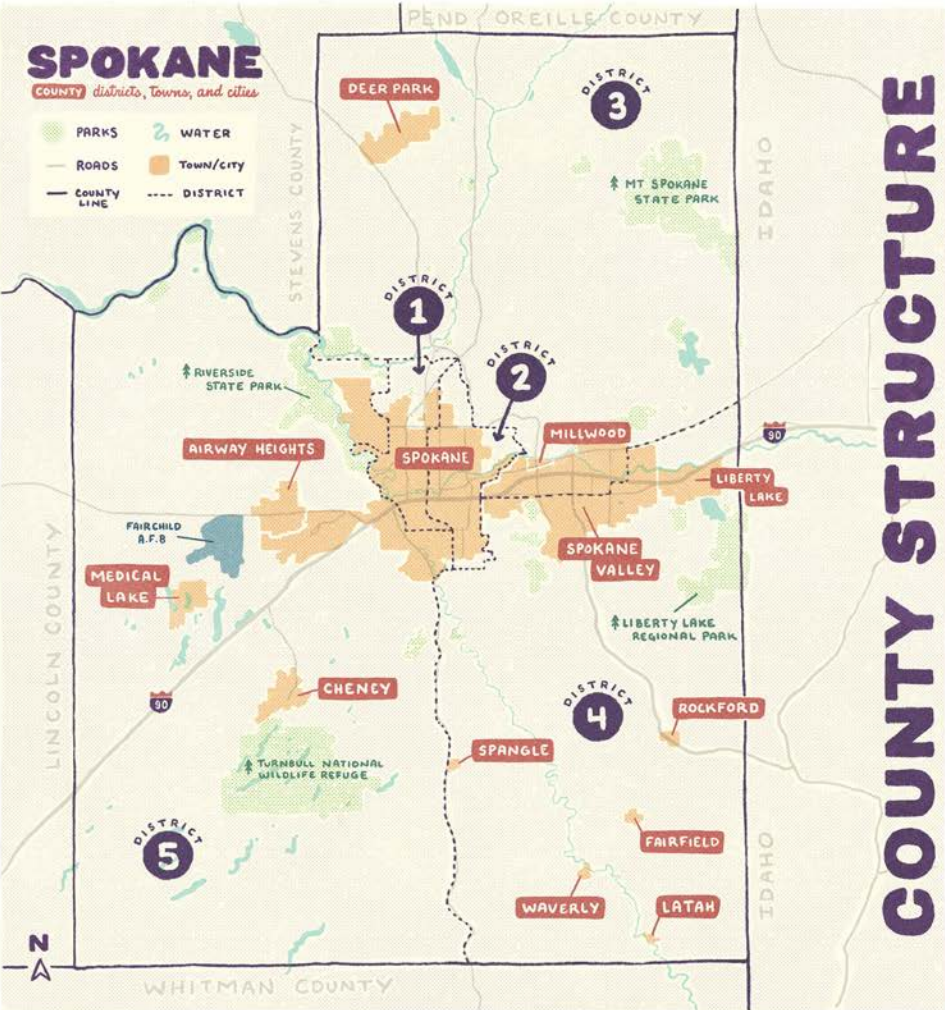


SPOKANE

COUNTY districts, towns, and cities

● PARKS
— ROADS
— COUNTY LINE
— DISTRICT

2 WATER
— TOWN/CITY



COUNTY STRUCTURE

Spokane County is home to nearly 540,000 residents with 13 recognized towns and cities: Airway Heights, Cheney, Deer Park, Fairfield, Latah, Liberty Lake, Medical Lake, Millwood, Rockford, Spangle, City of Spokane, City of Spokane Valley, and Waverly.

Spokane County also provides services to all residents living within the County, which also includes areas that are unincorporated, (not in any specific city or town.) Here are some examples:

- Spokane County Elections
- Spokane Regional Health District
- S.C.R.A.P.S (Regional Animal Protection Service)
- Spokane County Judicial System (Courts, Detention, etc.)

Spokane County is divided into five voting districts, each represented by an elected County Commissioner. The Spokane County Board of Commissioners works with staff to identify the needs of the public and ensure the County responds to those needs.

Commissioner duties include, but are not limited to: adopting and enacting the County's budget, setting policy, establishing fees and comprehensive use plans, and conducting public hearings and meetings.

Spokane County Board of Commissioners' meetings take place weekly and are open to the public.

City Council

As provided in the City Charter, one City Council President and six City Council Members constitute the Spokane City Council. The Council President is elected by city-wide voters while the Council Members are elected by voters in one of the three voting districts. The City Council is the legislative body of the City.

Council Members are responsible for drafting and passing legislation, approving and overseeing the City's budget, and advocating for the needs of their district. In addition, every Council Member is required to attend various public meetings and sit on numerous City and regional boards and commissions.



A Council Member represents residents, workers, and business owners in their district. Council Members work collaboratively to resolve issues of concern for the people they represent.

The City Council employs Council Office staff to support their work. Positions include an Office Director, Policy Advisor, Budget Director, Communications Director, and managers of various initiatives.

Share your voice!

Spokane City Council meetings take place weekly and are open to the public. Spokane residents are encouraged to speak at the meetings and share their opinions about city matters. Want to review upcoming agendas or have questions? Visit the City Council website.



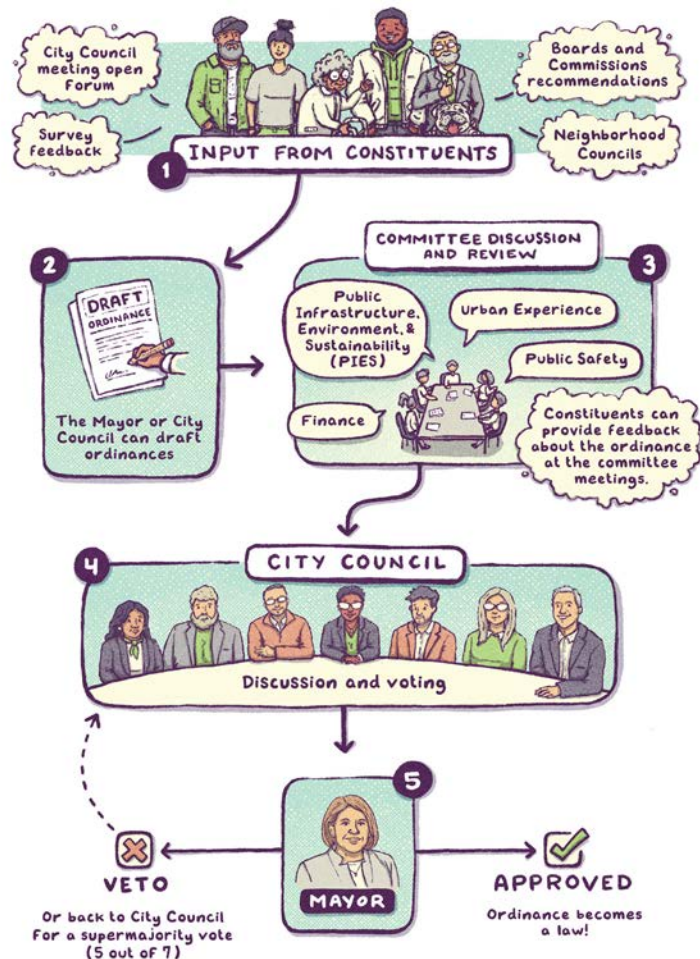
How an Ordinance Becomes a Law

Have you ever wondered how City laws are created?

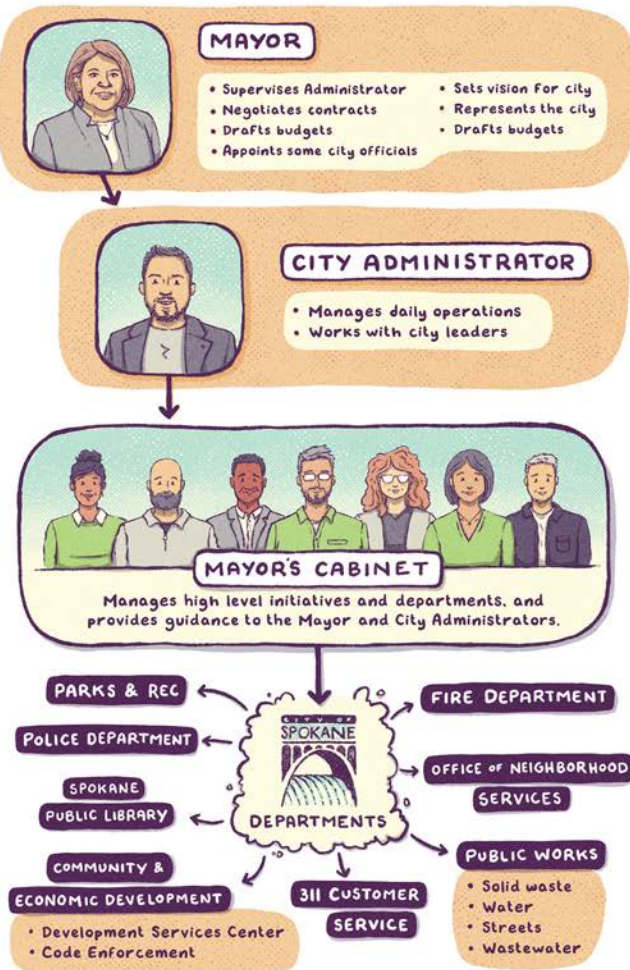
Laws begin as **draft ordinances**, which are pieces of legislation based on community needs and interests. Laws are created by researching possible solutions, developing a set of rules, undergoing a review by one of the City Council standing committees, approving the draft ordinance via a City Council vote, and finally a signature of the Mayor. The general rule for regular ordinances is that they take effect 30 days after enactment. Enactment is either the date of the Mayor's signature or the 10th day after it is presented to the Mayor. It is then that an ordinance passed by City Council becomes a **law** and is incorporated into the Spokane Municipal Code (SMC).

The **SMC** is the collection of City laws and regulations (a.k.a approved ordinances) that help set boundaries and rules that govern everything from construction and public right of ways, special event permits to land use standards and environmental stewardship. The SMC provides a foundation that helps our community stay safe and thriving.

Draft ordinances most often start with "constituents" like YOU who voice their opinions around a community concern or need. Then, City Council members and City staff will work with the community to further develop the idea, eventually moving it through the appropriate committee, collecting community input along the way. This is why it's so important to get involved in various City committees or your neighborhood council.



CITY ADMINISTRATION STRUCTURE



Internal City Structure

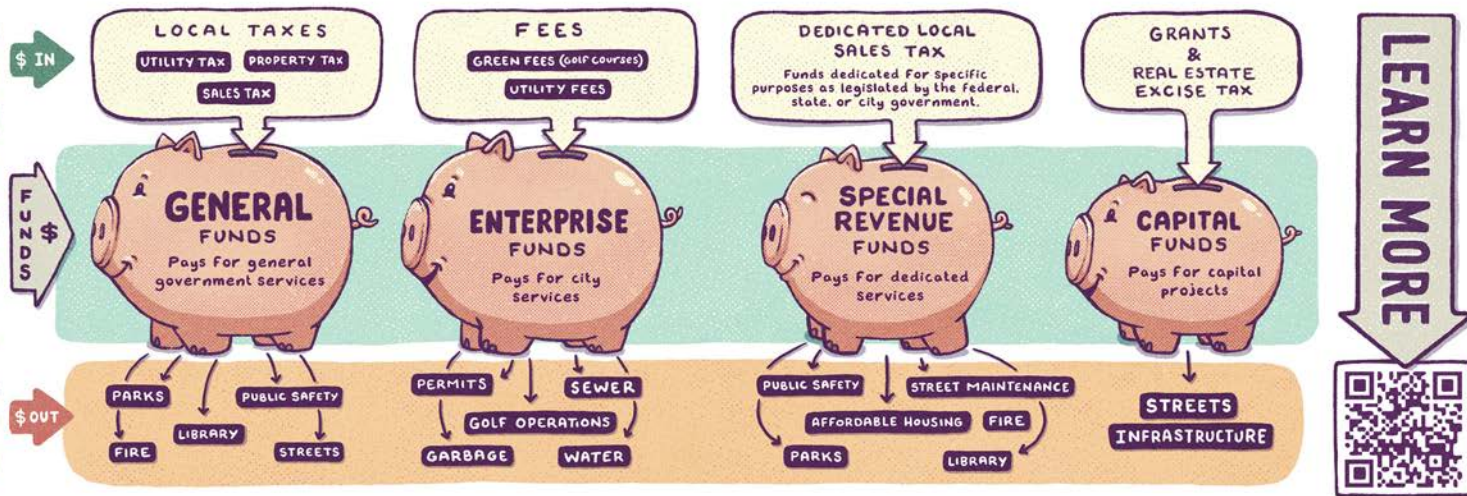
The Mayor is elected as the head of the Executive Branch, similar to the Governor's role at the state level and the President's role at the federal level. The City Administrator, meanwhile, serves in the capacity of the City's Chief Operating Officer.

The other key elected members in our government are the seven members of the City Council, who make up the Legislative Branch of the City's government.

LEGISLATIVE STRUCTURE



CITY BUDGET



City Budget

The City of Spokane utilizes a biennial budget process, meaning the budget is for two-year periods. This type of budgeting increases stability for economic fluctuations and opportunities for better long-range financial planning. The City's budget is funded through a variety of sources, including taxes, fees and charges for services like utilities, fines and penalties from traffic tickets, state and federal government programs, as well as grants from public or private sources.

Did You Know? Most of the revenue that funds housing services in Spokane are provided by state and federal agencies. The City acts as a pass-through for that funding, and committees decide where funding goes. Most revenue that funds behavioral health services in Spokane are provided by State and Federal agencies and flows through Spokane County.

Planning and Economic Development

Planning Services is a team of city planners who manage and update the long-term vision for the city. They are constantly thinking about the question, "What does the future of Spokane look like?"

Planners are trained professionals with extensive knowledge of trends in land use, housing, transportation, economic development, law, and data research and analysis.

They work closely with other City departments, City Council, the Mayor's Office, Plan Commission, other boards & commissions, regional planners, and agencies like Spokane Transit Authority.

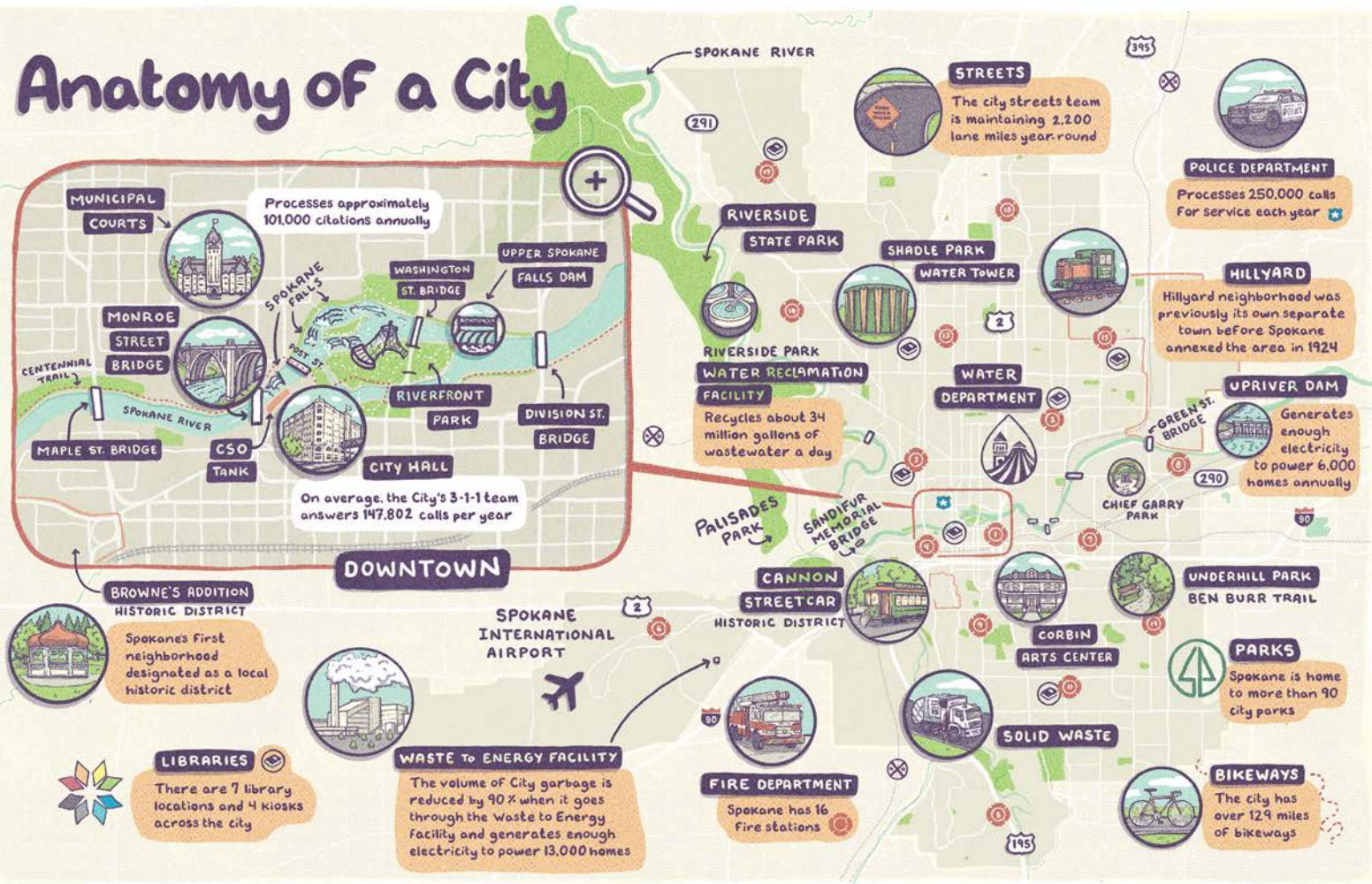


Spokane is 'Zoned' in on Progress

Planners use zoning to determine where and how things can be built. Zoning is a practice of dividing land into "zones" that allow for different uses, e.g. residential, commercial, or open space. Zoning is used to evaluate if an area should only allow one use, like industrial, or allow for a mix of uses such as retail, housing, and offices. Zoning's goal is to lessen impacts between different land uses and their effects like noise, traffic, or walkability, while also supporting vibrant neighborhoods.

Look up your property on Map Spokane and turn on the "Planning" layer to learn more!

Anatomy of a City



City Planning: How does change happen?

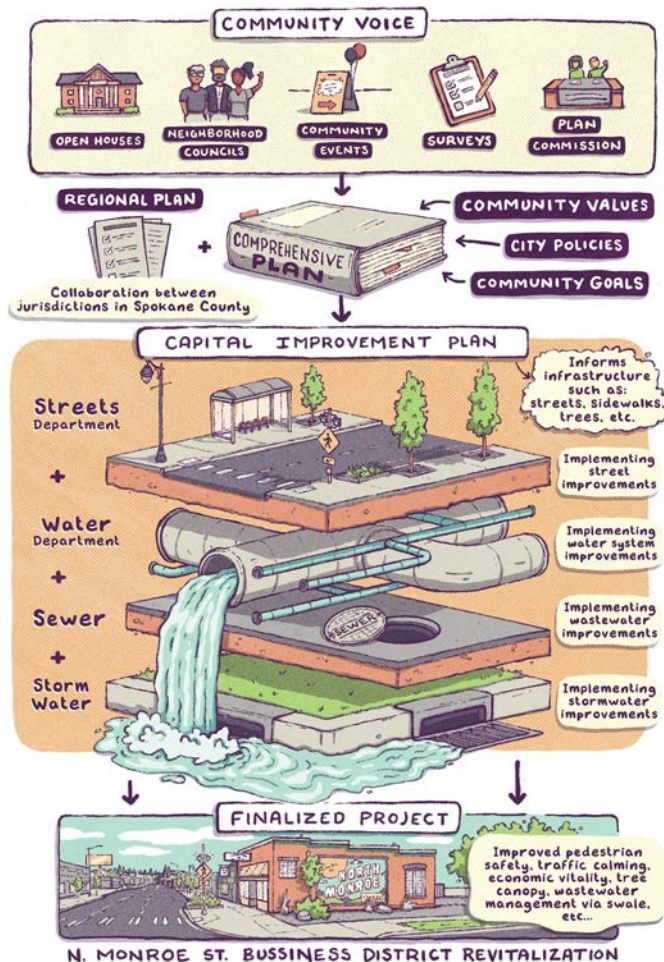
When a new building pops up on your daily route, have you ever wondered what goes into the rules of what can and cannot be built?

In addition to complying with building and fire codes, as well as engineering standards, there are planning requirements in the Spokane Municipal Code (SMC) that guide new development. The code regulates things like maximum building height, setbacks from the road, and building design elements.

How are those regulations determined? The development code must support and further the policies and goals within Spokane's Comprehensive Plan, a document providing direction for how the city and neighborhoods grow and change over time, including key topics like what kind of housing is built and where, how transportation infrastructure moves people around the city, and how we as a community adapt to impacts from a changing climate.

Did You Know? The Comprehensive Plan guides growth and the community vision in the City of Spokane for horizons of 20 years.

PROCESS FOR A PROJECT





Spokane Public Library

Spokane is home to seven city library locations. Everyone is welcome at Spokane Public Library and City of Spokane residents are encouraged to sign up for a free library card. Spokane Public Library offers an abundance of resources including books, events, meeting rooms, media studios, community archives, the Library of Things, business support, museum passes, and more. There's no limit to what you can explore with your library card!

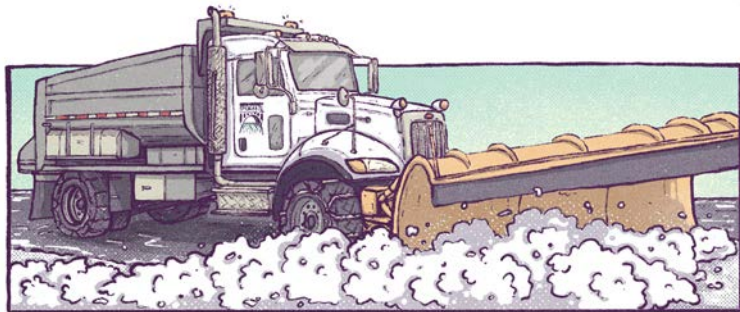
Did you Know? The Library of Things is a collection of non-traditional library items that you can check out with your library card. A few example items include garden tools, outdoor games, and musical instruments.

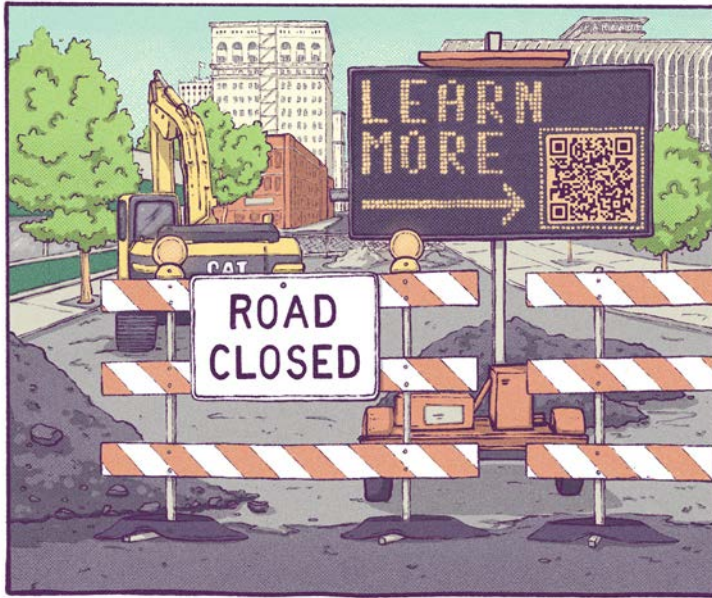
Public Works

The City of Spokane Public Works Division provides services for water, sewer, garbage, streets, and much more. This team of 750 employees does everything from picking up residential and commercial waste, to maintaining streets and signals, to making sure clean water is delivered to residents. The work they accomplish is critical to keeping our community safe, clean, and healthy, which includes the Spokane River.

Did you know? The Streets Department plows our city streets during the winter. We have over 2,200 lane miles of streets to maintain year-round and the City relies on the community to partner in the effort to keep sidewalks clear and report street conditions.

Why are there so many potholes? The City of Spokane is a freeze-thaw climate and provides the perfect conditions for growing potholes. Help us by reporting potholes you see to Spokane311.org.





Construction

The City's four-season climate allows for construction projects to be done eight months out of the year and there is always more work to do than time to complete them. The City has a Six-Year Streets Plan they follow to maximize the life of our streets. Learn more about current construction by scanning the QR code above!

Municipal Water Systems

Spokane is fortunate to have the Spokane Valley-Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer to provide its water supply. The City uses eight wells, 37 storage tanks, and 1,100 miles of pipes to collect and deliver up to 150 million gallons of clean water every day to the community. The City also owns and operates Upriver Dam which generates energy to provide power to water system pumps!

After this water is used, it is sent to the Riverside Park Water Reclamation Facility through 871 miles of sewer pipes to be cleaned before it goes back into the Spokane River. The City also has 363 miles of stormwater pipes that collect storm and snow runoff that is managed and treated before it is released back into the river.

Solid Waste

The Solid Waste Department prioritizes reduction, reuse, and recycling to manage waste in the community. In 2024, 46,522 tons of waste was diverted through recycling and composting. Crews collect trash, recycling, food, and yard waste for residential customers and provide trash and recycling services for commercial customers.

Emergency Management

The City of Spokane's Department of Emergency Management works to support first responders, such as Spokane Police and Spokane Fire. Emergency Management ensures that first responders have all the resources they need to stabilize incidents, including planning for disasters. The phases of emergency management are:

- **Preparedness:** the actions to prepare for disasters ahead of time, including developing plans and conducting exercises and trainings to test plans.
- **Mitigation:** the actions to prevent future disasters or reduce the potential impact from the disasters, such as creating defensible space around homes to prepare for wildfires.
- **Response:** the actions taken to respond to a disaster event, to stabilize the incident for life safety and to protect property or the environment.
- **Recovery:** the actions taken during and after a disaster, to help return to normalcy.

In order to build a more resilient community, how can you and your loved ones be most prepared?



BUILD AN EMERGENCY KIT

Emergency kits can include: water, non-perishable food, first aid supplies, flashlights, and important documents.

DEVELOP A FAMILY PREPAREDNESS PLAN

Your plan should include specific assignments for your family so that everyone knows their role(s) during an emergency.



VISIT ↘

SIGN UP FOR EMERGENCY ALERTS

Q my.spokane.org/emergencymanagement/alerts/

to register for real time notifications.



FIRE



OUTBREAK



HEAT WAVE



FLOOD



HIGH WINDS



SNOW STORM

Spokane Fire Department

The Spokane Fire Department (SFD) operates 16 stations across the City, providing fire, medical, and rescue services, as well as fire prevention and public education. All SFD firefighters hold at least an EMT-B certification, and some are trained as Paramedics. Specialty Response Teams include HAZMAT, Water Rescue, and Technical/Heavy Rescue units.

SFD also offers social services through the C.A.R.E.S. (**C**ommunity **A**ssistance **R**esponse) Team and Behavioral Response Unit (BRU). In partnership with Eastern Washington University, the C.A.R.E.S. program connects vulnerable residents to community resources to reduce non-emergency 911 calls. In collaboration with Frontier Behavioral Health, the BRU pairs a paramedic with a mental health counselor to provide support beyond traditional emergency response.

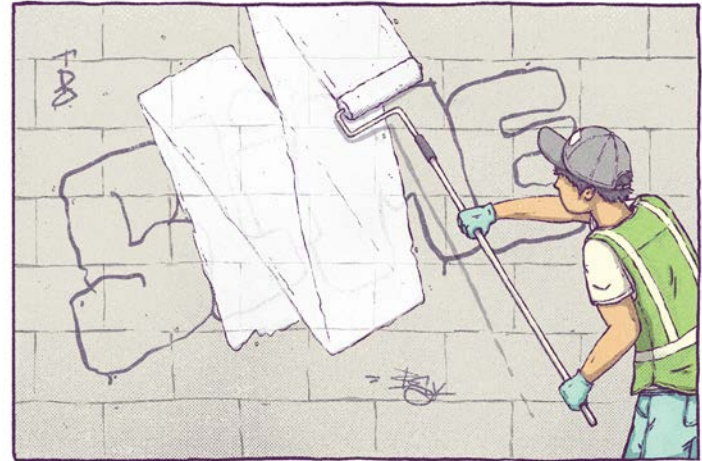
Spokane Police Department

The Spokane Police Department (SPD) is the agency responsible for law enforcement. They operate using a precinct model, which means officers are assigned to specific geographical areas across the city. The four precincts for Spokane include: Northwest, Northeast, Downtown, and South. SPD is led by the Chief of Police and three Assistant Chiefs of Police, who are appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by City Council.

Code Enforcement

Code Enforcement manages compliance to the City of Spokane Municipal Code (SMC). The bulk of their work focuses on conditions on private property, but also handles cases dealing with illegal dumping, graffiti, and substandard buildings. Code Enforcement also manages the Homeless Outreach Team (HOT).

HOT partners SPD with City Code Enforcement, behavioral health professionals, and service providers to help individuals facing houselessness access services like food, temporary shelters as well as longer term services like permanent housing.



Neighborhood Councils + Community Assembly

There are many opportunities for residents (a.k.a. YOU) to get involved and make a direct impact in your community.

Neighborhood Councils (NCs) are a very local way to get involved and influence development, infrastructure, traffic, and community building right in your backyard. NCs are volunteer-led and open to all neighbors within their respective NC boundaries. They plan events, host clean-ups, and inform residents about city business.

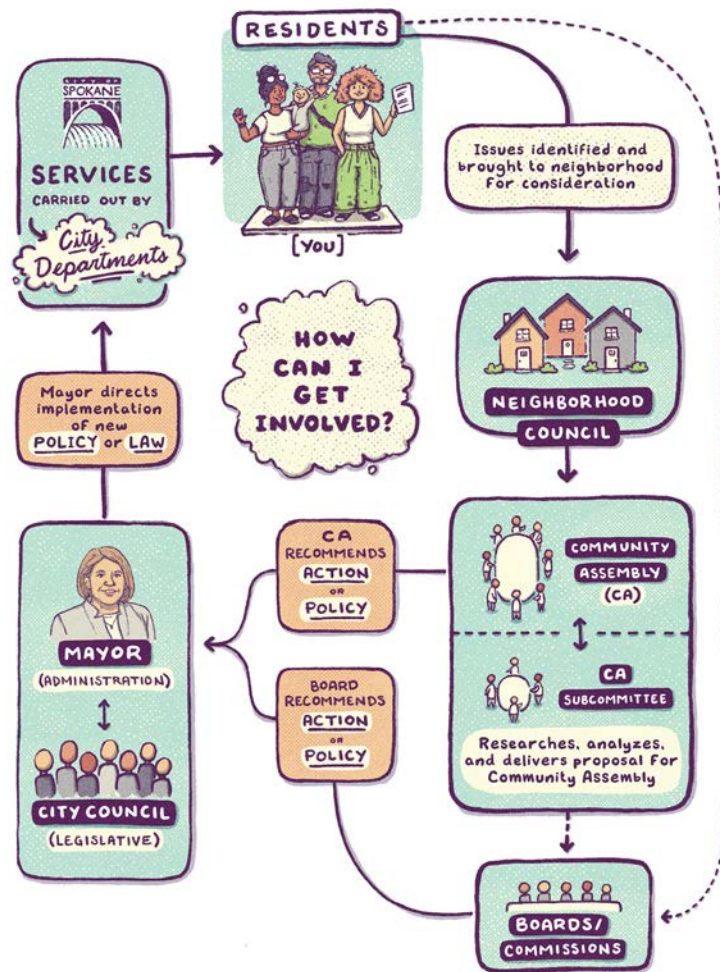
NCs have access to city grant funds, Spokane Safe Streets for All, clean-up supplies, and more.

A representative from every NC gathers monthly at the Community Assembly (CA) to share best practices and provide input on city legislation. Meetings are open to the public!

Boards and Commissions

The City has over 30 boards and commissions that have designated seats for residents (a.k.a. YOU). A few examples include:

- Spokane Human Rights Commission
- Chase Youth Commission
- Bicycle Advisory Board
- Spokane Park Board



Spokane



Contact Us!

Spokane 311 is a one stop shop for customer service as it relates to City departments, including Parks and Recreation, Utility Billing, Solid Waste Collection, Code and Parking Enforcement, and Streets. Common calls include paying your utility bill, reporting graffiti, making a zoning or code complaint, noting a pothole location, and other services.

Spokane 311 is always one call, one click, or one visit away! Other important numbers you should know include:

2-1-1 Social Services and Community Resources

- Connects callers to social services including housing, food, employment, mental health services, and more.

9-8-8 Mental Health Crisis Hotline

- Connects people experiencing thoughts or actions related to self-harm, severe depression, or anxiety with trained counselors who provide immediate support.

9-1-1 Emergency Services

- Connects callers needing immediate assistance from police officers, firefighters or an ambulance.

509-456-2233 Crime Check

- Non-emergency police service. Call to report crimes that are no longer in process, like theft or vandalism.



Office of Neighborhood Services

This zine was created by the City of Spokane's Office of Neighborhood Services (ONS). ONS assists Spokane's 29 neighborhoods by engaging residents and community organizations with a variety of programs, like civic and leadership education, neighborhood clean-up events, and more! The goal of these programs is to engage people in local government, build stronger communities, and improve quality of life.

View the digital version of the "Civic Guide for Neighbors" and other resources by scanning the QR code:



A huge thank you to the following people and organizations who made this publication possible:

Avista for their generous sponsorship. **Pollyanne Birge** and **Amber Groe** for the concept and direction. **Jeremy Whittington** for his design and creative consultation. **Madison Merica** (@madmerica_design) for her amazing illustrations. **Erin Hut**, **Gabby Ryan**, and **Elleri Groe** for their trusted copy editing.



Published in 2025