

Why local government matters

The vast majority, if not all, of our political news and talk today is focused on national politicians, talking points, and news.

Stop and think about it. The last time you had a conversation about national politics probably wasn't too long ago.

Now when was the last time you had a similar conversation about local politics? If you're like most people, it's been a while.

Why is this? There are many factors, but consider: Do you still read the local paper every morning? Do you watch local news? Do you listen to local radio shows?

The U.S. federal system was revolutionary in many ways, but especially because it delegated profound power to state and local levels of government.

Our local government often affects our everyday lives far more than federal lawmakers, but our media consumption habits and conversations don't reflect that. There is a growing gap between our daily discourse and the laws and policies that affect our lives.

Local government policy almost entirely dictates how clean our city is, the safety of your neighborhood, the quality of your children's education, your taxes, your ability to travel around the city, how easily you get to work, the quality and amount of public green spaces, which businesses occupy our city and which ones don't, and many other factors that affect our lives in ways federal policy never could.

The bottom line is this: Chattanooga controls its own destiny, and the cavalry is not coming. We're in competition for jobs and capital with Atlanta, with Nashville, with Knoxville, and other cities.

The good news is there's still time to get involved at the local level.

Try to incorporate local media sources back into your media consumption habits. Many of them offer podcasts, YouTube series, digital publications, and more.

And there is perhaps no better way to learn about local politics than to go directly to the source.

Attend virtual city council meetings on Tuesday afternoons, or check them out on the city's [YouTube page](#). Figure out which district you live in and shoot a note to your city council representative. If you're really curious about how tax money is being spent, take a dive into [this video](#), which outlines the City of Chattanooga's Consolidated Action Plan for 2020-2024.

Additionally, the city of Chattanooga is always looking for citizens to become a member of its [boards and commissions](#). Look through their offerings and if a board or commission sparks your interest, apply to join.

On Monday and Thursday, Mayor Andy Berke has live video conversations on his [Facebook page](#) at 5:30 pm.

And most importantly, help support our campaign to build a Chattanooga that works for everybody by heading over to [KellyForCha.com](#), signing up for a newsletter and making a financial contribution. We'd love to stay in touch with you as we get closer to the mayoral election in March.

If you care about this great city, why not take a moment to help shape its future? Our government is built by the people and belongs to the people, but the people must play their part.