



Host Advocacy Toolkit:

How to host responsibly and advocate for clear, common sense regulations to support hosting campers on private land in campsites, RVs, and alternative structures in your community.

Table of Contents

[Chapter 1: Start here!](#)

- Introduction
- Set yourself up for success

[Chapter 2: Prepare your message](#)

- Understand the landscape
- Key messages
- Your personal story

[Chapter 3: Identify stakeholders](#)

- Connect with local community

[Chapter 4: How to engage your local policy makers](#)

- Who are they?
- How do you get in touch?
- Clear asks and recommendations

[Chapter 5: How to start a petition, make a public comment, and connect with the press](#)

- Start a petition
- Make a public comment
 - In writing
 - At a meeting
- Connect with the press

Chapter 1: Start here!

Introduction

Hipcamp began in 2013 after a group of friends struggled to find and book a campsite for a local weekend trip. Battling poor information, long reservation windows, and overcrowding on public lands, the idea for Hipcamp was born. Today, Hipcamp Hosts welcome Hipcampers to more than 500,000 sites across three countries and in more than 1,000 counties across the U.S.

As more people learn about Hipcamp, it's important that we educate policymakers and local stakeholders about the Hipcamp community. We want to empower you with the tools and information you need to talk to your neighbors, engage your elected officials, and lead advocacy initiatives to make the regulations that apply to hosting more clear and simple in your community. **We hope this resource guide will help you bring your community together and take action to support Hipcamp in your area.**

You don't need to be a policy expert to advocate for your hosting business. With our support, we hope you can set up a meeting with your local representatives, share feedback on existing and proposed ordinances, talk to your neighbors about private land camping, or share your story with the press. There's no "one size fits all" approach to becoming what we call a **Hipcamp Host Advocate** — someone who represents Hipcamp within their local community and partners with Hipcamp to garner neighborhood support for local hosting activities. Advocacy looks different depending on who you are, where you're located, and what you're advocating for.

This document outlines how you can reach out to local leaders, community stakeholders, and elected officials and partner with Hipcamp to advocate for regulations specific to hosting campers on private land in campsites, RVs, and alternative structures (yurts, canvas tents, camper vans, etc.). If you don't see what you need here, please reach out to us at policy@hipcamp.com -- we're here to support you!

Set yourself up for success

[Hipcamp's Host Standards can be found here](#) and exist to set expectations and serve as guidance for the Hipcamp Host Community. We expect all Hosts to review and adhere to these standards. That means providing a positive experience for Hipcampers as well as being a **thoughtful neighbor**, a **responsible citizen**, and an **environmental steward**, all of which are prerequisites to being a strong Host Advocate.

Be a responsible Host

First and foremost, make sure you're being a responsible Host, thoughtful neighbor, and good citizen. That means:

- ❑ Maintaining good relationships with your neighbors and checking in with anyone who might be impacted before you host your first Hipcampers. Consider who you share a private road with and who will be able to see and hear your guests, for example.
- ❑ Taking [fire safety precautions](#) and keeping your listing up to date with local red flag warnings and fire bans.
- ❑ Disposing of all waste (garbage, recycling, compost, human waste) safely and legally and providing resources to enable your Hipcampers to do the same.
- ❑ Ensuring all structures on your property are permitted and safe.
- ❑ Keeping noise and nuisance to a minimum. Consider including signage to let Hipcampers know they're in the right spot and where they should park when they arrive.

Review [Hipcamp's Host Standards](#) for a full list of considerations and requirements, and let us know if you think there's something missing!

Do your research

As part of our [Host Standards](#), we expect that all Hipcamp Hosts adhere to all regulations that apply to their hosting activity. For example, you may need a permit or other government permission to host Hipcampers and if your land is part of a land trust or homeowners' association, you may need to ask permission from or notify certain people and/or organizations in your area.

Before you start hosting, take time to familiarize yourself with regulations related to your hosting activity. These regulations can include state, county, council, and/or municipal laws and can vary depending on several factors including:

1. **Where you live:** Every local government has different regulations that may apply to your hosting activity.
2. **How you host:** The type of overnight accommodation you offer will influence which regulations you should adhere to. For example, the regulations for hosting tent campers may differ from the regulations that apply to hosting guests who visit in an RV. Regulations for staying in a short term rental (a cabin or small farmhouse, for example) may be different from those that apply to hosting folks in alternative structures (yurts, campers, and canvas tents, for example).
3. **How your property is zoned:** As you may be aware, how your land is zoned affects what you can do on your property. Your zoning can also determine which permits, if any, you need to obtain to pursue certain activities on your property, including welcoming overnight guests through platforms such as Hipcamp.

It's important that you do your research to ensure your hosting activity is compliant. Applicable regulations may include business licenses, building standards, zoning rules, special permits,

taxes, and homeowners associate (HOA) rules. Follow these steps to learn about local, state, or federal regulations that may apply to your hosting activity:

Step 1: Understand how your property is zoned

If you're not already familiar, look up how your property is zoned. If you live within city or town limits, follow municipal regulations which may be available online at your local government's website. To find yours, check out [State and Local Government on the Net](#) or [Municode](#). If you're looking for county-wide zoning, you may also be able to do this online. For example, searching online for "zoning map in Carroll County, Maryland" shows that the county published a map [here](#). If you're located in Carroll County, you can find your property on this zoning map to determine how it is zoned and look up the regulations specific to that zoning.

If your local government doesn't have an online map, call your county/council or city/municipal land use, planning, or zoning department to ask how your property is zoned.

For example, the Carroll County Government published [this page](#) with information on:

- Where to find the relevant code
- What numbers you'll need to learn more about zoning for a piece of property (Tax Map #, Block #, Parcel #)
- Who to contact in the Office of Zoning Administration if you have any questions

Step 2: Understand how your hosting activity is categorized

Listings on Hipcamp range from tent and RV sites to cabins, yurts, treehouses, RV parks, canvas tents, vacation rentals... you name it! There's something for everybody on Hipcamp and each accommodation type may be regulated differently in your area. The number of sites (campsites, RV sites, cabins, yurts, etc.) you have may also impact how your hosting activity is regulated. For example, there may be different requirements in your area that apply to hosting one tent site than there are to hosting twenty.

Given the variety of hosting activities that exist, there may be various ways your state, county, council, or municipal regulations categorize hosting activity. Examples of how your hosting activity may be categorized include but are not limited to:

- Small-scale/Incidental Camping
- Low Impact Camping
- Low Intensity Camping
- Short-Term Alternative Structure Rental
- Campground
- Short Term Rental
- Agritourism Activity
- Recreational Camping Area

- RV Park

Once you've determined how your property is zoned and how your hosting activities are categorized in your area, you'll be well prepared to understand if there are regulations in place specific to your Hipcamp.

Step 3: Understand restrictions for your district

The land use code for your county, council, city or municipality likely includes zoning regulations. Most local governments post these codes online. Read the zoning regulations for the zoning district that applies to your property. If you cannot find your local laws online, you may have to read them at your local library or city hall.

The zoning regulations will describe the allowable uses for properties like yours and will also describe what permits, if any, are required for certain types of activities, including some activities that may relate to hosting overnight guests. Search the online zoning code for restrictions that may apply to your hosting activity, such as: "camping", "recreational vehicle", "short-term rental", "agritourism", or "vacation rental".

- For example, if you search for the term "campground" in [the Coconino County, Arizona \(United States\) Zoning Ordinance](#), you'll find the conditions under which campgrounds are allowed and which permits are required to operate a campground.

If you have questions about the restrictions in your zoning district, consider calling your local land use, planning, or zoning department.

Step 4: Ask for support

Every city, municipality, council, and county has a board of locally-elected officials whose responsibilities include supporting community members in navigating local laws and creating laws that benefit residents like you. Reach out to your city councilors, board of commissioners, or other local elected officials who represent you by phone, email, or by attending a public meeting (see Chapter 4) to ask for help navigating local laws regarding Hipcamp hosting. You may prefer to hire a local land use attorney who can give you confidential advice. If your local laws are unclear or make hosting difficult, consider expressing to your elected representatives that you would like them to make hosting more of an option for local landowners (Chapter 2 should help you do just that!).

Determining what the current regulations look like and whether they apply to your hosting activity is an important step towards understanding what path forward makes the most sense for you and for your local Host Community, and hopefully this chapter has set you up to do just that! Keep in mind that regulations that may apply to your hosting activity were likely written decades ago (if they exist at all!) and may not take into account platforms like Hipcamp. If regulations specific to hosting campers on private land don't exist yet or you'd like to see the laws that apply to your

hosting activities changed, it may be time to consider organizing and advocating for legislation to support your hosting business. This means talking to your neighbors, community leaders, and elected officials about the benefits of private-land camping and why they should draft, support, and prioritize legislation specific to campsites, glampsites, and alternative structures on private land that establish safeguards for Hosts and Hipcampers, alleviate neighborhood concerns, and offer a framework that promotes compliance. Before you set up meetings and knock on your neighbors' doors, dedicate some time to developing talking points and thinking through how you want to share your personal story. For more information on preparing your message, please see Chapter 2.

Chapter 2: Prepare your message

Regulations that could apply to your hosting activity were likely written decades ago (if they exist at all!) and may not take into account platforms like Hipcamp. If regulations specific to hosting campers on private land don't exist yet or you'd like to see the laws that apply to your hosting activities changed, it may be time to consider organizing and advocating for legislation to support your hosting business. This means talking to your neighbors, community leaders, and elected officials about the benefits of private-land camping and why they should draft, support, and prioritize legislation specific to campsites, glampsites, and alternative structures on private land that establish safeguards for Hosts and Hipcampers, alleviate neighborhood concerns, and offer a framework that promotes compliance.

Before you set up meetings and knock on your neighbors' doors, dedicate some time to the following:

Researching local sentiment: Are there folks within your community (neighbors, local leaders, policymakers, etc.) already talking about hosting campers on private land in campsites, RVs, and alternative structures? If so, what are the key issues being discussed? For example, fire safety and parking may be a top concern for your neighbors while your elected officials may be interested in the economic impacts of your hosting activities.

Developing key messages: Hipcamp provides tangible benefits to Hosts, residents, travelers, local businesses, and the local community. Given this, it is important we work together to ensure that communities develop smart regulations for governing tent and RV campsites and alternative structures on private land that establish safeguards for Hosts and Hipcampers and offer a framework that promotes and enables compliance.

Thinking through how you want to share your personal story: The first step towards developing regulations specific to hosting on private land is familiarizing your neighbors, local leaders, elected representatives, and wider community with your hosting activities and what it means to be a Hipcamp Host. Many people may be unfamiliar with Hipcamp and the concept of camping on private land and they may also be unfamiliar with **why you host** and **how your hosting**

business benefits you and the local community. We've put together some key messages below that you can use to tell that story!

Hipcamp key messages

Getting aligned on your primary talking points before talking to your neighbors or small business association, setting up a meeting with your representative, or making a public comment is a great way to ensure you're communicating clearly and consistently. Here are some key messages we've found in our data and throughout Host Testimonials about the benefits of hosting Hipcampers to Hosts, residents, travelers, local businesses, and the community at large.

Keep local land in local hands

Hipcamp creates sustainable income for local landowners, enabling them to keep their land in the family and avoid sale and subdivision. In 2020, we found that forty percent of Hipcamp Hosts use income from hosting to pay their mortgage or property taxes.

Hipcamp Hosts are integral to the fabric of their communities -- on average, they've lived in their county for 19 years. For example, Willet Family Farm in Westminster, Maryland has survived many hardships over the years including the Great Depression and a 1999 tornado! [Jeremy told his story to a local publication](#): *"In 2006, the farm had to be sold outside of the family, but in an effort to honor past generations and preserve the heritage of what the farm stood for -- faith, family and hard work -- I purchased the farm back in 2017. The 13-acre farm is perfectly located in the middle of over 200 acres of farmland owned by my parents and cousins."* He also shared that *"The outdoor space for campers, the revenue stream for farm-owners and the local economic benefits from tourists for the local community creates a win-win-win situation."*

Generating economic prosperity

Hipcamp supports local governments and communities by bringing in new visitors who support local businesses, from groceries and restaurants to gear shops and guided tours. While traveling, Hipcampers support the local economy by stopping by farm stands, renting equipment, purchasing local firewood, and paying to visit local landmarks and attractions. During an average visit, Hipcampers spend \$300 per person in the communities they camp and recreate in.

In 2020, Hipcamp Hosts in the U.S. earned nearly \$24 million in revenue. At an average transient occupancy tax of 10%, that would translate to \$2.4 million for local governments in taxes remitted. Hipcamp Hosts in the U.S. are expected to double their revenue in 2020, meaning local governments stand to raise over \$5.1 million in taxes.

Hipcamp Hosts are also job creators. With the revenue they earn from hosting via Hipcamp, hosts employ local community members as cleaning staff, landscapers, builders, gardeners, camp hosts, farm assistants and more.

Strengthening the local food economy

Many Hipcamp Hosts are commercial farmers and ranchers. Creating value aligned income for this community means stronger, more resilient local food systems, now and in our future. Eighty percent of Hipcamp Hosts characterize their land as agricultural, ranch, farm, homestead, or undeveloped. You can learn more about how Hipcamp supports local food systems [in interviews like this one with Alyse](#), Hipcamp Host and owner of Hickman Family Vineyards, a small family farm and winery in California.

Conserving land

Hipcampers want to stay in beautiful natural areas and the income Hosts earn is often used to protect and preserve their properties. Preserving land for wilderness corridors, watersheds, and habitats is critical for the health of our ecosystems.

Our 2020 community survey found that sixty six percent of Hipcamp Hosts use income from hosting to maintain or improve their campsites. Here's how Deana, a Hipcamp Host in California, shared her story:

"It has been my dream to bring my four nieces & nephews up with a deep love of the wilderness & a sense of stewardship towards all wild places. Hipcamp has allowed me this opportunity in many ways as now, the whole family is involved in hosting our guests, maintaining the property and benefitting from the revenue to make improvements to the property. I can't thank you enough for making your vision a reality for so many, like myself, that care about open spaces & want to nurture exploration & stewardship."

Lisa, a Hipcamp Host and farmer in Florida, is passionate about land stewardship and education:

"We have always enjoyed sharing our farm with other people and have hosted gatherings since we moved here. We love where we live, we love sharing it with others, and we love providing experiences that connect people to nature, the land, and the source of their food. Hipcamp was a great way to connect to folks who appreciate those things as much as we do...Our dreams are that this property will always be a sanctuary for bees, wildlife and people coming together to enjoy each other...you can act as a good steward of the land and still produce a product as a farmer. Nature and man can coexist, and we need the Earth more than it needs us."

The significance of outdoor recreation

Hipcampers are responsible community members looking to connect with nature and avoid crowds, with eighty-four percent of Hipcampers reporting that they go on outdoor trips to get in touch with and experience the healing benefits of nature. In 2020, most Hipcampers traveled in

couples or small groups of family or friends and half of all Hipcampers have children and use Hipcamp to introduce the next generation to the outdoors.

It is impactful to show the importance of camping and outdoor recreation to your community and local leaders not only through your personal story and the stories shared by your Hipcampers but also in numbers. Communicating how many campsites there are, how many acres Hosts steward, and how many visitors Hipcamp sends to the area every year can help tell the story of why private land camping should be supported in the area. Local leaders may also be interested in how much revenue is generated for you, for local businesses, and for the council/city. Email us at policy@hipcamp.com to request local data and we'll share information specific to your area.

Your personal story

The most important tool you possess is your own personal story! Many people, including and especially local leaders and policymakers, may be unfamiliar with Hipcamp and the concept of camping on private land. They may also be unfamiliar with why *you* host and how your hosting activities benefit *you* and your community.

Crafting your personal story is an important step towards talking about Hipcamp with elected officials, local stakeholders (small business owners and neighbors, for example), and the press. Elected officials are responsible for representing the interests of their constituents (you!) so they should be invested in understanding what's important to you, why it's important to you, and what they can do to support you. Sharing your story with local decision-makers can help them better understand and relate to your perspective and needs.

Telling your story

Think about the experiences that inspired you to start hosting guests on your property.

- What were your motivations?
- Was there a specific event that sparked your interest in hosting campers on your land?
- What has the impact of hosting been on you and/or on your family?
- What would the impact be of no longer being able to host with Hipcamp?

There are Hipcamp Hosts who use their earnings to pay their annual land taxes, to pay for upgrades to farming equipment or buildings, and to support their retirement, for example. There are Hipcamp Hosts who started hosting for the revenue and who continue to host because they enjoy meeting new people from different places and of different backgrounds. Many Hipcamp Hosts are travelers themselves and value being able to provide a peaceful experience in nature for someone driving, hiking, biking, or horseback riding through the area. Here are a few quotes from other Hipcamp Hosts about the impact their hosting business has had to get you started:

"Hipcamp has helped us earn some much needed side income to supplement our working ranch." - Jocelyn, Hipcamp Host

“Hipcamp combines community building with profitable returns. Win-win for everyone. I’m ecstatic to be sharing my beautiful land, campers love being here, and I’m able to supplement my income.” - Gary, Hipcamp Host

“We inherited the land and it gets a lot of abuse from the weather every year. It really takes a beating. Before, the family was using the property exclusively for ourselves, and it wasn’t as easy to maintain. Renting sites out to campers helps.” - David, Hipcamp Host

Your listing page on Hipcamp can also be a great place to start, as a personal story may include what Hipcampers have said about their experiences on your property via their reviews to help decision-makers understand the impact of your hosting business on the folks who visit your property! For example, this Hipcamper wrote about their experience learning about their Hipcamp Host’s conservation work:

“We were warmly greeted at the gate by John and his wife where they gave us the tour and story of the property. I won’t go into too much detail, but the short story is that John’s dedication to preserving the land is a great story. Instead of letting a developer come in and build homes on the land he purchased the entire 400 acres to match the adjoining 350 acres that his brother and him already own. This means that there are a total of 750 acres to explore, all naturally preserved between 3 tent sites. The small details stuck out to me like, the way John doesn’t mow the grass until August so he doesn’t disturb the animals and birds that nest there. Also the fact that he doesn’t wish to create a large camping area, and wishes to keep it small and intimate.” - Brent and Paulina, Hipcampers

Up next, how to use your talking points and personal story to connect with other local stakeholders (Chapter 3), communicate with elected officials (Chapter 4), and get the word out about the benefits of camping on private land (Chapter 5).

Chapter 3: Identify stakeholders

There are many community members who likely benefit from Hipcampers visiting the area, from other Hipcamp Hosts to small business owners! Garnering support from those community members who are positively impacted by and supportive of your hosting activities will demonstrate to lawmakers and other stakeholders the benefits of hosting campers on private land in your neighborhood.

Identify your Allies and Turn Out Your Neighbors

Engage local small business owners

Hosts are rarely the only community members who benefit economically from Hipcampers visiting the area. Small businesses are integral to communities and important to policy makers.

Small business owners play an integral role in the local economy, keeping money close to home, creating new jobs, and providing services to and opportunities for their neighbors. Support for your hosting activities from small business owners in your community demonstrates to lawmakers and other stakeholders that having campers on private land has a positive impact on the local economy well beyond income for the landowner.

Your local gear stores, restaurants, cafes, and farm stand owners may recognize you as a neighbor and customer, and may be interested in learning about your Hipcamp business and hosting activities. Many Hipcamp Hosts include local recommendations in their listing descriptions and welcome packets, directing visitors to their favorite spots in the area and spreading the wealth. Let local small business owners know that you routinely send your Hipcampers to their businesses and invite them to have a conversation with you about the benefits of hosting on private land!

Identify other community stakeholders

There may be other influential stakeholders in your area that would make strong partners when you meet with local elected officials about Hipcamp. Here are a view ideas for who to reach out to in your community:

- Seek out small business owners whose businesses you recommend to your Hipcampers.
- Connect with folks at your local National or State Park. For example, [Joshua Tree National Park lists Hipcamp](#) as a place where visitors can go to find accommodations outside of the park when all public campsites are full, recognizing that Hipcamp is meeting the growing demand for campsites in the area.
- Get in touch with your Tourism Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, or another association that might be interested and invested in supporting economic development and visitation to the area.

Share information with community members who may be interested in learning about your hosting activities and what it means to host campers on private land in your area and encourage them to join the conversation!

Talk to your neighbors

One of [Hipcamp's Host Standards](#) is to "Be a good neighbor." Happy neighbors are essential to a Hipcamp's success, and you likely already touched base with any folks who might be impacted by you hosting campers on your land before you hosted your first Hipcampers (we ask that you consider shared roads, increased traffic and noise, for example). Reconnect with your neighbors to ensure they're able to share any feedback they may have on your hosting activities, and if you have a strong relationship with them consider asking them to publicly express their experience with and support for private land camping in campsites, RVs, and alternative structures in the area!

Brainstorm!

Who do you know? Who do other Hosts in the area know? You never know who coached a county supervisor's high school hockey team or who has a state senator frequent their farm stand. Get creative and invite other folks to join in the conversation about Hipcamp in your community.

Chapter 4: Engage your local policy makers

Once you've done your research you'll likely understand what regulations, if any, may apply to hosting campers on private land in your area (see Chapter 1). You may find that the regulations in question were written decades ago (if they exist at all!) and might not take into account renting campsites on private land as a commercial activity through a platform like Hipcamp. If regulations specific to hosting campers on private land in campsites, RVs, and alternative structures don't exist yet or you'd like to see the laws that apply to your hosting activities changed, it may be time to consider organizing and advocating for legislation to support your hosting business. Once you've talked to your neighbors and community leaders about the benefits of private land camping and have a clear goal in mind (Chapters 2 and 3), the best way to create change is through your local elected officials. A decision maker is always a person and, when it comes to local ordinances and regulations, that person is likely an elected official who is there to represent you and your interests.

Look up what district your land is in and find the elected official who represents it (county supervisor or city council member, for example).

- Get to know your local government structure and legislative process. Use your local government's website to stay up to date on legislation, where new ordinances are in the planning process, and when relevant meetings or opportunities to share your feedback are coming up.
- You can use your local government's website to determine who the actual decision maker is. Who do you need to talk to about what you're advocating for? For example, is it your county commissioner, council member, supervisor, or mayor? You'll want to get to know what is coming up next, where you can have the greatest impact, and who is in a position to support you.
- Your elected officials are there to represent you and your community and it is their job to make decisions and take action based on your needs. They want to hear from you! That's the best way for them to know what you need as their constituent so don't hesitate to keep them informed by reaching out to share your thoughts and feedback.

Who are they?

Research is an important first step in all aspects of advocacy work, including getting in touch with local lawmakers. A number of online databases exist to help connect you with your representatives, both local and national. Start here to determine who has been elected to represent you!

- United States:
 - Mayors: [Find your mayor's contact information here](#).
 - City, County, and Town Officials: Once you identify your state, [this site will take you directly](#) to the relevant city and town websites.
- Canada:
 - [Alberta](#):
 - [British Columbia](#)
 - [Manitoba](#)
 - [New Brunswick](#)
 - [Newfoundland and Labrador](#)
 - [Nova Scotia](#)
 - [Ontario](#)
 - [Prince Edward Island](#)
 - [Quebec](#)
 - [Saskatchewan](#)
 - [Northwest Territories](#)
 - [Nunavut](#)
 - [Yukon](#)
- Australia:
 - [States, Territories and Local Government](#)
 - New South Wales: [State Electorate](#), [Local Council](#)
 - Queensland: [State Electorate](#), [Local Council](#)
 - Victoria: [State Electorate](#), [Local Council](#)
 - Tasmania: [State Electorate](#), [Local Council](#)
 - South Australia: [State Electorate](#), [Local Council](#)
 - Western Australia: [State Electorate](#), [Local Council](#)
 - Northern Territory: [State Electorate](#), [Local Council](#)
 - Australian Capital Territory: [State Electorate](#), [Local Council](#)

Next you'll want to know who the decision makers are for your specific issue and look into their voting history and interests. Is your council member invested in conservation and outdoor recreation? Did your county commissioner campaign on landowner rights? Is the mayor focused on economic development and local small businesses? Do your research to identify allies and decision makers, and use the talking points shared in Chapter 2 to speak to the values of the person you're speaking with and make your issue is one they're interested in working on.

How do you get in touch?

Time to engage your elected officials in conversation by sending a message or arranging an in-person meeting! Bring an understanding of any existing and relevant regulations with you and don't be afraid of saying "I don't know"! Remember, you don't need to be a policy expert to impress upon them the positive impacts of private land camping in campsites, RVs, and alternative structures for their communities and constituents.

From your local county commissioner to state-wide representatives, meeting with your elected officials about issues that are important to their constituents is a lot easier than you might think! Consider setting up an **in-person meeting**, scheduling a **phone call**, sending an **email**, or **posting on social media** to get in touch with them. Here are some tips to keep in mind when contacting your elected officials:

1. Introduce yourself, make sure the elected official in question knows you are one of their constituents, and share your personal story (see Chapter 2). The most important things you can do in a meeting, phone call, or in written correspondence is impress upon them the positive impacts of hosting Hipcampers and make it clear what you are asking them to do. Share your story, provide local examples, and keep it close to home.
2. Describe the issue at hand. Come prepared with talking points (see Chapter 2) and thoughtful ideas. Keep it short and focused and emphasize why you care about the issue you would like to discuss and why they, as your elected official, should too.
3. Make a clear ask: (1) What do you want? (2) When do you want it? (3) How can they help?
4. Be appreciative and polite. Please remember, these folks have tough jobs. Approaching with anger is not helpful, and saying "thank you" can go a long way.
5. Send a thank you note and stay in touch. And if you're getting in touch in writing (a letter or email, for example), request a response!
6. Let us know how it went! Write to us at policy@hipcamp.com to keep us in the loop and let us know if there's any information we can provide that would be helpful ahead of or after your meeting.

Your conversations with local government officials can be much more impactful if you offer clear and thoughtful feedback on and recommendations for new policies. You don't have to be a policy expert to share your thoughts; it's the job of your local elected officials to translate what is important to their constituents into legislation. Here are examples of how you might share your requests and recommendations. Remember to keep your communications productive and positive, and be open to collaboration!

1. Make a public comment at your county or city council meeting.
2. Send an email to your local elected officials.
3. Make a social media post tagging your county or local government.
4. Send a letter to the editor of your local paper.
5. Write a list of suggested changes to the existing codes.
6. Hire a lawyer to draft recommended amendments to the existing codes.

7. Share examples of what legislation could look like to give your elected officials a place to start, and share with them what you like about the shared legislation as well as what you'd like to see adapted to better suit your area and hosting business.
 - a. For example, Coconino County, Arizona [supports recreational camping areas with short-term or seasonal occupancy](#) to support tourism, encourage outdoor recreation, and complement the surrounding public lands.

Chapter 5: How to start a petition, make a public comment, connect with the press

Getting the word out about your hosting activities and advocacy work is an important way to garner support and build a coalition. Here are just a few examples of how you might be able to share information about camping on private land, why it matters to you, and why it should matter to your community.

How to: Start a Petition

Starting a petition can be a powerful strategy, enabling you to reach new audiences and demonstrate support for your cause while providing a low-barrier point of entry for community members that aren't able to make a significant time commitment. You'll likely want to engage in other tactics as well, but starting a petition can demonstrate to decision-makers that you have enough people behind your cause that they should take interest in your request that they implement or alter a regulation, for example.

When you're getting started:

1. Use a free resource to start an online petition, [like this one!](#)
2. Explain your topic and point of view **clearly, briefly**, and in a way that keeps the conversation **positive**, keeping in mind that your audiences for a petition are a prospective signer and a decision maker (a local lawmaker, for example).
3. Add enough **context** for someone not familiar with your topic to take interest and get invested and make a **clear ask** of the elected officials you'll be presenting your petition to. Rather than simply asking for signers to support camping on private land, explain that currently the only pathway towards legally having even one campsite for guests on private property requires a \$5,000 permit and at least 4 restrooms and ask for their support amending the existing approval pathways by August 2021, for example.
4. Include any information that is **legally required** for a petition to be considered valid (a mailing address, for example).
5. Think about the arguments that would **persuade** your targeted decision makers. This may require some research and asking around! What are your county commissioners or supervisors most invested in? What would persuade you if you were a member of the city council?

6. Get a **meaningful number of signatures** from community members. This number will vary depending on the size of your town, county, city, municipality, etc.
7. **Take your petition to an elected official!** This could happen in a one-on-one or public meeting and you can elevate awareness of your petition by working with the press.

How to: Make a public comment

In writing

The public has an opportunity to share their feedback when lawmakers change or propose new legislation. As with verbal commenting, submitting written comments is a way to make your voice heard and an opportunity to influence decisions on the issues you care about. There are likely regular meetings in your area where local officials discuss issues and legislation (city council or board of supervisors meetings, for example). Ahead of those meetings, there is typically a portal through which you can submit a written comment to make known your support for or concerns about an issue in your area that is on the agenda.

The most impactful public comments are personalized, clear, and concise. Remember that the person reading your comment may have dozens of other comments to review. Before you start writing, define your objectives. Ask yourself what you want to achieve through your written comment so you can make your case clearly and persuasively.

Tips for writing a convincing comment:

- Identify yourself as a constituent, a voter, and a local stakeholder.
- Use specific examples to up your feedback and arguments wherever possible.
- Share what you support as well as what you'd like to see changed.
- Offer suggestions and make clear asks and recommendations. See *Chapter 2: Prepare your message* for more detail.
- Reach out to us at policy@hipcamp.com if you'd like support writing your public comment and if there's any data we can provide that might be helpful.

At a public meeting

Every area has a different approach to including residents in the decision making processes that shape the future of issues ranging from farm stay activities to hosting guests in recreational vehicles on private property. Participation and opportunities for public comment are likely to vary from county to county, municipality to municipality, council to council. Regardless of where you're located, there are likely regular meetings where your local officials discuss issues and legislation (city council or board of supervisors meetings, for example). At these meetings, there is typically a segment for public comments during which you can vocalize or support for or concerns about an issue in your area.

Check the local guidelines for public comment and be thoughtful about the best way to deliver your personal story and feedback to garner the support of your neighbors, government officials, and the broader public.

1. Check when your elected officials will be holding their next public meeting in your area. City council meetings, for example, are typically held twice a month on a set day each week.
2. Go to your local government's website to look at the meeting agenda and understand what's up for discussion and what the guidelines are for participation. For example, you may need to sign up to speak before the meeting starts and in some areas you may only be allowed to speak on the topics and issues listed on the agenda in some areas, while others may let you speak about any local issue.
3. When it's time to speak, state your name and where you live so your elected officials know how to address you and know that you're a constituent.
4. Voice your opinion clearly and concisely, using your personal story and the talking points shared in Chapter 2, speaking specifically to the issue at hand, and making clear recommendations for what action you would like to see.
5. Public comments usually have a time limit of 2-3 minutes so everyone has the opportunity to speak. Practice what you're going to say with friends and family, other Hipcamp Hosts, or the Hipcamp Team! Reach out to us at policy@hipcamp.com if you'd like help preparing to make a public comment.

How to Connect with the Press

Write a letter to the editor, article, or opinion piece

Sending a short statement to a local publication with an engaged readership is a great way to get the word out about your advocacy work and generate discussion and support locally.

Newspapers and magazines publish letters to the editor and opinion pieces to give community members an opportunity to share their views and respond to topical issues. This is a great way to share the personal story and talking points you've been developing with many people at once and educate your community on, for example, the impact hosting Hipcampers has had on you, your neighbors, and local businesses. Remember, shorter letters have a better chance of being printed and press pieces can be timed strategically to build support and share information ahead of a key date (a board of supervisors meeting, for example).

Pitch your personal story!

You may have an opportunity to share your story with the press. Take this opportunity to focus on the impact hosting Hipcampers has had on you personally, focusing on your reasons for signing up to host and what it would mean if you weren't able to continue to host. By sharing your voice in an interview, through social media, or at a public event, you're able to give stakeholders a relatable and local lens through which to look at hosting campers on private land.

