

How to Make Your Voice Heard at Newark City Council

One way to make our voices heard by local elected officials is to give a public comment during a city council meeting. Public comment is a required aspect of local city council meetings because our elected officials represent us! When we show up for the issues that are important to us, we remind our representatives that they work for us AND we signal that we really care about the impact of their decisions on our community.

How to Deliver Public Comment

- **Determine** whether the issue you care about is formally listed as an 'item' on the [city council agenda](#). If yes, prepare to speak when that item is discussed. If no, prepare to talk towards the beginning of the meeting during the 'public comment' section of the agenda.
- **Fill out a public comment card** when you arrive, indicating which item you plan to speak on. You can sign up at any point before your item, but it is best to sign up before or early in the meeting. In Newark, city council meetings are in-person only.
- **Wait for the city council to introduce the relevant item.** When the staff is done presenting background on the item, the Mayor will ask if any members of the public would like to comment. Your card will indicate to the facilitator that you would like to comment, so prepare for your name to be called.
- **Go in front of the microphone** when your name is called.
- **Deliver your comment.** Bring a script or notes or simply speak from the heart.
- **Keep your comment relevant** to the decision at hand and speak for up to 5 minutes.
- **Mind the timer.** Usually, it will ding when 1 minute is remaining.

That's it – thanks for using your voice to make your community a better place!

What to Include in Your Comment

Speaking from the heart is often the most compelling way to make your voice heard. However, many people write down their comments in advance to feel more prepared while they're on the mic. Here are a few ways to make your comment impactful:

- **Introduce yourself.** If you are a local, state that you are a resident of the city that the council governs. If not, state how this issue impacts your community.
- **State clearly what decision you are asking the Council to make.** For instance 'I would like to see Council **oppose** this project' or 'I would like to see the Council **postpone** this decision until there is more information.'
- **Keep your comments clear** and to the point.
- **Explain how this issue impacts you,** your family, the environment, and your neighbors.
- **Include any community groups** that you are a part of that care about this issue.
- **Use sample talking points** from Save the Bay or other organizations that you align with, but try to personalize them.

Talking Points Related to the Proposed Mowry Village Project

Below are draft comments to city council. Feel free to focus just on the points that best represent your perspective. Remember – your final script should be around 2 minutes and cannot be more than 5 minutes.

Introduce Yourself and Your ‘Ask’ of City Council

Hi, my name is ____ and I am a resident of the City of Newark. I am commenting today because I live just north of the proposed development. I am concerned that the City is forfeiting an opportunity to protect my area from flooding. Therefore, I am asking the City to oppose the Mowry Village project.

State your concerns. You can choose to dive into one or multiple of the issues below.

I am most concerned about this project’s potential impact on flooding/public safety/wetland habitat.

Thank you and reminder of your ask.

Thank you for your time, please oppose the Mowry Village Project.

Example Talking Points

Flooding

I am concerned that Newark is highly exposed to flooding caused by sea level rise, groundwater rise and extreme storms. By developing this property, the city will forfeit an opportunity to increase our resilience to flooding. Restoring this area to a wetland will allow it to absorb water and serve as a natural buffer from flooding for communities that I care about.

Public Safety

Housing development is critical in Newark, but housing shouldn’t be located where it is not safe. The property sits entirely within a 100-year FEMA flood zone. Even if the Mowry Village site were elevated to reduce its vulnerability to flooding, the related necessary infrastructure – such as sewer and water lines and emergency service roads – would also be in harm’s way.

Wetlands

Over the past century, approximately 90% of San Francisco Bay’s tidal wetlands have been filled or diked off for development and other purposes. To restore the health of the Bay, over 100 scientists established a regional goal of protecting and restoring 100,000 acres of wetlands. Restoring Area 4 is a great opportunity for our city to be a leader in contributing to this goal.

Housing

Newark needs more housing to allow residents to stay in their communities. In the city’s recently drafted Housing Element, dozens of sites are identified that the City can use to build more housing without needing to develop Area 4.

Biodiversity

San Francisco Bay’s wetlands are home to over a dozen endangered species. I do not support the Mowry Village proposal that will further fragment and threaten existing wetlands with pollution, disturb wildlife, and prevent the movement of wetlands inland as sea levels rise.

Traffic

This development will generate 2,000+ car trips a day. Since Mowry Avenue is the only road to the development, this will concentrate traffic.